

## They Are a Brazilian Ensemble, But You Wouldn't Know by Their Middle-Eastern Sounds

Contributed by Isaura Daniel  
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Six musicians from the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais decided to bring the classical music of the Arab countries closer to Brazil. Marcelo Augusto, Lúcio Gomes, Eduardo Couto, Daniel Brandi, Elton Brandi and Simone Poliana established group Al Fallahin, in state capital Belo Horizonte.

Next year the group is going to release a CD with Egyptian music. The group was established a year and a half ago and plays Arab classical music, mainly from Egypt. The record will have the name of the African country.

Al Fallahin, whose name means "the peasants" in Arabic, plays music from 24 countries from the Middle East and North Africa. Among the Arab countries are Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Qatar, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Tunisia. The repertoire also includes music from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, which are in the region.

According to the group's director, Marcelo Augusto, Al Fallahin is also rehearsing the repertoire of a Lebanese operetta. The objective, according to him, is to open the operetta up to next year.

Marcelo Augusto plays the cello, Lúcio the bass, Eduardo plays the derbak, which is an Arab percussion instrument, Daniel plays the accordion, Elton the flute and Simone the violin. The cello player had already studied oriental music - Japanese, Indian and Arabic - well before entering the group, 15 years ago.

"There is great demand in the country for this kind of work. Brazil has many Arab descendants. Minas Gerais, for example, has an infinity of belly dancing schools," explained the musician.

Apart from promoting its own spectacles, the group also accompanies belly-dancing presentations. According to Marcelo, the repertoire includes from music for this kind of dance to Sufi songs, which are more religious and ritualistic, operas and desert music, which has a rougher sound.

The repertoire of the shows includes, for example, songs Alf Leyla Wa Leyla, from Egypt, Kahwet Kakhle, from Lebanon, and Wasla Em Saba, from Syria. The group plays between once and four times a month.

Apart from Brazil, the musicians have already played in Asuncion, Paraguay. One of the musicians, Lúcio Gomes, has even played in orchestras in the Arab countries. The group members are of Arab descent. According to Marcelo Augusto, the members of Al Fallahin want to study music in the Arab world.

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