

Central  
Asia  
in  
Forest Hills,  
New  
York

music of the Bukharan Jewish Ensemble

# Shashmaqam



**CENTRAL ASIA IN FOREST HILLS N.Y.,  
Music of the Bukharan Jewish Ensemble Shashmaqam**

Produced in collaboration with the Ethnic Folk Arts Center

Project directed by Ethel Raim and Martin Koenig

Annotated by Ted Levin



0 9307-40054-2 2

1. **Obloim** 3:50
2. **Ghairi Khudo Yar Nadoram**  
("We Have No Friend But God") 2:31
3. **Jon-e Manam** ("My Soul") 5:53
4. **To Bodi Sabo** 3:57
5. **Dostanra Gum Makun**  
("Don't Lose Your Friends") 3:09
6. **Biyo Yak** ("Come Once") 3:12
7. **Medley of Songs from Wedding Repertory:**  
**Yar-Yar,**  
**Abru Kosh Dumi Mor,**  
**Shastu-Shastu Chor,**  
**Chashmi Siyah Dori,**  
**doire interlude,**  
**Mahvashi Nozuk**  
**Badanam, Orzu** 5:40
8. **Talqin-i Bayat** 5:11
9. **Nasr-i Chargah** 7:31
10. **Ushshaq-i Samarkand** 5:29
11. **Qalandari** 3:12
12. **Yalli** 3:29
13. **Azerbaijani Segah** 4:31

Shashmaqam brings to life the rich and diverse musical traditions of Central Asia, where Jewish and Moslem musicians long coexisted in a flourishing cultural symbiosis. Shashmaqam's repertory ranges from virtuoso Central Asian classical pieces to exuberant wedding and ritual songs. Now, as Central Asia's Jewish population is steadily reduced by emigration, New York City-based Shashmaqam has become the custodian of a threatened, yet remarkable, musical tradition.



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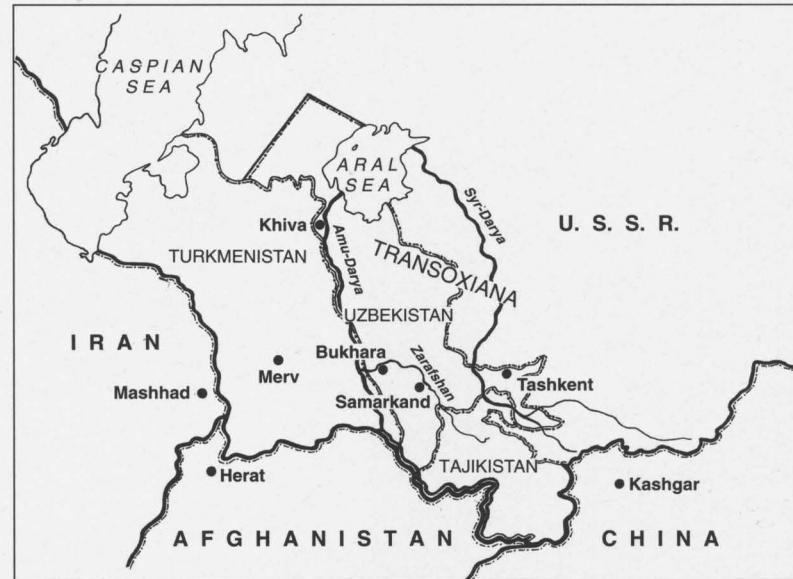
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### Credits:

Project Directors: Ethel Raim, Martin Koenig  
 Produced by Ted Levin, Martin Koenig, Ethel Raim  
 Notes by Ted Levin  
 Consultant: Otanazar Matyakubov  
 Recording Engineer: Paul Zinman  
 Assistant Engineer: Nelson Wong  
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Map showing location of Bukhara and regions mentioned in notes.



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# CENTRAL ASIA IN FOREST HILLS N.Y., MUSIC OF THE BUKHARAN JEWISH ENSEMBLE SHASHMAQAM

SF 40054 Central Asia in Forest Hills  
N.Y., Music of the Bukharan Jewish  
Ensemble Shashmaqam

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Recordings

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Central Asia in Forest Hills N.Y.,  
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Shashmaqam  
Notes by Ted Levin

In the summer of 1977, a tiny restaurant named "Firuz" opened its doors, or more accurately, its door, in a shoebox-shaped space on the southwest corner of Manhattan's 3rd Avenue and 33rd Street. In Tashkent, where I spent a year studying Central Asian music, I had known a young woman named Firuz, and with that tenuous connection, curiosity drove me into the restaurant one day for lunch. A smiling, slender woman with long, frizzy, black hair and dancing eyes greeted me in lurching English and showed me to a table. Surveying the menu, I asked her in Russian, the lingua franca of Soviet Central Asia, "Okuda vi?"—"Where are you from?"

"Ya iz Dushanbe"—"I'm from Dushanbe," she replied with palpable excitement at my two words of Russian. And that was the beginning of a great friendship between Firuz and me, and of a wonderful discovery: in New York, lived a community of the very people who had originally drawn me to the other side of the world, to Central Asia: the Bukharan Jews.

Bukharan Jews, as the name suggests, are associated with Bukhara, an oasis city situated about a hundred miles east of the Amu-Darya—the River Oxus of antiquity. The Amu Darya flows down from the Pamir Mountains—the "Bam-i Dunya" or "roof of the world"—to the border between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, which it marks for hundreds of miles. Then it turns northwest, passing west of Samarkand and Bukhara, and slightly east of Khiva and Urgench, before emptying into the Aral Sea. The area between the Amu Darya and its sister river to the north, the Syr Darya, is known to geographers as Transoxiana, and it is in the oasis towns and cities of this arid region that the Bukharan Jews—so-called by both Jews and gentiles from the Russian north established themselves, and tossed in their fate with their Moslem neighbors.

