



Beirut & Beyond International Music Festival announces 2016 dates, Guest Curator and Board of Trustees

Festival dates: **Thursday 8 - Sunday 11 December 2016**

Beirut & Beyond International Music Festival is thrilled to announce the dates for its 2016 edition taking place from **Thursday 8 - Sunday 11 December** in various venues throughout Beirut and neighbouring cities. The festival takes its reach and programming to new horizons this year with **Wael Koudaih** (a.k.a **Rayess Bek**) as Guest Curator and a newly established Board of Trustees comprising **Rima Frangieh, Alexandra Archetti Stølen, Jumana Al-Yasiri, Brahim El Mazned** and **Soudabeh Kia**.

"Now, more than ever, Beirut & Beyond is determined to bringing people together, facilitating opportunities and creating possibilities. Our guest curator and Board of Trustees are only the beginning!" **Amani Semaan**, Festival Director

Building on Khaled Yassine's strong artistic direction since the founding of the festival in 2013, Beirut & Beyond reveals a new approach to its programming. Every year, Beirut & Beyond will invite a regional musician as guest curator for the festival's programme of concerts, tours and talks. Guest curators will bring their own artistic imprint to the festival, allowing for a continuous rejuvenation of the programme, whilst also staying true to the roots of the festival as a showcase of emerging regional acts from across genres, styles and influences.

At the forefront of Hip Hop and urban music in the Arabic speaking world, Guest Curator Wael Koudaih (a.k.a Rayess Bek) is an author, composer and interpreter with seven album releases and performances in over 400 concerts worldwide. Most recently, Koudaih collaborated with photographer Randa Mirza to create *Love and Revenge*, an audio-visual concert that revives old popular Arabic songs and films by adapting them to the patterns and aesthetics of today's music, which they presented at Centre Pompidou, Banlieues Bleues and Mucem.

Bringing together prominent figures from Lebanese and international cultural scenes, Beirut & Beyond's Board of Trustees members are: Rima Karkafi Frangieh, founder and director of Ehdeniyat International Festival and Cinemaiyat Festival (LB); Alexandra Archetti Stølen, director of Oslo World Music Festival (NO) & chairman of the European Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals; Brahim El Mazned, artistic director of Timitar Festival and founder of Visa for Music (MO); Jumana Al-Yasiri, Sundance Institute Theatre Program Manager for the MENA region (USA) and Soudabeh Kia, world music advisor at Theatre de La Ville Paris (FR).

The festival will soon be making its first wave of programming announcements in collaboration with its long-standing partner, **Oslo World Music Festival**.

For more information contact Sarah El Miniawy - sarah@simsara.me

Notes to Editors

Wael Kodeih

Wael Koudaih was born in Nabatieh, Lebanon in 1979. Since 2002, he goes by the pseudonym “Rayess Bek”. A major Hip Hop and urban music creator and performer in the Arabic speaking world, Wael is an author, composer, and interpreter, who has released seven albums and performed in over 400 concerts worldwide.

In 2014 Wael Koudaih co-directed with Nancy Naous (choreographer) *The Third Circle*, an installation and a performance based on interviews made in Lebanon with several Muslim scholars, religious leaders and experts in Islamic law.

In 2012, Wael produced Goodbye Schlöndorff, an audio-visual performance that combines intimate messages recorded on cassettes and sent to loved ones in times of war, with short sequences from the film *Circle of Deceit* and its making-of, directed by Volker Schlöndorff.

Rima Frangieh (Lebanon) / Founder & Director of Ehdeniyat International Festival

Born in Lebanon to a Lebanese father and Iraqi mother, Rima grew up between Beirut and Sydney and was first known as a TV presenter on LBC, interviewing top international music and cinema stars. A very active social, cultural, environmental and humanitarian advocate, since 2004, she founded Al Midan NGO, the North Autism Center, Cinemaiyat Film Festival and Christmas By The Lake amongst others. In 2007 she founded Ehdeniyat International Festival, every summer bringing together local and international artists to the beautiful village of Ehden in the north of Lebanon.

Alexandra Archetti Stølen (Norway) / Director of Oslo World Music Festival

Norwegian-Argentinean Alexandra Archetti Stølen has been festival director of Oslo World Music Festival since 2006. Through Oslo World’s partnership with Beirut & Beyond from the onset, Alexandra played an active role in supporting and developing Beirut & Beyond. She is also the initiator of festivals in asylum centers in Oslo and has been the president of the European Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals since 2011. For many years, Archetti Stølen was known as one of Norway’s best tango dancers.

Brahim El Mazned (Morocco) / Founder & Director of Visa for Music

Brahim El Mazned is the artistic director of Timitar Festival of World Music, dedicated to promoting the Amazigh culture. He was selected in the Guide to Cultural Diversity « Les Aventuriers de la Culture » as one of the top 100 leaders in sustainable cultural development in the world. He is also on the board of the European Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals. Recently, El Mazned founded and organized the first two editions of the first Africa and Middle East Music Meeting, Visa For Music, which is held every November in Rabat (Morocco).

Jumana Al-Yasiri (Iraq/Syria/USA) / MENA manager of Sundance Institute Theatre Program

Paris-based with Syrian-Iraqi origins, performing arts manager and curator Jumana Al-Yasiri has worked throughout the past 14 years with different organizations and initiatives, such as Damascus Arab Capital of Culture 2008, the Young Arab Theatre Fund, Morgenland Festival Osnabrück, D-CAF in Cairo and Med Culture. In 2015, Al-Yasiri was appointed MENA Manager at the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, co-leading the implementation of the program's outreach in the Middle East and North Africa. Board Member of the Roberto Cimetta Fund, she is also a regular panellist and writer, focusing on contemporary Arab arts practices and cultural networks.

Soudabeh Kia (France) / World Music advisor at Theatre De La Ville Paris

Described by Le Monde as a “Musical head-hunter”, Soudabeh Kia is known for introducing European audiences to outstanding acts from the wider region of Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Central Asia such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Alim Qasimov and Shahram Nazeri. Originally from Iran, Soudabeh brings decades of knowledge in the music hailing from this region and has been, for many years now, world music advisor at Paris' prestigious Theatre de la Ville.

Ghazi Abel Baki (Lebanon) / Musician, Manager and Producer

Ghazi Abdel Baki started exploring music at the young age of ten, playing drums, recording sounds of gun battles and creating tunes on his guitar. As a musician, Ghazi recorded his own compositions, but also collaborated with renowned artists locally and internationally. At the core of the independent and underground music scene, Ghazi returned to Lebanon after living in New York, to establish and launch Forward Productions in 2001, recognised as the leading independent label for World Music in the Middle East. In 10 years, Ghazi produced and published more than 30 albums and became a prominent figure in the live music scene in Lebanon and beyond. In 2011, he founded “The Democratic Republic of Music” – DRM, a live concert venue that hosted during its three years of operations more than 350 concerts from all around the world. In 2015, Ghazi released his fourth album, “Ghazi Abdel Baki LIVE” gathering many of his live performances.