

MIT Turkish Student Association and DÜNYA presents

WISDOM AND TURKISH HUMOR

Karagöz, Nasreddin Hoca, Keloğlan

Practical wisdom, satire and Sufi philosophy in three comic archetypes from Turkey



directed by **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol**, *voice, ud, saz, cura*

Cem Mutlu, *voice/percussion* **Beth Bahia Cohen**, *violin/kabak kemane*

Robert Labaree, *voice/çeng* **Engin Günaydın**, *voice/percussion*

Samuel Kunstler, *cello* **Jeffrey Goldberg**, *piano* **Nektarios Antoniou**, *voice*

MAVI DANCE: Pınar Zengingönül, Aşlı Baykal, Ayşegül Yönet, Celil Bayram, Giorgi Shanidze, Gina De Freitas, F. Hakan Koklu, Johara, Mustafa Çorbacı, Nurşin Ata, Okan Ekinay, Özlem Dayıoğlu, Sarbani Hazra, Söngül İpekçi, Yasie Saadat, and Selim Ünlü (guest), Krysia Bereday Burnham (narrator)

PALS Children's Chorus, **Johanna Hill Simpson**, *conductor*

MIT Big Kresge Auditorium, Saturday, April 1, 2006 8:00 pm

Humor, Wisdom and Sufism in Turkey: Karagöz, Nasreddin Hoca and Keloğlan.

The musical journey of this program moves from the ‘traditional’ to the ‘original’, making its way, at the same time, from city to town to village. In **Part I** of the concert, the *Dünya* ensemble and *Mavi Dance* will present the traditional music and characters of the Istanbul shadow puppet theater ‘Karagöz and Hacivat’. The traditional selections represented in this section will be performed with an ensemble that will bear the city identity of Karagöz. In **Part II** we will move from city to town with a half composed, half improvised musical theatre piece based on a story about the famous folkloric character Nasreddin Hoca which will include themes and songs from the Bektasi Sufi tradition. In **Part III** the concert will close with the 60-piece *PALS* Children’s Chorus and the *Dünya* ensemble performing an original composition by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol about the foolish Keloğlan, the poor village “bald boy”. This composition will combine a trio of Turkish traditional instruments with a Western piano trio.

The folkloric characters in all three parts of the program are comic, but they also share strong connections to traditions of Turkish folk wisdom which at times overlap with both conventional religion and secular philosophy. For this reason, the word “wisdom” appears in our title, conjuring up the vast and varied repertoires of stories, songs and sayings in all languages which record the accumulated experience of human beings with the problems of life. It is not uncommon for this wisdom literature to exhibit qualities of irony or even absurdity, often embodied in characters who are laughable. In Turkish culture, the storehouse of the wisdom tradition, from which tonight’s examples are drawn, show the influences of Sufism, the non-conventional and at times heterodox tradition of wisdom which has run parallel to mainstream Islamic beliefs based on Koran, mosque and mullah. In each of the stories on tonight’s program, the name of God is evoked, but in each human beings find their own way to greater understanding through their powers of skepticism and perseverance. In each case, satire and laughter is a vehicle for arriving at the truth.

KARAGÖZ



The Karagöz shadow puppet theater, in which two-dimensional figures were manipulated by a puppeteer on a screen, had its beginnings as early as the 14th century in Egypt, but achieved an important place throughout the Ottoman Empire during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, remnants of this tradition can be found in Greece, Turkey, Egypt and as far east as Malaysia and Indonesia. The Karagöz puppet theater stage is separated from the audience by a frame holding a white translucent screen. A single puppeteer

stands behind the screen, holding the puppets against it with rods, with the light behind him. The figures are flat, clean-cut silhouettes in color and are made of animal hide.

The performance and the characters of this shadow theater fare inseparable from the social context of the Ottoman Empire and the rich multiethnic culture of Istanbul. A Karagöz play is made up of stereotypical characters drawn from Istanbul street life, each with its own dress, manner of speech, and music. Each of these types—rich, poor, urban, rural, Turk, Arab and European—has its moment in the limelight when a skillful puppeteer makes it the star, but also the object of satire.

