



# e-Newsletter

HONORARY CONSULATE GENERAL OF SYRIA  
Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A

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"Syria, the cradle of civilization and the gateway to history."

## Al-Farah Choir in US



When I attended the last expatriates conference in Damascus in May 2007, at the end of the first day all the participants were invited to a special musical event at the new Opera House. It was a unique performance of two groups sharing the stage, and taking turn in singing: Hamzeh Chacour and his ensemble, and Al-Farah Choir of Our Lady of Damascus. Chacour is one of the best vocalists in the Arab world who has performed his Sufi songs all over the world. However, everyone might not necessarily be familiar with the Al-Farah choir.

The choir was founded about thirty years ago by the charismatic pastor of Our Lady of Damascus Father Elias Zehlaoui. The choir grew over time to become an impressive group that includes talented people from different denominations and different religious affiliation. And despite the fact that all are amateur, nevertheless their dedication and discipline has brought them to a very high and recognized professional level.



The renowned Kennedy Center for the Performing Art in Washington D.C. has reserved in its program for 2009 a festival entitled: *Arabesque: Art from the Arab World*. It is a three-week festival (from February 23 till March 15) where groups from 22 Arab countries will be performing in a wide range of artistic areas: music, theatre, dance, film, and literature. A delegation from the center has visited Syria last year, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture in Damascus, they met and interviewed several Syrian groups. Their final selection rested on the children group of Al-Farah choir to represent Syria in the Festival. Their generous invitation covers the travel expenses of the children and their chaperons totaling about 150 persons! Furthermore, as recognition of the outstanding talent of the children, and to the delight of the Ministry of Culture, the Syrian choir was selected to take part in the opening ceremony of the festival.

Upon completion of their Washington commitment, the choir was gracious to decide to visit and perform in other cities in US. I am glad they will spend two days with us in Detroit and then few more days in Florida before going back to Syria. Some of the alumni of the choir are now living in the U.S and Canada, and are very excited about the coming of the choir to the US. Even some of them who are computer savvy started a website dedicated to the American tour <http://www.choirofjoy.org/>



Detroit event will be certainly an opportunity not to be missed. It will be on Friday February 27th at the Silver Garden Theatre in Southfield. The recital starts at 8pm and will be preceded by a reception at 7pm. Everyone is welcome, but reservation is requested and can be easily made by sending an email to [rsvp@SyrianConsulate.org](mailto:rsvp@SyrianConsulate.org). Business attire is suggested for the event and children over 8 are most welcome. Our friends in Ohio and Ontario are encouraged to join us for the evening, the choir has promised to make it worthwhile their drive! Finally the Michigan and Florida part of the tour will be sponsored by the generosity of the Syrian community in the United States. Please contact us to advise you on how to make tax-exempt donations.

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