

AGENDA
LEBANON

FILM

'8 1/2'

Metropolis Cinema-Sofel,

Achrachfeh

April 9, 8 pm

+961 3 533 710

Federico Fellini's legendary, semi-autobiographical motion picture stars Marcello Mastroianni as a famous Italian director who is lacking inspiration. Showing as part of the Fellini retrospective.

MUSIC

Irtijal

Masrah Beirut,

Ain al-Mreisseh

April 9, 8:30pm

www.irtijal.org

The final night of Beirut's experimental music festival will see carte blanche given to Dutch/British punk icons The EX. Luminaries such as Andy Moor, Katrin Bornefeld, Terry Hessels and other special guests will take the stage.

Ricky Ford

MOJO Club,

Hamra Street

Through April 16

+961 707 96279;

+961 3 443 033

An evening of soulful American jazz with veteran tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, accompanied by George Kassiss (piano), Samer Saghir (drums) and Makram Aboulhoun (bass).

Kathryn Farmer

Jazz Lounge,

Ain al-Mreisseh

Until April 11

+961 1 367 299

The New York vocalist and pianist, who has worked with such jazz luminaries as Phil Wilson, Dickie Dee, Melvin

Keeping in touch with Saeed Freiha

'Days Since His Absence' follows Ilham Freiha's journey in her father's venerable footsteps

Mirella Hodeib
Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: Ilham Freiha's first book "Days Since His Absence" is not merely a daughter's tribute to her father; it is the journey of an assiduous woman who succeeded in overcoming a welter of grievances and obstacles.

"My journey started the day my father passed away on March 11, 1978," the director general of publishing house Dar As-Sayyad writes in the introduction to her Arabic-language book.

When pioneering Lebanese journalist Saeed Freiha passed away during a visit to Damascus in 1978, his daughter Ilham was forced to take over Dar As-Sayyad at a time when the country was plunged in a bloody civil war.

To this day, she has kept it alive and thriving.

Established in 1943, Dar As-Sayyad is one of the Middle East's oldest and largest publishing houses.

Al-Anwar newspaper, together with magazines such as political publication *As-Sayyad* and entertainment-based *Al-Shabaka*, numbers among the house's 10 publications.

The 236 page "Days Since His Absence," beautifully illustrated with works from various Lebanese painters, is a collection of the writings that Freiha has published in *Al-Anwar* under the pen name "Nadera al-Saeed."

"I never had the courage to



sign them with my real name," she writes.

However Freiha emphasizes

that she was never frightened by the act of writing. "I grew up in a home where writing is a



Ilham Freiha

"Days Since His Absence"

habit and a ritual," she told *The Daily Star*.

"Days Since His Absence" is a diary kept by Freiha to inform her late father about the details of what is happening in the domestic and public realms.

Freiha blasts confessionalism in Lebanon, provides tips for improving the country's tourism sector, praises the

achievements of Lebanon's Interior Minister Ziyad Baroud, and tackles more intimate issues such as her toothache and her love for the United Arab Emirates.

The author writes that all through the years she had been driven by a single motto: "No one has the right to destroy Saeed Freiha's legacy ... not a state, not a group, not a party, not a person."

Freiha recalls that she mourned the death of her father for six consecutive months until she decided not to have him die twice.

"I took it upon myself to safeguard his name, literature, heritage, humanity, generosity, and chivalry," she writes. "This is how all through the 33 years he left us, I considered he never died."

The charismatic Freiha told *The Daily Star* that her father would be "undoubtedly happy" with her book.

Freiha adds that her father's "concise and straight-to-the-point" writing style dominates the book as well as all of her other writings.

"I try to keep my sentences short and direct just like my father did," she explains.

"Saeed Freiha shaped a style of his own when he shunned away from long and complicated structures."

The author confesses that writing alleviated her grief when she lost her father: "[French novelist Gustave] Flaubert once said 'read to live'; I say 'write to live.'"

She declares the act of writing as "the best remedy against grief and solitude."

"When you write you find yourself in a world you have created," Freiha explains, "where the most intense emotions are experienced."

In one of the book's most moving passages Freiha describes how she was forced to put on a mask during the three decades she ran Dar As-Sayyad.

"After those long years and after living through the times of peace and war," she writes, "I realized I conveyed an image, which quite contradicts my character and nature."

Freiha adds that the harsh conditions and challenges of her line of work have given her a "severe and strict image," which is contrary to her real nature.

"Can femininity, tears and surrender constitute effective weapons against the attempts of militias to take control of the publishing house?" she asks.

Freiha explains how she came to take the "conscious decision" to adopt such a role due to the situation during the chaotic years of the Civil War. However the author stressed that the austere image she assumed was never tied to a domineering attitude.

"It's crucial for a woman never to sacrifice her femininity in order to acquire power or authority," Freiha says.

The author acknowledges that routes are always more difficult for women, but urges them to "explore and exploit their inner strength."

REVIEW

Musicians take a physical approach to composition at Irtijal

Matthew Mosley

Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: Rough, concrete floors, white walls and big, open spaces: Gallery-owners worldwide have a remarkably similar approach to interior design. The idea, presumably, is that any-

plangent to remain bearable.

Later, Hautzinger created rhythm by pressing repeatedly upon the keys of his instrument. The quiet clicking that ensued resembled the naturally occurring rhythms that cause Bjork to launch into song in Lars von Trier's "Dancer in the Dark."

At times, Weninger's move-

horned into the modest space.

Yassin began by drawing his bow across metal bowls placed atop the body of his instrument, creating more yet high-pitched squeaks. Doerner created breathy sounds with his trumpet, drawing the end back and forth across a microphone to give a kind of Doppler effect.

