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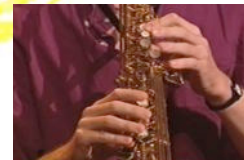
## Maza Mezé: Tasty Tidbits from the World Music Menu



If only the music people listened to was as diverse as the food they ate---what a world it would be! Maza Mezé is devoted to making that concept a reality. The word *Maza* is Arabic and the word *Mezé* is Greek. They both are terms that describe the assortment of appetizers served at the beginning of a meal in those cultures- think *babaganoush*, a plate of olives, a *kebab* or two...In the eastern Mediterranean these dishes tease the palate and either prepare the diner for more substantial fare to come or make up a meal on their own.



Maza Mezé is an assortment of Toronto musicians who love the music of Greece and the Middle East. Some have been born into the culture; others have adopted it. In 1995 they came together to explore traditional music from the region and to create their own original compositions based on that music. They are an eclectic gathering of some of Toronto's finest improvisers and innovators. Vocalists **Jayne Brown**, **Jennifer Moore**, and **Sophia Grigoriadis** are accompanied by instrumentalists **Ernie Tollar**, **John Gzowski**, **Debashis Sinha** and **Jeff Wilson** as well as selected special guests ranging from a belly dancer to a traditional Greek clarinet player. These artists lead double if not triple or quadruple musical lives - bringing their experience in a variety of other bands to Maza Mezé. Their varied musical tastes and abilities allow Maza Mezé to add many exotic flavourings from a dozen genres and traditions to the basic Greek and Middle Eastern repertoire; a dollop of R&B or a hint of Latin perhaps.



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festivals across Canada from Newfoundland's Sound Symposium to the North Country Fair in Jousard, Alberta to a folk music festival in Duncan, BC. In Toronto they have organized an ambitious year round series of concerts that feature special guests - master musicians from as far away as Egypt and as close as Toronto's Greek community. In the process they are transforming themselves into an institution devoted to expanding access to superb music for audiences everywhere



Maza Mezé's four cds feature infectious grooves and lush vocals, with a big helping of melodies and a wide assortment of instruments. After the first CD of traditional songs, Unleavened, the band went on to make 3 more featuring original songs created by every member of the group. Their first CD of original music, Brand New Threads, caught the attention of CBC Records, and the band was invited to become the first world music ensemble ever to be recorded by this prestigious label. The resulting CD, the Juno nominated Hypnotika, was followed by their latest, Secrets Moon Magic, featuring guest appearances by Trichy Sankaran, John Wyre (of Nexus fame) and autorickshaw's Suba Sankaran.

Maza Mezé's longevity and performance experience is a testament to the great music created by this group. With fans across Canada and around the world, Maza Mezé has become the tastiest world music institution Canada has to offer..



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## Performer Biographies



### Jayne Brown

Singer and bass player with Maza Meze, Jayne also performs with Maryem Tollar and is singer with traditional Greek music group Diaspora. Jayne has performed with Ilédè, an Afrocuban drum and dance ensemble, Nazka, a Latin American folk music ensemble and Staro Selo, a traditional Macedonian folk ensemble. Recording credits include work with Nazka, Staro Selo and Causa Generis. Jayne received a Canada Council Individual grants in 2000 and 2004 to study Arabic music with Dr. George Sawa in Toronto, Arabic singing in Cairo, Egypt and Greek music with Domna Samiou in Athens, Greece.

### Sophia Grigoriadis



Sophia sings, plays percussion, baglama and tambura with Maza Meze. She also sings with Maryem Tollar and the traditional Greek ensemble Diaspora. She has performed with Arabic traditional group Doula, Ilédè, Staro Selo, and soloist Frances Pappas. Sophia conducts the All Saints Greek Orthodox Church Choir, which she co-led on a concert tour of Turkey in 1992. Recording credits include Staro Selo and The Samba Squad. Sophia also runs her own company "Clapping Land" in which she provides music and movement programs to young children.

### John Gzowski



John Gzowski plays oud, electric and acoustic guitars, fretless electric guitar, cello, cumbuc and tamboura with Maza Meze. He has played banjo in Banff, guitar in Whitehorse, cello in Toronto, electric dowel in Kitchener/Waterloo, adapted guitar in New York and ship's horn in St. John's. He has performed rock with the Garbagemen, new music with Hemispheres, world music with Tasa and microtonal music with Critical Band. He has created music for over 50 plays, winning 4 Dora Mavor Moore Awards. His work in dance includes pieces for Dancemakers, Julia Aplin, Kate Alton and Kaeja Dance. He has also written for Array Music, Evergreen Club Gamelan Ensemble and Hemispheres. He has composed for bicycle bells and horns, tape and acoustic instruments, and replicas of Harry Partch's instruments. He builds and plays his own instruments such as the Cat's Cradle, electric 2x4, and the surrogate chromelodeon, some of which have been exhibited by the Art Gallery of Ontario.

