

*The Mimesis Ensemble presents*

# WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS



LEONARD  
BERNSTEIN

ANNA  
CLYNE

HALIM  
EL-DABH

MOHAMMED  
FAIROUZ

FLORENCE  
PRICE



**TUESDAY**  
**April 3, 2018**  
8:00 PM

**Weill Recital Hall**  
**at Carnegie Hall**

# PROGRAM

- It Is Dark and Damp On The Front (1949) Halim El-Dabh  
(1921-2017)
- Sympathy (undated) Florence Price  
(1887-1953)
- Take Care of This House, *from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976) Leonard Bernstein  
(1918-1990)
- String Quartet No. 1: Metamorphosis and Fugue on Egyptian Folklore (1951) El-Dabh
- I. Folklore
  - II. Allegro con brio
  - III. Adagio Sostenuto
  - IV. Perpetual Motion
  - V. Lento Misterioso
  - VI. Fugue

## *Intermission*

- Piano Miniature No. 11, *For Syria* (2012) Mohammed Fairouz  
Piano Miniature No. 12 (2013) (b. 1985)  
Piano Miniature No. 13: America Never Was America to Me (2013)  
Piano Miniature No. 19, *Jabal Hafit* (2018) [WORLD PREMIERE]
- Rest These Hands, *from The Violin* (2009) Anna Clyne  
October Rose, *from The Violin* (2009) (b. 1980)  
Tea Leaves, *from The Violin* (2009)
- A Prayer to the New Year (2012) Fairouz
- I.
  - II.
  - III. Lento con rubato
  - IV.

# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

## Why the Caged Bird Sings

*Program Note by Katie Reimer*

The Mimesis Ensemble is celebrating our 10th Anniversary season with this concert, featuring a program centered around the music of the recently deceased Halim El-Dabh. El-Dabh was the Composer-In-Residence during our inaugural season of 2008-9, and he travelled to New York City and Washington D.C. to work with us on several concerts during that season. The legacy of Halim El-Dabh and his courageous engagement of the turmoil and despair of the human condition, inspired the central theme on this concert, prayer in the form of music.

The concert opens with Halim El-Dabh's *It Is Dark and Damp on the Front*, an emotionally intense piece composed in response to the mobilization of Egyptian army to fight against the Zionist forces in the invasion and destruction of Palestine. The composer said about his piece "The war is dark and damp in the heart of human beings. There is something there that is going to haunt people for years and years and years and years. War truly begins in the heart of every human being." Within weeks of the composer's sensational premiere of his own piece in Cairo in Feb. 1949, he was encouraged to apply for a Fulbright to study music in the United States. It was arranged for him to study at Juilliard, but he insisted on his desire to learn Native American music. The Fulbright committee reconsidered, and he was granted permission to study at the University of New Mexico, where he could learn more about the music of the Hopi and Pueblo.

The second and third pieces on the program illuminate aspects of the white supremacy that has defined the United States from its foundation. Florence Price was one of the earliest African American composers who started chipping away at a tradition that had been dominated by white male composers. Price was the first black woman to have her work performed by a major American symphony orchestra. As stated in a New York Times article in 2017, "Our understanding of American modernism of the 1930s and 1940s is not complete without Price's contribution." Her song, *Sympathy*, sets a Paul Laurence Dunbar poem that would later inspire Maya Angelou to write her book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The "caged bird" sings not as a carol of joy or glee, but as "a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core, a plea that upward to Heaven he flings."

The third piece on the program is from Leonard Bernstein's 1976 musical, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, telling the story of the first hundred years of White House presidents, and examining America's complex contradictions around race and equality. The show was highly anticipated, but closed in grand failure after seven performances. America was not yet ready to face its own

deeply entrenched racism. The song warns the country to take care of this house, for it is “the hope of us all.” Listening to this song after Price’s *Sympathy* begs the question about where the hope for us all really lies - in the center of power, or in the margins of society where the caged birds sing.