Supposedly the descendants of Babylonian and Persian Jews who migrated—or were compelled to migrate—eastward, Bukharan Jews—*Yehudi* ("Jews simpliciter")—as they call themselves, have ridden out the stormy history of Central Asia with remarkable resilience. In

the 13th century, they survived the Mongol hordes who filled the moats of Bukhara's citadel with bodies before stampeding over them to massacre the city's defenders and then butchered in a single day 50,000 (or 70,000, depending on which historian's numbers are to be believed) of Samarkand's inhabitants.

In the following century, the Bukharan Jews survived the ravages of Tamerlane, who, in the spirit of his Mongol forebears, decimated the sedentary populations of Central Asia, leaving towers of skulls to decorate the cities he laid to waste. The Bukharan Jews survived, and to a degree prospered, under four hundred years of absolute feudal rule by a succession of Moslem emirs and khans, whose tax collectors ritually provided Jews with a humiliating slap across the face as a receipt for their taxes.

More recently, they survived the bloody turmoil of the 1920's, as Basmachi resisters, loyal to the deposed Emir of Bukhara, fought the Bolsheviks and the establishment of Soviet rule in Russian Turkestan while hundreds of thousands of Central Asians died of starvation. Some Bukharan Jews fled, making their way to Palestine, where they established a Bukharan community in Jerusalem. Those who remained survived the politics of Stalin: expropriation, forced collectivization, industrialization, the mass exile of minority groups, the Great Terror.

Far east of the war zone, the Bukharan Jewish community survived the Nazi stranglehold on Russia, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine, although many men lost their lives at the front. Following the War and the death of Stalin, they survived the bungled agricultural policies of the Khrushchev years and the social and economic stagnation of the Brezhnev era. But in the 1970's when Leonid Brezhnev opened the hermetic borders of the USSR to Jewish emigration, Bukharan Jews joined their brethren from Moscow and Leningrad in leaving the Soviet Union to seek a better life in Israel and America.

The first Bukharan Jews of the so-called "Third Wave" to emigrate to the United States came to New York, settling mostly in the Forest Hills section of Queens alongside new Jewish emigres from other parts of the USSR. While precise numbers are not available, it is estimated that in 1991, about 3000 Bukharan Jews live in New York City.

Firuz Yagudaeva, the chef at "Firuz," was one of the first Bukharan Jews to arrive in New York City. An accomplished dancer as well as an upstart restaurateur, Firuz knew several musicians in the small Bukharan enclave and invited them to accompany the traditional Central Asian dances with which she entertained

customers in a make-shift cabaret in the basement of her restaurant. From these sessions, a loosely-structured performing group emerged that also contributed music to social events in the Bukharan community and to occasional "world music" events around New York City.

Throughout the late 1970's and early 1980's, a steady trickle of Bukharan Jews arrived in New York. Among them was Fatima Kuinova, a powerful and evocative singer who abandoned a successful musical career in her native Tajikistan to seek greater opportunity for her children in America. Fatima Kuinova soon assumed a position of artistic leadership among the Bukharan musicians, who began to solidify their membership and rehearse a fixed repertory of pieces. They also took their present name, Shashmaqam, from the name of a venerable collection of classical Central Asian vocal and instrumental music that has furnished the group with an important part of its repertory.

Since 1983, under the aegis of the Ethnic Folk Arts Center, Shashmaqam has appeared at multi-ethnic music festivals and at events sponsored by Jewish community organizations eager to learn about the "lost" Jewish cultural traditions of Central Asia. These appearances inevitably stimulate animated murmuring among members of the audience that sometimes escalates into a lively give-and-take with the performers. The thought on everyone's mind seems to be some version of: "Well, these are Jews, but their music doesn't sound Jewish!"

Indeed, compared to the celebrated musical icons of Eastern European Jewish culture—Klezmer bands, Yiddish singers, fiddlers and accordion players—the music of the Bukharan Jews seems to emanate from far beyond the Pale. But the same cultural logic that links Eastern European Jews to the linguistic and musical world of their Slavic and Germanic neighbors has connected Bukharan Jews to the cultural identity of the Sunni Moslems of Iranian and Turkic descent, who, for many centuries, have comprised the majority of Transoxiana's urban population.

The first language of most Bukharan Jews is Tajik, an eastern dialect of Persian that is widely spoken in Bukhara and Samarkand. Almost all are fluent in Russian, and many also know Uzbek, a Turkic tongue that is the official language of Uzbekistan, the Soviet republic stitched together from pieces of the old Central Asian emirates and khanates. Yiddish has never been a part of Central Asian Jewish culture. Hebrew is confined to liturgical use, and the several still-functioning synagogues currently employ a prayer book printed both in Hebrew and in Tajik, the latter transliterated into the Hebrew alphabet.

As co-habitants of urban Transoxiana, Tajik, Uzbek, and Bukharan Jewish musicians have drawn from a common well of musical inspiration. Just as Jewish musicians in America participate in musical activities as diverse as symphony orchestras and rock bands, Bukharan Jews inhabit the same sound world as their Uzbek and Tajik neighbors, and the notion of a secular Central Asian "Jewish music" is as elusive as that of a secular American "Jewish music."

