

## « Sayeh-Roshan » (Chiaroscuro)

Ali Kian Yazdanfar, Double Bass

Kimia Rafieian, Piano

June 10, 2023 International Society of Bassists Convention, Ann Arbor, Michigan

5pm Britton Recital Hall, University of Michigan School of Music

Sallaneh (2022)

I. Dedicated to M.R. Shajarian

II. Dedicated to K. Kalhor

III. Dedicated to H. Alizadeh

Amir Eslami (b. 1971)

Ballade for unaccompanied Contrabass (1999)

Behzad Ranjbaran (b. 1955)

\*His Gabbah is Turquoise (2022)

Parisa Sabet (b. 1980)

\*Laylâ, Folk Songs Set #18 for Singing Contrabass Player and Piano (2022)

Reza Vali (b. 1952)

I. Night

II. Scat 1

III. Laylâ

IV. On the Khâjoo Bridge

V. Fairies

VI. Forty Windows

VII. Day

VIII. The Reign of Eternity

IX. Ranâ

X. Scat 2

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### **Sayeh-Roshan (Chiaroscuro)**

*Sayeh-roshan* – Persian for “chiaroscuro” – is the interaction of light and shadow, an idea that can be easily applied to many aspects of modern life. In a politically and socially polarized world, there is a constant pressure to take a stand on one side or the other. However, life is more complex than simple black and white, and the in-between is not gray but rather a complex pattern unique to each individual. There is always interaction between competing desires, ideas, and perspectives... Past and Present. Tradition and Modernity. Beauty and Ugliness.

At the same time, this duality is often the reality for those with ties to multiple cultures. Each of us has different connections to our roots – the experiences of recent arrivals to our shores, of those more settled, and also of second and further generations all contribute to a contrasting yet rich diversity of perspective. While the juxtaposition of these roots with our present surroundings can sometimes be confusing, the depth it brings to our lives gives a sense of meaning and place in a larger global community.

*Sayeh-Roshan* is centered around three new works for Double Bass and Piano written specifically for this program; it asks the composers and performers to consider what their Persian identity means to them now, living in the West, and how a chiaroscuro-like interaction of the West and East has become a part of them.

***Sallaneh (2022)*** Amir Eslami (b. 1971, now living in Vancouver, Canada)

Amir Eslami is known as a master of the ney (Persian Traditional Flute), as well as a composer and professor, having taught at the Art University of Tehran between 2005 and 2018. Each of *Sallaneh's* movements is dedicated to a contemporary master of Iranian traditional music and reflects their performing style: Mohammad Reza Shajarian's vocal perfection in the first movement (inspired by the song *Mihan Ey Mihan*), Kayhan Kalhor's improvisations on kamancheh in the second, and Hossein Alizadeh's virtuosity on setâr in the third. The title *Sallaneh* refers to walking slowly, similar to the pace of the first movement, but fittingly is also the title of one of Alizadeh's albums.

***Ballade (1999)*** Behzad Ranjbaran (b. 1955, now living in New Jersey, USA)

Behzad Ranjbaran has been a long-time composition faculty member at the Juilliard School and wrote the *Ballade* for the International Society of Bassists competition in 1999. In addition to a violin concerto for Joshua Bell and a piano concerto for Jean-Yves Thibaudet, he wrote a Concerto for Double Bass in 2017 for Ali Kian Yazdanfar. The *Ballade*, like the Concerto, is a work specifically written in an idiomatic style for the double bass. Opening with an arpeggiated flourish on the open strings, it immediately creates a unique atmosphere through soaring lyric motifs, insistent rhythms, repeated double-stop gestures, and sinuously flowing octatonic runs up and down the instrument.

***His Gabbah is Turquoise (2022)*** Parisa Sabet (b. 1980, now living in Toronto, Canada)

Parisa Sabet is a recent winner of several awards who uses her knowledge of Persian culture and Western music to address important social topics. About her composition, the composer writes: "Its musical elements are inspired by patterns, textures and colors found in Gabbah. Gabbah in Farsi means raw, natural, and uncut and is a type of Persian rug with bright colors and rough and primitive textures. Its patterns are formed by asymmetric and symmetric knots and can be as diverse as the mind and imagination of its craftsman. The color turquoise represents wisdom, tranquility, protection, good fortune, and hope.

When I asked Ali what elements of Iranian music or culture most interested him, he referred to his memories with his father talking about different aspects of Persian culture. I have been wanting to compose a piece dedicated to my father as well. *His Gabbah Is Turquoise* is a homage to the fathers."

***Laylâ, Folk Songs Set #18 for Singing Contrabass Player and Piano (2022)*** Reza Vali (b. 1952, now living in Pittsburgh, USA)

Reza Vali's compositions, like the concept behind *Sayeh-Roshan*, seek to bridge the distance between western and eastern (Persian) musical traditions. As outlined in his book, *Return to the Origins*, Vali insists on the imperative of understanding and composing using Persian traditional knowledge, even if his training and teaching was firmly centered around Western ideals. *Laylâ* is a virtuosic, kaleidoscopic journey that shows the richness and potential inherent in this merging of culture. As much a theater piece as a musical work, it places extra demands on both the soloist and the pianist: every movement contains either whistling, singing, jazz scat, percussion, or sprechstimme as well as extensive use of Persian modes, rhythms, and advanced techniques within the piano. The composer wanted the double bassist to perform as would a traditional folk musician, who in the service of telling stories, can do it all. References in the movements are to ghazals of Hafez, or children's poems of Ahmad Shamlu, or popular songs of young love. Other movements highlight archetypes of Persian ideals (perhaps the Laylâ idealized in Nezami's poetry and the tall and slender beauty of Ranâ). Although these cultural markers may be unknown for non-Persian listeners, they can nevertheless serve as a path towards understanding a culture often misunderstood by many.