The first half returns to Halim El-Dabh, with one of the earliest compositions he wrote in the United States. His *String Quartet No. 1: Metamorphosis and Fugue on Egyptian Folklore* was based on an Egyptian village song called “Atshan Ya Sabaye.” The lyrics of that folksong are: “There is plenty of water, my countrymen, but I am thirsty/I am thirsty, my countrymen, even though the rivers are full of water/Everything is full of water, but I am still thirsty.” El-Dabh had first used this song in a string orchestra piece from 1947, when he was still working as an agricultural engineer in Cairo. He said the song spoke to him because he was hungering and thirsting for more music when he was stuck working in his office. The song lingered in his spirit as it became the inspiration for his string quartet. A review for the *Christian Science Monitor* in Boston said “By far the most absorbing offering was the String Quartet No. 1 by the young Egyptian composer Halim El-Dabh. The Quartet was fascinating in color and at times compelling in motion. A *lento misterioso* movement of consistently dissonant chords was highly evocative of Egyptian sights and sounds. Surely more authentic than Aida! The final fugue proved not at all academic but strikingly original in themes and formal growth.”

The second half of the concert turns from the complexities of the 20th century to the still unraveling 21st century. Mohammed Fairouz’s Piano Miniatures seek to be in conversation with contemporary realities. His *Piano Miniature No. 11, For Syria* was composed in 2012 for those who were brutally massacred in Syria under Bashar Al Assad’s regime. His *Piano Miniature No. 12* is a song without words based on secret lyrics by Seamus Heaney upon his passing. The *Piano Miniature No. 13*, an elegy for Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager who was shot and killed. His murder continued to expose the fault lines of race in America that have never been deeply faced and dealt with by white America. The miniature was inspired by the Langston Hughes poem, *Let America Be America Again*, which proclaims that there has never been equality and justice for the poor white, the Negro, the red man and the immigrant in the “homeland of the free.” This miniature is followed by the World Premiere of Fairouz’s latest *Piano Miniature No. 19: Jabal Hafit*.

The concert moves from the inner geography of social sorrow in Fairouz’s piano miniatures to the personal intimacy of Anna Clyne’s *The Violin*. *The Violin* was written on the anniversary of her mother’s death, and the performance begins with a recitation of a poem by her mother, called *The Violin*. *Rest These Hands* is also inspired by her mother’s poetry. This musical response to the grief she experienced in losing her mother shows the healing possibilities of music for the painful human experience of loving and letting go.

Though each piece on this program could be viewed as prayer in the form of music, Price's *Sympathy* and Fairouz's work which closes the program, *A Prayer to the New Year*, make it explicit. This setting of a poem by the beloved Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan explores a range of tender feelings. The first movement starts an offering of yearning and praise, and a hope for a blessing yet unrealized. The second movement asks for the gift of love, which alone can nurture growth and flourishing. The third movement continues to plead for the gift of love, but now for the purpose of restoring hope and joy to our barren world. The fourth movement ends with a prayer to the new year, asking for wings to break free and light to pierce the deepest darkness. *A Prayer to the New Year* brings us full circle to the Palestinians under threat of annihilation in El-Dabh's *It Is Dark and Damp on the Front* which opened the concert. Tuqan's poem, and Fairouz's piece, demonstrate a hard-won affirmation of hope in the face of deepest despair.

### **It Is Dark and Damp On The Front (1949)** ***Program Notes by Halim El-Dabh***

*It Is Dark and Damp on the Front* is a solo piano work expressing the darkness and dampness that are germinated in the very psyche of humanity whilst fighting at a war front, a murky front that exists in reality inside every human being. The world premiere took place with the composer at the piano in Cairo, Egypt at The Assembly Hall of All Saints Cathedral on Friday, February 11, 1949. Halim El-Dabh performed his composition on a nine foot Pleyel piano equipped with three pedals. He shook the audience into a standing ovation. This single work changed his life from an agricultural engineer to a music composer.

The composition fell into the hands of Aaron Copland. Intrigued by El-Dabh's ultra modern style, he invited him to become his composition student at Tanglewood at The Berkshire Music Festival in the USA. There he also studied with Irving Fine, Luigi Dallapiccola and Leonard Bernstein.

A French critic, A.J. Patry wrote in *La Bourse Egyptienne*, commending the composer for his innovative use of sound and pedal techniques stated that "El-Dabh touches the instrument in a fashion of his own. He molds and fuses the sonorities of the piano producing sounds and feelings pertaining to a basic culture. He has exposed the European ear to a different way of playing. One must notice the way he uses the pedals, producing from simple elements, complex superpositions of harmonies." (Feb. 15, 1949).

El-Dabh describes his technique of composing as "heteroharmony," a term he coined by combining heterophony and chordal harmony in an interaction of chords and clusters with a focus on the unison.

