

# Beirut Chants Festival

SEASON 17



**4 - 23 DEC**

FREE ENTRANCE



# CAMILE & RHONA SABA

PEARL BRANDS  
ONLINE



MR. AKRAM  
ADIB SAFA



africell



ISABELLE AND  
PHILIPPE HELOU

BOB

IST BML  
Istisherat



ICI ▶ BEYROUTH  
THIS IS ▶ BEIRUT



Main Partner

# **Camile & Rhona Saba**

## **No sound rises above the sound of music**

Beirut Chants has never been a “festival” in the conventional sense. For us and our loyal fans, Beirut Chants has always been a shared space that reflects our diverse community’s determination, solidarity, and authenticity.

It is where all Lebanese come together, no matter how tough the times become. We persevere through brutal wars, standing firm as we know best—with culture, music, prayer, and love.

This year’s edition stands as a testament to the solid spirit of those who choose to build rather than retreat, to unite rather than divide, and to foster hope in the face of uncertainty. Together, we can turn challenges into opportunities, proving that even against all odds, the power of collective optimism and action can prevail.

**Micheline Abi Samra**  
Founder

# 17



MAIN PARTNER

**Camile & Rhona  
Saba**



04 DEC

## W.A.Mozart- Coronation Mass

Antonine University  
Choir & Lebanese  
Orchestra

MIRA AKIKI, SOPRANO  
GRACE MEDAWAR,  
MEZZO-SOPRANO  
BECHARA MOUFARREJ, TENOR  
CESAR NAASSY, BASS-BARITONE  
TOUFIC MAATOUK, CONDUCTOR

7:30 PM

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH  
MONOT

One of the leading choirs in Lebanon, **Antonine University Choir** was founded in Baabda-Lebanon 1978. It has contributed since the eighties in the cultural enrichment of Lebanese musical life with its repertory. UA choir has participated in the Classical Music Festival of Al Ain (United Arab Emirates 2008-2009), Al Bustan International Festival (2009 to 2019), Byblos International Festival (2010-2011-2013-2014), Baalbeck International Festival (2011-2018-2020), Beirut Chants Festival-Lebanon (2008 to 2023), Ehdeniyat (2016), Tbilisi Opera Festival (2012), Festival d'Ile de France (2012-2013), and Bahrain International Music Festival (2013). In May 2010, April 2013 and May 2015, the choir performed at the legendary Carnegie Hall in New York. The choir performed Lately Mozart's Requiem for the Beirut Chants Festival with the European Young Orchestra conducted by Paolo Olmi. This season marks the 45th season of the Choir.

**Mira Akiki**, a Lebanese coloratura Soprano, with more than 10 years of professional experience, known for mastering Vocal and Acting techniques with high agility and delicacy. She discovered her passion for music when she was 5, every time she heard her father playing the piano. After joining the NDU choir at the age of 11, her piano teacher discovered her vocal power. In 2019, she launched her online classroom, offering customized courses and trainings in complete

vocal techniques for singers from all over the world.

**Grace Medawar** - Mezzo Soprano is specialized in Lyrical/Classical singing. Grace participated in many events and ceremonies in Lebanon and many other countries such as Italy (Rome, Loreto, Napoli, Milano, Venice), France (Paris, Lisieux, Lyon, Aix En Provence, Region Alpes, Nice, Marseille...), U.S.A (New York, Washington DC), Brazil (Manaus, Sao Paolo), Jordan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar Oman and Cyprus.

Born in Lebanon, **Bechara Moufarrej** is one of the few singers who has pursued an operatic career outside Lebanon.

Since graduating in 2009 with a master's degree in Music in Lebanon, Bechara continued his studies in Italy and subsequently joined the opera studio back in his hometown of Beirut in 2013. In 2016, Bechara was offered an exceptional talent visa by the UK government to be part of the National Opera Studio (NOS) and to perform in their opera houses in the future.

Between opera lessons and Italian language teaching, Bechara has given many masterclasses to young and expert singers in the UK, Serbia, Lebanon, France, and Romania. After the Beirut Port explosion, the tenor collaborated with the Bayerische State Opera in Munich to record and film a tribute to Beirut titled "Salami Li Beirut" ("Peace for Beirut"), with all proceeds going towards rebuilding efforts and helping affected families.

He currently resides between London and Serbia for his future projects.

**Cesar Naassy**, Known for his striking stage presence and warm cantabile voice, Cesar finds himself particularly well in the BelCanto repertoire.

However, Cesar's notable acting abilities and innate vocal agility, also allow him to bring complex characters to life, making him exceptionally stand out in the operas of Mozart.

Cesar has set foot on the international stage as Raimondo in "Lucia di Lammermoor", Dulcamara in "Elisir d'amore", Don Alfonso in "Così fan tu", Bartolo in "Le nozze di Figaro", Sarastro in "Die Zauberflöte", The king of Scotland in "Ariodante" and Superintendant Bud in "Albert Herring" and many other roles...

