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Palestinian Trio Gives 'Ud Playing a Fine and Contemporary Inventive Feel

By: Issa Boulos

Chicago was recently chosen as the debut city for the Joubran Trio's first U.S. tour. This performance is one in a series of events that take place at the University of Chicago as part of "The Middle Eastern Music Concert Series," a series organized by the Middle East Music Ensemble, the Department of Music and the Center of Middle Eastern Studies .

Palestinian music in general abbreviates the Palestinian experience of occupation, discrimination, hardship and sacrifice. Apart from the rest of the Arab world, its musical perspective is quite unique, experimental, diverse and innovative. Following these thin lines, Samir Joubran's solo-'ud performance and composition career has been noted internationally as such, and the idea for the Joubran Trio came about when he heard the all-star guitar trio of Al Di Meola, Paco de Lucia and John McLaughlin combining jazz, rock, and Flamenco music.

The extended-family trio turned out to be musically as impressive, yet complicated in terms of traveling throughout the world and trying to be 'themselves,' three young Palestinians. "This is our Palestinian kitchen, our culture and language; this is our instrument, our music and identity; and we're just presenting our own version, one that grew organically out of all this. People know that we're Palestinians when they come see us, we make sure that they do, however once onstage, the music makes all of us forget who we are and we all become one." Samir says earlier on Tuesday, September 20 th , at the University of Chicago Campus where the Trio delivered a splendid concert later that evening.

Although I've seen Samir play many years back and have been following up on his career ever since, this time around with both his brothers Wisam 22, and Adnan 20, things seemed quite different. The strong sense of a proud cultural identity was overwhelming in their arresting music while being enhanced by obviously deep understandings of what is really important in life: people's lives and their untold stories. It got quite emotional that evening when a 3-4 month old baby was cooing along with the three un-amplified 'uds, while the three brothers seemed so content to have shared that moment with the child.

The master 'udists brought the world to Rosenwald Hall that evening, their positive energy traveled far through the skies of medieval Andalusia and they sprinkled their songs with treats of ancient beauties. These three young Palestinian brothers from Nazareth have already carried their youthful Arab 'uds to diverse audiences around the globe. Their work brought Palestinian music to a platform of proactive modern social activism, artistic awareness and global consciousness.

"Randana," the first album by Le Trio Joubran, was just released on their record label, also called

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Randana. The CD will be distributed in Western Europe and the United States over the rest of the year, and the trio is currently touring the United States and heading back to Europe in October.

By Issa Boulos is a critic for Four Magazine. The opinions expressed are his.

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