

A production of DÜNYA with The American Islamic Congress

Hicran: Singing of Separation

[HİCRAN (Turk.): separation, emotional pain]

A program of Turkish and Greek music full of longing for love, for homeland, for God

Tuesday, February 24, 2009
Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory

Robert Labaree (*çeng, voice, percussion*) **Panayotis League** (*kemençe, voice, percussion*)
Cem Mutlu (*voice, percussion*) **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol** (*voice, ud, saz, ney*)

There may be a contradiction in a concert devoted to *hicran* [pronounced *heedge-rah*n]. Music full of the pain of separation, of longing for what is out of reach, might not be expected to give us much to look forward to. And yet, in the regions of the former Ottoman domains inherited by modern Turkey and Greece, poetry and music full of *hicran* also provide the occasion for pleasure, passion and humor as well as for sadness. There is complaint here, and lamenting, but there is also liveliness, sweetness and joy, as if the very act of giving voice to separation creates delight. The complexity of *hicran* deepens further when we notice that much of the language of longing in examples of Turkish Muslim mysticism (Sufism) also shows up in secular love songs, in songs for Greek audiences, in songs of homesickness and in commercial pop songs.

A special place in this concert has been reserved for Aşık Veysel Satiroğlu (1894-1973), the most celebrated of the 20th century Turkish folk singer-poets (*aşık*). In the poetry of Veysel, who was blind from early childhood, conventional expressions of *hicran* found in Ottoman court and folk poetry mingle with highly personal questioning of himself and of society. Longing to know oneself becomes a feature of *hicran*, as does longing for an end to the separation of humans by race and religion. These apparently modern forms of longing are actually not original with Veysel, but owe much to the *Alevi* Sufism deeply rooted in rural Anatolia where he spent most of his life. The words of Veysel will be heard often tonight, but not his music. Instead, we have chosen to make new musical settings of them, either by creating original music for them in a variety of Turkish styles, or by fitting them to melodies by other known or anonymous Turkish composers.

PROGRAM

Part I: I had and lost, I remember and sigh (*Eicha ki isterithika, thimami ki anastenazo*)

Hicran oku sinem deler (*Şarkı: classical Ottoman song*)

Şevki Bey (1860-90)

A classic statement of the *hicran* idea by one of the most prolific of the 19th century Istanbul song composers: a mixture of longing for the unattainable beloved and professions of pain, all set in a lively melody.

*Hicran oku sinem deler
Olmaktadır halim beter
Bu iftirak artık yeter
İnsafa gel ey şiveger
Bir gün olur çağın geçer*

The arrow of longing pierces my breast
My spirits are in decline
Of this separation I say, enough!
Have a heart, come, my coquet!
One day your time will be over

İstanbul'dan çıktım (*uzun hava/unmetered folk song*)

from Çorum (southwestern Turkey)

In 1936 Bela Bartók recorded this song, sung by an illiterate village girl of 13 named Hatice Deklioğlu. It is a kind of *ağıt*, or lament, and the text is a typical assemblage of conventional phrases expressing separation from home and longing for forbidden love across racial and cultural barriers.

*İstanbuldan çıktım derya yüzüne
Meylim düştü Ermeninin kızına
Yeme, içme bak yavrının gözüne
Al beni terkine gidek Kürt oğlu*

From Istanbul I came out onto this earth
I have fallen for the daughter of an Armenian
Don't eat or drink, look only into the eyes of your baby
Take me, let us run away, son of a Kurd!

No fortress is built of small stones
Going out, I never look down the road to my love
The world will not fall at the death of someone like me
Take me, let us run away, son of a Kurd!

The workmen have put gloves on her hands
The young Circassian put on her gold jewelry
If I went with you, could we have a life together?
Take me, let us run away, son of a Kurd!

Mecnun gibi dolaniyorum (9/4)

words: Aşık Veysel (1894-1973) music: R. Labaree (b.1944)

In Aşık Veysel's poem, his lifelong blindness is presented as a form of separation, a state of exile in a foreign land (*gurbet*), a kind of madness. But it has also bound him and amused him with sweet words. The new music here is in a form not found in Veysel's own songs: a *zeybek*, a dignified and vigorous men's dance song in 10.