It is doubtful whether the main characters, Karagöz and Hacivat ever existed. Karagöz (literally ‘black eye’) is completely bald and wears an enormous turban which, when knocked off, suddenly exposes his bald head. This always provokes laughter. In dialogue sections, comedic situations result when Hacivat’s pompous language full of poetry is played off against Karagöz’ common street language, contrasting Hacivat’s formal knowledge and Karagöz’ common sense and occasional lack of understanding.

Each shadow play has three parts: *Mukaddime* (prologue), *Muhavere* (dialogue) and *Fasıl* (main plot), which concludes with a brief finale. Tonight’s performance is modeled mainly on the succession of stock characters found in the traditional shadow play’s *fasıl* section. Preceding the prologue an introductory picture or a screen ornament called *göstermelik* is pinned to the screen and remains there while introductory music is played. This is sometimes an abstract figure or a picture related to the play. In tonight’s presentation, the instrumental *Düyek Peşrev* will represent the *göstermelik* section.

In the prologue, a song is delivered by Hacivat (tonight: *On kere demedim mi sana*). Then Hacivat introduces himself by reciting a *gazel* (a form of elevated classical Ottoman poetry). Traditionally, he also would have offered a prayer to God, ending with a prayer for the sultan. To the audience he says that what is to follow is not just a play but mirrors faithfully the world we live in and has much to teach us.

NASREDDİN HOCA



Hundreds of anecdotes about Nasreddin Hoca are known to exist. His title, Hoca (teacher or scholar), suggests that he is somehow the voice of reason, though at the same time he can appear (like Keloğlan) foolish or simple. His stories often question authority and expose hypocrisy. In tonight's program, one of the more famous anecdotes of Nasreddin Hoca will be presented in the form of improvisational theatre, with musical pieces drawn from classical, folk and Sufi sources.

KELOĞLAN



Keloğlan is always described as a poor boy and, like Karagöz, he is bald. Almost everyone that comes in contact with this naive boy with a good heart thinks that they can swindle him, but in the end things always go his way, making him a symbol of success in the face of adversity. The musical composition in tonight's program is based on an original reworking by Serap Kantarcı Sanlıkol of a traditional Keloğlan story. The libretto concludes with a verse from the famous Sufi poet Yunus Emre.

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PROGRAM

Part I

KARAGÖZ: WISDOM from the City

Düyek Peşrev (instrumental prelude)

music: anonymous (ca. 1650)



HACİVAD (the man of Istanbul) (music only)

music: anonymous

*On kerre demedim mi sana, sevme dokuz yar
Sekizde safa, yedide vefa, olmaya zinhar...*

Didn't I tell you ten times not to love nine?
If in eight there is delight, then by all means be
faithful in seven....



ÇELEBİ and ZENNE (the upper middle class gentlemen and lady from Istanbul): On a rainy day a lady and a gentlemen see each other during a walk to *Üsküdar*, a neighborhood in Istanbul. Throughout the song she tries to get the gentlemen interested. This dance has influences from Western dance styles such as tango and jazz.

Choreography: Gina De Freitas, Mustafa Çorbacı

music: anonymous

*Üsküdar'a gideriken aldı da bir yağmur
Katibimin setresi uzun eteği çamur*

On the way to Üsküdar it started raining
My gentleman's jacket is long so it touches the mud



ÇİNGENE (the Gypsy): A gypsy woman dances to a song in a typical 9/8 rhythmic pattern common to many Turkish gypsy numbers. Her steps are based on Turkish gypsy folk and belly dance styles.

Choreography: Johara

music: anonymous

Çeribaşunun gelini, pek ince sarmış belini

The gypsy chief's daughter-in-law has a waist which is
delicately wrapped

Akşam bana neler etti boynuma atıp elini...

In the evening what does she do to me, placing her
hands on my neck?...