**Toufic Maatouk**, is one of the most compelling conductors of his generation. In the 2012 season, Maatouk began his tenure as Artistic Director of the Beirut Chants Festival in Lebanon. He is also Guest Conductor of the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra since 2013 and a Guest Conductor of the Romanian Radio Chamber Orchestra since 2017. Maatouk was appointed Artistic Director and Choir Master of the Antonine University Choir in August 2005 and Head of the vocal department in the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music since October 2015. He has been Head of the Academy of the Saudi Music Hubs in Riyadh (KSA). He is currently the Deputy Executive Director at the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation and the Abu Dhabi Festival (UAE) and an Academic Board member of the Global Leaders Institute in Washington DC (USA).



MAIN PARTNER

## Camile & Rhona Saba

### **Saint Romanos the Melodist” Choir Orthodox Archdiocese of Beirut**

By the blessings of His Eminence Elias Audi, Metropolitan of Beirut, the “Saint Romanos Choir of Beirut” was founded in the year 2000. It all started with a concert held in the Saint George Church, Souk El Gharb. The choir, then, contained 30 chanters, both male and female.

Members of the choir are essentially graduates of “The Saint Romanos School of Ecclesiastical Music” in Beirut where they study, for 5 years, everything related to Byzantine Ecclesiastical music starting from the basics. Our choir’s purpose is to perform well known chants, especially those composed by the late Antiochian Protopsaltis Mitri Al Murr, and those composed by the late Protopsaltis of the Saint George Cathedral of Beirut Andraos Mouaikel. In addition, there are always some new compositions written by the choir’s leader Fr. Romanos.

The choir performed many services in Arabic, Greek and English. Also, it has many published works performed by itself or in collaboration with other Orthodox choirs

Currently, the choir contains around 50 members, both males and females. They performed on several stages and in many churches, inside Beirut and throughout Lebanon, as well as in Syria, Greece, the United States of America, and Romania.

# 06

## Hymns from the Nativity & the Divine Liturgy

St. Romanos The  
Melodist Choir of Beirut

FR. ROMANOS JOUBRAN,  
CONDUCTOR

7:00 PM

ST. NICHOLAS GREEK  
ORTHODOX CHURCH



Embassy  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Beirut

07

## La Chanterie de Beyrouth

NOHA HATEM, CHOIR CONDUCTOR  
ISABELLE ISSAHAKIAN, PIANO

6:30 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH

Twenty five years ago Mrs. Noha Hatem founded with her artistic director Mrs. Isabelle Issahakian the Lebanese Children's choir called **La Chanterie de Beyrouth**. The objective of the choir is to promote and nurture young musical talent all the while contributing to Lebanese culture.

Open to all children between the ages of 6 to 14 and from different backgrounds, the choir has initiated a love of music of all genres and has contributed to enlivening musical events throughout Lebanon.

Mrs. Noha Hatem studied musicology and pedagogy at the Institute of Musicology in Lyon, France, and has participated in several internships in London, Germany and France. She later specialized in Music Appreciation for Children.

Her dedication as choirmaster of the Chanterie de Beyrouth has merited her the Chevalier des Palmes Academiques from the French government and the Medal of Order of Isabel from the Spanish government. Mrs. Isabelle Issahakian the artistic director of the choir has a degree in Architecture and Musicology. Since the foundation of the choir she has shared both her talent as a musician and dedicated service to all the children past and present of La Chanterie de Beyrouth.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Embassy of Switzerland to Lebanon and Syria



**Beirut Chants El-Sistema**, launched in 2022 introduced, for the first time in Lebanon, the world-famous El-Sistema music instruction program which targets youth from marginalized communities, originally in the barrios and slum areas of Venezuela in 1975 and has since mushroomed worldwide, for the youth to develop their music skills in the belief that this method leads to “social change” both individually and collectively.

The El-Sistema program in Lebanon offers free music instruction, free transportation and meals and group instruction and became a lifeline for many aspiring students and their concerned parents hoping to continue their children’s music development. Highlights of the first year were to perform in concert with the world-famous Black Alley Band in May and a special concert held overlooking Beirut Port in memory of the victims of the August 4th explosion which was broadcast on National Television.

Spreading Citizenship, togetherness and unity of purpose through music education are the unifying ideals of this project to integrate all segments of society for the benefit of a common good and to create a better future. After all, the motto of El-Sistema is: “Music for cultural change”.

08

# Beirut Chants El- Sistema

FADY KHALIL, CONDUCTOR  
ZAKAR KESHISHIAN,  
CHOIR CONDUCTOR  
KAMILA YERKANIAN , PIANO  
RAMZI KANDALAFT,  
MUSIC ARRANGEMENT

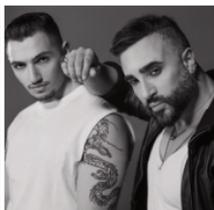


el sistema

Beirut Chants

7:00 PM

ACADÉMIE LIBANAISE  
DES BEAUX ARTS | ALBA  
SIN EL FIL



**Marc Reaidy** Tenor studied classical singing at Ecole des Arts Ghassan Yammine, with Russian Professor Galina Khaldeeva. Currently, he is working with Professor Arax Chekidjian.

He attended many vocal and dramatic workshops and master classes mainly in Lebanon, Russia, France and the United States.