The Bukharan sound world includes a panorama of musical genres and styles. At one extreme is the *shashmaqam*, a repertory whose musical complexity and aesthetic sophistication calls for the interpretive skills of professional musicians and the listening skills of refined connoisseurs. At the other extreme are simple melodies—lullabies, laments, dances, folk songs—accessible to all.

In this sound world, Bukharan Jewish musicians have been jacks-of-all musical trades. They were among the most distinguished of the musicians who entertained the emirs of Bukhara and their courtly retinues with virtuoso vocal performances drawn from the *shashmaqam*. During the Soviet period, when the social milieu of the *shashmaqam* has changed from feudal court to conservatory, concert hall, radio and recording studio, Bukharan Jews have continued to occupy a preeminent position as performers of indigenous Central Asian classical music. But the same "classical" musicians may also entertain at weddings—both Moslem and Jewish—where in different configurations of instruments and voices, they perform folk songs and dance tunes drawn from a large repertory of wedding music. This repertory includes not only music indigenous to Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, and environs, but diverse musical styles and genres culled from neighboring Central Asian and Middle Eastern peoples—Azerbaijanis and Afghans, Iranians and Indians—through recordings, radio broadcasts, and personal travels.

Each of the members of Shashmaqam brought elements of this rich and diverse musical tradition to New York City. And inevitably, the way in which Shashmaqam has reconstituted Central Asian music in New York reflects the social conditions in which the group's members now live. For example, the large urban population of Transoxiana could sustain a variety of ensembles with different musical profiles, whereas the modest size of New York's Bukharan Jewish community has thus far supported only one—Shashmaqam. The Ensemble has responded by assuming a protean character, and musicians of distinctively different musical profiles have been welcomed into the group.

Iosif Abramov, a vocalist who accompanies himself on the *tar* and *tanbur*, is an accomplished performer of the Bukharan classical repertory. By contrast, clarinetist Yasha Kakuriev and accordionist Mikhail Abramov specialize in folk songs and dances and light classical music played in dance tempos. Fatima Kuinova's musical experience spans the breadth of Shashmaqam's repertory, from classical pieces like *Ushshaq-i Samarkand* to Uzbek and Tajik folk songs and the Sufi-influenced *haqqoni*, while Firuza Yagudaeva interprets selected folk and classical songs in the refined dance style indigenous to urban Transoxiana. The artistic challenge that confronts a group such as Shashmaqam is to merge such different musical faces into a coherent, if not necessarily homogenous, musical statement. The present recording represents that statement.

The diverse musical genres represented on the recording are characterized by certain commonalities of performance style. These include an extraordinary vocal energy, a disciplined control of timbral and intonational nuance, and a gift for creating dramatic shifts and contrasts between the different sections of pieces, or as in the "Wedding Suite," between pieces themselves. Much of Central Asian music is built on the concatenation of smaller formal units into larger ones, which may be individual pieces, small suites, or the massive suite collections of the *shashmaqam* that each include dozens of pieces. Musicians master the art of segueing from section to section or piece to piece. Points of transition are marked by shifts from slow tempo to fast, from solo voice to ensemble, from one instrumental group to another, and by changes in rhythm, in tessitura, and in melodic type.

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After visits of several weeks' duration to the Jewish communities of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent in winter, and autumn, 1990, and again in spring, 1991, I am anxious about the future of Judaism in Central Asia. What Ghengis Khan's hordes, Tamerlane's armies, and a ghoulisish succession of dictators failed to accomplish, the increasing liberalization of the Gorbachev era has at least in part succeeded in provoking: the potentially terminal depopulation and destabilization of the Bukharan Jewish community. With anti-Semitism on the rise in the Soviet Union and a wave of hostile and volatile national movements gaining ground, Jews in Central Asia—both Bukharan Jews and Jews of East European descent—are overcome by a new and palpable insecurity.

Now that the option of emigration has become a firm reality, many Jews are considering relinquishing private homes, spacious gardens, livelihoods that by Soviet standards are prosperous, and the accumulated experience of centuries of acculturation to a way of life that has yielded material and spiritual sustenance, if at times grudgingly. At the same time, as communication strengthens between Bukharan Jews in Israel and America and those still in the Soviet Union, illusions about the West have also begun to give way to a more sober understanding of the challenges and pitfalls of emigré life.

In 1989, a new and more restrictive United States immigration policy all but stopped the influx of Bukharan Jews to New York. Whether at its current size the Bukharan Jewish community can maintain its distinctive cultural identity or whether it will be gradually assimilated into some larger social entity depends in part on the leadership of Bukharan Jewish community groups and organizations, and in particular on the vitality of a musical ensemble such as Shashmaqam. Musical performance can express powerful symbols that continually recreate and reaffirm the identity and beliefs of a community of listeners. Shashmaqam was conceived in a generous and genial spirit of community sharing; at the same time, perhaps unknowingly, its members have become participants in the shared custody of a threatened, yet remarkable tradition. Let us wish them, as it is said in Bukhara, "*khush omad bashed*"—success, good luck, Godspeed.

### Shashmaqam: The Music

Note: Persian and Tajik classical and post-classical poetry is notoriously difficult to translate into English. The translations of song texts that follow are not intended to simulate the poetic style of the original, but simply to provide a sense of the meaning of the texts.

#### 1. *Obloim*

Fatima Kuinova and Abukhai Aminov, vocals  
*"Obloim,"* a variant form of *Allaim* [Arabic: "my God"] illustrates a musical genre called *haqqoni* [from Arabic: *haqq*, "absolute truth," connoting "the absolute," or "God"]. *Haqqoni* is particular to Bukhara, and is sung by, and for, Moslems as well as Bukharan Jews. Unlike most Bukharan music, *haqqoni* is unmetred and is sung *a cappella*, with couplets performed antiphonally by two, or occasionally three or more, singers. Singers hold their hands to the side of their mouths or use a plate, held or gently waved at an oblique angle to the mouth, to regulate and direct their voices.

