



LES CONCERTS PARISIENS - AGENCE ARTISTIQUE
21, RUE BERGERE, 75009 PARIS – www.concertsparisiens.fr

HÂL

The Love journey

with

Maryam Chemirani

Voice

Sylvain Barou

Celtic flutes, bansouri, duduk, neyanban

Bijan Chemirani

Zarb, percussion, saz

Keyvan Chemirani

Zarb, percussion, santur, artistic direction



ALBUM RELEASED BY ALPHA CLASSICS IN SEPTEMBER 2021

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PRESENTATION

In the Chemirani family, we know Keyvan, a zarb and percussion virtuoso, and Bijan, an expert on the saz lute and also a percussionist. With their father, they formed a very famous trio... We know less about their sister Maryam, singer but also nurse, first in India following the footsteps of Mother Teresa, then in the Alpes de Haute Provence... Turned towards others and very busy in these troubled times, she has nevertheless decided to return to singing, under the impulse of Keyvan who imagined this programme for her and for her "warm and deeply generous" voice. Not forgetting their musical brother, the incredible flutist Sylvain Barou. At the crossroads of Iranian, Indian and Irish music, they have recorded an album called *Hâl* (pronounced "Hol") and subtitled "love ballads", because all the texts, whether sung in English or Persian, are love poems. The "hâl" corresponds to the moment when one lets oneself go, that ecstatic state between awakening and forgetting oneself...



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NOTE OF INTENT

"Playing with the family, on stage, has always been a special experience. As a natural continuation of learning about life and music, as well as a return to one's roots.

I naturally wanted to offer a programme surrounded by my sister Maryam, my brother Bijan and my brother at heart Sylvain Barou. In the continuity of my previous projects (work around the Indo-Eastern modality, acoustic training highlighting ornamentation, the richness of rhythmic patterns, back and forth between the festive and the meditative, space for improvisation within a precise framework...), I chose to centre it around the voice of my sister Maryam Chemirani, whose generosity, warm timbre and charisma touch me deeply and in my opinion deserve a full and complete exhibition. With the marvellous virtuoso Sylvain Barou - about whom one could say, as Rumi said of the ney reed flute, that "it is not air that comes out of his flute, but fire! " - and Bijan Chemirani's delicate sensitivity on the saz and his stunning precision on the percussion, we have a luxury case, sometimes silky, sometimes lively, playful and luminous. As is often the case, the need to open up the world of oriental modality is a necessity.

By feeding on various influences (jazz, improvised music...).

By drawing inspiration from the intimate prosodic relationship between text, rhythm and melody, by letting the mystery between the substance (meaning of the poems) and the form (the sound, the rhythm, the music of the words) come alive.

By opening up the percussion instrumentarium, with the use of a set closer to the drums (tom bass snare drum and cymbals).

By allowing Maryam to sing not only in Persian but also for the first time in English, with the idea of keeping the lines simple despite the use of learned elements of language, to have a slightly folk colour.

"My road is on the path my heart has taken," says Saadi. This journey made up of compositions and a few traditional pieces rearranged (Irish, Turkish, Persian) is also a journey of love, following the philosophy of Persian mystics, emphasizing love as a philosophy of life! And may we together get closer to the "hâl", that ecstatic state of both awakening and forgetting oneself, which is sought after in oriental scholarly music! »

KEYVAN CHEMIRANI



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HÂL, LOVE BALLADS

By Bertrand Dicale

Hâl is the state of consciousness in which one entirely forgets the self: a spiritual intoxication intertwining external perception with the sense of one's inner path – a sort of internal trance that the ancient Persian authors claimed to be the ideal state for every musician and every listener. *'I am not offering hâl, it is simply a lighthouse, a goal'*, Keyvan Chemirani reminds us. In calling his new album *Hâl, Love ballads*, he is placing himself in the legendary oriental tradition of someone with a passion for music treading the long, road towards self-discovery.

Keyvan Chemirani is part of a family. A family of blood relatives, certainly, with Keyvan's brother Bijan and his sister Maryam, but also with an honorary member, Sylvain Barou. Here then are four musicians who have already lived a hundred lives, inspired by the singular goal of uniting together around the concept of ecstasy.

This is not a uniquely Persian idea – and certainly not in our 21st century, which willingly or unwillingly presupposes the abolition of cultural frontiers. The Chemirani siblings grew up in the landscape of the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region, a charmed childhood surrounded by the Purcell and Vivaldi that their mother loved listening to, as well as the music played by their father Djamshid – masterclasses with his pupils, solo practise, rehearsals and concerts with the greatest Iranian musical celebrities. They also listened to radio, with its stream of pop music and evergreen song classics, but were equally enchanted by the Malicorne band, and the stimulating influence of the French folk revival. And so their notion of the eastern homeland, the orient, had its borders broken down, and it is this expanded vision of the orient that Keyvan is invoking here, along with his family.

