Feb. 29 Talk at Cal Poly to Focus on Popular Music and the Arab Spring

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Ethnomusicologist Laith Ulaby will discuss the role of popular music in the Arab uprisings of 2011 from 1:10 to 3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 29, in Cal Poly’s Chumash Auditorium in the University Union.

Ulaby’s talk, “Tears in Tahrir: Popular Music and the Arab Spring,” will have a particular focus on the sensational story of pop musician Tamer Hosny, known as the King of Egyptian Pop, and the unlikely role of the Egyptian heavy metal scene in the Tahrir Square protests.

Ulaby will explain how Hosny publicly supported the regime of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and had to be rescued by the military when he tried to appear at Tahrir Square. Hosny has since been working tirelessly to resuscitate his career by releasing songs and appearing in television roles that cast him as a supporter of the Arab Spring.

Ulaby will also discuss the Egyptian heavy metal scene, which had been suppressed in 1997 but recovered to become a key node for the organizing that created the backbone of the Tahrir Square protests.

Ulaby is a Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow on the U.S.-Muslim Engagement Initiative and an adjunct lecturer at the Georgetown Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

The presentation is free. It is sponsored by Cal Poly’s College of Liberal Arts and History Department. For more information, call 756-2670.

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