FRENK (the European): A couple number danced to the rhythm of Polka with steps featuring Russian, Polish polka figures. *Choreography:* Pınar Zengingönül, Mustafa Corbacı

music: a polka (anonymous)



SARHOŞ (the drunk): The drunk starts singing and counting the numerous drinks that he has had. He rejects the idea that he is drunk even though he counts 17 shot glasses of *mastika*, 8 cups of cognac, 6-7 cups of vermouth, and 50 glasses of wine among the drinks that he had. The dance features steps from Georgian and Turkish folk styles. *Choreography:* Celil Bayram

music: anonymous

*Onyedi tek düz mastika içtim, sekiz tanecik konyak
Altı yedi vermouth bira, elli tanecik şarap...*

17 shots of *rakı* I've had, 8 little ones of cognac
6 or 7 vermouths (or was it beers?), 50 or so little
wines...



KÖÇEK (the young male entertainer): This dance showcases male characters dancing. This particular dance uses wooden spoons. The *köçek* was typically a very handsome young male *rakkas*, "dancer," usually dressed in feminine attire, employed as an entertainer. The dance's spoon style is based on *Silifke* region dances. The steps are similar to those used in that region as well as Central Anatolia. *Choreography:* Mavi Dance *Dancers:* Aslı Baykal, Ayşegül Yönet, Gina De Freitas, Nursin Ata, Özlem Dayıoğlu

music: opening theme from *Gerdaniye Köçekçeler*

İsmail Dede Efendi (1778-1846)



ÇERKEZ (the Circassian): This dance depicts a Caucasian couple dancing with each other. Men's dancing from this region often incorporates sharp, fast figures as opposed to women's floating and graceful moves. This choreography is mainly influenced by Georgian style. *Choreography:* Giorgi Shanidze *Dancers:* Giorgi Shanidze, Yasie Saadat

music: *Şeyh Şamil* (anonymous)



YAHUDİ (the Jew): The young Jewish man goes to Palace grounds through Balat gate. He sees Jewish women working on their bundles (*bohça*) and getting ready to sell their merchandise. This was a widespread marketing system and the majority of these peddlers known as *bohçacı* were Jewish or Armenian. Searching for his lover, the young man asks the women if they have seen her. He laments the fact that she's seen him but he hasn't seen her. The mother and the sister try to hide the young girl who is interested in him but she manages to run away and meet him. The hand moves in the dance shows the influences of Spain, the origin of Sephardic Jews. The style however is softer than today's Flamenco. *Choreography:* Pınar Zengingönül

Dancers: Ayşegül Yönet, Nurşin Ata, Okan Ekinay, Özlem Dayıoğlu

music: anonymous

*Balat kapusundan yirdim iceri
Poliçeler oturmus iki keçeli...*

I entered the city from the Balat gate
and saw the police sitting with their coats...



ZEYBEK (the Zeybek, the Aegean hero): Colorfully dressed male dancers, called “zeybek” symbolize the courage, and heroism. These dances are done solo, therefore holding hands patterns and embracing movements are not part of these dances. The eagle is a popular symbol in these dances. In old Anatolian civilizations, especially in Greek culture, the eagle represented the sun, light and sky. It was considered sacred and identified with Zeus because of its longevity, its flying altitude and the ability to fall like a thunderbolt on its prey. *Choreography:* Okan Ekinay

*Sarı zeybek şu dağlarda yaslanır
Yağmur yağar silahları ıslanır*

music: anonymous
The heroic Zeybek is sorrowful on the mountains
When it rains his weapons get wet



LAZ (Anatolian Black Sea character): The Black Sea dance symbolises the wild waves of the Black Sea and the flashing and fluttering of the prized “hamsi” (anchovy) fish after it has been caught by fishermen. *Choreography:* Mustafa Çorbacı
Dancers: Ayşegül Yönet, Mustafa Çorbacı, Özlem Dayıoğlu, Nurşin Ata, Pınar Zengingönül

*Yavuz geliyor Yavuz da denizi yara yara
Kız ben seni alacağım, başına vura vura...*

music: anonymous
The ship “Yavuz” is coming, cutting through the waves,
Girl, I’m going to get you...