In 2013, He sang the leading role of Don José in Carmen de Bizet, an opera produced by The Lebanese Higher National Conservatory with the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra. In June 2015, and given his dramatic abilities, he participated in Beirut spring festival whereby he played and sang the role of the Turkish Pasha (in Turkish Language), under the direction of Yvan Caracallah.

Being an opera singer with a dramatic side, Marc Reaidy has been seen recently on TV performing as an actor.

**Matteo El Khodr**, Born in Beirut of Greek-Lebanese origins, Matteo moved to Paris to take singing lessons with several teachers, including David Kaufmann, then joined the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris in the class of Agnès Mellon. He signed a contract with Universal Music France and released two albums followed by European concert tours. In 2007, he introduced baroque music and the non-existent back then countertenor voice to Lebanon and the Middle East and sang in several festivals to then

09

## Tenor Contre Tenor

Marc Reaidy  
Baz, Tenor

Matteo  
El khodr,  
Countertenor

JOE CHAHOUD, HARP  
MARIO RAHI, VIOLIN  
OLGA BOLUN, PIANO

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH

is invited to the Doha Opera House in Qatar with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2020, he represents his country in THE VOICE France where he will dazzle the 4 chairs of the juries. Holder of several international singing prizes including the Prix du Public du Concours International de Chant Baroque de Froville, he played several title roles in world premieres including Apollo and Hyacinth by Mozart at the Cité de la Musique in Paris with Les Folies Françaises then triumphed in Ormindo by Cavalli in Morocco and Berlin with the Wiesbaden Orchestra. Matteo is also starring as an actor in movies and series and recently, a french series on Prime Video and Netflix.

**Joe Chahoud** is a multi-disciplinary Artist, his interests cover all the spectrum of the Art world; he works as a visual Artist, harpist, singer, performer, and a circus Artist. Joe Chahoud has been reintroducing the harp to Lebanon's cultural scene. His versatility and his diversity of instruments - electric, lever and grand concert harps - have seen him collaborate with musicians, choirs, and solo vocalists, bringing a unique blend of sounds to his audiences. He seamlessly transitions between popular contemporary songs and nostalgic tunes, blending oriental and international music while continuing to master classical pieces.

Born in Lebanon in 1983, **Mario Rahi** started the violin at a very young age. He pursued his diploma studies at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory of Rome with Maestro Claudio Cornoldi. In 2011, Mario Rahi was awarded his master's degree, with the maximum vote from the Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia with Prof. Domenico Nordio and Sonig Tchakerian.

Back to Lebanon at the age of 28, Mario has been part of the Lebanese

Philharmonic Orchestra since 2011. He is currently a violin teacher at the Lebanese National Conservatory of Music. He also contributed to the development of the "Conservatory Youth Orchestra" that he has been coaching with great passion and dedication until today. Mario appeared several times as soloist and concertmaster with the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra performing concertos by Mozart, Saint-Saëns and Hakim. He is often invited to perform in many festivals in Lebanon and abroad especially in Italy. Mario reserves particular interest in promoting Lebanese classical music, some of the compositions was dedicated to him such as Iyad Kanaan's violin sonata and Naji Hakim's variations on a minuet by J.S Bach.

**Olga Bolun** was born into a family of well-known musicians and educators. Since her debut in music at the age of 5 studying harp and piano, she instantly impressed with her remarkable talent for music and eye-catching ability to learn. Olga earned her higher music degree in Piano specialization from the State Academy of Music in Chisinau, Moldova, which is the USA equivalent of a Master's Degree in Music. Before moving to Beirut, Mrs. Bolun was teaching and lecturing at the National Academy of Music in Bucharest, Romania.

Mrs. Bolun is a permanent invitee to local and International Festivals in the region. Apart from performing and touring nationally and internationally, Mrs. Bolun teaches piano. She shares her musical life with her husband Serghei in the beautiful Lebanese mountainside and in Romania.



ICI ► BEYROUTH

10

هَلِّمُوا نِعَايِنَ عَجَبَا  
St. Stephanos  
the Melodist  
Choir

DR. ALAIN OSTA, CONDUCTOR

7:00 PM

ST. SAUVEUR GREEK  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
MONOT

The **Saint Stephanos Choir** was founded in 2009 by Father Romanos (Bachir) Osta, head of the Saint Stephanos Patriarchal School of byzantine Music.

Fr. Romanos is also the first chanter of the see of Antioch. He gathered a large number of chanters from the Eparchy of Beirut and Jbeil which later expanded to all Lebanese Eparchies.

All members of the Choir are experienced chanters of Byzantine music, as well as students of the Saint Stephanos Patriarchal School, who gradually enter the Choir upon acquiring all required skills and knowledge.

The Choir performs many recitals through the year along with masses and prayers, ordination of priests and bishops etc.

Since 2022, the choir is cooperating with Saint Theophanis choir (founded by Fr. Romanos in the eparchy of Saida and Deir Al Qamar), Panayia Melkite choir (founded by Fr. Romanos under the auspices of the Greek Melkite Patriarch), Saint Romanos School - Zahle (under the direction of the First Chanter of Zahle Georges Riachi), and the Patriarchal Music School in Damascus, Syria (under the direction of Levon Abajian).

