

East of the River

## **Hamsa**

Nina Stern: Winds

Daphna Mor: Voice and Winds

Kane Mathis: Oud

Jesse Kotanksy: Violin

Shane Shanahan: Percussion

**East of the River** presents a new program, *HAMSA*, featuring music from the geographic regions of Andalusia, North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and the Sephardic Diaspora. Based on music using the melodic modal system referred to as the *Maqam*, this program draws its listeners to the distinct beauty of and similarities between liturgical, folk, and Ottoman courtly music.

### Program:

Ein Ke'eloheinu

Sephardic Liturgical  
Instrumental interlude by Daphna Mor

Yfat Einaiim  
Rast Sirto.  
Tsur mishelo. / Adon Haslichot.

Moroccan song  
Ottoman Dance  
Trad sephardic/ Moroccan Liturgical

Kürdi Hafifi

Solakzade  
From the manuscript of Prince Demetrius Cantemir, ca, 1700  
Transcription: Prof. Walter Zev Feldman

Hamsa.

Shane Shanahan

Ana Mani Fiyash/ Sha'ar peach Dodi  
Ya Shochen  
Anque le di la mano  
Rast Ouyn Havasl

Trad moroccan/ Moroccan Liturgical  
Moroccan Liturgical  
Traditional Sephardic.  
Ottoman Dance Air.

*Intermission:*

Achot Katana Büyük Zincir	Moroccan Liturgical Gazi Giray Han From the manuscript of Prince Demetrius Cantemir, ca, 1700 Transcription: Prof. Walter Zev Feldman
Hüseyni Sirto	Ottoman Dance
Adio Querida	Sepharadic ballad
Anenu. Si Verias	Moroccan Liturgical Trad. Sepharadic
Ija mia:	Trad Sephardic Instrumental interlude by Kane Mathis

#### Program Notes:

To a large degree, context defines many of the main principles at play in any piece of music. This program contains music from Turkey to Morocco which was intended for a wide variety of contexts from dance to liturgy. Several of the pieces are dedicated to the Liturgical tradition. Yfat Einaiim, performed instrumentally, is a slow lyrical piece set to poetry by Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, a Spanish Jewish physician, poet, and philosopher of the 11th century. The lyrics, which describe a beautiful woman, acts as a metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel. Similarly the song Lecha Dodi is set to poetry by Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz a 16th century poet who was born in Salonica and moved Safed, an ancient city in Israel known for Jewish mysticism. The poetry uses a common wedding metaphor for reunion with God, "Let's go, my beloved, to meet the bride, and let us welcome the presence of the Sabbath". The same piece of text may be set to many different melodies. The melody used for this text in this case is an uptempo dance-like popular Moroccan song Ana Mani Fiyash. As in many other traditions, it is common for the Moroccan and Sephardi Jews to connect sacred texts with popular melodies. Another example of this technique is the setting of the text of Tzur Mishelo, which is sung after meals in gratitude, set here to the famous melody of the Sephardi song Los Billbilicos.

The program also contains pieces from the Ottoman court tradition. This tradition maintained a very high level of scholarship with regards to art as many flourishing empires did. Ottoman music forms are generally defined by three factors: modal content,

rhythmic accent scheme, and sequence of sections. Many pieces contain idiomatic relationships between rhythm and form, for example many dance airs are through composed while many preludes or pesrevs composed in longer usul, or rhythm, contain a ritornello. The Büyük Zincir is a compound rhythm. The 60 beat measure is made up of 5 separate constituent beats that make a total of 60 beats per measure. The phrasing of Ottoman music is strongly tied to the accent scheme of each piece and the way the melody aligns or diverges from the accent scheme of the Usul constitutes one of the main techniques for creating tension in a piece.

Rounding out the program are two songs dedicated to the Jewish High Holidays. *Ahot Katana* associated with Rosh Hashana, the New Year, and *Anenu*, a plea to God to answer the people's prayers for forgiveness on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. They are paired with Sacred Sephardi song. While the liturgical and sacred poetry was written in Hebrew, the three secular pieces presented are in Judaeo-Spanish, a romance language derived from old Spanish also known as Ladino. These include *Hija Mia* the lyrical content of which is a lively debate between a daughter and her mother as the former refuses her mother's heavy handed attempt at matchmaking.

