



This image released by the Metropolitan Opera shows a performance of 'The Exterminating Angel' which will be shown in selected US theaters on Sunday. (AP)

Music

Taboo tells all

Arab musicians bring their 'songs' to Berlin

BERLIN, Nov 15, (Agencies): Arab musicians in Berlin are bringing their musical roots to Germans — with a little help from American jazz.

At the monthly Arab Song Jam in the German capital, musicians use famous Arab songs as a starting point before inviting other musicians onto the stage for a jam session in a style pioneered by American jazz musicians before World War II.



Zouiten

"All musicians know these jazz sessions. So we use that technique on Arab songs," said Moroccan musician Alaa Zouiten, who plays the oud, a kind of lute, and who led a recent session. "It is a great idea because it brings popular Arab songs to life here in Berlin."

Berlin's already large Arab community has grown since 2015 with the arrival of tens of thousands of refugees from Syria.

That has led to an increased interest in Arab culture and music in the city, said Philippa Ebene, CEO and artistic director of "Werkstatt der Kulturen" — the "Cultural Workshop" — where the jam sessions are held.

"We have all these new Berliners from the Arab world and they brought their music with them," she said. "At the same time, Berlin is a city that is always hungry for new culture."

The Arab Song Jam is part of a yearlong celebration of Arab culture at the venue, also including poetry readings and Arab film nights.

The first jam session was held in March and it has become so popular that the basement venue often has to close its doors because it has reached its capacity. The audience is mixed — elderly Arab couples mingle with young European hipsters and groups of curious, middle-aged Germans.

"Is there a singer in the house?" Zouiten asks the crowd after the first song, and several people raise their hands.

Milo Kanefaty from Syria joins the musicians on the stage and as he sings the first words of a song by famous Lebanese singer Fairuz, the crowd cheers wildly and sings along. Soon people start dancing, hugging and applauding.

At other sessions, Germans from the audience also join in.

While Zouiten said he does not want to turn the Arab Song Jam into a political event, he does hope the music will help break down barriers between migrants and Germans who remain concerned about the large influx of newcomers.

Jaime Gomez, better known as the rapper Taboo from The Black Eyed Peas, had money, fame and a multi-platinum career when a strange back pain brought his world crashing down.

The six-time Grammy winner went to the doctor and got a gut-wrenching diagnosis: he had testicular cancer.

He had more than 100 million record sales to his name and a string of worldwide dance hits like "I Gotta Feeling" and "Where Is the Love?", but it meant nothing in the face of cancer's cruel reality, he told AFP in an interview.

At first, he was only able to piece the details together slowly.

"They didn't tell me what type of cancer I had. They didn't tell me what stage I was in. They just told me, Mr Gomez, you have cancer," said Taboo, 42.

"My life flashed before my eyes. I thought about my kids, I thought about my wife. Nothing prepares you for the shock of someone telling you you have that horrible disease."

That was in 2014. It was only last year that Taboo went public about his struggle with cancer — now in remission after a gruelling series of chemotherapy treatments.

Today, the Los Angeles native is an ambassador for the American Cancer Society and a vocal ally and fundraiser for cancer survivors everywhere.



Items from Colombian musician Carlos Vives, an 11-time Latin Grammy and two time Grammy Award winner, on exhibit at the opening of the exhibition 'Deep Heart: Roots, Rick & The Music of Carlos Vives' at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles, California on Nov 13. (AFP)



Shakira



Aldean

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Taylor Swift's new album "Reputation" has sold more than one million copies in its first four days, Nielsen Music said on Tuesday, but the US pop star failed to beat the record set by Britain's Adele two years ago.

Swift's 1.05 million US sales of "Reputation" came despite the singer keeping the album from streaming services and gave her the best-selling album of 2017.

But the figure was less than half the monster sales for the debut of Adele's "25" album, which surpassed 2.43 million copies in the first four days of release in November 2015 and smashed a 15-year-old US record set by boy band NSync in 2000. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Stone Temple Pilots have a new singer. The band featuring brothers Rob and Dean DeLeo, which was once fronted by the late Scott Weiland, brought former "X Factor" US contestant Jeff Gutt to the stage at Los Angeles' Troubadour on Tuesday night (Nov 14).

