

A man and a woman are shown from the chest up, playing large, circular brass instruments, likely baglamas. The man on the left is wearing a red turtleneck sweater and is looking towards the right. The woman on the right is wearing a red sweater with a dark, ornate pattern and a black headscarf. She is looking upwards and to the right. The background is black.

Music of Central Asia VOL.6

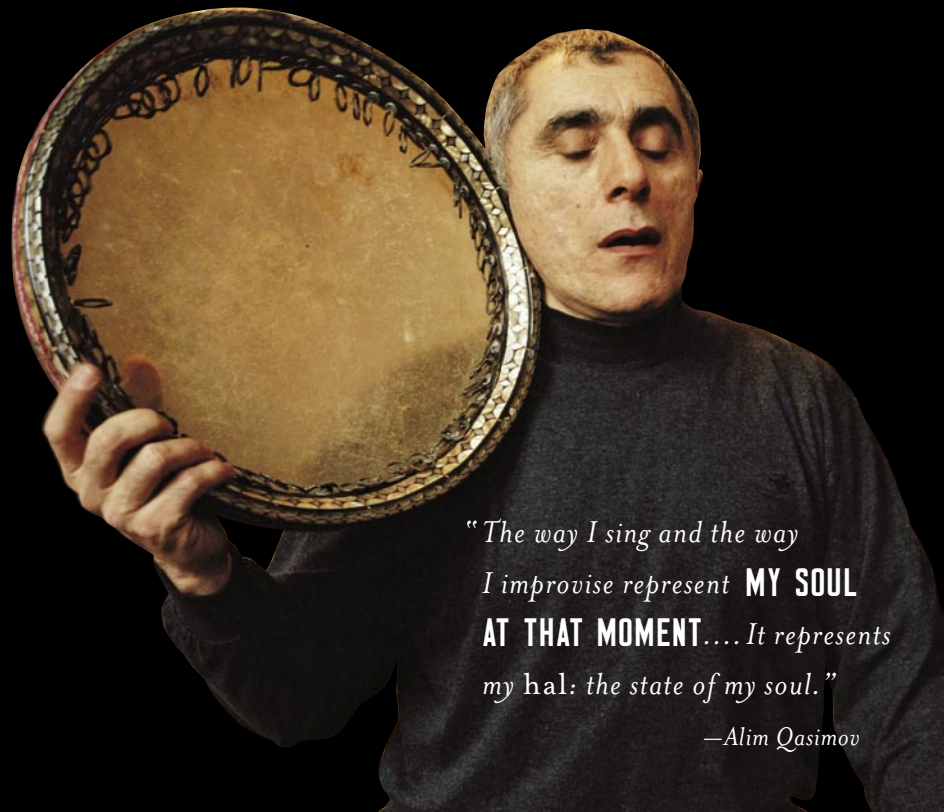
ALIM AND FARGANA QASIMOV

SPIRITUAL MUSIC *of* AZERBAIJAN



Smithsonian Folkways

MUSIC OF CENTRAL ASIA is a co-production of the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia, a program of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The aim of the series, released worldwide by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, is to present leading exponents of Central Asia's rich and diverse musical heritage to listeners outside the region. As a new generation of talented performers reinterprets this heritage — much of it ruptured or lost during the Soviet era — older traditions are reanimated and transformed. *Music of Central Asia* documents the work of musicians who represent both a mastery of their own tradition and a contemporary spirit of innovation expressed through new approaches to performance style, repertory, and technique. Each release includes a DVD with a documentary film on the featured performers as well as a map, musical instrument glossary, and short introduction to *Music of Central Asia* and the Aga Khan Music Initiative. These intimate, often poignant, musical portraits bring to life a group of remarkable artists whose creative achievements proclaim Central Asia's prominence on any musical map of the world. ~~~ THE AGA KHAN MUSIC INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIA was created in 2000 by His Highness the Aga Khan to contribute to the preservation, documentation, and further development of Central Asia's musical heritage. The Music Initiative pursues its long-term goals both within its region of activity and worldwide. In Central Asia these goals include revitalizing important musical repertoires by helping tradition-bearers pass on their knowledge and craft; building sustainable cultural institutions that can eventually be maintained by local organizations and communities; and supporting artists who are developing new approaches to the performance of Central Asian music. Worldwide, the Music Initiative strives to increase knowledge about Central Asia's music and culture, particularly among students, and to nurture collaborations among musicians from different parts of Central Eurasia and beyond. For more information, see: <http://www.akdn.org/Music>