Today, the choir performs several liturgical and religious events under the direction of Dr. Alain Osta, the first chanter of Beirut eparchy.



SPECIAL THANKS TO  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
AND INDUSTRY



# 11

## Ziad El Ahmadi Trio

### Organised Chaos

ZIAD EL AHMADIE,  
OUD AND COMPOSITION  
NIDAL ABU SAMRA, SAXOPHONE  
MAKRAM ABUL HOSN,  
DOUBLE BASS

7:00 PM

ACADÉMIE LIBANAISE  
DES BEAUX ARTS | ALBA  
SIN EL FIL

**Ziad El Ahmadi** is an Oud Player, Singer, Composer and Music Arranger and has long experience in Education. He was born in Kuwait on November 23, 1971. He graduated from “Al-Hikmah High School” in 1988 and had his BA in Communication Arts (Radio/TV/Film) from LAU (Lebanese American University) in 1997.

With three albums (“Bilbal” in 2003, “Beyond Traditions” in 2006 and “Silent Wave” in 2009) to his credit, Ziad El Ahmadi loves mixtures. In his three albums, he composed tunes where we can listen to Arabic-rooted melodies but at the same time mingled and mixed with other cultural elements like instrumentation, rhythms, harmony and orchestration..

Close to education, Ziad El Ahmadi was the head of the Drama and Music departments at Le Lycee National (1999 till 2014) where he established his choir and participated with them in many local festivals and won many competitions in Lebanon. At present, he is an instructor at the Lebanese International University (LIU) teaching music courses since 2013. At LIU, he is lecturing in music theory as an elective course and in music methods for home class teachers for education major students.



**SPECIAL THANKS  
TO ISABELLE AND  
PHILIPPE HELOU**

MAIN PARTNER

**Camile & Rhona  
Saba**

# 12 A Christmas with John Rutter Philokalia Choir

SR. MARANA SAAD, CONDUCTOR

7:30 PM

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH  
MONOT

**Philokalia Choir**, founded in 2010 under the leadership of Sr. Marana Saad, Philokalia Choir (previously known as the Saint Rafqa Institute Choir) has firmly established itself as a prominent choir in Lebanon and the wider region, presenting an extensive and diverse repertoire covering classical music (Palestrina, Bach, Mozart, and Dvorak), Arabic music (Sayyed Darwiche, Rahbani Brothers, Marcel Khalife, Charbel Rouhana, etc.), and Syro-Maronite music (traditional music, Toufic Succar, Iyad Kanaan, etc.).

The choir appeared in numerous festivals, both in Lebanon and on the international stage, including Baalbeck International Festival, Byblos International Festival, Beirut Chants Festival, Les Musicales du Liban à Paris, Sacrée Musique, Zouk Mikael International Festival, Lebanese International Choir Festival, Amchit Festival, and the Crossroad Festival in Cyprus.

The choir has also had the honor of performing in prestigious venues like the Presidential Palace in Baabda, the Maronite Catholic Patriarchate in Bkerke, and Casino du Liban. Their performances spanned cities across the globe such as Virginia and Washington (USA), Frankfurt, Rome, Paris, Limassol, and Krakow, where they participated in World Youth Day with Pope Francis.

Over the years, the choir has forged an enduring collaborative partnerships

with distinguished artistic figures, such as Marcel Khalife, Charbel Rouhana, Iyad Kanaan, George Khabbaz, Khaled Mouzannar, Majida El Roubi, Lubnan Baalbaki, Oussama Rahbani, Hiba Tawaji, Lena Farah, Carla Ramia, Rafca Fares, and Lucas Sakr, to name a few.

To date, the choir has released a total of 12 albums, which include “Rafca” (2014) and “Salami ma’ik” (2016).

**S. Marana Saad**, founding president of Philokalia Institute and Organization, S. Marana Saad holds a Ph.D. in Theology from Saint Anselm’s University in Rome and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. In addition to her academic achievements, she possesses an Executive Certificate in Strategic Management and Leadership from George Washington University in the USA, and has followed a Sensitization to Music Therapy training from the Nantes Music Therapy Institute in France.

She is an instructor in both Theology and Musicology at various universities and institutes. As of 2022, she is a member of the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO in Lebanon. Her journey in choral conducting began under the tutelage of Maestro Walter Marzilli at the Pontificio Istituto di Musica Sacra in Rome. In 2010, she founded the Philokalia Choir (formerly known as the Saint Rafca Institute Choir) and later went on to establish two more vocal ensembles, “Hymnos” and “Ashtar,” specializing respectively in western polyphonic and Arabic music. With the choir and the vocal ensembles, she went on global tours performing in France, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Germany, and the United States. As a lecturer, S. Marana participated in numerous conferences and workshops (Vatican, Rome, Tallinn, Richmond, Limassol, Zagreb, Stockholm, Paris). She published several articles covering topics in theology and spirituality, sacred music, choir management and leadership.





