

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
COMMUNICATION ARTS

# CONNECTIONs

ISSUE 2 2017-2018





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# #REINVENT COMMUNICATION

B.A. in Television & Film - Minor in Audiovisual Production

**THEY SAY IT'S NEWS**

**WE SAY IT'S EMPOWERMENT**

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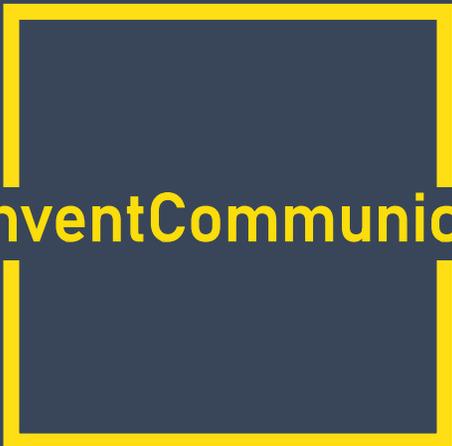
# #REINVENT COMMUNICATION

**B.A. and Minor in Multimedia Journalism**



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*Communication Arts students, staff and faculty at LAU*

# Dean's message



**Dr. Costantine Daher**

**Interim Dean  
School of Arts and Sciences**

Dear LAU community,

I would like to welcome you to the second issue of Connections.

We, at the School of Arts and Sciences, are used to being leaders in our fields. At no other time has this been more accurate than with the magazine that you are reading now.

Staying true to the department's strategic goals, Connections is a celebration of student, faculty, and staff achievements in the communication arts.

What started as a humble idea for a newsletter quickly blossomed into a unique project that elevates the Department of Communication Arts and the School of Arts and Sciences to new heights. As the first and the only magazine to be created entirely by a department, Connections is the culmination of student productivity and faculty leadership. Produced with a core of four journalism students, alongside faculty from the department, the inaugural issue of the magazine was a shy, yet brave, attempt at providing students with the platform to showcase their innovative nature.

Now in its second issue, Connections has already achieved higher status, evident in the number of students it has succeeded in attracting to form the essence of the magazine. With two senior journalism students acting as associate editors, and a proactive team of student journalists, photographers, content designers, and promoters, Issue 2 is a true reflection of the university's core values of student centeredness. Offering both experienced and novice students the opportunity to start their career here at home at LAU is the noble goal we all strive to achieve. As the School stresses student engagement, it seeks to highlight the value of experiential learning. While some departments achieve this in a laboratory, Communication Arts realize it through a magazine that exhibits students' productivity in writing features, conducting interviews, capturing photographs, and designing artwork, in addition to paying tribute to those who teach them by highlighting faculty achievements in scientific research, cinematic productions, and artistic performances.

Perhaps as important as student engagement is the spirit of oneness that the magazine promotes. Although traditionally conceptualized in the field as a journalistic endeavor, the magazine goes beyond tradition to encompass the various talents that make up the communication, journalism, TV/film, and performing arts student body. As it brings together its students, Connections enhances collaboration among the various majors.

With these objectives, CommArts Connections further cements the Department of Communications Arts as the flagship department at LAU, and as a leader in the Arab region.

As I close off this statement, I would like to thank Dr. Kozman for offering her valuable time to lead our students to reach their full potential.

And now, I wish you all happy reading!

# Chairperson's message



**Dr. Jad Melki**

**Chairperson  
Department of Communication Arts**

What is a flagship department at a university? I am often asked this question, ever since we included it in our strategic plan as a goal to achieve, but specially after our administration started using that term to describe the Communication Arts at LAU.

Many US universities have "flagship" status designated to their top and most prestigious programs. In 2004, University of North Florida, for example, designated six programs as flagships, including the Department of Music. According to UNF, the designation aims to "further the university's aspiration to become a regional institution of national quality."

What distinguishes a flagship program is its history, reputation and prestige, the quality of its faculty, and the level of its students' success. Universities usually invest significantly in their flagship programs, which in return propel the whole institution forward. They ensure the program sustains excellent facilities, houses exceptional faculty, and attracts top-notch students.

On the flip side, the university expects a lot more from flagship programs, at the level of scholarly and artistic output, the standards of excellence in teaching, the attraction of grants as well as national and international exposure through awards and recognition. All this also requires significant change and adaptability, as well as strong accountability—matters not easily introduced to an academic environment.

You've probably heard the famous quote: "Everybody wants change, but nobody wants to change." In an old academic institutional environment where processes have not changed for decades and individuals have become comfortable with the status quo, the inertia of changing even the most minute process becomes a formidable challenge that requires justification, sensitivity and perseverance, as well as a keen anticipation of how this small change will affect the whole system.

Add accountability to change and you have a laborious task at hand. In 1889, Theodore Roosevelt wrote about his experience as new commissioner introducing change and accountability to the New York Police Department: "I am having a hard row to hoe. I have made this commission a living force, and in consequence the outcry among the spoilsmen has become furious; it has evidently frightened ... the [U.S.] president... telling me that the law should be rigidly enforced where the people will stand it, and handled gingerly elsewhere. But I answered militantly; that as long as I was responsible the law should be enforced up to the handle every where; fearlessly and honestly."

Thankfully, our department has embraced change and accountability at all levels, in record time, and with enthusiasm. I often chat with faculty, students and staff about the breakneck speed the department has advanced in the past three years. From upgraded facilities and equipment, hiring many exceptional faculty, and adding new study abroad programs, to reinventing majors and minors and for the first time in the department's history introducing graduate studies—an MA in Multimedia Journalism that launches in Fall 2019; from reversing the trend of a hemorrhaging enrollment to an annual increase of 4.5 percent—against the odds of a struggling Lebanese economy that has hit hard the enrollment of all Lebanese universities. Add to that the record high we have reached in research and artistic output, student and faculty awards, fund raising, and media exposure.

All these accomplishments earned vigorously by the many faculty, staff and students who have gone above and beyond their normal duties and with little fanfare or expectation of recognition. And those who were skeptical in the past, have embraced the new department and its motto to #ReinventCommunication. Much of their work now is focused on our upcoming 50th anniversary in 2020, a big moment for us, which we will celebrate with a lot of fanfare.

Beyond our department, many colleagues, alumni and supporters from the community have lent a steady and generous hand. LAU's administration, particularly President Joseph Jabbra, Provost George Nasr and VP Elise Salem, has full-heartedly supported our endeavors and at every opportunity beseeched us to keep pushing forward. We promised them, and we promise you, to do so "fearlessly and honestly" and with a big smile!

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# Degrees & Programs

# 4 BAs and 5 Minors

## Multimedia Journalism

Bachelor of Arts and Minor

## Creative and Journalistic Writing Minor



Our BA prepares students for careers in print, broadcast, and multimedia news, offers courses at the forefront of the field and equips students for graduate studies.

The two minors in Multimedia Journalism and Creative and Journalistic Writing offer students the opportunity to learn basic journalism and creative writing skills, respectively, in as few as two semesters.

## Performing Arts

Bachelor of Arts and Minor



The BA covers a wide range of skills, including acting, voice training, body movement, writing, technical skills, and crafting with lights. The program also prepares students for graduate studies.

The Minor in Performing Arts offers students basic skills and competencies in dance, music, and theater.

# Television & Film

Bachelor of Art

# Audiovisual Production

Minor



Our BA in Television and Film offers practical skills and conceptual knowledge and prepares students for work in the various production, creative, and managerial professions.

The Minor in Audiovisual Production introduces students to the profession of audio, video and film production and provides media production competencies.

# Communication

Bachelor of Art

# Advertising & Public Relations

Minor



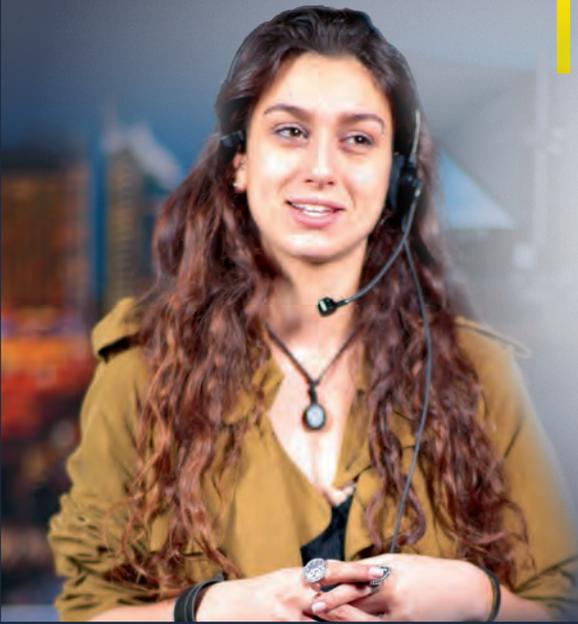
The BA in Communication covers three areas: Advertising and Public Relations, Social and Political Communication, and Interpersonal and Organizational Communication.

The Minor in Advertising and Public Relations introduces students to the role of communication in society and teaches them the main concepts, methods, and approaches used in the advertising and public relations professions.

# MA in Multimedia Journalism

## Multimedia Journalism

### Master of Arts



The MA in Multimedia Journalism covers multimedia journalism, digital innovation, and media research and teaching. It offers both a research and a professional track. During the first year, students in both tracks take common courses, and based on their emphasis, proceed accordingly the following year.

Students in the professional track take additional professional courses and culminate with a journalistic project and professional internship. Those in the research track attend theoretical and research-oriented courses and conclude with a thesis and a research apprenticeship. Both tracks are required to complete a teaching apprenticeship that qualifies them to teach university-level media courses.

## Pursue Your MA in Multimedia Journalism for all the Right Reasons

By Fatima Al Mahmoud

Graduating is always accompanied with a sense of pride and accomplishment, but what follows is the pressure of planning out the next step. Should you pursue an MA degree immediately? Or should you immerse yourself in the job market first? Can you do both at the same time?

No matter what your next step will be, here are five reasons why you should pursue an MA in Multimedia Journalism at LAU.

### 1. Explore the horizons of your career path

A two-year program, the MA introduces all students to digital innovation and media research during their first year. Based on their emphasis, students then choose either a professional or research track and proceed accordingly.

### 2. Work on research, teaching, and digital production with your faculty

Aside from the significant tuition reductions, the graduate assistantships offered by the MA also provide students with enriching working experience alongside their professors.

### 3. Qualify to teach university-level journalism

Opt for the teaching apprenticeship and get the chance to collaborate with the Department of Education for a co-taught course in media pedagogy.

### 4. Build a strong grounding in media research and theory

While Arab media remains an understudied field, the existing research on it comes from outside the region. Following the research track of the MA, you can regain control of the narrative and become one of the leading research scholars, after having built a strong media research grounding and a network of media professionals.

### 5. Reinvent communication

Once a communication arts student, always a pioneer on a mission to reinvent communication. Everything you learn and everything you give back to the department is part of your calling to help reinvent communication. ■

# Study Abroad



## Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change

– Salzburg, Austria

The Salzburg Academy is a three-week summer program in Salzburg, Austria, open to graduate and undergraduate students from all majors. Students discuss pressing global issues, produce multimedia modules, and engage in research and debates with 75 students and 15 faculty from across the globe, while exploring the exquisite Austrian nature and culture and Mozart’s birthplace, Salzburg.



## The Danish School of Media and Journalism

– Aarhus, Denmark

At DMJX, one of the leading schools of journalism and media in Europe, students learn news reporting and digital media storytelling skills through hands-on courses with world-class instructors and professionals. They produce news stories, including documentaries and features, along with acquiring technical and editing skills, studying risk reporting, and expand their views on world politics in a culturally-rich setting.



## Stockton University

– New Jersey, USA

Stockton University offers three different programs for students with an interest in performing arts: BA in Dance with emphasis in Dance Performance, Dance Studio Operations, Dance Arts Administration, Dance Pre-Movement Sciences, Dance Theater/Dance, and Dance Pre-Physical Therapy Dance; a BA in Music with emphasis in Instrumental and Vocal Music Studies; and a BA in Theater with emphasis in Theater Administration, Theater Performance, and Theater Design and Production. The school fosters students’ creativity as it aims at raising awareness on the importance of arts. Studying arts develops students’ critical thinking skills and allows them to function better in a team.



## Hogeschool University of Applied Sciences

– Utrecht, The Netherlands

LAU’s study abroad program has a newly establish exchange agreement with HU of Applied Sciences where students from both universities trade places for an entire semester. The exchange is part of the intensive “Europe in the World” program, where 24 students come together to report on topics that include culture and identity in Europe, its relationship with developing countries, and development of the European Union, among others. The university’s campus, Utrecht Science Park, is located on the outskirts of Utrecht, in the center of The Netherlands. ■



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# Events

Communication Arts in Action





*"LAU is acknowledging most if not all talents that are happening around and across Lebanon."*

- Georgette Gebara

# Festival NEXT 2018: A Commitment to Reinvent

By Sharen Aoun and Rana Tabbara

Reinventing communication is not a mere hashtag the Department of Communication Arts created to establish a presence in the online world. It is a powerful emblem that reflects the department's commitment to imagining innovative ways to think of communication.

This commitment took center stage on May 8 when the second edition of Festival NEXT debuted on LAU's Beirut campus. Festival NEXT, which is the new format of the renowned theater festival, included the four majors making up the department. In addition to theater, the four-day long event encompassed music, dance, journalism, communication, and TV/film through workshops, exhibitions, performances, and screenings.

The attendees' chattering sound and their diminutive giggles filled Irwin's theater and faded into utter silence as the light dwindled into the darkness. A beam of light appeared on stage. Music started playing. Shortly after, LAU's ground began trembling beneath the

steps of ballet dancers while musical notes entangled the auditorium's occupied red chairs.

Music out, lights on: Welcome to Festival NEXT 2018. The opening dance drew the path of the ballet pioneer Georgette Gebara and dedicated 2018's event to her legacy.

"I cannot begin to say how emotional I got when I was told that I was being honored for my career," Gebara said. "LAU is acknowledging most if not all talents that are happening around and across Lebanon."

After honoring the Lebanese dancer for her shining career in ballet and celebrating the changes she brought about in the dancing community, the festival continued its celebration of legacies by paying tribute to the forefather of the country's musical culture and the iconic singer, songwriter, and composer Wadiah El Safi.

"The festival is a sign of life," revealed senior instructor of music Joseph

Khalife, who organized and conducted the "Tribute to Wadiah El Safi" concert.

The Gulbenkian amphitheater was packed with people who believe in the importance of keeping folk music alive and those who find a connection to the Tarab genre beyond the played notes. Carla Ramia and Jalal Possik were acclaimed to be the two singers of the night.

But, not long after El Safi's music started playing, the crowd joined the two performers and the musicians, singing, clapping and tapping their way into the rhythms.

"The event brought happiness to our hearts because it showed our heritage and Wadiah El Safi is a legendary artist of our country," said Ramia. "Students are now familiar with a different type of music that they didn't really know before."

"He is the definition of the true, beautiful, and clean Lebanese heritage," added Possik.



A cultural vibe was generated among everyone who set foot in LAU during these four days. Beyond initiating a sense of belonging to an artistic yet educated culture and exhibiting legacies' histories, Festival NEXT gave journalism students the opportunity to unveil their own minor "legacy" through presenting their capstone projects.

From a story rich with interviews, to pure research, journalism's soon-to-be graduates tackled unique topics that highlight some important matters of society.

Those included the health implications of the garbage crisis in Lebanon, Lebanese parliamentary female candidates' self-representation on Twitter, and the Kurdish referendum.

According to multimedia journalism student Zainab Bachir, the capstone initiative incorporated in the festival gave her hope for a better future in journalism. All the hard work and effort, she believed, were worth it

once they had the opportunity to exhibit their project.

The journalism unit additionally organized a workshop on conflict reporting by war correspondent David Enders, and a workshop on dialogue-based storytelling and community building on social media by visiting faculty from the Danish School of Media and Journalism, Gitte Luk and Annette Holm.

While moving back and forth between its coverage of the performing arts and journalism units, the multidisciplinary event took a stop in the TV/film unit to discuss "Hedi." The screening of the film was followed by a Q&A session with the main actor Majd Mastoura.

"The hardest scene that I had to shoot was when Hedi had a fight with his mom, the conflict lied in acting it out with emotions," Mastoura said.

After being a home for arts, workshops, and everything else in between, LAU's

stages closed their doors on May 11 marking the end of Festival NEXT 2018.

The four-day festival reached an end with a closing ceremony dedicated to honoring one of the department's own, award-winning journalist and Lebanese TV presenter Rima Maktabi. A prosperous career in different news organizations, among which are CNN and Al Arabiya, made her the best candidate to win the inaugural Communication Arts Alumni Award.

"My advice is to face hard days with an open heart and perseverance," said Maktabi.

"Perhaps you think that when you graduate you wouldn't find any jobs or that the market is saturated but I tell you I am sure everyone of you will be able to reinvent communication, reinvent themselves, and reinvent media in the Arab world, specifically Lebanon." ■

# MedLeb: Creating “New Directions”

By Sally Farhat



*“The importance of the association lies in the role it plays in joining the forces of all media academics and that of media students.”*

- Melhem Riachy

A university campus in December is usually swarming with students rushing from one class to another, trying their best not to miss their exams. This December, however, LAU’s Beirut campus witnessed a different type of action.

Along with the students, faculty and media professionals from all around the country joined Lebanese politicians to launch the inaugural academic conference of the Association of Media Educators in Lebanon (MedLeb) under the patronage of the Minister of Information Melhem Riachy in December 2017.

Founded that same year, MedLeb is an independent organization dedicated to promoting cooperation among journalism, media, and communication programs; advancing scientific research; elevating curricular standards; fostering media literacy; and strengthening the relationship between educators, professionals, policymakers, and the industry.

Hosted by LAU’s Department of Communication Arts, the conference was sponsored by the Lebanese Ministry of Information, and co-sponsored by Deutsche Welle Akademie and the European Union.

“Lebanese Media Education: New Directions,” brought together media institutions, civil society organizations, and 400 media educators, students, journalists, and activists from 20 universities.

“This initiative is very important because having anything that can unite the industry together will make it stronger and more powerful,” said Karma Khayat, deputy news and political program manager at Al-Jadeed television.

Over two days, participants examined media research, laws, curricula, ethics, new technologies, entrepreneurship, business models and their implications on politics, national development, employment, and democratic governance.

“This conference is very important as it sheds light on new techniques of working and teaching in the field of media,” said the Director of the Faculty of Information at the Lebanese University, Professor Hani Safi.

The first day of the conference included four sessions. In the opening session, LAU President Dr. Joseph G. Jabbara, welcomed Riachy’s support of MedLeb and highlighted the importance of elevating media education and fighting for freedom of expression and press freedom in Lebanon and the region, especially in an era of political turmoil and technological revolutions.

Following Jabbara’s statement, Riachy praised MedLeb’s mission and its goals to raise the level of journalism in Lebanon and connect the industry with university graduates and academics.

“The importance of the association lies in the role it plays in joining the forces of

all media academics and that of media students,” he said. “When we improve and join the forces of education and the curricula, we increase the power of students.”

In turn, Director General of the Ministry of Information Hassan Falha expressed his appreciation for MedLeb and its success in gathering media professionals and academics from all Lebanese universities and regions.

Ending the speeches, the Representative of the Association of Media Educators in Lebanon Dr. Mirna Abou Zeid, highlighted the six objectives prioritized by MedLeb: elevating media curriculum in the country, developing media research among academics, expanding media and digital literacy throughout Lebanese society and teaching institutions, encouraging creativity and innovation, helping retrieve Lebanese media’s prominent role in the region, and reemphasizing media ethics.

The conference sessions consisted of six panels, and a lecture and workshop about peace journalism by keynote speaker and Chair of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, Dr. Jake Lynch.

“Having an association of media educators should allow for the effective circulation of new ideas about what journalism should be doing,” said Lynch. “I think that is important because journalism needs reform and the support of the public.” ■

# The Association of Media Educators in Lebanon – MedLeb: a Profile

By Natasha Salloum



By definition, an association addresses the protection of its members' interests and their legitimate rights. It aims to improve its members' financial and social status and to represent them in all matters related to the work place.

By definition, an association addresses the protection of its members' interests and their legitimate rights. It aims to improve its members' financial and social status and to represent them in all matters related to the work place.

According to Riachy, several meetings were held to join the Academic Media Community in Lebanon to the Ministry of Information. The result was the emergence of a committee that decided on roles and goals.

## Roals and Goals

To support the academic coordination between the different academic units in Lebanon in relation to media majors and specialties; to support graduates of the media & information faculties at the level of standards of union membership; to prepare graduates for the competition in the work place; and to coordinate with the Editors' Association.

To organize the relationship between the academic units and the official entities, especially the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in terms of modernizing standards and developing academic programs.

