

RAINBOW

Music of Central Asia **VOL.8** **KRONOS QUARTET**

with **ALIM & FARGANA QASIMOV** *and* **HOMAYUN SAKHI**

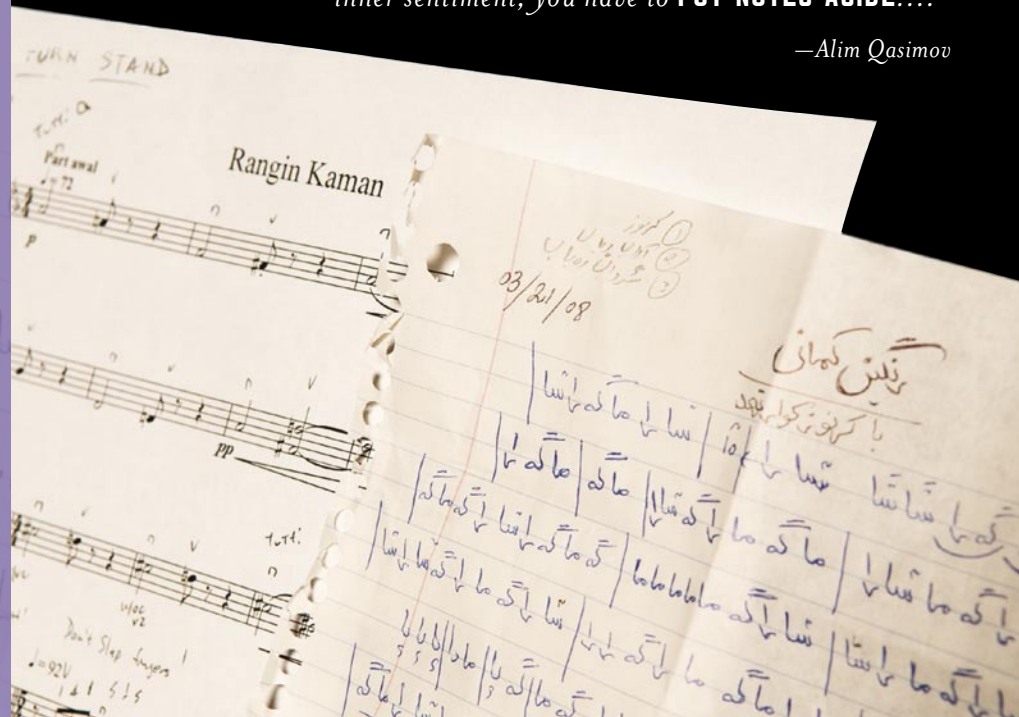


Smithsonian Folkways

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: www.akdn.org/music.

"To absorb this music deeply and get close to its inner sentiment, you have to **PUT NOTES ASIDE....**"

—Alim Qasimov





HOMAYUN SAKHI TRIO

HOMAYUN SAKHI, *Afghan rubab*

SALAR NADER, *tabla*

ABBOS KOSIMOV, *doyra and qayraq*



KRONOS QUARTET

DAVID HARRINGTON, *violin*

JOHN SHERBA, *violin*

HANK DUTT, *viola*

JEFFREY ZEIGLER, *cello*



ALIM QASIMOV ENSEMBLE

ALIM QASIMOV, *vocal and daf*

FARGANA QASIMOVA, *vocal and daf*

RAFAEL ASGAROV, *balaban*

RAUF ISLAMOV, *kamancha*

ALI ASGAR MAMMADOV, *tar*

VUGAR SHARIFZADEH, *naghara*



CD TRACKS

1. RANGIN KAMAN 28:58
2. KÖHLEN ATIM 7:45
3. MEHRIBAN OLAQ 4:49
4. GETME, GETME 12:31
5. LEYLA 1:43
6. QASHLARIN KAMANDIR 9:45



DVD

*MUSIC OF CENTRAL ASIA
AND THE AGA KHAN
MUSIC INITIATIVE*

*RAINBOW: KRONOS QUARTET
WITH ALIM AND FARGANA QASIMOV
AND HOMAYUN SAKHI*

*INTERACTIVE INSTRUMENT
GLOSSARY*

MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA



*Music of Central Asia Vol. 8
Rainbow: Kronos Quartet with Alim and
Fargana Qasimov and Homayun Sakhi*

SFW CD 40527 © 2010 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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



Left: A TYPICAL NOMADIC YURT. Right: HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN THE CITY OF SAMARKAND.



