

For Immediate Release



## **AUB Zaki Nassif Program and National Music Conservatory hold tribute concert for Lebanese folk music composers**

Beirut, Lebanon- 20/04/2012 - A tribute concert honoring early Lebanese folk music composers was held at the UNESCO Palace on April 19, 2012 in the presence of a host of dignitaries and music lovers.

The Zaki Nassif Music Program at the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music organized the event, which was held under the patronage of Culture Minister Gaby Layoun.

Led by Maestro Andre El Hage, the Lebanese National Orchestra, with the participation of the Conservatory's Choir, played songs by Lebanese musical legends. This year, the annual concert not only honored Zaki Nassif, but also included the top veteran composers of Lebanese folk music from the 1950s: Toufic Al Basha, Philemon Wehbe, the Rahbani brothers, and Abdul Ghani Shaaban.

Attracting a full house of music lovers of all ages, the concert was also attended by dignitaries including the Ambassador of Tunisia Mohamed Fawzi Blout, Greek Orthodox Bishop Constantine Nassar, and Colonel Georges Herro, retired conductor of the Lebanese Army Orchestra.

"There are generations of people raised in recent years who are not aware of this time period in music, and what we want is to bring back the memory of the golden period which will inspire them to continue listening and playing, especially if they are musicians," said Nabil Nassif, director and coordinator of the Zaki Nassif Music Program.

The program was founded in 2004, by a group of AUB faculty and lovers of Nassif's music to show their support and their desire for his music to live on for generations to come. According to the mission statement, the program aims to preserve and promote the musical heritage of Zaki Nassif and seeks to foster excellence in the teaching of music by contributing to its advancement through a variety of activities.

The program organizes competitions, concerts, conferences and seminars, inviting performers and scholars, awards fellowships, scholarships and prizes to students in his name, and recruits scholars and new faculty members to add new courses and graduate programs in Lebanese and Oriental Music at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

"The biggest achievement that these pioneers did is give us a history that we can be proud of," said Hanna Al-Amil, acting president of the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music and Head of Cultural Department at the Ministry of Culture, representing Minister Gaby Layoun.

One day after the concert, the first round of the 4th annual Zaki Nassif School Choirs Competition took place on April 20, 2012 at AUB's Assembly Hall where 11 schools from all around Lebanon competed to win both a financial reward as well as the chance to record a CD containing some of Zaki Nassif's songs for children. There will be one more round until the final concert on May 19, 2012 where a jury of five recognized professional musicians, headed by Colonel George Herro will announce the winners.

"My uncle said that you have to bring people to songs and music from a very early stage. And one way to do that is through choir. The competition is supposed to encourage schools to have a performing choir and get students into music from the start," said Nassif.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

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Note to Editors

#### **About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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