**Piano Miniature No. 11, *For Syria* (2012)**

***Program Note by Mohammed Fairouz***

Commissioned by the International Beethoven Project, 2012

*To the men, women and children who were brutally massacred in Syria*

Throughout 2012, Bashar Al Assad's regime has been murdering men women and children who have been asking for change in Syria. A recent news report displayed dozens of children found dead in Homs. The reporter commented on how they looked peaceful "as though sleeping".

A few days later I sat down to write a new piano miniature in response to a commission from the International Beethoven Project. Their theme was "revolution" and the new miniature was to be inspired by the Eroica Symphony, Beethoven's most revolutionary (and politically laced) work. It seemed natural for me to respond by commenting on the current revolution and loss of life in Syria. The result is a simple little elegy called *For Syria* in which the piano's singing line is a lullaby for those sleeping children: a lullaby that they have been robbed of the chance to hear.

**Piano Miniature No. 12 (2013)**

***Program Note by Mohammed Fairouz***

My 12<sup>th</sup> Piano Miniature is a little song without words. The tempo and unadorned lyricism is partly inspired by my love for the early Tin Pan Alley tear-jerker ballads. The secret unsung lyrics are from a poem by Seamus Heaney. This miniature was my first gentle reaction to his death and is dedicated to Seamus in gratitude for his generosity and friendship toward me.

**Piano Miniature No. 13, *America Never Was America to Me* (2013)**

***Program Note by Mohammed Fairouz***

Commissioned by Myrna Cook for Nicholas Phillips

On the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King's I Have A Dream speech, I wrote an elegy for an unarmed black teenager who was shot and killed by a man who was suspicious of his appearance. The fact that Trayvon Martin was gunned down and his killer legally acquitted of his murder in 2013 has, not secretly, been a cause for grief among people of color in the United States today.

In the days that followed, on my regular daily walks through the streets of Manhattan the words of Langston Hughes' poem, Let America Be America Again, rang through my head. I'd memorized the poem as a kid and its darkest lines seemed particularly poignant

(There's never been equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

*Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?  
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,  
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.  
I am the red man driven from the land,  
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—  
And finding only the same old stupid plan  
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

With the sounds of street-life, these verses intermingled with the percussive sounds of anger. I sat down a few days later and, over the course of a few hours, these sounds became my 13th Piano Miniature. The work is dedicated, respectfully, to the memory of Trayvon Martin and takes its title from the most hopeful lines in Langston Hughes' poem:

O, yes, I say it plain,  
America never was America to me,  
And yet I swear this oath—  
America will be! —

## **The Violin (2009)**

### ***Program Note by Anna Clyne***

*The Violin was inspired by my dear friends and wonderful violinists, Neil Dufallo and Amy Kauffman based in New York City, and another dear friend and violin maker, Bruno Guastalla, based in Oxford, England. Shortly after my mother passed away in 2008, I found a violin in Oxfam, a charity shop in Oxford. It was in a dusty old case leaning up against a pile of vinyl records in the basement. Priced at £5.99 (approx. \$9), the European baroque-style violin dating from the late 1800s, with a hand-carved lion's head scroll was a bargain. It needed some work, so I took it to Bruno's shop and he restored the violin in exchange for composition lessons. Back in Brooklyn, with a beautifully restored fiddle in stow, I made another barter with Neil and Amy - a violin duet in exchange for violin lessons. I subsequently composed *Blue Hour*, a violin duet with a pre-recorded track, which they premiered at John Zorn's New York City performance space, *The Stone*, in 2009, and I began my violin lessons. The following Summer, we recorded the suite at our friend, Jody Elff's home studio on his apple orchard in Upstate New York.*

One of my favourite pieces of music for solo violin is the Presto from Bach's Violin Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001. On the anniversary of my mother's death, I composed six more pieces to make a suite alongside *Blue Hour*, which became the opening movement for *The Violin* -

composing one piece an evening, finishing with *Lavender Rain* on the day of her anniversary. The Bach is quoted in *Rest These Hands* and *Tea Leaves* and these same two movements, along with *The Violin*, take their titles from three poems my mother wrote in the last year of her life.

Shortly after completing the music, I came across the work of New York-based artist Josh Dorman, through a program on PBS, which showed his extraordinary work with a Chicago-based organization that combines art and music in their work with people with Alzheimer's. Through his art, he captured individual life stories through a collage of images that were recalled in their conversations. His art was deeply moving, and I felt an immediate connection. We met shortly thereafter at a café in New York City, following which, I sent him the recordings for *The Violin*. Over subsequent years, Josh created seven stop-motion animations to accompany each of the seven movements.