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 up to 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

Rainbow: Chronicle of a Collaboration

Rainbow emerged from an ambitious process of collaborative creativity that reached across continents and cultures, and across musical categories and conventions. It represents at once a continuity and a turning point in the Smithsonian Folkways—Aga Khan Music Initiative CD-DVD series *Music of Central Asia*, whose previous seven releases each focus on a particular region or musical idiom, or on the artistry of a particular musician. Like the artists featured on earlier releases, the lead performers on *Rainbow* are all consummate masters of their own musical domain. Indeed, Azerbaijani singers Alim and Fargana Qasimov and Afghan *rubab* player

Homayun Sakhi have already debuted on *Music of Central Asia* (Sakhi on volume 3, *The Art of the Afghan Rubâb*, and the Qasimovs on volume 6, *Spiritual Music of Azerbaijan*). But how could it be otherwise in our era of cultural globalization that in their sonic imagination, these inquisitive artists, no less than the famously intrepid Kronos Quartet, should hear their own music both enriching, and being enriched by, sounds and sonorities from elsewhere? These days, the instant availability of so many musical “elsewheres” makes the prospect of artistic collaboration at once alluring and daunting, full of promise as well as potential pitfalls: where in the world to

begin? How to move beyond superficial grooves toward deeper levels of music connection? What standard to use as a measure of artistic success?

To the first of these questions, David Harrington, first violinist and founder of the Kronos Quartet, offered a straightforward answer: “I follow my ears,” he said. Harrington’s relentless musical curiosity has been the engine behind Kronos’s adventurous musical travels. “I started playing string quartet music when I was twelve,” Harrington related, “and I remember one day, as a young teenager, looking at a map of the world and realizing that the only string quartet music I’d ever played was written by men who lived in the same city: Vienna, Austria. That just struck me. And so at that age it became a part of my thinking to try to learn more about



JOHN SHERBA OF KRONOS READS MUSIC FOR
“RANGIN KAMAN”

other parts of the world through music.” Harrington has devoted his career to doing just that—in the process, forging under the aegis of Kronos a living legacy of pioneering and wide-ranging collaborations with musical creators from many cultures.

David Harrington's global musical explorations led him to recordings of Alim Qasimov and later, Homayun Sakhi. Harrington recounted his first impressions of listening to Qasimov: "I realized immediately that there was a quality I had never heard before from a singer. The way he inhabits the notes he makes is profoundly beautiful. It's like he's molding and shaping these notes in a way that we can only try to do with our bows. I hoped that one day we might be able to meet and find a way of making music together."

That musical meeting happened in 2008, as the first project in an ongoing collaboration between the Kronos Quartet and the Aga Khan Music Initiative. In its mission to revitalize and assure the onward transmission of musical traditions in regions

where they are endangered, the Music Initiative came to understand that cultivating creative processes which lead to artistic innovation and evolution is as important as conserving links to the past. Kronos's long experience in creating new music—oftentimes with artists from other cultures who didn't share a common musical lexicon of terms and concepts—offered a successful model of how to do such work.

To launch the Kronos-Qasimov collaboration, Alim Qasimov and two members of his ensemble, *kamancha* player Rauf Islamov and *tar* player Ali Asgar Mammadov, traveled to San Francisco to rehearse a set of Azerbaijani songs drawn from Qasimov's repertoire. The challenge of the weeklong rehearsal period was to



ALIM QASIMOV AND DAVID HARRINGTON

create a seamless interface between the note-reading Kronos players and the Qasimov Ensemble, whose performances typically feature an ever-shifting blend of memorized and extemporized musical gestures.

