

Banat al-Quds



Banat al-Quds Ensemble and Choir of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM) is a four-year-old ensemble that consists of approximately 28 female musicians and singers. Their passion for music and skillful talent brought them together to impress their audiences with their exquisite voices and brilliant performances.

With the consistent musical excellence of these young women, the conservatory established the ensemble in 2013 as a representation of Palestinian living culture in Jerusalem. Banat al-Quds was established as a result of years of dedication and commitment to professional music education, defying all social and political challenges.

When it comes to Arabic music, the general perception limits women to solo-singing performances. The conservatory, however, has a different approach that supports talented girls to take part in all fields of music, aspiring to make a positive change in their audiences' attitudes towards women and encouraging women's cultural participation.

These young women have found strong educational foundations and an enabling environment that have encouraged them to excel in the field of music, forming the first all-female ensemble and choir in Palestine, which is also unique at the regional level.

The ensemble performs Arabic music played on traditional instruments, such as *oud*, *qanoun*, *durbukkah*, and *daff*, and Western instruments that can be adapted and used in Arabic music, such as violin, cello, contrabass, flute, and clarinet. The ensemble is conducted by Suhail Khoury, general director of the ESNCM.

The songs that the ensemble presents are unique, as they mostly depict the girls' lives in Jerusalem under occupation. The 2017 summer program includes songs and instrumental pieces by famous Palestinian and Arab composers specially arranged by Khoury for Banat al-Quds' three-voices choir and ensemble. The composers include Hussein Nazek, Marcel Khalifeh, Ziad Rahbani, Ahmad Kaabour, Amel Mathlouthi, the Rahbani Brothers, and Suhail Khoury.

In May 2017, Banat al-Quds released three videos on YouTube in solidarity with the Palestinian prisoners' most recent hunger strike. Banat al-Quds are full of hope, resilience, steadfastness, and aspiration for freedom and life.

Their hard work has resulted in much success. In March 2016, the group was named Best Regional Choir for their participation in the Choir of the Year competition organized as part of the Choir Festival 2016 held in Dubai. Invited by the Palestinian embassy, they also performed brilliantly for a 2,000-strong enthusiastic Greek audience at their latest international appearance in Athens.

كلمتي حرة:

<https://youtu.be/9PwogBuV7eQ>

يما مويل الهوى:

<https://youtu.be/Gss-fcJ4pJo>

طتسمع كل الدنيا:

<https://youtu.be/XtXlyRL8LF4>