*"The way I sing and the way
I improvise represent **MY SOUL**
AT THAT MOMENT.... It represents
my hal: the state of my soul."*

—Alim Qasimov

CD TRACKS

MUGHAM CHARGAH

1. BARDASHT 3:55
2. MAYE 6:17
3. BESTE-NIGAR 8:19
4. HISAR 3:24
5. MUALIF 4:36
6. MÜKHALIF-TARKIB 8:36
7. MANSURIYYA 7:21

COMPOSED SONGS

8. YOU ARE THE LIGHT
OF MY EYES 13:16
9. ESHQIN MEHEBBETI
(LOVE OF LOVES) 5:25
10. JEYRAN (DEER) 6:32
11. KÖHLEN ATIM
(MY SPLENDID HORSE) 2:52

DVD

MUSIC OF CENTRAL ASIA AND THE
AGA KHAN MUSIC INITIATIVE

ALIM AND FARGANA QASIMOV:
SPIRITUAL MUSIC OF AZERBAIJAN

INTERACTIVE INSTRUMENT
GLOSSARY

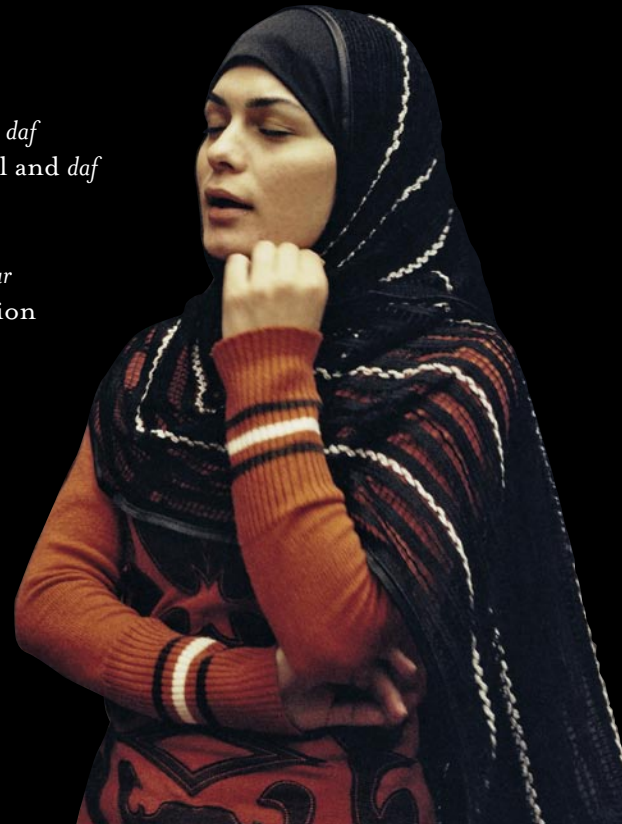
MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA

Music of Central Asia Vol. 6
Alim and Fargana Qasimov: Spiritual Music
of Azerbaijan

SFW CD 40525 © 2007 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

MUSICIANS

ALIM QASIMOV, vocal and *daf*
FARGANA QASIMOVA, vocal and *daf*
RAFAEL ASGAROV, *balaban*
RAUF ISLAMOV, *kamancha*
ALI ASGAR MAMMADOV, *tar*
NATIQ SHIRINOV, percussion
YASEF EYVAZOV, *oud*



CENTRAL ASIAN MUSIC

An Overview

Central Asia is commonly understood to encompass the territory of six nations: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (see map). Yet patterns of settlement and cultural links that predate the establishment of current political boundaries argue for a broader definition of the region. For example, the Uyghurs, a Muslim, Turkic-speaking people whose traditional territory is in western China, have old cultural affinities with other Central Asian groups. The Turkmen, who comprise the titular ethnic group of Turkmenistan, are strongly represented

in the Iranian region of Khorasan that flanks Turkmenistan to the southwest. Azerbaijan, geographically part of the Caucasus, is closely bound to Central Asia through a common cultural heritage of music, literature, philosophy, and art.