### **A Prayer to the New Year (2012)**

#### ***Program Note by Mohammed Fairouz***

Fadwa Tuqan has taken her place as one of the most important poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and one of the most beloved Arab poets of all time. A legend in her own time, schoolchildren across the Arab world memorized her verse as soon as it was published. She embodied a politically turbulent time and expressions of loss and dispossession became emblematic of much of her poetry. Fadwa Tuqan introduced me to *A Prayer to the New Year* two years before her death in 2003. The poem has stuck with me for the better part of a decade. It's one of Tuqan's most simple, beautiful and lyrical works.

Some of Tuqan's work can be terribly bitter but in all of the tumult and turmoil, *A Prayer to the New Year* expresses hope and aspiration with the same defiance and passion as her darkest poems. The work opens with the clamorous sounding of bells that my *teta* (Arabic for grandmother) described to me as resounding through the air from Jerusalem to Nablus (Tuqan's hometown) to Bethlehem at Christmas-time and into the New Year. The first song ends with a repeated question of what is to come and hopeful anticipation for the best.

The second song is filled with an excited, exultant sense of the power of love while the third, showcasing the darker mezzo-soprano sound, repeats the plea for love as it hints at the devastation of the surrounding world.

The final song is a prayer to be raised on the wings of angels from the darkest depths to the heights of joy. It answers the questions of the first song with resounding affirmation, piercing light and, above all, defiance in the face of despair.



# TEXT

**Florence Price | Sympathy**

*Poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar*

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,  
And the river flows like a stream of glass;  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals --  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling  
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting --  
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,--  
When he beats his bars and he would be free;  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings --  
I know why the caged bird sings!

**Leonard Bernstein | Take Care Of This House, from "1600 Pennsylvania Avenue"**

*Lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner*

Take care of this house,  
keep it from harm.  
If bandits break in sound the alarm.  
Care for this house,  
shine it by hand  
and keep it so clean  
the glow can be seen all over the land.

Be careful at night,  
check all the doors.  
If someone makes off with a dream,  
the dream will be yours.  
Take care of this house,  
be always on call,  
for this house is the hope of us all.

Care for this house,  
it's the hope of us all.

**Halim EL-Dabh | String Quartet No. 1: Metamorphosis and Fugue on Egyptian Folklore**  
*Lyrics by Halim El-Dabh*

Atshan Ya Sabaye  
I'm thirsty oh my countrymen

The jugs are full of water  
The rivers are flooding  
Brothers, sisters  
Show me the way to quench my thirst

Atshan Ya Sabaye

O train of twelve o'clock  
Bring me to my loved one  
Oh you with a steel iron whistle

The high tech woman with high heels  
Fashioned squealing noises  
Squeezing music out of my soul

**Anna Clyne | The Violin**  
*Poetry by Colleen Clyne*

The violin ornamental,  
Resting, ornamentally,  
upon the ornamental  
stand up piano.

Touchstones of the dead.

Standing up was life.  
Appearance all.

Pluck one string  
then another  
breathe  
pluck again  
another string  
breathe  
and again  
breathe  
I said  
breathe  
lift the violin  
smash the dead out of it.

Breathe.

**Anna Clyne | Rest These Hands**  
***Poetry by Colleen Clyne***

I rest these hands  
World weary  
Misunderstood

I rest these hands  
Toiled weary  
Long before they should

These hands  
Palmed to palmed  
With wonder

Surrendered

**Mohammed Fairouz | A Prayer to the New Year**  
***Poetry by Fadwa Tuqan***

I.

*In our hands is a fresh yearning for you,*  
in our eyes songs of praise and unique melodies,  
into your hand as choral offerings we will thrust them.  
O you who emerge as a sweet fountain of hope,  
O you who are rich with promise and desire.  
What is in store for us that you hold?  
What have you got?

II.

Give us love, for with love the treasures of bounty within us burst forth...  
With love our songs will grow green and will flower  
and will spring with gifts  
riches  
fertility.

III.

Give us love, so we may build the collapsed universe within us anew  
and restore  
the joy of fertility to our barren world.

IV.

Give us wings to open the horizons of ascent,  
to break free from our confined cavern, the solitude  
of iron walls.

Give us light, to pierce the deepest darkness  
and with the strength of its brilliant flow  
we will push our steps to a precipice  
from which to reap life's victories.

# ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

## Leonard Bernstein

Composer, conductor, pianist, teacher, thinker, and adventurous spirit, Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) transformed the way Americans and people everywhere hear and appreciate music. Bernstein's successes as a composer ranged from the Broadway stage—*West Side Story*, *On the Town*, *Wonderful Town*, and *Candide*—to concert halls all over the world, where his orchestral and choral music continues to thrive.

Bernstein's major concert works include three symphonies—subtitled *Jeremiah* (1944), *The Age of Anxiety* (1949), and *Kaddish* (1963)—as well as *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* (1949); *Serenade* for violin, strings and percussion (1954); *Symphonic Dances* from *West Side Story* (1960); *Chichester Psalms* (1965); *Mass: A Theater Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers* (1971); *Songfest* (1977); *Divertimento* for orchestra (1980); *Halil* for solo flute and small orchestra (1981); *Touches* (1981) and *Thirteen Anniversaries* (1988) for solo piano; *Missa Brevis* for singers and percussion (1988); *Concerto for Orchestra: Jubilee Games* (1989); and *Arias and Barcarolles* (1988). Bernstein also wrote the one-act opera *Trouble in Tahiti* in 1952, and its sequel, the three-act opera *A Quiet Place*, in 1983. He collaborated with choreographer Jerome Robbins on three major ballets: *Fancy Free* (1944), *Facsimile* (1946), and *Dybbuk* (1975). He received an Academy Award nomination for his score for *On the Waterfront* (1954).

As a conductor, Bernstein was a dynamic presence on the podiums of the world's greatest orchestras for almost half a century, building a legacy that endures and continues to grow through a catalogue of over 500 recordings and filmed performances. Bernstein became Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in 1958, a position he held until 1969. Thereafter, as permanent Laureate Conductor, he made frequent guest appearances with the orchestra. Among the world's great orchestras, Bernstein also enjoyed special relationships with the Israel Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic, both of which he conducted extensively in live performances and recordings. He won 11 Emmy Awards for his celebrated television work, including the Young People's Concerts series with the New York Philharmonic.

As teacher and performer, he played an active role with the Tanglewood Music Festival from its founding in 1940 until his death, as well as with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute and Pacific Music Festival (both of which he helped found) and the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. Bernstein received many honors, including the Kennedy Center Honors (1980); the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Gold Medal (1981); the MacDowell Colony's Gold Medal; medals from the Beethoven Society and the Mahler Gesellschaft; New York City's Handel Medallion; a special Tony Award (1969); dozens of honorary degrees and awards from colleges and universities; and national honors from Austria, Italy, Israel, Mexico, Denmark,

Germany, and France. In 1985, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences honored Bernstein with the Lifetime Achievement GRAMMY Award. His writings were published in *The Joy of Music* (1959), *Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts* (1961), *The Infinite Variety of Music* (1966), and *Findings* (1982). As the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry, Bernstein also delivered six lectures at Harvard University in 1972–73 that were subsequently published and televised as "The Unanswered Question." In 1990, he received the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Arts Association awarded for lifetime achievement in the arts. Bernstein died on October 14, 1990.

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**Anna Clyne | [www.annaclyne.com](http://www.annaclyne.com)**

London-born Anna Clyne is a Grammy-nominated composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic music. Described as a "composer of uncommon gifts and unusual methods" in a New York Times profile and as "dazzlingly inventive" by Time Out New York, Clyne's work often includes collaborations with cutting-edge choreographers, visual artists, filmmakers, and musicians worldwide.

Appointed by Music Director Riccardo Muti, Clyne served as a Mead Composer-in-Residence for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 2010-2015. She also recently served as Composer-in-Residence for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra during the 2015-2016 season and for L'Orchestre national d'Île-de-France from 2014-2016. This season, Clyne was selected by the League of American Orchestras and New Music USA to serve as the Music Alive Composer-in-Residence with the Berkeley Symphony through the 2018-2019 season. She has been commissioned by such renowned organizations as American Composers Orchestra, BBC Radio 3, BBC Scottish Symphony, Carnegie Hall, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Houston Ballet, London Sinfonietta, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, and the Southbank Centre, and her work has been championed by such world-renowned conductors as Marin Alsop, Pablo Heras-Casado, Riccardo Muti, Leonard Slatkin, and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Clyne was nominated for the 2015 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for her double violin concerto, *Prince of Clouds*. She is also the recipient of several prestigious awards including the 2016 Hindemith Prize; a Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; awards from Meet the Composer, the American Music Center, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and the Jerome Foundation; and prizes from ASCAP and SEAMUS. She was nominated for the 2014 Times Breakthrough Award (UK) and is the recipient of a grant from Opera America to develop a new opera, *Eva*, which will be workshopped in Spring 2018 at National Sawdust where Clyne is a Composer-in-Residence for the 17-18 season.