The purpose of *haqqoni* is to appeal to God and to facilitate inner purification: to renounce the physical world and become immersed in an inner world. In both musical style and texts, the *haqqoni* genre demonstrates the strong influence of Sufi ideals, and indeed *haqqoni* were formerly performed in the Bukharan *khanaaqa* (dervish meeting places), as well as in the *bazaar-i shab* (night bazaar) and in other popular gathering places. They are still performed as a part of funeral ceremonies and commemorations of the dead, now more frequently among Jews than Moslems. A *Haqqoni* is sung in the home just before the body of the deceased is removed to the cemetery. At both Jewish and Moslem burials, women traditionally sing for and among women, and men for and among men. Fatima Kuinova reports that *haqqoni* are also sung during social evenings in private homes as an expression of a singer's inner feelings.

The *haqqoni*'s antiphonal performance style fosters a certain tension wherein each singer strives for maximum self-expression in order to create the desired spiritual atmosphere. The singers may sing from a single text or combine different texts that provide the proper imagery.

The presence of an Uzbek strophe at the end of "*Obloim*," which is otherwise sung in Tajik, confirms the tradition of Uzbek and Tajik bilingualism in the repertory of Bukharan singers.

Oh, my soul, my God, I am your slave.

Woman: Eh, my friend, my soul, I take you by the hand.  
 I kiss your ruby lips, I long for your full-throated laughter.  
 I'll take you in my embrace tonight.  
 I'll saturate myself in the marrow of your bones.

Man: Eh, I ache, oooh. Come to my cabin,  
 joy of my soul, I'll fly around your head/  
 Without you, I cry day and night, I'll fly around your head.  
 My chest is constantly torn apart by your suffering.  
 I'll fly around your head.  
 Come for one night to this poor soul, I'll fly around your head./

Woman: Oh, my soul, my God. I'm your slave.  
 As long as I am alive, I want to see your face.  
 When I become ashes, let me become a piece of dust at the foot of your mountain.  
 With raised arms, I'll pray that for you,  
 the end of the world will never come.

Man: Eh, I ache, oooh, as long as I can't be around you rivals will sit alongside you.  
 Eh, branch of a fresh blossom, I am the nightingale of this garden.  
 How blessed am I if I can be in the shadow of your eyebrows.

Woman: Oh, my soul, my God, I am your slave.  
 (Uzbek text):  
 If you give me a goblet, give me a full one,  
 I've had enough half-full cups.  
 If you give me a friend, give me a soul-mate,  
 I've had enough who aren't.

Salaamati ("be well").

#### 2. *Ghairi Khudo Yar Nadoram*

("We Have No Friend But God")  
 Iosif Abramov, *tar* and vocal; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

This song represents a simplified folk version of a widely-known *ghazal* from the *Divan-e Shams* of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the 13th century Sufi sheikh and sublime poet who inspired the Mevlevi, or "whirling" dervishes (the full song text is printed in Jean During's *Musique et Mystique dans les Traditions de l'Iran*, p. 219-220). The fact that the singer of the present version, Iosif Abramov, ascribes the source of the text to the Torah and perceives it as Jewish spiritual poetry illustrates the interaction of Jewish and Islamic musical, spiritual, and linguistic traditions in Central Asia.

In the two worlds, we have no friend but God.  
 We have no occupation except remembering God.  
 We're a tall, thin branch in this little corner of the world.  
 We have nothing to do with the good and the bad of others.  
 We're a modest part of this little corner of the world.  
 Even if someone casts stones at us, we won't pay attention.

3. *Jon-e Manam* ("My Soul")  
 Borukhai Davraev, vocal; Iosif Abramov, *tar*; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

The black birth-mark on the face of my beloved  
 Whose dagger-like eyebrows pierce my soul.

Don't say for nothing that she makes my heart joyful.  
 I am held in the power of my heart,  
 when will my heart be in my power?

Him: Graceful one, from you comes the fragrant scent musk.  
 Her: When will this fragrant musk be my noose?  
 Him: Graceful one, don't kill your beloved one, less coquetry!  
 Her: I'll kill my beloved, how long do I have to live?  
 Him: You who speak sweet words, a black snake is standing on your neck.  
 Her: What do you mean, a snake; it's my unkempt hair.  
 Him: Ahmadi Jami glowed in love like a candle.  
 Her: What do you mean like a candle; you glow like the moon.

#### 4. *To Bodi Sabo*

Iosif Abramov, *tar* and vocal; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire* and vocal

*To Bodi Sabo* is a clearly expressed example of the *ghazal*, a lyrical form of poetry that was popular in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu literature from the 8th century onward, and that became entrenched in the poetic and musical expression of Bukhara, Samarkand, and other Central Asian cities. The text plays with the characteristic symbols and imagery of love and wine, mystically understood. In the last couplet, the poet—here, Maqfi—signs his name.

You must see the flower garden before the morning winds come.  
 The meadow birds will fly there.  
 Don't lose hope in your fate.  
 For every sunset, there is a sunrise.  
 We'll come, we'll sit, today the song of the poor nightingale  
 Tells of my soul's suffering.  
 If my thirsty lips don't taste the wine of union with you  
 My eyes will shed tears from the sorrowful pain of my love for you.  
 My eyes are on the caravan trail that is redolent with the fragrance of union with you.  
 When the morning wind brings news of you, my thoughts are constantly about you.  
 Don't arouse everyone to learn the secrets of the soul.  
 Others are constrained, reserved, but you are from among th rulers.  
 Don't awaken all of these things in the heart of Maqfi.  
 Think that there is a just one (God) other than you.