To communicate with various official and private media organizations in order to strengthen the relationship between university education and professional development to meet the local market needs and challenges; to develop scientific research skills; and to organize joint research activities at the national level through funding, development and publishing.

The association was established in an effort to control media affairs and examine its course and developments, especially with respect to values, ethics and professional standards. Its main aim is to guide the track that the Lebanese media follow and set the standards high enough to match the field's demands. ■



The Association of Media Educators in Lebanon

## Panels

Entrepreneurship, Investment, and New Business Models (Moderator: Hani Safi)

Media Law and Regulations (Moderator: Jad Melki, Chairperson of the Department of Communication Arts at LAU and Director of the Institute of Media Research and Training)

Media Curricula and Media Literacy (Moderator: Mirna Abou Zeid)

Media Research, Graduates, and Continuing Education (Moderator: Professor Nahawand El Kadri, Faculty of Information and Documentation, Lebanese University)

Professional and Ethical Standards and Social Media Challenges (Moderator: Assistant Professor Rami Najem, Faculty Director, Lebanese University)

Communication Technologies and Digital Media (Moderator: Ali Takach, Dean of the Faculty of Mass Communication and Fine Arts, Al-Maaref University)

# MedLeb – Member profiles

## Meet the personalities behind the Association of Media Educators in Lebanon

By Ahmad Karakira and Rana Tabbara



### Dr. Jad Melki

Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies, LAU  
Chairperson, Department of Communication Arts, LAU  
Director, Institute of Media Research and Training, LAU

*"There are many associations, but they're national but not discipline specific. So, there is the European-Arab Association of Communication Educators, there is US-Arab Association of Communication Educators, but there are no national specific journalism associations."*

Melki is also a visiting faculty at the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change and an affiliated researcher at the International Center on Media and the Public Agenda (ICMPA) at the University of Maryland, College Park. Melki believes that the Association of Media Educators in Lebanon is the first of its kind in the region.



### Dr. Mirna Abou Zeid

Media professor, Lebanese University  
Communication consultant,  
United Nations Development Program for Lebanon

*"Our role is to change the old curricula, provide trainings for students, and convince media organizations in our own way to only hire experienced students in the field."*

Abou Zeid's emphasis is media laws & regulations. Abou Zeid is also a former professor of communication and mass media studies at Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, and was once dean of the Faculty of Information and Communication at Antonine University. To Abou Zeid, the current media industry is very traditional and in need of change.



### Huguette Salame

Coordinator of public relations and media,  
Lebanese Canadian University,  
Editor, Al-Masira magazine

*"As competitive universities, we are working for the sake of higher education and media education in Lebanon, especially in updating the curricula that aim to build a media character for the students rather than just reporting news."*

Salame is interested in women's issues. She participated in Women on the Front Lines, a conference that focuses on the role of women in diplomacy at all levels, organized by the May Chidiac Foundation, and partook in the Women's Day celebration that honored remarkable Lebanese women for their accomplishments in the presence of the Minister of Women Affairs Jean Oghassapian. Salame sees the MedLeb initiative as an opportunity to build a new media character.



## Dr. Ali Takach

Dean of the Faculty of Mass Communication and Fine Arts,  
Al-Maaref University

---

*"The goal of this association is to broaden the horizons of media students to engage them with each other."*

---

Takach has worked on the translation and production of mass communication studies in Lebanon. Before being appointed dean, he completed many Lebanese educational tasks including research, education and curricular design. Professionally, he held different managerial positions at a number of international and Lebanese media production companies such as Euronews and France 24. According to Takach, this initiative is student-mediated.



## Dr. Hani Safi

Professor, Lebanese University  
Director of the Faculty of Information - Section 2, LU

---

*"I truly believe that media educators can now correct the media's path that was deviated into the wrong direction. We are finally back on the right track, giving justice to the forgotten profession and its educators."*

---

Safi is also a writer and journalist. He works as an analyst at Radio Voix du Liban and was a former news producer at MTV Lebanon. He obtained his master's degree in journalism from the Lebanese University, and his PhD in philosophy from The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK). Safi has high hopes in the established association.



## Dr. Rami Najem

Assistant Professor, Lebanese University  
Faculty Director, Faculty of Information - Section 1, LU

---

*"The importance of the association lies in providing guidelines and cooperation work between universities through sharing experiences and accurate material for media students."*

---

Najem earned his PhD in communication and mass media at Université Lumière Lyon 2. Najem is a former assistant professor at Université Libanaise Institut des Beaux-Arts. According to him, the association's goal is to create cooperation ties between 20 media universities in Lebanon.

# MDLAB 2018: New Ventures into Media Literacy and Faculty

By Rana Tabbara

*"LAU is working toward implementing the principles and values of media literacy and disseminating them in the Arab region."*

- Jad Melki

Events



Put 75 media enthusiasts, 20 speakers, 10 volunteers, cameras, and food together on a university campus in a typical Beirut summer, and you'll get innovative projects ready to tackle media literacy.

The Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB) returned in its sixth edition on August 7 at the Lebanese American University, to once again, fulfill its role in developing media and digital literacy education in the region, as well as to provide the needed training, curricular material and resources that can support individuals and institutions.

MDLAB runs each year as an intensive summer academy that brings together academics, students, journalists and activists to learn, train, network and socialize on all matters related to media and digital literacy. This year the academy was organized by LAU's Institute of Media Research and Training (IMRT) and sponsored by the Bosch Foundation, Deutsche Welle Academy, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European Union (EU), and UNESCO.

This year's academy brought together 75 media advocates, ranging from faculty members to students, journalists, and activists who come from different nationalities and

backgrounds. The participating countries included Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Algeria, as well as Germany, the US, and Bulgaria.

The 10-day program is at the forefront of the battle to counter extremist ideologies by advancing media and digital literacy education in the Arab region. The academy tackles topics of media, radicalization, human rights, feminism, empowering marginalized communities, and digital security, among others.

MDLAB 2018 kicked off with a salutary speech by Chairperson of the Department of Communication Arts at LAU and Founder and Director of MDLAB Dr. Jad Melki, who laid out the academy's mission to integrate a media literacy curriculum in all universities in the Arab world by 2020.

"LAU is working toward implementing the principles and values of media literacy and disseminating them in the Arab region with the objective of reinforcing critical thinking, responsible media, digital empowerment, civic participation, and social justice," said Dr. Melki.

"MDLAB is proud to be part of a global network of media literacy educators led by the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change. During the six

years MDLAB has been operating, over 50 universities and schools in the Arab region have adopted media literacy in their curricula."

Besides attending lectures, students and academics at MDLAB took part in workshops on various digital skills, including photo shooting and editing, audio editing and podcasting, video production, and data analytics. These workshops were given by TV/Film Studio Technician, Samer Beyhum, and MDLAB Alumni Mohamad Gameel and Haidar Hamzooz, assisted by a digital squad consisting of LAU communication arts undergraduates.

Each year, MDLAB makes sure to recruit students in the positions of Website Editor, Press Team, Social Media Team, Production Team, Live Team, PR and Events Squad and Digital Squad to enrich them with proper experience and make good use of their enthusiasm and hard work, as well as to keep the fun going.

According to communication undergraduate, Rawane Itani, being part of MDLAB is not always easy but is sure worth all the efforts.

"The experience was amazing and enlightening, meeting and interacting with so many people and getting to work in the PR and Events Squad made me enhance my communication skills,"

said Itani. "Besides the product we gave, I will never forget the cohesion in our relationship as a team; we had fun and spread fun."

Faculty participants also attend pedagogical workshops led by Assistant Professor of Multimedia Journalism in the Department of Communication Arts at LAU and MDLAB's Director of Research Dr. Claudia Kozman, Associate Professor of Education Dr. Mona Nabhani, and Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Lindsay Palmer.

These workshops focus on curricular and syllabi development, as well as active and experiential learning methods – methods of teaching that LAU is well known for championing. The goal of these workshops is to equip faculty participants with the skills needed to advance media literacy education at their home universities and to incorporate the latest pedagogical practices in their courses.

"Faculty development has become a crucial component of MDLAB," said Dr. Kozman. "As we try to spread media literacy in the Arab world, it is essential that we also invest in the faculty who are championing these courses in their home institutions. The most effective way to do this is to provide them with the proper tools that create a positive learning environment, which enhances student engagement with the course material."

In its second week, MDLAB 2018 featured a talk on gender and media, in which Melki examined the concept of symbolic annihilation, highlighting the problematic normalization of beauty in the media.

The lecture was followed by a panel discussion on media, minorities and the marginalized, moderated by Dr. Palmer, and comprising of female activists and spokeswomen from NGOs such as Marsa, Helem, and the Center for Lebanese Studies.

"Being different doesn't mean being less, it just means different," said the panelist Rouba AbuZeid, an intersectional feminist and a mother of a child with Autism-spectrum disorder. "People with special needs should be given different opportunities that fit their capabilities and skills."

Another discussion about women in the media was triggered after Palmer's lecture on gender in media reporting and female war correspondents, which was followed by MDLAB's second panel that aimed at exploring women and confronting gender discrimination.

"I am super impressed with the topics picked for the sessions because they are highly diverse and are less tackled in the Arab world," said Egyptian participant Rana Khaled, who is a PhD student at the University of Logan in Switzerland. "The lectures on gender are an opportunity for people from all over the Arab world to understand how the media can be highly connected to gender, and how social norms and values influence how

people perceive media and gender, and vice versa."

The final panel of the academy explored the media experiences of the 2018 Lebanese elections' non-mainstream candidates. The panel, which was moderated by Maya Majzoub from Dubai TV, included six panelists among whom, were Joumana Haddad, Mark Daou, and Bassam Abou Zeid. The panel was followed by the screening of "Fallen Television," a documentary by Maya Majzoub.

The closing lecture was conducted by Associate Professor in the Language and Culture Department at Arctic University of Norway Sarphan Uzunoglu, who presented talks about data visualization in newsrooms, and privacy, surveillance, and security of social media.

One of MDLAB's highlights this year, was MDLAB Got Talent, a show that brought together all the student and faculty participants with a special appearance of four remarkable public figures; Aline Lahhoud, Lebanese singer, El 3ama, local blogger, Daily Question, LAU - famous blogger and Ramzi Hobeishy, local entertainer. MDLAB Got Talent was purely organized by LAU student employees.

Alongside lectures and panels, student participants worked on their final projects while the faculty worked on their university curricula. MDLAB concluded on August 17 with the presentations of projects, the distribution of certificates and a closing ceremony. ■



# LAU's Arts and Sciences High School Fair: CommArts Students and Faculty Hone Young Skills

By Rana Tabbara

Around 1,900 high-school students swarmed LAU's two campuses to get a taste of university life ahead of their time. They gathered in Beirut and Byblos to flaunt their skills at the annual Arts and Sciences Fair, a robust yet fun competition that has been taking place on Byblos campus for the past 20 years and Beirut campus for the past five years.

The Department of Communication Arts had its share in the fair as it hosted four different workshops in February, followed by competitions in multimedia journalism, communication, TV/film and the performing arts on April 27.

The department invited school students to develop their interest in writing and reporting, communicating, filming, and performing. On the day of the fair, high-schoolers demonstrated their projects that were judged by faculty and students from the department for a chance to win a scholarship.

To prepare their submissions to the fair, high school students attended a multimedia journalism workshop on February 10, at Gulbenkian Theater. Led by Assistant Professor Claudia Kozman, students in the Advanced Newswriting and Reporting course gave the workshop, which focused on the basics of news writing and reporting, and the structure of the news story.

"The purpose of the journalism workshop is to give the basics," Dr. Kozman said. "This is what is taught in universities, so we are condensing it in about an hour so that they know what it is that they need to be able to write a story."

Gulbenkian Theater hosted yet another session, this time the communication workshop given by instructor Elyssa Skaff, which focused on storytelling

and how to implement an idea while maintaining a clear message. "The communication workshop is new to this fair, so we tried to cover as many topics as possible in order to make it easy for the students to implement a campaign," she said. "We covered topics about development, pre-production, production and post-production."

Afterwards, a performing arts workshop was conducted by Assistant Professor of Music Seba Ali, during which she helped four groups fine-tune their performances and adjust their messages.

"This year our theme is 'I'm proud of who I am.' It proved to be very attractive for school students across Lebanon because this year, unlike any other year, the number of participants is really large," said Dr. Ali. "This theme is important because it raises awareness about the fact that you should be proud of who you are regardless of your orientation and where you come from."

On April 27, high-school students were gathered in Gulbenkian Theater

once again to display to the jury the results of what they had learnt in the workshops.

Journalism students submitted written news stories or audiovisual reportages. The topics covered were abundant, ranging from video gaming all the way to divorce. The jury, which was composed of Kozman and multimedia journalism students Tala Ramadan, Mohamad Shour, Nala Zawk, and Lynn Karam voted for The Situation of the Elderly by Lynn Najji, from Beirut Annunciation Orthodox College, who took first place. Nour Fares from Rawdah High School came second and her peer Nathalie Harb third for their project Child Marriage.

According to first place winner Najji, the Arts and Sciences Fair allowed her to get first-hand experience in a field she had doubts about and allowed her to learn that it was in fact her passion. "Getting to work on a piece and presenting it to a large-scale audience gave me a taste of what it is like to be a real journalist," said Najji. "I've been debating with myself if this



major is fit for me, but now that I got to experience it, I know I was born for it."

The jurors, multimedia journalism students themselves, saw the experience as an added value to their education. "This experience helped me in developing my own self-critique because it is when you need to comment on others that you learn not to have the same problems yourself," said Ramadan.

The judges of the communication competition, Skaff and TV/film student Rahaf Jammal, voted Phoenix school for first place, Greenfield for second, and Universal College for third.

For Jammal, the Fair was an opportunity to project her thoughts on other students' projects, which was of benefit to her and to the high-school participants.

"As a judge, I was looking at the technical aspect of the story, may it be the quality of the shots or sound tuning," said Jammal. "This gave me an opportunity to share my opinion with the students and project my thoughts, which was beneficial to me and to them, considering that they took technical as well as communication advice."

According to the second-place winners from Greenfield, it is rare that high-school students get involved in community service these days but, through the communication workshop and competition they learned how to effectively move the public.

"The competition gave us an opportunity to help our community," said one of Greenfield's students Ali Shokor. "Our project aimed to help women who are domestically abused and, in the process of getting the work done, we learned more about the issue at hand and how we should articulate its message."

Judges of the TV/film competition, lecturer Nasser Chour and instructor Wafaa Halawi, voted for The Prophet film to win first and second place. Rawda student Ahmad Al Zein came first and his peer Ahmad Haidar came second, whereas the third place went to Rana Dayek from Greenfield for her work Roots of Change.

Chour stressed the importance of giving scholarships to communication arts students, in general, and TV/film students, in particular, because some parents might be reluctant to pay tuition fees for an arts major. "Through this fair, we are giving

students opportunities and helping them fulfill their dream when there are so many forces that could be standing in their way," he said.

The series of competitions closed with the performing arts competition where a jury composed of Seba Ali, alumnus Awad Awad, and TV/film and performing arts student Lynn Jbeily voted for Celine Fayyad's singing act in first place, Hariri High School Saida's performing act in second place, and Saint Mary Orthodox College's performing act in third place.

According to Awad, the Fair is of great benefit to the art industry in Lebanon, for it is a means of encouragement for arts, in general, and communication and the performing arts, in particular.

"We, as a society, need good quality artists. Thus, we need to encourage art as much as we need to encourage studying art because of the fact that art is looked at as secondary and inferior," he said.

LAU's Arts and Sciences Fair ended with an announcement of the high-school winners and the distribution of medals at Irwin Hall Auditorium in the presence of their parents and teachers. ■



*"The competition gave us an opportunity to help our community."*

- Ali Shokor

# Workshops on Campus

## Journalism Workshops

### SKAM Lecture

Conducted by Nikolaj Christensen, Lecturer at DMJX  
September 26, 2017

Nikolaj Christensen presented a lecture on the web series SKAM – or “shame” in English – on the Beirut campus about storytelling, concept development, feedback processes and creativity. The series, which has been a huge success in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, deals with successful storytelling. The themes covered by the series are daring: from love and intrigues to homosexuality, bipolarity and being a young Muslim woman in a Scandinavian environment.



### Al-Fanar Media Workshop

Conducted by David Wheeler, Editor at Al-Fanar  
November 14 – 15, 2017

Al-Fanar Media’s editor David Wheeler organized a two-day workshop about journalism and research. Students, faculty, and professionals from different countries gathered to discuss journalistic coverage of education and research, especially in the fields of social sciences and humanities.



### Media Coverage of Refugees Conference

Hosted by CommArts Department  
March 19, 2018

A conference entitled Media Coverage of Refugees was held on the Beirut campus. The talks consisted of Media Use of Refugees in Lebanon by the Chairperson of the Department of Communication Arts Jad Melki; media coverage of refugees in Lebanon and Syria by NDU Professor Roula El Helou; and finally, the coverage of refugee issues in Four Arab Countries: A study on Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco, by Roula Mikhael from Maharat Foundation.



### Interactive Workshops on Communication and PR

Conducted by Helle Tougaard Andersen and Merete Nilsson Koch, DMJX  
April 17, 2018

Helle Tougaard Andersen gave LAU communication and journalism students a workshop about storytelling techniques, explaining the effect and richness these add to stories and communication. The second workshop was conducted by Merete Nilsson Koch on leadership and communication styles. Nilsson Koch imparted to the students general information about Denmark and its citizens’ attitudes, focusing on the cultural differences between several European countries.



## TV/Film Workshops

### Casting Workshop

Conducted by Petra Serhal  
January 26, 2018

A Lebanese casting director and actress, who holds a master’s in Body in Performance from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance Casting, Perla Serhal directed a casting Workshop in Gulbenkian Theater to provide future filmmakers with practical techniques in finding good actors who fit the roles. The workshop helped film students understand how their vision of a character can be communicated to the auditioning actors to ensure their best performance. Its agenda included a discussion about two selected scripts with a prepared cast breakdown, as well the process of casting in terms of camera, actors’ preparation, and script.

### Intensive Steadicam Masterclass

Conducted by Christopher Kechichian  
November 24, 2017

In this workshop, certified Steadicam operator Christopher Kechichian introduced participants to the possibilities associated to Steadicam. The three-hour masterclass session covered all things related to techniques, operating styles, aesthetics, reaching the role of the operator as a storyteller, and strong vs. weak camera moves. At the end of the tutorial, a complicated shot was designed and filmed using the Steadicam first then a gimbal to stage the positives and negatives of each approach.

# Performance Arts Workshops

## Stage Makeup Workshop

Conducted by Lama Saab  
November 18 – 24, 2017

Lama Saab exposed students to the various aspects of theatrical makeup. Participants learned about products, tools and techniques of makeup application for the stage including basic highlight and shadow, tired look, illness, and old age make-up.

## Composition, Interpretation and Performance Workshop

Conducted by Layale Chaker  
March 24, 2018

As part of IMAGINE's Workshop and Concert Series, a workshop on composition, interpretation, and performance was held in Irwin Hall Auditorium by an award-winning Lebanese violinist, composer, and artist-in-residence, Layal Chaker. Open to all composers, instrumentalists, and singers from both western and eastern techniques, Chaker's workshop explored musical works in their variety of stages, ranging from early-stage compositions, works-in-progress, to complete works. Participants were directed to focus on the performative and interpretive features of composers, as well as the interaction between performing artists, interpreters and the mentioned composers.

## Technical Direction for Theater Lighting & Sound Workshop

Conducted by Anas Ghaibeh  
November 14 – 21, 2017

Participants of this workshop were familiarized with lighting and audio systems, as well as the principles of technical design and coordination the workshop allowed students to become immersed in the design process and eventual construction, implementation and installation of the scenic, lighting, projection, sound and effects of production.

## Storytelling Workshop: Tell Your Tale

Conducted by Alia Alzougbi  
November 20, 2017

BAFTA nominated storyteller Alia Alzougbi taught attendees about different global traditions of performance storytelling and how to pick up practical and conceptual tools to retell stories from their own cultural heritage. Participants had the opportunity to retell their stories in a once-in-a-lifetime storytelling workshop.



## Strings Workshop

Directed by Apple Hill String Quartet artists  
February 16, 2018

Part of IMAGINE's Workshop and Concert Series, Strings Workshop is designed to train intermediate and advanced instruments players. It aimed to teach and train participants aged 12 and above on the violin, viola and the cello. Elsie Kuder and Colleen Jennings taught the violin, Mike Kelly the viola and Rupert Thompson the cello.



## Cultural Management, from Concept's Creation to Execution Workshop

Conducted by Areej Abou Harb  
February 2-3, 2018

Co-founder and general manager of Me'zaf, a musical cultural initiative that aims to shed light on authentic music of the Levant and the world, Areej Abou Harb focused on giving practical and theoretical information about the formation, funding, and implementation of cultural projects in the Safadi Fine Arts Building. She introduced students to the related laws of culture and artwork in Lebanon.