Beyond Central Asia itself, diaspora communities created by recent emigration have spread cultural influences from the region far beyond its geographical borders. Some of Afghanistan's finest musicians were among the hundreds of thousands of Afghans who fled to Pakistan and later emigrated to the West following the Soviet invasion of their country in



1979 and the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s. Outstanding musicians were also among the tens of thousands of Central Asian (“Bukharan”) Jews who left Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to resettle in New York City and Tel Aviv when the USSR opened its borders to Jewish emigration in the mid-1970s. Central Asian Jews long lived as a Persian-speaking minority population among their Muslim neighbors. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of Central Asia’s Persian-speaking and Turkic-speaking population identifies itself with Islam, as an active religious practice, a cultural legacy, a worldview that informs everyday social life, or all of these. Excluded from this group are Russian-speaking Slavs and other non-Muslim immigrants who began to populate Central Asia after the tsarist conquests

in the latter half of the 19th century and during the Soviet era accounted for half or more of the population of the region’s major cities.

Central Asia’s history has been shaped by its strategic position at the intersection of two great axes of civilization. One axis points southwest, toward the sophisticated urban culture of Iran. The other axis points northeast, to what has been called Turan—the nomadic world of the Inner Asian steppe, where pastoralists belonging to myriad Turkic and Mongolian clans created a succession of powerful steppe empires. Iran vs. Turan, sedentary vs. nomadic, urbanite vs. steppe-dweller — in broad strokes, these contrasting pairs represent the distinctions of worldview and way of life that echo strongly in Central Asia’s

musical traditions despite centuries and millennia of intermingling among its diverse social groups.

In nomadic cultures, the consummate entertainer is the bard, and music is characterized by a strong narrative dimension. Epic tales as long as thirty times the length of Homer’s *Iliad*, and instrumental pieces whose wordless melodies and rhythms relate beloved stories through a kind of musical onomatopoeia all reflect a nomadic sensibility. Traditional nomadic spirituality ascribes spiritual power to a range of natural phenomena and living creatures, and nomadic music and sound-making often serve as a means of representing and accessing the power of spirits.

The music of sedentary-dwellers, by contrast, reflects the deep impact

of Islam as a spiritual and cultural force. The central artifact of musical performance is the elaboration and embellishment of words and texts by a beautiful voice. Singers are typically accompanied by small ensembles of mixed instruments that almost always include percussion. The beauty of the voice may also be represented symbolically by a solo instrument such as a plucked lute, violin, or flute, which reproduces the filigree embellishments and ornamentation characteristic of a great singer.

In the years following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Union tried to bring about fundamental transformations in the organization, transmission, and expression of indigenous culture among the inhabitants of its vast empire.

Since the beginning of the post-Soviet period, musicians throughout Central Asia have sought to recover and reanimate older musical traditions in response to growing interest in their cultural heritage, among both local inhabitants and outsiders. These traditions are firmly rooted in local musical practices, but none of them is “pure.” Central Asia’s long history of contact and exchange with other cultures continues to evolve in our own time. And as the musicians whose performances come alive on *Music of Central Asia* leave their own creative imprint on the region’s musical legacy, there can be no doubt that authentic traditional music remains forever contemporary.



INTRODUCTION

Azerbaijan: Musical Crossroads of Turkic and Iranian Civilizations

Music in Azerbaijan reflects the long history of contact between Turkic and Iranian peoples in Transcaucasia, the region lying south of the Caucasus Mountains between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. In antiquity, the territory of present-day Azerbaijan was part of a succession of Iranian empires, notably the Achaemenian and Sasanian, that was eventually infiltrated and conquered by Turkic and Mongol groups from the east: Ghaznavids, Seljuqs, Ilkhanids, and Timurids. During the 16th–18th centuries, control of Transcaucasia passed back

and forth between two imperial rivals: the Ottoman Empire, with its capital in Istanbul, and the Safavid Empire, centered in Iran. At the end of the 18th century, the Qajars, an Iranian dynasty of Turkic origin, emerged as rulers of the formerly Safavid lands, but in 1828, the Qajars were forced to cede their northern provinces, including a part of Azerbaijan, to Russia. Parts of these provinces later became the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan, and, following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the independent nation of Azerbaijan. Southern regions of



BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan remained under Qajar control, and today the number of Iranians who speak Azeri (a Turkic language) or identify themselves as ethnically Azeri is thought to be two to three times the population of Azerbaijan itself, currently around eight million.

