DÜNYA and Islam In The West presents

**Sufism After Rumi:**
Past and Present in Turkey and the US

Tuesday, October 28, 5:30pm, Harvard University, Faculty Club

Panelists
Jocelyne Cesari, Virginia Danielson, Robert Labaree, Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

The Dünya Ensemble
Shanteri Baliga/ney, voice Robert Labaree/çeng, percussion, voice
Cem Mutlu/percussion, voice Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol/voice, ud, divan sazı, ney
Noam Sender/ney Frederick Stubbs/ney

The Mevlevi Sufi order has played an important intermediary role between Islam and the West, where Islamic mysticism in its various forms has long been a source of fascination. During the 20th century, Mevlevi poetry, Mevlevi music and the famous Mevlevi whirling ceremony have captured the attention of American audiences, giving the founder of the order, Mevlana Celâleddin Rumi (d. 1273), substantial name-recognition and making him one of the best selling poets in the U.S. today. Presentations of the Mevlevi sema by both American-based groups and touring ensembles from abroad attest to the group's continuing, and even growing, influence in the West. In today's program, a panel of scholars and musicians explores the current role of Mevlevism in Turkey and in the U.S., followed by a concert of pieces drawn from the traditional repertoires of Mevlevi and other Sufi tarikats.
I. Turkish Sunni Islam and Sufi Practice

Our musical presentation begins, not with the Mevlevi themselves, but with musical excerpts representing some of the Sufi brotherhoods which have contributed to Mevlevi practices, both here and in Turkey. The complex character of Mevlevism is suggested in this set by some of the practices of the Sufi orders more closely associated with Sunni Islam, practices which include: the singing of songs (*ilahiler*) in praise of the prophet Muhammed; the restricted use of instruments except for percussion; ceremonies involving the singing of repeated rhythmic phrases (*zikir*); and finally the chanting of The Holy Koran in Arabic (*tilavet*) and of devotional poetry in Turkish (*kaside*). Under the influence of such Sunni Sufi orders, in particular those which originate from North India, some Mevlevi brotherhoods in the U.S. have come to include the above practices in their gatherings to a degree that might surprise their Mevlevi counterparts in Turkey.

*Tilavet: chanting of The Holy Koran, I: 1-7 The Exordium*

*Bismil-lâ-hir-Rahmân-ir’Rahim*


In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. King of the Day of Judgment.

You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help. Guide us to the straight way; The way of those whom you have blessed, not of those who have deserved anger, nor of those who stray.

*Saba ilahi* (devotional song)  
Anonymous

*Seyreleyip yandım mah cemalini*  
At the sight of your beauty I burn

*Nur kundak içinde yatar Muhammed*  
Muhammed lies in radiant swaddling clothes

*Canmin cananisin ya Muhammed*  
O Muhammed, my beloved

*Ter ter dudakların bilmem ne söyler*  
I don’t understand what your lips say

*Hulusi kalb ile Hakki zikreyler*  
With purity of heart you called on God

*Daha tıfîl iken ümmetin diler*  
Even as a child, you spoke for your people

**Sema*  
Anonymous

*Ben dervis diyene bir ün idesim gelir*  
I praise those who call themselves dervish

*Segirdi ben sesine varıp yites*  
I want to go to them when I hear their calls

**Semadan Sırrı Tevhidi** (*kaside ve zikir*-vocal improvisation over repeated phrases)  
Anonymous

*Semadan sîrrı tevhidi*  
Those who hear the secret to be one soul

*duyan gelsin bu meydane*  
should join us in this arena

*derun içre bugûn Allah*  
Those who say God from the deepest places of their heart

*düyen gelsin bu meydane*  
should join us in this arena

**Rast ilahi** (devotional song)  
Anonymous

*Erl er demine destur alâim*  
Let us get permission to become knowledgeable men

*Pervaneysîe bak ibret alâim*  
Let us look at the moth and learn from it

*Askin atesine gel bir yanâlim*  
Let us burn with the fire of Love

*Devrana girip seyran edelîm*  
And whirl and dream

*Eyvah demeden Allah diyelim*  
Before calling out for mercy let’s say Allah

*Günler geceler durmaz geçiyor*  
Days and nights pass

*Sermayen olan ömrün bitiyor*  
And your life, which is your fortune on earth will soon end

*Bülbüllere bak efgan ediyor*  
Look at the nightingales they are crying

*Ey gonca açı l mevsim geçiyor*  
O rosebud it’s time to blossom the season is changing

II. Turkish Shiite Islam and Sufi Practice

An historical split within Mevlevism is indicative of a further complication of Mevlevi identity, representing those more influenced by the Bektashi Sufi order (the so-called Semsi Mevlevis) and those influenced by Sunni tariqats such as the Naksibendi (the so-called Veledi Mevlevis). After centuries of interaction between the
Bektasi and the Mevlevi, their relationship came to an abrupt end in 1826 when the Bektasi were suppressed by the Ottoman government and the order was forced to go underground. (The Mevlevi continued their close association with the Ottoman elite right into the early 20th century.) The Bektasi practices which survived this period gradually evolved closer to those of the Alevi, a separate ethnic and religious minority group from Anatolia with theological characteristics similar to the Bektasi. Today Bektasism displays more of the characteristics of the Alevi than of the pre-1826 Bektasi order and, despite the distinct histories of the two groups, they are at times represented as one: “Alevi-Bektasi”.