## Authentic Levantine Music Workshop

Conducted by Ghassan Sahhab and the Sharqi Music Ensemble  
February 20, 2018

A musical workshop on Authentic Levantine Music was held at Irwin Hall Auditorium. Musicians and singers – composed of LAU students and graduates – played pieces from Sahhab's first album and other new tunes. The workshop focused on the modal and rhythmic Middle Eastern musical systems and was followed by a concert, My Orient (Sharqi in Arabic), that featured a performance by Sahhab and his band.





# Events

Communication Arts on Stage



# Ambitious Hen Dreams in a Family-Friendly Play

by Sally Farhat



You might not be the only one who dreams after all. Waraku dreamt of a forbidden reality, making sacrifices that redefined her very existence as a mere tool.

In the Department of Communication Arts' spring major production, *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*, Associate Professor of Theater Lina Abyad, presented a story of ambition, motherhood, and sacrifice. Dr. Abyad adapted the play that Gulbenkian Theater hosted between March 20 and 25, 2018 from a novel by South Korean writer Sun-mi Hwang.

The story revolves around an unusual hero: a hen named Waraku that dreams of becoming a mother. Finding herself dissatisfied to lay eggs on command and to have them sold later on to the market, Waraku decides to challenge the norm forced upon her, escape the barnyard, roam freely with all other animals, and most importantly hatch her very own egg. The play orchestrated a chant of individuality, freedom, and motherhood, playing a thousand messages and delivering several at a time, to an audience of different demographics.

## The Choice

Abyad's choice fell by coincidence on *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*. After three months of preparation to stage a completely different play, the director was introduced to Waraku's

story by a friend. Abyad's plan shifted from directing the previously chosen play to this one when she noticed how moved her friend was by the novel. Her passion for family plays also encouraged this shift.

"Very often when parents go to the movies they send their children with the nanny or they sit and talk while their children are watching," said Abyad. "I'm always interested to have a family play so parents would go to the theater with their children. It's something we don't have a lot of in Beirut."

The play also presents a broader image of motherhood and redefines the term. Waraku escaped her cage, got mistreated by other animals, and put her life in danger to make her dream of becoming a mother come true. But Waraku failed to hatch her own egg despite several attempts. Her sense of motherhood, however, did not stop her from hatching someone else's discarded egg, which turned out to be a duck. The hen treated the other bird as her own son and protected him from the weasel. In spite of her strong attachment to the duck, Waraku let him seek his future away from her, reflecting again the sacrifices a mother makes to ensure the best future for her children. Finally, when Waraku decided that she no longer had a purpose in life, she sacrificed herself as food for the weasel's children, marking her last drive in life, which is to give life to others.

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*"The hen did not only have a dream, she had ambition."*

- Christopher Al Zoummar

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"A mother feels the same level of responsibility toward all children and not only her own," said Abyad.

Beyond the emotional connection Abyad felt with the story, the messages the former carried were also another reason that made this story the chosen one.

## The Lessons

As a hen, Waraku is an ordinary animal. She lays eggs that will either be sold or hatched. Although she wants to be good at it, she has bigger dreams.

"The hen did not only have a dream, she had ambition, and this is what made her become a mother regardless if the egg was hers or not," said Christopher Al Zoummar, a performing arts student who acted in the play. "It is about going against all odds, challenging anyone who tries moving you into a specific direction – from parents, friends, to school teachers – and believing in your dream."

The play also reminded the audience of their belonging to the cycle of life. It highlighted the fact that one's role goes far beyond the self to reach, affect, and serve others. This idea is reflected in two parts of the play: the hen's decision to name herself Waraku, and in the ending.

The hen adopts the name Waraku (Leafy) after observing the cycle a tree leaf goes through: A leaf is formed by a tree, the leaf gives birth to the flower, it protects the flower through taking in the sun and rain, but when autumn comes, the leaf falls into the soil to be transformed into something else. This strife to become part of the life cycle leads the hen to call herself Waraku in the beginning of the play and to sacrifice herself by allowing the weasel to kill her and serve her as food to her children at the end of the play.

"The life cycle is about being part of a greater endeavor, being humble, and understanding the beginning and end of one's role," said Dima Tannir, the actress who plays Waraku. "It is so beautiful to step down and make room for the upcoming generations and that's what Waraku does."

Envisioning the cycle of life forces people to face the idea of death, which causes fear in many. The play portrays death as an important part of the cycle that should not be feared but accepted and believed to be the beginning of someone else's life.

"This is what life is about; someone who leaves, allowing the birth of someone else. We cannot stay sad forever," said Al Zoummar. "This is a lesson we should all keep in mind."

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*"The life cycle is about being part of a greater endeavor."*

- Dima Tannir

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### The Challenges

"It was very challenging and difficult for us," said Abyad. "It was extremely moving as a piece to the extent that we cried very often."

The slow pace of the play made it hard for both the actors and the Lebanese audience. According to Abyad, the pace was necessary because it fulfilled the hen's need to understand what she is going through.

The ending was also a challenge for the team. The dilemma of killing the hen at the end of the play haunted the director. "The end was a big discussion," said Abyad. "We discussed it with mothers, children, and even psychologists and everybody was saying 'don't do the end.'" But Abyad insisted on keeping it. For her, the idea of martyrdom has a huge weight on Lebanese culture, and shedding light on it, therefore, was "incredible."

Beyond all challenges and difficulties, the relation between actors working on this play was described by Abyad as very generous, respectful, and loving. This created the "perfect" environment for the play.

"I would always say you have to stop hugging each other," said Abyad. "But, I must admit it was very heartwarming. I like it when the piece transforms people." ■



#### Cast:

Dima Tannir, Chady Shhafa, Dima Al Ansari, Bilal Hneineh, Hasan Haydar, Hiba Sleiman, Karim Makouk, Gretta Greige, Alaa Itani, Mohammad Itani, Hasan Akoul, Rachid Hneineh, and Christopher Al Zoummar.

Scenographer and director: Lina Abyad

Assistant director: Pascal Jalouf

Costume designer: Faten Meshref

Makeup design: Lama Saab

Assistant makeup design: Joey abou Zayd

Light designer: Line Itani

Drawings and scenography: Hisham Ismail

Sound designer and operator: Jad Bizri

Poster designer: Noura Andrea Nassar

Producer: Hala Masri

Stage construction supervisor: George Chdid

Technical supervisor: Fouad Anka

Stage manager: Rachid Hneineh and Christopher Al Zoummar

Light operator: Khalid Abi Joumaa and Samer Shaar

Ticket booth manager: Zeina Badran. House manager:

Youmna Bayumi, Marwan Al Hasbini, and Tala Al Nashar

Public relations: Mahnaz Maktabi

Promo video producer: Samer Beyhum

Promo video crew: TV film students

Lighting crew: Rahaf Jammal and Farouk Kaffoura

Decoration crew: Shifaa Abou Al Naaj and Razan Slim

Costume crew: Stephani Oumairi and Robert Minasian

Makeup crew: Noura Saab and Lana Ajami

Poster distribution crew: Hussien Dbouk and Hussien Wehbe

Ticket booth crew: Hadil Katish, Dana Mroue, and Diana Mansour

# Abou Warde El-Santa: The Story of Lebanese Amnesia

By Fatima Al Mahmoud

*"I did it for my parents and for how much they had suffered."*

- Roy Farhat

It's 8:30 p.m. on a weekend. The chattering audience is lined up outside the Gulbenkian Theater the 2017 fall major theater production. A young lady approaches the crowd and asks them to follow her. They don't get very far before they hear a deafening sound and yelling. They have reached a checkpoint.

The synergetic nature of Abou Warde El-Santa has made it one of the most memorable productions of LAU's Communication Arts Department. Abou Warde El-Santa is a story of four protagonists – a war photographer, a singer, a librarian, and a college professor – who depend on their diaries to remind them of incidents from the Lebanese Civil War that their memory fails to recall. Instead of watching the characters from a distance, the audience accompanies them on their journeys to different events of their lives.

The production made use of the entire Fine Arts building, leading the audience from one entrance to another, and compressing a 15-year long civil war into 90 minutes.

The play was directed by LAU theater lecturer Dr. Aliya Khalidi, and its cast included Associate Professor of Theater Dr. Lina Abyad and LAU students Ram Nour El-Dine and Mohammad Ali Moussawi, among others.

Khalidi was 12 when the Civil War broke out and 27 when it ended, and thus took up a great part of her youth – as is the case with many Lebanese. Given that the discourse of the civil war traumatized its survivors, one would expect the Lebanese to avoid repeating their mistakes. But reality indicates otherwise.

"Every day I hear people saying: 'Yes, I'm going to fight on the side of my people and my ideology again and again' and it just drives me crazy; it infuriates me!" said Khalidi. "I just want people to relive the war so that they remember, or those who had no idea about it to get an idea, because war is not an easy thing."

Khalidi accuses the Lebanese people, including herself, of suffering from amnesia.

"I have been opening my journals to random pages and I have found

incidents that I have completely and utterly forgotten ever existed," she recalled. "And this is a huge problem. So I'm not saying that only the Lebanese have amnesia. I have amnesia too."

Khalidi believes that those who have lived through the Civil War have chosen what to remember and what to forget. She criticizes this notion for fear it would lead to repeating history.

"Since they have been talking about another war, and it's all over the newspapers, I decided that I needed to remind people what it was all about," she explained.

## Rewriting History

Besides recreating the war for those who have subconsciously forgotten it, Khalidi also aims to rewrite history through her production. As an instructor of the history of Arab theater, Khalidi delves into the historical political contexts in her classes.

"I asked my students: When did the Lebanese Civil War start? Nobody had any idea; nobody knew when it started,

SMOKING



when it ended or what happened during the war. Can you believe it?" Khalidi blames the students' lack of knowledge of the civil war on the absence of a history book that has recorded it.

#### **Lebanese Amnesia**

To do her part of creating this knowledge, she made sure to remind audiences about the painful part of any war: the loss of human life. As such, the production made several death references. A visit to a morgue and a graveyard were two of the most emotional scenes, where war victims were identified as a number or by the cause of death.

The final scene of the production is one where all the lead characters meet at Gulbenkian: the graveyard. The seats represent the war casualties, labeled mainly as Missing, Martyr, Massacre, Prisoner, 70,000 and 120,000.

"Perhaps if we show the horrors of war, it won't happen again or at least people will think twice," explained Khalidi.

#### **A Tale to Tell**

The characters and events in *Abou Warde El-Santa* are based on Khalidi's personal experience. "I didn't suffer in the least compared to other people, but have I had bullets racing right past me? Absolutely. Have I been kidnapped? Yes. Have I witnessed friends who have died? Absolutely. So yes, nothing really happened to me, but the incidents in the play are influenced by my own experiences," she said. In fact, the events in the production are closer to Khalidi's experiences than one would think.

"My favorite scene was the love story," said Moussawi. "What the audience doesn't know is that the lovers' story is true and inspired by a similar experience of the director's during the days of civil war."

#### **The New Generation**

Khalidi was not the only person hoping to leave an impact with the production. Most of the actors in the play were too young to directly experience the war, but only its aftermath. Still, they were determined to take part in the production and spread its message.

"I did it for my parents and for how much they had suffered," said LAU student Roy Farhat. "We did and still do live the civil war through what we read, what we watch, and the stories we hear, but I was in the play to show what the older generations have been through."

#### **The Receiving End**

The checkpoints were a personal favorite for audience members, because they appeared so real.

"[The production] was very good and very well organized," three young men agree. "It was obvious, and clarified how life was like in the war," "Our favorite part was the checkpoints."

"We were surprised; it was something very new to us and we loved it," said a mother who had lived through the war.

"My favorite scene was the first one," the mother continued. "We had just walked in with no knowledge of the play and were surprised by the checkpoint. The play really helped us remember events of the civil war that we had forgotten." ■



# Casino El Ons

By Fatima Al Mahmoud

*"I'm proud of having such a show done by LAU students and I'm looking forward to seeing Casino El Ons in another theater here in Lebanon."*

- Abdallah Malaeb

Music, laughter, energy, scandal, power and the truth... that is the story of Casino El Ons.

For three consecutive days, LAU played host to the infamous Casino El Ons. The setting was constructed in Gulbenkian Theater, Beirut campus, which was barely spacious enough to seat all the people eager to attend and watch the production after weeks of following its teasers on Facebook and Instagram.

"I was expecting to have a lot of audience, but not a full house for three nights, and not to the point where we had to add plastic chairs or where we had to turn people down after they showed up here," said Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Amr Selim, who is also co-director of Casino El Ons, and founder and director of the IMAGINE Summer Arts Camp.

## The Story

The idea for Casino El Ons emerged after the Arab spring and the new social order it created. At first, it was merely a concept at the back of Selim's mind, but later became a reality during

the Music/Vocal Ensemble Middle Eastern Music course offered at LAU. Although Casino El Ons was meant to be a fun and entertaining musical, it also shed light on important messages as it tells the story of citizen journalism and how the power of the media in directing societies was becoming more prominent.

"Each one of us now is a journalist; anyone with a smart phone or a recording machine is a journalist," said Selim. "But how is the piece of information being discussed in the different layers of the media? You see the same piece of information being discussed differently and little pieces of truth are being added depending on who is talking and to whom."

## The Collaboration

Casino El Ons started as an individual idea, but its application was a "team work in every sense of the word," explained Selim.

Once he had set his mind on Casino El Ons as a fun yet slightly political musical, Selim contacted LAU alumnus Awad Awad, who was quite excited about the idea.



"I believe this is the first collaboration between a full-time faculty and an alumnus," said Selim. "And this is one of the bigger productions that happened in the past few years."

The play had a total of 39 actors and musicians on stage and 25 people behind the screens – all from different nationalities, degrees, campuses and majors.

"The success we are having makes me feel incredibly hopeful about the future of performing arts in this university and in the region because these people are going to be the leaders one day and are going to have this mindset of 'it is possible, and collaboration is fun and needed,'" said Selim.

### The Visitors

For three days, Gulbenkian was swarming with people who wanted to visit Casino El Ons one more time. Those who had the chance to spend an evening there walked out chattering with excitement.

"It's not a play you see often. It's very different from the plays they usually do

at LAU," said Dana Mroue, a TV/film student. "They don't talk about normal topics, which is very interesting. That's why I like it, and I hope that people who couldn't be there will watch it in the link."

Not only was the audience pleased to have been part of the Casino El Ons experience, but they were also proud.

"It was an amazing play. The actors were amazing," said Abdallah Malaeb, an international affairs and political science student. "I'm proud of having such a show done by LAU students and I'm looking forward to seeing Casino El Ons in another theater here in Lebanon."

Apart from the audience and visitors, the production was an incredible experience for its actors and cast as well.

"Being a part of the play was a very enriching experience seeing as to how it introduced me to the Egyptian pop culture which is very theoretical in a sense," said Carla Saab, an architecture student minoring in performing arts. "It was also eye-opening to a pressing

issue the Arab world faces which is media propaganda."

### The Next Step

Among the audience members who attended the production for three consecutive days were those who did not get enough of Casino El Ons and still wanted more. "We are all trying to find ways to reschedule but hopefully not only at LAU," promised Selim.

Future plans for Casino El Ons include possible performances in countries like Egypt and Tunisia, where Selim has friends and connections. "I think this is something that needs to be shown to more people because it's about time people had fun," he explained.

Even the actors and musicians demanded more of Casino El Ons. "When are we going to do this again? My parents loved it, they wish they could come again," said Selim, recalling his students' comments.

"They keep talking about the experience and how proud they were to be part of it, and this is what matters," he added. ■

# Reflections Fights Social Injustice and Gender Inequality Through Art

By Fatima Al Mahmoud



From the backstreets of Shatila Camp to the podiums of LAU's Beirut campus, artists found a platform to fight social injustice and gender inequality under the second residency of IMAGINE Workshop and Concert Series (IWCS), which was held over seven days in October 2017.

Faculty, university and school students at LAU collaborated with some 200 artists on Reflections, the first multidisciplinary art series promoting equality and human rights.

Joining the program was internationally acclaimed American violinist Salley Koo, whose first trip to Lebanon took her to the Shatila refugee camp. There, she played for Syrian refugee children as part of LAU's outreach platform, in collaboration with NGO Basmeh and Zeitooneh.

Directed by LAU Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Seba Ali, Reflections: Equality and Human Rights combined all art disciplines to deliver a message against social injustice and inhumanity.

"Reflections and IMAGINE Workshop Concert Series aim to stimulate and encourage individual and community awareness, participation and involvement in the arts," said Ali. "Our series includes workshops, panel discussion, masterclasses, art exhibitions, and performances that are all built on immense collaboration, having artists, educators, and students work on small and big events that all involve art."

The multidisciplinary event launched with two plays performed by WellSpring

Learning Community students and directed by two of its drama teachers, Bassam Amine and Denise Dewhurst. In addition to theater, it included music, dance, fashion, and art shows.

Amine's dark comedy *Us and Them* dealt with the growing mistrust between wanderers who end up fighting over a piece of land.

"Through this play, I aim to portray that there is no point in splitting this earth into many pieces when you can just share it," said Amine. "We are all humans in the end and we are all the same when it comes down to the basic attributes and basic virtues."

The second play *Inside the House of Alba*, directed by Dewhurst, addressed the oppression of women both within the family and by society.

"Performing in this multidisciplinary event is a very good opportunity for my students," said Dewhurst. "It allows them to contribute in a creative work that enhances a human condition."

In a tribute to female composers whose talents suffered because of their sex, Koo and Ali gave a music and dance performance, accompanied by 40 LAU dancers.

"As an artistic director and educator, I believe that art is by far the most expressive form of communication that humans can understand and relate to," said Ali.

"I have seen and lived many stories of women who are underrated because of their gender, and it is time for the

arts to raise awareness about it all."

According to Farah Taha, an LAU dancer, the performance was a masterpiece that aimed to give power to the powerless.

"The deep meaning incorporated within the dance made me feel every single move," she said.

"One person alone cannot accomplish gender equality. The fact that it was in a group work had greater meaning."

Reflections was concluded with a gender-free fashion show by Aniss Ezzedine, LAU fashion design student.

"I think that there is no gender equality in the society we live in," said Ezzedine. "I don't think clothes are tailored for gender. If you like something you can wear it, whether it's for men or women, and that's the message I want to send today. My line fights a social issue."

While the event was going on, an art exhibition was held in front of the Safadi Fine Arts building showcasing the work of design students.

"Including design was a key aspect that allowed our residency to cover all kinds of art," said Ali. "In concerts and events, people tend to forget that design is appreciated art, but we didn't."

Starting in October and ending in March, IWCS held 22 events, from outreach, panel discussions, workshops and education programs to concerts and art shows, all part this season's four residencies. ■

# CommArts Department Celebrates Lebanese Heritage

By Ahmad Karakira

The Gulbenkian Theater and the Safadi Fine Arts Building at LAU were on a date with Lebanese heritage and patriotism.

As part of its continuous residencies, IMAGINE Workshop and Concert Series (IWCS) organized its fourth multidisciplinary event, Lebanese and Proud! to celebrate Lebanese heritage.

IWCS Artistic Director and Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Seba Ali, said that the purpose of the event was "to raise awareness of the country's past and present" and "to focus on the importance of diversity for the sake of human development and sustainable peace in Lebanon."

As the clock struck 12 p.m., Safadi Fine Arts Building area turned into a market, where merchandisers took over with their diverse booths to display their products.

One of the many booths was Siham Ghanem's, who was selling homemade authentic colorful Lebanese food.

Although Ghanem found the turnout on the market to be generally low, she was glad she participated in the event to introduce people to this type of food.

"Our purpose is to let students know more about healthy Lebanese

traditional food," she said. "I was happy to participate in the event and I would definitely return again next year if invited."

As the day came to an end, heavy rain did not prevent the large audience from attending the performance held at the Gulbenkian Theater.

With the collaboration of the Wellspring Learning Community, Al-Sarab Alternative Dance School and LAU students, the performers presented a series of plays, dances, and musical performances with the combination of past and present art, which reinforced the sense of patriotism in the audience and celebrated Lebanon's cultural heritage.

As the only Lebanese artist-in-residence this year, violinist and composer Layale Chaker, along with artists from the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music, took a step further and combined Arabic and classical music in a number of compositions.

Chaker explains that there are rich pieces of Lebanese music starting from the 1920s that had been abandoned and were unknown to some people.

"While doing research, I found out about repertoire between the 20s and 40s that is forgotten, especially by the young generation," she said. "What

we did today is that we took the melodies, changed their rhythm and harmony, and composed new pieces."

Chaker, who is currently pursuing her doctoral degree at Ecole des Hautes Etudes (EHESS) in Paris, believes that the performance was a reminder for the audience of the richness of Lebanese music.

"We reconnected the audience with the forgotten past before the war, which was the golden age, and presented it in a new way," Chaker said.

