

Mohammed Abdel Wahab

“A great singer and a great listener make equal efforts; the first when he sings, and the second when he listens.”

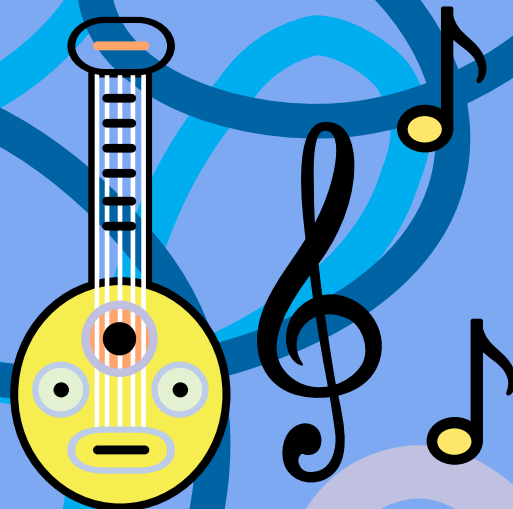
Born in 1902, Mohammed Abdel Wahab was an Egyptian composer, singer and actor. As a young boy in Cairo, Abdel Wahab was captivated by the city's theatre scene. Aged only seven, Abdel Wahab was already singing and performing in local shows.

After studying the oud and traditional music of the region at Cairo's Institute of Arab Music, Abdel Wahab's studies of Western music eventually led to a highly varied (and internationally popular) film-based repertoire. He started working on musical films in the 1930s, debuting as an actor in *Al-Warda al-Baida* 'The White Flower' (1933), which broke attendance records.

In the 1920s, Abdel Wahab's distinguished vocals and refined oud performances earned him the support of one of the great Arab poets, Ahmed Shawqi, famously nicknamed the 'Prince of Poets', who helped Abdel Wahab further his musical and literary education. The pair's collaborations were very popular at the time, particularly among the upper class.

Abdel Wahab laid the foundation for a new era of modern Arabic music through his unique fusion of Arab and Western musical styles. He incorporated a waltz in his song *Al Gondol* 'The Gondola' (1941) and wrote rock and roll rhythms into Abdel Halim Hafez's song *Ya Albi Ya Khali* 'Oh My Empty Heart' (1957). His innovative work with *tarab* and traditional Arab melodies is credited with broadening the traditional Egyptian ensemble.

Abdel Wahab introduced musicals to mainstream Egyptian culture and his portfolio includes over 1,800 songs. He is widely considered the father of modern Arab music in the 20th century, and one of the greatest composers of his time.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mohammed Abdel Wahab composed several countries' national anthems, including Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates!

FUN FACT

Abdel Wahab composed several songs for acclaimed singer Umm Khulthum, including the 1964 hit *Inta Omri* 'You Are My Life'.

MUSICAL TERM

Tarab: A genre of Arabic music that both evokes and refers to heightened emotionality, often translated as "enchantment".

