Middle East Ensemble To Play, Professor to Speak at Cal Poly Feb. 8

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Members of North America's largest Middle Eastern orchestra, the UCSB Middle East Ensemble, will perform at 3 p.m. Feb. 8 in Room 218 of the Davidson Music Center at Cal Poly.

Marcus will also present a lecture, "Elements of Middle Eastern Music: Melody, Rhythm and Instruments, at 2 p.m., also in Room 218 of the Davidson Music Center.

The ensemble performs music and dance representative of many cultures in the Middle East, including Arab, Turkish, Persian, Armenian, Greek, Jewish and even Assyrian. The group plays classical, religious, folk and popular songs plus folk dances and cabaret-style dances.

Following a tradition developed in Cairo, Beirut and Damascus, the men in the orchestra wear tuxedos and women wear colorful traditional dresses. Group instrumental pieces are quickly juxtaposed with solo instrumentals, solo vocals are answered by choral pieces, with solo and group dances interspersed throughout.

The group performs on traditional instruments, such as the pan-Middle Eastern short-necked lute (the 'ud), the Turkish long-necked lute (the baglama saz), the end-blown reed flute (the nay), the Persian hammered dulcimer (the santur), the Arab/Turkish plucked dulcimer (qanun or kanun), the Egyptian spiked fiddle (the rabab), the Turkish and Egyptian oboes (the zurna and mizmar), and a variety of Middle Eastern drums (the darbukkah, riqq, bendir, mazhar, tabl baladi and zarb). In addition, musicians use the accordion (retuned to accommodate Middle Eastern scales), the violin, cello, double bass, and on occasion, the guitar and saxophone.

The UCSB Middle East Ensemble is an official "ethnomusicology performance ensemble" in the Department of Music at UC Santa Barbara. Begun in 1989 by ethnomusicology Professor Scott Marcus, the ensemble has performed throughout California and regularly plays to sold-out audiences at UCSB's 486-seat Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall.

Admission to the performance is free, although donations at the door will be accepted. The concert is sponsored by Cal Poly's Music Department and College of Liberal Arts. For more information, call the Music Department at 756-2406.

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