

Argentinean-Lebanese folklore dance specialist visits LERC

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Reported by Elie Nabhan

Mr. Munir Nellmeldin, President of the Sociedad Lebanese de Rosario, in Argentina, visited the Lebanese Emigration Research Center at NDU, accompanied by Mr. Antonio Kassab, a tourist guide, who is fluent in several languages, and is contracted by foreign embassies to give guided tours to its visitors.

Mr. Nellmeldin delivered to LERC materials sent by Professor Walter Muller Moujir, LERC's Liaison Officer for Argentina, containing books, documents, and newspaper articles.

Mr. Nellmeldin is a close friend of LERC, having visited the Center in March 2008. He is a second-generation Argentinean of Lebanese descent, whose grandfather, Mr. Dib Najem el Din, emigrated to Etruria, Argentina, in 1925.



Souvenir photo with LERC: (from left-right) Mr. A. Kassab, Mrs. L. Haddad, Ms. G. Hourani, Mr. M. Nellmeldin (Oct 2011).

The Sociedad Libanesa de Rosario created the traditional Lebanese *dabke* troupe named the *Firkat Al Arz* on 15th December 1999. Mr. Nicholas Kronfly was its first president with Mr. Nellmeldin then taking over in 2001.

The *Firkat Al Arz* is made up of twenty dancers, most of them Argentineans of Lebanese descent, born in Argentina. Prominent families amongst them include the Saba family, originally from Kalkhat in the Koura district, the Rida family from Yaroun, Southern Lebanon, the Habib family from Sin el Fil in Beirut, the Haddad family from Marjayoun and Mr. Nellmeldin's sister Pamela.

The troupe have gained a high recognition for themselves as specialists in authentic Lebanese folklore dance, performing throughout Argentina with special performances in Chile in 2007 and in Brazil this year. Mr. Nellmeldin himself will be giving a solo performance in the Amani Oriental Festival during his visit to Lebanon.

The troupe will be engaged in several activities in Argentina over the coming two months. They will perform in a number of celebrations in collaboration with the Argentine Ministry of Tourism and the Lebanese Embassy in Argentina such as the one for Lebanon's Independence Day on 20th November.

Mr. Nellmeldin was then given a presentation of LERC's electronic archives. He kindly donated to the Center a number of videos and photos of various *Firkat Al Arz* performances including the show presented on Argentina's National Day of Immigrants.

Mr. Nellmeldin continues training in authentic Lebanese *dabke* in Lebanon and his efforts in transferring this authenticity and passion for his ancestral folklore are to be admired.