Presents

Myth of Gilgamesh AND
Music of the Middle East
with musician Simon Shaheen & storyteller Margaret Olivia Wolfson

Friday, November 14, 2008 at 10:00 AM
Bowker Auditorium
University of Massachusetts

Study Guides are also available on our website at www.fineartscenter.com - select “For School Audiences” under “Education” in the right column, then Select Resource Room.
“When I held and played these instruments, they felt like an extension of me.” -Simon Shaheen

Dazzling listeners with his soaring technique, melodic ingenuity and the unparalleled grace, which he deftly leaps from traditional Arabic to jazz and classical styles, Simon Shaheen has earned international acclaim as a virtuoso on the oud and violin. Shaheen is also one of the most significant Arabic musicians, performers and composers of his generation. His work not only looks back on the history of Arabic music, but also continues to push forward, embracing many different styles in the process. This unique contribution to the world of arts was recognized in 1994 when Shaheen was honored with the prestigious National Heritage Award. In the 1990’s he released four albums of his own: Saltanah (Water Lily Acoustics), Turath (CMP), Taqasim (Lyrichord), and Simon Shaheen: The Music of Mohamed Abdel Wahab (Axiom). He also contributed cuts to producer Bill Laswell’s fusion collective Hallucination Engine (Island) and music to the soundtracks for The Sheltering Sky, Malcolm X, and he wrote music for the entire soundtrack of the documentary For Everyone Everywhere. Broadcast globally in December 1998, this film celebrated the 50th anniversary of the United Nation’s Human Rights Charter. Shaheen wrote the music for the documentary of the British Museum’s Egyptian collection. The collection toured U.S. museums for three years and is an integral part of the exhibit’s introduction for audiences.

Born in Tarshiha, Galilee, in 1955, Simon Shaheen grew up surrounded by music. His father, Hikmat Shaheen, was a professor of music and a master oud player. Simon began learning the instrument at the age of five, and a year later began studying violin at the Conservatory for Western Classical Music. Simon Shaheen credits his father as being the predominant influence on his music. After graduating from the Academy of Music in Jerusalem in 1978, Shaheen was appointed Instructor of Arabic music, performance and theory. He moved to New York City two years later to complete his graduate studies in performance at the Manhattan School of Music, and later in performance and music education at Columbia University. In the early 80s, Shaheen formed the Near Eastern Music Ensemble establishing a group that would perform the most moving and highest standard of traditional Arabic music. This time also marked the beginning of Shaheen’s workshops and lecture/demonstrations in elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities to educate the younger generation. As a champion and guardian of Arabic music, Shaheen still devotes almost fifty percent of his worktime to working with schools and universities, including Juilliard, Princeton, Brown, Harvard, Yale, UCSD and others.
His concert credits are a veritable compendium of the world’s greatest venues, including Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Cairo’s Opera House, Theatre de la Ville in Beirut, and Belgium’s Le Palais des Arts. In 2000 Shaheen, appeared at the Grammy Awards with Sting, arranging the violin section for Stings’ live rendition of "Desert Rose." As a composer, Shaheen has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts; Meet the Composer, the Jerome Foundation, and Yellow Springs Institute. In addition to his recorded work, his theatrical repertoire includes Majnun Layla, (performed at Kennedy Center and The Museum of Natural History), The Book and the Stranger (from the classic Arabic story Kalila and Dimna derived from the Indian Book of the Animals), Possible City (set in Cordoba during the Andalusian period), and Collateral Damage (a monologue by Vanessa Redgrave).

Since 1994, Shaheen has produced the Annual Arab Festival of Arts, Mahrajan Al-Fan. Held in New York, the festival showcases a melody of the finest Arabic artists, while presenting the scope, depth and quality of Arabic culture. And in 1997 Shaheen founded the Annual Arabic Music Retreat. Held each summer at Mount Holyoke College, this week-long intensive program of Arabic music studies draws participants across the U.S. and the world. For the past six years, Shaheen has focused much of his energies on Qantara. The band, whose name means arch in Arabic, is Shaheen’s vision of the unbridled fusion of Arabic, jazz, Western Classical and Latin music, a perfect alchemy meld where the music transcends the boundaries of genre and geography.

“I want to create world music exceptionally satisfying to the ear and the soul,” says Shaheen, which is why I selected members for Qantara who are all virtuosos in their own musical form, whose experience can raise the music and performance of the group to the spectacular.”

- Text used with permission from Simon Shaheen.

