

Performers' Biographies

Summaya Ali



Soprano soloist, Summaya Ali, is anything but conventional. She has starred in the hit Broadway play *Ragtime*, performed on American Idol, danced with Step Afrika in Vietnam, won multiple awards, performed in various operas such as Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and is currently composing a hip hop and opera fusion CD. Adding to her achievements, Summaya Ali has accomplished all of this while wearing hijab and complying with Islamic principles. A graduate of Spelman College, she earned a master's degree from the New England Conservatory of Music, and has been taught by renowned opera teachers Patrizia Zanardi and Giovanna Cannetti.

Arwa Alsamarae



Arwa Alsamarae is a performance poet from Dearborn, Michigan. Though she recently started her training at Wayne State University's School of Medicine, Arwa feels that healing happens on stages just as it does in doctor's offices. She has performed poetry in various venues and has competed at the national level. Arwa earned the top spot on the University of Michigan's national poetry team her senior year and competed in the national poetry slam in Boston.

Ms. Latifah



Native of Los Angeles, CA and resident of Atlanta, GA, Ms. Latifah is a poet, singer, songwriter, and hip-hop artist that is used to surprising people. While her talents would justify a top spot in either genre, Latifah considers herself first and foremost a spoken word artist and believes that being able to share her thoughts with the world and receiving support from those who hear it is the greatest accomplishment an artist can be blessed with. Audiences are taken aback when she brings her 5 feet and 2 inches to the stage, smiles a small smile, opens her mouth, and the biggest voice that you'll hear all night comes out.

Fatima Khokhar (Qur'an Recitation)

Born and raised in Seattle, Washington, Fatima Khokhar has lived in Washington DC, Malaysia, Pakistan, and spent 4 years in Damascus, Syria studying Arabic and Islamic sciences at the Abu Nour Islamic institute and university. Since she joined the Atlanta Muslim community in 2005, Fatima has taught Quranic recitation for girls and women, hosted a high school mentorship program for Muslim girls, and been a substitute teacher of Islamic and Arabic studies at the Mohammed Schools of Atlanta. Along with being a trained doula, Fatima also received her certification as a Montessori teacher this past June, and is currently teaching at a local Montessori school gaining experience she hopes to bring back to the Muslim community.

Aminah Muhammad (Qur'an Recitation)



Aminah Saudah Abdullah Muhammad, a Muslim since 1975 and a blessed mother of eleven children, all born at home, has medical experience as a License Practical Nurse, Surgical Technician, and lay midwife. Aminah's early studies of Quranic Arabic began at Masjid Al Quran in Boston and since then, Aminah has recited at prestigious events such as the Muslim Journal's 7th Annual Awards Dinner, and was invited by the late Imam Warith Deen Mohammed to recite at Conventions, including Interfaith, Synagogue, Public and Private programs. Aminah has produced a Quranic recitation CD that is sold worldwide including Rome Italy, Dubai, and Indonesia. Aminah currently tutors on Quranic recitation, and provides counseling on women's health and polygyny at the Islamic Learning Institute in Florida.

Sara Zainab Shah (Qur'an Recitation)



Born and raised in San Diego, California, Sara Zainab Shah is a seventeen-year-old high school junior who has been studying Qur'an recitation since she was six years old. Along with her two older brothers, she has diligently trained to recite Qur'an with classical *tajweed* and *qira'at* techniques; she has been reciting Mujawwad and Murattal, two of the seven overarching styles of *qira'at*, for most of her life. Her powerful voice and beautiful recitations have earned her placement in recitation competitions and have made her a favorite with event organizers; she receives frequent requests to open programs and ceremonies. She currently teaches a class on Qur'an recitation to fifteen students.

Although her parents are immigrants from Afghanistan who have lived in America for thirty years, Sara Zainab Shah has yet to visit an Islamic country.

Ani Zonneveld



As a songwriter and producer (www.a-n-i.net), Ani Zonneveld has worked with many different artists to release songs around the world. She received an Album of the Year award at the AIMM (Malaysian equivalent of the Grammy), her song "Keep It Simple" helped Keb' Mo' win a Grammy in the Contemporary Blues category (2005), another song was performed by Grammy winners Keb'Mo' and Brenda Russell for the Grammy nominated album "Big Wide Grin" (2003), and recently she contributed three songs for Japanese artist Yuki, whose album 'Joy' was at #1 for several weeks. Ani has uniquely blended her two worlds of music and social activism into one, speaking and singing her message of social justice and peace. She is the co-founder and President of Muslims for Progressive Values (www.mpvusa.org), which calls for critical inquiry and dynamic engagement with Islamic scripture.

Hijabi Monologues



Maytha Alhassen is a performer and organizer for the *Hijabi Monologues* who has traveled both nationally and internationally. She received her BA in Political Science and Arabic and Islamic Studies from UCLA, and her MA in socio-cultural Anthropology from Columbia University. Currently a doctoral student of American and Ethnic Studies at the University of Southern California (USC), May finds it of the greatest importance to bridge her worlds of community, social justice, academia and the arts.

Progress Theatre



Progress Theatre is an international touring ensemble of multi-disciplined performers committed to using art to encourage social consciousness, cross-community dialogue and cultural awareness. Since 2001, Progress Theatre has inspired audiences coast-to-coast with dynamic performances that skillfully weave a vivid tapestry of music, drama, humor, social commentary and emotion. The ensemble pushes beyond the borders of "traditional" theatre asserting themselves as a distinctive voice in American theatre.

Cristal Chanelle Truscott (Artistic Director/Playwright/Founder of Progress Theatre) earned her PhD in Performance Studies at New York University and is currently Assistant Professor and Director of the Theatre Department at Prairie View A & M University and serves on the Board of Directors for the Network of Ensemble Theaters. She has been a guest lecturer at universities and arts programs nationwide including San Francisco State University, University of Houston, Spelman College, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and Columbia University. Her artistic work has garnered recognition and grants from the likes of the Ford Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Gates Millennium Scholars, National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts and the National Performance Network.

Maiesha McQueen (Music Composer; Actor) holds a BFA in Theatre from Tisch School of the Arts with a minor in Applied Theatre and a Masters In Education from Fordham University. In addition to writing and arranging the original scores for *PEACHES & MEMBUH*, Maiesha is an educational outreach coordinator of [GENERATION PROGRESS](#), Progress Theatre's arts education initiative. Here, she has developed a series of workshops that help artists use singing and songwriting as tools to express urgency, emotion and to promote change.



African Drummers



Zanaida Bynum-Roberson, Angelina Camara-Dixon and Kashi Diouba will present rhythms from various West African Countries using the dunun or bass drum sets. These sisters who have combined experience of over twenty years look forward to sharing this celebration with Azizah Magazine.

Hosted by: Zahra Ayubi and Mariam Aziz