

### AGENDA

#### LEBANON

##### FILM

**'Dheepan'**  
Metropolis Empire, Sofil  
May 11, 8 p.m.  
www.metropoliscinema.net  
Jacques Audiard's Palme d'Or-winning feature tells the story of a defeated freedom fighter, a young woman and a little girl who, posing as a family, escape Sri Lanka and try to build a life together in a Paris suburb.

##### MUSIC

**Omar Offendum**  
Radio Beirut, Rue Pasteur, Gemmayzeh  
May 11, 8:30 p.m.  
M.C. Mad Prophét and DJ Chak host this evening of hip-hop, featuring Saudi-born, Washington-reared, LA-based Syrian rapper Omar Offendum. Presented by the Spring Festival.

**Asil Ensemble**  
Masrah al-Madina, Hamra  
May 12, 8 p.m.  
01-753-010-11  
Mustafa Said and the Asil Ensemble for Contemporary Classical Arabic will perform their newly released album Tawahhüd (Autism).

**'Tatiana Primak-Khoury'**  
Hariri Auditorium, University of Balamand  
May 14, 7 p.m.  
Ukrainian-Lebanese pianist-n-residence Tatiana Primak-Khoury will perform works by Dvorak, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Rachmaninov.

##### ART

**'Sound Capsule'**  
Beirut Art Center, Jisr al-Wati  
May 11, 6 p.m.  
01-397-018  
In the context of the exhibition 'Esma/Listen,' cellist and experimental musician Nikos Veliotis will add his voice to Sharif Sehnaoui's ongoing sound work, in which instrumentalists contribute to a progressive, multilayered composition stretched over the duration of the exhibition.

**'At the Seams: A Political History of Palestinian Embroidery'**  
Dar al-Nimer for Arts and Culture, Villa Salem, America Street, Clemenceau  
Opens May 25, 7 p.m.  
Seams@palmuseum.org  
This satellite exhibition of The Palestine Museum takes visitors through a journey of Palestinian embroidery over time and how its changes were reflections of the land's political and social reality.

**'The Arab Nude: The Artist as Awakener'**  
AUB galleries, Sidani Street and Dodge Hall  
Through Aug. 1  
aub.edu.lb/art\_galleries/current/Pages/arab-nude.aspx  
Curated by Kirsten Scheid and Octavian Esanu, this

### REVIEW

# Thirteen-odd views on sound

**Esma' is stimulating, rich and varied sampling of contemporary art**

By Jim Quilty  
The Daily Star

**B**EIRUT: Hands in her lap, Marcella Lista sits with her eyes shut. Arrayed before her in Beirut Art Center's central gallery is a bemused audience, itself surrounded by an assortment of improvised instruments.

With BAC director Marie Muracchiole, Lista is the co-curator of the "Esma' (Listen), the exhibition of sound art nowadays reverberating through the center. Presently (a few days after the exhibition's April 27 opening) she is collaborating with artist Hauke Harder in the Beirut premiere of Alvin Lucier's 1965 work "Music for Solo Performer."

Some distance from Lista and her audience, bass drums, cymbals, bells, snare drums and other latent noise-makers have been arranged, each rigged with a loudspeaker's woofer – repurposed to operate as percussive enablers.

Wires connect the woofers to a soundboard erected at the far side of the gallery, which is, in turn, wired to electrodes fixed to the curator's skull.

From concert convention alone you'd assume Lista is the "solo performer" in Lucier's work. In fact her role is closer to that of instrument.

"Music" needs the brain on the other side of the electrodes to generate sine waves, which require an unflappable, yet wakeful, calm. (Lista later confessed to being a student of Qi gong).

The musician in this 25-minute performance is Harder, Lucier's stand-in, who uses the soundboard to direct the electrical impulses of the curator's brain to the woofer alongside a snare drum, a cymbal, a bass drum, etc.

Earlier Harder performed Lucier's "Music on a Long Thin Wire" (1969), and had overseen the installation of the artist's 1977 sound installation of the same name – a wire-and-magnet-based work that will generate pulse-lowering sound tones from a BAC gallery through mid-August.

"Esma'" is a stimulating, rich and varied sampling of contemporary sound art in the era since John Cage (1912-1992). The American composer, artist and theorist cast a long shadow over contemporary artistic practice and this show takes its departure from his work, especially his 1952 composition "4'33'," famously comprised of four and a half minutes of unplayed notes.

"There are some who say [Cage] brought more to the visual arts than to music," Lista mused in an interview with this newspaper. "I think that's untrue. His scores leave a lot of freedom to the performers. They're challenging because you have to be a really good performer to make something out of it."

"He's really disseminated a new way of approaching writing and

composing that transcends music and enters the history of art. For all these reasons I think Cage is a major 20th-century artist, as much as Picasso ... He crosses disciplines with the same sharpness ... recreating new possibilities for art in general.

"Today I would say the problem is that [it's no longer possible] to think of a universal way to approach artistic languages ... Now absence is to be taken for granted. There's always something you cannot see, a blind spot in what you see, [a silence] in what you hear."

"Esma'" assembles a handful of important late 20th-century works with new and recent work by artists from Lebanon and abroad.

Complementing Lucier is another 20th-century piece – Pierre Huyghe's "Silence Score," 1997, which impishly notes the background noise (audience conversation, street noise and such) that drifts into the aural absence of one performance of Cage's "4'33'."