Ali, who teaches music at LAU, firmly believes that, during IWCS, the performers, especially high-school students, truly developed a sense of pride for being Lebanese, "collecting true stories about the civil war, and developing choreography inspired by the Lebanese heritage, independence, identity, and pride."

"They [the students] were very excited to participate because they are Lebanese and proud," Ali added. "This created a sense of strength and competence to preserve and embrace Lebanon's heritage."

Lebanese and Proud! consisted of workshops, outreach programs, and performances that celebrated Lebanon's rich cultural heritage and diversity. ■



# Salaam Reaches Out to Refugee Children and Youth with Autism

By Ahmad Karakira and Rana Tabbara

*"The kids were happy and comfortable about moving freely on stage, and the atmosphere was very good, but I wish there were more people to know that autistic people too have the right to go to big concerts."*

- Maguey Moudawwar



Seventy refugee children experienced the feeling of having an entire theater stand up and applaud for them.

Performing one of The Lion King's songs in Arabic, the young singers from the Ketermaya and Shatila refugee camps opened the night for IMAGINE's artists-in-residence Apple Hill String Quartet and renowned Syrian composer and clarinet player Kinan Azmeh on LAU's Beirut campus.

IMAGINE Workshop and Concert Series' third residency, Salaam, comprised visits to and performances in Ketermaya, Shatila, Nabaa and Abu Samra camps, where the international artists introduced their art to the children, paving the way for the latter's performance in Gulbenkian Theater on February 15.

"When you go to refugee camps you expect to see the kids sad. I was shocked to see that they were always smiling and hugging us for visiting them," said IWCS Artistic Director and Assistant Professor of Music Seba Ali.

"It was part of our outreach program to take all the work we do together and present it at camps and schools

to introduce the underprivileged communities to the power of art."

Salaam, which consists of refugee camp visits and two concerts – one dedicated to children on the autism spectrum – aims to reach out to diverse communities and showcase hidden talents. The themes of the two previous IMAGINE residencies, Reflections and Tell Your Tale, were gender, human rights, and the art of storytelling.

The theme of the third residency, peace, was reinforced by exhibiting letters written by the children as part of the 1,000 Letter Project. Ali collaborated with US-based NGO Help Syria's Kids on the project in which refugees in Lebanon and children in New York exchanged messages. No less than 700 of these letters were pinned in front of Gulbenkian before one of Salaam's concerts.

"The idea behind bringing American and Middle Eastern artists together is to build bridges between communities," said Ali.

Performing alongside Ali and Azmeh, Apple Hill String Quartet played two musical works in that same night. The first was a romantic quintet by Dvorak,

and the second a classic by Azmeh called In the Element, a musical which was inspired "when he was running in the rain seeking peace," he said.

LAU students also contributed a great deal to the Salaam concert. TV/Film senior Roger Azr wrote poems for the Dvorak quintet, which were recited by pre-med student Majd Khiami. TV/Film students Taline Bedekiane, Rita El-Chouefati, and Alex El-Dahdah produced the visuals for the Dvorak quintet, while Ali Zoghdani created an abstract video for In the Element.

"We've been playing this piece for a while, and what was interesting for us in this performance is that the visuals added dimension that we hadn't seen before," said Mike Kelly, Apple Hill's violinist.

"I only wish that I could see it more, because when I was playing I kept on wanting to look. It was great."

IWCS concluded Salaam with an sensory-friendly concert performed by the Apple Hill String Quartet resident musicians, LAU faculty and students, and the Lebanese National Conservatory in Gulbenkian Theater.



To break the ice, Ali introduced herself and the instrument she plays on before starting the performance, and asked the audience to act freely.

LAU students Lynn Jbeily, Georges Chedid, Natalie Tadros, Stephanie Tadros, and conservatory student Sarah Mallah performed songs and musical pieces. In addition, the performance featured an original piano piece composed by LAU student Ryan Saade.

The main reason behind organizing this concert stemmed from a personal experience Ali had had in Lebanon. "When I first came to LAU, I met a staff member who has a kid with autism and this kid had never been introduced to a musical performance before," she said. "Because there is almost zero autism awareness in Lebanon, he is not allowed to go to any concerts, because no one knows why he's interacting in a certain way."

In addition to raising awareness, Ali stressed that the event's goal was to communicate with people on the autism spectrum through music. "We wanted to communicate with autistic people by providing an interactive concert to make them feel that they're welcomed and that they're very

important citizens who deserve equal rights and opportunities," said Ali.

The Head of Unit of the Autism Department at Sesobel Maguey Moudawwar believes that the concert was unique. Moudawwar's only concern was that there weren't many in the audience.

"This was the first time we get invited to a concert performed in this way," Moudawwar said. "The kids were happy and comfortable about moving freely on stage, and the atmosphere was very good, but I wish there were more people to know that autistic people too have the right to go to big concerts."

Ali revealed that registration for the concert was exclusive for people with autism-spectrum disorder and their families to ensure their comfort especially that it is the first time in Lebanon that such events are organized. "For this concert, it was intentional not to invite everyone to make sure that these families and individuals are comfortable," Ali said.

LAU students Nathalie and Stephanie Tadros who perform regularly had a different experience with the audience.

"Performing was very different for us especially that they were moving around the theater," Stephanie said. "We learned to let loose of any rules."

Nathalie added that the concert allowed the audience to feel free from restrictions. "The way this whole thing was designed gave an opportunity for that community to enjoy music without being faced with other challenges and strict rules," she noted. "It broke differences and it just proved how similar we all are."

Apple Hill String Quartet violinist Elise Kuder believes that this kind of performance helps people with autism-spectrum disorder act on their own. "I'm imagining that in a lot of concert halls if someone started acting up they might be asked to leave," Kuder said. "I think it is nice to have a place where people can be themselves."

Her colleague, viola artist Mike Kelly said that he enjoyed performing and praised the event.

"It's something that doesn't happen very often," he said. "It's wonderful that LAU hosted this event and showed commitment to present arts to everybody." ■

# Imagine: Multidisciplinary Program Turned Milestone

By Mohamad Chour and Fatima Al Mahmoud



Imagine.

Imagine a multidisciplinary series of workshops and concerts aimed at the betterment of society.

Imagine a program that uses art, music, dance, and theater to bring people together.

IMAGINE, conceived and developed by Seba Ali and Amr Selim – assistant professors of music at LAU’s Department of Communication Arts – is a series of unique projects that aspires to highlight the power of art.

## The Beginning

It all started when the need for the arts in the Middle East became evident to Selim and Ali. The noticeable lack of appreciation for the discipline and its clear exclusion from academic curricula triggered a need for change, a project they decided to spearhead.

“It was quite scary to see that there was so little appreciation for classical music or the arts in general,” said Ali. “I really wanted to take it upon myself to do something about it.”

With time, the lack of art and musical education uncovered a bigger and far more troubling issue for IMAGINE’s creators: the absence of representation. With a close-minded society comes

a shortage of awareness on certain issues and, therefore, the rise of silenced minorities and marginalized communities. IMAGINE plans to empower these communities, and in turn, educate people about their existence by spotlighting issues that range from sexual orientation, gender fluidity, gender equality, to gender stereotypes and human rights.

“These communities are so oppressed and have no voice in society,” said Selim. “IMAGINE shows others that things like these do exist and that it is completely okay.”

Along the lines of inclusion and representation, IMAGINE has heavily attended to children, a community that is often excluded from theater and musicals.

“In most theaters, no one is allowed to bring children because they are noisy and disrupt the performance,” said Ali.

In response, IMAGINE has catered for children in several events. Be it through artistic expression or musicals, IMAGINE has especially collaborated with children from Syrian refugee camps and children on the autism spectrum. Ali and Selim were especially passionate about communicating with the children through art, including the art of storytelling and the art of music.

“This is how you build a community,” said Selim. “You might touch someone’s heart in that moment and change their life forever.”

## Outside Help

In an attempt to help spread its message of unity and acceptance, IMAGINE relied on multidisciplinary collaborations. Projects were organized entirely with the help of faculty members and students from other departments, which boosted creativity and outcome and resulted in achieving new milestones, such as the first gender-fluid fashion show that took place at LAU.

“We collaborated with multiple instructors from the Fine Arts Department and they incorporated our series as an assignment for their students,” said Ali. “It’s like building a bridge between curricula,” she continued.

IMAGINE collaborations are not limited to campus grounds. World-class musicians have been regularly invited to perform at different events hosted throughout the year at LAU. Musicians who usually requested tens of thousands of dollars per gig performed at IMAGINE series for free, as an initiative to drive their message home.

"When you really believe in your message, people are going to help you and believe in you too," said Selim.

"These artists knew it was for a good cause and wanted to help us achieve our goals and push boundaries with us."

### The Events

As part of its outreach program, IMAGINE has organized four residencies in 2017 – all of which have included music concerts, performances, workshops, panel discussions, and exhibitions. The first residency titled Reflections, celebrated diversity and aimed to promote equal gender and human rights against social injustice. Reflections incorporated a music performance by internationally acclaimed American violinist Salley Koo and Ali at the Shatila refugee camp. It concluded with a dance and music performance as a tribute to female composers subject to gender discrimination, and a gender-fluid fashion show followed by an art exhibition.

The second residency, Tell Your Tale, kicked off with storyteller and British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) nominee Alia Alzougbi. Alzougbi's workshops and performances aimed to frame

storytelling as a powerful art form, and highlight its importance in everyday life. With storytelling's most common audience in mind, Tell Your Tale made its way to Shatila camp, where the children had a chance to narrate a story of their own.

IMAGINE's third residency, Salaam, carried a message of peace. It featured renowned Syrian clarinet player and composer Kinan Azmeh and international group The Apple Hill String Quartet in a concert that aimed to communicate the role of music in promoting peace. Salaam concluded with the 1,000 Letter Project, an initiative that included an exchange of letters between children based in New York and children living in refugee camps in Lebanon, which were later displayed to provide an insight into what children from different worlds aspire for.

The fourth and last residency of the academic year was known as Lebanese and Proud! It aimed to celebrate Lebanon's rich cultural heritage and diversity, and raise awareness on the importance of diversity toward sustainability in Lebanon.

The residency integrated Lebanese high schools in an exhibition, and arranged a Lebanese Market with the help of Souk El Tayyeb.

Besides the residencies, IMAGINE also includes the Imagine Summer Arts Camp (ISAC) for middle- and high-school students. In the span of three weeks, participating students are required to learn about music, dance and theatre. Although they eventually get to choose a potential major, the students are introduced to all fields of the arts in an attempt to bridge the lack of music and art education in academic curricula.

"I truly believe that an artist or an art lover in the 21st century needs to know about the performing arts in general," explained Selim, adding "we are trying to fill the gap."

### What Next?

Despite the milestones that it has achieved, this is not the end for IMAGINE, but the beginning. Both Ali and Selim are passionate about their message and its dissemination through classical music. Further residencies and efforts to expand and improve IMAGINE are in sight for the future. Their vision for IMAGINE may be clear and concise, but its impact is enriching and long term.

"Collecting and connecting. Collecting ideas. Connecting people together," revealed Selim. "That is my description of IMAGINE." ■

*"You might touch someone's heart in that moment and change their life forever."*

- Amr Selim



# Q & A

Events





## DID YOU KNOW?

Not only are Seba and Amr colleagues and co-founders of the IMAGINE initiative, but they're also married.

Amr and Seba met on a school bus when they were 10 years old.

Although they commuted to the The Cairo Conservatoire back and forth together on a daily basis, they only became close friends during middle school.

Amr and Seba have been married for eight years.

They have a 3-year-old daughter named Leila.

They both come from families with a musical background.

Seba has played the piano since she was four years old.

Amr is a classical musician and he plays the French horn.

## 10 QUESTIONS WITH SEBA AND AMR

**Q: What's your favorite word?**

**Amr:** Khalas, because of its many, many meanings!

**Seba:** Family or عيلة

**Q: Who do you think does Leila resemble most?**

**Seba:** She's a mini Amr. A complete and perfect toddler version of Amr.

**Q: Who is the better cook at home?**

**Amr:** Leila

**Q: Do you have opposite personalities or a lot in common?**

**Seba:** We are completely the opposite, but we make a pretty good team!

**Q: Describe each other using three words.**

**Amr:** Seba is a loving and caring human with a bit of stressfulness.

**Seba:** Amr is an amazing father, a life savior, a romantic, caring, and loving guy, and he could be a mystery box sometimes.

**Q: Who chose/suggested the name, Leila?**

**Amr:** Both of us, and we agreed with no argument.

**Q: Describe your idea of a perfect vacation.**

**Seba:** A peaceful time on a white sandy beach or in a warm house gazing at the fresh snow in the white Christmas, with my cup of hot beverage, hearing the giggles of my family and French cafe music in the background. Ahhh :)

**Q: Are you team winter or summer?**

**Amr:** We live at work so all seasons seem the same to us.

**Q: Favorite food?**

**Amr:** Koshary

**Seba:** Sushi

**Q: Team coffee or tea?**

**Amr & Seba:** COFFEE. ■

# Imagine Summer Arts Camp: An Edutainment

By Carla Richa and Ahmad Karakira



July was buzzing on LAU's Beirut campus with the energy and chaos young adults usually carry with them wherever they go. A scene that is expected to happen at any summer camp in the country had a special flare here. Instead of the usual "eat-play-sing" format of summer camps that target school-aged children, IMAGINE Summer Arts Camp (ISAC) combined education with entertainment, allows children to benefit artistically and enjoy themselves.

In its second year, this initiative from the Department of Communication Arts gives the chance to middle- and high-school students to experience the world of the arts in all its elements: theater productions, concerts, and a dance festival.

Although ISAC's focal point is the performing arts, its fundamental goal is to bring about remarkable transformations in students' lives – in terms of making them trust themselves and build a strong character – and to highlight the "competition-free" environment.

The three-week summer camp covers three disciplines: music, dance, and acting. The children do not get to choose one discipline, but are trained in all three for the duration of the camp. ISAC's Artistic Director, Assistant Professor of Music Amr Selim strongly believes that by experiencing them all, participants grow to know themselves and which category suits them best.

"We want the children to know that in order to master any art you should know all its aspects," Dr. Amr said. "Mastering art is a full rationale."

The summer camp offered several workshops for the campers where they had the chance to learn new tips and tricks. It started off with a clowning workshop where they were taught how to act like a clown.

One of the workshops lasted for a whole week, during which the campers were divided into groups to prepare their own movie. They were taught how to write the script, shoot the film, and edit it. The campers also had the opportunity to experience the different

art mediums and learn more about them. The camp ended in a final performance where the participants showcased the different skills they had learned.

"No one is going to judge you." With these words, Selim prepared the campers mentally, a few minutes before the final performance, while the audience gathered in front of the Safadi Fine Arts Building.

As will all things, ISAC 2018 had an end, and the Gulbenkian Theater opened its doors to conclude this annual camp, which has become a ritual at LAU during the summer vacation.

The daily exercises and workshops the young campers received were translated into comic sketches, storytelling, and musical performances of different genres that mostly dealt with rising issues in today's society, such as awareness about social media and discrimination.

LAU and ISAC faculty also took part

in the performance, with Assistant Professor of Music Seba Ali, and part-time faculty Yasmina Sabbah performing on the piano and singing along with the campers.

Between the performances, Selim took the opportunity to thank the faculty and others who helped to make the camp a success. He stressed that the ISAC's purpose is to create an unusual process of learning in the Arab world and especially in Lebanon.

"We want to make a change, we want to make a difference," he said. "And we want you [parents] to notice the difference."

Although the camp was only for three weeks, the campers' parents did in fact see a remarkable change in their children's attitudes.

Radwa Hamza, mother of camper Lea Hamza, believed that ISAC had improved her daughter's communication skills, and had added excitement to her summer vacation.

"She [Lea] became more sociable and made new friends," Hamza told

Connections. "The performance was amazing considering that all the training was done in three weeks. And I'm definitely thinking of registering not only Lea, but also her siblings in next year's camp."

Samar Sabbagh, mother of camper Judy Sabbagh, who had had low expectations before the final performance, was stunned by ISAC's closing ceremony.

"Honestly, the camp was very well structured, and the performance was really beyond our expectations. I really appreciated the fact that we used to receive daily briefs about the children's activities," said Sabbagh. "I really loved how our children's talents were put into this camp, where one of my daughter's invented pieces on piano was performed tonight."

A video of the 2018 camp memories was screened at the end of the performance, and the entire ISAC family was photographed on the stage.

Throughout ISAC, LAU students from different majors monitored the campers and assisted them during

their training and workshops.

One of the monitors, Maria Khoury, a multimedia journalism student who was the camp's photographer, believes that working with ISAC allowed her to gain leadership and photography skills, as well as experience in dealing with kids and learning from them.

"This generation is very smart and very talented, and the importance of the camp is that it enhanced their talents so they can use them later," she said. "Assisting in the camp taught me how to work with a group of kids of different ages."

Farouk Kufarou, another ISAC monitor and freshman student, echoed the sentiment. "I learned patience from them [the campers], and I discovered that I really love working with them. It's not because it's my second year working with ISAC, but I strongly believe that children who join us will improve their self-confidence, enhance their talents, and if they don't have a talent, I'm sure that they'll discover one during their time at the camp." ■

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*"This generation is very smart and very talented, and the importance of the camp is that it enhanced their talents so they can use them later."*

- Maria Khoury

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# International Dance Day Festival

By Carla Richa

Imagine dancers from different backgrounds and cultures meeting together to fight for human rights. In seven days, they work with one another to create a piece that calls for change. You can now stop imagining because who said your imagination is too far away from reality? All this occurred at the 8th Annual International Dance Day Festival.

Organized by LAU's Department of Communication Arts, the IDDFL in Lebanon launched on April 13 and lasted for a week. The seven days were full of various workshops offered by international and national dancers, and concluded with two different galas on the Byblos and Beirut campuses.

The festival is a chance for students and dancers across Lebanon to expand their knowledge and skills in dancing. When registering for the different workshops, students do not pay any fee. For the eighth time in a row, the festival returns and brings together national and international dancers without expecting any financial benefit in return.

During the opening ceremony at the Selina Korban Auditorium on Byblos campus, Associate Chair of the Department of Communication Arts and Director of the event Dr. Nadra Assaf shed light on the festival's history. "Ten years ago, I came up with the idea of joining people from different sectors in dancing where they can all meet at least once a year without paying any fee and share their different views and skills in dance," she said.

Two years later, the idea came through after LAU President Dr. Joseph G. Jabbara asked different faculty members to think of sectors in Lebanon that

needed to be worked on and improved.

Assaf's talk was followed by a dance performance by different Lebanese dance schools. The dancers were a mix of all ages, from six-year-olds in Little Ballerinas to 20-year-olds in Bail Adores. The festival also combined people from different cultures, regions, and ages who shared a common passion: dancing. The audience was packed with parents cheering for their kids and choreographers helping their students out before the performance began.

Laetia Hakim, a dancer and choreographer at Al Sarab Dance School, was one of the dancers who waited in anticipation for the festival every year. "It brings more awareness about dance and how it can affect a community and you as a person," she said.

With this year's theme being human rights, dancers had to audition to be part of the closing ceremony: the

gala. Auditions started at 10 p.m. right after the opening ceremony where international dancers such as Rain Ross and Matthew Henley auditioned as well.

The days that followed included workshops covering different dance styles such as Hip Hop and Lebanese Modern Folklore. Students were given the opportunity to improve their skills in the style they were interested in, meet international dancers, and build connections.

Jimmy Bechara, dance instructor at LAU and choreographer at IDDFL, explained how the workshops help to improve dance skills as well as raise awareness on both the health and cognitive levels. "Different lectures are given about dance injuries, to pedagogies and the process of creating," he said.

Participant Stephanie Tadros, a performing arts student at LAU revealed how the festival helped her





meet important people in the field. "It's a special opportunity that connects you with the world," she said, adding that it gives students the chance to be part of the dance community.

The first gala, which is part of the closing ceremony, took place on April 20 in Byblos. The dances were performed across the Old Souks, whereby each location had a meaning. The performances started near the Mar Yuhanna church since it represents a spiritual and peaceful setting.

The dance in this location introduced the right to peace. The right to equality was then raised, when three dancers performed under the arches. Assaf explained that they chose three performers rather than two to emphasize the idea of equality between humans, as well as between men and women. As for the arches, they represented two different components that meet at a common point.

Following the two dances was a

performance at a pub where the dancers expressed the right to rest. The dance explained how people get caught up with too much work where they forget to take a break. Hence, the location chosen was a pub: a place to relax. After that, dancers reiterated the right to equality through another dance.

The right to justice was then brought up in front of the castle. Assaf explains that the castle was chosen as a location since in ancient times it was where justice was carried out and courts held. Dancers then walked down the pathway, symbolizing a march to fight for human rights, reaching the trees. The dance between the trees represented the right to freedom with the trees symbolizing hope.

