

GEORGE MGRDICHIAN & THE OUD

The oud (rhymes with good) is an instrument of Near Eastern origin, popular in North Africa, Armenia, and Turkey. It is a pear-shaped grandfather lute (al 'oud) that dates, depending on which authority you adhere to, from the 3rd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D. George Mgrdichian's instrument, the eleven strings of which are plucked with the shank of a feather from the wing of a (Turkish) eagle, has less tonal edginess and more mellowness than the modern lute and a freer, more flexible sound than the classical guitar. As Robert Shelton has said in the New York Times, "...Mr. Mgrdichian plays in evocative, doleful minor modes sprinkled with eighth and quarter tones that make the Western scale seem almost limited. Subtle, sonorous sounds in deliberate tempos meld into whirling dance figurations that display his fiery technique."

George Mgrdichian "one of the world's finest oud players", according to Mr. Shelton, has succeeded in raising the oud to concert level; in his hands, the oud, one of the world's oldest instruments, is one of the most beguiling.

Cover photo: Leonard Heicklen

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Monitor Presents The Now Sounds of the

MIDDLE EAST

MCD 71709

featuring
**GEORGE
MGRDICHIAN, Oud
and His Ensemble**



A MONITOR INTERNATIONAL COMPACT DISC

NOW SOUNDS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Featuring the OUD of George Mgrdichian
Assisted by Menachem Dworman, guitar
Moulay Ali Hafid, dumbeg / Lou Mavrogian, bass

1. Nehavend Longa (Turkish) 2:44

(Nehavend is equivalent to D minor; Longa means fast-presto)

A longa is a composition used as the finale of a musical form known as a fosil. The fosil is one of the oldest forms of Turkish music known, dating back to the 16th century. It usually opens with a prelude, then a choral section followed by individual vocal and instrumental improvisations as well as composed pieces. One mode, such as nehavend, is used for all sections from beginning to end.

2. Sultan Yega (Turkish) 5:45

This selection is said to be a favorite piece of a Sultan back in early times, especially because of the opening of the piece in the low register (yega) which he was supposedly fond of. However, the piece itself is evocative of a Sultan passing through his town in slow measured pace - then suddenly the party begins and the music catches the spirit of revelry.

3. Yesterday 1:35

Composed by John Lennon and Paul McCartney of the Beatles; chosen by George because this song has become a "classic" and he felt the soulful mood of the song fits the soulful mood of the instrument.

4. Laz Bar (Turkish) 2:25

(Black Sea Fisherman's Dance)

This dance (Bar) dates back to the Pontus Empire (88 B.C.), and was used as a tribal dance by the Laz People, who inhabited the areas of Rize, Trabzon, Giresun, Ordu, and Samsun. They can all be found in North East Turkey, bordering the Black Sea. As the fishermen dance they try to imitate the movements of the fish.

5. Chat Araban (Turkish) 4:55

(On the Shores of Araban)

A piece composed to describe the shoreline of one of the Eastern Mediterranean areas.

6. Aley Giva (Israeli) 2:00

(The Hill)

A shepherd in the Galilee section of Israel plays the flute to his flock.

7. Ćaderemen Ustune (Rampi) (Turkish) 4:07

(Top of the Tent)

A song that comes from a section in Istanbul known as Sulukule, or Gypsy quarters. It is used popularly as a dance melody by female dancers.

8. Israeli Medley 3:20

A. Erev Shel Shoshanim

(Evening of the Roses)

An evening with you is like an evening with roses.

B. Cholot Mid Bar

(Sands of the Desert)

The desert sands bring warmth to the road

The evening wind passes over the hills

On the road to the mountain there is a couple walking

They are whispering to each other songs of love.

9. Marinella (Greek) 3:45

(Gypsy Girl)

This song tells of a Greek gypsy girl, Marinella - sinuous as a snake, tall as a willow, and with eyes like almonds. In the finale of this song, if you detect a familiar melody, it is the Chorale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In his musicological research, George discovered that it is believed (not without controversy) that Beethoven took this melody from an old Turkish march.

10. Take 5 2:00

(Five simply refers to the meter the piece is written in)

This lively piece was written by Paul Desmond, alto saxophonist, of the Dave Brubeck Quartet. This meter is rarely used in music of the Middle East; however, George felt the improvisatory nature of the piece lent itself beautifully to the Oud.

11. Shenez Longa (Turkish) 2:30

The description of Nehavend Longa, the first selection on this recording, applies to this piece as well. Shenez is the equivalent of A minor.

12. Sev Khavar (Armenian) 2:35

(Black Gloom)

The darkness of night is with me always

I know not the meaning of a bright day

My sorrows are so that even God above trembles

The graves are restless and the wind murmurs of sadness

Go now and tell of your sadness so that God above might hear you.

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