The unifying principal of the program is the use of a modal system known as Makam in most parts of the near east and north Africa, Dastgâh in the Persian tradition, and Mugam in the Azeri tradition. Makam can be characterized as the main organizing principle in near eastern music. Makams are sometimes errantly considered as scales but in practice a given Makam comes with sets of tendencies beyond the pitches used. Makam is essentially a set of composition rules that dictate pitch material, registral development, cadence points, and typical areas of modulation. These rules are equally adhered to in both improvisation and composition. The *taksim* is an improvised form that may take place in the context of a piece as a solo. Taksim may also precede a piece to introduce the makam, modulate between makams, or to orient the singer to the first pitch of the piece in cases where the voice enters with instruments at the start of a piece. While in the past, hundreds of separate Makams were identified there are only about one hundred in common use. The reason for this is due, in part, to a consolidation of similar Makams into a new composite Makam that would then express the tendencies of the constituent Makams. Names of Makams also give clues about their origins, deriving from names of regions, such as in Makams Hicaz, Ussak, and Isfahan and names of ethnicities, such as in Makams Kurdi and Ajam. (Kane Mathis and Daphna Mor )

## Translations:

### **En K'eloheinu/ There is none like our god**

There is none like our God, there is none like our Lord, There is none like our King,  
there is none like our Savior.

Who is like our God, who is like our Lord, Who is like our King, who is like our Savior.

### **Tsur Mishelo Achalnu/ Our rock, whose food we have eaten**

Anonymous. Circa 14th century.

The Lord, our Rock, whose food we have eaten, let us bless Him  
We are satiated and there is still food left over, as God has instructed  
He nourishes His world, our Shepherd, our Father  
We have eaten of His bread and drunk from His wine  
Therefore we will thank Him and speak His praise  
We said and respond: there is no one holy like our Lord

### **Adon Haslichot/ Master of forgiveness**

*Anonymus.*

Master of forgiveness, examiner of hearts,  
revealer of depths, speaker of justice.

We have sinned before You, have mercy upon us.

### **Achot Ketana/ Little Sister**

#### **R. Abraham Hazan Girundi Spain, 13th century**

The little sister - her prayers she prepares and proclaims her praises. O God, please, heal  
now her ailments. *Let the year and its curses conclude.*

With pleasant words she calls upon You, and with song and raises, for such befits You.  
Why do you avert Your eyes? Look! Enemies devour her heritage! *Let the year and its  
curses conclude.*

When will You raise up Your daughter from the pit; and from the dungeon, [will You] break her yoke? May You act wondrously when You go forth like a hero, to bring an end and conclusion to her ailments. *Let the year and its curses conclude!*

*May this year and its blessings begin.*

### **Lecha Dodi/ Let's go, my beloved**

Poetry: Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, 16th century. Salonika/Safed.

Let's go, my beloved, to meet the bride,  
and let us welcome the presence of *the Sabbath*

"Observe" and "recall" in a single utterance,  
We were made to hear by the unified God

God is one and God's Name is one,  
In fame and splendor and praiseful song.

### **Anenu/ Answer us**

*Anonymus.*

Answer us, God of Abraham, answer us.

Answer us, fear of Isaac, answer us.

Answer us, powerful one of Jacob, answer us.

Answer us, shield of David, answer us.

Answer us, the one who answers in times of heavenly favor, answer us.

Answer us, the one who answers in times of trouble, answer us.

Answer us, the one who answers in times of mercy, answer us.

Answer us, God of the heavenly chariot, answer us.

Answer us, merciful and full of grace, answer us.

### **Adio Querida / Farewell my beloved.**

anonymus

When your mother delivered you  
and brought you to the world  
she did not give you a heart

to love with....

Goodbye,  
goodbye beloved,  
I don't want to live  
You made my life miserable.

I'll go look for another love,  
knock on other ports  
in hope there is a true hope,  
because for me you are dead.

**Hija Mia/ My daughter**  
anonymous

My daughter, My dearest one  
I shall give you a handsome man.  
no, my mom, I do not want him.  
It does not impress me that he is handsome,  
No, I don't want him.

My daughter, My dearest one  
I shall give you a tall man.  
no, my mom, I do not want him.  
He is tall , I can not reach him,  
No, I don't want him.

My daughter, My dearest one  
I shall give you a short man  
no, my mom, I do not want him.  
with a short one i have to bend,  
No, I don't want him.

My daughter, My dearest one  
I shall give you a drunkard.  
Yes , my mom, he is the one I desire!  
With the drunkard I shall marry,  
Yes , my mom, he is the one I desire!

The **Hamsa**, is a palm-shaped amulet popular throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Depicting the open right hand, an image recognized and used as a sign of protection throughout history, the Hamsa is believed to provide defense against the evil eye.

