



AGA KHAN MUSIC  
PROGRAMME

## AGA KHAN MASTER MUSICIANS (AKMM)

Wu Man, *pipa*  
Basel Rajoub, saxophone, *duclar*  
Sirojiddin Juraev, *dutar*, *sato*  
Feras Charestan, *qanun*  
Abbos Kosimov, frame drums  
Jasser Haj Youssef, viola d'amore

### PROGRAM

1. Dance of the Yi People  
Wu Man, *pipa*  
Composed by Wang Huiran

A *pipa* classic composed by Wang Huiran (b. 1936) inspired by folk music of the Yi people of southern China. Wu Man's poignant interpretation of the piece evokes the vibrancy of Yi traditions.

2. Tashkent  
Basel Rajoub, saxophone, Feras Charestan, *qanun*, Jasser Haj Youssef, viola d'amore  
Composed by Basel Rajoub

"Tashkent" was inspired by Rajoub's first visit to that city, which is the capital of Uzbekistan, where he found "sunshine, peace, and the smell of home." Said Rajoub, "I walked your streets and found this sound. I salute you."

3. Qushtor  
Sirojiddin Juraev, *dutar*  
Composed by Kuzikhon Madrahimov (1888-1954)

Sirojiddin's virtuosic performance of "Qushtor" evokes the sound of flamenco guitar, and uses several of the fingering techniques typical of flamenco style: hammering down and pulling off on the strings with the left hand (*ligado*) while tapping the soundboard of the instrument with the right hand (*golpe*); and playing rhythmic rolls (*rasgueado*) and rapid repetitions of a single note (*tremolo*). These evocations point to the long-ago connections between Andalusia and the Arab world, which at one time included Central Asia.



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4. Teahouse

Wu Man, *pipa*, Feras Charestan, *qanun*, Abbos Kosimov, *doira*  
Arranged by Wu Man from folk sources

“Teahouse” is an homage to the sound of the traditional silk and bamboo instruments played in teahouses in Wu Man’s hometown area of Zhejiang Province, in China’s southeast. Not long ago, Wu Man taught the quintessentially Chinese pentatonic melody of “Teahouse” to *qanun* player Feras Charestan, who embellished it with his own improvised counterpoint. The beautifully integrated sound of the two instruments seems so natural that a listener could be excused for thinking that *pipa* and *qanun* have always been played together – and indeed, in a sense, they have. The *pipa* traces its ancestry to the Persian *barbat*, the short-necked lute with a bent scroll that may well have also provided the prototype for the Middle Eastern oud, and the melded sound of lutes and zithers is at the very center of traditional music from Iran and the Arab lands.

5. Cadence

Composed and performed by Jasser Haj Youssef, viola d’amore

Jasser Haj Youssef said the following about his composition: “‘Cadence’ is a piece in an improvised form that draws inspiration both from the Arabic *maqam* and from Bach’s Sonata no. 1 for solo violin. Bach was a universal composer, and what I try to do in ‘Cadence’ is join his music to the spirit of *maqam*, which is to say, join two worlds: that of Middle Eastern classical music and that of European classical music.

6. Jul Dance

Performed by AKMM  
Composed by Feras Charestan

Jul (pronounced Yule) Dance was inspired by folk music—specifically, the folk music of Sweden, where Feras Charestan now makes his home after leaving his native Syria. He wrote the piece as his contribution to a Christmas concert at the Swedish university where he was studying.

7. Rose

Performed by AKMM  
Arranged by Wu Man

This song comes from the repertoire of Wang Fandi (1933-2017), an influential *pipa* player and teacher known for creating “minority”-themed pieces that brought



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real or imagined exotic styles into the mainstream of modern Chinese music. Ostensibly based on a Uyghur folk melody, Wang's piece, whose original title is "Send you a Rose" (*Song wo yizhi meigui hua*), is prominent in the repertoire of *pipa* players, including Wu Man, who learned it directly from Wang Fandi in the late 1980s.

