

MDC performance of Arab classical music exemplifies city's multiculturalism

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As a Miami resident for more than 50 years, I've seen our region transform into a hub of arts and culture, positioning our city among the greatest in the world. Deeply rooted in our identity is our diversity, and the realization that our differences make us a stronger, more united community.

Nowhere is our uniqueness better exemplified than in our arts scene, which continues to evolve because of those who believe in the power of the arts as a vehicle for dialogue and social change.

At Miami Dade College — the cultural forerunner and catalyst of Miami's cultural gems — our groundbreaking MDC Live Arts Performing Arts Series' "Ojalá/Inshallah: Wishes from the Muslim World" highlights the richness of our multiculturalism and fosters an environment of acceptance and inclusion.

Supported by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, the series uses art to explore the diversity within Muslim culture, and creates safe spaces for the exploration of commonalities and differences.

At our opening event, The Sachal Ensemble: Song of Lahore, audiences listened to iconic jazz standards and traditional Pakistani folk songs. At Sahba Motallebi's Persian Classical Music concert, this Iranian virtuoso of the tar and setar shared the wonders of Persian music.

Ojalá/Inshallah also featured ancient traditions within new contexts —as with Iraqi-American Amir El Saffar's jazzy explorations of maqam music and Innov Gnawa's Moroccan ritual trance music. The series also celebrated new traditions, featuring the Hip Hoppa Locka block-party style performance in Opa-locka.

The series culminates on May 12 with the grandeur of Arab classical music during the "Layali al Andalus" performance at the Olympia Theater.

As an educator and an avid supporter of the arts, I believe in the power of cultural programs like Ojalá/Inshallah as bridge builders and community unifiers. Arts transcend differences and boundaries, helping our community find much-needed common ground, acceptance and understanding.

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