#### 5. *Dostanra Gum Makun*

("Don't Lose Your Friends")  
 Fatima Kuinova, vocal; Iosif Abramov, *tar*; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

A folk melody set to a text by Mirza Tursun-Zade, a well-known Tajik poet of the Soviet period. The poem is a *ghazal*, written in the spirit of popular didactic poetry.

While you can, don't lose your friends.  
 Don't lose the friends who are close to you.  
 Without friends, it is very difficult to be  
 in this world.  
 Don't lose those who lighten your troubles.  
 Learn how to tell your real friends from  
 the mass of friends.  
 Don't lose friends who are famous to  
 the whole world.  
 The beauty of the garden depends on  
 the charm of the flowers.  
 Don't lose people who are charming  
 like flowers.  
 If a friend comes, embrace him.  
 Don't lose friends who are famous to  
 the whole world.  
 The folk are our only source of inspiration.  
 Don't lose the folk who are famous to  
 the whole world.  
 While you can, don't lose your friends.  
 Don't lose the friends who are close to you.

#### 6. Biyo Yak ("Come Once")

Fatima Kuinova, vocal; Isosif Abramov,  
*tar*; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*; Yasha  
 Kakuriev, clarinet; Mikhael Abramov,  
 accordion

*Biyo Yak* is a Tajik version of the  
 ubiquitous counting song:  
 "Come once, come twice, come three  
 times..." Each number is at the same time  
 a play on words or a metonym: "one"  
 means "my one and only;" "two" means  
 "the one with two eyes;" "three" is the  
 same as the beginning of the word for  
 "apple," and so forth. It is in the poetic  
 form called *du-baiti*, a form typical of Tajik  
 folk poetry.

May the folk's evil eye not witness your  
 intoxicated eyes.  
 May your intoxicated spring not be  
 sorrowful.

We ask of God this wish: let your happy  
 times not be destroyed.  
 May everyone live, may no one die.

Come once, come once, my only one,  
 Come twice, come twice, my two  
 longed-for eyes.

(refrain):  
 My young flower  
 I will kiss your ruby lips.  
 My pure bride, don't lament too much.  
 You have an eternal friend, you have  
 happy times.

Come three times, come three times my  
 apple, my pomegranate  
 Come four times, come four times. I  
 don't have any patience left.

Come five times, come five times, my palm,  
 Come six times, come six times, my  
 wine goblet.

(Refrain)

Come nine times, come nine times, the  
 light of my eyes,  
 Come ten times, come ten times, I'll  
 take on all of your problems.

#### 7. Medley of Songs from Wedding Repertory:

*Yar-Yar, Aburu Kosh Dumi Mor*,  
*Shastu-Shastu Chor*, *Chashmi Sityah*  
*Dori*, *doire interlude*, *Mahvashi*  
*Nozuk Badanam*, *Orzu*,  
 the Ensemble; Fatima Kuinova, vocal  
 solos; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire* solo

In the cities of Transoxiana, weddings  
 provide the occasion for abundant music-  
 making and dancing. At traditional Moslem  
 and Jewish weddings in the Bukharan  
 cultural zone, men and women celebrate  
 separately. Male instrumentalists-singers  
 entertain male guests, while ensembles  
 usually consisting of between three and  
 seven professional women entertainers,  
 called *sozanda-s*, entertain the women.  
 Among Bukharan Jews, mixed weddings  
 are now becoming more common.

Shashmaqam has selected five songs  
 from the large repertory of wedding music  
 and linked them together in the customary  
 suite form. The songs are called after their  
 opening words. "Yar-Yar" is sung for  
 weddings throughout much of Central Asia  
 in various melodic forms and with a variety  
 of texts in several different languages. The  
 songs that follow it are associated more  
 particularly with the cultural sphere of  
 Bukhara. All are dance songs, and the  
 dances are interpreted in Shashmaqam's  
 concerts by Firuza Yagudaeva.

a) *Yar, Yar, Yaran eh* ("Friend, Friend,  
 Brothers")  
 My Brother Jews

My hand on your hand,  
*Yar, yar yaran eh* (refrain)

I am a victim of your two hands, (refrain)

A friend came, a friend came (refrain)

A friend has come from far away (refrain)

Stand up, take him by the hand (refrain)

The friend who left has come back (refrain)

b) *Aburu Kosh Dumi Mor*

Bravo, bravo, bravo  
 Your eyebrows are like the tail of a snake.

Your soft glance, partner in my suffering  
 Your eyebrows are like the tail of a snake.

Even if you cut off my head, I won't  
 turn away from you.  
 Your eyebrows are like the tail of a snake.

Even if you cut off my head with a  
 sharp dagger  
 Your eyebrows are like the tail of a snake.