In traditional Azeri music, Turkic elements are felt most strongly in folk song and epic traditions rooted in the countryside, while Iranian influence has shaped urban court music and art song. Musical instruments in Azerbaijan reflect this division: the instrument par excellence of folk musicians is the *saz*, a fretted, long-necked lute that, in a number of variant forms, is also common in Turkey. By contrast, urban musicians tend to favor the *kamancha*, a four-string spike fiddle, and the *tar*, a long-necked lute with a membrane-covered resonating chamber that is regarded as Azerbaijan's national instrument. In the 20th century, the *tar* became popular in Uzbekistan, across the Caspian Sea, where it played an important role in the development of urban popular music (*estrada*).

Spike fiddles are also prominent in many styles of traditional music in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, where they are known as *ghijak* or *ghirjak*.

Mugham, the indigenous classical music of Azerbaijan, belongs to a transnational tradition of urban

classical or court music that flourished in the great cultural centers of North Africa, the Middle East, West Asia, and Central Asia beginning more than a millennium ago. *Mugham* and its cognate repertoires are all regionally specific but represent what is at root a common musical language. Azerbaijani *mugham* shares broad features of musical form and structure with the Central Asian art song suites known as *shash maqâm* (six *maqâms*) but is closest in performance style, instrumentation, and modal organization to the Persian classical repertory, *dastgâh*.



AN INSTRUMENT-MAKER IN BAKU

ALIM AND FARGANA QASIMOV

Spiritual Music of Azerbaijan

Alim Qasimov (b. 1957) and his daughter Fargana (b. 1979) exemplify the explosive artistic energy that results when a powerful musical model ignites the spark of young talent. “To be a musician, there has to be a fire burning in you,” explained the elder Qasimov. “It’s either there or it isn’t. I’m convinced that if young people have this spark—call it inspiration, call it spiritual fire—they can perform any kind of music. It could be pop, folk, or classical, but whatever it is, they’ll stand out.”

Alim Qasimov’s authority on matters of artistic creativity derives from his position as one of Azerbaijan’s most

beloved musicians. A walk with Qasimov down any street in Baku, Azerbaijan’s capital city, confirms his renown. Greeting well-wishers, shaking hands, and making small talk, he is ever polite and humble. It is when Qasimov sings that his own inner fire burns brightest.

Fargana Qasimova’s talent gravitated naturally toward the music she heard from her father: Azerbaijani classical music, known as *mugham*, and the repertory of popular bardic songs sung by *ashiqs*—singer-songwriters who accompany themselves on the *saz* (a strummed long-necked lute). “There was never any question about my being



ALIM QASIMOV IN BAKU

given to a teacher,” Fargana recalled. “Music was always just a part of everyday life—I sang with my father for fun, and it was only when I was around seventeen years old that I seriously understood that I’d be a musician.”

The joyful spirit of Alim and

Fargana Qasimov’s homespun music-making has left its mark on the very form of that music—in particular, on the exquisitely disciplined balance between memorization and extemporization that is an essential part of the art of *mugham*. Like other kindred traditions of urban court or classical music that span the core Muslim world from Casablanca, Morocco, to Kashgar in western China, *mugham* is rooted in a system of melodic modes and motifs that provide a framework for both improvised performances and fixed compositions. Following a conventional order, skilled performers sequence pieces in different melodic modes into a suite that may last anywhere from twenty minutes to two hours. Throughout a *mugham* suite, extended pieces that blend memorized and extemporized elements

alternate with short, dance-like instrumental compositions (*reng*).

Mugham may be performed in a purely instrumental form, most commonly on the *tar* (long-necked lute) or *kamancha* (spike fiddle), but the performance medium most favored among Azerbaijanis is the voice. Vocalists typically perform the lead role in a trio that also includes *tar* and *kamancha* as well as a frame drum (*daf*) played by the vocalist. This trio style of performance provided the starting point for Alim Qasimov's innovative treatment of *mugham*.

