

## **Appendix: Program in Scripture and the Arts**

The Program in Scripture and the Arts continued the initiative begun in 2008/2009 to broaden the range of traditions and genres included in our programming. This was the first year that the Program functioned entirely without Henry Luce Foundation funds, which meant that we had to scale back the number of programs we could sponsor. We thought that our shorter program might have greater impact if we explored one phenomenon from a number different perspectives, and so we decided to focus the year's offerings around scripture and musical performance. Our programs featured traditions from medieval Anatolia, sixth-century China, eighteenth-century Austria, and the contemporary Middle East. Here is a brief overview of the program this year:

### **Program Events: Fall 2009**

A strong kick-off for this year's program was "**Popular Scriptures In Turkish Islam**" a lively talk and performance given on **Thursday, December 10** in the GSU Auditorium by the three musicians of the **DUNYA ensemble**. DUNYA is noted for its cross-cultural reach and mastery of Anatolian devotional music. The event, which was attended by close to forty students, faculty, and non-BU guests on a chilly exam-week evening, began with an orienting lecture by DUNYA's Robert Labaree. An ethnomusicologist and professor of Music History at New England Conservatory specializing in Turkish music and medieval European music, Robert gave an insightful overview of Anatolian Islamic musical and ritualistic traditions that use the Turkish language in their poetry. Labaree, Professor Mehmet Sanlikol and Cem Mutlu next gave a concert of Anatolian music inspired by devotional and liturgical poems composed in the Turkish language by Suleyman Celebi (early 15th c.), Yunus Emre (13th c.). A Question & Answer with the audience wrapped up the performance portion of the evening, as the performers offered more information on their selections. Later, the conversation continued at a well-attended reception in the GSU Back Court.

On **Thursday, February 18**, the Program for Scripture and the Arts presented the musical film project, "**The Song That Can Be Sung Is Not The Eternal Song**" a setting of nine chapters selected from the Daodejing for women's chorus and harp. The film drew images from four live cameras that documented a 2008 performance in Los Angeles. A film/art installation by Luis Proença provided visual resonance with images and themes of the text. Composer **Paul Humphreys**, Associate Professor and Director of World Music at Loyola Marymount University, presented the event, which was preceded by a reception. The film was attended by an intimate crowd of thirty-five people, including students and several visitors from the Boston community. It was followed by a Question and Answer session in which many thoughtful questions were presented to Professor Humphreys about his texts and his compositional process. Humphreys was also able to attend Professor Michaels' Chinese Religion and Buddhism undergraduate classes during the day on Thursday and speak with students about his work.

On **Thursday, April 8**, the Scripture & the Arts Program was joined by the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations as we presented a performance and Q&A by Arab hand percussionist **Karim Nagi**, entitled “**Ecstatic Arabic Music**”. Sixty-five people packed the executive dining rooms in SMG as Nagi, a native Egyptian drummer, DJ, and folk dancer, swirled, danced and sang music inspired by scripture and the Middle East. Attendees included faculty, staff, students and many people from the Boston community. Nagi held the audience spellbound as he embarked on a musical journey that sampled traditional rhythms from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Palestine and many more. The Q&A which followed the performance included an explication of the uniqueness of Arabic scales and a discussion of the special qualities of spiritual singing and movement, and Nagi also engaged the audience with a participatory segment demonstrating both the solitary and social nature of the medium. The performance was followed by a well-attended reception and falafel bar.

This year’s Scripture and the Arts program concluded with “**Sounds of Enlightenment: Mozart’s *Magic Flute***” a thoughtful and provocative lecture by Boston University’s own **Christopher I. Lehrich**. Held at the Photonics Center on **Tuesday, April 20**, the lecture examined Mozart’s beloved opera *The Magic Flute*, a bizarre fairytale filled with monsters, a dark Queen, a sorcerous brotherhood, bird people, and a prince rescuing a princess. Lehrich made the case that the opera can be considered a Masonic opera, but that it includes not a bipartite journey simply from feminine emotionalism and chaos to masculine reason and order, but a tripartite structure that reached to a third level, one of wisdom and love, as embodied in the character of Pamina. Thirty-five people attended the lecture, which was enhanced by DVD segments from various performances of the opera. The lecture, which lasted an hour, was followed by a lively Q&A and a short wine and cheese reception in the atrium lobby of the Photonics Center.

In addition to these events, the Scripture and the Arts Program was pleased to be a co-sponsor of the Department of Religion’s 14th **Annual Lecture**, “**How Odd was God/To Choose the Jews: A History of Early Christian ‘Flesh,’**” presented on **Tuesday, February 9** and featuring Boston University’s Aurelio Professor of the Appreciation of Scripture, **Paula Fredriksen** and Scripps College Professor **Andrew Jacobs**. The speakers discussed ancient Christianity’s ambivalence toward the flesh and toward the Jews and how Augustine challenged those views. This very well-attended double lecture was followed by a “chat” style question and answer and a reception. The Scripture and the Arts program was pleased to create flyers, html emails and a press release for this event, as well as conducting a publicity campaign that included coverage by *BU Today*.

## **Conclusion**

We are very pleased with the enthusiastic response this year’s program has received from our audiences. Many people who attended one event returned for others and we have had positive feedback about our updated website and the new opt-in feature for our e-mailing list. The year has also helped us to sharpen our focus as we plan our future. The emphasis on performance has helped us appeal to new audiences, and as we move forward, we plan to incorporate that spirit on inclusivity while returning to our “roots”—integrating art and scholarly interpretation. As we move forward we will continue to build programming with wide appeal—reaching out particularly to undergraduates by bringing visitors into the classroom and encouraging undergraduates to attend our events.

As we look forward to 2010/2011, we are already in the process of preparing two programs which we are pleased to note have received funding from the Humanities Foundation: the U.S. premiere of *The Escape of Jonah*, by composer Matti Kovler, which is scheduled for September 12 at the Tsai Auditorium, and an Autumn performance by the DUNYA Ensemble, which will bring scriptural musical traditions from multiple faiths into conversation. We look forward to designing events and lectures to compliment these programs and to fill out the rest of our season in 2010-2011.