

Upcoming album connects Turkey's bağlama with bass guitar

Two representatives of distinctly diverse music genres, world-famous French jazz bassist Dominique Di Piazza and innovative Turkish bağlama player Zeki Çağlar Namlı, have joined forces for a project that will yield a series of concerts and a studio album.

The two virtuosos got together in İstanbul this week for studio sessions. This unique but quietly arranged get-together took place in a very low-profile fashion due to the humble personalities of both musicians. However, what the two artists have made throughout their careers is anything but lowly. One of them, the Sicilian-born Di Piazza, is among the world's leading jazz bassists, praised for his matchless technique, whereas the other, Namlı, has proved during the past decade with his innovative instrument designs, as well as the songs he has composed, that he is set to become one of Turkey's most famous bağlama players -- despite his young age.



French jazz bassist Dominique Di Piazza (R) and Turkish bağlama player Zeki Çağlar Namlı are joining forces for a project that will yield a series of concerts and a studio album.

What brought them together for this project, strangely enough, is a source of complaint shared by many other musicians -- due to pirated copies and illegal downloads -- the Internet.

Piazza and Namlı met in person for the first time for this week's studio sessions, during which they reinterpreted -- mostly -- songs composed by Namlı in addition to playing jam sessions. By the end of this week, they are planning to complete the album's recording process. After the album's release, currently slated for October, Di Piazza and Namlı are also planning on giving a number of live concerts in İstanbul as a duo.

Speaking during an interview with Today's Zaman, both musicians were thrilled to be taking part in this project together. "My manager contacted Di Piazza and asked him if he could listen to some samples of my music on my MySpace profile and watch the YouTube videos from my concert performances. He then told him about a duet project. Dominique believed in the project's success. And so we started to discuss details on how to proceed and the repertoire," Namlı recounted how they came together.

Noting that he has been listening to Di Piazza's music for a very long time, Namlı said he particularly loves his recordings with John McLaughlin and Dennis Chambers. Namlı was also quick to point out that their joint project is not one that is related to a concern for popularity: "What is more important than being in the same project with a world-famous virtuoso is the music that will come out in the end and how genuine it will be. At the end of the day, we are both from diverse musical traditions."

His words brought to mind the question of what sort of a blend this collaboration would be. Namlı replied: "When one says 'musical style,' what it suggests to me is small patterns and an imagination that is constrained within the boundaries of these patterns. Music made by each individual is something different because each individual's viewpoint of life is different. Thus, the outcome of [such a collaboration] cannot be predetermined."

Namlı and Di Piazza also gave their fans the happy news that after this year's release of the as-yet-untitled album and the subsequent İstanbul concerts, they will embark on a world tour together next year.

Di Piazza, in the meantime, said he decided to take part in this project because he found Namlı's style to be very original and interesting after he watched his videos on YouTube. "He's got unparalleled music and a unique style. He's an interesting musician, considering the instrument he plays and his technique. The motifs in his songs really impressed me. When he plays, he uses an interesting and delightful musical language."

Asked what he plans to contribute to the upcoming album with Namlı, Piazza said, "as much sincerity as I can."