The details of working out the Kronos-Qasimov interface fell to Jacob

Garchik, a multi-talented performer-composer-arranger from New York who had collaborated with Kronos on previous projects. "It was difficult," said Garchik of the arranging work. "You have highly skilled, virtuosic musicians, but they have very different ways of learning and teaching music. Alim Qasimov's music is more improvised and unpredictable, but at the same time, it's based on arrangements. Someone in Azerbaijan had already composed and arranged these songs and then, in the process of recollecting them, Alim turned them into quasi-improvisations. Now his improvisations are being turned back into arrangements again."

Just as Kronos and Jacob Garchik were challenged by the Azerbaijani musicians' "unpredictable" improvisations,



QASIMOV ENSEMBLE AND KRONOS IN THE STUDIO

Alim Qasimov found it challenging to work with note-reading musicians. "Our traditional musicians don't learn folk songs or classical *mugham* from notes," said Qasimov. "When I perform

with my ensemble, I'm usually free, but here, everything depends on notation. If something is written two times, I have to sing it two times. To absorb this music deeply and get close to its inner

sentiment, you have to put the notes aside and learn how to improvise."

"I remember the first time we tried to do that," said David Harrington of Kronos's efforts to "move away from the page," as he characterized the process of improvisation. "It's something that we've become more and more comfortable with as time has gone on. From Kronos's perspective, there's a lot of improvisation going on in the Azerbaijani songs, but hopefully the listener won't even know when those moments are."

The enthusiastically received world premiere performance of the Azerbaijani songs took place at London's Barbican Centre during *Ramadan Nights*, the Barbican's eclectic survey of music from the world of Islam. For the concert, Kronos and

Alim Qasimov were joined by Alim's daughter and musical protégée, Fargana, and his full ensemble of four instrumentalists. The songs were recorded for the present CD the day after the concert. Alim Qasimov succinctly summed up the artistic results: "I think we have planted a tree, and now we have to work to make it grow and bear fruit. God willing, it will happen."

For Hodayun Sakhi, the process of creative collaboration with Kronos unfolded differently. Whereas the starting point for Alim Qasimov's work with Kronos was a set of popular songs performed by Qasimov but composed by an older generation of Azerbaijani songwriters, Hodayun Sakhi delivered to Kronos a musical work that he composed himself. The work was "Rangin

Kaman”—“Rainbow” in Persian—for Afghan *rubab*, string quartet, and percussion. The percussion instruments include Indian *tabla* and Central Asian frame drum (*doyra*) and clappers (*qayraq*). Like many contemporary composers who do not notate their compositions but simply record them directly from instruments or computers to hard drives or digital recording devices, Hodayun Sakhi composed and recorded the Afghan *rubab* part on his own instrument and realized the string quartet sounds on a Casio synthesizer. The percussion was added during rehearsals, with the musicians improvising in traditional rhythmic cycles and patterns.

Sakhi’s Casio and Afghan *rubab* recordings were given to Stephen Prutsman, an award-winning concert

pianist, composer, arranger, and music festival founder whose long collaboration with Kronos has resulted in over forty arrangements for the quartet. Prutsman transcribed the entire piece and wrote it out in Western music notation. In the sections of the piece where *rubab* and quartet play together, Prutsman created the quartet parts from the implied harmony suggested by the modal melodic lines of the *rubab*.