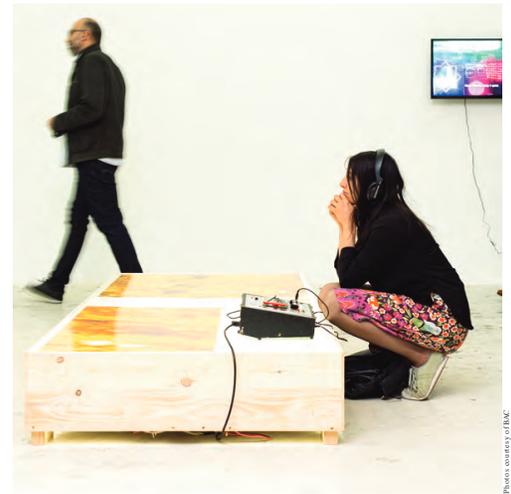
Premised upon ironic inversion, a

pair of works by Christian Marclay reflects upon the changing contemporary soundscape.

The (silent) video "Mixed Reviews" (American Sign Language), 1999-2001, features a man fervently signing a music review – an amusing yet thought-inducing conceit.

For Marclay's installation "4,000,000 Minutes," 2000-2016, a few hundred vinyl LPs have been scattered over the floor of the BAC foyer – including unreleased remixes of "Can you Dig It?" and Tony Sherman's "El lovee.ee." You can enter "Esma'" without walking on the recordings, which may induce cringes among those who have treated (or still treat) their vinyl as sanctified sound objects.

Among the much-loved recent international works corralled for "Esma'" is "Railings, London," the 2004 audiovideo installation of Francis Alys. Here the peripatetic artist documents the sound of various environs of the British capital – Park Crescent 4, Onslow Gardens,



Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "Conversation with an Unemployed," 2013.

Fitzroy Square, etc – by having a video camera follow him as he walks, banging on the metal railings surrounding them with a drumstick.

"Esma'" samples new and recent work by several partisans of Beirut's lively sound art scene.

For "Sound Capsule," 2016, guitarist Sharif Sehnaoui has laid down

an improvisational base that for the next few months will undergo two changes – "stretching," as it is looped repeatedly over the course of the show, and polyphonic layering as improv musicians Nikos Veliotis, Tarek Atoui, Ghassan Sahhab and Tony Elieh add their own performances to his own.

Composer-cum-sound artist Cynthia Zaven has created the three-minute video work "For Voice and Forest," 2016, which stages a young vocalist's sustained D-note in the unimpeded surroundings of a mountain forest.

"Esma'" also features Vartan Avakian's new work "Composition with a Recurring Sound, Beirut," 2016. Commissioned by Tandem-Works for its "Hammod Badawi" project, Avakian's wall-mounted piece of copper tubing resembles a section of a brass instrument. The work vibrates to the touch, while opening one of two valves will allow the listener to overhear the Beirut River – whose ambit is being discreetly captured and continuously broadcast, live.

The work of Lawrence Abu Hamdan has betrayed an obsession with sound as it intersects with contemporary art and culture, technology and politics. Two of his 2013 works here use different media and narrative conceits to take up the same topic.

The more subtle "The All Hearing," is an unannounced video document of an artist intervention that saw two imams snub that day's state-prescribed topic in their Friday sermons and condemn excessive noise instead.

The lightbox "Conversation with an Unemployed" narrates the ideas and practice underlying the intervention/video. While it at times seems a needless explanation of a sharp and amusing video, it's devised with enough imagination to justify a life of its own.

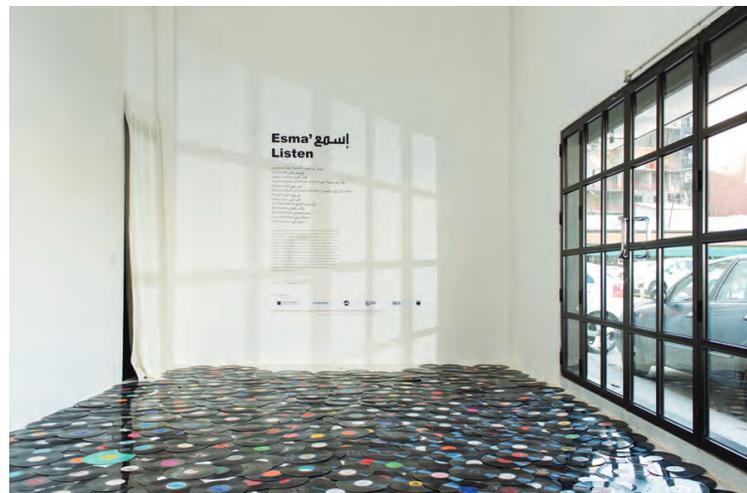
Projected daily during the course of the exhibition, Abu Hamdan's 2016 short "Rubber Coated Steel" uses a miniature target range and advances in the field of auditory forensics to uncover the Israeli army's use of rubber bullets to conceal its arbitrary murder of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators.

As it resonates through "Esma'" sound art has been carried a long way from pop music.

"Esma'/Listen" is up BAC through Aug. 11. For details about the show and its public program, see www.beirutartcenter.org.



An imam preaches against noise pollution in a scene from Lawrence Abu Hamdan's video work "The All Hearing," 2013.



Christian Marclay, "4,000,000 Minutes" 2000-2016.

## Cannes to bring light to a France darkened by fear

Cannes was launched in the wake of World War II, a time when France was always full of socially minded films, referring to the festival's golden lion award. The 69th Cannes Film Festival, which opens on May 17, may be the most likely future