*Mecnun gibi dolaniyorum çöllerde
Hayal beni yeldiriyor yel gibi
Ah çeker ağlarım gurbet ellerde
Durmaz akar gözüm yaşı sel gibi*

Like Mecnun the mad lover I wander in the desert
Imagination driving me like a gale
My cries exiled in a distant land
My tears flow ceaselessly like a flood.

*Zincirsiz kösteksiz bağladı beni
Tatlı dilleriyle eğledi beni
Yurdumdan yuvamdan eyledi beni
Yarsız dünya malı bana pul gibi*

Without chains or fetters, it has bound me
With sweet words it has amused me
From my village, from my nest, it has been with me
The loveless world's riches to me are nothing

Osou varoun ta sidera (2/4)

A traditional Cretan song recorded in 1938 by Stelios Foustalieris, late master of the *bulgari* (Cretan saz), with Ioannis Bernidakis on vocals. It is an example of the Cretan form known as *tabachaniotika*, heavily influenced by the music brought to Crete by Greek refugees from Asia Minor.

Osou varoun ta sidera, varoun ta mavra roucha Black clothes are as heavy as iron
Giati ki ego ta foresa, gia mian agapi pou 'cha I know because I wore them too, for a love that once I had.

Eicha ki isterithika, thimami ki anastenazo I had and I lost, I remember and sigh
Anoikse i gis mesa na bo, kosmo na min kitazo The earth opened for me to enter and never look at anyone again.

Part II: Reuniting with you is just a dream (Kavuşmak hayal oldu)**Karcıgar Saz semaisi**

Kanuni Ömer Efendi (d. 1870)

A classical instrumental piece by a famous Ottoman composer of Arabic origin, born in Syria.

Karcıgar Şarkı: Güzelliğin on par'etmez

words: Aşık Veysel (1894-1973) music: R. Labaree

A love song composed in classical Ottoman style (*şarkı*), but with words by Aşık Veysel which give the conventional longing for the distant lover a different twist: the beloved's beauty would have no value (literally: would not be worth a dime) without the poet's love for her.

*Güzelliğin on par'etmez
Bu bendeki aşk olmasa
Eğlenecek yer bulamam
Gönlümdeki köşk olmasa*

Your beauty wouldn't be worth anything
If I didn't have this love inside me
I couldn't find a place of enjoyment
If there was no mansion in my heart.

Şimdi uzaklardasın

Zeki Müren (1931-96)

A well-known popular song about separation and distant love by the famous Turkish classical singer who became an important figure in Turkish popular music and in the popular imagination from the 1960s onwards.

Şimdi uzaklardasın Now that you are distant from me The flowers in passion's gardens
Gönül hicranla doldu My heart is full of longing Have all faded
Hiç ayrılamam derken I cannot separate from you I cannot separate from you
Kavuşmak hayal oldu Reuniting with you is just a dream Reuniting with you is just a dream

Ada sahilleri

anonymous

An urban folk song with Turkish, Greek and Arabic versions. Our rendition draws most heavily on the Turkish.

*Ada sahillerinde bekliyorum
Her zaman yollarını gözlüyorum
Seni senden güzelim istiyorum
Beni şad et Şadiye başın için*

I am waiting for you by the shores of the Istanbul islands
All the time I watch for you to appear
I want you to come willingly
Make me happy with your beautiful face

Horos dervishikos

anonymous

We have based our version of this song on a recording made by the famous Greek singer Antonios Dargas in 1930 in Athens. The text is mostly in Turkish, the title in Greek.

*Ayşem, Ayşem, mor menekşem
Kocan çirkin, boşan Ayşem...*

My Ayşe, my Ayşe, my purple violet
Your husband is ugly, divorce him, Ayşe...