Recent highlights include the world premieres of *Masquerade* for the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop at the Last Night of the Proms; *This Lunar Beauty* for the Britten Sinfonia and soprano Julia Doyle; *RIFT*, a symphonic ballet in collaboration with choreographer Kitty McNamee for Marin Alsop and the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra; *Pocket Book VIII* for Roomful of Teeth; *Threads & Traces* for 100 cellos, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and performed at Disney Hall; and her violin concerto, *The Seamstress*, performed by Jennifer Koh with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at Orchestra Hall, and with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Center, London.

Her music is published exclusively by Boosey & Hawkes.

**Halim El-Dabh | [www.halimeldabh.com](http://www.halimeldabh.com)**

Born in Egypt in 1921, El-Dabh attended the First International Ethnomusicological Conference (Cairo, 1932), graduating from the University of Cairo in 1945. He was invited to study at the University of New Mexico, and received scholarships to Brandeis University and the New England Conservatory of Music as well. The latter granted him an Honorary Doctorate in 2007. In 2001, he also received an Honorary Doctorate from Kent State University, where he has taught since 1969. El-Dabh has also taught at Howard University and Haile Selassie University. At Haile Selassie, he organized the Orchestra Ethiopia, comprised of musicians from various ethnic groups within that country. Some of the topics that El-Dabh has researched or written about include the Zaar in Egypt, Ethiopia and the Congo; Candomble and Umbanda in Brazil; Zebola the Crocodile; Zikre in Egypt; and Ethnodynamics in African Music. From 1974 to 1981 he was cultural and ethnomusicological consultant to the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Programs for their project on Egyptian and Guinean puppetry. El-Dabh's African puppeteers took part in the celebrations of the second centennial of the United States (Washington, 1976). He was also consultant to the Middfest Folklife Festival in Middletown, Ohio which featured puppeteers from Egypt. El-Dabh also performed and directed combined percussion ensembles from Japan, Korea, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, India, and other nations at Middfest International's 20-Year, 25-Nation Retrospective (Middletown, 2005)

El-Dabh has written for African instruments and African themes. His works in opera, symphony, ballet, orchestra, chamber and electronic music are inspired from the heart of cultures in Africa and Asia. Information about his 300 scores can be found through C. F. Peters Publishers and Broadcast Music Inc., both in New York City. He composed the music for the Sound and Light show performed in several languages at the Sphinx and the Great Pyramids of Giza, Egypt. Every night the show recounts the stories of the Sphinx and the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt.

Some of El-Dabh's recent activities include being the keynote speaker for the Fela Sowande (1905-1987) Memorial in Cambridge, England in 2005, which acknowledges the many achievements of the Nigerian born Sowande as Yoruba Chief, ethnomusicologist, music composer, and musician. Known as the "Father of Nigerian Art Music," Chief Sowande and El-Dabh were close friends and colleagues at KSU during the 1980's. In 2005 El-Dabh and a group of KSU musicians performed El-Dabh's works with the String Orchestra of Alexandria at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in Egypt. He performed with prominent African musicians, including Ismael (Pops) Mohamed, in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the UNAZI ("lightening" in Zulu) conference (2005). This was the first African Electronic Music Festival in history. In 2005 El-Dabh presented "Africa meets Asia," a series of workshops that explored the encounter of African and Chinese music, at The Central Conservatory of Music, in Beijing, China. While here, he also explored the idea of African pianism with Akin Euba, a distinguished African ethnomusicologist and composer. El-Dabh and Euba continued this exploration in conferences held in Cambridge, England, and St. Louis, Missouri. Note that Ghanaian born William Chapman Nyaho has played El-Dabh's compositions relating to African pianism. In 2007 El-Dabh's concerto "Invisible Bridge," commemorating the Underground Railroad, was premiered in Dayton, Ohio by the Dayton Symphony Orchestra and Black American cellist Karen R. Patterson. Together with the African ethnomusicologist, Kwabena Nketi, El-Dabh has participated in African Music workshops at Northwestern University (1968). El-Dabh has also collaborated with KSU professors on a regular basis. In 1983 he transcribed ballad music recorded by Manuel da Costa Fontes (Romance Languages) on the island of Sao Jorge, Azores. El-Dabh wrote "Egyptian Calypso" for "Flash In The Pan," the KSU Trinidadian style steel drum ensemble, and has written for the KSU Orchestra and several chamber ensembles performing at KSU. Students who have studied El-Dabh's drumming techniques in depth, such as Blake Tyson, Associate Professor of Percussion at the University of Central Arkansas, have continued to perform and teach his works. Tyson also accompanied El-Dabh and performed his works at the UNAZI Festival and at the Beijing Conservatory. El-Dabh wrote "Symphony for 1000 Drums," which was portrayed by one thousand drums in Cleveland (2006) and in Fort Collins, Colorado (2008). This symphony invokes the goddesses of ancient Egypt and Yorubaland.