"We never put before ourselves the aim of singing *mugham* in the form of a duet or carrying out any kind of reform," said Alim Qasimov of the sinuous vocal arrangements he performs with Fargana. "Rather, what



FARGANA QASIMOVA IN BAKU

we do appeared spontaneously in the process of rehearsing. We liked it, and we started to practice it. Nowadays, *mugham* is always performed by a single vocalist, but there used to be a way of performing where one singer would begin a phrase and another singer

would finish it, and they'd alternate like that through a whole piece. We do the same thing: I begin a line, and Fargana continues it, and the effect is as if one person is singing. In places our voices overlap, so there's a kind of polyphony. I can't explain why it turned out that way—perhaps because Fargana is my daughter and we live in the same house. But I think it's that spiritually we're very close. We understand each other in an inner sense, and this is how our understanding is expressed. It all comes from singing together, and it's spontaneous. We can do it one way in a rehearsal, and then in a concert, it will turn out completely differently.

"When I started performing with Fargana, there was no small amount of criticism," Alim Qasimov added,

"but now there's less and less. People have started to accept our 'experiment' because they feel that it's sincere, and that it's our spiritual discovery. In fact, it's not an experiment. The way I sing and the way I improvise represent my soul at that moment." Qasimov, speaking in Azerbaijani, clarified: "It represents my *hal*: the state of my soul."

The term *hal*, an Arabic word that is also commonly used in Persian and in Turkic languages, has strong associations with Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam. For Sufis, *hal* is a state of spiritual awakening that creates an openness to the mystical presence of the Divine. Qasimov, translating *hal* into the language of art, defines it as "inspiration." "It's not something you can pull out of your pocket," he emphasized. "I can't command myself



MEMBERS OF QASIMOV ENSEMBLE IN PALACE COURTYARD IN BAKU. FROM LEFT: ALI ASGAR MAMMADOV, NATIQ SHIRINOV, RAUF ISLAMOVI, RAFAEL ASGAROV

to get inspired at a particular moment and perform something. Moreover, you have to transform the musicians you're playing with so that they can

share that inspiration, and then give it to the audience. When I meet with the musicians in my ensemble, it's almost like a gathering of dervishes. There's an atmosphere that starts to nourish us that comes from beyond our own will, and that's the source of the unpredictability in our music. It's almost a feeling of ecstasy that leads to some kind of meditation. There isn't any point in performing *mugham* without *hal*."

The musicians in Alim Qasimov's ensemble include not only performers on the *tar* and *kamancha*, as in a conventional *mugham* trio, but also on the oboe-like *balaban*, on a variety of hand drums, and, at times, on the oud. The expanded ensemble is also an example of Qasimov's search for the fullest expression of *mugham*'s range of moods and emotions. "If it were

up to me, I'd invite not four or five musicians, but an entire chamber ensemble, and I'd create wonderful compositions for them that would be performed in the world's most prestigious concert halls," Qasimov said. "I observed that in Turkey and Iran, they have ensembles with violins, cellos, flutes—real orchestras that aren't restricted to just the local instruments. I can only imagine what you could do with our *mugham* if you had those instruments. But since I don't work with musical notation, it's hard for me to do arranging, and performing with a large ensemble has remained only a dream."

"*Mugham* is an elite art," Alim Qasimov concluded. "It's for a select group—for people who have some kind of inner spirituality, who have their own inner world. These days 'elite'

refers to something more commercial than spiritual—for example, to the kind of people who can buy a new car every year. But that's not what I have in mind. An elite person is one who knows how to experience, how to endure, how to feel, how to listen to *mugham* and begin to cry. This ability doesn't depend on education or upbringing, nor on one's roots. It's something else. It's an elite of feeling, an elite of inspiration. These kinds of listeners aren't always available. I can't speak about the distant past, but it's clear that *mugham* hasn't developed in a straight line. There were lapses and dips and ascents, and surely it will always be like that. I can't say whether we're in a dip or an ascent—it's not for me to judge—but I think there will always be an attraction to this music until the end of humanity."