13

سبحان الكلمة

Shoubho Ihaw Qolo

Ghada  
Shbeir

7:00 PM

STS. PETER AND PAUL  
CHURCH | CORNET  
CHEHWAN

**Ghada Shbeir**, a distinguished musician and educator, holds a PhD in Musical Sciences and a diploma in Arabic singing from the Holy Spirit University-Kaslik, where she now teaches oriental Arabic singing, music theory, and history while directing the university's Oriental Arabic Choir. Known for her deep dedication to Arabic and Syriac musical traditions, she earned the first prize at Egypt's Best Arabic Song Competition (1997) and the prestigious BBC World Music Award for the Middle East and North Africa (2007) for her album Mouachahat. Shbeir has released a variety of Arabic and Syriac music albums and published comprehensive educational works, including *Al Mouashahat* and *Al Maqamat Al Arabiya*, for oriental singing students. Her extensive research on Arabic and Syriac music led her to document over 700 Maronite and Catholic Syriac melodies, enriching the musical heritage for future generations. Shbeir has represented Lebanon globally, performing at festivals, conducting lectures, and participating in international congresses across the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Arab world. Additionally, she has composed and performed numerous original works and actively contributed to musical theater and television, including a coaching role on *The Voice*. Through her pioneering work, Shbeir continues to elevate and preserve the rich legacy of Arabic music and Syriac chants worldwide.



14

## Byzantine Hymns Ribale Wehbe

6:00 PM

OUR LADY OF  
BALAMAND  
PATRIARCHAL  
MONASTERY



دير سيدة البلمند البطريركي  
Patriarchal Monastery of Balamand



TAMARI  
FOUNDATION



UNIVERSITY OF  
BALAMAND

**Ribale Wehbe** Lebanese Singer and Chanter Born in 1999 in Beirut, Lebanon, Ribale Wehbe is a talented young singer and chanter from a family of musicians. While she excels in oriental singing, she possesses a profound passion for Byzantine music. Ribale began her musical journey at the age of eight, participating in her first Byzantine concert with the Sem Choir, where she remains an active soloist.

In 2022, Ribale continued her concert tours, performing in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Yerevan (Armenia) alongside maestro Teodor Currentzis and the MusicAeterna ensemble. She is also a soloist with MusicAeterna Byzantina, under the direction of conductor Antonio Koutroupis, enriching the ensemble's performances with her unique artistry. In 2024, Ribale has been actively touring across Romania, performing in cities such as Bucharest, Suceava, and Ploiești, captivating audiences with her exceptional artistry. Ribale holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education and Musicology from Antonine University in Baabda, Lebanon (2020), and a Diploma in Byzantine Music from the School of Byzantine Music of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens, Greece (2021). She continues to enhance her skills in oriental singing while playing the piano and oud, an Arabic instrument. In addition to her performances, Ribale teaches classes in musical awakening, Byzantine, and oriental music.



**SPECIAL THANKS TO  
MR. AKRAM ADIB SAFA**

**Carla Chamoun** is a gifted trilingual singer from Beirut, Lebanon, renowned for her unique style that merges modern Arabic music with an oriental twist. Singing in Arabic, English, and French, Carla captivates audiences with her expressive voice and multicultural appeal, quickly establishing herself as a rising star in the Middle East and Europe.

Carla's career gained momentum through solo performances across the Middle East and Europe, but a major breakthrough came in 2018 with her debut album, *Ajmal Chi*. Featuring The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, and produced by four-time Grammy Award Winner Jan Holzner, this album showcased her ability to blend Eastern and Western influences, solidifying her reputation in contemporary Arabic music.

Her partnership with ONE:SIXTEEN Production House has been crucial in broadening her reach and enabling her creative vision. In 2024, Carla made history as the first Lebanese and Arab artist to join The World of Hans Zimmer tour in Europe, an achievement that not only highlights her talent but also introduces Arabic music to global audiences. Carla's music is characterized by deep emotion and a blend of traditional and modern tones, making her a bridge between cultures. Singing in three languages, she connects with a diverse audience, sharing universal themes that transcend language barriers.

15

Light of Hope

# Carla Chamoun

7:00 PM

CHRIST THE KING  
CHURCH | ZOUK  
MOSBEH



# 16

## Francisco Fullana, Violin

WINNER OF 2018 AVERY FISHER CAREER GRANT,  
1ST PRIZE OF THE 2016 GEORGE ENESCU INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITION  
1ST PRIZE IN THE 2015 MUNETSUGU ANGEL VIOLIN COMPETITION IN JAPAN  
1ST PRIZE IN THE 2014 JOHANNES BRAHMS INTERNATIONAL VIOLIN COMPETITION FIRST

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH

Spanish-born violinist **Francisco Fullana**, winner of the 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant, has been hailed as an “amazing talent” (Gustavo Dudamel) and “frighteningly awesome” (Buffalo News). His solo violin album *Bach’s Long Shadow*, was named BBC Music Magazine’s Instrumental Choice of the Month. Its five star review stated: ‘Fullana manages to combine Itzhak Perlman’s warmth with the aristocratic poise of Henryk Szeryng’.

