

Karim Nagi-Mohammed

Arabic Music, Dance, and Culture



Summary of the Performance: Karim Nagi Mohammed demonstrates many different Arabic percussion instruments while discussing Arab culture, music and dance. He begins the performance with a discussion of the difference between ethnicity, religions and Arab countries. He speaks masterfully about the important issues facing Arab-Americans, allowing for both laughter and learning. The performance continues with short explanations of Arabic instruments followed by skillful demonstrations. Karim concludes with a dance called “Dabka”, in which he allows audience members to join him on stage and dance.

Objectives of the Performance: Karim Nagi Mohammed's goal is to provide an enriching, positive and educational introduction to Arab music and culture. He uses music and dance to emphasize the importance of learning about a culture outside the framework of politics and to show the depth of Arab culture.

Karim Nagi Mohammed is a native Egyptian who has lived in the Boston area for over 20 years. Karim performs primarily Arabic, Turkish and Andalusian hand percussion, including the Egyptian Tabla (goblet drum), Riqq (tambourine) and Segat (brass castanets). He is a faculty member of the New England Conservatory of Music. He leads the SHARQ Arabic Music Ensemble performing the classical Arabic instrumental and vocal repertoire. Karim travels the country presenting his education program called "Arabic Music, Dance and Culture" to school grades K up through the university level. He developed and currently performs Turbo Tabla a music and dance show that combines traditional Arabic and Turkish music with modern Electronica and Techno. Karim also dances the Dabka Arabic Line Dance.

Arabic Music and Dance: The Arab culture is thousands of years old. Originating in the Arabian Peninsula, the language and culture has since spread to over 23 countries in the Near East and Africa. Poetry and stylized speech has been the cornerstone of all Arab art. There are numerous epic tales and stories dating back to the nomadic Bedouin tribes well before the Biblical era.

Music is closely related to poetry in Arab culture. Poetry would be sung melodically, rhythmically, and with refrains and repeats. A rich modal and melodic system was developed to align certain scales and note combinations to match certain moods, feelings and poetic emotions. Over the centuries instruments were added to accompany the vocal repertoire. Now there are several instruments in every category that are unique inventions of the Arab world.

Dance has also been an essential cultural tool. Most Westerners are familiar with Arabic dance as entertainment. But dance is essentially a social ritual for the Arabs. Dance is used for ceremonies like weddings and births, as well as sport and storytelling. There are several dances for single performers, women, men, and mixed gender groups. Dance is closely related to music and a great many Arab dancers are also musicians.



Tabla

Pre-Performance Activities: Learn the names of all 23 Arabic countries, which are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine (Israel), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Post-Performance Activities: Review clapping rhythms and Dabka steps, as well as discuss the similarities/differences between Arab and Western cultures.

Vocabulary

Arab : a member of an ethnic group originating from the Near East.

Arabic : a language spoken by the Arabs in 23 countries.

The alphabet is completely different from English and is written from right to left. Capital letters are not used. English actually uses Arabic numbers.

Arab-American : an American citizen who is of Arab descent.

Bi-Cultural : someone who lives in America but also retains many of the traditions of their country of family origin.

Islam : a religion that originated in Saudi Arabia and can now be found all over the world. The religion was founded by the prophet Muhammad in the late 500's AD. Most of the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity can be found in Islam.

Muslim : someone who follows Islam.

Copt : one of the original Christians found in Egypt first century AD. This sect of Christianity has 7 million followers in Egypt.

Instruments:

Oud : Arabic Lute with 5 pairs of strings.

Nay : Arabic bamboo flute

Segat : Arabic brass castanettes

Duff : Arabic frame drum

Qanun : Arabic lap harp with 96 strings



Buzuq : Arabic guitar



Riqq : Arabic tambourine



Tabla: Arabic hand drum

"**Dum**" : a deep low-pitched sound

"**Tak**" : a tight high-pitched sound

"**Ka**" : a loud high-pitched sound

Dabka : a line dance done by men and women together. Stepping, jumping and stomping characterize the dance. Dabka is performed at weddings, parties, stage performances and social demonstrations.



Class Acts Arts

8100 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910

301-588-7525

www.classactsarts.org

info@classactsarts.org

Middle East



The Arab countries above are: Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine (Israel), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen (additional Arab countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia)

RESOURCES

General info on the Arab world: www.al-bab.com

Intro to Arabic Folk dance: www.mobilityexpress.com/sourat/dabke.htm

Arabic Songs with Translations: www.egyptianacademy.com/songs.asp

Advanced Music: www.maqamworld.com