UC SANTA BARBARA
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Middle East Ensemble to Perform in Egypt

The Middle East Ensemble at UC Santa Barbara has been invited by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture to perform a series of concerts in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor in July.

Directed by Scott Marcus, a professor in the music department's ethnomusicology program, the ensemble will perform at the Cairo Opera House, as well as in more informal venues in the three cities. "They'd like us to give as many concerts as we can," Marcus said.

The ensemble, which includes a chorus and a dance troupe, performs music and dance that reflects the diversity of cultures found in the Middle East –– Persian, Armenian, Greek, Sephardic and Oriental Jewish, Kurdish, Arab, Turkish, and Assyrian. Their repertoire ranges from classical pieces to religious, folk, popular, and children's songs, as well as folk, classical, and cabaret-style dance.

Egypt's consul general in San Francisco suggested the group give a concert in Cairo after hearing them perform at UCSB in 2007. That suggestion was followed by a formal invitation from the Ministry of Culture. Of the 70-member ensemble, which is made up of students, faculty members, and musicians and dancers from the Santa Barbara community, 50 plan to make the trip.

In addition to performing regularly on campus, the ensemble has given several concerts in the Los Angeles area, Sacramento, Arizona, and Washington, D.C. In 1999, seven members of the ensemble were invited by the government of Uzbekistan to represent the United States at the annual Festival of Eastern Song, which took place in Samarkand.

"But this is bigger, I think," Marcus said. "Eighty percent of the ensemble is made up of European Americans. The idea that all these Americans are being invited by the Egyptian government to perform mostly Arab and Egyptian music and dance is very significant –– politically and culturally."

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The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.