

Joubran: Three Heart- Charming Lutes

By Rabee Dwekat



cannot recall how many times I changed the title as I wrote this article, or how many times my thoughts dispersed, or how many times I deleted words so that the text wouldn't become a form of intellectual ingratitude to describe or criticize innovative youth who are way ahead of their times. It is difficult to start writing; it is complex for the writer to come up with the words for the beginning of the article and its end; it is a mystery that pulls writers into their zone of weakness. I was not able to write an article perfect enough to describe the creative brothers, Le Trio Joubran, until I accompanied them for several days in the Turkish cities Bursa and Istanbul. Istanbul lies on the dividing line between Eastern and Western civilizations; its charm, sea, and history, along with the sound of the lute's strings played by Palestinian fingertips, put you in another world of beauty and wonderful dreams.

Listening to the musical pieces of Le Trio Joubran and getting to know their large audiences of various languages, cultures, and civilizations leads one to recognize that this music surmounts all human emotion and seduces its listeners to adore music, the lute in particular.

Their recitals are musical conversations that tell a story of love or sorrow. They begin with the eldest brother Samir's few high and fast continuous notes, presenting the beginning of the story in "Shajan," which might be a story of hope, a story of sorrow, or a story of an imprisoned homeland. Adnan enters with different sounds that add a new dimension to the story. Samir returns to confirm the equanimity of the story. While Samir continues with low, consistent tones, Wisam interrupts to drive them out of this controversy and motivates them

to challenge their reality. After going back and forth, the composer, the artist Yousef Hbaish, prepares the setting to resolve the situation: the three to continue to play with equal sound and rhythm. "Masar" takes you to other worlds of imagination and to a harmonious atmosphere as you listen and enjoy. Tradition dictates that the audience stand when this piece begins.

We cannot imagine or describe our memories of feelings – buried sorrow or passion for a loved one – as all of this is gathered in the musical pieces that lighten the tension and sadness.

The secret of their pieces is not linked to particular stories; rather the listeners experience the music personally, as though the pieces express their own memories of and feelings towards homeland, love, happiness, sorrow, fear, and poverty, etc. Each listener feels that the piece is played for him or her; as if the music were the Mona Lisa, which gives a unique feeling to each person – the best that artists can offer to their audiences.

The three brothers were brought together through their love of third-generation art, when the family started





Le Trio Joubran.

to make lutes in Nazareth, in northern occupied Palestine. Later they learned to compose music and play the lute. They emerged from the womb of a mother who loves the sound of the lute and a father who enjoys making lutes, to become a generation that uses their lutes to serve their national identity, presenting an artistic template with a unique rhythm and creativity.

Le Trio Joubran's music has maintained its independence in the Arab cultural and art movement as it creates classic balanced music that attracts audiences with artistic sense and good taste from the East and the West, from all around the world. An Arab band that has such broad acceptance in countries around the world that do not know our culture or language must have touched something deep inside their listeners. Their music has a logic that

attracts hearts before minds; it can be contrasted with the cultural decadence and deterioration that we witness in the Arab region.

The three brothers play to audiences that await them with great passion. The overflowing concert halls resound with applause as they step onto the stage to bring love, memories, homeland, earth, and expressions of Palestinian culture – a mix of beautiful, sad, and happy moments in the past and in the present. The strings of their lutes are not free from fear, yet hope always captivates the audience in a prison with doors closed behind the human madness of killing innocents and destroying homelands. Hope is brought to Rome through Nero's love, and to Jerusalem by the song of the lute, which gives hope of freedom from the injustice of the occupation, and to other bleeding Arab countries.

The term lust for silence conveys the key to audience enjoyment of Le Trio Joubran music. The silence becomes a passion that leads to emotional climax. Music lovers who have listened to "Masar," "Shajan," or "Safar" fall more deeply in love, and those who have not been fans of music become eager for another piece. The concerts by this Palestinian triangle have crossed all languages and civilizations, using their sounds to caress the inner souls of human beings.

