

Layale Chaker





# biography

Raised on the verge of several musical streams since her childhood, Lebanese violinist and composer Layale Chaker debuted her musical training at the National Higher Conservatory of Beirut in her native Lebanon. She later pursued her musical studies at Conservatoire de Paris and the Royal Academy of Music in London, studying under professors such as Mohamed Hashem, Carmen Scricpariu, Jeanne-Marie Conquer and Nicholas Miller.

## APPEARANCES & COLLABORATIONS

Layale has appeared as a soloist, performer, improviser and composer in concerts, recitals and projects around the world, as well as in several festivals, namely Beiteddine Festival, Beirut Chants, Zouk Mikael Festival, Bimhuis Amsterdam, Royal Albert Hall, London Jazz Festival, Wigmore Hall, National Sawdust and The Stone in New York, Hancher Auditorium, Boulez Saal, Festival d'Avignon, Alderburgh Festival, Junger Kunstler Festival Bayreuth, Lucerne Festival and Beethoven Festival Bonn among others.

Her collaborators include Gabriel Yared, Ziad Rahbani, Marcel and Rami Khalife, Daniel Barenboim, Vijay Iyer, Michel Godard, Holland Baroque, Bayreuther Philharmoniker, Babylon Orchestra, New World Symphony, Oxford Orchestra, Notes Inegales, and the Orchestra of Age of Enlightenment among others.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Past season highlights include a premiere work for solo violin and orchestra with the Oxford Orchestra and the premiere of her string trio by members of New World Symphony in Miami. She has debuted her first violin concerto with the Bayreuther Philharmoniker as the orchestra's first-ever commissioned composer in January 2018. A recent commission from Newlands Festival has also invited her for a collaboration with Holland Baroque.

Layale is also currently touring with her own ensemble, Sarafand, across Germany, France, the UK, the USA and the Middle-East following the release of their debut album 'Inner Rhyme' in January 2019.

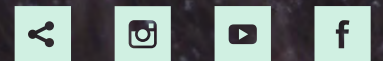
## FUNDS & AWARDS

Layale Chaker was also recently granted the Diaphonique 2019 Franco-British Commission Fund, along with London-based Notes Inegales ensemble and musicians of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, for a creation in May 2018. As a member of Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan, she performs around the year in concert halls such as the Royal Albert Hall, Buenos Aires' Teatro Colon, Mozarteum Salzburg, Philharmonie de Paris, Salzburg Festspiele and der Philharmonie Berlin among others.

Layale is a Ruth Anderson 2017 Competition Prize winner, the recipient of the Royal Academy of Music's 2018 Guinness Award, a finalist of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé 2018 Prize, and the recipient of the Nadia et Lili Boulanger 2019 Prize.



connect



## new album

### Layale Chaker & Sarafand

#### "Inner Rhyme"

Composed between Beirut, Paris and London over the past two years and recorded in New York over the summer of 2018, the album explores aesthetics of Arabic classical, vernacular and free verse poetry, using a musical language at the intersections of contemporary, jazz and Arabic Maqam music. "Inner Rhyme" was awarded the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture 2018 Grant.

Layale first became passionate about poetry through the prism of 40's and 50's Lebanese repertoire, and its' improvised oratory poetry, which is often considered in its' local culture as the pinnacle of musical expression. Listening to the voices of Zaghoul el Damour, (the Nightingale of Damour), Moussa Zgheib and Khalil Rukoz, as well as wedding chants, Sufi remembrance recitations (Zikr) and Syriac rituals, she marveled at the prominence and abundance of poetry and music in each and every aspect of Lebanese life.

Chaker went on to translate twelve classical Arabic poetic meters into rhythmical meters. Mapped through those rhythmical meters, but also through the fluidity of oral vernacular and free modern forms, "Inner Rhyme" unveils musical threads that aim to abstract language and focus on the physical contour of verses and the percussive sonority of the words. Beyond expression, the composition process captures the shape and essence of epic testimonials on life, death, war and love that make the heart of Arabic poetry.

In a Circle Records was established in 2008 by Johnny Gandelsman, Grammy-winning producer and violinist. Most recent releases include Johnny's debut recording, featuring complete solo works for violin by JS Bach, and Silkroad Ensemble & Yo-Yo Ma's album of music recorded for Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's documentary TV series, "The Vietnam War".