Gutt, a Detroit native, competed on the show in 2012, singing a moving rendition of Leonard Cohen's classic "Hallelujah." That he was a relative unknown to the crowd of rock fans was not lost on the 41-year-old: he wore a name tag that read, "Hello, my name is Jeff." (RTRS)

NEW YORK: Shakira is postponing her European tour until next year after suffering a vocal cord hemorrhage.

The 40-year-old Colombian sensation took to Twitter on Tuesday to apologize to her fans, saying she has a "heavy heart" but must stop singing to recover.

"All the years I've been signing, I've never been faced with a situation like this," she wrote in statements in both English and Spanish. She says she can't wait to be back onstage and "hear your voices singing along with mine." (AP)

Stage

Cranston excels in 'Network'

Coloratura hits new high in Ades opera

NEW YORK, Nov 15, (Agencies): Yes, that really is a stratospheric A above high C that Audrey Luna sings the first time we hear her in "The Exterminating Angel."

The American coloratura soprano, one of many stars in the cast of Thomas Ades' new opera, recalled her reaction when the composer first broke the news of her daunting assignment.

"He shows me the score, and I say, 'Does it really have to be the very first thing I sing?'" Luna said. "And he goes, 'Oh, it's just a laugh, you can do it!'"

Do it she does, along with many other notes nearly as dizzyingly high. (For comparison's sake, the highest note for the Queen of the Night in Mozart's "Magic Flute" is an F, two tones below A.) Luna's performance can be seen and heard when the Metropolitan Opera's production is broadcast live in HD to movie theaters worldwide on Saturday.

Luna is making a tiny bit of history with her A. According to The New York Times, it's the first time in the Met's 134 years that anyone has sung a note that high.

Her character in the opera, adapted from Luis Bunuel's surrealist 1962 film of the same name, is opera singer Leticia, a guest at a dinner party given by a wealthy couple who invites her back after a performance. Ades wrote the role with Luna in mind after hearing her perform the role of Ariel in his adaptation of Shakespeare's "The Tempest" at the Met in 2012.

Leticia and the other guests spend most of the opera's three acts mysteriously trapped in the drawing room until she comes up with a plan for breaking the spell. She realizes all the guests have moved to the same spots they occupied in the first act when they asked her to sing and she refused.

This time she agrees, launching into a mystical, dreamlike aria that, in the libretto by Tom Cairns, includes lines like: "We, your scattered sheep, prisoners of desire/ From the four ends of

the earth/ Our dreaming spirits yearn." Once she's done, the guests are able to leave the drawing room.

"The aria is crazy!" she said with a laugh. "There are no rests, no breath marks indicated. There are just periods at the ends of sentences. So when I got it I was like, 'Help! I can't do this.'" Ades assured her she could take a breath whenever she needed to.

Luna has her own theory as to why Leticia turns out to be the key to the guests' escape. "I walk into this party as almost the help," she said. "They have just seen me in a show. And now I'm there, like every opera singer, who maybe goes to a party afterward, you're still on, still giving a performance in a way, and I feel like I'm almost on the same level as those servants. And so perhaps that's why I see things coming. I'm not really one of the elites."

Luna sang in the world premiere of the opera in Salzburg, Austria, in 2016 and again in London earlier this year. Nine of the 14 principals have been with the show since the beginning, and Luna said they spent so much time in rehearsal rooms that it sometimes felt as if they were living the story of the opera.

Rehearsal

"We were together six days a week for six weeks in Salzburg, six weeks in London, about four or five here, in a room, for six hours a day," she said. "The director's off with a couple of people working out some staging, and we're all sitting around, and sometimes you wonder, wait a minute, am I in rehearsal or am I in the movie, because you're waiting until it's your turn. ... We were trapped, 100 percent."

Before the opera opens, audiences may be surprised to see three sheep wander onstage. These are not the first sheep to appear at the Met — a previous production of Verdi's "Falstaff" used them as well.

Many different animals have fig-

ured in Met productions over the years: a horse and donkey in Puccini's "La Boheme," dogs in Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier" and a goat and chickens in Prokofiev's "War and Peace." There was a camel in Samuel Barber's "Antony and Cleopatra" and a flock of geese in Humperdinck's "Koenigskinder."

