

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Alwan For the Arts Presents “So You Think You Can Dabkeh”
Festival Celebrating the Folk Dance of the Levant in New York**

September 8 - October 13, 2012

Alwan for the Arts | 16 Beaver Street, 4th Floor | New York, NY 10004
<http://www.alwanforthearts.org/event/893>

New York, NY, September 12, 2012

[Alwan for the Arts](#), New York’s leader in promoting the diverse culture and arts of the Middle East, presents *So You Think You Can Dabkeh*, a series exploring the traditional and popular line dances of the Levant region of the Middle East. Through participatory and performance events in Manhattan and Brooklyn from September 8 - October 13, 2012, Alwan will celebrate one of the most publicly performed and beloved traditional dances of Arab Americans. The events are open to the public and funded in part by NYSCA.

Dabkeh is a music and dance tradition from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and parts of Iraq and Turkey. Rooted in village folk celebrations, dabkeh is performed in lines and circles, with rhythmic stomping and syncopated foot patterns. The music may involve a cappella vocals (*mawwal*), wind instruments (*mijwiz*, *shababa* or *nay*) and a large resounding drum (*tabl beledi*). It is performed socially at celebrations, in choreographed floor patterns by troupes, and even in street protests.

Alwan investigates the dabkeh tradition in the context of New York City. *So You Think You Can Dabkeh* includes dance workshops, a panel discussion, competition, concert and more, featuring many local expert dabkeh dancers and musicians from a variety of backgrounds. A special tour of dabkeh sites in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, will explore the ways in which dancers continue to adapt this aspect of Middle Eastern village heritage to render it an intrinsic part of the fabric of the urban metropolis.

So You Think You Can Dabkeh invites audiences and participants to engage with the social and cultural significance of this exciting dance form, and its importance for negotiating communal identity among the diverse Arab communities in the U.S. In doing so, it complicates ideas about what it means to be “Arab” or “American” or both.

FESTIVAL EVENTS

Saturdays, Sept, 8, 15, 22, 29 | 3-4:30 pm

Dabkeh Workshops with Ramzi Edlibi (bio below) - Learn social and stage styles of dabkeh and perform in Oct. 13 showcase. (\$15/ea or \$50 for 4)

Saturday, Oct 6 | 7pm

Dabkeh Tour of Bay Ridge - Neighborhood *dabbikeh* introduce participants to steps, sounds and stories of dabkeh in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Includes pastry tastings and dinner with live music. (\$25 Advanced ticket purchase only)

Thursday, Oct 11 | 6:30 pm

Women and Dabkeh: Panel and Party - A panel discussion features women dabkeh experts and addresses issues of gender in performance. Dance their signature steps in the dabkeh jam that follows. (\$5)

Saturday Oct 13

Dabkeh-Off A day-long Dabkeh-Off concludes *So You Think You Can Dabkeh*.
3:30pm Dabkeh Workshop: Learn dabkeh traditions from homeland villages of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine to Brooklyn, NY. (\$10)

5:00pm Lecture: Leading scholars present on dabkeh's social, political and cultural significance. (\$5)

7:00pm Dabkeh-Off and Concert: A city-wide showcase and competition followed by singing by Anas Tabash, known for his Palestinian village folk style of *mawwal*. (\$15)

All Day Admittance | \$20

Bios

Ramzi Edlibi (dancer, choreographer, musician) began his study of Arab dance and ballet at an early age in Lebanon with Wadia Jarrar and Mr. Caracalla, historic figures in the development of Lebanese dance for the stage. In addition to Edlibi's formal training, social dances and music, such as dabkeh, were a part of everyday and night life. He has a deep understanding of the cultural context, feeling and musical elements of dabkeh, as well as a wonderful ability to teach the social and concert styles of dabkeh.

Edlibi went on to perform dance with the leading vocalists and dance companies of the Arab World such as Fairuz, Sabah, Wadi Al-Safi and Caracalla Dance Theatre. He then traveled abroad to perform and teach, while civil war raged in Lebanon, learning other dance traditions along the way. Since establishing himself in the global city of New York, Edlibi has continued his dance career, researching and presenting dances and music of the world. Edlibi is Artistic Director of Dance Around the World, an Arts in Education program that brings dance and music to public schools.

Dr. Shayna Silverstein is a lecturer in ethnomusicology at Northwestern University and the University of Chicago. Her ongoing research examines Levantine dabkeh in relation to gender and sexuality, globalization, nationalism, and performance studies. She has received substantial support from Fulbright-IIE, University of Chicago, and US Department of Education and her work has been published in the fields of anthropology, ethnomusicology, and Middle East studies. Shayna consults for several arts initiatives in Chicago and New York, and has performed on 'ud and violin with members of the Silk Road

Ensemble and the Middle East Music Ensemble at the University of Chicago. She received her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of Chicago.

***So You Think You Can Dabkeh** is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature and is sponsored, in part, by the Greater New York Arts Development Fund of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, administered by Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC), and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council.*

ABOUT ALWAN

Since 1998, Alwan for the Arts, a 501(c)3 arts and cultural organization, has played a leading role in promoting the diverse cultures of the Middle East in New York and the tri-state metropolitan area. Located in Lower Manhattan, Alwan is a cultural and aesthetic hub that presents 100 events a year, from concerts and dance performances to film screenings and literary readings. Alwan's curatorial perspectives casts a critical eye on current events and trends in arts and culture related to the Middle East. For more information, please visit: <http://www.alwanforthearts.org>

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