“Dazzling playing - which, despite drawing inspiration from Eastern traditions - stems from a contemporary approach that is rich of countless colors”

“ *Innovative and vibrant, clear and resonant... Chaker's wistful violin meanders in ney-like serpentine lines.* ”

ALL ABOUT JAZZ



## track listing

1. Return To Jaykur 6'02
2. Ushaq 3'59
3. Relentless 5'30
4. Interlude - Half-Light 1'24
5. Mkhmmas suite - 1 - Hawwel Ya Ghannam 5'12
6. Mkhmmas suite - 2 - Frah Al Donniyeh 3'44
7. Mkhmmas suite - 3 - Ya Fajr 4'44
8. Alight Here 5'24
9. On The Trunk Of An Olive Tree 6'04
10. Postlude - Folded 2'08

## credits

**Layale Chaker**  
violin & composition

**Jake Charkey**  
cello

**Nick Dunston**  
bass

**Phillip Golub**  
piano

**Adam Maalouf**  
percussion

**Radwan Ghazi Mounneh**  
recording/mixing engineer

**Harris Newman**  
mastering engineer

Recorded at **The Rift Studio** Brooklyn, NY  
Mixed at **Hotel2Tango** Montreal  
Mastered at **Grey Market Mastering**

listen to the  
album here

password  
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## featured soloist & composer

Layale's work as a soloist and composer has been featured with ensembles and orchestras such as Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Notes Inegales, Wigmore Hall Bechstein Sessions, Orchestre Cosmophonie, Holland Baroque, New World Symphony, Apple Hill Quartet, the West Eastern Divan Orchestra, Oxford Orchestra and Zulal Trio.

She has received commissions from Zoukak Theatre Company (Lebanon), the Diaphonique Franco-British Commission Fund and Contemporary Music for All, and has premiered works in halls such as Bimhuis (The Netherlands), Abbaye de Royaumont, Domaine des Dominicains de Haute-Alsace (France), Beirut Chants (Lebanon), National Sawdust, The Stone, Hancher Auditorium (USA), Brighton Festival, Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, London Jazz Festival (UK), Morgenland Festival, Bethanien Haus, Boulez Saal (Germany), Teatro Colon (Argentina) ....



Manuel Vaca 2016©

**“ Beguiling debut... [...] gorgeous wine-dark swirls ”**

NPR

**“ haunting yet quietly rigorous [...] flights of improvisation and fleeting echoes of early Baroque ornamentation. ”**

**”** New York Times

The New York Times

## A Violinist Questions the Musical Divide Between West and East



The violinist and composer Layale Chaker, who has a new album, "Inner Rhyme," at home in Brooklyn. Heather Sten for The New York Times

By Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim

[read on further here](#)

SCENE  
noise

FEATURES

## THE 'INNER RHYME' OF LAYALE CHAKER; A MUSICAL ODE TO ARABIC POETRY

Lebanese violinist Layale Chaker's debut album explores the rhythmic cycles of Arabic poetry.



BY TUCKER MCGEE

[read on further here](#)

in the press





NEW MUSIC

## The 10 Best Albums We Heard In January

Layale Chaker & Sarafand  
*Inner Rhyme*



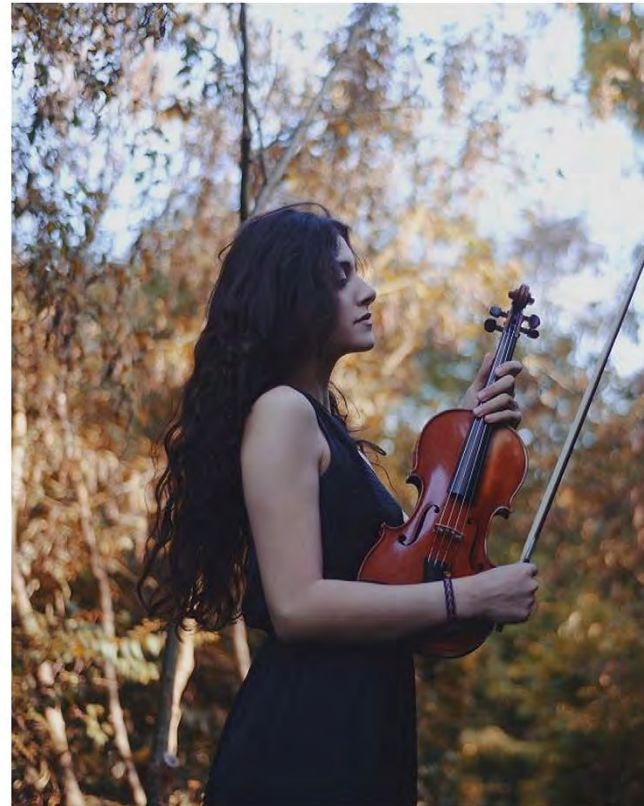
ROBIN HILTON

[read on further here](#)

