

NAXOS

KAMRAN INCE

Symphony No. 2

'Fall of Constantinople'

Concerto for Orchestra • Piano Concerto

Bilkent Symphony Orchestra • Ince • Metin



Kamran Ince (b. 1960)

Concerto for Orchestra, Turkish Instruments and Voices

Symphony No. 2 'Fall of Constantinople • Piano Concerto • Infrared Only

In 1980, when Kamran Ince landed in America after growing up mostly in Turkey, the twenty-year-old composer quickly developed a reputation for music of brash energy, endless invention and startling juxtapositions.

The *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1984) and *Infrared Only* (1985, commissioned by the New York Youth Symphony and premiered by them at Carnegie Hall in 1986) made that reputation. They are outrageous in the way that music by good young composers is outrageous. The young Kamran Ince generated material to burn, and he burned plenty in these two works.

The *Piano Concerto* opens with startling marketplace chatter and clatter of woodwinds and strings. Rimshots interrupt. A high orchestral whine, like the singing of high-voltage wires, creates a static charge. The piano emerges from the whine with random glitters of sound that do not quite add up to arpeggios, and the brasses power up a blast reminiscent of Richard Strauss. In the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* and *Infrared Only*, recurring musical ideas are usually transformed in some way, but are presented in the stream-of-consciousness manner of dreams. Listening to the *Piano Concerto* and *Infrared* is very much like stepping into a thrilling, disorienting sonic dream. We might be disoriented, but the composer knew exactly where he was in these pieces. "In the Concerto," Ince writes, "I was thinking of the music in three types of blocks: static, semi-static and moving. The piece slowly moves from stasis toward more motion. These contrasting blocks want each other and complete each other. Each block is at home, like tonic, but when you move on to the next, it's as if the previous block had been seeking it, as dominant seeks tonic as a matter of physics."

A more patient and mature voice asserts itself in the *Symphony No. 2* ('*Fall of Constantinople*', 1994, commissioned by the Albany Symphony Orchestra) and

Concerto for Orchestra, Turkish Instruments and Voices (2002, revised 2009, commissioned by the Turkish Ministry of Culture).

"These are extremely important works for me," Ince writes. "In the symphony, for the first time, I referred specifically to Turkish musical elements. In this work I evoke the spirit of the Turkish village drum (struck on both sides with a different mallet for each, creating two sounds). I simulate the *zurna* – an extremely loud and nasal, bagpipe-like instrument – by giving a single line to as many as five woodwinds, and having a sixth double a half-tone lower. This adds quarter-tone dirt and spice to the sound, to create a clash you can feel, if not hear. I am thinking of the Ottoman Janissary Band, which naturally plays with quarter-tone inflections and out of tune unisons. Which I love."

Ince takes it further in the *Concerto for Orchestra, Turkish Instruments and Voices*. "This is my next statement," he writes. "For the first time, I use actual *zurnas* to get to the in-your-face, folk- and dance-like ceremonial feeling of true Turkish folk music. In Turkey, *zurnas* announce weddings and other important events. *Zurnas* are so loud that sometimes you cannot hear the bass drums pounding next to them. I contrast the bold, raw folk-like music with the seriousness, courtliness and depth of Ottoman classical music, with its elegant and subtle *ney* [a flute-like instrument, very difficult to play] and *kemençe* [a sort of bowed fiddle, shaped rather like a mountain dulcimer]. The singers live in both of these sound-worlds. They make sounds with pebbles on the folk side and sing on the Ottoman classical side. The brass, percussion, string and woodwind sections of the orchestra contribute only the bold and unique sounds only they can produce. The orchestral writing is very lean, with no filler."

Ince opens with a sonic riot featuring a mob of nasal

wind instruments in microtonal dissonance. A frightening, massive swarm of strings follows. Those ideas recur throughout the work; they go off like alarms and typically alert us to the start of a new episode – but they often contrast sharply with what they announce, which includes achingly intimate music for *kemence* and singers. In an instant, the music can turn from military intimidation to amorous yearning.

In the developmentally important *Second Symphony*, Ince set his music on the narrative grid of Mehmet the Conqueror's taking of the Byzantine capital in 1453. The timpani/bass drum thud of Ottoman artillery recurs throughout. All sorts of violent ideas accrete to this central sound. The organizing contrast lies in a beautiful falling melody and attendant rocking harmonies that become hypnotic with repetition. The theme makes an immediate and lasting impression. It plays the lead character and represents the prayers of fearful Christians in the slow movement, *Hagia Sophia*. But it also stands

for the calm nights on the ramparts, when the bombardments cease, in the two day-night cycles in the opening movement, *The City and the Walls*.

Those two ideas permeate the symphony and help us to locate ourselves within its sprawling story. A great deal more vividly illustrative material bubbles up within it. A remarkable evocation of Mehmet and Constantine's pep talks to their troops squawks out speech rhythms in high woodwinds on one hand and rolls out with lugubrious solemnity on the other. The enormous weight and relentless drive of *Ships on Rails* is the very image of the Ottoman fleet being dragged overland to bypass the Byzantines' impregnable harbor chain. In this symphony, we hear Ince on his way to his mature compositional method of laying out easily absorbed essential material early and bringing it back in one form or another over the course of the piece.