"The Exterminating Angel," also starring sopranos Amanda Echalaz and Sally Matthews, mezzos Alice Cooté and Christine Rice, tenor Joseph Kaiser, countertenor Iestyn Davies and bass John Tomlinson, will be shown starting at 12:55 pm Eastern on Saturday with the composer conducting. A list of theaters can be found at the Met's website: www.metopera.org/hd. In the US it will be repeated on Wednesday, Nov 29, at 1 pm and 6:30 pm local time.

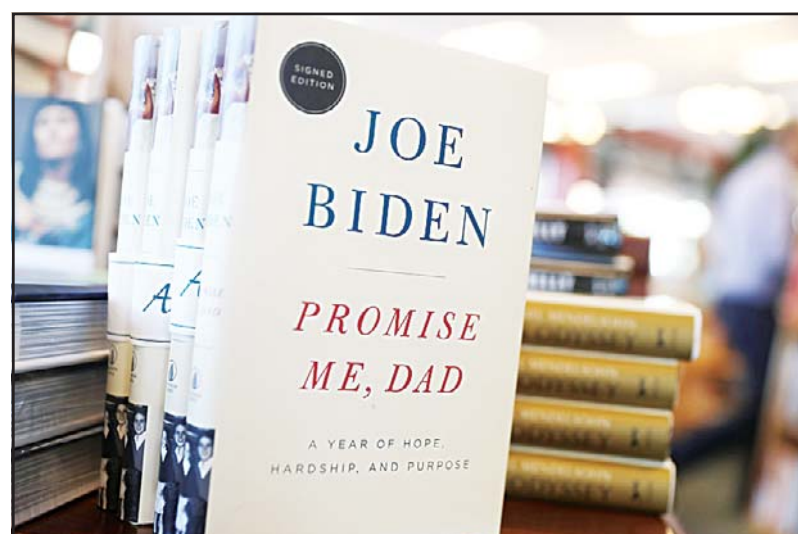
The medium is the message — or so they say. If Paddy Chayefsky's classic TV news satire isn't just prescient, but positively prophetic in our age of fake news, the point is pressed home by an intricate multimedia staging that makes it almost impossible to tell fact from fiction.

Majestically played by "Breaking Bad" s' Bryan Cranston, anchorman Howard Beale carves up the day's news with increasing apoplexy in a bid for record ratings, and it's impossible not to see our own era of rolling fury reflected. After an impromptu on-air outburst bumps his failing nightly news show ahead of its rivals, the network's bosses push him to keep ranting on repeat. That makes Beale a lightning rod for a nation's rage, inciting viewers to declare themselves "mad as hell" en masse, and he cuts through a corrosive and corrupted system simply by calling attention to its corruption — Trumpian tactics, as plain as day. It's uncanny, a warning fresh from 1976, but it's so on-the-money it can seem on-the-nose.

NASHVILLE, Tenn: Country star Jason Aldean says he hopes that healing can start for those affected by a mass shooting at a Las Vegas music festival in his first inter-

view since the October shooting. Speaking on NBC's "Today" show, Aldean, who was on stage when a gunman opened fire on the crowd at the Route

91 Harvest Festival, said that he initially thought a speaker had blown when he heard a sound like a crackling over his in-ear monitors. After the shooting continued, he looked over to the side of the stage to figure out what was going on. (AP)



Copies of the new book by former US vice-president Joe Biden called 'Promise Me, Dad' are displayed on a shelf at Book Passage on Nov 14, in Corte Madera, California. The new book by former US vice-president Joe Biden hit store shelves Tuesday. (AFP)

NEW YORK: Tracee Ellis Ross will be close by when her mom, Diana Ross, is honored at Sunday's American Music Awards because she'll be hosting the show.

The "black-ish" actress says she's excited to be named the host but is "especially thrilled" to do it the year that her mother is getting the Lifetime Achievement award.

Diana Ross will not only be honored but will also take the stage to perform. Tracee Ellis Ross is following in the footsteps of her mom, who hosted the American Music Awards years ago. (AP)

NEW YORK: Whatever happens Thursday at the Latin Grammys, Residente can relax. The Puerto Rican rapper, who leads nominations with nine nods for his first solo album post-Calle 13 — including album, record and song of the year — admits that he felt pressured to do "something huge and great" after spending a decade with the most decorated act in the history of the Latin Grammys. (AP)