

Tarab Retreat 2022 - Faisal Zedan Residency

\$1,000 Grant from the Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund – April 2022

Tarab Retreat 2022 Brings Arabic, Balkan, Indian, and Persian Music and Dance to the Colorado Front Range in Five Different Venues, In Person

By Pete Jacobs

Pete Jacobs and Meg York are musicians, world music and dance enthusiasts and seekers of Tarab – the magical connection between musician, dancer and audience that inspires higher and higher levels of creativity, expression and ecstasy.

The Tarab Retreat is patterned after the Mendocino Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp in California and is held in Colorado using regional teachers. It is a local version of Mendocino without the two-day drive and without the mosquitoes!



The Tarab Retreat began in 2018 as an opportunity for dancers and musicians to improve their skills and experience the connection between musicians and dancers that comes from live interaction and improvisation. We wanted to put on an event that featured regional teachers (mostly Colorado and New Mexico) and was accessible to local dancers and musicians. For 2020 and 2021, due to COVID-19, we had to cancel the in-person event at the La Foret retreat center in Colorado Springs and instead put on a hybrid event with a combination of Zoom classes, live music and dance instruction and performances broadcast to remote participants using a variety of platforms.



For 2022, we went back to in-person performances at five different venues around the Front Range. Audiences and artists alike felt it was a profound undertaking.

Tarab Retreat 2022

This year we were excited to feature workshops by **Faisal Zedan**. Born in Lebanon and raised in Syria, Faisal is now based in El Cerrito, California. He is a master of the derbekki, a hand drum played throughout the Middle East.

Besides the drum workshops for students, a special feature this year was the professional cross-pollination between Faisal, playing derbekki, and Colorado-based **Nabin Shrestha**, who grew up in Nepal and is a master player of the tabla, a traditional Indian and Nepali drum.



We used the AWLF grant mostly to pay for Faisal's airfare and the rental of Lumonics Studio. Just getting Faisal to Colorado created an explosion of creativity, since he is a percussion powerhouse who loves to teach and collaborate with all levels of musicians. His depth of knowledge is astonishing.

This culminated in a stunning studio audio recording, designed for future dance accompaniment, recorded at FTM Studios in Lakewood.

Sun., June 12 – Concert, Columbine Unity Church, Boulder

Featuring: Hindole Manjumdar, South Indian Tabla Maestro

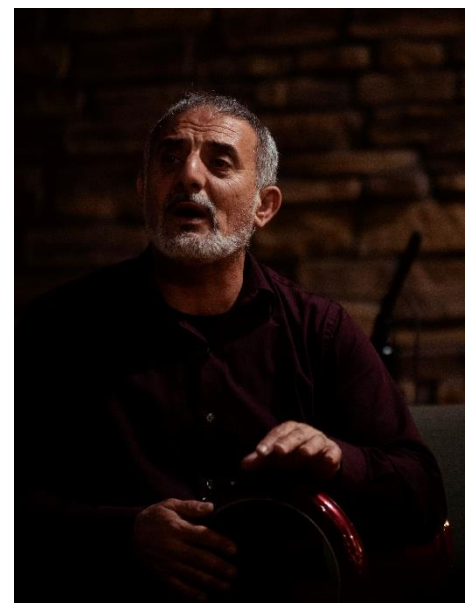
Maestro Manjumdar, currently based in Wisconsin, was in town for two days. Our contact was Bijay Shrestha, and Pete and Meg put together an improvisatory concert at Columbine. We had about 45 people present, many coming from Aurora and South Denver.

Thurs., June 16 – Dinner and Jam Session, Amman Hookah Lounge in Aurora

Featuring: Pete Jacobs, Meg York, Faisal Zedan, Mustafa Kammer and friends

Music of Lebanon featuring songs of Fairuz. We played in the outdoor area in front of the storefront lounge in Aurora. Our contact was Meg's friend Mustafa Kammar, who was thrilled to meet Faisal Zedan. Faisal spent the evening giving Mus lots of life and music advice. A saturated experience overall.

Meg organized our setlists to showcase tunes that everyone knows, then we showed up and jammed them for an appreciative casual hang out at a Hookah lounge. A hookah lounge is like a cigar bar – participants smoke flavored tobacco out of ornate water pipes while chatting about politics, life issues, and drinking coffee. The scene is mostly for younger Arabs, but we had some of the older generation join the event to hear our music. These older folks really gave us their complete attention, whistling when we ended a tune, clapping after taksim solos, and were very complimentary.



Our artists were treated to a Syrian village home-cooked feast, and played over several hours for an appreciative, multi-generational pan-Arabic audience of 75 people in person, and this gig was also streamed by Meg's friend Behrooz Baharnast to a Farsi language Whatsapp channel, called Andalib, which has 114 members all over Iran, Spain and the US.

