

ARABESK

*This event is a part of the “Three Hundred Years of Turkish Music” Concert Series



directed by **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol**, *voice*

Eylem Başaldı, *violin* / **Theodoulos Vakanas**, *violin*

Dimitris Mikelis, *ud* / **Bilgehan Tuncer**, *guitar* / **Cem Konuk**, *bass*

Cem Mutlu, *percussion* / **Karim Nagi Mohammed**, *percussion*

Club Passim, Harvard Square, Monday, April 19, 2004, 8:00 pm

Arabesk

Arabesk literally means "made or done in the Arabic fashion". However in Turkey, "Arabesk" specifically refers to a type of popular music, a hybrid genre which sprang up at the outskirts of large Turkish cities at the end of the 1960s. It has in it elements of Turkish folk, art and even sacred music with strong influences of Arabic popular music from the 50s and 60s..

From a sociological point of view, Arabesk began with migration. During the 1950s, large numbers of poor people began relocating from the rural areas of eastern and central Anatolia to urban areas in the western region of Turkey in pursuit of a better life. In the process, the emotional and physical worlds of these migrants changed so rapidly that their original identities were no longer adequate to cope with the new conditions they faced. Over the course of the following two decades, a time of enormous political and economic turmoil for the whole of Turkey, the migrants were forced to create for themselves a new identity. This new identity associated itself with the style of music that was eventually called Arabesk.

The governing elite of the Turkish Republic, which defined Turkish values in terms of Western cultural models, saw Arabesk as a threat to its social agenda and during most of the 1970s and 80s banned it from radio and television. Despite these measures, stars like Orhan Gencebay brought Arabesk to a greater popularity than any other music in Turkey, a position which it still holds. The music of this period symbolized a protest against a powerful nationalist state by immigrants who had been exiled from their cultural roots. With these songs, they minimized the cultural and social differences among them, and created a lifestyle and an identity which enabled them to survive in cities where they were not yet fully integrated.

Elements of the new musical style can be traced to Arabic popular music and to certain regional singing styles of the Anatolian countryside, as well as to western rock and roll. In some artists, such as Orhan Gencebay, the influence of classical Turkish *makam* music can be heard. The lyrics of the songs echo the sufi traditions of the countryside. The immigrants brought to the city their traditions and these distinctive elements give Turkish Arabesk much of its originality. God is mentioned in these songs in many different ways, at times with a rebellious quality, and at times with an acceptance that God brings both blessings and suffering and that our destinies are in His hands.

With the lifting of the government ban in the 1980s, Arabesk quickly became more commercialized and record companies began creating a succession of overnight pop stars. The Classic Arabesk style which this concert aims to portray is now a thing of the past in Turkey. The songs selected for this program represent pre-1980 Arabesk. The one original song here is an attempt by Serap Kantarcı and me to capture the original spirit of Arabesk from a contemporary point of view.

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

PROGRAM

Introduction by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol
director of the “*Three Hundred Years of Turkish Music*” concert series

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- I. Batsın Bu Dünya*** Orhan Gencebay (b. 1944)
(Let this crazy world go down in flames)
- II. Arap Saçı*** Erkin Koray (b. 1941)
(The chaos in me)
- III. Ölürsen Kabrime Gelme*** İbrahim Tatlıses (b. 1952)
(Don't ever let me see your face again, not even by my grave)
- IV. Bir Teselli Ver*** Orhan Gencebay
(Comfort me, *oh Lord*)
- V. Dertler Benim Olsun*** Orhan Gencebay
(Save all troubles for me)

* * * *intermission* * * *

- VI. Mahkum*** Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol (b. 1974)
(Condemned) lyrics by Serap Kantarcı and Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol
- VII. Bir Kulunu Çok Sevdim*** İbrahim Tatlıses
(Immortal love)
- VIII. Neden Saçların Beyazlanmış*** Adnan Şenses (b. 1935)
(Why So gloomy my friend?)
- IX. Fesupanallah*** Erkin Koray
(For God's sake!)

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translations by Cem Mutlu and Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

Acknowledgements

MANY THANKS to Robert Labaree for his collaboration in the creation of this concert and the whole series. I would also like to thank Serap Kantarcı, without whom I could never have found the energy and power to do this concert. Her endless encouragement and professional skills will never be forgotten.

The Musicians

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol (*voice*) is continuing his studies in composition as a Doctor of Musical Arts student at the New England Conservatory. Sanlıkol has performed with Jazz stars such as Tiger Okoshi and Horacio “El Negro” Hernandez at International Music Festivals and the Blue Note Jazz club in New York.

Dimitris Mikelis (*ud*) is a graduate of Berklee College of Music in Jazz piano.

Eylem Başaldı (*violin*) is a graduate student in Contemporary Improvisation at NEC. She teaches violin and plays with Arabic and klezmer groups in the Boston area.

Theodoulos Vakanas (*violin*) is a graduate of Berklee College of Music in violin and he is currently a Master’s Degree student at the New England Conservatory.

Bilgehan Tuncer (*guitar*) has a degree in Chemical Engineering and is a graduate of Berklee College of Music in guitar. He has performed with such stars as Tarkan.

Cem Konuk (*bass*) is continuing his studies as a bass player at Berklee College of Music.

Cem Mutlu (*percussion*) performs jazz percussion and a variety of world musics with groups in the Boston area.

Karim Nagi Mohammed (*percussion*) Karim teaches Arabic Music at the New England Conservatory. Karim also produces events including the famous Arabesque Mondays at Club Passim.

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Next Fall the *Three Hundred Years of Turkish Music Concert Series* will continue with: *The second Greek & Turkish Holy Days/Sacred Music Celebration*, *Anadolu Rock*, Sanlıkol’s *New Ottoman Music Project*, and many more...

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