NEW YORK MUSIC DAILY

**in the press**

A Gorgeously Kinetic, Restless New Album by  
Haunting, Dynamic Violinist Layale Chaker



Global Music With a New York Edge

by *delarue*

[read on further here](#)

Debate

## Layale Chaker on the violin as cultural chameleon

21 JUNE 2018

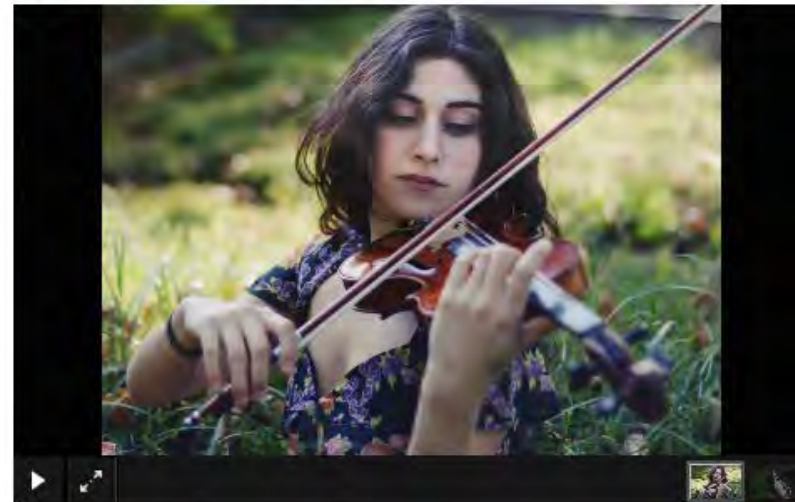


The Lebanese composer and violinist discusses the ease with which the violin can drift between genres – and why she has devoted her creative life to doing just that

[read on further here](#)

CULTURE

### Layale Chaker, violon hybride



L'ARTISTE DE LA SEMAINE

Vingt-sept printemps et une allure de star. Violoniste et compositrice, elle n'hésite pas entre les deux, mais dit que tenir un violon et écrire une partition sont la même face de Janus, et nourrissent et renforcent son inspiration.

Edgar DAVIDIAN | OIJ

23/01/2018

[read on further here](#)

## ليال شاكر: الروح شرقية... والتقنية غربية



آداب وفنون | نقد | [عمار مروة](#)

[read on further here](#)

## in the press

### A SELECTION OF RECENT ARTICLES

**VIOLINIST** January 18, 2019

[read online here](#)

**TEXTURA** January 2019

[read online here](#)

**NEW YORK MUSIC DAILY** January 21, 2019

[read online here](#)

**IN ON THE CORNER** January 27, 2019

[read online here](#)

**JAZZ WEEKLY** January 31, 2019

[read online here](#)

**ALBUM A DAY** February 2019

[read online here](#)

**AL AKHBAR** February 12, 2019

[read online here](#)

# Layale Chaker And Sarafand: Inner Rhyme



By **HRAYR ATTARIAN**  
February 17, 2019  
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Arabic poetry is the primary source of inspiration for Lebanese violinist and composer Layale Chaker's innovative and vibrant debut *Inner Rhyme*. Recorded in New York with her band Sarafand (named after a Palestinian village that was abandoned in 1948) this original music is full of subtle wit and sublime emotion.



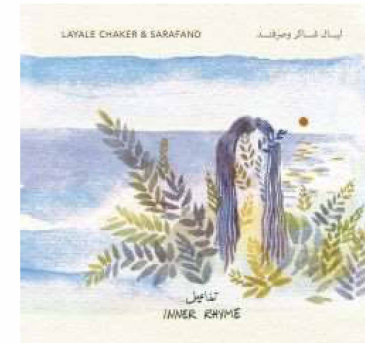
In crafting this exquisite album, Chaker transposes traditional Arabic poetic meters to rhythmic ones. She also draws upon her western classical training as well as her Levantine heritage with its multi-ethnic songs, both secular and sacred.

For instance, the three movement "Mkhammas Suite" is based on a style of pentametric verse usually associated with Sufi mysticism. On the first part, "Hawwel ya Ghannam," Chaker's wistful violin meanders in (reed flute) *ney*-like serpentine lines. Percussionist [Adam Maalouf](#)'s thunderous beats, cellist Jake Charkey, and bassist [Nick Dunston](#)'s hypnotic pizzicato refrains contribute further dimensions to the expectant backdrop. Chaker makes her violin "dance as the band concludes on a celebratory note.