In sections where the quartet plays alone, Prutsman assigned each of the pitches he heard on the Casio to a particular instrument—what composers and arrangers call “voicing.” “I voiced it according to what I thought would be most natural for the [Kronos] Quartet,” said Prutsman. “I also marked articulation, dynamics, slurs, and phrases. Most of the time, people don’t



DAVID HARRINGTON WITH HODAYUN SAKHI

do that, but I’ve found that it’s always helpful as a guidepost to the Quartet.” During rehearsals, Kronos re-arranged some of Prutsman’s markings based on their experience of working with the *rubab* and percussion. Traditional Afghan meters and rhythms in the piece presented another challenge

for Prutsman and Kronos. Prutsman explained, “There are lots of groupings of seven, but where are the strong beats in those groupings? Oftentimes, strong accents don’t correspond with down beats. We spent a lot of time getting comfortable with the rhythmic units.”

Hodayun Sakhi composed “Rangin Kaman” as a way to represent “all the peoples and regions of Afghanistan and connect them to other parts of the world.” Sakhi elaborated, “There are influences from both classical and folk music. The folk music comes from Herat, Mazari Sharif, Kandahar, and other places; it’s music that’s performed by Hazaras, Pashtuns, Uzbeks—I tried to bring together a little bit from each region and people of Afghanistan.”

“Hodayun is a great band leader,”

said David Harrington. “He knew exactly what he wanted from us; he knew every rhythm that he wanted the tabla to play, and basically, he taught everybody. He has the whole score completely imprinted in his mind, so in one sense, there’s nothing left to chance. But Homayun is very open to changes that arise from the experience of working together. For example, in one place I suggested using a practice mute to achieve a different timbre on the violin. He loved the sound when he heard it, and it got worked into the piece. As Homayun got to know us better, he refined the writing through a lot of little changes like that. In the end, ‘Rangin Kaman’ was literally tailor-made for Kronos.”

Homayun Sakhi added his own assessment of the artistic collabora-

tion. “Working with Kronos, I realized that through music you can cross not only boundaries between different regions of Afghanistan but even bigger boundaries, such as between East and West. When we play together, the music really connects well, and we all get a lot of pleasure from it.” In this impromptu critique, Homayun Sakhi may have provided as good an answer as any to the question of how to measure the artistic success of collaborative music-making. If a piece “connects well,” as Sakhi put it, and if performers with the keen musical sensitivity of the Kronos Quartet and Homayun Sakhi enjoy performing it, there’s a good chance that it has something to say.

David Harrington echoed Sakhi’s critique. “If we’re involved in a piece of music and I get a recording of a



From left: ABBOS KOSIMOV, JEFFREY ZEIGLER, JOHN SHERBA (standing), HANK DUTT, SALAR NADER, DAVID HARRINGTON, HOMAYUN SAKHI

performance and can’t stop listening to it and, when I wake up in the morning, the music is part of my consciousness, then I know it’s something I’m really happy with.” The riveting

performance of “Rangin Kaman” on *Rainbow* makes a strong case for this piece, and for the prodigious talent of its young Afghan-American composer, Homayun Sakhi.



TRACK NOTES

1. RANGIN KAMAN (*Rainbow*)

Composed by HOMAYUN SAKHI (2008)*

Arranged by STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

HOMAYUN SAKHI, Afghan *rubab*; SALAR NADER, *tabla*; ABBOS KOSIMOV, *doyra* (frame drum) and *qayraq* (clappers)

KRONOS QUARTET: DAVID HARRINGTON, violin; JOHN SHERBA, violin; HANK DUTT, viola; JEFFREY ZEIGLER, cello

* “*Rangin Kaman*” was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet and Homayun Sakhi by the Aga Khan Music Initiative, a program of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and the Columbia Foundation. Additional commission funds were provided by The James Irvine Foundation, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and the LEF Foundation.

