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AL-BUSTAN SEEDS OF CULTURE

Receives Second Year of National Artistic Recognition from the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Rhythms from an array of hand drums – *tablah*, *riq*, *daf*, and *djembe* – have filled the rowhouse of Greenfield Intercultural Center at the University of Pennsylvania on Monday nights for the past four years. What began as a master/apprenticeship program in Arabic percussion, led by master Lebanese-American percussionist Joseph Tayoun, and facilitated by Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture, has developed into the Al-Bustan Percussion Ensemble. The group consists of young drummers of diverse backgrounds – from Arab and non-Arab to Muslim, Christian and Jewish – who perform at venues throughout the city.

Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture is pleased to announce that its Arabic percussion instruction program has gained national recognition for a second year from **The National Endowment for the Arts**. Al-Bustan is one of 216 organizations from around the country, and one of nine in Pennsylvania, to be funded in the category of **Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth, 2008-09**.

“There are few programs around the country in which traditional Arabic arts are passed on to young people the way that they are in Al-Bustan's Arabic music program,” comments Terrence Liu, ethnomusicologist based in Washington DC. “Master percussionist Joseph Tayoun is passionately dedicated to the young people he teaches, and they respond to him. They are able to learn very difficult Arabic percussion patterns quickly and accurately. Joe challenges them to learn and creates a sense of ensemble in which the students encourage one another.”

“This second year of federal grant funding significantly expands our music instruction to reach more students in underserved neighborhoods,” says Al-Bustan founder and president Hazami Sayed. “Furthermore, it allows us to offer a series of teacher and student workshops on Arabic music led by internationally renowned Arab-American virtuoso musician and composer Simon Shaheen.”

With the continued support from the NEA, *Arabic Rhythms: A Percussion Instruction and Music Appreciation Program* will resume in September '08 with weekly workshops at two Philadelphia public schools: John Moffet Elementary in West Kensington and Feltonville Arts & Sciences Middle School. The Al-Bustan Percussion Ensemble will resume rehearsals at Greenfield Intercultural Center, and weekend percussion apprentices will return to The Rotunda in West Philadelphia. Simon Shaheen will lead master workshops for music teachers in fall '08 and for student music ensembles in January '09. Mr. Shaheen will be featured by the Kimmel Center at the Perelman Theater on February 1, 2009.

Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture is a non-profit organization registered in Pennsylvania with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. “Al-Bustan,” Arabic for “the garden,” provides year-round arts programming that brings together children and youth of diverse backgrounds to learn about the Arabic language and culture, encouraging dialogue, understanding, respect and a celebration of diversity.

Al-Bustan is funded in part through individual contributions and grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Middle East Center of the University of Pennsylvania, Embassy of the State of Qatar in Washington DC, Samuel Fels Fund and Chace Fund. In-kind support is provided by U-Penn's Greenfield Intercultural Center and The Rotunda.