

# Farid El Atrache

“An artist is married to his creative work, he engenders tunes, songs and films.”

Farid El Atrache was a composer, singer and actor born in 1910 in Syria. At nine years old, El Atrache, along with his mother and siblings, escaped the French occupation of Syria and fled to Egypt where the family settled and later obtained Egyptian citizenship.

As children, El Atrache and his sister Asmahan, who also became a prominent singer and actress, found musical inspiration in their mother who sang and played the oud. They developed their musical skills by learning from her and accompanying her to monasteries and music clubs where she performed.

While studying at Egypt's music conservatory, renowned composer Riyad Al Sunbati became El Atrache's mentor. Al Sunbati helped El Atrache kick start his professional career by recommending him for work at privately owned radio stations. El Atrache later played the oud and sang for the orchestra of Egypt's national radio station.

El Atrache's career entered a new phase when movie producers began approaching him and his sister to appear on Egyptian film screens. In 1941, the two starred in their first hit movie, *The Triumph of The Youth*, after which El Atrache began producing movies himself and writing the soundtracks.

El Atrache was a revered artist who was celebrated for his work in music and film. He was also recognised for his mastery as an oud instrumentalist, and for his notable work on the theory of musical scales and structures in *maqamat* performances.



## DID YOU KNOW?

El Atrache's parents were descendants of the royal family that ruled Jabal Al Druze, also known as Jabal Al Arab, in Southern Syria.

## FUN FACT

El Atrache was so superb at playing the oud that he was nicknamed, 'King of the Oud'.

## MUSICAL TERM

**Maqamat:** In classical Arabic music performances, the distinct character of the music; the scales, tones, and characteristic patterns to which an improviser always returns.