About the Artist: Margaret Olivia Wolfson…

Margaret Olivia Wolfson, a solo theater artist, writer, and founder of World Myth and Music, has collaborated with musicians for more than 20 years, performing in such places as Kennedy Center, the Sydney Opera House, the National Theater, Harvard, Princeton, the United Nations, and other venues. With musician Paula Chan Bing she performed throughout Europe and Asia, and her previous music-drama collaboration with Simon Shaheen, Majnun Layla received widespread critical acclaim at its opening at the Kennedy Center and nearly two year run. In 2007, Wolfson worked with Shaheen and the world-renowned poet, Adonis, presenting a collage of his poetry in English and Arabic with musical accompaniment. She also collaborated with Opera Memphis Director, Michael Ching on Psyche and Eros, a piece for string orchestra and solo actor, hailed as ‘simply marvelous’ by the San Francisco Classical Voice. In addition to her performance work, Wolfson is an award-winning author of four books which have been translated into multiple languages. Her first book, Marriage of the Rain Goddess, won a United Kingdom Reading Association Award for substantial contribution to literature, and her work Mother of Beauty was nominated for a Pushcart Editor’s Choice Award in 2007. In 2008, Margaret co-founded Olivia and Charles: The Art of Legacy, a custom book company that produces family histories. Wolfson also consults for arts organizations in New York City, among them Midori & Friends.
The historical origins of this music are extremely heterogeneous. Early Arab musicians borrowed from the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Sumerians. Many of the instruments now used are direct descendents of those depicted in the wall paintings and carvings of these past civilizations. The distinctive quality of Arab music owes a great deal to the type of instruments employed. As ancient and traditional as the music itself, the present forms of these instruments evolved primarily in the eighth through tenth centuries, during that creative zenith of classical Islamic civilization known as the Golden Age.

The Oud is a stringed instrument used in Middle Eastern music. The English word for lute, comes from the Arabic word oud, which means ‘branch of wood". Between the eighth and tenth centuries, the oud had only four strings; a fifth was added by Ziriab, the famous Andalusian performer, and a sixth later on in the fifteenth century. Shaped like half a pear with a short fretted neck, the oud has five pairs of strings, with an additional string serving as the bass sound. Some Arabic musicians refer to it as “the King of all instruments”.

The tablah is a small hand-drum also known as the durbakke. One of the most commonly played of the percussion instruments; the tablah has a membrane of goat or fish skin stretched over a vase-shaped drum with a wide neck. Usually made of earthenware or metal, it is placed either under the left arm or between the legs and struck in the middle for the strong beats and on the edge for the sharp in-between beats. It is primarily used in rural music, called fallahin, for dancing as well as in popular music in the cities.

The Ney is a single reed pipe of the simplest design whose origins go back to the Sumerian civilization. It is a simple open-ended reed instrument that has six holes in the front for the fingers to play and one hole underneath for the thumb. Fine, mellow tones are brought forth by blowing gently over the orifice of the tube while manipulating the fingers and thumbs; by blowing with more or less force, sounds are produced an octave higher or lower, and tunes in different scales can be played by utilizing neys of various lengths.

The Riqq, (also known as the daff) is the Arabic name for the popular instrument corresponding to the English tambourine. It consists of a round frame, covered on one side with goat or fish skin. Pairs of metal discs are set into the frame to produce the jingle when struck by the hand. The sounds of this percussion instrument set the rhythm of much Arab music, particularly in the performances of classical pieces.
Pre-Concert Activities…
BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

ACTIVITY #1: Background Information

Share the background of the Gilgamesh story with students and introduce the epic’s different themes and characters.

Background
Before stories were written, they were spoken, handed down from generation to generation. Stories have many purposes, among them to entertain, impart cultural and educational values, and instill moral and ethical values. The basic elements of a story are: plot (what happens); theme (s) what the story is about; and characters. In the past, stories appeared on wood and bamboo, bone, clay, stone, palm-leaves, skin (parchment), tree bark, silk, textiles, and paper. Today stories are recorded on film and shown on television, movie, and computer screens.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, an epic inspired by an actual historical king who ruled over a city-state called Uruk (modern day Iraq) in Mesopotamia. It is believed to be one of the oldest stories ever written by human. It was inscribed in stone in a special wedge-shaped language called cuneiform more than 5,000 years ago in a region known as Mesopotamia (today’s Iraq).

Even before the story was written down, it was orally circulated, sung by poets accompanied on special harps called lyres. Over time, the written script and story of Gilgamesh was absorbed by other people of the region, among them the Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, and Persians.

Some five hundred years after the first version was created, a scholar named Sîn-léqi-unninni, revised and expanded the writing. This version of the epic is considered the Standard Version and it is the source for most contemporary translations and adaptations. The Wolfson/Shaheen Gilgamesh music-drama script is a streamlined and free adaptation of the Standard Version.

