CHANTING THE WORD OF GOD: an Ottoman tableau of devotional music

with DÜNYA Ensemble
directed by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol, ney, ud, saz, cura, voice
Beth Bahia Cohen, bowed tanbur, violin Robert Labaree, çeng, voice
Bertram Lehmann, percussion George Lernis, percussion Elif Özdemir, voice
and
Richard Barrett, voice Vasil Grigoriadis, voice Samuel Herron, voice
Grammenos Karanos, voice Antonios Papathanasiou, voice
special guest Josh Jacobson, voice

Thursday, May 8, 2017 8:00 pm The Fenway Center at Northeastern University

Part I: Devotional songs in Greek, Hebrew and Turkish

Ney Taksim (improvisation)

Segah Peşrev by Neyzen Yusuf Paşa (1821-1884) & Yeheme Levavi Biroti - a piyut (liturgical poem)
Yeheme levavi biroti, tsari yiltosh einav negdi / Shinav yakharok gam yisaar, lehaftiz hamon gdudi / Khish aneni Noraot, Elohei ha’Tsvaot / Ad matai ketz plaot, esmakh yagel kvodi / Shama leshama samani, vegila avnei yesodi / Omar amar levala, eer nakhalat tzvi hodi / Khaletz nah eved shadood, yartiakh kesir vadood / Tsur be’Kha arutz gdood, le’Kha azamer beodi.

My heart fills with terror, when my enemy stares at me. Gnashing teeth, working up a storm to scatter my companions. Lord of hosts, I beg, respond swiftly with your awesome miracles. How long must I wait for them? How long for that joy and glory? My enemy destroyed me, till the foundations were laid bare and will bring down the glorious city that I long for. I cry out for redemption, a tormented slave, burning in his pain You are my strength; with you I can defeat an army, My song is for you as long as I live.

Christos Anesti Matia Mou (Greek paraliturgical song)
Christos anesti matia mou
Christ has risen in front of my eyes

Anonymous

Meta to techthinai se [Μετά το τεχθῆναι σε]
Doxastikon of Vespers for the feast of the Theotokos’ Entrance into the Temple, celebrated on November 21. This setting in plagal fourth mode was composed by Konstantinos Pringos (1892-1964), Archon Protospsaltes of the Great Church of Christ.

Μετά το τεχθῆναι σε, Θεόνυμφε Δέσποινα, παρεγένου ἐν Ναῷ Κυρίου, τοῦ ἀνατριφθῆς εἰς τὰ Ἁγια τῶν Ἁγίων, ώς ἤγιασμένη.

Since you are sanctified, O Lady, bride of God, having proceeded after your birth to the Temple, to be brought up in the Holy of Holies, verily, Gabriel was sent to you with food. And all the heavens were amazed at beholding the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. Wherefore, O pure and spotless Theotokos, glorified in heaven and upon earth, save our race.

Pencgah Nefes (devotional song)
Mushaf demek hatadır ol safhai cemale
Bu kitap bir sözdür fehmiden ehli hale

Text: Resmi, Music: Anonymous

It’s wrong to say that The Qur’an is the face of perfection
This book is a promise to those who try to comprehend

Part II: Mevlid-i Şerif
Recognized as a classic of Turkish literature, the Mevlid-i Şerif is a long poem commemorating the birth of the Prophet Mohammed written in Turkish in 1409 by Süleyman Çelebi (1351-1422). It is often chanted on special occasions such as the birth of a child or as a commemoration of the dead. Musically, mevlid is a solo form, improvised and unaccompanied, usually performed in conjunction with Koranic chant and
informal group singing of devotional songs (*ilahi*). Tonight one section (*bahr*) of the mevlid will be chanted.

**Tilavet: chanting of The Holy Koran** - Surah al-Kahf (The Cave)

> حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغَ مَعْرَبَ السُّمَّامِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عِينٍ حَمَمٍ وَوَجَدَ عَنْدَهَا قُوُّمًا وَإِنَّمَا يُتَّبَعُ قُوُّمَانِ نَجَّاً ذَٰلِكَ الْقُسَدُ إِنَّمَا يُتَّبَعُ 
>
>
> ... “Alexander!” We said, “you must either punish them or show them kindness.” He replied: “the wicked we shall surely punish. Then shall they return to their Lord and be sternly punished by Him. As for those that have faith and do good works, we shall bestow on them a rich reward and deal indulgently with them.”... “Alexander!” they said, “Gog and Magog are ravaging this land. Build a rampart between us, and we will pay you tribute.”

