



CARNEGIE HALL presents

CITI GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS

ROMANI MUSIC OF TURKEY

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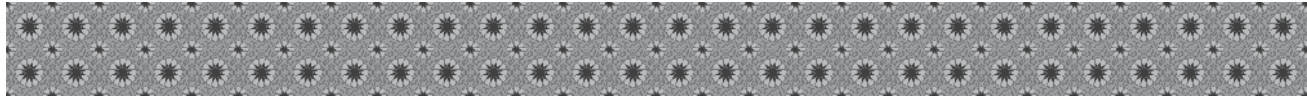
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INTRODUCTION TO TURKEY

Turkey is a Eurasian country that stretches across the Anatolian peninsula in western Asia and Thrace in southeastern Europe. Turkey borders eight countries: Bulgaria to the northwest; Greece to the west; Georgia to the northeast; Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran to the east; and Iraq and Syria to the southeast. The Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus are to the south; the Aegean Sea and Archipelago are to the west; and the Black Sea is to the north. Separating Anatolia and Thrace are the Sea of Marmara and the Turkish straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), which are commonly reckoned to delineate the border between Asia and Europe, thereby making Turkey transcontinental.

Due to the country's strategic location astride two continents, Turkey's culture has a blend of Eastern and Western tradition. Turkey has come to acquire increasing strategic significance, as it is a powerful regional presence in the Eurasian landmass with strong historic, cultural, and economic influence in the area between the European Union in the west and Central Asia in the east, and Russia in the north and the Middle East in the south.

Turkey is a democratic, secular, unitary, constitutional republic whose political system was established in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of World War I. Since then, Turkey has become increasingly integrated with the West. Turkey began full membership negotiations with the European Union in 2005. Meanwhile, Turkey has continued to foster close political, economic, and industrial relations with the Eastern world, particularly with the states of the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia.

Istanbul (known earlier in its history as Byzantium and later Constantinople) is Europe's most populous city and Turkey's cultural and financial center. The city covers 27 districts of the Istanbul province. It is located on the Bosphorus Strait and encompasses the natural harbor known as the Golden Horn in the northwest of the country. It extends both on the European and on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, and is thereby the only metropolis in the world that is situated on two continents.

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANI MUSIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Various groups collectively referred to as "Gypsy" moved into the Anatolian peninsula (or present-day Turkey) as early as the 11th century. Three of the Gypsy groups can be found in present-day Turkey: Dom (Middle Eastern groups that speak a dialect called Domari), Lom (people who speak Lomavren, a language with Armenian elements), and Roma (European groups that speak a language known as Romanes, which contains many Greek words). The Roma used bears for entertainment, fortune telling, and warding off the evil eye. In addition to entertainment with trained animals, Romani acrobats, jugglers, and dancers often performed and traveled as a troupe.

Dom, Lom, and Romani groups contributed to the vigor of the Ottoman Empire (an area that existed from about 1250–1922 and spanned southeastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East at the height of its power). These groups were not only entertainers, but participated in a number of other occupations and trades, as metal smiths, sieve makers, animal traders, flower-sellers, makers of grates and tongs, food vendors, and basket weavers. During the Ottoman period, Romani professional musicians continued to provide important musical services. Roma from musician families were conscripted into service as musicians for *mehter*, the Romani military ensemble; when the *mehter* was abolished in 1826, *mehter* musicians continued to perform for celebratory ritual events in smaller ensembles consisting of *çifte nacr* (small kettle drums), *davul* (a double-headed bass drum), and *zurna* (a double-reed wind instrument). Musicians from Romani and related groups also used music to sell goods such as *macun* ("taffy") or to accompany trained dancing animals, such as bears, chimpanzees, and baboons.

—Sonia Seeman

