Hamid Al-Saadi
with Safaafir

Wednesday, January 29, 2020
Welcome to the Cleveland Museum of Art

The 2019–20 concert series comprises a stunning array of artists from around the world and close to home, ranging from traditions far and wide to ideas old and new. In addition to performances by the Zohn Collective with La Coperacha puppet company from Mexico and by Fretwork, we present traditional Iraqi maqams by Hamid Al-Saadi, contemporary African music by Fatoumata Diawara, and classical Indian music by Zakir Hussain. The museum’s commissioning series continues our partnership with the Cleveland Foundation’s Creative Fusion program, this year presenting world premieres by Aleksandra Vrebalov (Serbia) and Luciano Chessa (Sardinia). Organists Pierre Queval and Nicole Keller perform on the McMyler Memorial Organ in Gartner Auditorium, Sarah Davachi and FretX (duo Mak Grgic and Dan Lippel) perform at Transformer Station, and the spotlight turns to local artists in our monthly series featuring young artists from the Cleveland Institute of Music and the joint program with Case Western Reserve University’s early and baroque music programs.

In the Galleries

Tiffany in Bloom: Stained Glass Lamps of Louis Comfort Tiffany Through June 14
Color and Comfort: Swedish Modern Design Through February 9
Liu Wei: Invisible Cities Through February 16
Master/Apprentice: Imitation and Inspiration in the Renaissance Through February 23

Please turn off all electronic devices before entering the performance hall.

Photography and audio/video recording in the performance hall are prohibited.

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Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 7:30 p.m.
Gartner Auditorium, the Cleveland Museum of Art

ENSEMBLE

Hamid Al-Saadi, vocals
Amir ElSaffar, santur
Dena El Saffar, joza
Tim Moore, percussion
George Ziadeh, ‘oud

PROGRAM

Journey to the Heart of the Iraqi Maqam

Tonight’s program is approximately 90 minutes in duration and will be announced from the stage and presented without intermission

Tonight’s performance is being filmed for a documentary. By attending this concert, you consent to be filmed in general audience footage. If you have any concerns, please see the house manager.

Hamid Al-Saadi is in the United States as an Artist Protection Fund Fellow, in residence at Rutgers University and Sarah Lawrence College.
Inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the *maqam* is the classical vocal tradition of Iraq and one of the most refined of the many maqam traditions found throughout the Arab and Muslim world. In Iraq, the term maqam refers to highly-structured, semi-improvised, compositions that take years of disciplined study under a master to learn fully. Often rhythmically free and meditative, they are sung to Classical Arabic and colloquial Iraqi poetry, and are followed by light-hearted, rhythmic songs, known as *pestaat*.

Maqam is the urban classical vocal tradition of Iraq. Found primarily in the cities of Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra, the maqam repertoire draws upon musical styles of the many populations in Iraq, such as the Bedouins, rural Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen as well as neighboring Persians, Turks, and other populations that have had extensive contact with Iraq throughout history. The use of the word maqam in Iraq is distinct from its use in the rest of the Arab world and Turkey, where the term refers to a musical mode on which compositions and improvisations are based. In Iraq, maqam refers to the composition itself.

**History**

The exact beginning of the maqam tradition in Iraq is unknown, and is a subject of debate among maqam musicians and connoisseurs. Some believe that the maqam is a several hundred years old tradition, brought in by the conquering Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Others postulate that it began during the Abbasid period (8th-13th century A.D.), when Baghdad was the seat of the Islamic caliphate and was a great center of art, learning, and technological achievement. Still others believe that the maqam may reach to a much further past, to Iraq's ancient civilizations, the Babylonian or perhaps the Sumerian.

Until the 20th century, the maqam was ubiquitous in the urban centers of modern-day Iraq, its melodies heard in various settings. In religious contexts, maqam melodies were used in the call to prayer, during *mawlid* rituals (celebrations of the birth of the prophet Mohammed and/or other Holy persons), as well as in Qur’anic recitation. Maqam was also sung in the *zurkhanes* (athletic houses), to energize the participants performing physical activity. It was even sung by street vendors advertising their products. Tradition often dictated which types of vendors would sing what melodies. Formal maqam concerts took place in private homes during celebrations and in *gahawi* (coffeehouses), which were the primary venues for maqam performance.

