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The Next Generation of Global Music



Town Hall Seattle and SAMA: Music + Art present

Damir Imamović:
The Bard of the Balkans

October 18, 7:30pm in The Great Hall

Curated by Jon Kertzer



Damir Imamović: The Bard of the Balkans

Damir Imamović- *vocals, tambur*

Chad McCulough - *trumpet*

George Lawler - *percussion*

Program will be announced during the show.

About Damir Imamović

Bosnian musician Damir Imamović has established himself as a leading voice in contemporary sevdah and continues to forge innovative approaches to the venerable tradition. Born into a family of sevdah musicians in Sarajevo, he has become a well-known representative of the new generation of traditional musicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the region.

Taking its name from 'sevda,' the Turkish word for love, derived in turn from the Arabic 'sawda' (melancholy), **sevdah has been played in the Balkans in one form or another since at least the 15th century.** Often referred to as the 'Bosnian blues', its lyrical and musical preoccupations with love, longing, and loss provide a bridge to other European traditions, such as Portuguese fado or Greek rembetika.

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“Sevdah has been shaped by a cultural mix,” says Imamović. “As with any living music, sevdah exists in flux — I see myself in the tradition of singing oral histories, a music for audiences to sit and listen to.” Imamović hopes to create a **“sevdah that’s looking outwards, not hiding in tradition.”**

Damir’s art is deeply rooted in his research and educational work. In addition to performing and recording — including his acclaimed albums *Singer of Tales* (Wrasse Records, 2020) and *The World and All It Holds* (Smithsonian Folkways, 2023), both produced by Joe Boyd — Damir teaches within his own SevdahLab project. In 2015, he curated the multimedia exhibition *Sevdah, the Art of Freedom* at the National Gallery of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The following year, he published the first history of the sevdalinka genre, *Sevdah* (Vrijeme, 2016; also available in English). He has received numerous local and international awards for his writing in theatre, film, video games, and other media.

“Damir Imamović is a key figure in its (sevdah’s) revival. Damir is a charismatic performer and tireless researcher, teacher, and composer who finds fresh meanings in old sevdalinka and whose own songs carry messages of tolerance, secularism, and peace beyond Bosnia to the rest of the Balkans and the wider world.”

-Joe Boyd, *And the Roots of Rhythm Remain: A Journey Through Global Music 2024*

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Preshow Food Vendor

Owned by Selma and Eric Mansell, **Baked in Bosnia** is a pre-order restaurant serving phenomenal starters, main dishes, desserts and drinks all coming from Selma’s roots growing in Bosnia and later Germany.



Preshow Speaker

Denis Bašić is a scholar, translator, and writer whose work bridges history, poetry, and sound. Drawing on both research and lived experience, he explores sevdalinka—the Bosnian song of longing—as a living expression of emotion, spirituality, and identity. The preshow talk will begin at 6:30PM in the Mehdi Reading Room

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