

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 15, 2016

WHAT: UMass Fine Arts Center Presents
Othello in the Seraglio: The Tragedy of Sümbül the Black Eunuch

WHEN: Friday, October 14, 8:00 p.m., Preconcert talk at 7 p.m.

WHERE: Bowker Auditorium, University of Massachusetts Amherst

TICKETS: Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/>

IMAGES: To download images relating to this press release please go online to <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/PressImages>

A “COFFEEHOUSE OPERA” BASED ON A CLASSIC TALE

Othello in the Seraglio puts a new dramatic twist on the ancient story of a black eunuch in the 17th-century Ottoman court, a tragic tale perhaps best-known to us through Shakespeare's play. For this retelling, Boston composer and Grammy Award nominee Mehmet Ali Sanlikol has created a stunning score, performed live by an ensemble of 12 musicians, that weaves elements of Italian Baroque and Turkish music with his own compositions. It's called a “coffeehouse opera” because its staging conjures up the intimate, exotic setting of a coffeehouse in Constantinople (now known as Istanbul) in the 1600s, where customers gathered to be entertained by *meddahs*, professional storytellers of great artistry.

The narrative centers around Sümbül, an African caught up in the trans-Saharan slave trade as a boy, who has risen to the height of power and influence as a *kızlarağası*: the royal court's chief eunuch. Like the musical score, the libretto derives from a rich variety of sources, including Shakespeare's *Othello*; the bard's own source, a 16th-century Italian novel; a 1930s Turkish novel; poetry of the Bektashi dervishes; and Turkish shadow plays and proverbs. Ticket holders are invited to come early for a talk about the show at 7 p.m.

General admission for *Othello in the Seraglio* are \$25; Five College student and youth (17-and-under) tickets are \$10. Tickets for the show are eligible for a subscription discount and may be purchasing by calling the box office at 545-2511 (toll-free: 800-999-UMAS) or online at fineartscenter.com. This event is sponsored by Pioneer Valley Hotel Group and WGBY TV57, with funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

The FAC and select area restaurants offer great discounts through our Artful Palate & Pillow program (“Pillow” discounts for hotel accommodations). Single-ticket buyers receive a discount on the nights of performances. Subscribers receive discounts on any night, not just performance

nights, throughout the FAC season. Subscribers could end up saving anywhere from 25 to 35 percent on an evening out. Details and links to participating hotels and restaurants at www.fineartscenter.com/artfulpalate.

Subscriptions and single tickets, on sale now, can be purchased by phone, 413- 545-2511 or 800-999-UMAS, or via the FAC's secure website, www.fineartscenter.com. For smart phone users, the FAC has a mobile site.

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High-resolution photos are available at www.fineartscenter.com/pressroom