There were several coffeehouses in Baghdad that specialized in maqam. Among these were Gahwat Shaabander, Gahwat al-Qaysariya, and Gahwat ‘Azzawi. These places functioned both as performance spaces as well as institutions wherein the maqam was transmitted. During the day, experts, amateurs, and novices, known collectively as *ushshaq al-maqam*, or lovers of the maqam, would sit for hours, philosophizing about the inner meanings of a maqam melody, discussing a particular maqam’s possibilities, debating who was a more skilled singer, or critiquing a recent performance. Every evening in these gahawi, a maqam concert would take place that, when performed in its complete sequence, would last about nine hours.
performed in a rhythmically free and semi-improvised manner, with ample room for interpretation, ornamentation, and variation, such that every performance is unique. Each singer is expected to develop a personal approach to performing these melodies. What must remain in any interpretation is the ruhiyya (spirit or spiritual essence) of each given melody. Totally free improvisation does not exist in maqam performance.

Structure
Each melody in a maqam composition functions as one of six structural components that make up the maqam’s form. These components are the tahrir, which is the opening melody/main theme that is repeated throughout the maqam; qita’ (sing. qita’a) and awsal (sing. wusla), or secondary melodies, which form the building blocks of the composition; the meyana, or climax, which is usually a qita’a or a wusla sung in the high register; a small cadence known as a jelsa, which precedes the meyana; a qarar, or a descent into the lower register; and the teslim, which is the final, closing cadence that signals the end of the maqam and the coming pesteh (defined later). Each maqam begins with a tahrir and concludes with a teslim, and contains one or more of the rest of the structural components. Some maqamat follow a predetermined sequence of melodies that each performer is expected to adhere to, whereas others contain a relatively free form.

Poetry
Poetic tradition and the maqam are closely intertwined in Baghdadi culture. Most maqam listeners are also avid readers of poetry, and pay as much attention, if not more, to the words of the poem as they do to the musical aspects of a maqam performance. At its essence, maqam singing is a form of poetic recitation. The rules of performance practice dictate which genre of poetry is sung with each maqam, although the choice of
the specific poem is left to the singer. Almost all of the maqamat use one of two genres of poetry. The first, known as the *qasida* (pl. *qasa'id*), is an ode written in Classical Arabic and is found throughout the Arab world. The second genre of poetry, called *zuheiri*, is a native Iraqi form that is sung in Iraqi dialect. It consists of seven lines, arranged according to the rhyme scheme AAA BBB A, where the final word of each line is homophonous, but yields a different meaning in each repetition. Several maqamat were traditionally sung with Turkish or Persian poems, though in recent years, these poems have been replaced by *qasa'id*.

**Rhythm**

Although maqam singing is rhythmically free, many maqamat contain a rhythm, or *iqa*’ (pl. *iqaa't*), which is performed by the accompanying instruments. In the Baghdadi maqam repertoire, eight *iqa*a’t are used. Each *iqa’a* is performed on the percussion instruments as a pattern of “dums” (sustained, low-pitched strokes) and “teks” (short, high-pitched strokes) and silences that fit into a meter of a fixed number of beats. The *iqa’a* and the melodies exist concurrently, converging and diverging spontaneously, creating a polyrhythmic effect.

**Classification Of Iraqi Maqam by Mode**

In Baghdad, there are approximately 56 maqamat (this number varies according to different sources). From each maqam can be extracted a seven-note mode, or scale, on which the tahrir and other melodies are based. Maqamat are classified based on their mode, which results in eight families, which are Rast, Bayat, Hijaz, Segah, Nawa, Hussaini, Ajam, and Saba. Almost all maqamat fit into one of these families.

Each family has a primary maqam, which bears the name of the mode, and several secondary maqamat. The primary maqamat tend to have a fixed sequence and long, elaborate structures, whereas the secondary maqamat are often of a lighter and simpler nature, though there are exceptions.

**Additional Musical Pieces: Muqaddimah And Pesteh**

In performance, each maqam is preceded by a rhythmic instrumental piece, known as a *muqaddimah*, and is followed by one or more *pestat* (sing. *pesteh*). Pestat are rhythmic songs with repetitive melodies that often contain simple, humorous, texts dealing with day-to-day life and various aspects of society. The light-hearted nature of the pesteh serves to counterbalance the heavy, complex, introspective nature of the maqam. Members of the instrumental ensemble and the audience usually join in singing these songs. Unlike the maqamat, these songs have remained popular in Iraq to the present day.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Hamid Al-Saadi**

Through his powerful and highly ornamented voice, and in his comprehensive knowledge of the intricate details of the music and poetry of Iraq, generations and layers of the maqam tradition resonate through Hamid al-Saadi’s magnificent presence on stage. The only person in his generation to have memorized and mastered all 56 maqamat from the Baghdadi repertoire, Al-Saadi is one of the few vocalists who is keeping the maqam alive today, at a time when so many elements of this profound tradition are in danger of extinction.