### Jennifer Moore



Jennifer sings with Maza Meze, She also leads the PIRATE JENNY trio, with percussionist Blair Mackay and guitarist Bill Parsons. Jennifer has performed with the Altin Yildiz Orkestar, the Evergreen Club Gamelan, and Kurt

Swinghammer, among others. Dance-related performances include Dora Award-winning Peter Chin's Bridge and Julio Lumo, choreographed by dancer Peggy Baker. Jennifer holds a BFA in voice and has studied Arabic singing and theory with Dr. George Sawa and at the Arab Music Retreat in South Hadley, Mass.



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## Performer Biographies



### Debashis Sinha

Debashis plays percussion with Maza Mezé, autorickshaw, Doula, Maryem Tollar, Diaspora, and Fiddlesong, as well as appearing with other ensembles. He is interested in seeking out the threads that bind disparate disparate musical and percussive traditions and this has led him into appearances performing Flamenco, Balkan, Breton, Jazz, Celtic, Quebecois, South American and new music. His studies (supported by the Canada Council) have taken him as far afield as Cairo and Athens, as well as closer to home where he continues South Indian rhythmic studies with Professor Trichy Sankaran.

### Ernie Tollar

Ernie plays clarinet, sax, ney (mid-east reed flute) and bansuri flute (India) with Maza Mezé. He co-leads world/jazz group Maryem Tollar Ensemble with his wife, Maryem. He has performed in festivals across Canada as co-leader with groups Space Trio and mecca. He has studied jazz, Indian, and Arabic musics in Toronto, Madras, and Cairo. Ernie has studied South Indian music with world-renowned master Trichy Sankaran and performs regularly with him in Trichy's Trio. Ernie received a Canada Council Individual Grant in 2000 to study South Indian music with Professor Trichy Sankaran in Toronto; Vairamangalam in Madras, India; Ibrahim Kawala in Cairo, Egypt; and Ross Daly in Athens, Greece.



### Jeff Wilson

Percussionist for Maza Mezé, Jeff also plays with Ska band The Liquidaires. He has played with The Altin Yildiz Orkestar, Wind May Do Damage, klezmer band Hu-Tsa-Tsa and various other pop and world music bands. He collaborates regularly with modern dancers, appearing live in numerous performances. Jeff plays percussion for dance classes at George Brown College, Dancemakers, and various classes in Toronto.



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## Maza Meze Press Quotes

*"Ancient music is dusted off with remarkable ease by this sprawling Greco-Arabic combo"*

Matt Galloway  
Now Magazine  
Toronto



*"Maza Meze's music was so rich that the group's Saturday morning set felt more like a full dinner, dessert and coffee than just a nibble or two".*

Georgia Straight  
Vancouver

*"Delightfully unorthodox Greco-Arabic belly-busters"*

Tim Perlich  
Now Magazine  
Toronto

*"Gently bubbling, belly-dancing jams beating out of their intriguing Greco-Arabic mix of traditional strings and percussion"*

Tim Perlich  
Now Magazine  
Toronto



*"With varying rhythms and melodies collected from Greece and the Middle East, Maza Meze had the roped-off dance area grooving."*

Emmet Matheson  
Leader Post  
Regina

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## Recent Performance Highlights

2003-2004:

**Summerworks Theatre Festival.** Music for The Arabian Night (R. Schimmelpfennig).  
Directed by Ross Manson, winner of the People's Choice Award.

**Guelph multicultural festival,** Guelph, Ontario, June, 2004



**Summer tour:** Bella Coola, BC; Grand Forks Art Gallery, BC; Solo Concert, Artspring Salt Spring Island, BC; Islands Folk Festival, Duncan, BC. *Tour supported by the Canada Council for the Arts Touring Program.*

Distillery Downtown series, Toronto, July 2004

**Feast of the East.** Lula Lounge, Toronto, January and April 2004

**Amnesty International concert.** Canadian Music Week. March 2004

**Creative Trust Fund Gala concert:** Princess of Wales Theatre, January 2004

Greek Traditional Concert: Alliston, January 2004

**CBC recording:** Secrets, Moon, Magic. November, 2004

**CBC On Stage:** Concert and National Broadcast

Maza Mezé with Trichy Sankaran, Suba Sankaran and John Wyre, November 2003

**Master Musicians concert series:** with Dr. Alfred Gamil. Small World Music Festival, Toronto, September 2003

**Arabic Concert** with Alfred Gamil at Capitol Theatre, Windsor, September 2003

**Regina Folk Festival,** Regina, Saskatchewan August 2003

Ontario Festivals: **Elora Music Festival,** August 2003 and **Sunfest,** London, July 2003

**Master Musicians** concert series, 2003 with Stefanos Hatzistefanou, Leonidas Zafirís, George Milionís, Toronto May

**2003 Juno Awards:** performance and nomination for Best World Album. Ottawa. May 2003

2001-2002:

• **CBC Recording:** Hypnotika, released by CBC records October 1st, 2002 in performance at Glenn Gould Studio, as part of CBC's "Onstage" concert series.



