

# Art is pathway to understanding for Arab festival

## Performers hope to increase communication and decrease fear between communities

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THE GAZETTE

Hip hop, the blues, male belly dancing, mischievous stand-up comedy and Dan Bigras.

The program for the seventh annual Festival du Monde Arabe de Montréal was unveiled yesterday, and the options available underline the festival's main goal: to improve communication and understanding through the creative efforts of artists – or, as the festival has dubbed them, “prophètes rebelles.”

The festival runs from Oct. 26 to Nov. 12 with performing arts, cultural discourse and film series to sample.

“We live in troubled times,” festival spokesperson Bigras said

yesterday. “And when we are not properly informed, it creates paranoia.”

Bigras's concert Fou et Rebelle is at Théâtre Maisonneuve de Place des Arts on Nov. 8. The singer and actor told media yesterday that he was keen on participating in the festival because he strongly believes clearer communications among the world's many communities can help fend off unwarranted fear.

“Not every Arab is a member of Al-Qa'ida,” Bigras said. “And not everyone from the Occident is an (invader and warmonger).”

The festival opens at the Spectrum with the free concert Musiques de désert, featuring artists such as DuOud, Les Aïssawa and Kudsi Erguner. Passes



FESTIVAL DU MONDE ARABE

Jean-Pierre Smadja of DuOud.

must be picked up in advance at the Spectrum (318 Ste. Catherine St. W.) or at La Maison de Radio-Canada (1400 René Lévesque Blvd. E.).

The performing arts program

features 24 productions, with artists approaching Arab culture from both traditional and contemporary points of view.

Islam Blues marries traditional music with a blues sensibility (Oct. 29, Corona Theatre). Les Possédés showcases both traditional and contemporary dance forms (Nov. 9 and 10, Théâtre Maisonneuve). Bagdad HipHop features Arabic rap performed by artists including Narcicyst of Euphrates and Nomadic Massive (Nov. 8, Corona Theatre).

Quebec writer/journalist Jacques Languirand pays tribute to poet Khalil Gibran (Nov. 1, Cinquième Salle of Place des Arts). On the same day, Arab jazz takes centre stage with Shusmo and the Mel M'Rabet group. The Indian group Duo Saaj and Quebec's Galitcha share the spotlight during Route des Indes (Nov. 5).

Humour takes a stand with Mohsen El-Gharbi and his show

Juste pour mourir (Nov. 4, Cinquième Salle). El-Gharbi plays a former member of Al-Qa'ida who was kicked out after failing to make the grade as a suicide bomber and is looking for a career change.

Bigras shares spokesperson duties with Quebec writer and anthropologist Serge Bouchard, who will participate in the free roundtable discussion Prophètes du 21e siècle (Oct. 28, Maison de la culture Frontenac). Bouchard is joined by Sorbonne professor Mohamed Arkoun – an expert in Islamic thought – and Algerian playwright Slimane Benaïssa.

Over 20 films will be screened at the NFB Cinema.

**Festival du Monde Arabe de Montréal** runs from Oct. 26 to Nov. 12. For details, visit [www.festivalarabe.com](http://www.festivalarabe.com)

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