Themes
The Epic of Gilgamesh explores and examines multiple themes, including friendship and loyalty, the appropriate uses of power, wilderness and civilization, and above all, the importance of finding meaning in life despite the certainty of death. The powerful images, events, and characters found throughout the story clearly impacted on many later literary works, including Homer’s Odyssey and the Old Testament. Of particular interest to archeologists and scholars was the 11th clay tablet whose cuneiform letters revealed the story of the great Sumerian deluge—a story with multiple parallels to the story of Noah’s ark.

Characters
ANU: the Lord of the Sky; the chief god worshipped by the ancient Mesopotamians
ENKIDU: a wild man created out of water and clay by the goddess Aruru; before meeting Gilgamesh Enkidu roamed freely with the animals
ENLIL: a major god of the Mesopotamian pantheon responsible for creating Humbaba, the creature who guards the sacred cedar forest in Lebanon
GILGAMESH: the main figure of the story; an historical king that inspired the legend of Gilgamesh

ISHTAR: a powerful goddess and daughter of the god Anu; she is an impulsive, powerful, and explosive figure who is both revered and fear

SHAMASH: the Mesopotamian god of the sun

SIDURI: a young girl who brews beer at the edge of the world and advises Gilgamesh to give up his quest for immortality and enjoy the good things of life

SCORPION BEINGS: mythical figures who guard the entrance to the tunnel running through Mashu Mountain

URSHANABI: the ferryman who pilots Gilgamesh across the Waters of Death and returns with him to Uruk

UTNAPISHTIM: an ancient king who, like Noah, built an ark and filled it with pairs of male and female animals, plants, and seeds to begin life anew after the great deluge

THE STORYTELLER’S TOOL KIT

Explore different ways a storyteller uses his/her voice and help students understand how important ‘intention’ is in bringing a character’s words to life.

A storyteller, whether writing on paper or ‘telling’ a story with voice and body, uses language to bring characters and setting alive in the minds of readers or listeners. A writer accomplishes this strictly through language whereas an oral storyteller uses expressively spoken language, gesture, and body language, and sometimes music to paint pictures in the listener’s imagination.

A well told story uses the musical elements below to bring his or her words alive:

TEMPO: the speed of speaking; fast and slow
DYNAMIC: volume of speaking; loud and soft
PITCH: speaking in a high and low register
REST: pause in speaking
TIMBRE: the color and texture of the voice

Discussion Questions

- When might the storyteller speak loudly? Softly? Quickly?
- When might the storyteller speak in a high or low voice (pitch)?
- Why would a storyteller use a pause (rest)?

Most importantly, a storyteller must have a clear intention behind what he or she says. Understanding what feelings the character is trying to convey—or reflects—is very important when telling a story—as important as the words. Repeat the same line using a different emotional intention each time.
DEPRESSED “Mother, last night I had the strangest dream. In my dream a meteor, with a tail like melted starlight, streaked across the sky. It then landed at my feet. Can you tell me what this means?”

WORRIED “Mother, last night I had the strangest dream. In my dream a meteor, with a tail like melted starlight, streaked across the sky. It then landed at my feet. Can you tell me what this means?”

CURIOUS “Mother, last night I had the strangest dream. In my dream a meteor, with a tail like melted starlight, streaked across the sky. It then landed at my feet. Can you tell me what this means?”

List different emotions on slips of paper-happy, melancholy, angry, giddy, etc.- and place in a box. Have students take turns drawing a slip from the box and repeating the same line in a voice that conveys that emotion.

**POST-PERFORMANCE**

**Questions**

After students have heard the Wolfson/Shaheen music-drama, explore the following questions:

1. What is appropriate and inappropriate behavior for a king? Can you draw a parallel to today?

2. In the story, Gilgamesh is driven to establish his reputation. How do we know this from the story? What do you think about that? Is reputation as important today as it appeared during the time of Gilgamesh?

3. How did you feel about the slaying of Humbaba (the guardian of the cedar forest). What forces did that unleash? Can you draw a parallel to today’s world? How might this relate to current issues such as global warning, the environment, etc.

4. What role do women play in the story? What do you think of Sidhuri’s advice to Gilgamesh?

5. Describe the different gods and goddesses in the story. What is their role in human affairs?

6. How do Gilgamesh and Enkidu complement each other? What happens to each of them over the course of the story?

7. How did the ancient Sumerians regard death?

**Discussion Question**

- Can you think of any other stories that use similar themes or motifs?
Resources

Younger Readers


Middle School/Upper Elementary


Background of Region

Evacuation Procedures
Bowker Auditorium

Note: Interior house conditions may necessitate alternate exit routes.

Sections A - K and the Pit exit toward stage.

Sections L - U exit toward lobby.

West side exit stairwell Left.