For both Keyvan and Bijan, their professional career began with percussion instruments. *'From the very start, the zarb was our 'open sesame' to all kinds of music, allowing us to meet a whole host of musicians in masses of different worlds...'* Keyvan and his brother have always engaged in cross-cultural adventures. Apart from their frequent collaborations with their father, and in recent years with their sister Maryam, each of them has adventurously ploughed other cultural furrows – Bijan in his Mediterranean journey with Sting, in the project *If On A Winter's Night*, and Keyvan in his involvement with jazz, Breton music, and much more.

On this album they each play several instruments, Bijan's saz and Keyvan's santur supplementing their virtuosic percussion. Sylvain Barou plays flutes and pipes of several traditions, from the uilleann pipes to the Armenian duduk. Sylvain comes from a family of travelling instrumentalists: from his home base in Brittany he led a trio with Dónal Lunny, studied the bansuri flute in India, then made various other global forays to Asia Minor and elsewhere...

At the heart of the ensemble is the deep, warm, sweet-toned voice of Maryam Chemirani – as Keyvan remarks, *'such a moving voice, full of mystery, magic, immediacy of emotion'*. This really intimate, tactile singing seems to caress the listener's arm and cheek; above and beyond any aesthetic frisson, it gives the artistic intention a humanising quality.



For the core numbers of this album, Keyvan Chemirani chose a very western percussion set –snare drum, floor tom and three cymbals, a set he has used for the past few years for stage appearances with Sylvain Luc or Serge Teyssot-Gay. This basic kit reminds him of his first rock group, when he was twelve or thirteen, playing with musicians twice his age. *'I play quite straightforwardly, like a child, never wondering about whether it's right for me to play this or that instrument.'* This choice of percussion is also a compromise, faced with the well-known dilemma of percussionists wanting the power of a drum kit, and drummers dreaming of the percussion's rich range of sonorities.

As to geography, there is no stopping Keyvan and company: three numbers explore Celtic folklore, one being the Irish ballad Lord Baker, the old love story of an English 'Lord of high degree' taken prisoner in Turkey, and the ruler's's 'brave young daughter', the princess who released him. Here already we have an encounter between two worlds. And this is also the first time Maryam has recorded a song in English, confronting the challenge of applying her superb artistry to a cross-cultural context.

Hâl, Love ballads was a long time in the making. Gradually, organically, the repertoire was built up, with Keyvan often taking Bijan's riffs on the saz as the basis for composition. The studio sessions were spaced out, and it was a laborious process of settling and pruning. *'I had to cut everything back,'* says Keyvan. *'If you're looking for a simple emotion, a bit like a pop feeling, then you don't need to keep too many improvisations when putting the pieces together.'* And so quite a few of the numbers have ended up no longer than singles, five minutes maximum.

From the very first concerts to the final recording several years have intervened, giving Keyvan enough time not to lose himself in digressions. *Hâl, love ballads* is also the self-portrait of musicians who have spent several decades travelling around a map of the world, and constantly reshaping it – Iran, India, the Mediterranean, the Celtic world, and so on.

'When all those years ago we began to use the zarb in other cultures, we approached them with very few elements – just sounds, and timbres – and this allowed us to get into the very remote spaces of the Persian music we had learnt from our father.' With this same deft lightness of means, Keyvan Chemirani and his companions traverse a vast area of varied performance, applying new colours while letting the original musical sources shine through. This is a journey that ranges all the more freely for not casting off its moorings. From the heart of a studio it summons up a dozen different worlds to achieve an ecstasy that combines artistic vision with musicological rigour, in a dizzying voyage of discovery.



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THE PROGRAMME

Chabi Majnoun

Poem by Nezami on a traditional Turkish theme.

Del Bar

Traditional Persian

"I'm waiting for this door to open and for you to appear to me."

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Composition by Bijan and Keyvan Chemirani on the Persian poem "Bâz âmad" by Moïni Kermanshahi (1923-2015)

An Indian way

Instrumental composition for santur, bansuri flute and percussion (daf and zarb) on a rhythmic cycle in 4/4 time, introduced by a non-rhythmic discourse in the style of a North Indian alap and inspired by a South Indian raga called Shadvidamargini.

Lord Baker

Traditional Irish

The story of a lord who falls in love with a Turkish princess and travels to the East to find her.

Maqâm zé deyram

Poem by Hâfez, the 14th-century Persian mystic poet.

"I am like the pilgrim, my place is on the road my heart has taken".

Haft Mâhi

Persian poem "bé kodjâ shénin tché to bân" on a composition by Keyvan Chemirani

Duo de zarb

Improvisation of percussion on a metric in 7 beats

Bâman Sanamâ

Poem by Hafez, on a composition by Bijan and Maryam Chemirani

"Beloved, may I sacrifice my heart for you"

Berceuse pour Maël

A composition on a 13th century poem by Saadi of Shiraz about the lover's absence.

Maures

Poem by Hâfez "Listen to these sentences, to free yourself from your pain" on a traditional Mauritanian theme.