Born into a family of educators, Francisco is a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Madrid, where he matriculated under the tutelage of Manuel Guillén. He received Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from The Juilliard School following studies with Donald Weilerstein and Masao Kawasaki, and holds an Artist Diploma from the USC Thornton School of Music, where he worked with the renowned violinist Midori.

Francisco is a committed innovator, leading new institutions of musical education for young people. He is a co-founder of San Antonio’s Classical Music Summer Institute. As of 2025, Francisco will start his newly appointed role of Artistic Director of the San Antonio’s 210 Festival, and will continue his efforts to foster the new generations of young musicians on both sides of the Atlantic through the Fortissimo Youth Initiative.



**SPECIAL THANKS  
TO MR. NABIL  
BUSTROS**



**Mariane Saïd** is a Lebanese singer born in Beirut on October 13, 1992. She began her musical journey performing in churches and has been studying at the Lebanese Conservatory since 2012. Furthering her classical singing training through private courses and at USEK, she has sung with several choirs, including the NDU choir.

**Ignace Bteich**, born in Beirut in 1995, is a classically trained pianist with a Baccalaureate Degree in Piano Performance (2018) from the Lebanese Conservatory of Music. Rooted in classical traditions, Ignace began exploring jazz in recent years, blending classical finesse with the vibrant spontaneity of jazz for a rich and dynamic musical experience.

**Charbel El Heraoui** - Flute, born in Beirut on April 21, 1989, began his musical journey in 1999 with flute studies at the Lebanese National Conservatory. He later majored in musicology at USEK University, earning a diploma in flute performance, and expanded into jazz.

**Jack Estephan**, a musician and artisan, Jack Estephan began playing violin at age nine and has performed in concert halls globally, including France, Poland, Morocco, and Italy.

**Anthony Malkoun** began his career as a classical percussionist with the LeBAM orchestra in 2011, expanding into Latin percussion and jazz drumming. He has performed with the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra and shared the stage with artists like Jose Carreras.

17

## A Swinging Christmas

MARIANE SAÏD, VOCALS  
IGNACE BTEICH, PIANO  
CHARBEL EL HERAOUI, FLUTE  
JACK ESTEPHAN, BASS  
ANTHONY MALKOUN, DRUMS

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH



Ambassade  
de Belgique

18

# Stephanie Huang, Cello

AWARD WINNER OF THE QUEEN  
ELISABETH COMPETITION

# Florian Noack, Piano

2ND PRIZE PRIZE AT THE 2010  
INTERNATIONAL RACHMANINOFF  
COMPETITION MOSCOW

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH

**Stéphanie Huang**, laureate of the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition 2022 in Belgium where she also won the two public prizes (the Canvas-Klara prize and the Musiq3 prize), Grand Prize of the Suggia International Cello Competition 2015 in Porto, First Prize of the Società Umanitaria International Competition 2021 in Milan, ADAMI Classical Revelation award 2021 in France, Stéphanie Huang has built and developed a successful music career with her passion for music and her sense of perfectionism for the public. Notable concert performances with an extensive repertoire include concertos by Haydn, Dvorák, Elgar, Saint-Saëns, Schumann, Tchaikovsky... Stéphanie Huang has performed with National Orchestra of Belgium, Brussels Philharmonic, Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra, Lille National Orchestra, Munchner Rundfunkorchester, Mulhouse Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Musica, Royal Chamber Orchestra of Wallonia, under the direction of conductors such as M. Sanderling, James Feddeck, Stéphane Denève, C. Izcaray or V. Mardirossian ... Also a keen chamber musician, Stéphanie Huang has collaborated with artists such as Augustin Dumay, Gary Hoffman, Frank Braley, Renaud Capuçon, Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, Claire Désert, Laurent Korcia... performed at many national and international festivals (Verbier Festival-Switzerland, Sommets

Musicaux de Gstaad-Switzerland, Musicales d'Evian-France, Musique à Deauville-France, Kamarikesä Chamber Music Festival Helsinki-Finland, Festival des Midis-Minimes Brussels-Belgium, Festival de la Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth-Belgium, Printemps des Arts de Monte-Carlo-Monaco, Schiermonnikoog International Chamber Music Festival-Netherlands, the Festival Jeunes Talents-Paris, the Victoria Hall-Geneva, the Palais des Beaux-Arts-Brussels-Belgique, Super Cello Beijing-China, Seiji Ozawa Festival in Matsumoto-Japan...). Born into a family of musicians, Stéphanie Huang began playing the cello at a very young age. She won a first prize at the Dexia Music Competition and made her debut at the age of twelve at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels with the Rococo Variations of Tchaikovsky. She obtained her Bachelor degree at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in Brussels, her Master degree in cello, her Master degree in chamber music and Diploma of Performing Artist at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse in Paris with numerous awards (Spes, Meyer, Kriegelstein, Safran foundations, laureate of the Fondation Banque Populaire). She is an artist in residence at the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth de Belgique. Stéphanie Huang plays a Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume cello generously loaned by the Adelus Endowment Fund.

