

Arab World Music Icons and American Music Stars Share the Stage at MGM Grand

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For Benefit Celebration of Universal Children's Day; 'Sahra' Makes History Saturday, Nov. 21 Khaled (Algeria), Assala Nasri (Syria) and Rida Al Abdulla (Iraq) to Headline and American GRAMMY Honorees K.C. Porter & Karina Pasian to Perform; Surprise Guests

PRNewswire

LAS VEGAS

MGM Grand and Dawn Elder World Entertainment proudly present the world premiere of Sahra on Saturday, Nov. 21, at the MGM Grand Garden Arena. Sahra is an unprecedented multi-media event celebrating Arabic culture in the Middle East and North Africa. Performances and presentations bring together international music and film celebrities, Arab film stars and other with the Hollywood's elite, and more than 100 master musicians and dancers from 23 countries. In recognition of Universal Children's Day, all profits from Sahra will benefit leading children's charities focused on the Middle East and North Africa (ACCESS and NAAMA). With its ambitious program and bold humanitarian mission, Sahra marks a watershed for Arabic culture in the United States.

International recording stars Khaled, Assala, and Rida Al Abdulla headline the Sahra concert, the crown jewel in a weekend of multi-media events that includes video montages of beloved works by Middle Eastern film celebrities, late-night dancing with the latest hits in Arabic popular dance music, and much more. The MGM Grand undergoes an Arabian makeover for this historic weekend, beginning with spectacularly designed concert staging celebrating a stunningly diverse heritage.

Algerian-born Khaled (Cheb Khaled), pioneer and king of "pop rai" music, makes his long-awaited return to the U.S. Khaled's 1991 hit "Didi" and "Aisha" 1996 swept the world and made this homeland icon an international sensation. Collaborations with The Wailers, Santana, Earth Wind & Fire, Quincy Jones and hundreds of others, cementing Khaled's reputation as one of the world's most moving and powerful vocalists and performers of all time. His legacy includes 10 diamond, platinum, and gold albums, as well as the highest-selling Arab album in history. Khaled has played to audiences of more than 100,000, and is set to make music history again with his latest album release

"Liberty," and this being the first time in U.S. history an Algerian/North African artist will headline in Las Vegas.

Assala Nasri has been called the voice of the Arab world today, and the heir apparent to legendary Arab singer Fairouz. Born in Syria, and raised in a musical milieu, Assala launched her career in 1991 with the release of *Law Ta'rafou* (If You Know). The album had four songs in the classical tarab style, art compositions whose aim is to bring about a shared experience of musical ecstasy (tarab) among listeners. As with so many of the albums to follow, it included a song for her father. The album was an instant hit with heartbreaking songs like "Samehtak Ketir (I Forgive You)," which was given to her as a gift from the famous composer Sayed Makkawi. A dynamic and charismatic diva with an unmatched vocal range and style, Nasri records and performs worldwide. Having released more than 20 studio albums and more than 40 No. 1 hits, and selling more than 20 million albums, it is no surprise her 2008 CD *Nos Hala* (Half Mood) debuted at No. 1 on Rotana's Top 5 in Egypt and Lebanon, and most of the Arab World. Her appearance at MGM Grand will be her first return to the United States since 2003.

Iraqi Rida Al Abdulla has been singing since the age of eight. Graduating from the Bagdad School of music he began recording and performing throughout the region gaining wide popularity and recognized as one of the best new voice of Iraq. His career was interrupted in 1993 by forced military service, imprisonment and torture under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Following a daring escape in 1997, Rida relaunched his career in Dubai where his first three albums went gold. This year, he released a long-awaited fourth album "Yom Wa Sana" that breaks new ground in integrating Western and Arabic instrumentation, rhythms and production style. The title single has already climbed the charts to number two after only two months of release. Abdulla is noted for his classical and composition style that preserves the tradition of Iraqi maqam, while delivering poignant lyrics.

Joining these international legends on stage will be a host of recognized performers from North Africa, the Middle East, France and the United States, including guest appearances by the 11-time GRAMMY Nominated Palestinian oud and violin virtuoso SIMON SHAHEEN and multi-Tele Award-winning Lebanese Choreographer ADAM BASSMA with his dance company. The evening will also include guest appearances by American celebrities, including GRAMMY-winners K.C. Porter, and GRAMMY-nominated rising star - Def Jam's KARINA PASIAN - as well as a number of noteworthy "surprise" guests. The Sahra concert promises a multi-national summit of brilliant and committed performers, breathtaking performances and a show of unity in the tradition of "We Are the World," and the Live 8 concert, all focused on making a better future for kids.

"We are thrilled to host a unique Middle Eastern concert for such an important cause," said Gamal Aziz, president and chief operating officer of MGM Grand. "This event allows us to continue our tradition of providing a stage for the top names in worldwide entertainment while supporting charities that assist refugee children in various communities around the world."

In recognition of Universal Children's Day, all profits from Sahra will benefit two organizations with unmatched track records when it comes to uplifting the lives of Arab children around the world: NAAMA Foundation (National Arab American Medical Association) and ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services).

NAAMA was formed in 1975 by a group of physicians in Los Angeles eager to provide help for populations affected by war in the Middle East. Executive Director Mouhanad Hammami says NAAMA is a "non-profit, non-political, and non-religious" humanitarian enterprise whose current initiatives range from creating a burn unit in Nablus, to establishing pediatric oncology standards in Egypt, serving the needs of Iraqi refugee children in Jordan, and providing emergency relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the 9/11 attacks, and the 2008 Gaza crisis. NAAMA's membership of medical professionals of Arabic descent, and its many good works, have made it one of the most respected charitable organizations operating today.

For the past 35 years, ACCESS has been an award-winning social service organization committed to developing and supporting the Arab-American community. ACCESS initiatives include Detroit's acclaimed Arab-American National Museum (opened in 2005) and more than 90 programs serving Arab-American communities in seven different locations. The organization's most recent initiative involves creating fitness centers to serve the largest population of Arab-descended children in the United States, those in the Detroit metro area. The focus, once again, is children, in particular preparing them for healthy and productive lives.

Ticket prices, event packages, and on-sale information for Sahra can be found at www.mgmgrand.com/sahra.

Sahra is produced by Dawn Elder who is recognized in the American media landscape for her expertise on the cultural interplay among American, Middle Eastern and North African societies. Elder is a composer, producer, director, artist manager, public speaker and creator of more than 1,000 events, including some of the most ambitious cultural festivals and conferences the United States has seen. Elder's wide-ranging achievements are unified by a fierce humanitarianism and a dedication to the principle that culture - especially music - has a vital role to play in resolving hostilities between nations, faiths, and ethnic communities.

The MGM Grand Garden Arena is home to concerts, championship boxing and premier sporting and special events. The Arena offers comfortable seating for as many as 16,800 with excellent sightlines and state-of-the-art acoustics, lighting and sound. Prominent events to date have included world championship fights between Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson as well as Oscar De La Hoya vs. Floyd Mayweather and George Foreman vs. Michael Moorer; and concerts by The Rolling Stones, Madonna, Elton John, Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney, Bette Midler, George Strait, Janet Jackson, Phil Collins, Billy Joel, U2, 'N Sync, Sting, Coldplay, Alicia Keys, Jimmy Buffett and the Barbra Streisand Millennium Concert. The MGM Grand Garden Arena also is home to the annual Academy of Country Music Awards (ACMA), Frozen Fury NHL pre-season game and the U.S. Open of Motocross.

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