**The Aga Khan Master Musicians** create music inspired by their own deep roots in the cultures of the Middle East and Mediterranean Basin, South Asia, Central Asia, and China. Brought together by the Aga Khan Music Programme to explore how musical innovation can contribute to the revitalization of cultural heritage, the Master Musicians are venerated performers and composer-arrangers who appear on the world's most prestigious stages while also serving as preeminent teachers, mentors, and curators.

Each of these exceptional artists has achieved mastery within a rigorous musical tradition defined by canonical styles, repertoires, pedagogy, and performance techniques. At the same time, they share a belief that tradition can serve as an invaluable compass for an artistic search into new forms of creativity inspired, but not constrained, by the past. This search has led to a strikingly original body of work composed, arranged, and performed by the Master Musicians, often joined by distinguished guests. Recent concerts have featured Kronos Quartet, Malian *ngoni* virtuoso Bassekou Kouyaté, and the Lisbon-based Gulbenkian Orchestra.

### Musician Bios

**Wu Man** is an acclaimed performer on the *pipa*, a four-stringed Chinese lute with ancient roots that, due in large part to her efforts, has become a leading instrument of contemporary music in both East and West. Wu Man performs both traditional and contemporary music on the *pipa*, and many new works have been commissioned specially for her. She was a founding member of the Silk Road Ensemble, and has played an active role in cross-cultural music making, in particular with members of China's Uyghur minority.

**Basel Rajoub** is a saxophonist and composer-improviser whose inspirations include traditional Middle Eastern rhythms and melodies as well as jazz. Born in Aleppo, Syria, he graduated from the Damascus High Institute of Music and creates new music that brings together musicians from the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and Europe. A winner of Radio Monte Carlo's Moyen-Orient Music Award, Basel Rajoub divides his time between performing, teaching, composing, and recording. Currently based in



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Geneva, Basel performs as a member of several ensembles, and is the founding member of the Soriana Project.

**Sirojiddin Juraev** is a master performer on long-necked lutes from Central Asia. Born and raised near the ancient city of Khujand, in northern Tajikistan, Sirojiddin learned to play the two-stringed *dutar* as a child and later studied with the great Uzbek master Turgun Alimatov. As a student at the Dushanbe Academy of Maqom, created by the Aga Khan Music Initiative in 2003, Sirojiddin also studied *tanbur* and *sato* (bowed *tanbur*) with ustad Abduvali Abdurashidov. Sirojiddin is active as a composer and arranger, and has created a body of new virtuoso works for *dutar*, *tanbur*, and *sato*. He performs both as a soloist and as a member of several ensembles, including Soriana Project, the Academy of Maqom, and Tajikistan’s State Shashmaqom Ensemble.

**Feras Charestan** is from the city of Al-Hasakeh, in the northeast of Syria, and studied *qanun* at the High Institute of Music in Damascus. He has performed as a *qanun* soloist with symphony orchestras and has been a member of popular bands as well as contemporary music ensembles, creating new music rooted in Middle Eastern traditions. Feras Charestan currently lives in Stockholm, Sweden.

**Abbos Kosimov** was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, into a musical family. A disciple of the honored Uzbek *doira* player Tuychi Inogomov and winner of the Competition of Percussion Instruments of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Kosimov established his own *doira* school in 1994 and his ensemble, “Abbos,” in 1998. Kosimov performs internationally with Zakir Hussain and Randy Gloss’s percussion group Hand’s OnSemble and recorded with Stevie Wonder.

**Jasser Haj Youssef** was born in Monastir, Tunisia and studied both classical European music and classical Arabic music (*maqām*) from an early age. His first instrument was the violin. Later he began playing the Baroque viola d’amore, which has sympathetic string that are not bowed, but create a rich, resonant sound. Haj Youssef’s professional career has merged his interests and talents in the improvisatory art of *maqām*, classical chamber and orchestral music, jazz, and world music.