Imagine a map of the world, turned upside down. When such a world is your point of reference, the terms 'obscure' and 'well-known' do not necessarily apply. Much in the same way, **Florian Noack** (1990, Belgium) discovered the world of repertoire for piano. Even as a teen, composers like Alkan, Medtner, Lyapunov were studied next to Chopin and

Beethoven, thanks to the highly inspirational book 'Piano Music' by Guy Sacre.

In 2010 Florian wins 2nd Prize and the Public's Prize at the International Rachmaninoff Competition Moskou In 2011 he wins 3rd Prize at the International Piano Competition Cologne and the 2nd Prize at the international Robert Schumann Competition

In 2013 Florian wins 1st Prize at the Karlrobert Kreiten Piano Competition, 1st Prize at the Lions Club Competition, and winner of the Steinway Förderpreis

Formative experiences have been the studies with Claudio Martinez-Mehner at the Musikhochschule Basel, and Academy masterclasses with the socratic teachings of Ferenc Rados in Prussia Cove, Cornwall. Florian Noack has won numerous prizes including the International Rachmaninoff Competition, the international Robert Schumann Competition and the International Piano Competition Cologne.

Florian Noack has notably performed at the Kölner Philharmonie, BOZAR Brussels, Beijing Concert Hall, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Xinghai Concert Hall Guangzhou, the Liège Philharmonie, Konzerthaus Dortmund, Konzerthaus Berlin, Musashino Shimin Bunka Kaikan Tokyo, and in Paris: Salle Gaveau, Philharmonie de Paris, Auditorium du Louvre and Comédie des Champs-Élysées.



Arabia  
INSURANCE

19

# Maqams & Rhythms Firas Andari

MHAMMAD NAHHAS, QANOUN  
KHALIL AL BABA, VIOLIN  
MAJDI ZEINEDDINE, PERCUSSION  
HACHEM ABDULKADER,  
BACKING VOCALS

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH

**Firas Andari** is a Lebanese singer and composer who has a contemporary musical language that is rooted in the authentic Arab musical heritage, scooping from its historical repertoire without borrowing from other musical genres.

Firas Andari shone in the Beirut Chants Festival 2023, won the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) grant in 2022, participated in the OneBeat Lebanon Residency Program in 2021, and recently, as a researcher and music director, presented a series of programs on traditional music entitled "Maqam wa Maqal" which was produced by the Arab Thought Foundation. He has many followers with whom he interacts regularly on social media, often singing live and playing live music.

Firas Andari was born in Lebanon in 1997 and began singing at the age of six. At the age of twelve, he began studying muwashahat, qudood and the origins of traditional music in the Levant, under Dr. Hayaf Yassin, before joining the Antonine University to study oud professionally, under Egyptian singer and music researcher Mustafa Said. Andari acquired from Said a rich auditory repertoire that Said had also learned by ear from the pillars of traditional singing in Egypt, also known as Sheikhs. Andari also learned the origins of each maqam, its habitual phrases and melodic development, as well as the different maqam dialects that were passed down orally from generation to generation and not taught by music schools.



## PEARL BRANDS

ONLINE

**Fayha National Choir** is a mixed Lebanese a cappella choir internationally renowned for revolutionizing Arabic choral music. It was founded in 2003 by Maestro Barkev Taslakian, who remains its principal conductor. The choir was originally based in Tripoli and adopted the city's local nickname 'Fayha'. After branching out across Lebanon to Beirut and Chouf, the choir was named the first Lebanese National Choir in 2022.

With many awards to its name, including first place prizes at the Warsaw International Choir Festival and Middle East Choir Festival, Fayha is globally recognized as a standard for Arabic a cappella.

It has a rich and unique repertoire that revives classics from across the region – offering new interpretations that blend Western harmony with Arabic musical tradition.

The choir has amassed an extensive archive, making it the prime resource worldwide for Arabic choral arrangements, today performed by choirs all over the world in order to promote Arab Music.

# 20

# Fayha National Choir

Maestro Barkev  
Taslakian,  
Conductor

Guest of Honor,  
Layal Nehme

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH



Born in Lebanon, **Bechara Moufarrej** is one of the few singers who has pursued an operatic career outside Lebanon.

Since graduating in 2009 with a master's degree in Music in Lebanon, Bechara continued his studies in Italy and subsequently joined the opera studio back in his hometown of Beirut in 2013.

Bechara led the role of Anthony with six well-known arias at the Cleopatra world premiere opera at The Royal Albert Hall in London. This performance took him to the Pyramids of Egypt, and following Egypt, an American tour awaited.

In 2016, Bechara was offered an exceptional talent visa by the UK government to be part of the National Opera Studio (NOS) and to perform in their opera houses in the future.

Between opera lessons and Italian language teaching, Bechara has given many masterclasses to young and expert singers in the UK, Serbia, Lebanon, France, and Romania. After the Beirut Port explosion, the tenor collaborated with the Bayerische State Opera in Munich to record and film a tribute to Beirut titled "Salami Li Beirut" ("Peace for Beirut"), with all proceeds going towards rebuilding efforts and helping affected families.

He currently resides between London and Serbia for his future projects.