**Mohammed Fairouz | [www.mohammedfairouz.com](http://www.mohammedfairouz.com)**

Mohammed Fairouz, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers working today. Hailed by The New York Times as "an important new artistic voice" and by BBC World News as "one of the most talented composers of his generation," his large-scale works engage major geopolitical and philosophical themes with persuasive craft and a marked seriousness of purpose. Fairouz's cosmopolitan outlook reflects his transatlantic upbringing and extensive travels. His catalog encompasses virtually every genre, including opera, symphonies, vocal and choral settings, chamber and solo works.



As an artist involved with major social issues, Fairouz seeks to promote cultural communication and understanding. Recent major works have included his “grandly ambitious” (Opera News) third symphony, *Poems and Prayers* interweaves texts of Arab poets Fadwa Tuqan and Mahmoud Darwish, the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, and prayers such as the Aramaic Kaddish. His fourth symphony, *In the Shadow of No Towers* for wind ensemble, about American life in the aftermath of 9/11 premiered in 2013 at Carnegie Hall was described by Steve Smith of The New York Times as “technically impressive, consistently imaginative and in its finest stretches deeply moving.”

Fairouz became the youngest composer on the Deutsche Grammophon label to have an album dedicated to his works with the 2015 release of *Follow, Poet*. The album includes two works that exalt the transformative power of language: his elegiac song cycle *Audenesque* and the ballet *Sadat*. The album has met with broad critical acclaim – praised as “captivating” by the New York Times and receiving “highbrow and brilliant” distinctions in New York magazine’s taste-making Approval Matrix.

Since childhood, Fairouz has found musical inspiration in literary and philosophical sources and has composed an opera, an oratorio, fifteen song cycles, and hundreds of art songs. He describes himself as “obsessed with text” and has been recognized by New Yorker magazine as an “expert in vocal writing” and described by Gramophone as “a post-millennial Schubert.” He has collaborated directly with distinguished poets Mahmoud Darwish, Wayne Koestenbaum, and Nobel Prize-winner Seamus Heaney, and with writers Mohammed Hanif and David Ignatius. Among the eminent singers that have performed his vocal music are Kate Lindsey, Sasha Cooke, Isabel Leonard, Nathan Gunn and Anthony Roth Costanzo. Fairouz’s opera, *Sumeida’s Song* has been performed at the Prototype Festival, the Pittsburgh Opera and the Boston Opera Collaborative and recorded on Bridge. Anthony Tommasini of The New York Times called the work “an intensely dramatic 60-minute four-character opera with a searing score.”

Prominent advocates of his instrumental music include the cellist Maya Beiser, the Borromeo, Del Sol and Lydian String Quartets, The Imani Winds, violinists Rachel Barton Pine and Chloë Hanslip, flutist Claire Chase and clarinetist David Krakauer, The Knights Chamber Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble LPR and the Metropolis Ensemble. Commissions have come from the Detroit and Alabama Symphony Orchestras, the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir and Indianapolis Symphony, Beth Morrison Projects, Dutch National Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

His music has been performed at major venues around the country including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Boston’s Symphony Hall and The Kennedy Center, and throughout the United States, the Middle East, Europe, and Australia. Recordings are available on the Deutsche Grammophon, Naxos, Bridge, Sono Luminus, Albany, GM/Living Archive, and GPR labels.

