

Strings for the soul

By Athoob A Al-Shuaibi

Back in the eighth or ninth century, a famous musician called Ziryab taught concubines to play the oud (lute) and sing in Andalusia. This historical fact was narrated exaggeratedly through Orientalist paintings, in addition to movies and Arab soap operas that contributed in promoting the link between obscenity and the oud. Nowadays, parents fall in the contradiction trap between allowing their children to enjoy their music hobby and limiting their talents within school and family, so the rest of the society won't get a wrong idea about them.

In the Kuwaiti society, a person who plays the guitar, violin or the piano is considered as classy, while oud players are looked down upon. Girls in particular who play the oud in Kuwait are more likely to get bullied because of their passion for this musical instrument. Oud is like any other stringed instrument; however, such negative stereotypes have been chasing its reputation for hundreds of years.

Non-profit organizations such as Bayt Lothan, LOYAC and the Ministry of Education in Kuwait encourage students to practice and develop their musical talent at all academic levels. In spite of this, the "shameful" outlook hasn't changed much in our community.

Moreover, many music instrument shops in Kuwait are stuffy with cigarette smoke and bad ventilation. They ignore the importance of creating a pleasant buying experience worthy of music as a respected art. For this reason, a girl in Kuwait might find it uncomfortable to be in these shops unless she's accompanied by somebody, as she might be at the receiving end of piercing gazes from strangers eyeing her with suspicion.