The dances were accompanied first by the oud, then the violin. During the last dance, Tadros sang Imagine by John Lennon.

All dances were contemporary and

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*"Ten years ago, I came up with the idea of joining people from different sectors in dancing."*

- Nadra Assaf

---

All dances were contemporary and improvised. The only thing that required preparation was the choice of locations. As for everything else, it was the dancers' job to let out their emotions and fight for human rights.

The second gala, which was also part of the closing ceremony, was all prepared for. It took place at Gulbenkian Theater, LAU Beirut campus, on April 21. The performance was divided into two parts: the first gave student groups such as the LAU Dance Club a chance to take part in the festival; the second was about the call for human rights where each dance fought for a right.

The theater was packed with not only parents and friends, but also people with an interest in the performing arts.

The gala started with a speech by Assaf, explaining the creation and concept behind the festival. Then a voice note sent by Georgette Gebara, pioneer ballet dancer, president of Jbeil's municipality, and supporter of the festival, was played. Gebara explained the importance of this event in allowing bodies to communicate and for students to build a stronger relationship than the ones at school or university.

The IDDFL's cause was expressed during the second part of the gala which constituted seven contemporary dances and one jazz. The rights expressed were those of equality, unity, peace, and expression.

LAU Dance Instructor Sarah Fadel, who was also a choreographer and dancer at the festival, believes that such festivals allow the dance community to grow. "It is changing the way people view dance," she said. ■

# Sharqi: A Twist in Traditional Arabic Music

By Sally Farhat

The hum of hundreds of people echoed in Irwin Hall Auditorium on February 20, 2018. Those as young as 18 and others as old as 60 rushed to occupy the iconic red seats as they prepared to embark on an entirely new musical experience.

The theater's lights dimmed as the stage lights shined brighter; a hundred voices turned into utter silence as the music started playing.

The Department of Communication Arts at LAU hosted Sharqi with Some Saba, a concert by the Sharqi Music Ensemble, conducted by instructor of music Ghassan Sahhab. The concert is a replay of the music album Sharqi (My Orient), Sahhab's first-ever produced album.

"The album is a year old," said Sahhab. "Today's concert included a few additions to this album of which is the Sama'ii Saba piece that we've never played in previous events."

The concert presented three different longer-format music pieces (wasla). Each of these was played on a specific mode or maqam.

The aura in the theater shifted with

the start of every new wasla, exposing the audience to new emotions and reflecting what each different maqam can bring to life.

The first wasla was on maqam al Rast, a mode that gives a sense of depth and wisdom. This was followed by maqam al Hijaz, which is dramatic to a certain extent. The concert was concluded with a final wasla on maqam Bayti, which is one of the most energetic or happy maqams in Middle Eastern music.

"Middle Eastern music is neither hard nor complicated for listeners as one might assume," said Sahhab. "It includes something that makes one believe the music is speaking to his or her soul, reaching the person's unconsciousness."

The band playing in the concert was composed of five musicians alongside the composer Sahhab. Imad Hashisho played the oud, Khalil El Baba the violin, Tony Hawat the cello, Ali Hout the percussion, and Sahhab the qanun.

"I'm honored to be participating with Ghassan in his music," said violinist El Baba. "Since the most listened-to-

music in our country is westernized, I cannot always play traditional Arabic music, the music that I love. This is a chance for me to expose what I like best."

El Baba considers such events important in reviving Arabic music, especially since people are more prone to listen to western music, as it is mostly available to them.

"Even Arabic songs are now westernized to the extent that you can easily switch Arabic lyrics to English and those would fit perfectly into the tune," he added.

The theater that had been filled with noise before the music started playing went silent through the entire one-hour concert to burst once again at the end of the concert into noise demanding the band to replay one wasla.

"Such concerts nourish the soul and the spirit," said Rana Yassine, one of the audience members who came from outside LAU. "The concert's music took us back to the golden age of Oriental music." ■



# Oummi: A Musical Treat to all Mothers

By Tala Ramadan

Every Mother's Day, schools and universities in Lebanon stage events for students to express their gratitude towards their mothers. What better way to honor mothers than to pamper them with classical notes on the first day of spring.

At LAU, gratitude for mothers took the form of Mother's Day concert organized by Joseph Khalife, a senior instructor and musician-in-residence. The annual concert, Oummi, featured students, staff, and faculty who performed several contemporary classical songs.

The theater was filled with sounds of angelic voices, leaving the attendees overwhelmed. The performance was not a usual one since the songs were mainly poetic and emotional considering the concert was for Mother's Day.

Khalife wanted to take out these emotions and let the performers engage with the attendees who were students thinking of their mothers, or mothers thinking of their motherhood.

"I always try to get performers together in the name of special occasions; occasions that are close to our hearts because this is how their performance will be genuine and authentic," said Khalife.

Students who performed talked about the special vibes they wanted to give on this day.

"My mother couldn't make it today, but I'm doing this because I care about mothers in general, and I want to see them happy. This is why most of us are here today," said Yves Abi Aad, a civil engineering student, and a musician.

Performers did not have much time to rehearse because of their academic responsibilities so they assembled songs that required minimal rehearsal for maximum effect. The effect surely did work; mothers in the audience were speechless.

"This is beautiful, I love that this particular gift is not a material one, instead it is something that we can enjoy, appreciate and never forget," said Vivian Kanj Khairallah, one of the mothers at the concert. "Mr. Khalife is a saint for bringing this together."

The diversity in the songs performed captivated the audience the most, satisfying all tastes, from opera lovers to Arabic songs lovers. ■

# Dancing with the Profs

By Sally Farhat and Fatima Al Mahmoud

Contributor: Sarah Kaskas

Put on your dancing shoes and jump onto the dance floor. You do not always get the opportunity to dance with your profs!

For the third year in a row, the Department of Communication Arts organized Dancing with the Profs, the university's version of the famous show Dancing with the Stars. Similar to previous versions, this year's event brought together LAU students and faculty members with the aim of satisfying their passion for fun, dance, and competition. After five months of preparations, the four competing couples put on a breathtaking show at the Selina Korban Auditorium, Byblos campus, on April 26.

The competition was first organized by the LAU Student Dance Club in Byblos. Following its success, it became an annual project held under the supervision of the Department of Communication Arts.

"The idea of the event came to me when I was elected president of

the Dance Club three years ago," explained Romario Akiki, LAU student and organizer of Dancing with the Profs. "We wanted to let the students see their professors from a different perspective."

Despite the professionalism with which the event is usually handled, the organization of the third edition was more challenging. Setting a final date for the competition was difficult due to the double Easter holiday. As a result, the competition was pushed forward to the end of the semester, which conflicted with final exams and projects. Last minute withdrawals by some professors were also an issue. Despite the obstacles the organizers faced, their purpose for completing the show was clear: allowing the "students and professors to have fun together on the dance floor," explained Akiki.

Rabih Nahas and Mira Samaha of Dancing with the Stars and Assistant Professor of Engineering Joe Tekli, judged the performance of the four

couples: English instructor Souraya Daoud and Nadim Hijazi, English instructor Paul Saghbini and Rachel Chreim, Biology instructor Stephanie Mehanna and Karim Serhan, and Assistant Professor of Nutrition Maya Bassil, and Romario Akiki, who won the competition.

"I can't say that they were better than the others because every dance had its own meaning, but they were the most outstanding," said Samaha.

Beyond the dances themselves, most attendees agreed on the importance of such an event.

"This event lets students approach their profs outside the studying ambiance and allows them to get to know each other more," said a second-year pharmacy student. "It is really important in strengthening their bond and improving their relationships." ■



Students



# Student Senior Projects

## Performing Arts Capstones

Students

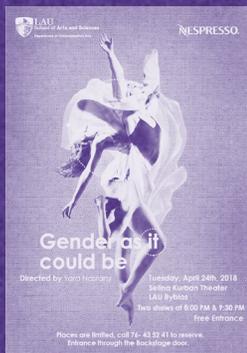


### “WIRED”

*Directed by*  
**Antoine Awad and Majd Alalam**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Nadra Assad and Dr. Amr Selim**

Through movement and music, this project discussed the transmission of a nervous impulse across a synapse in an abstract fashion. The students wanted to follow the sequence of a certain order coming from a certain place, travelling in a certain way and causing changes at the end, and apply these qualities to dance and music.

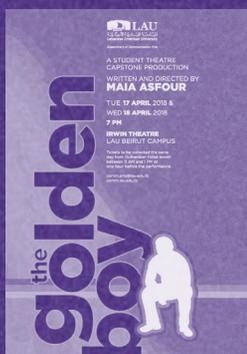


### “Gender As It Could Be”

*Written and Directed by*  
**Yara Nasrany**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Nadra Assad**

The general theme for this capstone was the freedom of the female body. The performance showcased a group of girls (dancers) living in a matriarchal world, in which the voice of society is that of modern dance pioneers, who will make sure the girls live in an environment that celebrates them instead of oppressing them.

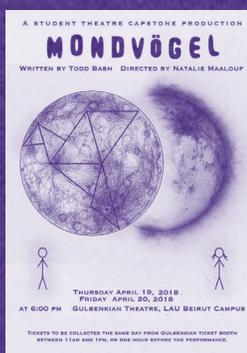


### “The Golden Boy”

*Written and Directed by*  
**Maia Asfour**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Mona Knio**

The Golden Boy was written in 2017 for a playwriting class. The inspiration came from Splendor in the Grass, a 1961 film written by William Inge. The message commuted through the play is that when one talks about love one “should acknowledge others’ love.”



### “MONDVÖGEL”

*Written by*  
**Todd Bash**  
*Directed by*  
**Natalie Maalouf**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Mona Knio**

The play is about Michael, a man in his 40s, who has been trying to find a way out of his nightmares. He attempts to fulfill the latter through the search for the Young Woman, who is the symbol of purity and innocence. However, the ghosts of the past take over him, disrupting their connection.

# Performing Arts Play Productions

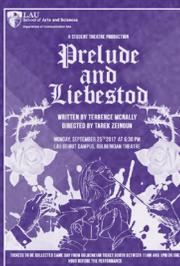


## “Huis Clos”

*Written by*  
**Jean-Paul**

*Directed by*  
**Tala Al Nachar**

(No Exit) is a 1944 existentialist French play. It is a depiction of the afterlife in which three deceased characters are punished by being locked into a room together for eternity. The original title is the French equivalent of the legal term in camera, referring to a private discussion behind closed doors.



## “Prelude and Liebestod”

*Written by*  
**Terrence McNally**

*Directed by*  
**Tarek Zeinoun**

This play, which was written in 1989 as the second one-act of the the Stendhal Syndrome, intermingles the characters' thoughts and utterances throughout the conduction of Richard Wagner's "Prelude and Liebestod."



## “عربة الموسيقى”

*Written by*  
**Maya Zbib**

*Directed by*  
**Ghida Ladkani**

This play was originally performed in 2008 at Lebanese households, where the writer herself visited her audiences to act the script out. The play exhibits stories of several women in the Lebanese society and tackles all their worries and concerns.

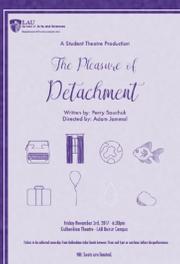


## “Nachthunde”

*Written by*  
**Todd Bash**

*Directed by*  
**Rahaf Jammal**

This play is inspired by surrealist influences; it is a dream-like work exploring the longing for youth. Even in the land of dreams however, one will not be able to achieve an absolute state of sufficiency, commutes the play.

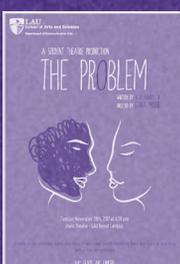


## “The Pleasure of Detachment”

*Written by*  
**Perry Suchouk**

*Directed by*  
**Adam Jammal**

The play revolves around a female writer who lacks the ability to completely express herself. She reacts to this by detaching herself from her reality, in order to create dream-like worlds where she feels content.



## “The Problem”

*Written by*  
**A. R. Gurney, JR.**

*Directed by*  
**Dana Mroueh**

Originally performed in 1968, The problem concerns WASPs of the American northeast, it talks about a couple's love life and as the story progresses we start to learn each of the spouses' secrets.

# TV and Film Capstones



## “Five to Six”

*Directed by* Leil Fouladkar *Edited by* Ghada El Ghrawi

*Supervised by*  
Dr. Sabine El Chamaa

This film is inspired by the assassination of the Lebanese politician, Walid Eido and his son Khaled Eido. As Dalia witnesses her boyfriend, Karim, suspect his father is assassinated, they sprint. Little did she know that her life will transform to that of the “target’s girlfriend.”

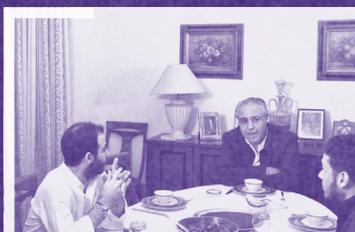


## “Al kae’d”

*Directed by* Charlie Noueihed *Written by* Karim Soueid

*Supervised by*  
Sarah Kaskas

A day at a Cafe in Souk El Rowshe.



## “Hadretkoun Min”

*Directed by* Nadine Safi *Edited by* Shireen Ayache

*Supervised by*  
Dr. Sabine El Chamaa

The Bizri family happily lives under one roof, being what seems to be a conventional regular family. Throughout the story, we learn each of the four members’ secrets from the director’s point of view.



## “Mish Maamoul”

*Directed and Written by*  
Firas Itani

*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas *Produced by* Line Itani

Soha spends the entire day busy with people visiting her on the Adha holiday, until her daughter Hiba comes in and everything collapses.



## “The Brink”

*Directed and Written by*  
Yara Adada

*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas *Produced by* Yasmine El Arnaout

When nothing makes sense around her, Leah escapes to a forest to build the one thing she might ever feel secure in. However, as external and internal forces push her situation at home to grow darker, Leah is faced with an important decision, to either face her reality or succumb to her isolation.



## “The Girl without Words”

*Directed and Produced by*  
Ida Guldbaek Arentsen

*Supervised by*  
Sarah Kaskas

In 2013 Tala was hit by a chemical weapon in Ghota, suburbs of Damascus. She spent four months in the hospital and developed epilepsy as one of the neurological consequences after the attack. Her mother left her to live with her grandparents in Katermaya in Lebanon. Her life held both love and concerns.

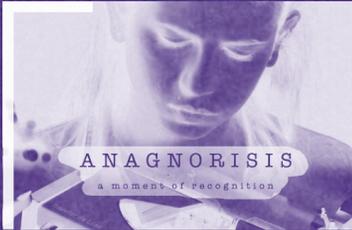


## “The Hippodrome”

*Directed and Produced by*  
Malene Nielsen

*Supervised by*  
Dr. Sabine El Chamaa

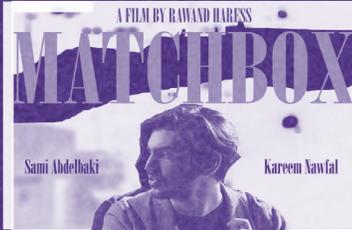
The horse track in the outskirts of Beirut is a look back at what once was. The 50s and 60s glitz and glamour is over and now all that is left are the same horses, jockeys, and people over and over again every Sunday. Prizes are low and money is short.



### “Anagnorisis”

*Directed by* Ghada Youssef *Produced by* Lama Hatoum  
*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas and Tony Farjallah

They are questions we ask, they are doubts we have, but at the end of the day they are decisions we make.



### “The Matchbox”

*Directed by* Rawand Haress *Produced by* Lamia Tokatly  
*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas

A psychological thriller that revolves around the story of Sami, a man who suffers from severe anxiety, his past unfolds as his car breaks down.



### “How to Make Cupcakes”

*Directed by* Maria Sakr *Produced by* Yara Houry  
*Supervised by* Tony Farjallah

A bride to-be finds herself second guessing her decisions, trying to choose between doing what she loves and marrying whom she loves.



### “Khataya”

*Directed by* Issa Khanji *Produced by* Lamia Tokatly  
*Supervised by* Mark Khalifeh

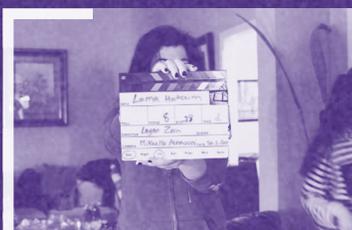
A father finds his past knocking on his door when least expected. Joel has been suffering from alcoholism after a past murder, his struggles to recover is haunting him daily, Having only his daughter Sara, unaware of his past, to take care of him, Joel tries to seek rehab and start a new chapter.



### “Let It Out”

*Directed by* Roy Abou Chaaya *Produced by* Lamia Tokatly  
*Supervised by* Nasser Chour

A 23-year-old woman is stuck in Beirut’s traffic and is struggling to get home. But why?



### “Sketched Dream”

*Directed by* Layan Zein *Produced by* Lama Hatoum  
*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas

Rain doesn’t know anything about her father, after her mother’s death she starts imagining a male figure in her head and draws him every day. The man on the drawings shows up in front of Rain on a bus and her life takes a new dimension afterwards.



### “Reality Check”

*Directed by* Dania Yamout *Produced by* Lama Hatoum  
*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas

A 20-year-old man, after discovering his mother is diagnosed with cancer is determined to save her life by robbing the restaurant that he works in, with the help of his girlfriend. When his actions cause the death of the restaurant security guard, his guilty conscience comes into conflict with that of his girlfriend.



### “Christmas Dinner”

*Directed by* Deema Dbouk *Produced by* Lamia Tokatly  
*Supervised by* Sarah Kaskas

A cab driver who suffers from depression and loneliness after his wife left him until his alter ego show up as a normal passenger to help him out of this situation.

# Journalism Capstones

## Woman in Iran

*Written by*  
**Nour Mehdi**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Monika Halkort**

The topic of women's rights in Iran is very limited within the hijab law when it comes to Western media. Although, in reality, the hijab law is not the main issue Iranian women struggle with. This project is based on the author's travel to Iran to collect stories from various Iranian women of different socioeconomic levels to reach the reality of what it feels like to be a woman in Iran.

## Food Safety and Lebanese Agriculture: An Unregulated and Neglected System

*Written by*  
**Amy Melki**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Monika Halkort**

Tackling food safety in Lebanon, I mainly focused on agriculture as the food chain is long and complex. The reasons why I decided to look into the agriculture sector is due to the fact that agriculture is the first step in the food chain and understanding the challenges and obstacles that farmers face could lead to an understanding of the flaws of the whole system. Also, the lack of food safety in Lebanon became a popular topic on the news when Lebanon's previous Minister of Health, Wael Abou Faour, took serious measures to shed light on the issue and shut down unhygienic and harmful food practices.

## ذلك القطار

*Written by*  
**Yarah Moussawi  
and Bashar Zaiter**

*Supervised by*  
**Jihad El Mallah**

Recently, Baalbek has occupied the forefront of the Lebanese security and political scene. It is the most prominent example of the political neglect of the parties where there is no development or effective governmental institutions, in addition to a high rate of displacement, lack of job opportunities and university majors, security chaos, reckless and indiscriminate gun shooting, and the weakness of authority and security forces under the domination of political forces, until the word "Baalbek" became the fear of tourists. However, with the exchange of blame and accusations between Baalbek's ruling political party and its outlawed clans, negligence is justified to keep Baalbek in the position of ignorance and underdevelopment.

## The Effect of Stand-Up Comedy and Satire on Creating a Public Opinion

*Written by*  
**Mahnaz Maktabi  
and Sandra Azki**

*Supervised by*  
**Jihad El Mallah**

Stand-up comedy and political satire are one of the oldest genres of theatrical forms, yet they are taking new heights specially since the booming of social media, and playing a more important role when it comes to elections in Lebanon, Italy, the US or even South Africa. Comedians such as Charlie Chaplin, David Letterman, Chouchou, Salam Zaatari, and Hisham Haddad, among many others, try to make a difference in the public opinion on a daily basis. Not only are their shows designated to make people laugh, but they are also a slap in the face of the public.

## Colorful Stones

*Written by*  
**Sara Habbash**

*Supervised by*  
**Jihad El Mallah**

This short documentary tackles the issue of the Apartheid Wall on Palestinian land, and the graffiti painted on it by many Palestinian, Arab, and international artists. The documentary considers two viewpoints regarding the graffiti on the wall, between people who view it as an act of resistance against the Israeli occupation, and others who think it beautifies/normalizes the existence of the Apartheid Wall from the first place. The movie was shot in Palestine, at the Qalandia checkpoint, and in Bethlehem city.