"I love color," said Hodayun Sakhi, "and in 'Rangin Kaman,' I piece together different colors as a way of expressing hope for peace and harmony among different peoples and nations." In Sakhi's composition, these colors are represented both by the different styles of Afghan music played on *rubab*, *tabla*, and *doyra*, and by broader contrasts between Eastern and Western instruments. The piece begins with an elegiac prelude for solo string quartet. The dramatic entrance of the *rubab*, with a gliding sweep of the instrument's sympathetic strings, introduces a contrasting musical style and establishes an antiphonal relationship between *rubab* and quartet: East is East and West is West. In the meditative section that follows, the plucked *rubab* and Kronos's bowed stringed instruments coalesce

in a tonal and textural equipoise as they take turns improvising solos above a steady drone pitch. In the jaunty second half of the piece, *rubab* and quartet become increasingly entwined, framed by subtle rhythmic patterns marked out on the *tabla* and *doyra*. Gathering momentum, the drums emerge from their accompanying role in a brief but brilliant percussion break. A cadenza-like section for string quartet leads to a reprise of the austere solo entrance of the *rubab*. In the fiery finale, *rubab* and quartet converge into a sinuous composite voice—a sonic rapprochement of East and West that resolves the structural tension of the opening, and in so doing, perhaps serves as a musical metaphor of hope.

TRACKS 2–6

The songs on tracks 2–6 are arranged by Alim Qasimov, with string quartet parts arranged for Kronos by Jacob Garchik* and performed by

ALIM QASIMOV, vocal; FARGANA QASIMOVA, vocal and *daf*; RAFAEL ASGAROV, *balaban*; RAUF ISLAMOV, *kamancha*; ALI ASGAR MAMMADOV, *tar*; VUGAR SHARIFZADEH, *naghara*.

KRONOS QUARTET: DAVID HARRINGTON, violin; JOHN SHERBA, violin; HANK DUTT, viola; JEFFREY ZEIGLER, cello

* *These arrangements by Alim Qasimov, with string quartet parts arranged by Jacob Garchik, were commissioned for the Kronos Quartet and the Alim Qasimov Ensemble by the Aga Khan Music Initiative, a program of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and the Columbia Foundation.*

These vibrant performances of five songs from Azerbaijan fuse multiple layers—both old and new—of composition, arrangement, and improvisation. In each case, the oldest layer is a strophic song composed during the mid-20th century, when

Azerbaijan, like other Soviet republics, cultivated an active tradition of popular songwriting that blended local and European musical instruments and styles. Though the composers of four of the five songs are known, their works became a part of oral musical tradition,

with the result that performers came up with their own arrangements. For “Getme, Getme” and “Qashlarin Kamandir,” Alim Qasimov’s arrangements include, in addition to the original strophic melody and lyrics, improvised vocal and instrumental interludes featuring couplets from classical Azerbaijani poetry (*ghazals*) performed in the style of *mugham*, the art music tradition of Azerbaijan. These were the performance versions recorded by the Alim Qasimov Ensemble and sent to Kronos arranger Jacob Garchik, who built on Qasimov’s elaborations in scoring the songs for quartet. Garchik’s scores not only skillfully meld the four Western and four Azerbaijani instruments into an integral octet that accompanies the singers, but the scores also depart from the script provided by

the songs to offer short compositions for Kronos—instrumental intermezzos that evoke the signature styles of other composers who have represented the East: the lush harmonic textures of Rimsky-Korsakov; the brooding modal melodies of Bartók; the motoric ostinato patterns of Philip Glass.

In the end, of course, it is not only a score that melds together different musical instruments and traditions but the empathy that develops among the music’s performers. Speaking of the Alim Qasimov Ensemble, David Harrington said, “They’re tremendously generous musicians and people, and you really feel that in playing with them.” The ebullient results of the Kronos-Qasimov collaboration confirm that the feeling expressed by Harrington is surely mutual.