TRACK NOTES

PART I. MUGHAM CHARGAH

TEXT: SEYYID AZIM SHIRVANI (1835–1888)

MUSIC: TRADITIONAL, ARRANGED BY ALIM QASIMOV

Tracks I–7 comprise a performance of Mugham Chargah (Persian: Chahargah), one of the seven principal suite forms of Azerbaijani classical music. Each *mugham* suite consists of a conventional sequence of pieces (*shu'be*) that take listeners on a journey through varied musical and emotional terrain. The great Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov (1885–1948) believed that *chargah* excites the passions and conveys pride, virility, and a martial spirit. Throughout the suite, high dramatic tension contrasts with moments of repose and détente. Each section of Mugham Chargah is described below.

The poetic texts sung by Alim and Fargana Qasimov represent six *ghazals* by Seyyid Azim Shirvani. Born in Shamakhi, the same region as Alim Qasimov, Shirvani was a representative of the Azerbaijani enlightenment movement of the



ALIM AND FARGANA QASIMOV IN REHEARSAL AT HOME



late 19th and early 20th century. By singing Shirvani's *ghazals*, the Qasimovs express loyalty to their home region, devotion to classical Azerbaijani verse, and support of Shirvani's belief in a humanistic, progressive Islam. Although the texts are fixed, melodic elaboration of the text contains a strong improvisational element. Alim's exuberant cries of "*Mashallah!*" (Well done!), heard during sections performed by Fargana and the instrumentalists, underscore the spontaneous energy created during the moment of performance.



BARDASHT

Bardasht (from Persian “summing up”) is a generic compositional form that serves as a short overture to a *mugham* suite. This lively *bardasht* begins with a rhythmic instrumental introduction that prepares the dramatic, high-register entrance of the vocalists with the signature melodic interval of *chargah*: an upward leap from *la* to *do* (*la* is slightly flattened). Alim and Fargana Qasimov render the opening verses of Shirvani’s *ghazal* antiphonally in free rhythm over an embellished drone provided by the *kamancha*, *tar*, and *balaban*. The final four lines of *Bardasht* gradually descend a full octave to the initial pitch of the subsequent piece, *Maye*. The text of *Bardasht* begins:

*Oh friend, do not drag me to the edge of that desert today,
That moon is not here, so do not take me to this empty spectacle.
I became love-crazed from the fairies’ braids,
What excuse can I give to Adam, who brought me into this world?*



MAYE

Like *bardasht*, *maye* is a generic compositional form that establishes the modal character of a *mugham*—its characteristic melodic motifs, tonal centers, principal intervals, typical melodic embellishments, and poles of melodic tension and resolution. *Maye* focuses on developing tonal relationships in the lowest octave register of a *mugham*, while subsequent sections gradually explore successively higher tonal regions.



BESTE-NIGAR

Beste-Nigar is a *shu’be*—a secondary *mugham*, or melody archetype that appears at a specific point in the development of a principal *mugham*, here *chargah*. A short instrumental prelude introduces a modulation from the scale of *chargah*, anchored on *do*, to the initial emphasized pitch of *beste-nigar*, *mi*, which arrives at 1:14. After an extended exploration of the tetrachord *mi-fa (fa#)-sol-la*, *Beste-Nigar* modulates at 5:20 to a transposition of the *chargah* scale set a fourth higher, on *fa*. The modulation is brief, and at 6:09, *mi* reappears as the tonal center. At 7:00, the melody descends to *do*, reestablishing the scale of *chargah* and concluding with an instrumental dance tune (*reng*).



HISAR

Hisar is another secondary *mugham* of *chargah*, characterized by upward transposition of the *chargah* scale to the fifth scale degree, *sol*. In contrast to Beste-Nigar, the transposition is sustained, marking a clear increase of emotional tension. Hisar ends with a fast-paced instrumental *reng* that segues into the next *shu'be*, Mualif.

*Oh, caravan leader, take our caravan to a safe haven,
Be merciful, lead these devastated ones to the tulip garden.
Oh, headwind, it is time for a beneficent favor,
Blow our ship from these high seas to the shore.*



MUALIF

Mualif continues the melody's ascending trajectory, modulating upward from *sol*, the tonal center of *hisar*, to a focus on *si*, *re*, and, at Alim Qasimov's dramatic entrance at 2:36, *mi*, an octave-and-a-third above the initial *do*. It is in this high register that Alim and Fargana Qasimov's voices achieve the subtle interplay of antiphony and polyphony that represents an innovation in *mugham* performance style.