**Saba ilahi (devotional song)**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seyreleyip yandim mah cemalini</td>
<td>Seeing your beauty I have been burning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurkundak içinde yatar Muhammed</td>
<td>Muhammed lies in glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canım cananisn ya Muhammed</td>
<td>O Muhammed you’re my beloved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ter ter dudakların bilmem ne söyler</td>
<td>I don’t understand what your lips say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hulusi kalb ile Hakki zikreylär</td>
<td>Maybe with purity of heart remembers God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daha tıfıl iken ümmetin diler</td>
<td>Even early on wished for the good of people</td>
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**Çargah ilahi**

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<tr>
<td>Ben dervişim diyene bir ün idesim gelir</td>
<td>I praise those who call themselves dervish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seğirdi ben sesine varıp yitesim gelir</td>
<td>I want to go to them when I hear their calls</td>
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**Allah Adın Bahri of the Mevlid-i Şerif**

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<td>Allah! This name invoke we in beginning,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaciob oldu cümle espect her kula</td>
<td>For this is ever due from us, his servants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allah adın her kim ol evvel ana</td>
<td>Allah! The name which brings to all who call it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her işî âsan eder Allah ana</td>
<td>God's present aid, the weight of labour light'ning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allah adî olsa her işin önü</td>
<td>Did Allah's name begin each fresh endeavour,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hergiz ebter oymaya anın sonu</td>
<td>The end would ne'er fall short of full attainment.</td>
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*(Translation by F. Lyman MacCallum)*

**Allah Adın Bahri of the Mevlid-i Şerif**

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**Part III: Songs of the Alevi and the Bektaşi dervishes**

**Hicaz Nefes**

This song recorded by a Bektaşi woman in the Thracian part of Turkey is full of special vocabulary and references to secret practices.

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<td>Medet ya Alîm senden medet</td>
<td>Help Ali! I ask for your help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meşrebâdâr herkesâ yârân olur bektâşîler</td>
<td>It is in the nature of the Bektaşi to become companions of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimse bilmez sirlarım settar olur Bektâşîler</td>
<td>Nobody knows their secret, the Bektaşi become the forgivers of sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Öldüler ölmezden evvel bubdular hakkî' ayan</td>
<td>They died yet evidently found God before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zümreyi ifran içinde cân olur Bektâşîler</td>
<td>They become brothers within the wisdom of their fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dést-i pirden bir kadeh nûş ettiler bezmî-e elest</td>
<td>They drank a cup from the hand of their master of devotion to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daima sermez gezîl mezest olur Bektâşîler</td>
<td>The Bektaşi are always intoxicated and joyous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tâc-i rehi tiqbent ile mürside teslim olur</td>
<td>With a crown of truth and a belt of rope they submit to their Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ey Nesimi sinesi âryan olur Bektâşîler</td>
<td>O Nesimi Bektaşi hearts are purely visible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medet ya Alîm senden medet</td>
<td>Help Ali! I ask for your help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakk Dost Dost</td>
<td>O God, O Friend, Friend</td>
</tr>
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**Ud Taksim**

**Alis mono den ifiche**

This is an example of Islamic mysticism (Sufism) from Greece, a Bektaşi Sufi song in Greek from the island of Crete.

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<td>Alis mono den ifiche sti yis apothamenos</td>
<td>Ali was not left dead in the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s’ olo ton kosmo brihetai ma einaik koukolomenos</td>
<td>he’s everywhere in the world, but he’s concealed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alis den ipsiase vizi ti manas na bizazi</td>
<td>Ali didn’t take his mother’s breast to nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Muhammed perimene ya na tou kouventiazei</td>
<td>he was waiting for Muhammed, to converse with him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sun rises on the ground of Kerbela
the Shah’s children are there, and all the world knows of them
I’ll go sit on the ground of Kerbela
I’ll take pen and paper, and write of their suffering

Yesha El Hay Tohil
Text: Israel Najara, Music: Anonymous

Gel Gönül Sabreyle
Text: Pir Sultan Abdal (ca. 1480-1550), Music: Anonymous

Our colleague Noam Sender has adapted the poem by Najara to a melody used nowadays for a Bektashi nefes that follows the same syllabic structure. To the same melody, Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol has adapted the original Bektashi poem by Pir Sultan Abdal.