Part II

NASREDDİN HOCA: Wisdom from the Town

TİMUR’UN FİLLERİ (Timur’s Elephants)

Music selected and arranged by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol, Robert Labaree and Cem Mutlu
Choreography: Mavi Dance

Scene 1: Village people are going through their daily life. There are people shopping, walking, and dancing in the village center. This village owns an elephant given to them as a gift by *Timurlenk* (Tamerlane, the Mongol conqueror). Although they all seem to like the animal, villagers are becoming concerned because of the elephant’s eating habits.

music: *Tokat Havası* (anonymous)

Scene 2: Nasreddin Hoca calls for a meeting in the village square as complaints arise from the villagers about the elephant. They all agree that they need to speak to Timur about the problem.

music: anonymous Text: Pir Sultan Abdal (16th c.)

*Gelin canlar bir olalım
Yezid’e* hamle kılalım*

Come together everybody, let’s unite
and take action against this cruel man

(**Yezid:* In the theology of Shi’a Islam, Yezid is the name of the Umayyad caliph who is held responsible for the murder of the Caliph Ali’s two sons. The usage of his name after his lifetime applied to cruel rulers)

additional instrumental music: *Bayati Peşrev* Neyzen Emin Dede (b. 1883-d. 1945)

Scene 3: Finally a selected group of villagers led by Nasreddin Hoca start their walk to see Timur.

music: *Tokat Havası* (anonymous)

Scene 4: Hoca arrives at the tent and goes up to Timur. As he starts talking to Timur about the elephant, he suddenly realizes that all villagers who were walking with him have disappeared. He gets very angry so instead of complaining about the elephant he asks for another one.

*Fakirin geldi divane / Elinde gül dane dane
Yaranbaşı izin kime
İç ağam afiyet olsun / Sohbetiniz kutlu olsun...*

music: Bektasi sufi devotional song (anonymous)
A poor man came to the court / a small rose in his hand
The guard says, “Who wishes an audience?”
“Oh sir, good health to you/In your audience, I wish you well”...

Part III
KELOĞLAN: Wisdom from the Village

THE BALD BOY and His Magic Lute

Music composed by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol Choreography: Johanna Hill Simpson
Story conceived by Serap Kantarcı Sanlıkol, adapted by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol
edited by Robert Labaree and Johanna Hill Simpson
PALS Children's Chorus conducted by Johanna Hill Simpson
Mother: Nina Berin Stein *Keloğlan:* Jake Wilder-Smith
Pasha: Niki von Krusenstiern *Donkey:* Nahshon Rosenfeld

Once upon a time there was a Bald Boy of Anatolia / Smart but poor, from Ikonian.
This Bald Boy of whom I speak, pure as water / Had for his family, an blind old mother
At his feet she knelt, her clothes but a thread / She cried out loud with sorrow and dread:
"My son, my child, of money we have none / Help us, my dear one, or we are done."

Thus walked this bald boy, this poor boy / To the town, seeking work and joy.
He spent that first night in a cave, deep in prayer / To the great God Almighty to take pity and care.
[Keloğlan prays]: *Allah'ım sen yardım et, kismetim bol olsun, yolum açık olsun*
[God help me, that I may have good fortune and my way clear.]

The sun dawned brightly and so the boy woke / To find a small lute, lying right by his cloak.
He walked from the cave and began to play / In the forest around him, he heard something say:
[the chorus of cicadas]: "Keep on singing, Patience is a virtue"

[a donkey enters, singing]:
"Ahhh, ahhh, what have I done? / A fool am I, my hope is gone.
This wretched ass who is weeping thus/Was once the son of the Pasha of Talas".
"My father's garden was put in my care / But I wasted it, now it's burned and bare.
'You're a donkey', father swore, 'you're not my son' / So this donkey appeared, the young boy was gone."

The heart of the bald boy would surely break / Seeing this donkey in such a sad state.
In the charred, barren garden he began to toil / He sang, he played, and he turned the soil.
With the help of his magic lute, he made / A paradise once more, of green and shade.
The Pasha rewarded this blind mother's son / This bald boy, this poor boy, this Keloğlan.

