



## **Tradition: Oud**

The oud is a very old and special musical instrument that comes from the Middle East and North Africa. It's shaped like a pear and looks a little like a short, round guitar. It usually has eleven strings, and musicians use a long thin pick called a risha to play it. Because the oud has no frets (those little bars on a guitar neck), players can slide their fingers to make smooth, beautiful sounds. Playing the oud takes skill and creativity and musicians use it to express emotions and tell stories through music. It can sound joyful, sad, or even mysterious, depending on how it is played.

People have been playing the oud for thousands of years! The first instruments were found in ancient Mesopotamia in what is now Iraq. Over time, the oud became popular in many countries in North Africa and the Arab world and made its way to Europe where it inspired the creation of the guitar and other instruments. Today, it is still an important part of music in many parts of the world. Many great musicians have played the oud and passed down its traditions. Some, like Mohamed Abozekry, are also mixing it with new styles like jazz and other world music forms, introducing younger generations to its unique sound.

## **Artist: Mohamed Abozekry**

**Mohamed Abozekry ("Moh")** is a talented musician from Egypt who plays the oud. He was born in Cairo in 1991 and fell in love with the instrument as a young boy after hearing his uncle play it at family gatherings. Seeing how much he loved the oud, Mohamed's parents sent him to a music school called the Arab Oud House. It was started by a famous musician named Naseer Shamma. Mohamed practiced very hard and became very skilled. By the time he was 15 years old, he was already teaching the oud—making him the youngest oud teacher in the Arab world!

When he was 18, Mohamed won first place in a big music competition in Damascus, Syria. He began performing around the world and meeting musicians from many different countries. After meeting some French musicians at the Oud House in Lyons, France, he became interested in learning to speak French, so he traded oud lessons for French lessons! He later moved to Paris where he continued to study, perform, and explore new musical styles. Mohamed's music now blends the rich traditions of Arabic music with exciting new sounds from around the world.

While living in Paris, Moh wanted to be able to play with other musicians. To do that, he needed to change the way the oud was usually played, and he created his own style of playing! He changed the number of strings on his oud to include two lower bass strings

and changed the way his hands plucked the strings. This allowed him to accompany musicians while they took turns playing solos. Thanks to his creativity, the oud has become part of many different types of music, from jazz to world music styles, while keeping its traditional roots.

Moh has made several albums, which are collections of songs that show his amazing skills on the oud. He also teaches other musicians and helps keep the tradition of oud music alive while adding his own creative touch. His music can be happy, sad, or full of energy, depending on how he plays. If you listen to his songs, you might hear a mix of old and new sounds that make his music special. Moh is a great example of how musicians can share their culture and creativity with the world!

## **Between Two Worlds: From Cairo to Paris**

Mohamed Abozekry lives and makes music in two amazing cities: **Cairo** and **Paris**.

Cairo is the capital of Egypt and one of the oldest cities in the world. It sits along the Nile River and is close to the Great Pyramids of Giza. In Cairo, you can visit ancient mosques, colorful markets, and museums full of treasures from Egypt's past. Cairo is also a very modern city, and the streets are busy and full of life, with the sounds of car horns, people talking, and music playing. Cairo is where Mohamed began his musical journey and where he learned the deep traditions of the oud.

Paris, the capital of France, is known as the "City of Light." It is famous for beautiful buildings, art museums, and delicious food. You might know landmarks like the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre Museum. But Paris is also home to people from many different countries. You can hear many languages and try foods from all over the world. Moh set up a second home in Paris to learn more about music and to try new ideas. He plays with musicians from different backgrounds and adds new styles to his oud music.

Together, Cairo and Paris help shape Mo's sound. He connects the old and the new, the East and the West, to create music that brings people together from all around the world.

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