Yesha el hay tohil lev soled behil
Living God provide deliverance to an exulting heart
Ki od el hay eliyon yateh al tziyon
The Heavenly Living God will still favor Zion
Lev nishbar venidka pedut el hakeh
Broken and dismayed heart, expect heavenly redemption
Lev ashuk veratzutz od tashuv lasus
Weary and exhausted heart, you shall rejoice again!

Gel gönül sabreyle katlan bu cevre
O my heart, be patient and bear this pain
Elbet sen’ağlatan bir gün güldürür
Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day
Niceleri kondu göçtü bu hane
So many came to, and left this inn
Elbet sen’ağlatan bir gün güldürür
Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day

Çeng Taksim

Zikir in Three
This performance is modelled on zikir, the Sufi devotional practice of improvisational solo cantillation over repetitive group singing. Repeated phrases in different languages and musical idioms provide a framework for the three traditions to interact in a shared musical devotion. Over these zikir patterns soloists from each group improvise melodically on texts they have chosen in their own language.

chorus: repeated phrases in Arabic, Hebrew and Greek
Arabic: La ilahe illallah (There is no god but God)
Hebrew: Adonai hu hah-Elohim (The Lord is God)
Greek: Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)
soloists: selected texts in Turkish, Hebrew and Greek

Part V: Liturgical and Ceremonial Music

Vocal Taksim in Hebrew – Psalms 69:31, Jeremiah 16:19 and Judges 5:3
Ahal’la shem Elohim be’shir va’agdelenu be’toda
I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving
Adonay uzi uma’uzzi um’nusi beyom tzara
Oh Lord, my strength, and my stronghold, and my refuge in the day of affliction
Shim’u melachim ha’azinu rozenim anochi lashem anochi ashirah
Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; I will sing to the Lord; I will intone a melody

Ya’elam Shavani
Text: Israel Najara (c. 1550-1625), Music: Avtalyon ben Mordechai (17th c.)
Ya’elam shavani ne’elam zemani / Matay shav ani el moshav iram / Shur tsur Israel binkha eved El/ Aluf magdiel / Ve-aluf iram - Ana el li ha’azen
I was captured by Ya’elam (a son of Esau, i.e. a symbol of the Christians) / My history came to an end / And when I return to their areas of settlement (of the Christians) / Watch Rock of Israel your son enslaved / by the chiefs of Magdiel and Iram (i.e. the leaders of the Christian tribes) / God, please listen to me!

**Greek Orthodox Biblical Pericope, 1 John 1:1-7**

1 Ο ἐν ἀρχῇ, ὃ ἀκηκόα, ὃ ἑωράκαμεν, ὃ ἤπνεον ἐς ὁπλαιμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὁ ἐδεσσάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐγκαθίστασαν, περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς· 2 καὶ ἡ ζωή ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον. Ἡμεῖς δὲ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν.

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—

2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.

**Anastaseos imera and Christos anesti [Ἀναστάσεως ἡμέρα... Χριστὸς ἀνέστη]**

Doxastikon for Orthros of Pascha. The hymn “Christ is risen,” which concludes the doxastikon, constitutes a triumphant proclamation of Christians’ belief in the Resurrection of Christ and is the most beloved of all Orthodox hymns. Based on oral tradition and the transcription by Petros the Peloponnesian (c. 1730-1778), this setting in plagal first mode has been further arranged by Photios Ketsetzis.

Ἀναστάσεως ἡμέρα καὶ λαμπρυνθώμεν τῇ πανηγύρει καὶ αλλήλους περιπτυξώμεθα. Εἶπώμεν αδελφοί καὶ τοις μισούσιν ἡμᾶς, συγχωρήσωμεν πάντα τῇ Αναστάσει.

It is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant for the feast, and let us embrace one another. Let us say, brethren, even to those that hate us, ‘Let us forgive all things on account of the Resurrection,’ and so let us cry, ‘Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life!’

**Bowed Tanbur Taksim**

**Ferahfeza Mevlevi Ayini**

The final movement of one of the most famous of the pieces composed for the whirling ceremony of the Mevlevi dervishes.

**Dördüncü Selam (Fourth Movement)**

Sultan-i meni, ender dili-ü can iman-i meni
My sultan, my belief deep in my heart and soul

**Son Peşrev and Semai** (instrumental postlude)