The works of certain 20th century poets have also influenced Chaker. The opening track "Return to Jaykur" is based on Iraqi writer Badr Shakir al-Sayyab's similarly titled paean to his hometown. The nostalgic and lyrical piece showcases plenty of spontaneity as Chaker and pianist Phillip Golub exchange contemplative and angular phrases over their bandmates' rumbling rhythms. Chaker's clear and resonant tones contrast hauntingly with Charkey and Dunston's darkly reverberating strings.

Equally mesmerizing is "Alight Here" which allows for individual expressions as well as a dynamic and ethereal ensemble performance. Chaker's melancholic violin soars while Charkey plays a sinewy and lean melody that simmers with reserved fervor. Cascading keys, hinting at the sound of the *qanun* (middle eastern dulcimer), mark Golub's bittersweet solo. Dunston's thumping strings and Maalouf's percolating percussion form the vivid pulse at the core of the track.

With this impressive first release Chaker has not simply fused genres, she has transcended them. Her eloquent and poignant compositions are simultaneously earthy and spiritual, provocative and passionate. *Inner Rhyme* is a hell of a start to an artistic career.



## Layale Chaker & Sarafand

### *Inner Rhyme*

In a Circle Records ([www.inacircle-records.com](http://www.inacircle-records.com))

Review by [Tyran Grillo](#)

*Inner Rhyme* is the debut album from celebrated Lebanese violinist-composer Layale Chaker, and plants Arabic poetry into borderless musical soil. Using the cadences of that poetry, in both classical and vernacular forms, as rhythmic infrastructure, she cultivates fresh ecosystems in which words and instruments nourish one another. The heavy nostalgia she carries in "Return To Jaykur" sets the tone for something more than the mere word "album" could ever express. Rather, it's a journey in the truest sense, tracing the footpaths of melodies seemingly aware of their own mortality.

Beside her is a faithful band of musicians: cellist Jake Charkey, bassist Nick Dunston, pianist Phillip Golub, and percussionist Adam Maalouf. The latter brings out some of the deepest impulses in the music, as in "Ushaq," which pieces together its vistas one leafless tangle at a time. Chaker, for her part, plays as one might sing, exhaling through every note with lyrical assurance. Despite the formidable control with which it's rendered, the music wraps its flesh around a fiercely driven nervous system.

One hears it in both the title and execution of "Relentless," which frames its composer like a bird in flight, as well as in "Alight Here" and the jazzier "On The Trunk Of An Olive Tree." All of these balance ancient and futureward leanings.

The album's centerpiece is the "Mkhammas Suite," which over the course of three parts reveals its heart one ventricle at a time. Its dramas are photorealistic, taking inspiration from political upheavals that have left so many scars on the face of the earth that it's all we can do not to trip as we try to avoid contributing to them.

The final movement is a masterstroke of arrangement, treating violin and cello as siblings, bass and percussion as the paths they take, and the piano as scribe for every conversation between them. The more they speak, the more our ears wish to listen. - Yran Grillo

[Find the artist online](#)

TOP  
OF THE  
WORLD  
TRACK 2



Anna Rakhvalova

**Layale Chaker & Sarafand**  
**Inner Rhyme**

In a Circle Records (44 mins)

★★★★★

*This debut from the French-Lebanese violinist is pure poetry*



French-Lebanese composer and violinist Layale Chaker's debut album, *Inner Rhyme*, which took two years to compose between Beirut, Paris and London, is a fantastic exposition to what is sure to be a fruitful career. Her dualistic influences of Arabic *maqam* and contemporary jazz are wonderfully combined by her sometimes rasping, sometimes full-bodied, always emotionally charged violin-playing.

Inspiration for the album came from Lebanese poetry of the 40s and 50s. Chaker translated poetic metres used by the likes of Zaghoul el Damour, Moussa Zgheib and Khalil Roukoz into rhythmic cycles, providing a basis for composition. In 'Mkhammas Suite, I', percussionist

Adam Maalouf creates a texture that evokes Sufi music with his *daf* (frame drum) in 5/4. Whereas in 'Alight Here', a piano (played by Phillip Golub) and violin melody laced with complex rhythmic stabs drive the piece. Pizzicato double bass in the higher registers from Nick Dunston weaves playfully around the melodies until the groove takes hold. 'On the Trunk of an Olive Tree' is where Chaker's jazz influences really shine, with Golub's piano glistening in the mix with thick chords and gentle, hazy solos from the rest of the band.