## Garbage in Lebanon: A New Disease

*Written by*  
**Noor Abu Tarraf  
and Zainab Bachir**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Claudia Kozman**

This project is a multimedia feature story that delves into the health implications of the garbage crisis in Lebanon. The authors based their story on personal visits to the Al Naameh and Bourj Hamoud landfills, speaking to both residents and authorities. The result is a multimedia feature story that includes insight from various stakeholders, including citizens affected, medical doctors, pharmacists, environmental experts, among others. The story takes on a unique storytelling approach that combines narrative, detailed descriptions, dialogue, and data from sources.

## The Role of Social Media in Lebanese Parliamentary Elections

*Written by*  
**Kafa Khalil**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Claudia Kozman**

This project is a research study that uses textual analysis to examine the relationship between the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary candidates' posts on Facebook and youth. A sample of six candidates – three who ran independently for the elections and the others who ran for different political parties – was used to analyze the data. More than 200 posts were collected from these accounts from February 1 to April 24, 2018. Results showed that, during this period, youth were highly engaged with posts related to the elections. Analysis also revealed a positive interaction between youth and candidates' posts, especially those related to political life.

## The Self-Presentation of Female Candidates in the Lebanese Elections

*Written by*  
**Mira Matar and  
Fatima Al Mahmoud**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Claudia Kozman**

With the impressive number of women who ran for the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary elections and the increasing importance of social media in elections campaign, the authors of the story took a special interest in how the female candidates for the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary elections presented themselves on their personal Twitter account. Using a textual analysis as a research methodology, the authors examined the candidates' tweets to formulate three main frames that fit the candidates: the empowering female, the dedicated candidate, and the relatable tweeter. The project is a multimedia feature story that is based on in-depth interviews with the candidates and an analysis of their tweets.

## The Fight for an Independent Kurdistan

*Written by*  
**Natasha Salloum**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Claudia Kozman**

The Kurds who have for long struggled for self-autonomy, were so close to having a 'Kurdistan homeland,' except that the referendum didn't take them as far as they had anticipated: establishing a nation. Shedding light on Kurds' fight for independence and demand for recognition from the international community can begin from a country as small as Lebanon, to proliferate to the ends of the globe. This capstone project took a qualitative approach that employs Kurds' views to highlight the continuous struggle and ceaseless hope for total Kurdish independence. It is presented as a multimedia feature story that incorporates in-depth interviews with several Kurds in Lebanon and Iraq.

## Populism and Gender

*Written by*  
**Ghina Mohsen**

*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Claudia Kozman**

Populism, a political movement that presents itself as a supporter of the people, has a set of techniques that politicians follow, but it is still not clear where the concept of gender lies in this new political trend. This project is a feature story that analyzes the relationship between populism and gender, highlighting its roots and its current status. It pays special attention to the issue in Lebanon.

# Student Diaries

## ARIJ - Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism

### Diary from the Dead Sea

By Rana Tabbara

It's not often these days that the Arab states can claim a world-class innovation ahead of the West. But when it comes to "Fake News", we are infamous for having it way before they did.

On November 30, 2017, some 400 Arab journalists talked about this topic when they convened at Jordan's Dead Sea for the 10th Annual ARIJ Forum. It was pretty interesting to meet in a barren place, next to a sea whose name holds morbidity. But one thing I can assure everyone is that the ideas generated from the conference, and the enthusiasm for an accountable

and independent investigative journalism gave life to the place. The Dead Sea was never so alive, and more initiatives like that can flood this livelihood and pour it into neighboring countries as well, or so we hope. Bashar Zaiter and I were fortunate enough to gain a student scholarship and attend the conference. During our first two days, we had a special students' workshop about the ABCs of Investigative Journalism by Dr. Mark Hunter.

We then spent the other three days attending workshops, lectures, and panels of our choice, during which, I

*"The Dead Sea was never so alive, and more initiatives like that can flood this livelihood."*

- Rana Tabbara

joined a total of 30. Equating to 10 talks per day - I wonder if I broke any record.

The last night of our stay was dedicated to distributing awards and, there, I was surprised to find out that the project I had submitted was competing in the semifinals against scholar journalists' work for the Multimedia Prize. I didn't make the finals, but according to Rana Sabbagh, the executive director of ARIJ, the project was "very well done." And so she offered me a job as a freelancer, making me at 19 the youngest investigative reporter in the network.



## The Excitement of Being an ARIJ Family Member

By Bashar Zaiter

I won't begin this reflection paragraph with a definition of the ARIJ conference since it is known how beneficial it is and how it raises investigative journalism in the Arab world. I will begin with my excitement when I knew that I had been accepted – the dream of any journalism student.

We went to the Dead Sea in Jordan where the conference took place. On Friday, we attended a workshop on the ABCs of Investigative Journalism, where we learned the stages of this type of journalism. From a workshop about mobile journalism to a lecture about investigative storytelling and

other lectures such as the Facebook journalism program, our Saturday was full. On the last day of the workshop on Sunday, we attended a lecture about the golden rules of successful storytelling in the digital era, in addition to four other lectures and sessions, before the final and official ending ceremony of the ARIJ 10th annual conference.

During the ceremony, there was the distribution of awards, which really made us more and more excited about being investigative journalists. The topics of the lectures were invaluable in informing us about the survival of

media in its multimedia forms and the golden rules we should follow.

In my opinion, this might be the most professional conference that I will ever attend. From the guests to the audience, the organization of the place and the hotel, the time and the lectures, we were getting more and more excited to be a part of the ARIJ family.

Not only did they help us with the technical side, but they also brought us closer to many different people from different countries, which broke stereotypes between us, and between them and our country. ■

# Launching “Naya”: An Initiative from LAU Students and Alumni

By Sally Farhat

Cooking, fashion, make-up, and how to raise the kids are no longer what defines “women news.” Women’s issues and success stories deserve recognition, which is why An-Nahar took it upon itself to create Naya, a platform that seeks to shed light on Lebanese women’s challenges and achievements.

The original idea of Naya came to be after several correspondents, including myself, noticed the underrepresentation of women in the news. Our inspiration were existing initiatives, such as The Lily from the Washington Post and 100 Women from BBC.

I was assigned as Naya’s editor in July. In no time, my job shifted from a correspondent with the responsibility of reporting ethically, to an editor with the responsibility of not only managing a section but also presenting Lebanese women and their issues in the way they deserve to be presented. It was, and it

is still my duty to run a unique column, one that challenges cliché women news. My mission is aimed at boosting women’s power and not simply empowering them.

Following several meetings, our launch on social media, and a short pilot-test in August, Naya officially debuted in September.

Since then, a team of 16 correspondents of which six are LAU students and alumni, have put in all the efforts to become a voice that would resonate with our readers. No topic is considered a taboo and no difficulty is overlooked by the members. Until this day, Naya has challenged women’s topics and has made me grow and discover myself each passing day.

LAU students and graduates contributing to the section include Fatima Al Mahmoud, Tala Ramadan, Carla Richa, Maria Sakr, Paula Nawfal, and Rana Tabbara. ■



# The UAE Graduates 100 Young Arab Media Leaders

By Sally Farhat

What happens if we put 100 young journalists in one room?

Well, I might have never thought about it until I found myself in that room.

Amid the political conflicts and economic battles our Arab world is facing, 100 Arab media students and fresh graduates from 18 different Arab countries came together to mirror the strengths of Arab unity in the UAE’s Arab Youth Center.

The Young Arab Media Leaders Program acted as an open platform welcoming those who acknowledge the power of the media and dare to question its current use. Mira Matar, Hussein Kassab, and I, were the chosen candidates to represent firstly, LAU and secondly, Lebanon in the program. Long working hours, a profusion of information, and mentally challenging topics were the main headlines of the program.

Fifteen days were surprisingly enough to attend 47 workshops, 30 meetings, 10 visits to prominent media institutions, and 60 lectures presented by well-



known national and international media institutions such as CNN, SkyNews, MBC, Reuters, and Google. Our journey also concluded with a visit to HH Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

We became impassive to exhaustion and fatigue. Resting turned into a foreign word – one we do not acknowledge nor understand. Our day would start at 6:30 a.m. and “hypothetically” end at 8 p.m. But, by the time the clock ticks 7:45,

participants have already planned their post-workshop plans. The Young Arab Media Leaders Program can be best described as 15 overnights in a row.

In a blink of an eye, we found ourselves on the last day of program in tears. Fifteen weary days were enough not only to teach us what we couldn’t have learnt in years and to challenge us to question every detail we come across but also to create a family of 100 Young Arab Media Leaders. The program left a piece of each participant in 18 different Arab countries. ■

# A Student Visit to the Lebanese Parliament

## New Wave of Voters on the Horizon

By Mira Matar

One hundred and twenty-eight LAU students had the privilege to visit their House and take the seats of the Lebanese deputies. In the presence of Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, an extraordinary session was held for almost an hour.

For once, women held more than half the seats.

For once, the average age of the deputies was at its lowest.

For once, seats were not apportioned according to sects and parties.

For once, the one-hour session was not interrupted by any chaotic scrimmage.

For once, the House was a source of pride and an example to follow.

The Lebanese Parliament failed over nine years to elect deputies and has witnessed several extensions since then. Today's 128 LAU students are part of the estimated 20 percent of the Lebanese population that will vote for the first time in the general elections to be held next May.

Our upcoming deputies could look as young and fresh as these 128 students, and our upcoming parliament could be as exquisite and remarkable as today's.

For this to happen, a great responsibility rests on us – new voters – to make sure that our votes are going in a direction that produces real change and transmits the pulse of youth to the House.

*"It's no wonder politicians have big egos: The chair by itself gives power, and made me feel I was in charge."*

- Sandra Azki



## The Chair Made Me Feel I Was in Charge

By Sandra Azki

Going to the Parliament was a very exciting and new experience for me, and I see it as beneficial for the youth who seized the chance to experience the parliamentary life by sitting in chairs that are only for politicians and questioning Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Parliament.

Berri was asked various questions about politics and the meeting tended to be serious. However, it didn't lack some

humor, where Berri was continuously cracking jokes as he is used to doing. Many students, including me, weren't given a chance to ask questions since we quickly ran out of the 45 minutes Berri gave us for the Q&A including his speeches, LAU President Dr. [Joseph] Jabbra's speech, and a student's introductory speech. It's no wonder politicians have big egos: The chair by itself gives power, and made me feel I was in charge.

## Seeing the World Differently

By Yarah Moussawi

"Arra'ees!" (The President!) This was the first word that touched the hearts of 128 students who were sitting there as members of the Parliament.

The word was strong and loud enough for each one of us as ministers and MPs to stand up and applaud the Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri who gave us this unique opportunity. Participating in this special occasion, organized by LAU, was one of the best and most important experiences that I have personally witnessed.

However, taking the seats of the current deputies of the parliament and acting as MPs in front of Nabih Berri was a great opportunity for us to ask him a few questions

and address some of our concerns. The short session was extraordinary but typical at the same time, providing us with a real feeling of being true MPs for the first time although not all of us had the opportunity to ask questions.

Speaker Berri's facetiousness made the session a smooth one and broke the formal border between him and us although he was answering our questions firmly and objectively.

This special session drew our attention to seeing the world differently, from a decision-making perspective, and left us hoping to be real MPs in the future. ■

# Samir Kassir Student Experience

## Ahmad Karakira

Multimedia Journalism

From being selected to represent LAU, to having access to the candidates' projects, meeting them, and asking them questions, taking part in the award's event made me feel proud to be a multimedia journalism student, especially that the award focuses on press freedom and a noble cause such as human rights.

## Rana Tabbara

Multimedia Journalism

Being part of the process enriched me as a student as it gave me the opportunity to experience being a critical journalist. Besides that, it also introduced me to all the talented journalists who were driven by their passion - one we share. If I had to sum up what I took from this experience I'd say that with passion and persistence a person will not only send his/her message out, but will also encourage others to seek and keep seeking.

## Fatima Al Mahmoud

Multimedia Journalism

Participating in the Samir Kassir Award Ceremony was an enriching experience. On a personal level, being interested in seeking a career in investigative journalism, the experience was the perfect exposure to the work of regional journalists, providing me with insight on issues that don't necessarily hold proximity to us but are still worthy of highlighting and refueling my passion for this career. Although the award was given to only one project of each category, all participants were equally inspiring.

## Carla Richa

Multimedia Journalism

It was a chance for us students to meet influential people in our field as well as have a quick look on how articles are meant to be, how they're judged. From that, I was able to learn more on how the structure of my article should be as well as how to my story.

## Abdallah Malaeb

Political Science and International Affairs

Participating in the Samir Kassir event put us in direct contact with journalists who at some point risked their lives in order to articulate pain, injustice, and crimes caused by certain governments. Giselle [Khoury]'s speech was a wakeup call for us to fight for human rights, voice out the demands of marginalized people, and never accept becoming a mouthpiece of a certain political player in an era of biases.

## Sally Farhat

Multimedia Journalism and Communication

Participating in the Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the Press ceremony allowed us to meet inspiring journalists, listen and learn from people coming from different journalistic perspectives, and most importantly, to become more critical. We had the opportunity to discuss the competing pieces with the finalists themselves and thus, not only did we question their choice of topic, sources and so on but also, we challenged ourselves to see beyond what is the given.

## Mira Matar

Multimedia Journalism

By attending Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the press, I learned from experienced journalists how to improve my own skills and knowledge about the field. I was offered a chance to engage in their work and have deep discussions about them. It was also an opportunity to meet new people with different backgrounds and different schools of journalism, which enlightened my way of thinking in my field, not to mention that I built networks with experts from different parts of the world.

## Tala Ramadan

Multimedia Journalism

The SKF event had a huge impact on my journalistic journey because I got to meet experienced journalists who shared their experienced thoroughly and every detail mattered. ■



# Experiences from Salzburg



## Emilio Mounsef Senior, TV/Film

I was privileged enough to attend Salzburg Global Seminar 2018. The beautiful thing about it is that the minute you arrive, they make you feel at home. We "broke the ice" and started the group work; I knew that my final project had to be a documentary because that way I would be disseminating truthful information through my passion for television and film. Working with students from all around the world really makes this experience unique and unforgettable. I am a person who likes change and new adventures; I want to make a difference in this world, and I want to leave something behind. That was what happened in Salzburg, I left something there and I got something in return. This experience changed me, made me more media literate and most importantly, more confident in myself.



## Lynn El Jbeily Senior, TV/Film

Holà! I participated in the 2018 Salzburg Global Seminar, as per recommended by my friends and Dr. [Jad] Melki. We attended several lectures, panels and participated in numerous activities. One of the things that impacted me the most was the human library, where we got the chance to listen to each other's stories or as Roman likes to call it "read the books", the human books discussed several issues but the story that impacted me the most was the one about survival. This made me reflect on several events that happened in my life, it made me more positive. I will never forget the people I met during my stay there, I've never had so much support in my entire life and that made me more confident. The people I met there are my second family now. This experience is not to be missed!



## Sally Farhat Senior, Communication, Multimedia Journalism; Minor in PFA

I can't describe the journey in Salzburg! The Seminar was a lifetime experience and I was lucky enough to be involved in it. To touch on the knowledge we gained, we definitely learned a lot of things during the three week program through getting exposed to new journalistic ideas and approaches. However, beyond the group works and the lectures, the simple talks and chats we had with other people from all over the world gave us a more specific view of the general topics manifested in the conference rooms and allowed us to have a better understanding of how journalism works differently in different countries. Being surrounded by people from different cultures and learning about all these cultures was another highlight worth mentioning.



## Yara Issa Senior, Communication

Being part of the Salzburg Global Seminar this year was a challenging yet incredible experience. The fact that one hall gathered around a hundred person from different nationalities to discuss worldwide topics, changed my way of perceiving issues and dealing with them. The hardest part of the academy was leaving, part of me wanted to go back home to my family and country but the other part wanted to stay there in a place we felt like home. Each and every person I met at this academy has a little piece of me with them. I feel so blessed and thankful for those three weeks of my life. Bits and pieces of my heart will forever be roaming the world now, and this is a dream come true. I traveled the world within three weeks.



## Jena Lynn Karam Senior, Communication

Over the summer I was lucky enough to attend the 2018 Salzburg Global Seminar. It was truly a life changing experience. I applied to the program for its direct focus on media and international affairs. However, it taught me so much beyond the two topics. I was able to make connections with some of the most advanced media entrepreneurs, in addition to meeting students like me from different regions all around the world. I think my favorite part of the program was the ability to discuss and try to find solutions regarding important topics taking place in the modern world. I truly believe that our small group of 85 students give or take, advanced the world of media and international affairs just by attending this seminar and I believe that it was the perfect study abroad experience before work.



## Rana Tabbara Senior, Multimedia Journalism

Salzburg was an opportunity for us to get outside our comfort zone and deflate the cultural bubble we live in. I chose to participate because I wanted to see global media systems in practice and learn more about how other cultures approach storytelling methods, reporting strategies and other intakes on journalism. I particularly enjoyed participating in group projects that encouraged us to think critically and come up with new ways to tackle the issues imposed on today's field. All these are very nice technical words to describe a great academic experience. However, there was that sentimental part that I want to reflect on as well. Salzburg Global Seminar is a title that doesn't give the program justice, a more articulate title would include "home". This Seminar gave me a family that only novelists can describe.



### Alex Dahdah Senior, TV/Film

Last February, based on my friend's recommendation, I signed up for a three-week program abroad, not expecting anything specific but a rich academic experience. However, I didn't expect this experience to become a mark-point in my personal life. Post-Salzburg is a time when I discovered the value of diversity, the meaning of exploring different perspectives and the golden belief that we can always make a change together.



### Kinda EL Zoghby Junior, Multimedia Journalism

Salzburg was indeed a wonderful experience. Being part of the Salzburg Global Seminar for the year 2018 was literally a life-changing experience for me in several ways. The friendships I formed from all over the world while in the Schloss followed me back home. I enjoyed every single detail during the three week experience; I especially enjoyed being independent, exploring new places with amazing company, getting to know many media experts and so on. I can confidently say that having such a remarkable experience changed me for the better. I'm really more than thankful to be part of this amazing group of people.



### Jad Fawaz Senior, Economics; Minor in Political Science, Multimedia Journalism

Before I went to the seminar I was always told, "Jad make your story human!" and I never knew what that truly meant before watching Daniela Rea's documentary. Between talking to people from different backgrounds, and that documentary I think my experience there definitely let me unlock a different dimension of empathy within me. What was also significant about the seminar was the diversity we had in terms of faculty. The professionals were very opinionated scholars and accomplished people in the journalistic world but they did not have the same schools of thoughts or ideologies, so there was a lot of room for critical thinking, interpretation and also off classroom discussions.



### Sara Taha Junior, Psychology

I joined the Salzburg Global Academy wishing to experience a new thing in life, to meet new people, and to learn from so many inspiring figures. This experience met all my expectations and was even better than I expected, Salzburg global seminar taught me that there are a lot of persons working on themselves to develop and to make the world better. Meeting people from diverse cultures, making friends, having the chance to talk and share thoughts, and ideas was priceless. It's an experience not to be forgotten, and I would definitely recommend it to everyone!  
PS.: I'm overwhelmed by the fact that I now have not new friends, but a new family from all around the world, Salzburg what a blessing!



### Moustafa Wehbe Senior, IT Management and Marketing

The Salzburg Global Seminar was—until this day—the best experience of my life. It taught me two major lessons: reassuring the credibility of news, no matter how real it might seem/look, and it gave me a new perspective along with an approaching method towards foreigners; because I was mostly used to communicate with Lebanese. I have made lifetime friends that I still talk to until this day. Who wouldn't make friends in such a serene place that gives you immense comfort whenever you gaze at the greenery, and the iconic Alps? The experience was simply unforgettable.



### Mohamad Khoudari Senior, Political Science and International Relations

I can proudly say that I was a participant in the Salzburg Global Seminar program that took place this summer. What's special about this program is that it brings together people from all around the globe; I have never imagined that I would make friends with people from Mexico or China! And I even met amazing people from my university that I would not have probably met if not for this program. The location of the program is also very special, as we stayed in a historical palace located in the very peaceful city of Salzburg. The environment which we stayed in provided us with peace of mind and allowed us to think only about what we came to do, re-imagine journalism. It is an unforgettable experience, I will never forget the laughs we had and the late night talks with my roommate.



### Samer Wehbi Junior, Marketing

I attended the Salzburg Global Seminar without knowing exactly what to expect. It was more than just a regular seminar, it was a great way to make new friends, new connections, and it added to our individual experiences as well. The program allowed us to discuss an array of topics regarding media, and you can only imagine how inspiring the discussions were between students with ingenious thoughts and professionals with years of expertise. Everything about this experience was honestly amazing, whether it was the amazing view that surrounded us, the amazing people we met, or the cultural richness of the rooms we sat in every day. It all made this historic seminar and hotel feel like home. Truly an experience of a lifetime! ■

# Student Awards

## LAU Alumna Wins Best Short Film at European Film Festival

The Department of Communication Arts has definitely reaped what it sowed with yet another alumna being acknowledged for her unique work. Line Itani, who received her Bachelor's degree in TV/Film in 2017, has won the prize for best short film at the 24th European Film Festival, for her senior film Brine.