Part III: True loves burn ceaselessly (*Ehli aşklar yanar durmaz*)

Ayin in Hicaz Makam

words: Aşık Veysel (1894-1973)

music: Abdürahim Künhi Dede (1769-1831) (arr. R. Labaree)

Aşık Veysel's meditation on the creation of the world, set to one movement of the music (*ayin*) originally composed in the 19th century for the whirling ceremony of the Mevlevi sufi brotherhood. In Veysel's words, man's separation from God was God's doing: He fashioned the world and then "withdrew and waited".

Terennum (instrumental interlude)

Selam III (Movt. III)

*Bu dünyayı kuran mimar
Ne boş sağlam temel atmış
İnsanlığa ibret için
Kısım kısım kul yaratmış*

The Architect who created this world,
What an empty, solid foundation he laid
As a lesson to humanity
He created mortals, part by part

The world's design turns ceaselessly

He established the order in this way

The expert lovers burn ceaselessly

Then he withdrew and waited

With the wine of love, they drink ceaselessly

He gave to Veysel all sorts of pain

Love creates the companionship...

And set him to seeking a remedy...

Son yürük semai (instrumental postlude)

* * * INTERMISSION * * *

Part IV: In a distant land a feeling came upon me (*Gurbet elde bir hal geldi başıma*)

Gurbet elde bir hal geldi başıma

words: Pir Sultan Abdal (1480-1560) music: Ali Ekber Çiçek (b.1935)

The two sources for this song are both *aşık*s (singer-poets), like Aşık Veysel. The poetry of Pir Sultan Abdal, hanged by the Ottoman authorities in 1560 for his anti-establishment sentiments, is kept alive by singer-poets like Ali Ekber Çiçek, who is associated with the *Alevi*, the ethno-religious group embodying rural Turkish Sufism.

*Gurbet elde bir hal geldi başıma
Ağlama gözlerim mevlam kerimdir
Derman arar iken derde düş oldum
Ağlama gözlerim mevlam kerimdir*

In a distant land a feeling came upon me
Do not weep, mine eyes, the Lord is gracious
Looking for a solution I fell into sorrow
Do not weep, mine eyes, the Lord is merciful

*Huma kuşu yere düştü ölmedi
Dünya Sultan Süleymana kalmadı
Dedim yare gidem nasıp olmadı ,
Ağlama gözlerim mevlam kerimdir*

The Bird of Paradise fell to the earth and died
The world didn't even belong to Sultan Süleyman
I wanted to go to my Beloved but could not
Do not weep, mine eyes, the Lord is merciful

Allah birdir Peygamber Hak

words: Aşık Veysel (1894-1973)

music: anonymous (arr. R. Labaree)

Aşık Veysel spent his life in the rural villages where the *Alevi* brand of Turkish Sufism thrived. This tune is *Alevi*, as is the poem's theme: the separation of humans from each other by race and creed.

*Allah birdir Peygamber Hak
Rabbül alemdir mutlak
Senlik benlik nedir bırak
Söleyim geldi sırası*

God is One and The Prophet is Truth
The Eternal is the Creator
What is this yourself, myself? Enough!
Now that the time has come, let me say it.

Kurd, Turk and Circassian
All are sons and daughters of Adam
All are martyrs and heroes
How is this wrong? Tell me

Part V: I'm burning inside, my wound is too deep (*İçerim yanıyor yar yar yaram pek derin*)

Tzivaeri mou

anonymous

The melody of this song is a traditional *zeibekiko* (slow 9/8) from Asia Minor, while the lyrics and *tsakisma* or repeated phrases used to fill out the melody ("*Tzivaeri Mou*") are commonly found all over the Greek islands.

*Minise mou na sou stilo laledakia ap' to vouno
Na ta valis sto potiri, na tharris pos eimai ego
Ta matakia sou, pouli mou, hamilokitazoune
Sa girisoun kai me doune, stin kardia me sfazoune*

Send me a message and I'll send you flowers from the mountain
For you to put them in a glass and imagine that they are me.
Your eyes, my love, look down at the ground
And when they turn to me, they slaughter me in my heart.