Chaker has achieved a considered, unique and profound composition and performance on her debut. I can't wait for more.

CHARLOTTE ALGAR

**TRACK TO TRY** *Mkhammas Suite, I: Hawwel Ya Ghannam*

Turkey, to perform her traditional songs alongside Naida Čatić's Bosnian repertoire, setting them in a harmonic language stemming from another one-time imperial governor, Austria-Hungary, spiced up on occasion by Macedonian brass and slap guitar.

Unsurprisingly, the most convincing fruit of this relationship comes with their joint performance of 'Üsküdar'a Gider İken Anadolka', a song whose chequered history is shared by the Indian Jewish community and Boney M's 'Rasputin'. Slightly jazzy versions of the veteran favourite 'Kafu Mi Draga Ispeci' and the classic 'Snijeg Pade na Behar na Voce' sit happily here with their Turkish relatives.

KIM BURTON

**TRACK TO TRY** *Fındıklı Bizim Yolumuz*

**Dub Colossus**  
**Dr Strangedub (or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Dub the Bomb)**

Good Deeds Records (71 mins)

★★★★★

*Spaced out dub to wipe your cares away*



This was supposedly written as a response to the ever-mushrooming sense of doom commonly

experienced thanks to climate change, Trump, Brexit, etc. The way to 'stop worrying' suggested by *Dub Colossus*' fifth album is to just ignore it all, lie back on some wavy bass line and ride the reverb into outer space.

Where his early albums featured more obvious collaborations with Ethiopian *azmari* musicians, *Dr Strangedub*, which comprises eight new tracks plus six remixes, keeps more in the dub practice of sampling the odd lyrical snippet, heavily filtering them through effects and laying them over prominent bass lines – though in this case, very, very chilled ones, and with an added dose of serenity delivered by cosmic guitar and trumpet solos that riff a jazzy stardust over the majority of the album.

Overall, it can feel a bit formulaic, and despite a couple of more upbeat moments – the groovy 'Fight Back (Resistclubdub Mix)' and the Cuban-influenced 'Spy in the House of Dub' – the tracks tend to blend into each other somewhat. Still, it's a sunny album; it won't solve your problems, but at least it might help you escape the world for a moment.

TIM ROMAIN

**TRACK TO TRY** *A World Without Dub*

## quotes & highlights

*"... A beguiling debut that intertwines bright and beautiful strands... gorgeous, wine-dark swirls."*

*- NPR Music, Top 10 album releases*

*"A Gorgeously Kinetic, Restless New Album by Haunting, Dynamic Violinist Layale Chaker...the leading contender for best album of 2019 so far."*

*- New York Music Daily*

*"Haunting yet quietly rigorous... Often there seems to be more breath than voice in these wordless poems, though other times Ms. Chaker draws full-bellied sounds, or sketches out silvery arpeggios."*

*- The New York Times*

*"Chaker, for her part, plays as one might sing, exhaling through every note with lyrical assurance. Despite the formidable control with which it's rendered, the music wraps its flesh around a fiercely driven nervous system."*

*- RootsWorld*

*"Potent spell cast... particularly entrancing."*

*- Textura*

*"A gorgeous blend of sounds ... accomplished with grace and agility."*

*- In on the Corner*

*"... The fine string performances, by Chaker especially, stand out."*

*- The Strad*

*"Organic, dynamic, and complex. However, the complexity doesn't take center-stage; like a good piece of writing, you are lulled into it with elegant phrasing, immaculate punctuation and exquisite vocabulary."*

*- Scenenoise*

*" Her violin is pastoral and dreamy."*

*- Jazz Weekly*

*"Une exploration sublime et mélancolique... Tant de grâce et de beauté."*

*- Deuxieme Page*

*"Innovative and vibrant debut.. this original music is full of subtle wit and sublime emotion. Chaker has not simply fused genres, she has transcended them. Her eloquent and poignant compositions are simultaneously earthy and spiritual, provocative and passionate."*

*- All About Jazz*

*Itunes - No.1 on World Music Chart (February 2019)*

*Amazon - No.1 on World Music Chart (February 2019)*

*"Sometimes rasping, sometimes full-bodied, always emotionally-charged violin playing. A considered, unique and profound performance.. Pure poetry."*

*- Songlines - Top of the World 2019*



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