Brine follows the story of a city reigned by drought where tears are the only possible means of remuneration. In the movie, the emotional value of tears is replaced with the materialistic value of money.

Struggling to make a decent living, the lead characters, Akthab and Sirab, set out on a journey to find the reservoir of tears, only to realize their emotional value.

"I believe what made the film stand out is the fact that it attempted to create a world of its own with rules that are not ours," said Itani, who created her film under the supervision and support of Assistant Professor of Film Sarah Kaskas.

Itani was inspired by the tendency of those around her to pour themselves into work and disregard their personal lives and feelings, a habit she practiced herself. "We lose a bit of our humanity. I wanted to dramatize this phenomenon," she explained.

The movie was a collective effort, put together by a number of dedicated students, alumni and faculty including Samer Beyhum, Mohamed Yassine, and Youssef Itani, among others. ■



## TV/Film Students Win Award for Short Film Tackling Violence Against Women

Seventy seconds of strong visuals and an even stronger message were enough to grant *Misplaced Guilt* the best short film award at the arts contest that LAU's Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) held as part of the international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

The short film, which was created

by TV/Film students Rita Abi Daoud, Jana Abi Ghosn, Imad Barakat, and Pia Maria El Khoury, and Emma Nader addresses issues of sexual violence, victim blaming, and public harassment. It depicts a young woman stepping out of her bloodied clothes and into a bathtub while voices are heard humiliating her for her sexual assault.

The first-time director El Khoury used

her anger at the prevailing rape culture to come up with the idea. "I've heard so many explanations given to justify rape – sympathizing with the criminal and blaming the victim. I felt the need to address it and share my thoughts with others."

The film was part of the Introduction to Audio Visual Media course, taught by lecturer Nasser Chour. ■



# "Maram" Brings Home 4 Awards and 28 Festival Selections

In a collaborative effort between LAU faculty, students, and alumni, Maram was born.

Maram is a short documentary that features a young Syrian refugee girl, Maram, who sells flowers on the streets of Hamra rather than attend school. The documentary tackles the right to education, of which many street children are denied for a number of reasons including general corruption and income inequality.

Created and directed by TV/Film studio technician Samer Beyhum, Maram was officially selected by 28 festivals across Lebanon, Canada, Poland, Spain, Italy, France, the USA, Chile, Colombia, Australia, Germany, and Croatia, over the span of one year.

The documentary has also won four awards: The Best Solidarity Work Award from the MINIDOC 2017 film festival in Spain, Best Short Documentary Directing Award from the Global Motion Pictures Award Festival in the USA, Best Documentary Award from the online

Best Short on MovieScreenPro Film Festival, and Best Documentary Award from the Dieciminit Film Festival in Italy, as well as a trophy and cash prize from each of the MINIDOC 2017 and Dieciminit film festivals. Working

alongside Beyhum were LAU students Nour Nassar, Kourken Papazian, Sandra Sayej, Issa Khanji, Lamia Tokatli, Deema Dbouk, Judy Srouji, and Iyad Tchelebi, and LAU alumnae, Souad Saidi and Madonna Adib. ■



# LAU Alumna Receives Honorable Mention at the Los Angeles Film Awards



"Anagnorisis" is defined as a moment in a play or other work when a character makes a critical discovery. It is also the title of the experiential dance short film written and directed by TV/Film alumna Ghada Youssef.

A surreal experience of the death of a beloved and the desperate urge to feel their presence, Anagnorisis was beautifully written and executed. The

story of Marie and her late mother was awarded an Honor of Mention at the Los Angeles Film Awards and listed as part of the Official Selection at the Festigious Film Festival.

"The story is triggered by the death of my aunt who raised me 10 years ago," explained Youssef. Relating to the thought process of any individual who has experienced loss, including herself,

Youssef built the film's narrative on "if you are here, please show yourself!" "The film is what most of us, even for seconds, dream to experiment," she added. Besides having a story to tell, Youssef's film was a self-created platform to express her passion for dance.

Anagnorisis is Youssef's capstone project, which was supervised by Senior Lecturer of Film, Tony Farjallah. ■



# Faculty & Staff



# Faculty Awards

## Underdown Brings TV/Film Faculty Sarah Kaskas Grants and Prizes

"I've always wanted to make this movie without really knowing what it is," said Associate Professor of TV/Film Sarah Kaskas, about her feature documentary *Underdown*.

Tackling poor living circumstances in Beirut, *Underdown* tells the story of three unrelated characters striving underneath the poverty line. Despite the heaviness of their situation, the humor and lightness surrounding the characters have allowed for the feature documentary to stand out in the many festivals it toured. "When you can make someone laugh, then you have them, you have their attention," explained Kaskas, an award-winning filmmaker, sound recordist, music composer. Her message throughout the film was that of finding your home. "Home is not exactly a shelter, it's more about you and where you feel you are at peace with yourself despite any hardship you have," she said.

While still a work in progress, *Underdown* has won grants at each of the Doha Film Institute, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and Misereor, Germany. It has also participated in Beirut Cinema Platform, where it won two prizes: Participation in Malaga Cinema Platform and Sound Mixing by the leading DB Studios in Lebanon, received "The Cell" prize award while part of the CineGouna Springboard Platform during El Gouna Film Festival, and participated in Qumra platform. ■



## TV/Film Faculty Tony Farjallah Wins Best Director Award for "Morine"



To many people, Morine is a forgotten Lebanese saint. To LAU senior instructor of TV/Film Tony Farjallah, she is a hero. Having lived during a time when heavy restrictions were placed on women, Morine disguises herself as a man to get to the monastery where she spends her life in the service of God. It wasn't until her death that the truth was revealed to the monks. Her story was retold in a two-hour film, directed by Farjallah, making it the first Lebanese historical movie in the history of Lebanese cinema.

Sharing Morine's beliefs, Farjallah explained that he would not have made

this film if he weren't a spiritual person himself.

"What I have learned in directing was to serve what I like and who I am," he stated, adding that his message for this film was to show saints, like humans, can love, hate, and make mistakes. "Saints do not fall from heaven, but grow on earth," he said.

Farjallah's craze with the character and story of Morine has resulted in a film that "keeps the viewer attached for two hours on their seats following the fascinating steps of her adventure,"

said Farjallah. Deservedly, he won Best Director at the Marbella International Film Festival 2018, among other awards including:

- Best Foreign Feature at the Christian Film Family Festival 2018
- Award of Excellence at the IndieFEST Film Awards 2018
- Best Spiritual Feature at the Great Lakes Film Festival 2018
- Official Selection at the Heartland International Film Festival 2018
- Official Selection at the Carthage Film Festival 2018. ■

## Prestigious Grant for Music Ensemble Co-founded by Music Faculty Amr Selim



Merely an idea for eight years, Common Sounds became a reality after being selected to receive the US-based prestigious Knight Foundation Grant Award. Common Sounds is a multi-genre music ensemble co-founded by Assistant Professor of Music and Founder and Director of Imagine Summer Arts Camp at the Lebanese American University (LAU), Amr Selim, and renowned musician Ray Furuta. In an attempt to realize his vision of a musically and culturally diverse ensemble, Dr. Selim embarked

on a journey to recruit artists from all over the world. The end result was a group of musicians and instruments from Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, India, Armenia, and the United States. The diversity on which Common Sounds is built disseminates a powerful message.

"We're making a statement that everyone is able to live together musically," said Selim. "We're trying to inspire others by bringing all these people together and inspire others to do the same," he added.

Common Sounds first performed on July 26, in San Jose, California, when Selim and Furuta put together a small concert to premiere their compositions, followed by a panel discussion on music belief and conflict.

Future plans for Common Sounds include reaching as many people as possible. Selim intends to bring the ensemble to the Arab region, specifically to Lebanon and Egypt. He is also looking forward to featuring the ensemble at LAU one day. ■

## New Faculty Q&As

# Gabriele Cosentino

**Position:**  
Visiting Assistant  
Professor

**Program:**  
Communication

**Degree:**  
PhD in Media studies

**Focus:**  
Relation between  
politics and  
entertainment;  
cultural globalization



By Sally Farhat

**What made you go into political communication and study the relation between media and politics?**

I've always been interested in the relation between politics and culture, it has always been my thing. The idea of focusing in political communication however, came later during my undergraduate. In Italy, we had a very strange experience. We had someone like Trump except 20 years before him, someone from the media who moved to politics and became a very powerful politician. The experience back then was traumatic, it was a shock for the population to see someone becoming so powerful politically in a short period of time leveraging on his wealth, on his notoriety, and on his charisma. Back then, we were not ready for all these things and it was a kind of revolution but not in a good sense. This pushed me to study the relationship between media and politics because I was becoming aware that it is potentially very powerful. Now after Trump, I realized that the Italian case was not strange, but, a predictor of what might happen in the rest of the world.

**What is the importance of understanding the relation between entertainment and the world of politics?**

Political communication is very important, complex, and goes far back in time. My focus is just an attempt to make sense of a very strange phenomena: the domain of entertainment and that of popular culture overlapping with the sphere of politics and in the process changing the way we talk about politics, the way politics gets addressed, what we consider politically relevant, what we consider politically admissible, and what characters we give credit. There are certain limits that are being broken and if you want to see where politics is going nowadays you have to look at the connection between politics and media and it is really at this intersection that the new things are happening.

**Where have you worked before coming to Lebanon and why did you decide to come here?**

As a professor, I have worked for New York University in New York, and in Italy I've worked in several small liberal arts colleges. I came here following my wife who works at the European Commission Delegation to Syria. We moved because her whole office was transferred here and I followed along out of love. It was a big challenge for me because I had a job in Brussels and I had to quit it in hope of finding a job in Lebanon and I was lucky enough to find this visiting position.

**As a foreigner, what difficulties or challenges did you face while teaching the political communication course in a Lebanese context?**

This is the class that I am enjoying the most in terms of learning about the country. I really like it because there is a lot of emotions, which is good because I'm Italian so I'm closer to this type of environment. But, it is definitely a challenge because people are very passionate; their whole identity is on the line and their whole idea of who they are is at stake so

they will not take criticism simply as an element of discussion. I tried to keep the content closer to my experience as much as possible. I know about the theory, the trends about certain phases of evolution, and I can say with some degree of confidence that these trends might also happen here because all democracies have experienced changes.

**What distinguishes LAU from previous universities you've worked in?**

For me the most interesting thing that I am learning in this experience is to combine the practical and the theoretical in my classes. The emphasis of this department is to always have a practical component and I really like it because I have these two sides of me: a theoretical scholar but also a creative hands-on person.

**What do you like and dislike about teaching?**

It was mostly like a passion for knowledge and curiosity that made me go into teaching. I like to learn, to find out about new things and that's the first drive. The second drive is that I really like to relate and transmit the information I learn to somebody else. The part that I like about teaching is the human contact that creates a lot of real vibes and energy. The part that I don't like is when I am alone writing and correcting. For me, this part is draining. But, as with any job, you have to learn to get out the most from the positive and then learn what the negatives are and find a balance between the two.

**What research do you consider as the most prominent among all the ones you conducted?**

I wrote a book last year about populism and fake news and now I submitted a proposal for the English version. This research for me is very interesting. I'm learning a lot about how social media has been used to manipulate the public opinion and the way Facebook scandals have helped someone like Trump to become president. It's super fascinating because it is very current. There is the technological aspect which is interesting, and there is this element of fiction intersecting with reality: People being doped by false and fictional narratives, stories, myths, and then believing them, acting out on them, or voting because of them. It is very dangerous but it also very fascinating because it forces you to ask what drives people's decisions?

**What is your view on Lebanese politics?**

Politics of Lebanon for me look very foreign but also very familiar at the same time. They are familiar in the division, the cleavages, and the strong affiliation; that is something I also see in Italy. The foreignness is the religious element, the geo political context of the region, and all the influences that this country feels from the surrounding countries that are much bigger and more powerful. This scale does not exist in Italy, not in Europe.

## New Faculty Q&As

# Sarah Kaskas

**Position:**  
Assistant Professor of  
Film

**Program:**  
TV/Film

**Degree:**  
MFA in Cinematic Arts

**Focus:**  
Bridging audiovisual  
aesthetics to tackle  
sociopolitical themes  
and identity





By Fatima Al Mahmoud

"I can't see myself doing anything else," says Sarah Kaskas, a filmmaker, sound recordist, music composer and Assistant Professor at the Lebanese American University of Beirut. Her passion for making films and music emerged ever since she was a young child fascinated by video cassettes and rock 'n' roll. Turning her passion into a career, Kaskas pursued a BA in Communication Arts and an MFA in Cinematic Arts. Her most recent film, *Underdown*, has already won two awards at Beirut Cinema Platform, participation at Malaga Film Festival, and a grant at the Doha Film Institute, although it is still a work in progress.

#### Why did you choose filmmaking and sound recording?

As cliché as this may sound, I feel like it kind of chose me. Ever since I was a kid, I was so interested in watching behind the scenes. I was so fascinated with that part even more so than the film. I also remember I had on VHS tapes the "making of"... just 10 minutes, a small little featurette of the making of the film. Regardless of it was before or after the film, I would always watch it before the film. Something about knowing how the film was made before seeing the film was so much more interesting to me than just watching the film. And the same with music, I remember being a kid and pretending to play guitar on a tennis racket. My parents recognized that and tried to push me into the more obvious music lessons. And every time in the lessons they get to the whole note-reading, I just did a block. I still can't read notes and I never wanted to read notes, I just wanted to play rock and roll. And ever since I was a kid, I was recording on a cassette player, I found a way to overdub tracks over and over and over again not knowing anything really about how sound works but I was just experimenting. I crammed all these instruments in my bedroom and I'd just try to record, and I guess that's one of the main reasons why I'm so into sound as well.

#### Do you think there are challenges of being a woman in this field? And if so what are they?

I'm happy to say I don't think so. There were definitely challenges being a sound recordist in the region but at the same time there were advantages. I got a lot of jobs that specifically required female sound recordists, especially if I was taking a job that had to do with the Gulf and there were female subjects so they didn't want any men around them. Because of that I was able to go on a really amazing project in the Amazon jungle in Brazil a few years ago. As a sound recordist, you get doubtful looks because it's a very physical job for the most part. And I do feel that maybe I didn't get a few jobs because they were doubtful of me as a woman because it's a predominantly male job. As a director, there are examples of prominent female filmmakers which can maybe shatter this stereotype or misconception or difficulty. So you maybe not taken as seriously, but not in the extreme sense where you can't work or no one's going to listen to you.

#### What do you think of all the departmental changes?

I think they're great. Especially because I was a student here, there are a lot of changes. Sometimes it's a bit overwhelming; a lot is changing really fast. But I think all the changes are to the betterment of the program. It's always hard to accept change, I can understand that. But I think in general it's becoming really substantial as a program and I think it's starting to show. Many students at least in the TV/Film program are really making it happen, they're entering festivals,

they're winning awards, and they're getting residency programs.

#### So based on these changes, what do you think of the upcoming generation of filmmakers as storytellers?

I think everyone has an amazing story to tell, and I always do give them this advice, just speak from your heart, talk about you, localize. Those examples where you give everyone the same topic and you make them shoot something related, they're going to come back with 50 different films because it's about subjectivity. I think this is what makes everyone unique. It's their approach to something and their vision and their story. I think this is something they should not shy away from; they should be very truthful. That's the whole point of filmmaking, it's truth. Even if you're writing a completely fabricated story, a fiction, you're composing the dialogue you're composing the characters, and there's no way you would write this story unless it means something to you.

#### Which of your movies would you consider your favorite?

There's this really special place in my heart for the first film I made, which was here in LAU. I guess it was in 2006, there was the Art of Film class, which at the time was mostly about abstract cinema. We watched a lot of experimental films in the class, and we had to produce an abstract film as our final project. So I really love that film because it was the first film I made and it was the first time I edited on a non-linear software which was Avid, and I spent like a month trying to edit this film because I couldn't really understand the software and I wanted to do a lot of layering and weird stuff in the edits so it took a really long time to experiment with that. And it was also the first time I experiment with sound design not knowing anything about sounds. I laugh at it now when I watch it because all the sound is mono and coming out of one side, which is a huge technical mistake and I didn't even know this. I really like that project because it was the first time I was sort of mind blown, I was able to physically see first-hand what you can do in a film and how non-linear it can be and how expressive it can be.

#### What are you most proud of in your career so far?

The fact that I'm still able to produce material and that there's this burning desire to produce films. I think that's what keeps me going. There's never like this "Oh it's been 3 years maybe I should do something." It just really comes from somewhere deep inside, this need to keep making films.

#### If you were to describe yourself with a film genre, what would it be?

Dark comedy, for sure.

## New Faculty Q&As

# Usama Acra

**Position:**  
Senior Lecturer of  
Communication

**Program:**  
Communication

**Degree:**  
MA in Speech and  
Interpersonal  
Communication

**Focus:**  
Maintaining high academic  
standards while helping  
students become competent  
communicators regardless  
of their majors.

By Rana Tabbara

**Known for being passionate about communication, what made you go into it in the first place?**

As a matter of fact, I started as an engineering student, as many Lebanese guys did at that time, but I did not like it since I knew exactly what that field of study entails since my older brother was an engineering student too. I decided to consult with the career services department to determine my field of interest: speech and interpersonal communication. When I first came back from the United States, my father offered me to take over his business in Saudi Arabia since he wanted to retire, but I kindly declined because I really wanted to work in my field. Later on, I got an offer to be the principle of three schools in Abu Dhabi, but again I declined even though they offered me about triple my salary here at LAU.

**From the Humanities Division to Communication Arts, how do you describe this transition?**

Finally, my dream to teach in the Department of Communication Arts came true. Recently I taught Interpersonal Communication along with Fundamentals of Oral Communication, which is a course I've been coordinating for over 21 years. One of the reasons I am enthusiastic about joining this department is that there are several other courses in my field of specialization that I can teach in such as Advanced Public Speaking, Nonverbal Communication, Human Communication Theory, Small Group Communication, Organizational Communication, etc. In a nutshell, in order to fulfill my dream, I am genuinely looking forward to help develop this department in any possible way.

**Known for teaching at LAU from 1983 till 1987 and then from 1991 up until today, when was your highlight period at LAU and why?**

Every period has its glory. When I first came back in 1983, I obviously did not enjoy the fact that there was war in my own country. At that age, however, I did very much enjoy the challenge of crossing the "green line" to teach on both campuses, in East and West-Beirut, since I genuinely do not believe in discrimination based on religion, gender, sexual preference, ethnic origin, or race. At check points, I used my dad's old car since it had a UN license plate and my BUC ID card instead of my Lebanese ID since it did not specify my religion. Now, I enjoy utilizing my experience, my non-traditional teaching methods and my extensive course files to make a difference in my students' life.

**After a successful stay abroad, what brought you back to Lebanon?**

I ask myself the same question every time I drive my car in a traffic jam, hear the electric generator switch on, smell the odors of trucks hauling water to fill our tanks, listen to the news, or see the garbage piled up in the streets. However, I have to admit that Lebanon, despite all of the inconveniences, has its own charm. Neighbors still care about each other, colleagues treat each other as friends, and relatives still have family ties despite the fact that they are spread all around the world.

**You are known for creating non-traditional teaching**

**methods. Tell us a little bit about some of what you integrate in your classrooms.**

The traditional methods of teaching are obsolete. Using educational games, experiential learning methods, critical thinking techniques, etc. are by far more effective and enjoyable for the teachers and their students. My classes usually close on the first day of registration, and students rush to register in my sections by force because of utilizing such methods. One time the Chair of the Department of English used the exercises I prepared while doing research about the contemporary methods in education, she then told me that her students' grades were "the highest ever."

**Known as a professor who "makes his students' life easier," what are some of your strategies, and how much time do you invest in creating them?**

The extensive Teachers' File and Students' File that I have for the COM 203 course took me a very long time to prepare. For example, it took me about nine hours to prepare a crossword puzzle that summarizes the two most important chapters in the textbook about persuasion. A one-page handout about the causes of poor listening is an outline summarizing ideas of four different books. It took me four complete days to outline chapters in the textbook as an alternative to the traditional note-taking strategy in class.

**You are a member of several on-campus communities. What are your roles?**

Yes, I have a good record of doing extra-curricular activities, but I strongly feel that I can always do more. For example, I am currently working with our students /colleagues to initiate a Public Speaking Club, a departmental Speech Lab, a platform to invite various public speakers, develop strategies for promoting the field of Communication Arts, and so forth. It simply gives me a sense of achievement.

**What extra note would you like to share with the readers?**

I yearn to see our beloved country Lebanon retrieve its glory when everybody used to live in harmony with everybody else regardless of their ethno-religious affiliation, when neighbors used to care about each other regardless of their political views, when students had a common goal to get an education and help each other achieve that goal, when all citizens enjoyed the luxury they can't afford these days, when Hamra used to be the "hub" for education and intercultural mingling, and when our beloved "Green Lebanon" used to be referred to as the "Switzerland of the East."

