Sounds – and music – are able to shape individual and collective identities, define spaces and borders, denote cultures, transmit knowledge and influence style lives. ASWAT is a series of music meetings and performances focusing on Egyptian culture(s) of music that seeks to explore a range of musical practices across Egypt, and beyond, through the contribution of academic speakers and music makers, followed by a concert. The meetings will offer the opportunity to deepen some historical, religious, social and musicological aspects that interwoven in, and from, the Egyptian music heritage, addressing creation, performance and reception practice.

ASWAT is a joint initiative from IFAO and CEDEJ, curated by Kawkab Tawfik

Venue: IFAO Gardens
The great Egyptian 20th century music tradition is still alive both in contemporary performance and it is inspiration for new compositions. Arabic music making is more and more developing and shaping new forms and expressions, traveling across and beyond geographical spaces, meeting new audiences. Søren Møller Sørensen, senior professor of musicology at University of Copenhagen, Denmark, will introduce the musician Bilal Irshed, Danish Palestinian musician rooted in Arab tradition, as an indicative model of this phenomenon.

Bilal Irshed and his quartet will perform a selection of music from his project The Fifth String. The project takes its name from a 9th century Arab musician named Ziryab, who is credited for having added a fifth string to the then four-string oud. According to the legend Ziryab coloured the first four strings so that they would symbolise Aristotle’s four temperaments. Then he added a fifth string that would represent the soul. It is from this fifth string that the project draws its inspiration. The Fifth String was created by the oud player Bilal Irshed and the music consists of original compositions combined with new arrangements of Egyptian 20th century music tradition.

Bilal Irshed is a Palestinian - Danish oud virtuoso and music composer who is residing in Denmark. He was born and raised on the village of Daboryya in the northern Galilee. He joined the Arabic music orchestra of Nazareth in 2002, who he toured and performed with at many international venues and music Festivals in Europe. In 2011 Bilal released two albums: ‘Compositions’ with Bilal’s Trio and ‘The Fifth String’ with the Fifth String Ensemble.