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THE ARTISTS

KEYVAN CHEMIRANI | Zarb, percussion, santur, artistic direction



Born in Paris in 1968, Keyvan Chemirani grew up on the heights of Manosque. He was trained in Persian scholarly music by his father Djamchid, born in Tehran, a virtuoso of zarb. The Grand Master was keen to marry his traditional music with theatre (the Mahabharata by Peter Brook), dance with Maurice Béjart or Carolyn Carlson or contemporary music. Today, Keyvan has in turn become a master of the zarb (chalice-shaped drum), the daf (frame drum) and the bendir (Mediterranean percussion). The art of Iranian percussion is based on poetry. The structure of the instrumental pieces for zarb is inspired by that of Persian poems,

the blows on the goatskin covering the instrument echo at the feet of the verses. But for Keyvan, the music cannot be limited to the secular Persian repertoire because it is above all shared. He likes encounters and mixes to create bridges between East and West and between all forms of music (world music, jazz, ancient music). He is particularly sensitive to voices.

A curious musician, he travels around the world music scene improvising with many artists, singers and instrumentalists: the Breton Erik Marchand, the Irish-Cretan Ross Daly, the South Indian Sudha Ragunathan, the Sephardic Françoise Atlan, the flamenco composer Juan Carmona or his brother Bijan. These improvisations capture the particular characteristics of the different traditions and reveal their similarities in an astonishing way, showing how Iranian percussion can come close to the sound of the Indian tabla, how the Breton language sounds almost Mediterranean.

His instrument, the zarb, has found a place in the world of jazz. Keyvan has collaborated with renowned artists such as Didier Lockwood, Sylvain Luc, Louis Sclavis or Renaud Garcia-Fons. An explorer, he also enjoys working with early music ensembles such as Dominique Vellard's Ensemble Gilles Binchois, La Chapelle Rhénane, with whom he recorded David de Schütz's Psalms, and Leonardo García Alarcón's Cappella Mediterranea, which invited him as a soloist and with which he premiered Falvetti's Il Diluvio universale at the 2010 Ambronay Festival.

MARYAM CHEMIRANI | voice



A singer of Iranian origin, Maryam Chemirani grew up in a family of musicians with her father Djamchid Chemirani, a great zarb master, and her brothers Keyvan and Bijan.

She works the Radif (repertoire of traditional Persian classical music) with Hossein Omoumi, master of ney and singing. Meetings in India and Bangladesh allowed her to broaden her knowledge of modal music: she studied medieval music with Henri Agnel, in particular the repertoire of the Cantigas de Santa Maria and accompanied the Trio Chemirani with songs of Persian poetry (Hâfez, Khayyâm, Saadi...) on compositions by her brother Bijan and traditional pieces.

She then formed with Bijan, Maria Simoglou, Pierre-Laurent Bertolino, Harris Lambrakis and Kevin Seddiki the sextet Oneira.

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BIJAN CHEMIRANI | zarb, percussion, saz



Continuing an illustrious family saga, Bijan Chemirani was initiated at a very young age into the delicate handling of the ancestral Iranian zarb by his father Djamchid, a true institution and the depositary of the oral tradition of Persian music, and by his brother Keyvan, with whom he forms the prestigious Trio Chemirani. Born in France, the youngest member of the family earned his master's stripes over the years in the Tombak - the other name of the Zarb - before renewing the playing field of Persian percussion by taking his polyrhythms to the heart of the Mediterranean repertoires.

Through his many friendships with Ross Daly, Socrates Sinopoulos, Sylvain Luc, and in the Oneira 6tet and ForaBandit collectives, he has enriched his musical universe by learning the different Saz lutes, and his insatiable curiosity, multiplied tenfold by an undeniable openness to the world, has propelled him much further, in eclectic adventures with cellist Jean Guihen Queyras, American jazzman Chico Freeman, songwriter Piers Faccini to rock guitarist Serge Teyssot-Gay, Ballake Sissoko to trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf, and even English pop star Sting. An extraordinary journey for an artist shaped by rhythmic explorations and poetic itineraries.

SYLVAIN BAROU | Celtic flutes, bansouri, duduk, neyanban



Virtuoso flutist, and certainly curious, Sylvain Barou breaks all boundaries in his path! Coming from a strong, rich and rigorous tradition through Breton and Irish music, he quickly turned towards the East following several decisive musical encounters. First of all, he began learning Indian Hindustani music with the bansuri flute, then his interest in modal music pushed him towards Turkey, Kurdistan, Armenia, Iran and Azerbaijan, through the practice of duduk and zurna. All these influences have nourished a unique and open-minded discourse, which has allowed him to blend into all contexts, whether traditional or jazz, or more generally modal and improvised music.

He has been on stage and in the studio with Keyvan Chemirani, Prabhu Edouard, Trilok Gurtu, Vincent Segal, Donal Lunny, Stelios Petrakis, Efrén Lopez, Eléonore Fourniau, Adnan Joubran, Denez Prigent, Rusan Filiztek, Jacques Pellen, Erik Marchand, Annie Ebrel, Karim Ziad, Altan, Titi Robin, Coşkun Karademir...