2. KÖHLEN ATIM (*My Spirited Horse*)

Music and lyrics: Jahangir Jahangirov (1921–1992)

*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!*

3. MEHRIBAN OLAQ (*Let’s Be Kind*)

Music and lyrics: Shafiqə Akhundova (b. 1924)

*I am going to voice my feelings again.
Hey people, please, listen to me!
Let thousands of hearts beat together,
Let’s be more friendly to each other,
Let’s be kind and caring,
Let’s be kind.
Let’s treasure a pure and sincere love.
Let’s talk and laugh, and get far from sorrow.*

4. GETME, GETME

(Don't Go Away, Don't Go Away)

Music and song lyrics: Said Rustamov (1907–1983)
Ghazal lyrics: Nebati

*Your eyes have captivated me, they lassoed me.
Don't go away, sweetheart, don't go, please
come back.*

*Without you, my heart is never in peace.
What can your troubled lover do instead
of seeking compassion that can never be
found!*

*I learned that patience is the only remedy for
the bitterness of separation,
But I can barely stand it since this ocean seems
endless.*

5. LEYLA

Music: Jahangir Jahangirov (1921–1992)
Lyrics: Mammad Rahim

*If you leave this garden,
Flowers will droop,
Nightingales will drop bloody tears,
Still singing sweet songs for you.
Hey, Leyla, my beautiful flower,
Hey, Leyla, whose tongue is so sweet.
Hey, Leyla, I love you!*

6. QASHLARIN KAMANDIR

(Your Eyebrows Are Bow-like)

Music and song lyrics: Unattributed
Ghazal lyrics: Jafar Jabbarli

*Your eyebrows are bow-like,
Your eyebrows are bow-like, and your gaze is
stunning.
Your words are sweeter than honey and sugar.
Please, come to me, sweetheart, you are my
flirtatious beauty!*

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

KRONOS QUARTET

For over 30 years, the Kronos Quartet has pursued a singular artistic vision, combining a spirit of fearless exploration with a commitment to expanding the range and context of the string quartet. In the process, Kronos has become one of the most celebrated and influential ensembles of our time, performing thousands of concerts worldwide, releasing more than 45 recordings of extraordinary breadth, and commissioning more than 650 new works and arrangements for string quartet. Kronos's work has also garnered numerous awards, including a GRAMMY for Best Chamber Music Performance (2004) and "Musicians of the Year" (2003) from *Musical America*.

Kronos's adventurous, eclectic repertoire encompasses works by 20th-century masters (Bartók, Shostakovich, Webern), contemporary composers (Aleksandra Vrebalov, John Adams, Alfred Schnittke), jazz legends (Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk), and artists from even farther



From left: JOHN SHERBA, JEFFREY ZEIGLER, DAVID HARRINGTON, HANK DUTT

afield (rock guitar hero Jimi Hendrix and avant-garde saxophonist John Zorn). Integral to Kronos's work is a series of long-running, in-depth collaborations with many of the world's foremost composers, including Americans Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich; Azerbaijan's Franghiz Ali-Zadeh; Poland's Henryk Górecki; and Argentina's Osvaldo Golijov. Additional collaborators from around the world have included Chinese *pipa* virtuoso Wu Man; the legendary Bollywood "playback singer" Asha Bhosle; the renowned American soprano Dawn Upshaw; Mexican rockers Café Tacuba; the Romanian gypsy band Taraf de Haïdouks; and Inuit throat-singer Tanya Tagaq.

The Quartet spends five months of each year on tour, appearing in the world's most prestigious concert halls,

clubs, and festivals. Kronos is equally prolific on CD, with a discography on Nonesuch Records including *Pieces of Africa* (1992), a showcase of African-born composers that simultaneously topped *Billboard's* Classical and World Music lists; *Nuevo* (2002), a GRAMMY- and Latin Grammy-nominated celebration of Mexican culture; and the 2003 GRAMMY winner, Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite*. The Kronos Quartet/Kronos Performing Arts Association is a nonprofit organization based in San Francisco.

ALIM QASIMOV ENSEMBLE

Alim Qasimov and his daughter, Fargana, exemplify the explosive artistic energy that results when a powerful musical model ignites the spark of young talent. "To be a musician, there



ALIM QASIMOV ENSEMBLE

has to be a fire burning in you," says 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."

