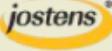




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Arts & Entertainment

# Classical and Contemporary Merge in Faculty Performance

*Friday Night Live series features Turkish-inspired music and campus talent*

By Chelsea Hawkins

City on a Hill Press

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The auditorium creaks with the sound of tuning instruments, the stage is flooded with blue lights, and in the center sits the Özgen Trio. The crowd quiets and the room quickly fills with the sound of Turkish-inspired music, the kemençe, a small bowed instrument, enrapturing its listeners.



*The Özgen trio stands on the stage. The three musicians, who include music lecturer Mesut Özgen, performed a hybrid of Western and traditional Turkish music for the UCSC Friday Night Live concert series. Photo by Andrew Allio.*

The performance, the opening show for the music department's Friday Night Live concert series, is a rare experience for the Santa Cruz community. The stage is not only graced by the master kemençe player, Neva Özgen, but it is also the foreground for the premiere of David Evan Jones' piece combining podcasts and live music.

"This is one of the unusual programs," said music lecturer Mesut Özgen, who is a classical guitarist and cousin of Neva Özgen. "[Friday Night Live] is mostly the traditional Western classical repertoire."

The program consisted of performances of traditional Turkish folk songs, including taksims — improvised preludes — by Neva Özgen, and an original composition by Mesut Özgen, called "Anatolian Fantasy." However, the performance is not an "authentic" representation of Turkish music, but rather a "hybrid" combination of Western and Turkish styles.

"[Mesut Özgen is] doing Western music, but his ears are full of Turkish classical music from his childhood," Neva Özgen said. "Because of that he combines [the styles] very well."

The draw of the performance for many, however, was the opportunity to see Neva Özgen play the kemençe. Nakul Deshpande, a second-year earth sciences major from Merrill who also studies and plays the kemençe, was excited to hear Neva play.

"It's really a treat that she's here," Deshpande said. "Personally, I would have liked to hear more traditional tunes. Every musician has a little flavor, and I really just like the way Neva plays."

Amy Haberman, a local resident, described Neva's playing as "expressive," while Mesut Özgen described Neva's musical style as "special."

"If the same notes are played on a violin, they may not sound like anything special, but her playing style, with the Turkish accent, it makes it completely different," Mesut said. "Each note is not one pure simple pitch."

However, the night's performance was more than just the meeting of Western and Eastern music, but also of technology and art.

Porter provost and music professor David Evan Jones premiered his latest composition, "News from Afar" during the second half of the show that evening. The composition takes news podcasts, and uses a program to

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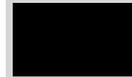
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add pitches to the voices, creating a song-like quality. The podcasts are overlaid on computer-generated instruments. The piece was played while Mesut Özgen and Neva Özgen performed accompanying music.

“I began thinking about the relationship of the arts to the news,” Jones said. “The arts don’t tend to change very much on the surface with what happens on the news ... so I wanted to see a more direct relationship between the art that I make and the news that I hear.”

Jones was also inspired by a general appreciation for “language” and intonation.

“I’ve done a lot of work with the sounds of speech,” Jones said. “I’ve synthesized speech ... changed the sounds of voices and words in a lot of different ways.”

The use of technology in Jones’ piece is a new frontier for Neva Özgen, who normally plays traditional Turkish music.

“David Jones’ piece was a challenge, but [Neva] wanted to experience the challenge,” Mesut said.

Despite Jones’ use of technology in his composition, he still holds some apprehensions about the role of technology in music, maintaining a “love-hate relationship,” he said. The human aspect of music, the ability to make mistakes and not be perfect, still has its appeal.

“For real people making real music, mistakes in music aren’t a big deal,” Jones said. “It’s like an eggshell, letting you know it’s real eggs in the omelet.”

Jones’ music not only attempts to bridge a gap between technology and music but also aims to make a connection between people and the world at large.

“We all have individual lives that we try and make as positive and pleasant as possible [but] we live in a world where we’re hearing news that is mostly about things unpleasant,” Jones said. “We’re constantly in a state of dissonance with those things. We live with this incongruity between our daily lives and what we’re hearing about all the time [on the news]. [The composition] tries to bring together ... these bewildering reports of what we get every day.”

The night’s performances were tied together by one idea: the convergence of opposing musical styles, technology and art and the individual and the communal spaces.

“[The concert is a way] to attract new audiences to classical concerts,” Mesut Özgen said. “Although it is classical, [there is] a kind of synthesis between East and West.”

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