

About the Artists

THE BOSTON CAMERATA

The Boston Camerata is America's preëminent early music ensemble. Founded in 1954, Camerata has been under the direction of French-born singer and scholar Anne Azéma since autumn of 2008.

Camerata's musical performances are well known for their blending of spontaneity and emotional commitment with careful research and scholarship. With its distinguished roster of singers and specialists in early instruments, Camerata produces a major concert series for audiences in the Greater Boston area, as well as touring regularly in the U.S. and throughout the world. These live performances present vital, historically informed performances of European music of the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque eras, and of early American music, sacred and secular. The Camerata's many LP and CD recordings, as well as its numerous media appearances and educational projects, have brought its work to audiences in every continent.

For this unique program, The Boston Camerata is joined by SHARQ Arabic Music Ensemble, to create a program of music from the various coastal areas around the Mediterranean, spanning more than 700 years, with an emphasis on the 12th and 13th centuries. This wide-ranging program circles the Mediterranean from Spain through Italy and Egypt all the way around to Morocco, all inspired by some aspect of the Christmas story.

SHARQ ARABIC MUSIC ENSEMBLE

The SHARQ Ensemble is dedicated to preserving and presenting traditional Arabic vocal and instrumental music. Their repertoire is one that is rarely played by even the most dedicated professionals in the Arab world. SHARQ chooses vocal and instrumental pieces that illustrate the rich and buoyant possibilities of the genre. SHARQ consists of young professional musicians from several cities in the Arab world and Turkey. Their geographic diversity demonstrates the variety of styles and heritages of the Near East, and their obvious synthesis. The musicians' youthful demeanor and performance style helps revitalize these classics, presenting them as a living art. Their education and cosmopolitan attitudes serve as a compelling and healthy representation of the modern and artistic Arab individual. With all the current political antagonisms, SHARQ utterly dissolves the fictitious dichotomy between the Arab and Western worlds.

SHARQ was founded in 1999 by Karim Nagi, a native of Cairo, Egypt, master percussionist and proponent of traditional Arab folkloric dance. The lead singer and Oud (Arab lute) player is Aboud Agha, originally from Aleppo, Syria. The ensemble is completed by multi-instrumentalist Boujemaa Razgui from Marrakech, Morocco.

The word “Sharq” means “East” in the Arabic language, and the goal of the ensemble is to present Arab vocal and instrumental music on original and authentic acoustic instruments. Those instruments include the oud (fretless lute), the nay (bamboo flute), the keman (Oriental violin) and the riqq (fish skin tambourine). SHARQ also wears custom traditional outfits with a 21st century adaptation.