

# Burhan Öçal and the Istanbul Oriental Ensemble

Friday, October 25, 8 pm, 2002  
Zellerbach Hall

Burhan Öçal, director, darbuka, vocals, percussion, and strings  
Ibrahim Halil Camli, violin and flute  
Ekrem Bağ, darbuka  
Alaattin Coskuner, kanun  
Ayhan Birol, clarinet  
Huseyin Bitmez, ud  
Oguz Kaplangi, sound engineer

Exclusive Management:  
ICM Artists Ltd., New York  
Lee Lamont, chairman; David V. Foster, president and CEO

This presentation of Burhan Öçal and the Istanbul Oriental Ensemble  
is made possible with the support of the Friends of Cal Performances.

Cal Performances thanks the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  
and the Zellerbach Family Fund for their generous support.

Cal Performances receives additional funding from the National Endowment for the Arts,  
a federal agency that supports the visual, literary, and performing arts to benefit all Americans,  
and the California Arts Council, a state agency.

All pieces arranged for the Istanbul Oriental Ensemble by Burhan Öçal

- B. Öçal Katar (2002, improvisation)  
Anonymous Hicaz Oriental (1900)  
M.J. Hakki Bey Acem Kürdi Pesrev (1870)  
Sultan Selim Ey Goncai Nazik Tenin (1750)  
Anonymous Muhayyer Oriental (1900)  
Anonymous Hicazkar Oriental (1900)  
B. Öçal Bozkirda Dugun (2002, improvisation)  
(aka Suzinak Oriental)  
B. Öçal Darbuka Solo (2002, improvisation)

## INTERMISSION

Anonymous	Folk Song for Saz (1870)
Veli Dede	Hicaz Pesrev (1700)
H. Sadullah Aga	Ah Nideyim Sahn – I Cimeni (1760)
Anonymous	Two Songs Yar Saclarin Lüle Muhabbet Bagi (1900)
Anonymous	Nihavent Oriental (1800)
Istanbul Oriental Ensemble	Istanbul Nihavent (2002, improvisation)
Anonymous	Nihavent Longa (1900)

The Istanbul Oriental Ensemble, led by percussionist/vocalist/string player Burhan Öçal, includes a number of Turkey's leading Gypsy musicians, all of whom are dedicated to preserving the all-but-forgotten heritage of 18th- and 19th-century Gypsy music from Istanbul and Thrace (the area where Europe and Asia meet that today includes parts of Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, between the Aegean and the Black seas). The diverse character of this music, which celebrates a full range of life experience, is influenced both by the Gypsies' love of nature and by their great migrations.

Gypsies have played an important role in shaping the music of the region around Istanbul, Edirne, and Izmir (Smyrna) since the 10th century. Their talent, love of music, and undisputed technical virtuosity have allowed them to assimilate a highly divergent range of folk and classical forms. They have long been bearers of an important musical tradition, especially in Turkey, where Islamic disapproval of music made it the preserve of the Greek, Jewish, and Gypsy peoples. In the course of their constant travels, the Turkish Gypsies acquired a wide repertoire, adopting those elements of Turkish classical music that provided the best vehicle for their vitality and temperament (such as the solo improvisations known as *taksim*). The daily life of these musicians, in fact, has always centered on musical improvisation. When they were not performing at a concert, wedding, or some other gathering, they would often get together to improvise late into the night. One musician would begin to develop a theme to introduce the *makam* (one of the modes, or scales, that are the basis for Turkish classical music), which would then be picked up and lavishly ornamented by the next musician.

The main instruments of the Istanbul Oriental Ensemble are the *darbuka* (drums), the *kanun* (zither), *ud* (lute), clarinet (successor to the *zurna*), and the *keman* (violin or fiddle). The Ensemble's recordings, *Gypsy Rum* and *Sultan's Secret Door*, have both won the *Deutsche Schallplattenpreis* (a rare honor for consecutive albums), while *Gypsy Rum* also received the *Musique de la Monde Prize* as the best world music album of 1998. In 2000, the group released its third recording, *Caravan-serai*, which was dedicated to its original clarinetist, Ferdi Nadaz, who died shortly after the recording was made. The recording tells the tale of a band that arrives at an oasis and plays at the wedding of a wealthy camel dealer. It includes "Ya Kerim!," which features Nadaz's muezzin-style vocals, the only known recording of his voice. All of the group's recordings are distributed by *Harmonia Mundi* in the United States. Members of the Istanbul Oriental Ensemble were featured in the 1993 film *Latcho Drom* ("Safe Journey"), which tells—through song and dance—of the Gypsies' migration across Europe and Asia.

In the summer of 2001, the Istanbul Oriental Ensemble performed its first concerts in Moscow, and it also appeared at the Montreal Jazz Festival with *Groove ala Turca*. The Istanbul Oriental Ensemble made its first American tour with Burhan Öçal during the 2000–2001 season.

Exclusive Management:  
ICM Artists Ltd.  
40 West 57th Street  
New York, NY 10019