Fargana Qasimova grativated

naturally to the music she heard from her father—classical Azerbaijani *mugham* as well as popular *ashiq* songs. "What we do happens spontaneously," said Alim Qasimov of his work with Fargana and the four young musicians who accompany them. "We can sing one way in a rehearsal, and then in a concert, it will turn out completely differently. When I meet with the musicians in my ensemble, 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 a kind of meditation." The four Baku-based ensemble members who appear on *Rainbow* are all virtuosic performers in their own right. In various configurations, they have appeared with Alim and Fargana

Qasimov in their frequent international concert performances of Azerbaijani traditional music, and as members of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. Alim Qasimov is the 1999 winner of the IMC-UNESCO International Music Prize for performers—the same award received in previous years by Ravi Shankar, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Yehudi Menuhin, and Benny Goodman, among others.

HOMAYUN SAKHI

Since immigrating to the United States in 2002, Homayun Sakhi has established a worldwide reputation as the outstanding Afghan *rubab* player of his generation. His artistry demonstrates how an imaginative musician working within a traditional musical idiom can enrich and expand its



HOMAYUN
SAKHI

expressive power, while respecting the taste and sensibility passed down from master musicians of the past. Sakhi's performance style has been shaped not only by the musical traditions to which Afghan music is geographically and historically linked but by his lively interest in contemporary music from around the world. Born in Kabul into one of Afghanistan's leading musical families, he studied *rubab* with his

father, Ustad Ghulam Sakhi, in the traditional form of apprenticeship known as *ustad-shagird* (Persian: "master-apprentice"). Ghulam Sakhi was heir to a musical lineage that began in the 1860s, when the ruler of Kabul, Amir Sher Ali Khan, brought classically trained musicians from India to perform at his court. Over the next hundred years, Indian musicians thrived there, and Kabul became a center for the performance of North Indian classical music. Musicians in Kabul also cultivated the art of playing the *rubab*, which was prominent in regional folk music. Today the people of Afghanistan regard the *rubab* with great pride as their national instrument. Homayun Sakhi currently resides in Fremont, California, a major cultural center of Afghan émigré life,

where he opened a school to teach Afghan music to children. His busy performance schedule regularly takes him to cities around the world.

SALAR NADER

Born in Germany in 1981, Salar Nader is one of his generation's leading performers on the tabla.

A disciple of the great tabla master Ustad Zakir Hussain, Salar Nader frequently accompanies Homayun Sakhi as well as other performers of Afghan and North Indian



SALAR NADER

classical music. A resident of San Francisco, Nader recently appeared as an onstage musician in an American theatrical adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's best-selling novel, *The Kite Runner*.

ABBOS KOSIMOV

Abbos Kosimov was born into a musical family in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. He began playing *doyra* at age nine, and later studied with Ustad Mamurjon Vahabov at Tashkent's College of Culture and Music. He graduated from the Tashkent State Institute of Culture in 1994, and since then has pursued an international career as a professional *doyra* player. Based in California since 2005, Kosimov continues to perform with his Uzbek traditional music group,



ABBOS KOSIMOV

legendary percussionists Terry Bozio and Steve Smith, and the world percussion group Hands On'Semble. He has recorded with Stevie Wonder, and recently created the first instructional DVD on the *doyra* available in the West.

Abbos. He also performs as a member of Zakir Hussain's Masters of Percussion ensemble, and has appeared with conga virtuoso Giovanni Hidalgo,

INSTRUMENT GLOSSARY

AFGHAN RUBAB

The Afghan *rubab* is a double-chambered lute with 3 main strings (originally made of animal gut, now nylon), 4 frets, 2–3 long drone strings, and up to 15 sympathetic strings (made of copper and steel). It was probably invented in the 18th century in Kandahar, Kabul, Peshawar, Ghazni, or another city with a sizable Pashtun population. In the 19th century it was also known in Rampur and in Punjab (northern India). In India the Afghan *rubab* was modified to become the *sarod*.