**Usama or Sam? And why?**

When I first went to the USA, not too many people could pronounce my name properly, so I chose the nickname "Sam." Now, thanks to Usama Bin Laden, everybody knows the name "Usama," and you should see how glad the security officers at Western airports are when they read my name on my passport; they think that they got a "golden egg." Finally, I really consider myself to be lucky Sam / Usama because I had the opportunity to get a good education and to teach at such a reputable institution like LAU. ■

# Faculty Activities

## Workshops

### Miss Lebanon 2018

Faculty: Nadra Assaf  
Location: LAU, Beirut  
Lebanon  
August 2018

In collaboration with the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World, the Department of Communication Arts offered a series of workshops for the contestants of Miss Lebanon 2018 to help spread gender equality and redefine the standards of beauty in the country. Assaf conducted a workshop that covered nonverbal communication and body language in a mediated event. The training also focused on and investigated vocal tone, touch, eye contact, expression, appearance, posture, and gesture.

### Online Verification and Investigation Workshop

Faculty: Monika Halkort  
Location: LAU, Beirut,  
Lebanon  
March 2018

Halkort organized an online verification and investigation workshop in collaboration with Bellingcat, a leading bureau of investigative journalism in London. The workshop was conducted by Christiaan Triebert, a journalist from Bellingcat, and was designed to provide student participants with in-depth techniques, tools, and skills to collect, verify, analyse, and preserve online open source information

### Academia Job Application

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Santa Clara  
University,  
Santa Clara, USA  
January 2018

Selim conducted a workshop tailored for young musicians on how to apply for jobs in academia. The session included writing resumes and cover letters, along with tips on successful interviews.

## Lectures and Presentations

### Reactive Inclinations: The Recipe as Pretext for New Configurations of Power over Life

Faculty: Monika Halkort  
Location: Beirut,  
Lebanon

February 2018

The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, Ashkal Alwan, hosted a lecture discussing the link between food recipes and one's sense of belonging, cultural identity, and memory. Presented by Halkort, the lecture focused on the wider ethical and political implications of this power. The presentation was held in February and took Syria's seedbanks and popular recipes of the Mediterranean as examples.



### Music and Islam in Egypt

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Santa Clara  
University,  
Santa Clara, USA

August 2018

Selim presented a lecture about music and Islam in Egypt, where he focused on Qur'an chanting and religious songs in the North African country.

### Music, Belief and Conflict

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: San Jose Museum  
of Art, San Jose,  
CA, USA

June 2018

Selim took part in a panel discussion about music, belief, and conflict, as part of the Common Sounds Ensemble activities in California.

### Residency at Opera de Tijuana

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Casa de Cultura El  
Pípila, Baja  
California, Mexico

July 2018

During his residency at the Opera de Tijuana, Selim conducted masterclasses and lectures, in addition to coaching sessions, and a recital.

## Maqamat Beit El Raqs, Institut Français

Faculty: Nadra Assaf  
Location: Deir El Qamar,  
Lebanon

Assaf was invited to share her expertise and parts of her dance career with dancers and artists from Takween, an intensive contemporary dance program. Her two-hour presentation focused on her creative and research practices and her view on choreography and teaching in Lebanon.

November 2017

## Erasmus + Faculty Exchange Program at DMJX

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Aarhus and Copenhagen, Denmark  
March 2018

Kozman visited The Danish School of Media and Journalism for the second consecutive year, as part of the EU-sponsored Erasmus + faculty exchange program. During her stay in Denmark, Kozman presented two lectures at the university's two campuses on Aarhus and Copenhagen, where she talked about the state of the media in the Arab world.



## Re-Imagining Journalism: News and Storytelling in an Age of Distrust

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Salzburg, Austria  
July – August 2018

Kozman was one of LAU's two visiting faculty at the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, where she, along with other academics, supervised a group of students as they created and presented their project on how to reimagine journalism. In addition, Kozman conducted a small study group about the pedagogical uses of technology in the classroom.



## Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Beirut, Lebanon  
August 2018

As the Research Director of the Institute of Media Research and Training, Kozman took part in the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut presenting lectures and conducting workshops. In a lecture that addressed all MDLAB participants, Kozman talked about how the media frame conflict. Where faculty were concerned, Kozman led the pedagogical development section where she presented – alongside LAU Associate Professor of Education Mona Nabhani – lectures and conducted workshops that aimed at integrating active learning methods in lecture designs and media literacy syllabi.



## Research Conferences

### Crossroads in Cultural Studies

Faculty: Monika Halkort  
Location: Shanghai, China  
August 2018

During a panel presentation at 12th Association for Cultural Studies conference, Crossroads in Cultural Studies, Halkort presented her research that critically questions the disjunctive cartography of ethical commitment and obligations that emerges from the variegated trafficking of data signals. Halkort's paper, *Ecologies of Risk: Mapping the ethical imperatives of geo spatial intelligence in the Mediterranean Sea*, evaluates the influence of contemporary modes of datafication on the moral geographies and infrastructural arrangements of the colonial period.

### Digital Media and Borders in Asia and the Arab World

Faculty: Monika Halkort  
Location: Lignan University, Hong Kong  
December 2017

Halkort was invited by Rolien Hoyng, Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at Chinese University of Hong Kong, to participate in a workshop on digital media and borders in Asia and the Arab world. There, she presented her previous work on the politics of data in Palestinian camps.

## Lebanese Media Education: “New Directions”

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: LAU, Beirut, Lebanon  
December 2017

Kozman took part in a panel discussion about “Media Research, Graduates, and Continuing Education” at MedLeb, the inaugural conference of the Association of Media Educators of Lebanon. One of six panelists, Kozman shed light on the state of the scientific research in Lebanon, underlining the importance of empirical studies for the advancement of research at the regional and international levels.



## Association of Education for Journalism and Mass Communication

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Washington D.C., USA  
August 2018

Kozman presented her research study in the Electronic Media Division of the Association of Education for Journalism and Mass Communication at its annual conference. Coauthored by Associate Professor at Kansas State University, Raluca Cozma, the study used the uses and gratifications theoretical framework to explore how Lebanese television stations use Twitter.



## Film Screenings and Festivals

### 2017 General Grants Program for Cinema, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture

Faculty: Sabine El Chamaa  
Location: Beirut, Lebanon  
November 2017

El Chamaa was invited to serve as a jury member for the short film projects for AFAC, alongside five other jurors, three of which judged the feature-length film projects. After individual evaluation of the films, which were among the 325 applications received for both the short film and feature-length categories, the two committees chose 28 projects that received a grant from AFAC.

### “Why Remember? Memory and Forgetting in Times of War and Its Aftermath: Ruins, Remains, and Reconstructions” Conference

Faculty: Sabine El Chamaa  
Location: Bosnia and Herzegovina/ Sarajevo  
June 2018

El Chamaa presented Rememories, a photo essay and paper that questions the elusiveness of memory as it confronts the material photographic traces of experience. The conference is co-sponsored by London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London.

### “Bread and Tea”: Short Documentary Festivals Tour

Faculty: Sarah Kaskas  
Location: Beirut, Lebanon  
2017-2018

Directed by Sarah Kaskas, Bread and Tea is a short documentary about a 9-year-old Syrian refugee who lives in a makeshift camp on the borders of Lebanon with his three siblings. With a missing father and an absent mother, Mohamad is torn between being a kid and being a caretaker to his family.

The documentary, which was completed in 2016, has been successfully touring festivals among which are:

- Baalbeck International Short Film Festival, 2017
- 14th SedicCorto International Film Festival, 2017
- 16th Reggio Film Festival, 2017
- 8th China International New Media Short Film Festival, 2017
- 14th Human Rights Film Festival Barcelona, Paris, NYC, 2017
- 8th Karama Human Rights Film Festival - Jordan, 2017
- Karama Human Rights Film Festival - Yemen, 2018

## Lebanese Film Festival - Selection Committee

Faculty: Sara Kaskas  
Location: Beirut, Lebanon  
May 2018  
Kaskas was invited to join the Selection Committee of 13th edition of the Lebanese Film Festival. Along with two other members, Kaskas viewed hundreds of submitted films and held discussions to reach a consensus on the final official selection for the festival.

## Film Screening at P21 Gallery

Faculty: Sabine El Chamaa  
Location: London, United Kingdom  
February - March 2018

El Chamaa was invited to screen two of her short fiction films Promenade and How Beautiful is the Sea at "{Un}told Stories" a series of evening projections and discussions on current issues from and about the MENA region.



## Artistic Performances and Productions

### Our Bodies, Our Voices: Virtual Meets Real

Faculty: Nadra Assaf  
Location: Geneva, NY  
July 2017

Although they come from different regions, Assaf and Heather Harrington found common ground in dance and body movement. The two co-choreographed, directed, and performed at the 6th annual Somatic Dance Conference, Making Your Corner of the World a Better Place: Somatics, Science, Pedagogy and Performance. Their performance aimed at connecting people, bridging the divides, and inviting individuals to empathize with others.



### Unraveling Embodied Terrains (UET)

Faculty: Nadra Assaf  
Location: Valletta, Malta  
July 2017

Assaf and Heather Harrington used research, body movement, and music to reflect the battles endured by a female body in their performance Unraveling Embodied Terrains at The Dance Studies Association's Conference Contra: Dance and Conflict. Co-choreographed and co-directed by Assaf and Harrington, the performance used arts to fight violence and oppression on a female's body one choreographed step at a time.



### OpusNow Quintet

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Long Island Museum,  
Stony Brook, NY,  
USA

January 2018

The Woodwind quintet recital OpusNow Quintet was part of Northshore ProMusica Concert Series. The repertoire included Summer Music by Samuel Barber and Hindemith Wind Quintet.

### Music @ Noon

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Santa Clara  
University,  
Santa Clara, USA

January 2018

Selim performed in a horn and piano recital titled Folk to Classical: A recital of repertoire inspired by folk music from Egypt, Russia, Argentina and the USA.

### The Complete Brandenburg Concerto by J.S. Bach

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Triton Museum of Art,  
Santa Clara, CA, USA

January 2018

Selim performed Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 1 and 2.

### Northport Symphony Orchestra

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Northport High  
School Concert Hall,  
Northport, NY, USA

February 2018

Selim performed the 1st Horn concerto with the Northport Symphony.

### Common Sounds Ensemble

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Rotary Summit Center,  
San Jose, CA, USA

June 2018

Amr Selim performed the world premiere of his composition Zar, at the debut performance of Common Sounds Ensemble. The Egyptian French hornist also played at Night At The Caravanserai, in collaboration with San Jose Chamber Orchestra (music by: Abdel Wahab, Van Ahn, and Sandeep Das). Selim's third performance with the Common Sounds Ensemble was Ayre in collaboration with Nava Dance Collective (music by: Taylor Ackley and Osvaldo Noé Golijov). ■

# Meet the Staff

By Sally Farhat and Natacha Karkour

Staff in the Department of Communication Arts are well known for granting students all the help and support they need. From Safadi Fine Arts studio, offices, and control rooms to Nicol G002 and Nicol's TV studio, your staff are all over the place. The endless hours you spend around them might have made you believe you know them well. But, do you really?

There's a side to the staff you probably have never seen before. Who knows, maybe that side would get you a step closer to them.

## Beirut Staff



### George Chdid The Prankster

George is the senior theater technician. His job of constructing major productions' sets and supervising students in set-construction is eased by his favorite companion: music. However, be aware while around, George has a history of setting up pranks in partnership with students.

The bright side: all pranks carry a lesson at the end.  
The not-so-bright side: the joke might be on you.



### Annie Tabakian The God Mother

Annie is the lead studio technician. Drowned behind many gadgets and some trolls, the department's god mother will always find time in her busy schedule for students.

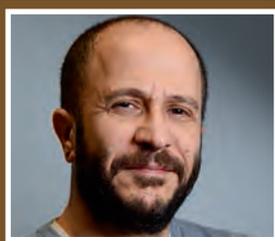
The secret for her 24/7 positive energy? Her power-puff powers!  
Power-puff fans, Annie is in Nicol G002 waiting for your help to spread some additional positive vibes.



### Houry Gostanian Silent Storm

Houry is the lead academic assistant of the department of Communication Arts. Wherever and whenever you see her, Houry has a signature smile drawn on her face. This might have tricked you into believing she is always calm but, Houry can be best defined as a silent storm.

The weather turns stormy when either someone calls her a "secretary" or when she's too focused on her work and someone nags (way too much) around her. Avoid both cases!



### Farid Boustani The Mysterious

Farid is the TV/film studio supervisor. His 23 years of experience have gained him students' trust. Farid might look mysterious for some but know that his personal life is exciting.

Did you know he practices scuba-diving and he is heavily tattooed?  
To all tattoo lovers, Farid is your companion.



### Rima Mirdas Kurdi Metallic

Rima is the TV/film studio technician. If you've ever spent enough time in the studio then you've seen her headphones are always on.

Ever wondered what she is listening too? Well, Rima revealed that she has been a fan of metallic music ever since she was 13 years old.  
A fan of this music genre? Pass by Rima and get her to share some of her favorite music pieces while she works.



### **Hala Masri** Hidden Star

Hala is the senior theatre coordinator. You probably know her as an organized workaholic but, not as an actress and singer. She has previously acted in several plays and appeared on several TV shows on Future TV. Hala has also sang on the same stage with Fairouz and she worked on several projects with Ziad Rahbani.

Take a picture with Hala next time you see her; she might become the next Fairouz sooner than you think.



### **Ali Mahdi** Football Admirer

Ali is a new part-time staff in the department. If you haven't seen him yet, it's because he is hidden behind two giant screens in the corner of the underground studio.

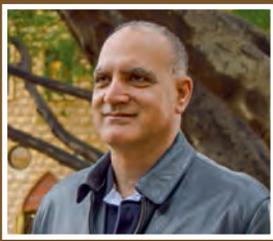
Football fans pass by Ali; he claims to be the biggest football enthusiast.



### **Samer Beyhum** Dancing Dragon

Samer, aka the dragon, is a part-time TV/film studio technician. He considers himself the dearest to students. Regardless of how close you are to him, there are a few things you've never heard about him.

If you're a dancer, Samer is your perfect partner; he used to dance classical ballet and do fencing.



### **Fouad Anka** The Guy from the South

Fouad is the senior theater technician. Beyond his serious face, Fouad is a fun person to be around. If you are from the South, you are his favorite person because guess what? Fouad is obsessed with Marej Ouyun, his village.

## **Byblos Staff**



### **Nicolas Daou** The Handy Man

Nicolas is the senior theater technician. He wakes up at five in the morning to bike before work, and his next goal is to mountain bike in Peru! When he's not biking, he's probably surfing, and when he's doing neither, you'll find him in the theatre with his tools, creating something from scratch.

So if you have a crazy idea that you want to build, he will make it happen for you!



### **Liza Hardan** Busy Bee

Liza is the lead academic assistant that juggles three different departments: English, Humanities and Communication Arts, thus she is always busy. She is an LAU alumni who loves to travel. She's been to her dream destination, the Margarita Island in Venezuela.

Even though she's always on the go, there isn't one thing she won't help you with.



### **Sami Fayad** The Family Man

Sami is the TV/film studio supervisor, who is an LAU alumni. He can't start his day without his morning ritual with his children, and of course his coffee.

Don't get him wrong, even though he loves the grey winter skies and the absence of sun, he is always in a great mood projecting his positive energy to students.

If you know Sami, you know he loves white Mercedes sports cars, so if you do too, he's your guy! ■

# Staff Activities

## Performing with Ziad Rahbani

Staff: Hala Masri, Senior Theater Coordinator

Locations: Beiteddine International Festival, Russian Cultural Centre, Shkif Castle resort in Arnoun, & High Five Club in Hrajel

Date: July, August, September 2018

In summer 2018, Hala Masri joined renowned Lebanese artist Ziad Rahbani as a member of the choir in his concerts. Beyond singing alongside fellow artists, Masri had a solo and duo role in two songs. The concerts she participated in include "على بيت الدين", during the Opening of Beiteddine International Festival on July 12 and 13, "شو هالايام اللي وصلنا لا" in the Russian Cultural Centre on August 28 and 29, "يا أبو علي" in Shkif Castle resort on September 7, and "إسمع يا رضا" in High Five Club on September 12.



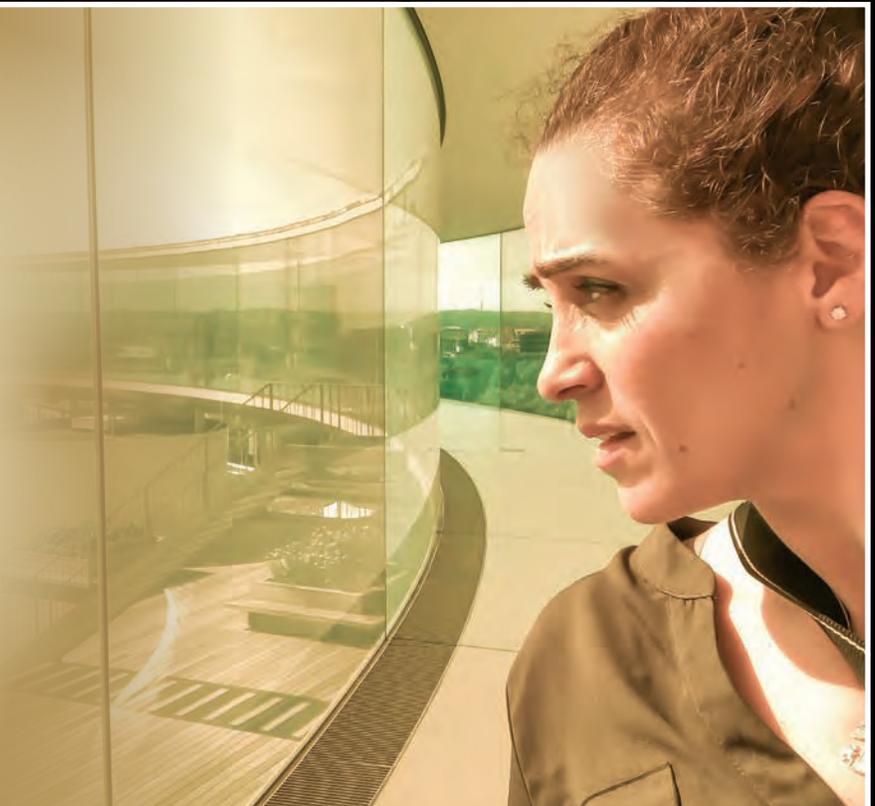
## Erasmus + Staff Mobility Program

Staff: Annie Tabakian, Lead Studio Technician

Location: DMJX, Denmark

Date: May 23 and June 2, 2018

As part of the Erasmus Staff Mobility Program, Tabakian visited the Danish School of Media and Journalism (DMJX) to share the Department of Communication Arts' communication plan as well as get acquainted with the host university's plan. Tabakian also had the opportunity to attend a branding meeting between DMJX and DesignIt, a design agency that will be responsible of rebranding DMJX, and a pitching session for exchange students.



## ACS Workshop

Staff: Samer Beyhum, TV/  
film Studio Technician

Location: The American  
Community School of  
Beirut (ACS)

Date: May 2018

Beyhum was invited to present a one-day workshop at ACS during the Week Without Walls initiative. The initiative involved a week-long filmmaking workshop for a female group of students conducted by Christy Samaha, LAU TV film alumna. ACS students were then given the opportunity to visit LAU, take a tour of its facilities, and attend a production workshop that was part of Festival NEXT.



## DMJX Workshop

Staff: Samer Beyhum, TV/  
film Studio Technician

Location: DMJX, Denmark

Date: April 30 and May 5,  
2018

Between April 30 and May 5, Beyhum flew with his filming expertise to Denmark. Beyhum presented the practical aspects of using a camera and sound equipment to create short, compelling, and socially engaging documentaries to Erasmus Mundus Master Students at DMJX. The training also focused on the postproduction process and how to grade and color correct for a better effect. ■





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Be ready to #ReinventCommunication



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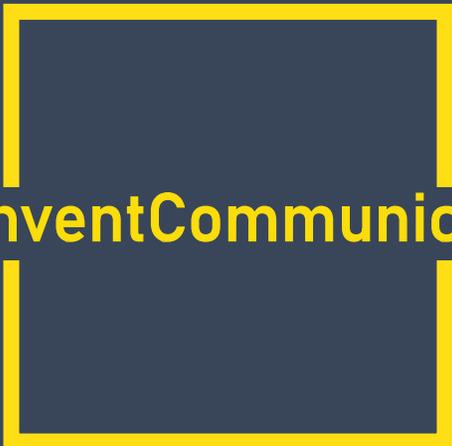
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