Le Trio Joubran's music can bring us back to our humanity, to our original emotions. Within the tragic conditions of Arab countries, where happiness has been stolen from millions and replaced with a perverse joy in killing that has taken away our humanity, this music can redeem us from death, restore our memories, and create a new space where smiles can return.

Le Trio Joubran's music serves the Arab Palestinian identity and delivers a national message to the entire world; as the first piece ended in Istanbul, we hear Samir's reassuring voice, "Palestine is doing well, rest assured. We hope to see you in another concert in Jerusalem and in a free Palestine." Even without announcing their nationality, such a statement is sufficient for audiences to recognize their national identity and their sense of belonging to the just cause. It is also enough to show the audience's love for Jerusalem and for Palestine and its people. The great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish taught them to be artists from Palestine and not Palestinian artists, so that they are loved for their creative and classy art.

Le Trio Joubran's logic in art and music drives us to respect them even more, as they consider that vocal artists are dictators who recruit various musical instruments to serve their voices – in this case, the lute – and give them the right to do more work than the artists themselves. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that made their music a path towards freedom and a way to dedicate national culture to music. In the modern context where many instruments are needed to enable one voice to sing, Le Trio Joubran impresses audiences with the song of the lute, without words, since the instrument speaks a universal language. The lute that appeared five thousand years ago has become a part of Le Trio Joubran as the artist, the vocalist, and the inspiration that relieves pain.

A number of strange stories reveal the love that people have for the Trio's music. One day as Le Trio Joubran walked along a street in Paris, a woman called out from afar, "Le Trio Joubran!" and took a picture with them. She told them that while she was in labor at the hospital, she refused to take anesthesia to alleviate the pain, instead she asked the hospital to play Le Trio Joubran's music during her labor. This is yet

another reminder of the pain-relieving effects of this music. In Turkey, in front of an audience with an Arab flavor, the song "Masar" precipitated huge applause from the audience, which recognized it as a song from one of the popular television shows. During a visit to a CD store in Bursa with the three brothers, we received an indescribable reception. People immediately gathered around us to express their admiration for the Trio. How can the audience in this small city in Turkey know this music? How is it that Le Trio Joubran's CDs are best sellers in these stores?

Le Trio Joubran is truly an international band that has become a voice that many admire. They play their pieces with the entire range of human emotion and offer people hope in the midst of the world's extreme darkness.

Their use of the words of the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish brings an additional quality to their music. During a 13-year period, Le Trio Joubran and the Palestinian poet were able to win the hearts of millions with an unprecedented cultural contribution. Even after the poet's passing, Le Trio Joubran has continued to present their music with the voice of the poet in an initiative that revives his name, his voice, and his poetry. They have refused various offers from other Arab poets to

join them due to their dedication to the soul of Mahmoud Darwish.

In recognition of their music and in an unprecedented and unique gesture, Bank of Palestine, the largest Palestinian Bank, chose Le Trio Joubran to be its cultural partner. It is the first partnership of its kind between a musical band and an institution from the private sector in the Arab world. Le Trio Joubran has become the interface and the cultural partner of the bank. This brilliant initiative on the part of the bank owes its origin to the bank's appreciation of Palestinian innovators and ambassadors of Palestinian culture to the world.

We must always remember that these lutes have excelled in revealing the cultural treasures of Palestine and have contributed to developing an art that suits the original lute instrument, which historically has not received the appropriate support and attention from the Arab and international media channels. Le Trio Joubran is on top of the Arab culture pyramid to present a rich literature of art culture that has crossed civilizations, languages, and countries to become more appreciated by the West than by the Arab world.

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Our Readers Say ...

The French language runs rampant through Algeria, Lebanon, and the likes. English is now an important part of nearly all former British colonies. And languages such as Navajo and Cherokee have been traded in for English among America's indigenous populations. And yet, since my arrival in Palestine, I've not heard a single word of Hebrew! I think that really says something about the strength of the Palestinian cultural identity. To me, this shows how effectively Palestinians have culturally resisted colonization.

Daniel, Bolivia