My blood boils, I'll circle around you.  
 Your eyebrows are like the tail of a snake.

c) *Shastu-Shastu Chor*

6 times 64 times, you captured me  
 You captured me with your curly locks (2x)  
 You captured me with your eyes  
 You captured me with your face  
 You captured me with your eyes  
 You captured me with your face  
 You captured me with your curly locks  
 6 times 64 times, you captured me  
 You captured me with your curly locks.

d) *Chashmi Sityah Dori*

You have black eyes, I'll be your victim.  
 Where is your house, I'll be your guest  
 (refrain)

The way you walk to the door catches my  
 eye right away (refrain)

I'm embarrassed by your black eyes.  
 I don't have anything to give back to  
 you  
 The only treasure that I have is my life,  
 and I'll sacrifice it for you.  
 (refrain)

e) *Mahvashi Nozuk Badanam*, *Orzu*

My graceful one, like a moon, *orzu* (I  
 want you)  
 I want to come closer to you, *orzu*  
 My graceful one, like a moon, *orzu*  
 I'll say a word in your ear, *orzu*  
 My words will become dear to you, *orzu*  
 I'll talk to you so that you will want me to  
 go on talking, *orzu*  
 Let it be so, *orzu*  
 You speak with sweet words, *orzu*  
 You have an ant-like waist, *orzu*  
 Your eyebrows are like a bow, *orzu*  
 My graceful one, like a moon, *orzu*.

#### 8. Talqin-i Bayat

Isosif Abramov, *tanbur* and vocal;  
 Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

"Talqin-i Bayat" is a classical piece from  
 the *shashmaqam*, the collection of six long  
 vocal and instrumental suites that is at the  
 heart of the musical "great tradition" of  
 Bukhara. *Shashmaqam* means in Tajik  
 "six *maqams*." In Central Asia, *maqam*  
 has two meanings. The first signifies a  
 mode or melody type, i.e. a nucleus of  
 melodic features that may include  
 stereotypic melodic motifs and intervals,  
 conventionalized initial and final pitches,  
 and a particular registral location within  
 the central part of the pitch ladder that  
 comprises the tone world of the  
*shashmaqam*. In this sense of "melody  
 type," a *maqam* is melodically more  
 specific than a mere scale, but less specific  
 than a particular tune. *Maqam* also means  
 a suite, or collection of pieces that displays  
 in its contents and sequence certain  
 melodic and rhythmic organizing  
 principles. Thus, *shashmaqam* means both  
 "six collections" and "six systems of  
 melody types." Each collection is called by  
 the name of the melody type that is  
 featured in the opening piece of its  
 collection of pieces: *buzruk*, *rast*, *nava*,  
*dugah*, *segah*, and *iraq*. In addition to  
 these six melody types, other subordinate  
 melody types, called *shu'be* (Arabic:  
 "branch") make cameo appearances in the  
 suites.

"Talqin-i Bayat" is in melody type  
*bayat*—a *shu'be* in the *nava*  
 cycle—performed in the *usul*, or metro-  
 rhythmic genre *talqin*. Distinguished by  
 its uneven, lurching beat, *talqin* is a genre  
 common to the *shashmaqam* and to  
 Central Asian art songs, called *ashula*, that  
 are independent of the *shashmaqam*. In  
 Central Asia, the *usul* of *talqin* is also  
 known as *lang* ("lame," as in Tamerlane,  
 or Timurlang, i.e. "Timur the Lame") and  
 is related to the Turkish "limping" *usul*,  
 called *aksak*.

Isosif Abramov accompanies his vocal  
 line on the *tanbur*, a long-necked lute  
 whose strings are plucked with a special  
 plectrum worn on the finger. Brass strings  
 ride relatively loosely over high, moveable  
 frets, allowing players to create a variety of  
 fluid microtonal intervals by depressing the  
 strings more or less firmly behind the frets.  
 In this performance, Isosif Abramov  
 matches the subtle microtonal inflections  
 in his voice with identical inflections on the  
*tanbur*.

Even though you left me, you are still  
 my beloved.  
 Even though you are an enemy to my  
 life, you are closer to me than my  
 own life.  
 Even if you will torment me, shooting  
 me with the arrow of suffering,  
 I won't even throw at you the petals of  
 soft blossoms.  
 Your pushing me away is like assassination.  
 Even if I were to die, I wouldn't give  
 you to anyone else.  
 Endure a few more days, my life is  
 coming to an end.  
 When the end comes, I will give you my  
 friend.  
 When your happy drunkenness is filled  
 with the sweet voices of a songstress,  
 Let the groans of my heavy suffering  
 reach you.

#### 9. Nasr-i Chargah

Abukhai Aminov, vocal and *doire*; Isosif  
 Abramov, *tar*

*Nasr-i Chargah*, also from the  
*shashmaqam*, is a piece in melody type  
*chargah*—a *shu'be* in the *dugah*  
 cycle—performed in the *usul*, or metro-  
 rhythmic genre *nasr*, a 6/4 rhythm which  
 in this performance is marked on the *doire*.  
 Like other pieces in the *shashmaqam*,  
*Nasr-i Chargah* is a fixed  
 composition—albeit an oral one—and  
 melodic improvisation plays a limited role  
 in performance. The text was composed by  
 the Tajik poet, Najib. Abukhai Aminov,  
 the singer, learned it from his brother, the  
 noted singer Serezh (Simkha) Aminov.

I brought you two hearts, both melted.  
 I am burning in two fires, but each of  
 these fires burns the sun.  
 Your crescent moonlike eyebrows are  
 reflected in the mirror-like water.  
 With one movement of your eyebrows,  
 you destroy them both.  
 I had two vessels of your blood in my heart.  
 With a wink, you destroyed them both.  
 Coquettishly, you opened your two lips,  
 and from them holy words began to flow.  
 I made two requests of you, and in one  
 place, I received an answer to both.  
 I dedicated two couplets to your eyebrows  
 But you never took notice of them  
 Even though each of them became a book.  
 Your two curly locks which were curled  
 by a manicurist,  
 Each of your two locks became a noose  
 for my soul.  
 In the faith of my soul, Najib had two  
 homes in two worlds.  
 With one glance, the wine-pourer  
 destroyed them both.

