

# AshKhabad ...

Ashkhabad is the capital and cultural Heart of Turkmenistan. Its finest musicians have come together and called themselves „Ashkhabad“. The name derives from the Persian language and means „city of love“.

Playing an exciting mixture of traditional Turkmenian music infused with elements from Persia, Turkey and Azerbeidjan, the musicians of Ashkhabad are influenced by everything they have ever heard: from the sounds of the desert to jazz and rock.

Newcomers to Ashkhabads music are struck by their musical mastery but even more by their power of feeling and the romanticism that they breathe into every note they sing and play.

## ... since 1991

In the former Soviet Union it wasn't allowed to through wedding parties in the Turkmenian tradition. But of course there have always been wedding parties and music. The best wedding musicians came together in 1991 - finally legally - and called themselves „Ashkhabad“. For the first time they played concerts in the western world: in Germany, Belgium, Scotland, England, Ireland and Spain the press was much impressed by the Turkmenian master musicians. Lots of gigs at WOMAD-Festivals in the USA and Canada followed.

1993 Ashkhabad made their first album: In the studios of Peter Gabriel they recorded „City of Love“ for the „Real World“-Label. And they had some more fabulous concerts in Europe and Asia.

Not only journalists and fans loved Ashkhabads sound - some very special musicians too. So in the past few years Ashkhabad started some crossover projects. Last of them was a CD-recording with Melina Kana from Greece. She and Ashkhabad played in 2000 two concerts in Germany. In 2001 Ashkhabad will be in Europe on tour again – playing brilliant new songs from a brilliant new album to be recorded later the year.



## ...the musicians

**Hassan Mamedov** (violin), born in Ashkhabad 1958

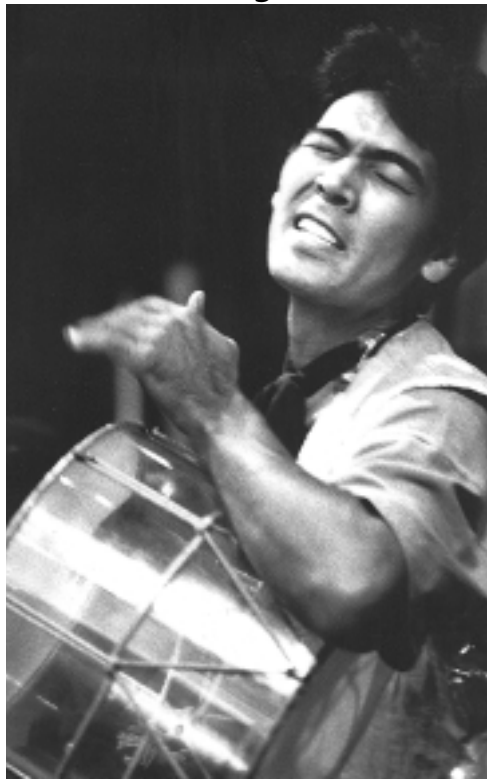
Hassan's father was a farm hand who loved music. When Hassan was six his father asked him which instrument he would like to learn. There was some classical music on TV that moment and Hassan pointed to one of the violinists on the screen. His father bought him the instrument and threatened to throw him out of the house if he didn't practice. The young Hassan practiced, even if he was only interested in football. He was pretty scared of his father.

Aged 19 he began to play accordion at weddings. For him the violin was reserved for European classical music. First his respect than his love for the string instrument was too strong, however, and he sold his accordion. Today he plays everything from classical music to folk, jazz, rock and pop. His idols are Jasha Heifetz and Jean-Luc Ponty.

Hassan, who is of Azerbaijan descent brings Azerbaijan, Turkish and Persian influences to the music of Ashkhabad.



**Khakberdy Alimuradov** (dep, serp, nagara – percussion), born in Ashkhabad 1956



Khakberdy's father worked in the cotton industry. Musically influenced he was by his two older brothers. They played tar and accordion. At kindergarden he wasn't content just to sing along with the other children; he had seen men playing the dep (a frame drum similar to the tambourine) on TV and at weddings – he already knew what he wanted to do in his life.

As a boy Khakberdy played along with Persian melodies on the radio and at the age of 13 he started to play drums at weddings, learning the traditional Turkmenian repertoire. He went on to study percussion at the university and played music with many local bands.

Everybody who hears him today will be struck by the virtuosity, energy and creativity of his playing and acting. Khakberdy works in a lot of different musical spheres. Meanwhile he has studied Indian and Latin-American percussion and rhythms. And he already linked up with drummers from all over the world.

## Kurban Kurbanov

(keyboards, accordion), born in Ashkhabad 1961

Kurban comes from an academic background and his parents didn't want their son to go into folk music. But the music was stronger. Kurban went to weddings secretly to listen to the best traditional accordion players.

Today he doesn't enjoy weddings very much. From a musician's perspective, he says, the musicians are often treated badly. „If we go to a wedding we feel like soldiers going to the front.“ He does think, however, that weddings are vital for his dexterity. After a weekend of playing accordion for twenty hours or more the fingers certainly move more easily.

Kurban also works as an arranger with the belief that as many people as possible should have the chance to listen to Turkmenian music.



## Sabir Rizaev (clarinet, soprano-sax, percussion, keyboards), born in Ashkhabad 1958

Sabir's father, a teacher, is an amateur tar player and helped his son to develop his own musical talents. At a very early age Sabir learned to play the piano. He went on to study percussion and woodwinds, too.

He played in the opera orchestra, for the radio big band and organized jazz festivals and concerts in Ashkhabad. In the seventies he was a popular player with a number of rock-jazz-groups.

Today he is the Head of the Department of Popular Music at Ashkhabad University. He also works as a composer. Sometimes he still joins his friends and plays at weddings.

Sabir has written the music for a number of movies and published his chamber music compositions which are strongly influenced by oriental music.

Sabir names Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Ravel, Charlie Parker and Michael Brecker as his favorite musicians. He considers Turkmenian music to be the source of development of his personality as an artist.



## ...the critics

"Ashkhabad"'s Percussionist drew the crowd into a rhythmic grunt-and-response while he sang and twirled wearing a belt with dangling odds and ends that clanged. One of the objects was a telephone; he picked it up and shouted: „Hello, New York!“  
New York Times

"This fiery quintet from the Central Asian Plains of the former Soviet Union combine an amazing number of disparate elements into a satisfying whole"  
City Paper

"Ashkhabads album „City of Love“ on Gabriel's Real World label is an all-acoustic recording based on the traditional Turkmenistan wedding music but given a modern edge by the players' experiences with jazz, rock'n'roll and classical music."  
Arts

"The music has an exotic, Middle Eastern sound, but Ashkhabad made it instantly accessible with their showmanship and contagious humor."  
The Boston Globe

"For the first time the Turkemenian musicians gave a public concert in their country after the political turnover in the former Soviet Union. It was a great success. The traditional lyrics and melodies mixed with elements of Rock and Jazz finally had found not just a thankful but a freaked out audience in Germany, too: at the Fabrik in Hamburg."  
NDR-Magazin

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