

IBRAHIM MAALOUF

KALTHOUM

KALTHOUM is a celebration of women who overturned the course of history, women whose artistic influence has had an impact reaching all the way down to our lives today. So I chose an emblematic figure, a genuine monument in the history of Arab people, and incidentally someone whose voice is the one I've listened to the most, ever since I was a child: Oum Kalthoum.

Pianist Frank Woeste and I took one of this Egyptian diva's greatest songs, and we "translated" it into jazz that's rather conventional, but hopefully it innovates in the way it mixes cultures: the song is "Alf Leila Wa Leila" (*"The Thousand and One Nights"*). The song was composed in 1969 by Baligh Hamidi, taking the form of a suite lasting around an hour (as often in those days), with a three-minute chorus and verses of between five and twenty-five minutes. A large part of the piece is reserved for improvisation, both in the original version and in this one, but this suite is above all a series of tableaux, and the way it's set up was very exciting to re-transcribe.

We recorded and mixed it in New York with the same crew as for the album "Wind" in 2011, which was also a homage (to Miles Davis), so I naturally thought of "Kalthoum" as continuing that fine adventure on record, with Larry Grenadier (double bass), Clarence Penn (drums), Mark Turner (saxophone) and Frank Woeste on piano.