Bir gönül yaptınsa, If in a heart you sow a seed,
Er eteğin tuttunsa, If to a falling man you pay some heed,
Bir kez hayır ettinse, If you bring a blessing to one in need,
*Binde birse az değil One time in a thousand is plenty indeed**
(*Original Turkish text: by the 13th century Sufi poet Yunus Emre)

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program notes by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol, Robert Labaree and Pınar Zengingönül

Acknowledgments

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Our main sponsor for the 2006 Spring season

DÜNYA Org. is a non-profit, 501 (c) 3-tax exempt educational organization located in Boston, MA, USA. DÜNYA seeks to work with a wide range of cultural and religious organizations and musical groups but relies on no particular political, governmental or religious affiliation or support of any kind. Its goal is to present a contemporary view of a wide range of Turkish traditions, alone and in interaction with other world traditions, through performance, publication and other educational activities.

The Performers

THE MUSICIANS: **Mehmet Ali Sanlikol**, *voice, ud, saz, cura*, is a jazz pianist and composer and president/co-founder of the DÜNYA organization. **Cem Mutlu**, *voice, percussion*, plays jazz and a variety of world traditions with groups in the Boston area. **Beth Bahia Cohen**, *violin, kabak kemane*, plays and teaches bowed strings from Eastern Europe and the Middle East and performs with *Ziyá* and *Orkestra Keyif*. **Robert Labaree**, *voice, ceng*, is Chair of the NEC Music History Department and director of the NEC Intercultural Institute. **Engin Gunaydin**, *voice, percussion*, is a percussionist, a graduate in music of Bilkent University in Turkey, now studying at Berklee. **Johanna Hill Simpson**, *conductor*, has founded the PALS children's chorus 16 years ago at the W. H. Lincoln School in Brookline, MA. She has prepared children's chorus performances under the batons of Seiji Ozawa and Tan Dun. **Samuel Kunstler**, *cello*, is a student of Paul Katz at the New England Conservatory. He performs in France and in the U.S. **Jeffrey Goldberg**, *piano*, is an experienced educator, conductor, coach, eclectic pianist, soloist and an improviser who has appeared with the Darmstadt Contemporary Music Festival and Boston Symphony Orchestra. **Nektarios Antoniou**, *voice*, teaches chant at Holy Cross School of Theology and Founder of the *Schola Cantorum* at Hellenic College. He is a post graduate student at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.

MAVI DANCE was founded in the fall of 2002 by Pınar Zengingönül, an accomplished folk dancer and former company manager for Collage International Dance Ensemble. The group currently has 18 dancers and is looking forward to expanding in the near future. The Boston-based group is presently focusing on Turkish, Georgian, Russian, Balkan, Eastern European, Central Asian and Middle Eastern dance.

PALS Children's Chorus is considered one of the nation's premiere treble-voice ensembles. This after-school performing arts program trains typical children from one school community, transforming individuals into an ensemble of the highest caliber. Founded in 1990, PALS currently brings together 130 children ages 7 through 14 in three choral ensembles, and provides additional performing opportunities for high school students.

members of the chorus: Brooke Amendola, Nina Berinstein, Katie-Ai Bishop-Schaffer, Katharine Bohrs, Jennifer Cho, Becky Danning, Karly Duggan, Olivia Eschenbach-Smith, Lucy Florman, Sylvie Florman, Suzanne Freeman, Margit Gall, Leah Gellineau, Geoffrey Hodgkins, Kathryn Hodgkins, Laura Jacobs, Aleeq Kroshian, Garen Kroshian, Masha Kuo, Mariah Lojek, Callie McLaughlin, Elizabeth Meiklejohn, Emy Metzger, Frederick Metzger, Maya Midzik, Ava Moreno Michela, Moscufo Rikki, Leigh Mueller, Wilson Neal, Anna Nemetz, Saori Ohyama, Jacquelyn Pearlmutter, Kenin Qian, Regina Raphael, Rebecca Robinson, Sarah Robinson, Nahshon Rosenfeld, Hannah Shapiro, Asa Sutton, Eliana von Krusenstiern, Nikolai von Krusenstiern, Liliana Welch, Emma Wellbaum, Jake Wilder-Smith, Hadley Williams, Keith Williams, Kristen Windish