

## Samer Rashed

Samer Rashed is a Palestinian composer and viola player from Jerusalem. He graduated from the National Conservatory of Music in Jerusalem and began a challenging journey to pursue his passion in music composition, particularly for the viola. This journey led him to Istanbul, where he studied with world-renowned musicians and violinists, and was influenced by Turkish gypsy and jazz music. In 2016, Samer launched his first album, *Gypsy Rhapsodies*, in Jerusalem, which contained five of his music compositions and two covers in gypsy swing/jazz music.

With this album, Samer became the first Palestinian musician to compose a music album of this genre for the viola, which was distinguished by its upbeat rhythm and harmony, showcasing the beauty of simple yet sophisticated melodies that bring joy to listeners – a key trait of gypsy swing music.

The album launch was followed by a number of successful concerts in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Haifa, and the Golan Heights, asserting on one hand the audience demand for unique genres

that incorporate Arabic music and, on the other hand, setting a great example for young Palestinian musicians through showing them what can be accomplished with minimal resources and maximum ambition.

The success of his first album led Samer to launch his second album in 2019, *Tales of the Gypsy Jazz*, which includes seven of his compositions in gypsy jazz music and incorporates unique instruments such as the buzuq and the accordion. This album reflects Samer's progress as a composer and as a viola player by introducing pieces that require challenging techniques and performance skills. *Tales of the Gypsy Jazz* includes a diverse range of upbeat and slow music that takes listeners on a variety of journeys and presents yet again an unprecedented employment of the viola as the key instrument in this genre.

Samer remains strongly influenced by Eastern music and jazz techniques, and continues to be inspired by the gypsy and swing traditions. In addition, the quality of his music productions is a result of the collaboration with highly talented local musicians as part of his vision to compose, arrange, and produce music that is inclusive and impactful. His music offers various local musicians a platform to showcase their performance techniques and interact with Palestinian audiences. His selection of supporting instruments enriches the album and also sends a strong message that music composition is as important as the values and the messages associated with it, particularly for a Palestinian artist.