MÜKHALIF-TARKIB

Tarkib means "modulation," and Mükhalif-Tarkib consists of a modulation to a tonal area that extends upward from *la*. A brief refrain of *chargah* reappears in the middle and at the end, preparing the transition to the next *shu'be*, Mansuriyya.

*He who wants to be a leader, let him,
Let him kiss the tavern door and order a glass (of wine).
If there was a destiny for me written in the water of heaven,
My God turned it into rosy-red wine.*

Oh, Captain, devote your ship to God,
Ask for the land of my beloved, lead your ship to a safe haven.
Hizir's** road led straight to the land of the Caspian-dwellers,
Take Hizir's path, take us also to that country.*

* The word *naxuda* in Azerbaijani is a play on words that means both "captain" and "atheist."

** Hizir is a Muslim saint whose virtues include aiding lost travelers.



Left to right: ALIM QASIMOV, ALI ASGAR MAMMADOV, NATIQ SHIRINOV, RAUF ISLAMOV



MANSURIYYA

Mansuriyya recapitulates the modal character of *chargah* an octave higher, providing an emotional culmination to the entire suite. At the end, the melody descends to the initial *do*, completing the cycle of melodic modulations and transpositions and bringing the piece to a close.

PART II. COMPOSED SONGS

Tracks 8–11 represent songs written both by composers trained in Western classical music [track 11] and by *ashiqs*—oral tradition singer-songwriters whose song texts portray, often with wry humor and searing irony, the power of love and the pain of separation [tracks 8–10].



YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF MY EYES

MUSIC: SHAFIGE AKHUNDOVA (1924–)

TEXT: BEKHTIYAR VAHABZADE (1925–)

This composition fuses a popular song by one of Azerbaijan's best-known female singer-songwriters with an excerpt from a "*mugham* opera," *Leyli and Mejnun*, composed by Uzeyir Hajibeyov (1885–1948) and first performed in 1908. Shafige Akhundova's song melody opens the composition with lyrics by poet Bekhtiyar Vahabzade, who became a leading dissident during the late Soviet period.

*You are the light of my eyes, I fell in love with you at first sight.
You are the first strike on my heart, come, let's celebrate life close together.
You are the light of my eyes, you are the fragrance of our garden.
Oh my love, what is this separation? I have waited enough, my jasmine,
You are the light of my eyes.*

At 3:25, the song *segués* seamlessly to the *mugham* section inspired by Hajibeyov's opera. For his libretto, Hajibeyov drew on the famous *Leyli and Mejnun* of 16th-century poet Muhammad Füzüli. The Qasimovs set portions of Füzüli's text to a composite *mugham* melody of their own creation loosely related to melodic material in the opera. At 12:17, the *mugham* melody *segués* back to the song, which is briefly refrained before the end. Alim Qasimov said about his creation, "Fargana and I believe that all who listen to this piece will experience their own internal world of love."



ESHQIN MEHEBBETI (LOVE OF LOVES)

MUSIC AND TEXT: ASHIQ KHANISH SHIRVANI (1932–)

VOCAL SOLO: ALIM QASIMOV

The words *eshq* and *mehebbet* both mean "love" in Azerbaijani (*eshq* is the root of the word *ashiq*). The song tells the story of a young man who falls in love with a neighbor's daughter and decides to marry her. In order not to burden his poor parents, the lad arranges the marriage himself, and informs his crestfallen mother only after the wedding. As a prelude to the song, Alim Qasimov sings a couplet from a *ghazal* of Füzüli set to a melody in *mugham bayat-i Shiraz* (0:00–2:11).

*My soul has fallen into the love of loves,
Mother, my dear, please dry your tears.
I have passed twenty years,
I cannot wait another year, my dear [mother].
(Refrain)
What is this secret I have fallen into, Mother,
I have fallen into love's fire.
I never knew the power of love like this before, Mother.*

MUSIC: UNATTRIBUTED

TEXT: ASHIQ ALASGAR (1821–1926)

WITH *ghazal* BY HAJI REZA SERRAF (D. 1907)

VOCAL SOLO: FARGANA QASIMOVA

In this song, Fargana Qasimova performs the part of a lovesick *ashiq* (minstrel) who seeks to woo his beloved by singing to her, accompanying himself on the *saz* (long-necked lute). In the *ghazal* that follows (beginning at 2:56), the singer begs his beloved to reveal her heart's secrets. Alim Qasimov offers the following commentary on this popular song: "In Azerbaijan, *jeýran* refers to a kind of deer that lives in the mountains and the plains. They're lovely animals, and because their eyes are so beautiful, poets often use this word. There are many girls named Jeyran in Azerbaijan. We hope that when listeners hear this song, they'll get in touch with their own inner purity and sincerity."