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# A Tenor's Christmas

Bechara  
Moufarrej, Tenor

7:00 PM

CHRIST THE KING  
CHURCH | ZOUK  
MOSBEH



Funded by the European Union

# 22

## Théo Fouchenneret,

Piano

1ST PRIZE OF CONCOURS DE  
GENÈVE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC  
COMPETITION

7:00 PM

ST ELIE CHURCH  
KANTARI

**Théo Fouchenneret** won the first prize at the Geneva International Competition in November 2018 before being named “revelation instrumental soloist” at the Victoires de la Musique Classique. The same year he won the 1st prize as well as five special prizes at the Lyon International Chamber Music Competition with the Messiaen Trio.

Applauded by great halls and international festivals, he also performs with internationally renowned musicians: Victor Julien-Laferrière, Renaud Capuçon, François Salque, Lise Berthaud, Svetlin Roussev...

In March 2020, he released his first solo CD with La Dolce Volta, a recording devoted to Beethoven's great Waldstein and Hammerklavier sonatas. Theo is also a great chamber musician, as evidenced by his extensive discography with musicians such as Eric Le Sage, Tatsuki Narita, the Messiaen Trio and Raphaël Sévère, the Xenakis Trio and Philippe Hattat.

The young pianist will dedicate his next solo recording to Gabriel Fauré. In addition, Théo is at the initiative of the recording project of the complete chamber music of Robert Schumann, which will begin with the opuses for violin and piano, alongside his brother Pierre Fouchenneret.

“One is struck by a presence and a full and intense sound. Quickly, the contrasts seize us. Fouchenneret invites us to a true interpretation.”  
Diapason



UNDER THE PATRONAGE

IN COLLABORATION



## **PUCCINI 100: Anniversary Concert**

As we mark the centenary of Giacomo Puccini's passing, tonight's concert, presented in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute and held under the patronage of the Italian Embassy in Beirut, stands as a celebration of his profound musical legacy and a testament to his enduring influence on the world of classical music. Featuring the Notre Dame University Choir, tenor soloist Bechara Moufarrej, and the orchestra, conducted by Fr. Khalil Rahme, this special performance is the closing concert of the Beirut Chants Festival.

The first half of the program honors Puccini's sacred works, offering a glimpse into the lesser-known yet equally powerful side of the maestro's repertoire. Opening with "Motetto Per San Paolino", an early and contemplative work, we are invited to experience Puccini's sensitivity to sacred text and melody. This is followed by the "Gloria" from his youthful "Messa di Gloria", a piece brimming with operatic grandeur and the lyrical richness that would later define his celebrated operas. The second half transitions to the festive spirit of Christmas, uniting diverse traditions and showcasing the universality of sacred music. Through motets from the Lebanese Maronite tradition, the English tradition, and the Italian tradition, the program underscores the rich tapestry of cultural expressions that come together in the spirit of the season. As we commemorate Puccini's

# 23

# PUCCINI 100 Anniversary Concert

BECHARA MOUFARREJ, TENOR  
NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY CHOIR  
AND ORCHESTRA  
FR. KHALIL RAHME, CONDUCTOR

7:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH

centennial, we also celebrate the harmony between cultures and the timeless beauty of sacred and choral music. May tonight's concert inspire reflection, joy, and a deepened appreciation for the transformative power of music.

#### **NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY CHOIR**

With more than a dozen concerts per season, numerous recordings and publications, as well as many international awards, NDU Choir is one of Lebanon and the region's outstanding choirs. A broad repertoire, a richly warm sound, an unmistakable interpretation all contribute to make it a permanent partner of the international festivals, and the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra and its conductors, where it functions as a musical ambassador for Beirut in the great concert halls around the world.

Established in 1993, the Notre Dame University Choir has been shaped by reverend Khalil Rahme o.m.m., who returned to Beirut after completing his music studies in Rome, to found the choir and the School of Music at Notre Dame University.

Along with the symphonic choral central repertoire, the annual season programming of the choir includes a wide range of Lebanese music, in close cooperation with celebrated composers, such as Iyad Kanaan, Gabriel Yared and Valentino Miserachs Grau, with the aim of developing and growing the Lebanese choral repertoire. Furthermore, Notre Dame University Choir is constantly developing new and unusual ways of experiencing choral music.

#### **Fr. KHALIL RAHME**

After completing his studies in philosophy, theology and music in Rome, Fr. Khalil Rahme returned to Beirut in 1993 to found the Notre

Dame University Choir and School of Music, in addition to his entrusted tasks at the Lebanese National Conservatory of Music (choir director and music formation instructor).

As a renowned composer, his catalogue lists several motets, oratorios, and chamber and film music. Rahme is also founder and artistic director of the Lebanese Pipe Organ Week (SOL Festival), a yearly festival promoting pipe organ music. He is appointed Chaplain General of the Sovereign Order of Malta in Lebanon.

# CAMILE & RHONA SABA

PEARL BRANDS  
ONLINE



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BEIRUT



Cooperación  
Española

ISABELLE AND  
PHILIPPE HELOU

BOB

IST  
BML  
Istisharat



ICI ▶ BEYROUTH  
THIS IS ▶ BEIRUT



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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UNIVERSITY OF  
BALAMAND



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