

MODDATHIR ABOWL WAFWA

Toola Nesma Music ND0701

Welcome to the Night of a Thousand Ouds. Well, five. First to Cairo and a CD very much born of



that city. Composer and oud player Moddathir Aboul Wafa sets his compositions against an Egyptian string section, half a dozen violins – including notable arranger Abdou Dagher and Hassan Sharara of the Cairo Symphony Orchestra – weaving a full if not lush sound. There's grandeur from the off, with an almost military rhythm to the opening, stately *Mawkeb El Nakham* (Procession Of Melodies). It's evocative stuff. Aboul Wafa's wordless tales of the city are clearly and wonderfully delineated: evening strolls on the banks of the Nile, a wedding party in the old town with the groom performing a stick dance and the bride at the balcony. The opening of *El Leil Wel Nil* (Night On The Nile) places a fluttering nightingale of a *nay* against the dark waters of a brooding orchestra. The result is dramatic and beautiful. The sweep of the strings and the richness of melody evoke at times Omar Khairat's honeyed film scores, or even the song settings for great Egyptian recordings of the 1950s. For the most part Aboul Wafa's oud serves the drive of the compositions, but on the lovely, reflective *Fi Samaa Al Musikaa* (In Music Heaven) the oud takes centre stage, while *Samba Toola* – named after his daughter – turns up the heat with a samba beat and a freer, jazzier sound making up for less intensity with a gleeful levity. Hear a track on this issue's *fRoots 30* CD.

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