Also pretty much in the Arabic youth culture, if you like something you immediately stream it. At the Hookah lounge, the estimate is that about 30 to 40 phones were streaming parts of the evening at any one time. Unknown numbers of shares, but in the hundreds if not thousands of shares in the Arabic- and Farsi-speaking social media communities.

Fri., June 17 – Jam Session

Featuring: Nabin Shrestha and Faisal Zedan, at an apartment in Westminster. Tunes included 7's (322 into 223) and Tintal, an 8/8 Indian rhythm. Tehi endings.

Faisal soaked up traditional Hindustani classical music. Meg and Faisal enjoyed a home-cooked meal with Nabin and his lovely family, wife Areena and their two-year old beautiful baby boy.

Tues., June 21 (morning) – Worthmore Refugee Resettlement Agency Concert, Aurora

Some 30 attendees and staff from the refugee-staffed dental clinic joined us for a singalong. Tung Pham of Gora Orkestar was also there to learn how to play for belly dancers. 1666 Elmira Street, Aurora, CO 80010

Tues., June 21 (evening) – Lumonics Light and Sound Gallery, Denver

Bijay and Nabin (also known as JamKeyJam) performed duo material, plus Moon Art and the 7's (322 into 223) and Tintal jam that Faisal had



learned at the session on the 17th with Nabin.

We had open dancing, with 20 people in attendance, enjoyed especially by the owners of Lumonics. Lumonics is a gallery that has featured illuminated modern sculpture glowing with a synced sound system, since long before Meow Wolf.

Wed., June 22 (afternoon) - Percussion/Folklore Workshop, Lakewood

Eight students worked with Faisal Zedan to learn percussion technique and much more.

Wed., June 22 (evening) - Crave Mediterranean Grill, Glendale

Featuring: Mustafa Kammar, Pete Jacobs, Meg, Phrank Bramlitt

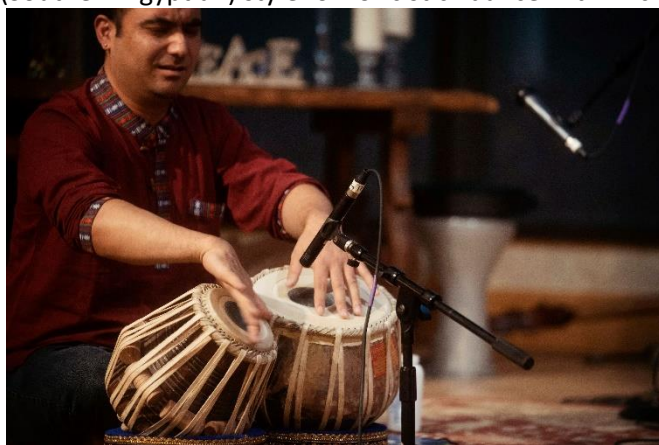
Seventy-five restaurant diners enjoyed our musical offering. It was especially touching to see Sabe Kammer, Ethiopian dancer, and Samantha Lynn, Anglo belly dancer, trading off. Eric Koenig also wowed everyone with his crisp hip movements and beautiful hand gestures.



Thurs., June 23 – Drum Workshop and Closing Concert, Boulder

Featuring: 7 Students and Faisal Zedan, Nabin, Bijay, Phrank, Pete Jacobs, Meg York, Meagan Chandler

The music included a JamKeyJam set (Moon Art, 7s) and an Arabic set (Alf Layla Wa Layla into Clarinet Taksim, drum solo for Samantha, Morghe Saher for Eric Veil Daret Alayem, Laylet Hob, Jurjuna, Lama Bada, Zeina). And, from the percussion workshops: a Saidi (Southern Egyptian) style folkloric stick dance with Eric and Samantha Lynn. The evening ended with all 30 people in attendance participating in Ethiopian clapping and dance circles with drumming by Faisal and his students with Sabe Kemmer, Oromo Da Dance, from Aurora, CO.



July 17-18 and 23-24 - Renaissance Festival

Featuring: Meg, Faisal, Phrank Bramlitt and Samantha Lynn

Meg, Faisal, Phrank and Samantha performed over four days at the Colorado Renaissance Festival.

These shows were seen by 500-600 people per day, more than 2000 over four days.

Many ethnic audience members felt included in our concerts and sang along with our tunes or played our extra loaner percussion instruments owned by Musical Ambassadors of Peace that Meg has on hand for just such an occasion. We look forward to uploading the event videos to social media so we can continue to share our music and experiences with a wider audience.

[Learn more about the Tarab Retreat and enjoy some musical clips at their website.](#)

All photos: Lisa Siciliano