Born in Iraq in 1958, Hamid Al-Saadi’s artistic, musical and scholarly journey with the Iraqi maqam began from childhood, inspired by his avid love of the Iraqi and Baghdadi culture, the Arabic language, music and poetry. He studied, practiced, and performed the maqam until he
became one of the more renowned and highly acclaimed musicians and scholars in this subject. He learned the art of singing and performing the Iraqi maqam from the legendary Yusuf Omar (1918–1987), who pronounced Al-Saadi as his successor. Muhammed Al-Gubbencchi (1901–1989) who taught Omar and was probably the most influential maqam reciter in history, said that he considered Al-Saadi to be the “ideal link to pass on the maqam to future generations.”

Al-Saadi immigrated to Great Britain in 1999, where he lived and was active for six years as a maqam scholar, singer, artist and writer, and returned to Baghdad in 2004 where he currently resides. He authored a book on the maqam entitled, “al-maqam wo buhoor al-angham,” which is one of the most comprehensive texts on the Iraqi Maqam and its poetry that has ever been published.

Hamid Al-Saadi is now in the United States as an Artist Protection Fund Fellow, in residence at Rutgers University and Sarah Lawrence College. He has also performed at Duke University, The Wexner in Columbus, the Kennedy Center Jazz Club, Old Town School of Folk Music, Princeton University, the Freer and Sackler Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center, in addition to a number of lectures and private performances at Rutgers, Princeton, and other universities.

Amir ElSaffar

Amir ElSaffar has been described as “uniquely poised to reconcile jazz and Arabic music,” (Wire) and “one of the most promising figures in jazz today” (Chicago Tribune). A recipient of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award and United States Artists Fellowship, ElSaffar is an expert trumpeter with a classical background and is conversant in the language of contemporary jazz, while creating techniques to play microtones and ornaments idiomatic to Arabic music that are not typically heard on the trumpet. Additionally, he is a purveyor of the centuries-old Iraqi maqam tradition, which he performs actively as a vocalist and santur player.

Born near Chicago in 1977 to an Iraqi immigrant father and an American mother, ElSaffar earned a bachelor’s degree in classical trumpet from DePaul University, while playing actively on Chicago’s jazz scene. He moved to New York in 2000 and played in the ensembles of Cecil Taylor, Vijay Iyer, and Rudresh Mahanthappa. In 2002, he embarked on a journey to Baghdad and throughout the Middle East to study the Iraqi Maqam. Upon returning to New York five years later, ElSaffar established himself with his work combining jazz and Middle Eastern music, in particular his microtonal harmonic and melodic approaches.

Safaafir

Safaafir is the only US-based ensemble dedicated to performing the Iraqi maqam. The group is led by Amir ElSaffar and his sister, Dena, two American-born siblings of Iraqi descent, who trained in Western music but eventually found their way into Iraqi music. Dena holds a degree in classical viola performance from Indiana University, and Amir is a jazz trumpeter and composer based in New York City who has a degree in trumpet performance from DePaul University in Chicago. Dena and Amir discovered Arabic and Iraqi music independently of one another, and it wasn’t until 2005, at the suggestion of Dena’s husband, percussionist Tim Moore, that the three decided to form a maqam trio. Prior to that, Dena and Tim had been performing together in Salaam, an Arab/Middle Eastern ensemble founded by Dena in 1992 that continues to perform actively today. The three named the group Safaafir, meaning coppersmiths, in homage to Amir and Dena’s ancestry and namesake. For more than 14 years, the group has performed actively for Iraqi, Arab, and American audiences across the United States and internationally. In addition to presenting the maqam in its traditional format, Safaafir incorporates jazz, classical and other Middle Eastern styles to create a highly unique and personalized sound.
Amir ElSaffar has released seven critically acclaimed albums and leads five ensembles, in addition to collaborating with musicians in the US, Europe, and the Middle East. He has composed for jazz ensembles, Middle Eastern ensembles, chamber orchestras, string quartets, and contemporary ensembles, in addition to dance and theater projects, receiving commissions from the Berlin Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, the Flamenco Biennale (Netherlands), Metropolitan Museum of Art, MAP Fund, and Chamber Music America. ElSaffar was composer in residence of the transcultural program at the Royaumont Foundation in France where he created three new works between 2017 and 2019.

