



presents,

VOICES OF THE EAST GAZELLER



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

voice/ud **Albert Agha** *voice* **Güç Başar Gülle** *violin* **Eylem Başaldı**
voice **Theodoulos Vakanas** *çeng* **Robert Labaree** *percussion* **Karim Nagi Mohammed**

Club Passim, Monday, December 20, 8:00pm

Co-produced by *Arabesque Mondays at Club Passim*

THE IMPROVISED LOVE SONG

During the latter days of the Ottoman Empire some of the most popular singers of commercial songs in Turkish were the *bafizlar*, individuals especially trained to create improvised vocal renditions of *The Holy Koran* in Arabic. It was usually only these same *bafizlar* who were considered up to the task of singing *gazel*, the highly prized free-rhythm improvisation on secular love poetry, a practice which has a number of parallels in Arabic and Greek music, as well.

These parallels in other traditions generally show up with other names. Among Greek singers, the closest practice to *gazel* is perhaps the *amane*. Among Arabic singers, the equivalent forms would be *mawwal* and *layali*. The Greek *amane* usually comes before the singing of a composed song and usually employs words like "aman, medet aman", expressions for which there is no literal translation. The Arabic *layali*, which is a vocalization using the syllables "ya layl" (again, there is no literal translation), and the *mawwal*, which uses a poetical text in colloquial Arabic, can both go on for extended periods of time, longer than the average Turkish *gazel*. The folk equivalent of the classical Turkish *gazel* is called an *uzun hava* and tends to be less freely improvised than the *gazel*, although it resembles the *gazel*, *amane* and *layali* in its highly expressive improvisatory quality and in its free rhythm. While the tradition of *gazel*-singing is more often associated with poetic texts in Ottoman (the Turkish-Persian-Arabic mixture spoken by the Ottoman elite until the 1930s), the *uzun hava* uses poetic texts in colloquial Turkish.

Each of these improvised song traditions has a different style and complexity of its own, with love the most common subject. Among all of these traditions, the degree of spontaneous improvisation can vary drastically, depending on the singer. The differences in vocal color among the traditions will also be obvious to even a first-time listener. But despite their unique qualities, all these forms can co-exist, and in fact communicate with each other, as will be apparent in the second half of this concert, which features a three-way conversation among Turkish, Greek and Arabic musicians.

Unfortunately, the vocal improvisation traditions in all three of these communities are gradually losing the popularity they had at the beginning of the 20th century. In Turkey alone, as much as one quarter of all the 78 RPM recordings from this early period were *gazels*. Today there is hardly a single new recording in which *gazel* is featured, making this evening's concert a commemoration of past traditions, even as it explores new collaborative possibilities which we hope will contribute to the continued vitality of all three.

Dr. Mehmet Ali SANLIKOL
Dr. Robert Labaree

PROGRAM

I. Gazel from Greece to Turkey and Syria

Amane and "Mana mou Hellas" (folk song)

singer: Theodoulos Vakanas

"Makber" (anonymous) and gazel

singer: Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

Uzun hava and "Gözünü toprak doyursun" (folk song)

singer: Güç Başar Gülle

Mawwal and "Duaa mawlaayah"

singer: Albert Agha

"Bakmıyor çeşm-i siyah" (Haci Arif Bey) and gazel

singer: Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

II. Surrounded by double Gazels

Double gazel and "Sallasana mendilini/Sala sala" (Turkish and Greek folk song)

singers: Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol and Theodoulos Vakanas

Gazel and "Donülmez akşamın ufkundayız" (Münir Nurettin Selçuk)

singer: Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

Müstear yürük semai [instrumental] (Hafız Ahmet Mükerrrem Akıncı)

Mawwal and "Qul lil Malihati" (words: Al-Darimi music: Sabah Fakhri)

singer: Albert Agha

Double gazel and Ada sahilleri (Turkish folk song)

singers: Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol and Albert Agha

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