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ORIENTAL Jazz FLAVOR AND WORLD MUSIC

WITH Randa Ghossoub

The famous French writer Victor Hugo verbally illustrated the magic of music: "*La musique exprime ce qui ne peut être dit et sur quoi il est impossible de rester silencieux*." In other words, music expresses that which cannot be spoken, and on which it is impossible to be silent. Decoding what transcends between the notes is undeniably always a challenge.

Jazz music, which so very often is associated with the African-American communities of New Orleans, has historical roots in the olive trees of the Middle East. This form of music has been swinging in the Arab world for more than 100 years. In fact, the Greater Arab Maghreb region greatly influenced Spain with its unmistakable oriental rhythm heard in flamenco. The eastern Mashriq, too, gave birth to many renowned musicians. The Beirut-born Rahbani Brothers nurtured and promoted the jazz trend throughout the country. Ziad Rahbani, the eldest son of Fairuz and Assi Rahbani, would later come to be known for his distinct and influential jazz contribution to the world.

In the musical landscape of Lebanon, many musicians have tapped into the evolving jazz scene and can be heard across the globe. They contribute to an impressive tradition of blending Middle Eastern tunes with the rhythmic genre. Montreal-based Lebanese jazz singer and songwriter Randa Ghossoub is making her mark in international jazz. With four albums and many concerts in New York, Beirut and Montreal, she operates smoothly and surely. Her music is strongly bred by her Arabic culture, yet enriched by every place she has lived or loved, such as Africa, Europe and Canada.

There is always a contemplative and mystical dimension in her songs, which takes the oriental-inspired melodies, blended with modern jazz, to a different level. Randa subtly evolves from the blue notes of an etherical world filled with sensual romance. She mixes oriental lyricism and jazz in her own way to offer a bouquet of multilingual creations. An enchanted enchantress, she leaps effortlessly between Orient and Occident.

Randa's performances of "Bint El Chalabiah" and "Fragile" are quite the creation. She creates a melting pot with each song. The Lebanese jazz woman is known for being as "soothing and smooth as a caress! Randa has the voice of an angel whilst being sensuous and alluring." Randa sings fluently in English, French, Arabic and Spanish. Interviewed for HOME Magazine in Montreal, she shared with us a special moment between the notes.

https://www.youtube.com/user/randaghossoub
http://www.randamusic.com/

Music is constantly evolving, but it seems jazz is always at the root of gospel and blues. How do you see your contribution to the genre?
Indeed, music evolves from roots to branches. Every new version of it is an attempt to take it to a new place. In jazz, musicians take standards and spice them with their own signature during each performance. I do the same, blending it with my own colors, especially the oriental ones. It goes elsewhere with phrasing and tones.

How does your Lebanese heritage seep into your music?
My Lebanese heritage leaves traces in the writing of lyrics, of course. It appears as well when I challenge myself to sing in Arabic with jazz instrumentation.

Who is the first musical artist that really sparked your interest in music, and why?
It is undoubtedly Billie Holiday that dragged me into the world of jazz. The specific song was "Don't Explain". I found myself in this poignant, painful ballad with lyrics coming out of an achy heart.

How do you live your musical duality and how are your values and philosophies transmitted into that world?
I live my duality very well in the sense that once the best of each world is extracted, a perfect harmony is created. After having lived in and experienced many different places, I incorporate the feeling of belonging in multiple ways in both my writing and composing.

What was your biggest challenge in the pursuit of your career?
The biggest challenge was to remain disciplined at all times. I guess this is the secret of success for every project, whether in music or any form of art, like dancing, writing or painting.

What is your best advice for someone who dreams of pursuing a singing career?
Oh! Giving advice isn't really my expertise. I believe each individual should follow their own path. There is a place for everyone and one shouldn't give up by fearing anything. And in the end, talent—genuine talent—always pays off. No matter what.

Career and albums
Her career as a singer took off in 2002 when she recorded her first jazz album "Pillow Talk". In 2006, she launched her second album "I Belong", offering a mix between jazz and world music. She has since toured many places around the world.

In September 2011, she released "Moon Breeze" with the collaboration of world-acclaimed jazz pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Michel Donato and drummer Jim Hillman. Finally, her latest album, "Subtle Thrills", was released in 2015.

By Frida Anbar



Photo by Milad Ayoub

HOME MAGAZINE

The soul of Lebanon

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