Dena El Saffar is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, teacher and recording artist who has performed throughout the US as well as in the Middle East and Latin America. Born and raised in a musical family in Chicago, she learned about her Iraqi heritage through stories, music and recipes. She began violin lessons at the age of 6. At the age of 17, after winning several concerto competitions and touring Europe with a youth orchestra, she travelled to Iraq and became inspired to learn the Iraqi music traditions. After completing a Viola Performance degree at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and made Bloomington her home. While still a student, she founded the Middle Eastern music group Salaam (www.SalaamBand.com), which focuses on music of the Arab World. Salaam has recorded 7 albums, and has been featured on NPR, including an interview on All Things Considered with Guy Raz. El Saffar plays several traditional Middle Eastern instruments—‘oud, joza, kemanche—as well as violin and viola. She has a long list of recording projects with well-known American musicians such as Krista Detor, Slats Klug, Moira Smiley, and Michael White. She has toured and performed with countless ensembles including Youssou N’Dour, Rivers of Sound Orchestra, the National Arab Orchestra, and Iraqi Maqam ensemble Safaafir. When she is not busy performing or teaching, Dena enjoys hiking in the woods and spending time with her family.

Tim Moore grew up in the Midwest, and began playing drums at the age of 11. A natural percussionist, he began performing with different groups early on, gaining experience in a variety of genres including jazz, blues, salsa, and rock. After earning a computer science degree from Indiana University in 1989, he worked on the East and West Coasts as a computer programmer, but in 1993 he left that world in order to devote himself to music. In his quest to become a better, more diverse musician, he began learning rhythms and instruments from around the world, eventually bringing his focus to Middle Eastern percussion. He has studied Arabic percussion with Wessam Ayoub, Sattar Al Saadi, Lateef Al ‘Abeedi, N. Scott Robinson, and Mohammed Khalil Salih. Tim plays the dumbek, riqq, naqqarat, bendir, tabl, and zanbur, as well as drum set, bass, and guitar. Tim is married to Dena El Saffar, and enjoys spending his free time with their two children, Jamil and Layla.

George Ziadeh was born and raised in Birzeit, Palestine, and pursued music from a young age. In 1986 he moved to the United States, where he studied ‘oud with Simon Shaheen and classical singing and voice with Youssef Kassab, with whom he has toured extensively across the country. George has performed and lectured with such ensembles and institutions as the University of Chicago’s Middle East Music Ensemble with Issa Boulos, the University of Colorado (Boulder), Alwan for the Arts, the United Nations (invited by Kofi Annan), and annually at the Columbia University Department of Ethnomusicology. In 2008, George was a featured solo and ensemble performer in the “Brooklyn Maqam” Festival of Arab Music. From 1995 to 1997 George taught at the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Ramallah and at Birzeit University. George is considered an authority in maqam and Arab classical repertoire.
UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Our popular chamber music concert series featuring young artists from the Cleveland Institute of Music and the joint program with Case Western Reserve University’s early and baroque music programs continues. Outstanding conservatory musicians present mixed repertoire ranging from the standard to unknown gems amid the museum’s collections for a unique and intimate experience. Free; no ticket required
Wed/Feb 5, 6:00 — CWRU Baroque Chamber Ensembles
Wed/Mar 4, 6:00 — CIM Harpsichord Department

FretX Mon/Feb 24, 7:30, Transformer Station. Contemporary guitar duo FretX (Mak Grgic and Daniel Lippel) formed in 2015 and is dedicated to the wide range of dynamic repertoire that exists and is coming into existence for their combination. Their concert includes a program of works by Helmut Lachenmann, Agustín Castilla-Ávila, Courtney Bryan, Gity Razaz, and more. $25, CMA members $22.

Fatoumata Diawara Wed/Feb 26, 7:30, Gartner Auditorium. Hailed as one of the most vital standard-bearers of modern African music, Fatoumata Diawara is boldly experimental yet respectful of her roots. Her spectacular 2011 debut album made the Malian singer and guitarist the most talked about new African artist on the planet. Hers is the voice of young African womanhood—proud of her heritage but with a vision that looks confidently to the future and a message that is universal. $33–45, CMA members $30–40
These performances are made possible in part by
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Programs are subject to change.

Photography and audio/video recording in the performance hall are prohibited.

We invite you to join the Musart Society, the museum's affiliate group for music, and engage more deeply with programs like this one. For more information, visit cma.org/musart.

TICKETS 1-888-CMA-0033 cma.org/performingarts