

Simon Shaheen's

Zafir: Musical Winds from North Africa to Andalucia

From Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 8:00 pm

This was the 607th concert in Koerner Hall

Simon Shaheen, Musical Director, oud & violin

Nidal Ibourk, vocals

Juan Pérez Rodríguez, piano, guitar & vocals

Auxi Fernandez, dance

Qantara

Najib Shaheen, oud

Tariq Rantisi, percussion

Bassam Saba, flutes

Tony Barhoum, qanun

Nassim Al Atrash, cello

Layth Al Rubaye, violin

Simon Shaheen brings to life the Arab music of Al-Andalus and blends it with the ubiquitous art of flamenco in his newest production *Zafir*, a program of instrumental and vocal music and dance. This program does not pretend to recreate the music of a bygone era, but rather to renew a relationship that began more than a thousand years ago. It reveals the commonalities of a music born in cultural centers of Iraq and Syria, blew like the wind (zafir) across the waters of the Mediterranean to Al-Andalus, blended with elements of Spanish music, and was brought back across the sea to North Africa where it flourished in the cities of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

The links between Arab culture and that of Andalucia are deeply imbedded in history. For more than 600 years, the Moors held sway over a large part of the Iberian Peninsula, which they called Al-Andalus and the courts of Cordoba, Seville, and Granada flourished as centers of Arab-Iberian culture until the surrender of Granada in 1492. Zafir, which means "wind" or "breath" (from which the English word "zephyr" is derived), describes the creative breath that blew across two continents during this very pivotal time when music and the arts took a huge leap forward. Music flourished in Al-Andalus, especially after the arrival of master musician, Ziryab, from Baghdad in Cordoba around 825 AD. He introduced original Arab musical forms and instruments, which would later compose the roots of flamenco. While the origins of flamenco remain shrouded in mystery, the imprint of the Moors is undeniable. The aim of both Arab classical music and flamenco is to achieve a heightened state of emotion, a feeling of ecstasy, known by the Arab musicians as tarab and by flamenco performers and enthusiasts as duende. This transcendent feeling is essential to both traditions.

[Simon Shaheen](#)

Simon Shaheen made his Royal Conservatory debut on June 1, 2012, and all of the other artists made their Conservatory debuts on April 16, 2016.