



Life and Works of Assi and Mansour Rahbani (Rahbani Brothers)

Assi and Mansour Rahbani were born in the Lebanese coastal town Antelias in 1923 and 1925 respectively. They grew up in a loving but strict family that had a definite influence on their subsequent artistic development: a “strong-willed” father who loved music, self-confident mother and a “strict” cane-wielding grandmother.

They pursued their Eastern music education, first under the tutorship of Father Bulos al-Ashkar in Antelias, and later spent nine years studying Western music under Professor Bertrand Robillard.

Assi and Mansour went to school first to the Ibrin Nuns School in Antelias and later to Farid Abu Fadel School, Kamal Mukarzel School and then the Jesuit School in Bikfaya.

Their father Hanna Rahbani died at an early age and the brothers had to cut short their schooling. Assi joined the local police in Antelias and Mansour joined the judicial police in Beirut.

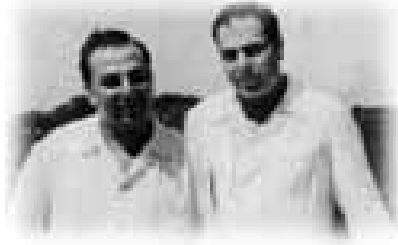
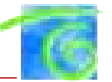
However, they pursued their Eastern music education, first under the tutorship of Father Bulos al-Ashkar in Antelias, and later spent nine years studying Western music under Professor Bertrand Robillard. Along this track, the talents of the two brothers were refined and developed.

Assi and Mansour were inseparable in school and in work and from the start formed a special artistic entity.

In 1945, they joined the Lebanese

Broadcasting Station and presented their distinctive genre of Lebanese songs. Later they were associated with what was called “The Near East Radio” where they presented, along with their songs, a sit-com called “Sab’ and Makhoul” which was enthusiastically received and eagerly followed by people throughout the Middle East.

In 1955 Assi married Nuhad Haddad (a.k.a.



Fayrouz) whose fantastically beautiful voice added a new dimension and the Rahbani duo became a trio.

The Rahbani Brothers founded a special Lebanese theater based on “return to the fountains” in new Eastern-Western harmonious moulds. Their products in the various artistic types were prolific. They worked together as one until the end of the seventies.

In 1972, Assi suffered a stroke but remained productive along with his brother to the end. Assi passed away on 21 January 1986.

Assi’s death kept Mansour in shock for a whole year. However, starting in 1987, Mansour firmly grabbed the mantle and resumed his career alone and later with the help of his sons Marwan, Ghadi and Usama. He produced several theatrical works that graced the theaters of Lebanon, Syria, Dubai, Amman, Tunis, Egypt and Abu Dhabi.

The Rahbani Brothers and the subsequent productions of Mansour founded a special and advanced school in Eastern and Western art. Their works were folkloric, historic and patriotic, evincing strong support for such just causes as

Palestine, social inequality, the problems of poverty and injustice in the area and around the world. Their work, which included three movie productions, received international acclaim and they were frequently invited to perform in such world-famous universities as the Sorbonne, Harvard and Oxford, as well Arab and Lebanese institutes of higher learning.

The Rahbani works were also performed all over the Arab world and most prominent Western cities including: London, Manchester, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires and twelve states in the US and Canada.

The works of the Rahbani Brothers, the later productions of Mansour Rahbani and the second Rahbani generation have taken Lebanese and Eastern performing arts to a higher and higher level of excellence at home and all over the world. They have opened a new and glorious chapter in the Lebanese and Levantine artistic heritage. Their influence is lasting, deep and extensive.