- Broadcast of CD release concert on **CBC Radio's "Onstage"** and **"Global Village"**.
- Featured performance on CBC Television's "Opening Night".
  - Performances at Hugh's Room, Toronto.
  - Participation in **Toronto Fringe Jazz Festival**

2000:

- Release of **second self-produced CD** Brand New Threads, Songs from Middle Eastern Canada, *assisted by Canada Council*
- **Canadian Tour** of Brand New Threads *assisted by Canada Council:* Jasper, High River, Wells, Kamloops, Duncan, Nelson, Silvertown, Harrison, Vancouver, Victoria, Winnipeg, Wakefield, Levis, Toronto, Ottawa, Jousard, Montreal.



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## Repertoire Summary

Maza Mezé's repertoire falls generally into three categories:

### 1. GREEK REPERTOIRE:

Maza Mezé performs songs that belong to a tradition originating in the Greek communities of Asia Minor, primarily around the centres of Smyrna and Constantinople (known today as Izmir, Istanbul, and Turkey). The instrumentation, (usually violin, oud, qanun and dumbek), modes, rhythms and vocal style are most closely related to Arabic music, given the historic Islamic influence in that area.

Maza Mezé also performs a variety of Greek folk songs, from improvisational 'table songs' to traditional dance music. These folk songs originate in northern Greece, and are characterized by irregular meters of 7/8 and 9/8.

Maza Mezé continues to develop its understanding of this music through old recordings, and by working with the songs in the same spirit of improvisation that accompanied their creation.

### 2. ARABIC REPERTOIRE:

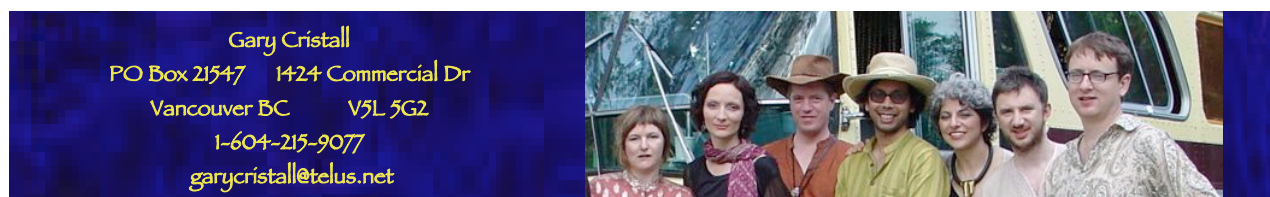
Maza Mezé studies and performs a mix of classical folk and popular music from Egypt and Syria. The instrumentation is based on the qanun, percussion, and often strings and horns. Using the musical resources at hand, Maza Mezé forms its own interpretation of songs using instruments and improvisations that complement the tradition. In 2001 four members of Maza Mezé studied performance and theory of this music in Cairo, Egypt.

Saidi music is hypnotic, joyful music from the Upper Nile region. Here, Maza Mezé brings in contemporary instruments to create organic traditional sounds (ie. we replace the synthesizer so often used in authentic recordings!)

Other songs derive from the Mowashahat tradition (a tradition that flourished during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Andalusia, setting Arabic devotional poetry to music using complex rhythms and modes.) This music has continued through modern compositions in this style, primarily in Aleppo, Syria. Two of Maza Meze's members have studied this form extensively both in Toronto and in Syria in 1996.

### 3. ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS:

With the launch of its 2nd CD in 2000, "Brand New Threads - Songs from Middle Eastern Canada", Maza Mezé solidified its path in the direction of more original compositions. "Brand New Threads", and our latest CD "Hypnotika" (recorded and produced by CBC Records, launched Oct 1, 2002) contain original pieces by all band members. The pieces are written in many musical dialects, but share the band's common fascination and love for the music of the East.



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## Description of Instruments

- Baglama** A miniature lute
- Bansuri** Indian bamboo flute with 6 holes
- Def** Middle Eastern frame drum. Often used alone to accompany singing, particularly Sufi music. It is made with a traditional goat skin or fish skin head on a hardwood shell.
- Dumbek** Arabic drum with hourglass design that produces a high resonance and a deep Doum. It has a large neck inside and out for maximum strength. The head can be made of plastic, fiberskyn, goatskin or fish skin.
- Fretless Electric Guitar**  
Made by John Gzowski to accommodate the microtones in Arabic and Greek maqams (scales).
- Ney** Long end-blown cane flute of the Near East, used from Egypt to Persia. The sound is produced by blowing across the sharp edge with pursed lips.
- Oud** The oud, predecessor to the European lute, is the ancient and modern lute of the Near East, known from the 7th century. The modern oud has a shorter neck than the European lute. The oud usually has 3 soundholes and no frets.
- Qanun** Popular throughout the Middle East, Turkey & Greece. The qanun is an ancient Asian table harp. The index fingers, clad in picks, pluck the strings in groups of three. In the twentieth century, the Turks improved the design by adding tuning keys to alter the pitch of individual strings by eighth or quarter tones, thus facilitating transposition.
- Riqq** Middle Eastern tambourine that has a fish skin or plastic head and brass jingles.
- Tamboura** A Balkan stringed instrument in the long-necked lute family.
- Zils** Finger cymbals.

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