

# ITRAAB ARABIC MUSIC ENSEMBLE

## FALL 2023 CONCERT

Anne Elise Thomas, director

Sunday, December 10, 2023, 4 PM

### SONG LYRICS

#### **YA NANAH HILWA (O SWEET NANAH)**

*Music learned from an early Maloof recording by singer  
Salim Dumani with Takht Naim Karakand, recorded in 1920  
in New York City; translation by Albert Agha*

Oh nanah, her beauty, how do I find her  
She flew, oh nanah, to her master's house  
Yesterday afternoon, she was in my palace  
Her sterling manners, so hard to overlook

She passed by me, overtook my thoughts  
Oh I wish she was mine, my intention is to marry  
The nightingale took her, and flew with her  
His intention, oh nanah, is to hear her singing

## SONG LYRICS, cont.

### **YA HAL KHALEG (O PEOPLE!)**

*From the Iraqi Maqam tradition; with thanks to Laith al-Sidiq  
and Amir Elsaffar*

O, People! Who saw my lover and recognized them?  
It turned out that they were a faithless traitor

They asked me about [the beloved's] beauty — I said,  
"Like a full moon"

They asked me about [their] absence — I said,  
"It's as if they've emigrated"

They asked me about [their] attributes — I said, "Promises"  
They asked me about [their] cheeks — I told them,  
"Like flowers"

They asked me about [their] forehead — I told them,  
"A crescent"

They asked me about [their] eyes, and I told them,  
"Like a gazelle"

They asked me what I want — I told them, "A lover"  
They asked me what I need — I told them, "A doctor"

## SONG LYRICS, cont.

### ***EL-LAYLA HILWA (THE NIGHT IS SWEET)***

*From the Iraqi Maqam tradition; with thanks to Laith al-Sidiq  
and Amir Elsaffar*

This sweet night — sweet and beautiful  
Ah – Ah – oh beautiful night

I will sit all night and remember my lover  
And with the excuse of the dreamer,  
I will cry as much as I want

I don't have two hearts, if only you knew  
You took one with you, what's left for me?

### ***WASLAH OF TUNISIAN PIECES IN MAQAM M'HAYYAR SIKAH***

*Traditional Tunisian songs; lyrics discussed from the stage*

## SONG LYRICS, cont.

### **IL BULBUL NAGHA (THE NIGHTINGALE SANG)**

*Traditional Iraqi; music learned from an early Victor recording  
by singer Constantine Souse with Takht Naim Karakand, recorded  
in 1917 in New York City*

A nightingale twitters on the jasmine branch  
O, the poppy anemones  
It is my intention to meet my beloved amidst  
the jasmine and the basil

My heart is on fire — what a bummer  
— I need a doctor to treat me  
But the medicine of the doctor doesn't cure me  
— seeing my beloved is what cures me

A beggar came to the door; the beautiful one told him,  
"God will provide"

He said, "I'm not a beggar, give me a kiss  
in the name of God!"

We were six at the stream — the beloved came,  
and then we were seven

I asked for a kiss, she didn't give it. She told me  
"Shame on you, it's Friday!"

## SONG LYRICS, cont.

### ***AD-DIK YASIH 'KU KU KU KU' (THE ROOSTER CROWED)***

*A version of Il Hilwa Di by Sayyid Darwish, lyrics by Badi` Khayri; compare to alternate version below. Learned from a 78-rpm record by singer Salim Dumani, recorded in 1922 in New York City on Maloof Records; translation by Jared Holton.*

This beautiful girl got up to knead bread in the early morn,  
And the rooster yells, "ku ku ku ku" at the crack of dawn.  
Come on, let's get up and go out into God's world,  
    O workers,  
May God — the best Giver — make your morning  
    a good one!

The day has risen, O All-Knowing Lord,  
My pocket is empty — there's not even a cent!  
Who these days has seen more of life's hard knocks  
Than oppressed workers?

America's children do not sleep,  
They turn away from the industry.  
There is always money, if only just pennies.  
They don't get bored from [unintelligible]

All of the women and men  
Are taking the Friday salary.  
The morning's official directs work  
We dock it a sum of money

## SONG LYRICS, cont.

### **ASFUR (A SPARROW)**

#### **POEM BY MAHMOUD DARWISH, MUSIC BY MARCEL KHALIFE**

*Dedicated to all who persevere through impossible situations in the SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) region. If you are moved, and able, we encourage you to consider a donation to one of the following organizations doing humanitarian work, or to your favorite charity:*

[Doctors Without Borders](#)

[International Rescue Committee](#)

[UNWRAUSA](#)

[American Near East Refugee Aid](#)

[Palestinian Children's Relief Fund](#)

A bird stood at my window and said, "O little one,  
hide me with you, I beg you."

I asked him, "Where are you from?" He said,  
"From the limits of the sky"

I asked him, "Where did you come from?" He said,  
"From the neighbor's house"

I asked him, "What are you afraid of?" He said,  
"I escaped from the cage"

I asked him, "Where are your feathers?" He said,  
"Fate took care of them"

A bird stood at my window and said, "O little one,  
hide me with you, I beg you."

A tear fell on his cheek, his wings tucked under him  
He landed on the ground and said, "I want to walk,  
but I can't"

I held him to my heart, hurting from his wounds  
Before he finally broke free from his captivity,  
he broke his voice and his wings

## SONG LYRICS, cont.

I said, "Do not fear, do you see the sun is rising?"  
He looked toward the forest, saw the tides of freedom glitter  
He saw wings flutter beyond the high gates  
He saw the forest flying on the wings of freedom

### **IL-HILWA DI (THIS BEAUTY)**

*Lyrics by Badi` Khayri, music by Sayyid Darwish*

This beautiful girl arose early to bake  
As the rooster crowed "ku ku" at dawn  
Let's go, to "God's door," oh workers  
May He make your morning good, master `Atiyya

Day broke — by God's blessing — and there's nary  
a coin in my pocket  
These days, who has received hard knocks like  
the wretched workers?  
Patience is thin since conditions worsened  
Oh, you with money — the poor also have a generous Lord

Be brave, oh Abu Salah  
Take it easy, and you'll live at ease  
Depend on God, and let's go! Time is running out!

The sun rose, and the kingdom belongs to God  
Hurry to make your living, and depend on God  
Take your tools and let's go

### **AH YA ZAYN (O MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE WORSHIPPERS)**

*Traditional Egyptian*

Oh, most beautiful of the worshippers  
Oh, rose, opened in the gardens