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**NEW YORK ARABIC ORCHESTRA RETURNS TO TILLES CENTER  
WITH AN ALL-NEW PROGRAM OF CLASSIC AND  
CONTEMPORARY ARABIC MUSIC ON FEBRUARY 23**

*Afternoon's Program Will Include Piece by NYAO's  
Late Founder and Former Northport Resident Bassam Saba*

*Program Also to Feature Students from Long Island University's Music Department*

Brookville, NY [February 10, 2025] – After a sold-out performance last year, **New York Arabic Orchestra (NYAO)** returns to Tilles Center for the Performing Arts' Krasnoff Theater at Long Island University on **Sunday, February 23 at 3 pm** with an all-new program. The Orchestra, led by Artistic Director and violinist **Layth Sidiq**, will perform original pieces, including one by **NYAO's late founder and former Northport resident Bassam Saba**, entitled *Chou Kan Hilo (How Beautiful It Was)* - the first time the Orchestra will perform this piece since Saba's passing - plus compositions from the golden era of Arabic music and more recent ones. Unique to this performance is that the Orchestra will also be joined onstage by **eight students of Long Island University's Music Department**.

The New York Arabic Orchestra, co-founded in 2007 by Mr. Saba and musician and teacher April Centrone, has transformed Arabic music education in New York City and impacted thousands of students and concertgoers around the world. Its mission and vision is to preserve and promote Arabic culture through music and education. In its 17-year existence, the NYAO has performed at globalFEST, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, Detroit Symphony Hall, Festival Múscas Do Mundo in Portugal and Taipei Silk Road Music Conference in Taiwan. Most recently, the orchestra was featured as part of the original soundtrack for the Ubisoft game *Assassin's Creed Mirage*, composed by Brendan Angelides and released in 2023.

**Co-founder Bassam Saba**, originally from Lebanon, was a world-renowned virtuoso, multi-instrumentalist, and leading figure of Arabic music. Saba studied nay, oud, and violin at the Lebanon National Conservatory, and before his passing in 2020, had made Northport, NY his home. Since 2021, **violinist Layth Sidiq has been guiding the NYAO as its Artistic Director**.

Says **Mr. Sidiq**: "It is always a pleasure to return to Tilles Center with the New York Arabic Orchestra. Last year, we had a fantastic experience performing and connecting with the audience. This year, we are excited to present a new program, including a special piece honouring the life and legacy of our co-founder, Bassam Saba. We are also excited to present one piece with students from the LIU Music Department. We are certain their contribution will add a lot to the orchestra! Additionally, based on audience feedback, we are providing translations of the songs so that non-Arabic-speaking listeners can follow along and connect more deeply with the music. We look forward to sharing this experience with you all."

The Orchestra's configuration will consist of **vocalists Nano Raies** of Syria and **Kareem Youssef** of Lebanon, an array of musicians performing on traditional Arabic instruments including the **nay, oud** and **qanun**, as well as **violin, piano, bass** and **percussion**. To add to this special afternoon and true to its mission of education, New York Arabic Orchestra will also be joined by students from **Long Island University's Music Department**. The student group, under the direction of **Dr. Spence Howell, Chair, Department of Music, Director of Athletic Bands, Long Island University**, will collaborate on one piece with the NYAO.

Says **Dr. Howell** of the collaboration, "This is an incredible opportunity for our LIU students to share the stage with world-class musicians and immerse themselves in the rich traditions of Arabic music. Performing with the New York Arabic Orchestra at the Tilles Center is not only a milestone in their musical journeys but also a testament to the diverse and dynamic experiences we offer in the Department of Music at LIU and Tilles Center. I couldn't be more proud of our students for embracing this moment and representing our university on such a prestigious platform."

**Tom Dunn, Executive and Artistic Director, Tilles Center, and newly appointed Dean of LIU's College of Arts and Design** commented, "My goal at Tilles Center and LIU is three-fold. One, leading, of course, with artistic excellence. Two, ensuring that the artists and ensembles that grace our stages reflect the fullness and diversity of our Long Island community. And three, providing experiential learning and performance opportunities for LIU students. With this special collaboration with New York Arabic Orchestra, I am confident we are achieving those goals."

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**Ticket Information:** Purchase subscriptions and single tickets at [tillescenter.org](http://tillescenter.org) or [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com), in-person at Tilles Center's Tantleff Box Office or by telephone at 516.299.3100. The box office, located at 720 Northern Boulevard (Route 25A) in Brookville, New York, is open Monday to Friday from 1 to 6 p.m. Fees are associated with all orders, and there are no refunds, though subscribers also enjoy exchange privileges.

## **ABOUT TILLES CENTER**

Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post's mission is to engage and enrich our community through arts performance, education, and advocacy. For more than 40 years, Tilles Center has hosted and presented more than 50 performances each season by world-renowned artists in music, theater, and dance. The nonprofit also supports thousands of children and adult learners each year through its robust arts education programs, providing arts experiences to underserved communities — from low-income school districts and those on the autism spectrum to local seniors. Tilles Center is located at LIU Post, 720 Northern Blvd, Brookville NY. Learn more at [tillescenter.org](http://tillescenter.org).

## **ABOUT LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY (LIU)**

Long Island University, founded in 1926, continues to redefine higher education, providing high quality academic instruction by world-class faculty. Recognized by Forbes for its emphasis on experiential learning and by the Brookings Institution for its "value added" to student outcomes, LIU has a network of over 285,000 alumni, including industry leaders and entrepreneurs around the globe. Visit [liu.edu](http://liu.edu) for more information.

## **ABOUT CATHOLIC HEALTH**

Catholic Health is an integrated system encompassing some of the region's finest health and human services agencies. The health system has nearly 17,000 employees, six acute care hospitals, three nursing homes, a home health service, hospice, and a network of physician practices.

## **OUR PARTNERS**

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#### Capital Improvement Fund

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