#### 10. Ushshaq-i Samarkand

Fatima Kuinova, Borukhai Davraev,  
 Abukhai Aminov, Isak Baraev, vocals;  
 Isosif Abramov, *tar* Arkady Davidov,  
*tar* Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

*Ushshaq-i Samarkand* is associated with  
 the 19th-century Samarkand musician Hoji  
 Abdulaziz. The melody of *Ushshaq-i*  
*Samarkand* derives from the Central Asian  
 melodic type *ushshaq* and is sung to a  
 variety of Tajik and Uzbek poetic texts  
 written in the classical quantitative verse  
 style that is called *aruz*. The Tajik text  
 used in this rendition of *Ushshaq-i*  
*Samarkand* is by Zebunisa, a 19th century  
 female descendant of the Moghul emperor  
 Babur.

Classical Central Asian songs  
 characteristically begin in a low tessitura,

pass briefly through a middle range, and ascend through a series of increasingly higher sections to the awj, or point of musical culmination. Following the awj, the melody descends and finally concludes in the low register from which it began. The extensive melodic diapason of *Ushshaq-i Samarkand* lends itself to virtuoso solo treatment, and indeed, the piece is known almost exclusively through the performance of soloists. However, Shashmaqam's rendition features not one, but four, vocalists, who enliven their performance by marking sections of the piece with different numbers and combinations of voices.

You with the painted eyebrows, come here.  
With a warm glance, joy of my soul, come here.  
Playing with your eyelids, with a glare as hard as a diamond,  
Here, the kings demand the Karbala desert.  
Let human treachery not reach the paradisaical garden of your smile.  
You leave me, and I don't know where I am.  
I leafed through the pages of all the world's books.  
I saw your birthmark and said, "this is what I was looking for."  
If you would pay a tribute to God for your beauty  
Come here, Zebunisa, for here, I am the humble one who receives tribute.

11. **Qalandari**  
Isosif Abramov, *tar*; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

Like *Talqin-i Bayat* and *Nasr-i Chargah*, *Qalandari* belongs to the Central Asian classical *maqam* repertory. The term *qalandar* refers to a wandering dervish. The *qalandar usul* is the same as the limping *usul talqin*. *Qalandar-s* are normally vocal pieces, but this one is played as an instrumental piece.

12. **Yalli**  
Isosif Abramov, *tar*; Shumieli Kuyenov, *doire*

For Bukharan musicians, Azerbaijani music, from Azerbaijan, across the Caspian Sea, represents a form of slightly exotic cultural import. Yalli is an Azerbaijani collective dance performed by men and women, either together or separately. The music is usually played on the *zurna* and *davul* (oboe and drum). In the 1970's, Azerbaijani music became popular in the wedding music repertory of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Bukharan Jews.

13. **Azerbaijani Segah**  
Yasha Kakuriev, clarinet; Mikhail Abramov, accordion; Isak Baraev, *doire*

Azerbaijan has its own counterpart to the classical *shashmaqam*, called *magam*, a virtuoso repertory usually performed by soloists or small ensembles who may be vocalists or instrumentalists performing on the *tar* and *kemanche* (spike fiddle) and accompanied by a *daf* (frame drum).

*Segah* is the name of a melody type that occurs in both the Azerbaijani *magam* and the Bukharan *Shashmaqam*. However, the link between the two *segah-s* seems to be in name only, since they are melodically quite dissimilar. Bukharan musicians have taken up the haunting Azerbaijani *segah*, not in the pristine form of classical *magam*, but in a lighter, more popular style. Here it is performed on clarinet and accordion,

accompanied by *doire*. The opening section is an unmetred improvisation on the clarinet built from the conventionalized melodic motifs and phrases of *segah*. This section segues into a rang, or dance movement that features a fixed tune composed in *segah*.

### Instruments

**tanbur.** The *tanbur* was traditionally the leading instrument of Bukharan classical music. It has four strings, three of which are used as drones while the fourth is plucked with a metal plectrum worn on the tip of the index finger. Frets are built of wound gut and are built up from the neck of the instrument so that a performer can inflict the plucked string sound with microtonal oscillations by varying the pressure on the string across the fret. In this respect, the *tanbur* style mimics the filigree style of vocal production, in which notes are bent, vibrated, and oscillated in a variety of canonized styles of ornamentation called in Uzbek *nola*.

**tar.** The *tar* is an Azerbaijani instrument which was first employed in Bukhara at the beginning of the 20th century and has become especially popular there since the 1950's. In Azerbaijan, the *tar* player does not accompany his (it is always played by men) singing, while in Uzbekistan, as this recording shows, the *tar* frequently serves as an accompanying instrument, substituting for the more traditional *tanbur*.

**doire.** A large tambourine with a thick wooden rim and goatskin or sheepskin head, the *doire* is a much-favored instrument in Bukhara. Commonly played by women as well as men, the *doire* can also perform a solo function in extended interludes between songs. This form of "singing" *doire*-playing is called *safalek*. In the classical music of the *shashmaqam*, the *doire* is a required instrument inasmuch as the *shashmaqam* consists not only of canonized melodic types, but a canonized system of rhythmic formulas—the *usul-s*.

**clarinet and davul** (kettle drums). Like the *tar*, the clarinet and *davul* entered Bukharan music from Azerbaijan, as a part of the absorption of Azerbaijani musical styles in the Bukharan wedding repertory.

