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Arab Spring hits a high note in Doha

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Lebanese composer Marcel Khalifa says his new show seeks to echo cries for freedom

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Lebanese composer Marcel Khalifa is pictured during a rehearsal with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, presenting choral compositions inspired by the Arab Spring, at the Doha Opera House in the Qatari capital on February 3, 2013. AFP PHOTO / AL-WATAN DOHA / KARIM JAAFAR
== QATAR OUT ==

Doha: Renowned Lebanese composer Marcel Khalifa enthralled a Qatari audience with his Arab Spring-inspired suite 'Oriental', presented in collaboration with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra he helped set up in 2007.

The performance late on Sunday in Doha aimed "to echo the cries of the Arab people for freedom", said the 62-year-old composer, whose latest work unifies tunes from the traditional Iraqi maqam musical style with others from the Levant, North Africa, Egypt and Andalusia.

"There is much happiness" in Oriental, "echoing the cries of ordinary Arab people, which had been suppressed for [some] 50 years before they took to the streets to demand freedom," Khalifa told AFP.

The Leipzig Radio Choir sang in Arabic accompanied by the Qatari orchestra at the opera house in Doha, located in the Katara Cultural Village.

Khalifa's 31-year-old son Rami, who has chosen to follow in his father's footsteps, presented a requiem, as a tribute to victims of mass unrest in the Middle East and North Africa. "The large amount of death around us, especially in Syria and Arab Spring countries and

the whole world led me to compose this requiem," said Rami, who played the harpsichord accompanied by chants from the Korean soprano Whal Ran Seo.

For Khalifa, a leftist since his youth, the two works are "complementary."

The aspiration of Arabs to freedom is "an irrevocable process which will move ahead despite the obstacles of extremism and sectarianism," he said, adding that "difficult years are ahead."

Khalifa played an important role in launching the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra. Today, the team comprises 101 musicians from 30 countries but none from the Gulf state itself.

The creation of the orchestra is part of efforts by Qatar to become a cultural hub in the Gulf.