

## Alwan for the Arts

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Presents

### The Poetry of Ahmed Fouad Negm and Compositions of Sheikh Imam

*Featuring*

**Azza Balba and George Ziadeh**

May 14, 2010 at 9:00 p.m.

Alwan for the Arts is proud to present a musical performance featuring the works of Egyptian poet **Ahmed Fouad Negm** and composer **Sheikh Imam**, with singer and political activist **Azza Balba** and Oud player **George Ziadeh**. Ms. Balba and Mr. Ziadeh will be joined by **Sami Abu Shumays** on violin, **Amir ElSaffar** on trumpet, **Johnny Farraj** on percussion, and **Zafer Tawil** on Qanun. The performance will be held at Alwan for the Arts at 16 Beaver Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10004. Tickets are \$20 and are available online at [www.alwanforthearts.org](http://www.alwanforthearts.org) or at the door. Student tickets may be purchased for \$15 at the door only. Doors open at 8:30 p.m.

#### Ahmed Fouad Negm (Poet)



One has to speak of the poetry of Ahmed Fouad Negm in grand terms: if the Internationale were to have been written in Arabic, most probably its author would have been Ahmed Fouad Negm, the vernacular poet. Born in the province of Sharqia in 1929, Negm is well known for his patriotic and revolutionary poetry that gives voice to the Egyptian and Arab underclass. In 1962, he met singer and composer Sheikh Imam and started their famous collaboration that would endure 18 years of political imprisonment for both of them and the ire of Nasser's, Sadat's and Mubarak's regimes, and which ended in a bitter rift in the early nineties. Deeply influenced by the work of Lorca, Maxim Gorky and Nâzım Hikmet, Ahmed Fouad Negm is uniquely embedded in the Egyptian vernacular. The verse is at once tenderly melancholic, acerbically

humorous and irreverent, futuristically hopeful, full of verve and unrelentingly vigorous. His poetry "bets" on the future, youthfully contemptuous of the present and totally irreconcilable with the past. It rhymes and Flows and, though it has never been heard before, it is perfectly understood and has a home in language and speech.

### Sheikh Imam (Composer)



Imam Mohammad Ahmad Eissa or Sheikh Imam (July 2, 1918 – June 7, 1995) was a famous Egyptian composer and singer. For most of his life, he formed a duo with the colloquial poet Ahmed Fouad Negm. Together, they were known for their political songs that favored the poor and the working classes. Though their songs were banned on Egyptian radio and television stations, they were popular among ordinary people in the 1960s and 1970s. Their revolutionary songs criticizing Arab regimes, particularly after their spectacular defeat in the 1967 war, led to their imprisonment and detention on many occasions. The music of Sheikh Imam is marked by a form of totality that allowed his political songs to travel beyond the geographical location of its origin. Indeed, his music appealed to non-Arab and Arab symbols such as Palestine or his tribute to Che Guevara. Although he studied Quranic recitation at an early age, Imam came to be known for his magnificent classical Arab musical composition and as a rebellious folk singer. He also rejuvenated, modernized and developed the art of the political song in the Arab world. Musically, his instrument of choice was the Oud, and his compositions, anchored in tradition, are rather streamlined in their development and orchestration, but emotive of Tarab in an intimate setting.

### Azza Balba (Vocals)

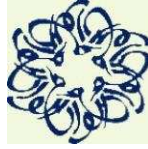


Born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, Azza Balba graduated from the faculty of commerce. While a student she won an award for best singer in a university competition which resulted in a scholarship at the Conservatoire. She joined various local ensembles and became politically active in the student movement in the late 1970s. Imprisoned twice for her political activism, she was later released and traveled to Lebanon in 1982 to live in Sabra and Shatila during and in the aftermath of the massacres. For her efforts, she was honored by Yasser Arafat and the PLO. Azza Balba performed the work of many great composers: Kamel Tawil, Mohamed El Mogy, Sid Meckawy and of course Sheikh Imam. She also performed in many musicals, television series and films. Although she frequently sings in concert in Europe and the Arab world, this is her first visit to the United States.

### George Ziadeh (Vocals and Oud)



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.



**About Alwan for the Arts**

Since its founding in 1998, Alwan for the Arts has been an organization dedicated to the presentation and production of the arts and cultures of the Arab world, Middle East and North Africa. Alwan organizes film festivals and screenings, book/poetry readings and signings, lectures and conferences, art exhibits, musical and theatrical performances, and language and literature classes. In 2003, Alwan established a center at 16 Beaver Street in lower Manhattan. In the second decade of its existence, Alwan remains committed to providing a space for reflection, dialogue, and growth in the arts and cultures of the peoples of the Arab world, Middle East, North Africa, and their diasporas, serving their communities and educating the broader public through programs that enrich the artistic and cross-cultural encounter.

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