**accordion.** The accordion achieved popularity in Bukhara in the 1960's, a bit later than the *tar*. In wedding music ensembles, it has largely replaced traditional stringed and wind instruments such as the *gijak* (spike fiddle) and *nay* (wooden flute). It has also superseded the harmoniums of Azerbaijani and Daghestani provenance that were used in Bukhara at the turn of the century.

### The Musicians

**Fatima Kainova** was born in Samarkand, but moved to Dushanbe in 1934 with her two sisters and seven brothers after her father was jailed and murdered for his mercantile prosperity. She graduated from the Pedagogical Institute in Dushanbe and in 1942, joined a women's *rebab* ensemble and folk orchestra under the direction of the Dushanbe Philharmonia. She counts as her teachers Niryia Aminov, Faizula Babakulov, Sharazar Shaibov, and Faizula Shakhobov. In 1948, she was named a Merited Artist of the Tajik SSR. She came

to New York in 1981, where she lives with her husband and two children.

**Abukhai Aminov** was born in 1951 in Samarkand. He learned music from his father, a merchant and amateur singer, and later from his brother, the noted singer Serezh (Simkha) Aminov. Later, he studied *doire* in Samarkand's music high school and worked in Samarkand House of Culture no. 7, where he directed a children's music ensemble. He came to the United States in 1989 and is currently employed at Streits Matzos in Manhattan.

**Borukhai Davraev** was born in 1947 in Katta-Kurgan, a town in the Samarkand region. He attended the Samarkand music high school, but left after three years to work as a teacher in a middle school. He came to the United States in 1979 and is self-employed as a shoe repairman.

**Shumieli Kuyenov** was born in Samarkand in 1950 and lived subsequently in Dushanbe and Tashkent, where his father worked as a barber. He played the *doire* from early childhood, and was a student of Ustad Alim Kamilov, who fixed *doire* rhythms in notation. In 1968 he became an accompanist in Tashkent's High School of Choreography and after service in the army, worked as a teacher and accompanist in the Theater Arts Institute. In 1979, Shumieli Kuyenov emigrated to New York, where he worked for five years as a taxi driver. In 1984, he opened a jewelry store on Long Island, which he now manages. He lives in Queens with his wife and two daughters.

**Yasha Kakuriev** was born in 1947 in Tashkent. He graduated from a music school in Tashkent, and from Tashkent's Music High School. He worked at the Tashkent Radio Station, playing clarinet and saxophone in a popular music ensemble and in 1982, became a teacher in Tashkent's Music School no. 22. In 1989, he emigrated to New York and presently works as a chauffeur for Phone-a-Car in Manhattan.

**Isosif Abramov** was born in Tashkent. He graduated from secondary school and from the High School of Arts in Samarkand and then returned to Tashkent where he worked as an accompanist in the Choreography High School and in the Theater Arts Institute. He emigrated to New York in 1989 and played his first concert with the ensemble Shashmaqam just two weeks after his arrival in the United States. Presently, he sells hot dogs from a pushcart while learning to be a watch repairman.

**Firuza Yagudaeva** was born in Dushanbe. She started dancing at the age of seven, and later studied choreography with leading teachers in Tashkent. She taught Central Asian and international dance, as well as psychology and dance methodology in Tashkent and Dushanbe, and toured with the Lola Dance Ensemble. She emigrated to the United States in 1976 and for several years, ran the "Firuz" restaurant in which she performed, cooked, and presented visiting dancers. She now works as a teaching assistant in an elementary school.

**Mikhail Abramov** is a native of Ferghana. He graduated from Ferghana's music school and continued his studies in the Ferghana Musical *Uchilishshe* (high school). He worked as an ensemble leader

in a *dom kul'turi* (house of culture) and concurrently, as a chauffeur. Abramov emigrated to Israel in 1978, and in 1987, came to New York City, where he works as a machine operator at Streits Matzos.

**Arkadi Davidov** was born in Bukhara. He learned the *tar* and *rebab* as a teenager and studied in the Bukhara music high school. He taught music in primary schools before moving to Tashkent, where he lived for thirty years, playing professionally in a folk orchestra. Subsequently, he immigrated to Israel, and in 1984, came to the United States. He lives in Forest Hills, Queens, and works at Streits Matzos.

**Isak Baraev** was born in Tashkent in 1949. He is a graduate of the Tashkent Music High School, and of Tashkent State Conservatory, where he concentrated on folk percussion instruments. In Tashkent, he taught percussion in Music School no. 23, and worked as a percussionist in the theater, in theater and dance institutes, in the Philharmonia Society, and in the radio station *maqam* ensemble. He came to the United States in 1989 and currently works as a chauffeur for Prime Time Limousine.

**Credits:**  
Project Directors: Ethel Raim, Martin Koenig  
Produced by Ted Levin, Martin Koenig, Ethel Raim  
Notes by Ted Levin  
Consultant: Otanazar Matyakubov  
Recording Engineer: Paul Zimman  
Assistant Engineer: Nelson Wong  
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### About the Ethnic Folk Arts Center:

The mission of the Ethnic Folk Arts Center (EFAC) is to promote cultural understanding and empowerment through research, documentation and presentation of community-based traditional performing artists. The Center has a 25 year history as a public advocate of cultural equity for the diverse immigrant communities in the greater New York area. Historically, the level of support available for these communities leaves them invisible to the public eye. Our concern is to support and nurture diverse traditional cultural forms that are in danger of extinction; forms that have traditionally bound members of ethnic groups together and provided the foundation for community life. Working on both a local ethnic community level and within the mainstream media and arts world, the Center creates a bridge that facilitates access to broader general audiences. But perhaps even more importantly, this outside affirmation is critical in helping to sustain and nurture the life of these traditions within the communities themselves.