



Tarik & Julia Banzi: Al-Andalus  
*Music with a message!*

Al-Andalus refers to Moorish-ruled Spain from 711-1492. During these eight centuries, the Spain of Al-Andalus witnessed the closest encounter possible between Africa, the Arab World and the West, as well as between Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

An outstanding model of tolerance and functioning multiculturalism, Al-Andalus was a time that is known for its mutually beneficial symbiosis among Muslims, Christians and Jews which resulted in remarkable artistic, educational, and cultural enlightenments. This situation and the pluralism that went with it had various consequences: the intermixing of races, bilingualism and multilingualism and, religious dialogue and debate.

The core of the performance group Al-Andalus (founded 1987) is the married couple Tarik (Morocco) and Julia (USA) who now make their home in Tangier, Morocco. Not unlike the Renaissance that inspires them, they are both scholars, musicians and artists (Tarik completed doctoral studies in Fine Arts and Julia doctoral studies in Ethnomusicology specializing in Women's Andalusian music). Their lives reflect their commitment to create peaceful understanding between the US & Arab world and amongst Muslims, Jews & Christians through historically informed performance of Andalusian works and the creation of new works rooted in the Andalusian legacy yet reflective of today's global soundscape.

Hailed as “*a new musical language that unites the East & West*” Tarik & Julia Banzi present programs integrate a holistic approach to andalusian music combining Andalusian, Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) & Spanish Andalusian with contemporary compositions rooted in this Andalusian legacy that simultaneously embraces the multicultural world we live in today. This unique group of musicians, singers, dancers, visual artists & scholars from diverse countries in the Maghreb, USA, Spain and the Far East are inspired by the legacy of Al-Andalus. Through performance and scholarship we bring the spirit of Al-Andalus from the past into the present. It was the Banzi's who coined the term 'Contemporary Andalusian' (c. 1987) to describe their informed approach to andalusian music that melds the past with the present to create historically informed and esthetically pleasing renditions of traditional musics as well as new compositions which embrace rich treasures of the past and bring them into the present.

In 2004, Al-Andalus was honored to have performed for *Queen Sophia of Spain, Lady Bush, Princess Haifa Al-Saud* and was the only musical group selected for the festival of Al-Andalus in Washington DC. The same season they performed at the *Smithsonian Museum, National Gallery, Embassies of Jordan & Egypt, Ford Center (LA), New York, Canada, Festival de Tres Culturas de Murcia, Toledo, Spain School of Translation & 12 concerts in Sevilla* as part of the *Noches Mediterraneo* (Ayuntamiento de Sevilla).

Presently, Al-Andalus is in the recording studio for their fifth album (2005). Their new formation adds *Nourdinne Chekara*, torchbearer of the famed *Abdelsadek Chekara* family and current professor of Andalusian music, voice & violin at the Tetuan Conservatory of Music (Morocco) and, *Virtudes Sanchez* (Cadiz, Spain) whose voice combines her Andalusian heritage, *flamenco, canto lirico Espanol* as well as her classical vocal training she received later in life at conservatories in Conil, Sevilla and Madrid with multi-lingual vocal skills marrying tradition and progress with skill and know how.

*Al-Andalus: Contemporary Andalusian Music*

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