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Arab music delights

By Elaine Krasny

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Last Thursday, when I took a break from my usual workday to hear the Al-Sharq Ensemble, part of Marquette's Arabian Heritage Celebration, I had a truly unique experience. This classical Arabian music group provided an event similar to what I imagine a Barry Manilow music fan would have waking up at a Mozart concert. I certainly didn't expect formally trained musicians, performing concert hall quality music at the Brew Bayou! I was also surprised to hear 16th century music of the Ottoman Empire played on instruments like the cello and recorder, using "traditional" Western music notation. If a Middle Eastern music genre exists, I suspect that the Western experience has been limited mostly to the mainstream "pop" variety like Egyptian Kadim Al Sahir's album, "Qusat Habebain," which is a delightful CD in its own right. However, the Al-Sharq Ensemble was also able to convey their culture's spiritual depth without my understanding Arabic, because music is still the only "global" language. Not only did I find the group's performance personally enriching, but it also celebrated both the diversity and oneness of all peoples, in keeping with Marquette's Arabian Heritage Celebration.

Krasny is a researcher in University Advancement.



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