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**Jasmine Muhammad, soprano.** Jasmine Muhammad is a versatile vocalist, bridging the gap between the grand stage of opera to the harmonic space of background vocals to recitals of art songs and spirituals. Jasmine completed a successful three year tenure as a Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist and continues her work as a classical singer and background vocalist.

[www.jasminemuhammad.com](http://www.jasminemuhammad.com)

**Tammy Moore, mezzo-soprano.** Tammy Moore sings with "amber warmth" (Washington Post) and has been lighting up opera stages all over the United States; including Opera Philadelphia, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Santa Fe Opera, Castelton Festival, to name a few. Recently, Tammy had been traveling and singing a recital series in the Northeast and will continue the tour this fall out west. Ms. Moore is the owner and founder of Moore Artistic Management, a boutique management company for artists and composers.



**Sidney Outlaw, baritone.** Lauded by The New York Times as a "terrific singer" with a "deep, rich timbre"! The GRAMMY Nominated American baritone will debut with Minnesota Opera in "Fellow Travelers" as well as Atlanta and Arizona Opera in "Yardbird." He also has another major NAXOS Recording Release with Baltimore Symphony in 2018. [www.sidneyoutlaw.com](http://www.sidneyoutlaw.com)



**Yuri Namkung, violin.** Born in Seattle, Washington, Yuri Namkung has soloed throughout the country and abroad with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Tonhalle-Orchestra Zurich, Filarmonica Joven de Colombia throughout Colombia and Brazil, Spokane Bach Festival with Gunther Schuller and in Panama at the Biodiversity Museum with UNESCO and Unicef Artist for Peace jazz pianist Danilo Perez. She has performed at the Newburyport Chamber Music Festival, Crested Butte Music Festival in Colorado, Wellesley Composers Conference, Poor Richard's Chamber Music Society in Philadelphia, I/O Festival at Williams College and ChamberFest Vero Beach on viola, and with the Talea Ensemble in L.A. playing Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire. Yuri is a graduate of Columbia University, the Juilliard School, and the New England Conservatory. [www.yuri-namkung.com](http://www.yuri-namkung.com)

**Alex Shiozaki, violin.** Praised as "spellbinding" by the New York Times, violinist Alex Shiozaki is a member of the Momenta Quartet and on faculty at the Juilliard School's Preparatory Division. In demand as a chamber musician, he performs frequently with the Le Train Bleu Ensemble, American Contemporary Music Ensemble, Mimesis Ensemble, and more. Also an active soloist, his recent and upcoming highlights include appearances with the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra, Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra, and the AXIOM Ensemble. [www.alexshiozaki.com](http://www.alexshiozaki.com)



**Rick Quantz, viola.** Rick Quantz is a freelance violist in the New York City area, performing orchestral, chamber, and solo music. He has performed with chamber groups including: The Dream Unfinished, Halcyon Chamber Series, Mimesis Ensemble, ChamberMusicNY, Cadillac Moon Ensemble, Concerts on the Slope, and Julie and Elizabeth's Anti-Capitalist Concert Series. Rick studied at the Eastman School of Music with John Graham, Rice University's Shepherd School of Music with Karen Ritscher, and NYU with Stephanie Baer.



**Zexun Shen, cello.** Zexun Shen, originally from Shanghai, China, resides in New York City. He is a cellist in the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and DMA candidate at the Stony Brook University. Mr. Shen had performances in America, Asia and Europe, and he is invited to be an artist in residence at Heifetz Institute in Virginia and GongGeng Academy in Hang Zhou, China this summer. [www.ZexunShen.com](http://www.ZexunShen.com)

**Katie Reimer, piano.** Acclaimed by the New York Times for her “meditative” playing, pianist Katie Reimer is the Executive and Artistic Director of the Mimesis Ensemble. She released her debut solo piano CD, *Mirrors*, in the fall 2016, featuring piano music by Bach, Beethoven, Glass and Fairouz. She was the Artistic Director of a recording of Mohammed Fairouz’s debut opera, *Sumeida’s Song*, on Bridge Records, and was both pianist and Artistic Director for a recording on the Sono Luminus label featuring solo and chamber music by Mohammed Fairouz.

[www.mimesisensemble.org/about](http://www.mimesisensemble.org/about)



# THANK YOU!

*The Mimesis Ensemble acknowledges with deep appreciation the following for their generosity during our 2017-18 season.*

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*"I see little of more importance to the future of our country and of civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his/her/their vision wherever it takes him/her/them."*

**-John F. Kennedy**

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