Compiled by Sami Ashkar

Rahbanography

Works of the Rahbani Brothers (Assi and Mansour)
before Assi's death



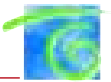
Theater:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1957: "The Harvest Time" | Baalbek |
| 1959: "Trial" | Baalbek |
| 1960: "The Glory Time" | Baalbek |
| 1961: "The Baalbaki Girl" | Baalbek |
| 1962: "The Moon Bridge" | Baalbek |
| 1963: "The Soldiers' Return" | Capitol Cinema Theater, Beirut |
| 1963: "The Night and The Lamp" | Casino Du Liban and Damascus |
| 1964: "The Rings Seller" | The Cedars and Damascus |
| 1965: "The Windmills" | Baalbek |
| 1966: "The Reign of Fakhr El Din" | Baalbek, Beirut |
| 1967: "Hala and The King" | Piccadilly Beirut and Damascus |
| | The Cedars |
| 1968: "The Person"(Al Shakhs) | Piccadilly and Damascus |
| 1969: "The Sylex Mountains" | Baalbek |
| 1970: "Viva! Viva" (Ya3ich Ya3ich) | Piccadilly |
| 1971: "Good Morning" (Sah Al Naoum) | Piccadilly and Damascus |
| 1972: "The Keys' Keeper" | Baalbek and Damascus |
| 1972: "Paper People" | Baalbek, Damascus and U.S.A. |
| 1973: "The Station" | Piccadilly and Damascus |
| 1973: "Love Poem" | Baalbek |
| 1974: "Loulou" | Piccadilly and Damascus |
| 1975: "Mays El Rim" | Piccadilly and Damascus |
| 1976: "Variety Show" | Damascus, Amman, Baghdad, Cairo and Aleppo |
| 1977: "Petra" | Amman and Damascus |
| 1978: "Petra" | Piccadilly and Casino Du Liban |
| 1980: "The Conspiracy Continues" | Casino Du Liban |
| 1984: "The Seventh Spring" | George V theater, Abidjan and Lagos |
| ... : "A variety of theatrical shows" | On world stages abroad. |

Cinema:

- 1965: "The Seller of Rings"
1966: "Safar Barlik"
1967: "The Guard's Daughter"

And hundreds of TV and radio shows, programs, series and sketches as well as thousands of songs around the world performed by famous singers.



Works of Mansour Rahbani after Assi's death



Theater:

- 1987: "Summer 840" Casino Du Liban, Piccadilly, Tripoli, Beitedine, Jericho festival, Damascus, Zahleh, Carthage and Hammamat.
- 1994: "The Will" George V theater, Piccadilly, Amyoun, Damascus Jericho festival and Dubai.
- 1998: "The Last Days of Socrates" Casino Du Liban, Cairo and Opera house Abu Dhabi
- 1998: "Rahbani Anthology" Baalbek – Rerun of three works of the Rahbani Brothers with Fayrouz: The Moon Bridge – The Sylex Mountains – The Keys' Keeper.
- 2000: "He Rose on the 3rd Day" Casino Du Liban.
- 2001: "Abu Tayeb Al Mutanabbi" Dubai, Baalbek, Damascus, Amman and Forum de Beyrouth.
- 2003: "Kings of Communities" Casino Du Liban.
- 2004: "The Last Day" Casino Du Liban. Roméo & Juliette: Adaptation
- 2004: "The Reign of the Shepherds" Beiteddine festival, Damascus, Aleppo and Forum de Beyrouth and Qatar.
- 2005: "Gibran and the Prophet" Byblos festival.
- 2007: "Zenobia" Dubai, Forum de Beirut and Byblos.
- 2008: "The Return of the Phoenix" Byblos festival, Dubai and Casino du Liban.

Musical compositions:

- 2000: "The Maronite Mass" St Elie Church – Antelias
Includes many hymns, musical compositions and compilations.

Television:

- 1997: "Stages" (MAHATTAT) 13 episodes of variety shows
- 1998: "Mansour Rahbani Reads" 31 selected works by eminent Arab poets, Read by Mansour Rahbani

Poetry:

- "I The Other Strange Man" Collection of poems
- "Alone I Travel as King" Collection of poems
- "Al Kousour Al Maiyat" Collection of poems
- "Bahar Al Shiti" Collection of poems
- "Kasaed Moughanat"

In addition, Mansour Rahbani lectured extensively about arts, poetry and music in many Arab countries, and wrote a large number of articles about the Rahbani experience, and a collection of poems to be published very soon.

In the pipeline:

New theatrical works, a number of poetic, musical and literary works

Reviewed Samia Abou-Hamad