*Let me encircle you with love,
Your black eyes and eyebrows, Jeyran.
I have fallen into the flames of longing,
Help me to recover from this pain, Jeyran.
Let the partridges cackle, my little deer,*



Left: A HOUSE CONCERT IN BAKU. Right: *TAR* PLAYER ALI ASCAR MAMMADOV



*If I cannot love you openly,
Then let me love you in secret.
With my saz, with my saz,
Oh beloved, I encircle you with love.*



KÖHLEN ATIM (MY SPLENDID HORSE)

MUSIC AND TEXT: JAHANGIR JAHANGIROV (1921–1992)

Composer Jahangir Jahangirov wrote this song as part of a film score for *Yenilməz Batalyon* (*The Invincible Battalion*), a patriotic film about the struggle of Bolshevik soldiers against counter-revolutionaries in the early Soviet period. Reflecting themes characteristic of Azerbaijani folklore, the song expresses the hero's longing for his homeland and family and his love for the horse that will take him there. Alim Qasimov calls the song "Köhlen Atım," and learned it by ear from the movie. True to oral tradition, his version varies somewhat from the original text.

*A wind is blowing, dispersing the mountain fog
My mother's eyes are on the road,
All she has left is hope
All she needs is me.
I am on the way to see my dear mother
Oh, snowy mountains
The clouds are bunching up [to hide me]
Let my carriage reach the village
Oh, my spirited horse!*



INSTRUMENT GLOSSARY

BALABAN

Cylindrical oboe made from apricot, mulberry, or nut wood played with a large double reed that produces a soft, breathy, and often mournful sound.



DAF

Frame drum, also called *qaval*, widely used in Azerbaijani folk music as well as in the classical *mugham*. Fish, goat skin, or nowadays, plastic provides the playing surface. Jingling metal rings are sometimes attached to the inside of the frame.



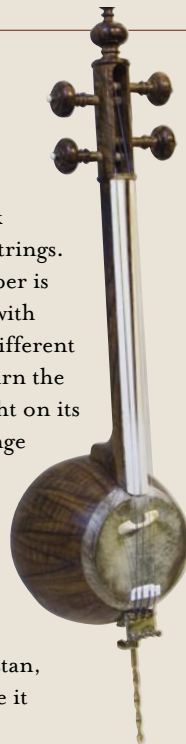
NAGHARA

Cylindrical double-sided frame drum held under the arm and played with hands rather than sticks. *Naghara* is typically played at festive celebrations, especially weddings.



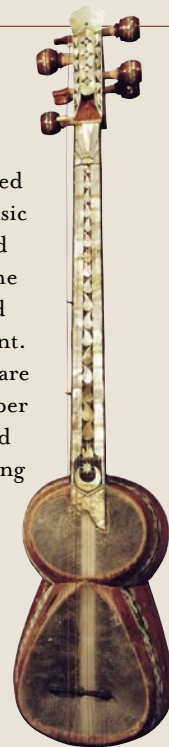
KAMANCHA

Spherical spike fiddle with a cylindrical neck fitted with four steel strings. The resonating chamber is traditionally covered with catfish skin. To play different strings, performers turn the instrument left or right on its spike rather than change the angle of the bow. A similar spike fiddle, sometimes fitted with three strings instead of four, is played in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, where it is called *ghijak*.



TAR

Double-chested plucked lute used in urban music from the Caucasus and Iran. In Azerbaijan, the *tar* is widely considered the national instrument. Iranian and Azeri *tars* are distinguished by number of strings, quantity and position of frets, playing position, and type of plectrum. The skin-like cover of the resonating chamber is traditionally made from the pericardial membrane that englobes a cow heart.



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Recorded at Azerbaijan Film Studios, Baku,
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The producers gratefully thank: Azerbaijan Film
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