Gelmiş değil böyle peri

Şakır Ağa (1779-1840)

The object of longing here is a *tavşan*, one of the types of professional male dancers who acquired considerable fame during the Ottoman period until they were outlawed in the 1850s. They were young and beardless and often imitated female movements. The composer is a famous musician and muezzin--leader of the daily prayer.

Gelmiş değil böyle peri
Hiç görmedim çoktan beri
Olsam ne var ben müşteri
Hiç görmedim çoktan beri
Tavşanların işvereri
İzmirlidir en dilberi

There hasn't been a beautiful one like this
I haven't seen one like him for a long time
What if I became a customer?
I haven't seen one like him for a long time
The flirtatiousness of the *tavşan*
The most attractive are the ones from Izmir

Gurbet

Özdemir Erdoğan (b. 1940)

A well-known piece of Turkish pop music from the 1970s, an example of *Anadolu Rok* (Anatolian Rock) which combines folk-style Turkish poetry with folk-like melodies and folk instruments to evoke *gurbet*--the longing for home--felt by many rural immigrants to the city and by many Turkish "guest-workers" in Germany and elsewhere.

Kime desem derdimi ben bulutlar
Bizi dost bildiklerimiz vurdular
Birde gurbet yarası var hepsinden derin
Söyleyin memleketten bir haber mi var:
Yoksa yarin gözyaşları mı bu yağmurlar
İçerim yanıyor yar yar yaram pek derin...

O clouds, tell me who shall I tell of my sorrows
The ones who we thought were our friends shot us
Besides, the pain of being far away is deeper than all
Tell me if there is any news of my home
Or is the rain outside the teardrops of my love
I'm burning inside, my wound is too deep...

Veysel's last poem

words: Asik Veysel music: R. Labaree, M. Sanlıkol, C. Mutlu

Veysel's last poem was dictated to his son shortly before the famous aşık's death on March 21, 1973. It is set here in the style of an unmeasured improvisatory folk song (*uzun hava*). On his deathbed, Veysel is able to contemplate the ultimate separation from all he has known without *hicran*. It is not a lament or a complaint, but a simple farewell.

Selam saygı hepinize
Gelmez yola gidiyorum
Ne karaya ne denize
Gelmez yola gidiyorum

Farewell to you all.
I am leaving on the road of no return
Neither to the shore nor to the sea
I am leaving on the road of no return.

The boat is waiting in the harbor,
The crew is ready there
My gaze is no longer in the world
I am leaving on the road of no return

My wife, my companion, and my children
This is it, my autumn,
Veysel's dark road.
I am leaving on the road of no return

Program notes: R. Labaree

Translations: R. Labaree, M. Sanlıkol, P. League

Musicians

Robert Labaree (*çeng, voice, percussion*) is chair of the NEC Music History Department, director of the NEC Intercultural Institute and co-founder and Vice President of *DÜNYA*.

Panayiotis League (*kemençe, percussion*), teaches Greek language at Hellenic College, and is an active performer of Irish, Greek and Turkish music in the Boston area.

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

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol (*voice, ud, saz, cura, ney*) is a composer and jazz pianist with a doctorate in composition from NEC, and is co-founder and president of *DÜNYA*.

DÜNYA

(the Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek word for "world") is a non-profit, tax exempt educational organization founded in Boston in 2004. 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, recording, and other educational activities. *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.

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol, President
Robert Labaree, Vice president
www.dunyainc.org



ISLAMIC CONGRESS

The American Islamic Congress (AIC) is a civil rights organization promoting tolerance and the exchange of ideas among Muslims and between other peoples. AIC is a non-religious civic initiative challenging increasingly negative perceptions of Muslims by advocating responsible leadership and 'two-way' interfaith understanding. As Muslim-Americans, thriving amidst America's open multicultural society and civil liberties, we promote these same values for the global Muslim community. We are not afraid to advocate unequivocally for women's equality, free expression, and nonviolence - making no apologies for terrorism, which primarily claims Muslim lives.

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