

Please see the information below regarding the Choir of Joy performance in USA.

This choir is dear not only to my heart but to the hearts of many people from Syria and all of those who got the chance to listen to their amazing chants and peaceful voices, watched their performances on DVD or attend any of their numerous concerts in many areas of the world especially those with the Great, Giant Arabic Singer, Mr. Wadeh Al Safi.

In maybe a first in the world, the *Choir of Joy* has coupled with the famous Mosque of Omayyad chanting group "*Al Mounshdeen*" in a one of a kind type of performances that coupled Muslims and Christians under one roof chanting together to The Creator. The *Choir of Joy* was created and lead by the visionary Father Elias Zahlaoui, a priest in the Our Lady of Damascus Church. In addition to his highly respected spiritual figure, Father Zahlaoui is well known for his strong patriotism expressed in his numerous writings in support of the Palestinian cause.

Please spread the word and let us support this beautiful group.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

CHOIR OF JOY

Our Lady of Damascus, Damascus, Syria

Calendar of Events

This page will be updated as details of the upcoming US tour of the Choir of Joy become available.

Washington, DC

22 Feb 2009 -- Performance in the Crypt of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

[Address](#) [Time](#)

23 Feb 2009 -- Performance in the opening ceremony of the Kennedy Center's Arabesque Festival

[24 Feb 2009 -- Performance on the Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater \(1 hour performance\)](#)

25 Feb 2009 -- Performance at a school in the greater DC metropolitan area (TBD)

Detroit, Michigan

27 Feb 2009 -- Silver Garden Theatre in Southfield.

Reception : 7pm

Recital: 8pm

Reservations: rsvp@syrianconsulate.org

Jacksonville, FL

01 Mar 2009 - Performance at Ritz Theatre & LaVilla Museum, 829 North Davis Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202. Time: 6:00PM [Read More...](#)

Orlando, FL

03 Mar 2009 -- Disney Amusement Park, Orlando, FL. At Dock Stage in Downtown Disney Marketplace. Time: To be announced.

Additional Resources

[Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#)

[The Kennedy Center Agenda](#)

THE CHILDREN OF AL FARAH CHOIR PRESENT:

DAMASCENE JASMINE

..... a spell of love

Conducted by CLAUDIA TOUMA NAKHLEH

February 24. 2009

Eisenhower Theater

Folk Songs and Hymns from the Syrian heritage

About the Choir

It was established in 1977 by Father Elias Zahlaoui. The choir consists of 500 volunteer members aged between 7 and 80 years old, divided into 5 groups and representing all Christian denominations. In the church, the choir celebrates the traditions and practices of the Byzantine church. In the wider community, the choir is seeking to spread the message of peace and encourage interfaith dialogue through music.

The choir was traveled around the world; France, Holland, Germany, Belgium, Australia Lebanon and Jordan....and now the United States to build bridges with other nations and to highlight the beauty of the Arab culture . We introduce to you Syria, a country of peace, brotherhood and freedom.

Meet the Conductor

Claudia Touma Nakhleh: Born in Damascus 1967, BA Degree in Economy. Studied choir conducting with the Russian conductor Professor Victor Babinco. She conducted the Children of Al Farah Choir since 1987. As a music teacher in The Damascus Community school and Al Farah Children choir conductor, she presented more than 70 performances; concerts, music recitals, Christmas shows, and Musicals.

She led the choir to many awards:

- **In 1998: The third Cairo Festival for Television and Broadcasting, the**

bronze award for the best children's song.

- In 2000: The seventh Syrian song festival, Award for the best song.
- In 2004 the Nineth Cairo Festival the silver award for the best children song.

The priest and the founder of the Choir

Father Elias Zahlaoui: Born in 1932 in Damascus-Syria. He studied the philosophy and the theology in Jerusalem. He was ordained as a priest in **1959** and moved into Damascus in **1962** devoting himself to the youth service. In **1977**, Father Elias Zahlaoui established Al Farah choir in the lady of Damascus church. He taught the Latin language and translation in Damascus University Between **1975** and **1980**. He also taught the Theatre art Between **1978** and **1979** in the Academy Of Dramatic Arts. A member in Arabic Writers Union since **1973**. He wrote several books and many plays for the theater. He translated the *History of the Theater in 5 parts from French*

About The Program:

Part 1

Let there be peace on earth: a true song of brotherhood, a message of world peace and understanding between all races and religions, written in 1955 by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, rearranged by Victor Babenko.

