

# Karim Sulayman

with

Ronnie Malley, oud

Matthew Duvall, percussion

Lisa Kaplan, piano

***This performance, recorded in Fall of 2021, is part of UCLA Center for the Art of Performance's Tune In Festival, celebrating the power of artists to overcome, to continually create, to move us in their quests to drive change.***

Lebanese-American tenor **Karim Sulayman** has garnered international attention as a sophisticated and versatile artist, consistently praised for his sensitive and intelligent musicianship, riveting stage presence, and beautiful voice.

Karim won the 2019 Grammy® Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album for his debut solo album, *Songs of Orpheus*. His second solo album, *Where Only Stars Can Hear Us*, debuted at #1 on the Billboard Traditional Classical Chart and has received international critical acclaim, including being named "Critic's Choice" by Opera News and included in the New York Times' Best Classical Music of 2020.

This year, Karim will make his solo recital debut at Carnegie Hall. In addition to regularly performing on the world's leading stages in opera, orchestral concerts, recitals and chamber music, Karim has been featured on PBS Great Performances, and he appears on the second season of *Dickinson* on Apple TV+.

In November 2016, Karim created a social experiment/performance art piece called *I Trust You*, designed to build bridges in a divided political climate. Karim has been invited to give talks and hold open forums with student and adult groups about inclusion, empathy, healing from racism, and activism through the arts.

Performing with Karim are musician, composer and educator **Ronnie Malley** on the oud, **Matthew Duvall** on percussion and **Lisa Kaplan** on piano. Matthew and Lisa are founding members of Eighth Blackbird, an inventive chamber music ensemble based in Chicago.

Eighth Blackbird has won four Grammy Awards for Best Small Ensemble/ Chamber Music Performance over its 25-year history and has become "a brand-name defined by adventure, vibrancy and quality" (Detroit Free Press). It has commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by established and emerging composers.

# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

**This program features music from around the globe, highlighting the intersection of Latin American, Spanish and Arabic music.**

## **Suéltate las Cintas**, *Gustavo Santaolalla*

Gustavo Santaolalla's work goes all the way back to the late '60s as a teenage rock musician in Argentina. He is a prolific and varied composer and producer, and his current ventures include music for video games. He has attracted many international music and film awards, including two Oscars for Best Original Score, and several Grammy Awards.

This beautiful love song has been recorded by a wide range of artists.

## **El Arriero**, *Atahualpa Yupanqui (arr. Ronnie Malley)*

Atahualpa Yupanqui was an Argentine singer, songwriter, guitarist, and writer. He is considered the most important Argentine folk musicians of the 20th century, influencing generations of musicians, folklorists, and poets throughout the Americas with his lifelong commitment to championing causes for indigenous and working-class peoples.

This song, recorded in 1955, describes the harsh beauty of the Argentine countryside, and the struggles of El Arriero, or the mule driver, hurrying a herd of livestock through the hills. "The sorrows and the little cows walk on the same path. The sorrows are ours, the cows belong to someone else" says the refrain.

## **Taksim: Lamma bada**, *Traditional Arab-Andalusian*

For nearly 700 years the Andalusia region in southern Spain was inhabited by Arabic speaking Muslim peoples from northern Africa. In the 1400s, after Christian rulers took control of the area, the vibrant Muslim and Arabic cultures were destroyed or obscured as Muslims and Jews were forced to convert to Christianity or were expelled. And yet even today, the Arabic influence can still be found, as songs like Lamma bada have been passed down through centuries.

In Arabic and Turkish classical music, a taksim is an improvised musical interlude that usually precedes the performance of a traditional song. Usually, it is a solo or has very minimal accompaniment. In this performance, Ronnie Malley uses the song Lamma bada as the basis for his improvised oud solo.

## **El helwa di**, *Sayed Darwish (arr. Ronnie Malley)*

Sayed Darwish was an Egyptian musician and composer, working in the early 1900s. His works, blending Western instruments and harmony with classical Arab forms and Egyptian folk music, were extremely popular. This song represents a kind of idealized Egyptian life at the beginning of the twentieth century. A beautiful woman wakes up early to start baking bread. The sound of the rooster is heard ("kou kou kou kou") and the neighborhood cheerfully begins the work of the day.

## DIG DEEPER: LINKS TO FURTHER READING AND VIEWING

Learn more about Karim and see more performance highlights on [his website](#)

Discover more about Gustavo Santaolalla in this piece from [NPR's Alt. Latino](#)

[Discover Eighth Blackbird](#)

Listen to more music from [Ronnie Malley](#)

Read the [translated lyrics](#) of the songs performed in Spanish and Arabic



*Atahualpa Yupanqui poses in an Argentine radio studio, 1934*



*Egypt's Sayed Darwish, c. 1918*

## What's that instrument?

The **oud** is a string instrument with a rounded back, a deep almond or teardrop shaped body and a short neck. It has been the central instrument in Arabic musical traditions for centuries. Ouds can be found across Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In this performance, you'll see Ronnie Malley playing a modern oud.



## REFLECTION: FIRST THOUGHTS

Take a moment to make some notes about the experience of this performance, and what's comes to mind.

<b>Memorable Moments</b>	
<b>I Feel...</b>	
<b>I Wonder...</b>	

### CONSIDER...

Karim is trained as an opera singer. What do you think about opera? Is this what you imagine or expect an opera singer's performance to be like?

These pieces feature Spanish and Arabic lyrics. If you don't speak those languages, how did you connect to the music?

Have you ever heard music like this before?

In the conversation following the performance, Karim talks about the power of music to bring people together. What else do you think offers a way for different people to connect to each other?

We asked Karim what he likes to listen to outside of his professional life. What music brings you joy, energizes you, or reminds you of a happy memory?