East side exit stairwell right.

Balconies
NOTICE TO ALL TEACHERS AND CHAPERONES

- **PERFORMANCES BEGIN PROMPTLY AT 10AM OR NOON.** Many of our performances sell out. This means we can have up to 1,600 students to seat. Please help us by arriving **30 minutes** prior to the start of the performance. This will allow our ushers to get everyone seated and for you and your students to visit the rest rooms and get settled. It is important that we begin our performances on time so that all schools can meet their lunch and/or dismissal times.

- **PLEASE CHECK LOCATION OF PERFORMANCE WHEN MAKING YOUR BUS RESERVATION.**

- The staff of the Fine Arts Center needs your help! An increasing number of students are coming into the performance space with gum, food, beverages, cell phones and portable music players. **None of these items is allowed in the halls for performances.** Many of these items are stowed in backpacks and are not easily noticed. Our goal is to offer high quality performances for young people. In order to enhance the experience, we ask for your cooperation in preventing these items from entering the hall.

- For the comfort of all concerned, we ask that backpacks, lunches and other gear be left on the bus. Our long-standing policy of no cameras or tape recorders still is in effect.

- At the conclusion of the performance please remain in your seats until your school group is dismissed.

*We hope that you and your students enjoy your theatre experience!*
PARKING AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FINE ARTS CENTER'S
BOWKER AUDITORIUM
In Stockbridge Hall

School Bus Parking: Students should be dropped-off at the circle near Stockbridge Hall, which is accessed via the road to the Campus Center Parking Garage off of Commonwealth Avenue. University Security will direct buses to an appropriate parking lot during the performance (typically by the football stadium). PLEASE BE SURE YOUR BUS DRIVER KNOWS THAT ALL PERFORMANCES LAST APPROXIMATELY 1 HOUR AND THEY SHOULD RETURN A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE ANTICIPATED END TIME. If drivers are not with the buses, they may miss the radio call from security asking them to return for pick-up, resulting in unnecessary delays returning to your school.

Individual cars: We recommend parking in the Campus Center Parking Garage, which is directly next to Stockbridge Hall/Bowker Auditorium. All other available parking during weekdays is at meters. There are few meters available that are close to Bowker Auditorium. Available lots and pricing (current as of 1/1/07) are listed below:

- Parking in the Garage is available to our patrons at a discounted rate of $1. To receive this rate you MUST give the Garage attendant a parking pass. To receive your pass, please call our office to let us know that you will be arriving by car. Parking passes are sent with the invoices. (413) 545-2116
- Parking meters are enforced Monday - Friday, 7AM - 5PM. Meter rates are $1.00 per hour.

Parking Garage – next to Bowker - accessed across from the Mullins Center off Commonwealth Avenue
Lot 25 - next to Mullins Center with 3 & 5-hour meters

From the North: (Vermont, Greenfield) I-91 south to Route 116. Follow signs on 116 “To the University of Massachusetts.” Exit ramp leads to Massachusetts Avenue. Turn left (east) on to Massachusetts Avenue toward the campus. At first light turn left on to Commonwealth Avenue. At next light turn right and follow signs for the Parking Garage.

From the South: (Springfield, Holyoke) I-91 north to Route 9. Turn right (east) on Route 9 over the Coolidge Bridge and through Hadley. Turn left (north) on Route 116 (across from Staples) heading toward campus. Turn right (east) at first exit at “University of Massachusetts,” then bear right onto Massachusetts Avenue toward campus. At first light turn left on to Commonwealth Avenue. At next light turn right and follow signs for the Parking Garage.

From the West: (Northampton, Pittsfield) Route 9 east through Northampton and over Coolidge Bridge. Follow remaining directions under “From the South”.

From the East: (Belchertown, Ludlow) North on Routes 21, 181 or 202 to Route 9 into Amherst. Right on to North Pleasant Street (main downtown intersection), north through center of town. Turn left at Triangle Street (Bertucci’s Restaurant on your right), rejoining North Pleasant Street. Stay on North Pleasant until it enters campus. Go straight through light – street has now become Massachusetts Avenue. At bottom of hill turn right on to Commonwealth Avenue. At next light turn right and follow signs for the Parking Garage.
For Concert Hall, Rand Theater and Bowker Auditorium – Patrons traveling by car are encouraged to park in the parking garage. Discounted parking is available in the garage for $1. A parking permit is required for discounted parking in the garage. Please call the Arts & Educational Programs Office if you require permits at (413) 545-2116. All other parking on campus is at available meters at the rate of $1 per hour. Parking is enforced Monday – Friday, 7AM – 5 PM.

Buses will drop-off students as indicated on map. Buses will be given parking instructions by Campus Security.