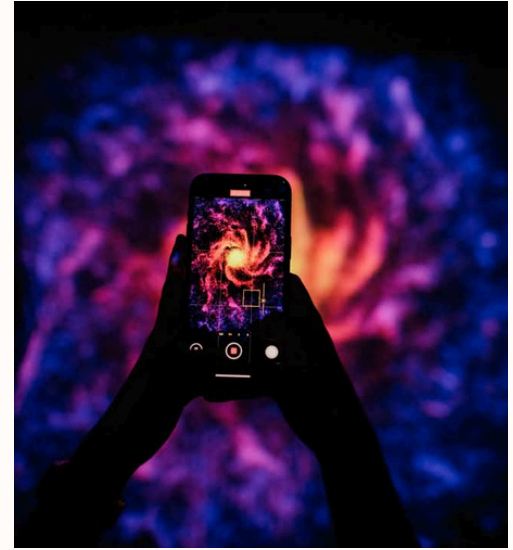


A TAPESTRY OF MEMORY, MUSIC, AND MEANING – A RAMADAN EVENING AT DAR BEN GACEM, SAINT-CROIX MARCH 21ST, 2025

On a serene Ramadan night, beneath the glow of old lanterns and the hush of a medina bathed in gold, Dar Ben Gacem, Saint-Croix became more than a space—it became a vessel of time, memory, and living heritage. As the call to prayer faded into the stillness of the evening, the doors of this historic house opened to welcome souls seeking more than just iftar. They came in search of knowledge, of sound, of stories that linger in the stones and echo through the arches. What unfolded was not merely an event, but a journey—a delicate weaving of past and present, intellect and emotion, spirit and art.



NADWA SEMINAR A DIALOGUE ACROSS CENTURIES

In the intimate courtyard of **Dar Ben Gacem Kahia**, the night began with Nadwa Seminar :

“The Spanish Monk Francisco Ximénez and Tunisian History,” led by historian and scholar Housseem Eddine Chachia.

Surrounded by walls that had long listened in on whispered prayers and heated debates, Chachia’s words carried the weight of centuries. He invited the audience to rediscover a nearly forgotten figure—Francisco Ximénez, a Spanish monk who made Tunisia his home from 1720 to 1735.

But Ximénez was no mere outsider. He embedded himself in the very heart of the Beylik, moving through palaces and alleyways, observing, recording, and participating in the rhythm of Tunisian life. His writings, touched with both curiosity and reverence, chronicled the vibrant cultural exchanges of the time and offered a rare, layered portrait of coexistence, diplomacy, and everyday life.

As Chachia spoke, time seemed to fold in on itself. Audience members, many seated cross-legged or leaning forward in wooden chairs, became travelers in Ximénez’s Tunisia—one shaped by shared skies, mingled tongues, and the enduring spirit of Andalusia, especially in the town of Testour. Questions flowed like water, and in that moment, history became conversation.



NEQAT – MUSIC AS ANCESTRAL BREATH

Later, as night deepened and the stars settled like dust over the medina, Saint-Croix transformed into a sanctuary of sound.

Neqat, a gifted collective of musicians, took the stage. They didn't just play; they conjured. With every note, they reached into the heart of tradition and pulled forth something utterly new yet hauntingly familiar.

Singer Nessrine Jabeur opened the set with the delicacy of silk unfolding. Her voice, pure and commanding, carried the ancestral poetry of Muwashshahat, gliding effortlessly into classic Tunisian melodies like "Ritek Ma Naâref Win."

She was joined by the soulful strings and rhythms of Hamza Zeramdini, Khachnaoui Mohamed Ad, and Omar Elouaer—each weaving their instrument into the collective breath of the performance. The result was not just music but memory awakened, a conversation between generations, a lament and a celebration all at once.

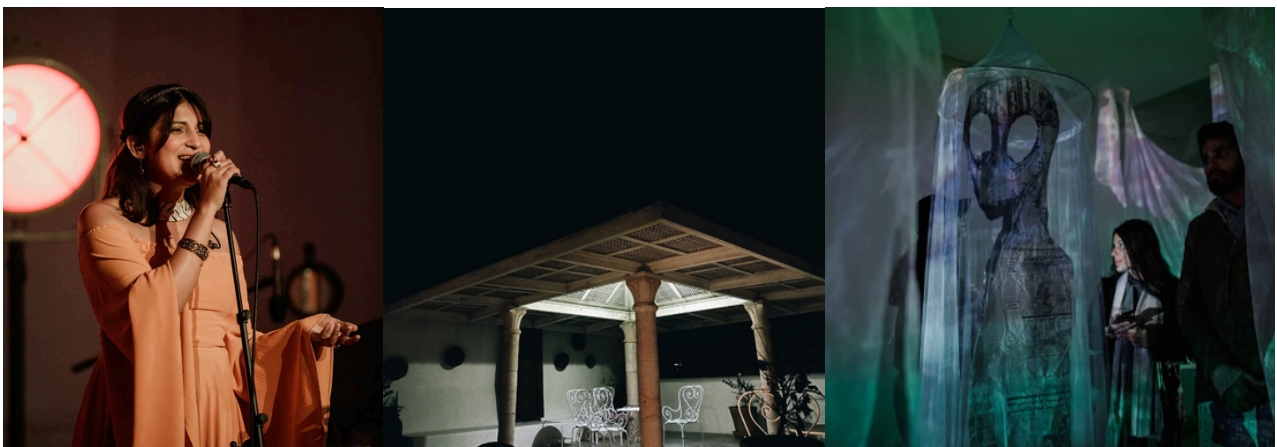
The audience, drawn into this world of sound and silence, listened with the reverence of those hearing something sacred.

Throughout the evening, the medina was not a backdrop—it was a participant. Its narrow alleys guided visitors toward light and laughter, its stones whispered stories to bare feet and trailing hems. At Saint-Croix, an open studio welcomed wanderers to step into the creative process itself—to see not just the final brushstroke, but the hand that paints, the mind that dreams.

It was a night where every doorway opened to dialogue, every arch framed a scene worth remembering.

In a time when speed and spectacle often drown out silence and reflection, this night at **Dar Ben Gacem** offered something precious: stillness, depth, and a return to essence.

A reminder that Ramadan is not only about fasting from the world, but also about nourishing the soul—with knowledge, music, and the magic of coming together.



WRITTEN BY SAJA BEN ABDERRAHMEN

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