

For Immediate Release



Image: Tarek Atoui. Courtesy of the artist.

**Sharjah Art Foundation Announces *Visiting Tarab*,
A Project and Performance Written and Conceived by Sound Artist Tarek Atoui**

**To Make Its World Premiere in New York on November 5, 2011, for One Night
Only, as a Commission of the Internationally Acclaimed New York Biennial,
Performa 11**

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE)—The **Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF)** announces ***Visiting Tarab***, an evening of music to premiere November 5 as part of Performa 11 (Nov 1 - 21), the fourth edition of the internationally acclaimed New York visual art performance biennial. Conceived by nomadic sound artist **Tarek Atoui**, *Visiting Tarab* presents a sound sculpture that employs samples, forms and structures from the world's largest collection of Classical Arab music as interpreted by seventeen musicians and sound artists from hip hop, electronic, contemporary and traditional music.

In addition to Tarek Atoui, the evening will premiere contributions by **Anti-Pop Consortium, Uriel Barthelemi, Jonathan Butcher, Maria Calix, DJ Spooky, Lukas Ligeti, Robert Lowe, Raz Mesinai, Ikue Mori, Sara Parkins, Zeena Parkins, Elliott Sharp, Zafer Tawil, and George Ziadeh**. The newly commissioned work makes its world premiere in New York City on Saturday, November 5, 2011, from 8:30pm to 1:30am, at SIR Stage 37, and is followed by more than 100 performances by acclaimed contemporary artists included in Performa's three-week biennial. To purchase tickets, please visit www.performa-arts.org.

Sharjah Art Foundation President Hoor Al-Qasimi explains, “*Visiting Tarab* is a truly exceptional commission that reveals the beauty of traditional Arab music. Tarek Atoui’s vision for modernizing elements of this renowned collection in ways that continue to preserve the significance of its traditions is admirable. It is a pleasure to be able to collaborate with Performa as one of New York’s premiere arts organizations, and to bring this culture of Arab musical traditions to the United States. We look forward to presenting the Middle East Premiere of this work next March during the Sharjah Art Foundation’s annual March Meeting.”

Sound artist Tarek Atoui comments, “To me this project is about reviving a universal heritage and a golden era that the world – and especially the Arab world – seems to have forgotten about after the change and turmoil of the second half of the 20th century.

Visiting Tarab is about rediscovering a renaissance age with all its innovations and openness through the languages of sound, music, and performance. As an artist, I feel lucky and privileged to have started a project that is going beyond my expectations and what I had imagined...”

Performa Founding Director and Curator RoseLee Goldberg adds, “It has been a thrilling experience working with Tarek and getting to know the history of Tarab music. Each of the artists has returned from Beirut quite transformed. This is the goal of our exciting collaboration with the Sharjah Art Foundation; to create a real exchange of ideas and sensibilities.”

Used in Arab culture to describe the emotional effect of music, “Tarab” is also commonly associated with a traditional form of art-music. The word “Tarab” refers to an older repertoire rooted in the pre-World War I musical practice of Egypt and the East-Mediterranean Arab world, and is directly associated with emotional evocation. For the occasion of his Performa Commission, Atoui invited 16 musicians and sound artists purposefully selected for their talents as both musicians and composers as well as their interest in music as performance to travel to Beirut to explore the world’s largest and most extensive collection of Classical Arab music. This private collection, owned by Lebanese collector Kamal Kassar, is comprised of old 78 rpm shellac discs and studio tapes ranging from 1903 to 1950, largely covering the Arab renaissance period that started early in the 19th century and continued through the 1930s. The participants then selected excerpts from the collection and independently composed their own interpretations of both the content and its possibilities in relation to the history of “Tarab”. After three months of independent consideration, these performers will soon be brought together for one night only by the vision of Tarek Atoui as both contributing performer and orchestrator of the evening’s composition.

The one-night-only US performance will be a continuous building of energies, intensities, and textures inspired by the structure and rules of “Tarab,” transforming the New York venue into a space of enchantment and ecstasy. A Performa Commission with the Sharjah Art Foundation, *Visiting Tarab* is one of 13 commissions by the New York biennial. The commission also continues the Sharjah Art Foundation’s ongoing commitment to support the flourishing arts environment in the Gulf region and beyond by actively pursuing both a regional and international program of cultural collaboration and exchange.

The Sharjah Art Foundation will premiere *Visiting Tarab* in the United Arab Emirates in March 2012.

Born in Lebanon in 1980, Tarek Atoui moved to France in 1998 where he studied sound art and electro-acoustic music. In 2006, he released his first solo album in the *Mort Aux Vaches* series for Staalplaat Records, and in 2008, he served as artistic director of the STEIM Studios in Amsterdam, a center for the research and development of new electronic musical instruments.

Atoui is a sound artist who specializes in creating computer tools for interdisciplinary projects and youth education. He has presented work internationally including the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2010); Sharjah Biennial 09, United Arab Emirates (2009); La Maison Rouge, Paris (2010); the Mediacity Biennial, Seoul (2010), the Haus Der Kunst, Munich (2010) and the Salzburg Sommerszene festival (2011).

Visiting Tarab is a Performa Commission with the Sharjah Art Foundation, and is supported by Performa Producers Circle members Carla Chamas and Judi Roaman, and by Nayla Hadchiti, and Hutham Olayan; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, and The Dedalus Foundation.

About the Sharjah Art Foundation:

Sharjah Art Foundation supports the flourishing arts environment in the Gulf by nurturing artistic opportunities and actively pursuing both a regional and international program of cultural collaboration and exchange.

Sharjah Art Foundation builds on the pioneering role the Emirate of Sharjah has played in the artistic and cultural development of the Gulf region. Inspired by the cross-fertilisation and rich cultural diversity of the Emirates, the Foundation provides both national and international leadership in the production and presentation of contemporary visual arts. Recognising the central and distinctive contribution that art makes to society, the Sharjah Art Foundation cultivates a spirit of research, experimentation and excellence while acting as a catalyst for collaboration and exchange within the Middle East and beyond.

For more information on the Sharjah Art Foundation and the Sharjah Biennial, please visit www.sharjahart.org.

About Performa 11:

Performa 11, the fourth edition of the internationally acclaimed biennial of new visual art performance presented by Performa, will be held in New York City from November 1–21, 2011. The three-week biennial will showcase new work by more than 100 of the most exciting artists working today, in an innovative program breaking down the boundaries between visual art, music, dance, poetry, fashion, architecture, graphic design, and the culinary arts. Presented in collaboration with a consortium of more than 40 arts institutions and 25 curators, as well as a network of public spaces and private venues across the city, Performa 11 will ignite New York City with energy and ideas, acting as a vital “think tank” linking minds across the five boroughs and bringing audiences together for brilliant new performances in all disciplines.

Established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, Performa is the leading organization dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth-century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

Performa launched New York's first performance biennial, Performa 05, in 2005, followed by Performa 07 (2007), and Performa 09 (2009). www.performa-arts.org

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