Peteroch Moran: "My Lord, I seek your door" hymn in Assyrian, Christ's language. A musical piece dating back to 1000BC chanted to ask for forgiveness from sins.

The full moon has risen upon us, "Tala' al badru alaina": People chanted in rejoice of the Prophet Muhammad's entry to Medina more than 1400 years ago. This is a live traditional music arranged by Hazem Al-Ani.

Tabrikat Byzantine hymn for the Good Friday

Amen: Christians, Muslims and Jews conclude their prayers with the word "*Amen*" to recall that God is one, composed by Pergolesi.

Part 2

Sweet is my country, "*Hilwa ya baladi*": homesick nostalgia tickles the memories of the first love, arranged by Victor Babenko.

Arab Coffeepot, "*Rakwet Arab*": flirting song for Al Sham, written by Talal Haidar, composed by Makhoul Kassouf, arranged by Victor Babenko.

Hal assmar al Ion: Syrian Traditional song (solo : Amal Watfi).

"Ya mal alsham Medley": "Jazzy!" Ancient Syrian folkloric songs on "Rast" key, by Abu Khalil Al-Kabbani and Daoud Hussni, arranged by Narick Abajian.

The spring way, "*Lamma a Tareeq al ain*": a countryside girl on her way to the water spring being looked at by the admirers and addressed with flirting words, arranged by Victor Babenko. (Solo: Nataly Na'aman)

The stairs of roses, "*sahretna adraaj al ward*": dancing music "*dabka*" composed by Rahbani brothers, arranged by Victor Babenko.

Mouail al hawa: Greeting to our brothers in Palestine.

People , Love each other: Ya nas hibbou al nas: Love is the Joy of people, pity those who don't love.

Sham Jasmine Medley, "*yasmin alsham*": Folkloric popular songs from the Damascene tradition sung during old wedding feasts and parties

When she started to sway, "*Lamma bada yatathanna*": terza rima celebrating the beauty of the beloved, appealing for the love passion, ascribed to Sayed Darwish, arranged by Victor Babenko.

He filed up the glasses, "*Malaa alkassat*": by Mohammad Othman **I cried in passion**, "*sehtu wajdan*": by Omar Al-Batsh. **O, who is manipulated by liquors**, "*ya man laibat bihi alshomolu*": by Abu Khalil Kabbani. Terza rima: An ancient Arabic musical form originated in Andalusia and became very famous in Aleppo.

"Ala dalona"-Layltna min lyaly al omer : a traditional song goes back to 3000 BC with contemporary interludes by Zaki Nassif.

Wake up in the land of freedom , "*Tesha ala Watan Alhurria*": Children represent the future. Give them love and they will grant you life, written and composed by Marwan Nakhla, arranged by Victor Babenko.

Our beloved ones's just appeared, "*Tallo Hbabna*": Welcome song

of the coming back absents to their homeland, composed by Zaki Nassif, arranged by Fadi Khanshat.
(Program content and order is subject to change.)

Musician:

Lute : Habib Suleiman- **Kanoon**: Silvie Suleiman- **Nai**: Fouad bou Hamdan **Flute**: Ghada Al-Khoury

Violin: Luchezara Dimitrova Nasrula- Chadi Al ali – Rabie Azar.- **Cello**: Mouhamad Nameq

Piano: Iyad Gennaoui **Keyboard**: Fadi Khanshat **Guitar** : Tarik Salhieh **Bass**: Yamen Yamani

Syrian Drum: Ragheb Jabil -**Drums**: Simoun Moraych

Artistic support: Victor Babenko - Marwan Nakhleh

Technical support: Rami Ashi

Administrative Director: Ghayth Mitri

Victor Babenco: Holder of Medal of Distinction as a Man of Culture from the Russian Federation. Studied at the Moscow Conservatory and graduated as a choir and orchestra conductor. Professor at the High Institute of Music in Syria (Harmony and ear training). Awarded grand prizes at many International concourses. Compose many music books in Harmony and Analyzing Music forms and a Music Dictionary.