This set features the nefes—a song type characteristic of pre-1826 Bektasi sufism. The songs all share a common reverence for the figure of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, aligning them more closely with Shi’a Islam than with Sunni Islam. As some of the texts here demonstrate, Bektasi ceremonies may include heterodox practices such as the ceremonial use of raki (local alcohol) or sarap (wine), making them at times the focus of official disapproval, with the result that much Bektasi poetry involves coded language which is difficult for outsiders to interpret. The nefes here have been chosen because their texts are somewhat less prone to hidden meanings, though they still rely on language which suggests an earlier time.

### Pencah nefes

*Mushaf demek hatadır ol safhai cemale*

*Bu kitap bir sözdür fehmiden ehli hale*

Text: Resmi

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

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### Ussak nefes

*Noldu bu gönlüm noldu bu gönlüm*

*Derdu gaminla doldu bu gönlüm*

*Yandi bu gönlüm Yandi bu gönlüm*

*Yanmada derman buldu bu gönlüm*

Text: Bayram

My heart—what has happened to it?

My heart is filled with sorrows

My heart is burning

My heart has found relief in burning

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### Hüseyni nefes

*Mescit ile medreseyi*

*Ismarladık zahitlere*

*Hakka ibadet etmege*

*Yeter bize meyhaneler*

Text: Semsi

The mosque and the medrese

We’ll gladly give them to the ascetics

To pray to God

The tavern is enough for us

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### III. Mevlevism

A variety of musical styles have found their way into the practices today associated with Mevlevism, even including current developments influenced by commercial popular music. In this final section of the program the focus will be on what may be called traditional forms of Mevlevi music. *Ayin* is the name given to the four movement musical setting of the text of the whirling ceremony. The poetry being sung in the ayin is in a mixture of Persian and Turkish, much of it drawn from the *Mesnevi*, the revered work of Celaleddin Rumi that has been called “the Qur’an in Persian.” The ney (reed flute) is the ultimate symbol of Mevlevism since Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi begins the *Mesnevi* with a reference to it. To most people born in Turkey, the instrument is inseparable from the idea of mysticism, even when it is used in a secular context. Rather than perform a complete ayin tonight we will instead present two movements from a relatively recent ayin composed in the mid-20th century. This will be followed by a composition which the Mevlevis refer to as *niyaz ayini*—a kind of ayin in short form which was performed for a variety of occasions, such as the honoring of a donor to the Mevlevi order.

### Ney Taksim

**Hisarbıselik Pesrev**

Neyzen Halilcan (20th c.)

**Hisarbıselik Ayin** (2. and 3. Selam)

by Sadeddin Heper (20th c.)

*Ey ki hezar aferin*  
*Bu nice sultan olur*  
*Külu olan kisâler*  
*Hüsrevü hakan olur*  
*Her ki bugün Velede*

*Oh, the creator of thousands of beings*  
*What a sultan you are*  
*Those who are your servants*  
*Become royal rulers*  
*So if today you believe in*
Inanuben yüz süre
Yoksul ise bay olur
Bay ise sultan olur

and therefore side with Veled
If you’re poor you’ll become rich
If you’re rich you’ll become a sultan

Niyaz Ayini

Sem-i ruhuna cismimi pervane düşürdüm
Mevlayi seversen beni söyleme gamim var
Dinle sözümü sana direm özge edadır
Dervis olanla lazım olan askı hudadır
Askin nesi var ise masuka fedadır
Sema safe cana sifa ruha gidadir
As k ile gelin talibi cüyende olalim
Zevk ile safalar sürelim zinde olalim

To the candle of your soul I have become a moth
If you love the Lord don’t make me explain, I’m in sorrow
Listen to what I’m saying, it is about another way
What a dervish needs is the love of God
What the lover possesses is sacrificed for the Beloved
The sema is joy, and it is good for body and soul
Come with Love and let’s strive to be the seeker
Let us enjoy our time and be alive with divine Love
Come to Mevlana so we can be his servants

Program notes and translations by M. Sanlikol, R. Labaree

The panelists and the musicians

Jocelyne Cesari directs the Islam in the West program and has also held teaching positions in the anthropology department and at Harvard Divinity School. Her most recent books are: When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States (2004) and European Muslims and the Secular State (2005).


Robert Labaree (çeng, voice, percussion) is an ethnomusicologist specializing in Turkish music and medieval European music. He is chair of the Music History department at New England Conservatory and director of the conservatory’s Intercultural Institute, which he established in 1993.

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol (voice, ud, saz, ney) completed his doctorate in composition at New England Conservatory in 2004, is a composer and jazz pianist and president and co-founder of DÜNYA, a non-profit music collaborative based in Boston established in 2004.

Shanteri Baliga (voice, ney) has been a student of Frederick Stubbs for over 12 years, and plays with a number of Boston based ensembles.

Cem Mutlu (voice, percussion) a member of the DÜNYA board, plays jazz and a variety of world musics with groups in the Boston area.

Noam Sender (voice, ney) performs with a variety of ensembles in the Boston area and is a member of the advisory board of DÜNYA.

Frederick Stubbs (ney) is an ethnomusicologist specializing in Turkish music who teaches World Music and Ethnomusicology at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.