TABLA

The pair of hand-played, tunable drums is the principal percussion instrument in North Indian classical music, also used since the middle of the 19th century in the Kabuli art music tradition. The *bayan* ("left") is a metal kettle drum whose pitch is modulated by pressure from the heel of the hand on the drum skin. The *tabla* or *dahina* ("right") is a wooden drum whose skin can be tuned to a precise pitch.



DOYRA

A frame drum with jingles, the *doyra* is commonly played by both men and women among sedentary (i.e., non-nomadic) populations in Central Asia.

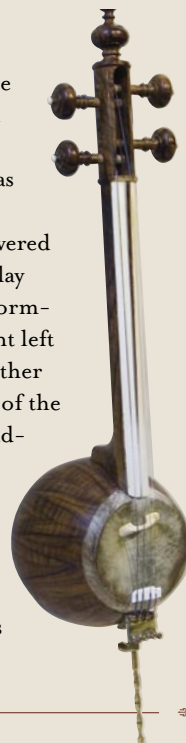
TAR

The *tar* is a 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 surrounds the heart of a cow.



KAMANCHA

A spherical spike fiddle with a cylindrical neck fitted with four steel strings, the *kamancha* has a resonating chamber that 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*.



BALABAN

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





NAGHARA

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



DAF

The *daf* is a frame drum, also called *qaval*, that is 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.

DISCOGRAPHY

For a discography of recordings by the Kronos Quartet, consult www.kronosquartet.org.

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CREDITS

Produced by David Harrington, Theodore Levin, and Fairouz R. Nishanova

Series executive producers: Theodore Levin and Fairouz R. Nishanova

Track 1 recorded March 2009 at Skywalker Sound (Nicasio, California)

Recording engineer: Joel Gordon

Assistant recording engineers: David Corcoran, Scott Fraser, Dann Michael Thompson

Sound editing and mixing: Rafael Popper-Keizer, Joel Gordon, David Harrington

Tracks 2–6 recorded September 2008 at Livingston Studios (London, England)

Recording engineer: Scott Fraser

Assistant recording engineer: Anthony Leung

Sound editing and mixing: Scott Fraser

Mastered by Joel Gordon

Photography by Sebastien Schutyser, Jay Blakesberg, Rachel Bleckman

Videography: Saodat Ismailova and Carlos Casas

Video post-production: Henninger Media Services: Lauren Meschter, colorist; Laurie Rihner, DVD menu artist; Ari B. Zagnit, senior DVD developer; Lauren Boettcher, post-production supervisor

Annotated by Theodore Levin
Translations of Azerbaijani song lyrics by Aida
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Map by Nathalie Hericourt

The producers gratefully thank: Soudabeh Kia,
Leslie Ann Jones, David Jones, Kenneth
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Kronos management: Kronos Performing Arts
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(www.kronosquartet.org)

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The Kronos Quartet appears courtesy of
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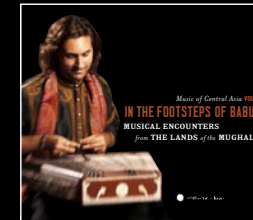
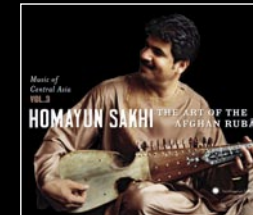
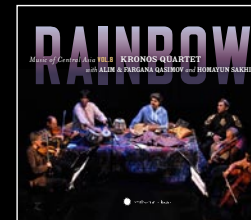
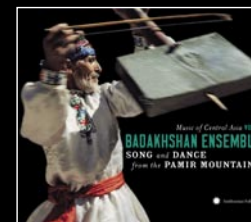
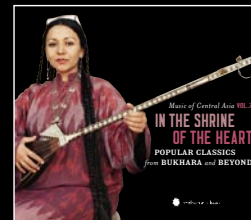
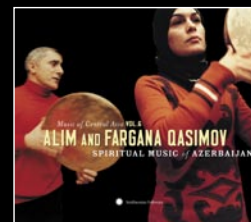
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