Tom Strini

Kamran Ince

With numerous prizes, including the Prix de Rome, the Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Lili Boulanger Prize, Kamran Ince has distinguished himself in particular as a composer able to bridge East and West. Born in Montana in 1960 to American and Turkish parents, he was brought up in Turkey, and trained at the Ankara and Izmir State Conservatories, before returning to America at the beginning of the 1980s to work with Christopher Rouse and Joseph Schwantner at Oberlin and the Eastman School of Music, gaining his doctorate. He currently serves as Professor of Composition at the University of Memphis and as Co-Director of MIAM at Istanbul Technical University. His works have been played by leading orchestras and concerts devoted to his music have been heard at the Holland Festival, CBC Encounter Series in Toronto, the Istanbul International Music Festival, the Estoril Festival in Lisbon, and the Cultural Influences in Globalization Festival in Ho Chi Minh City. Projects include *Far Variations* (2009), commissioned by Arizona Friends of Chamber Music for the Los Angeles Piano Quartet; *Concerto for Orchestra Turkish Instruments and Voices* (2002, rev. 2009), for the Turkish Ministry of Culture; *Dreamlines* (2008), celebrating the centennial of the Turkish Chamber of Architects; *Music for a Lost Earth (Ambient Music Project)* (2007); *Gloria (Everywhere)* (2007), for Chanticleer's Mass Project; *Turquoise* (2005), various works arranged for the Netherlands Blazers Ensemble; and his *Fifth Symphony 'Galatasaray'* (2005), in honour of the Turkish soccer club's centennial celebrations. His recordings for Naxos include his *Symphony No. 3 'Siege of Vienna'* and *Symphony No. 4 'Sardis'*. He continues to work on *Judgment of Midas*, an opera commissioned by Crawford Greenewalt, Jr. III, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Sardis excavations in Turkey. His music is published by Schott Music Corporation.

Bilkent Symphony Orchestra

The Bilkent Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1993 as an original artistic project of Bilkent University. Developed by the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, the orchestra is composed of over ninety proficient artists and academicians of the Faculty from Turkey and twelve countries. With these characteristics the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra is the first private, international and academic artistic ensemble in Turkey. With Turkish and foreign guest conductors, soloists and choirs, the orchestra has distinguished itself through its season of over eighty concerts a year. Bilkent Music Production, Naxos, CPO, Alpha and EMI have released over fifty CDs of the orchestra. Through events such as the Bilkent Concert Series, Turkish Composers' Week, Education Concerts and The Bilkent International Anatolia Music Festival, the orchestra aims to bring a wide range of activities to large audiences, to spread the appreciation of music at national level, undertake international activities and develop cooperation with institutions abroad.

Bilkent Youth Choir

The Bilkent Youth Choir was founded by the Bilkent University, Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, in 1986. As one of the artistic groups of the Faculty, the choir is composed of students studying in the various fields of music. The choir has been under the direction of Elena Pushkova since 1998. Among the awards it has received are two gold medals and the first prize at the 21st Preveza International Choral Competition in Greece in 2003 and second prize at the 2004 Florilège Vocal de Tours, France. The choir regularly collaborates with the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra to perform symphonic choral works.

Işın Metin

Işın Metin started his music education at an early age in Istanbul and was admitted to Bilkent University Faculty of Music and Performing Arts in 1987. He studied with professors Hatipo lu, Szalinski and Hoinic, and worked with eminent composer Arif Melikov. In 2003 Işın Metin was appointed Artistic Director of the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra. He redesigned the programming to include DVD and CD recordings of large-scale orchestral works as well as masterpieces by Turkish composers with internationally renowned artists. These have been released by international labels. Metin has guest conducted prominent orchestras in Austria, Azerbaijan, Chile, Germany, Greece, Montenegro, Russia, Spain and Ukraine. He co-founded the Greek-Turkish Youth Orchestra, and conducted its 2009 and 2010 tours. His many awards include the SCAMF Silver Medal and the H.Atat award. For his many achievements and contributions to the arts with the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra, he was named UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador by UNICEF – Turkey. Metin is Dean of the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts at Bilkent University, and Artistic Director and Conductor of the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra.



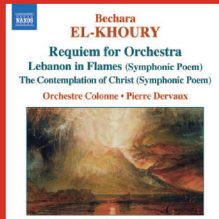
LEFT: **Kamran Ince** plays his Piano Concerto with the **Bilkent Symphony Orchestra**, **Işın Metin** conducting (*Emre Unlenen*)
ABOVE: **Işın Metin** (*Mehmet Caglarler*) • RIGHT: **Kamran Ince** conducts the **Bilkent Symphony Orchestra** in his Concerto for Orchestra, Turkish Instruments and Voices (*Deniz Hughes*)
BELOW RIGHT: The **Bilkent Youth Choir** (*Mehmet Caglarler*)
BELOW: **Kamran Ince** (*Merih Akogul*)



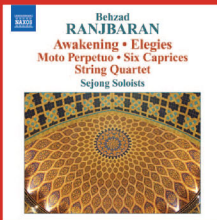
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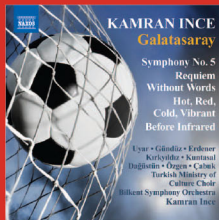
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Playing Time
74:24

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Booklet notes and sung text in English

Kamran Ince writes music of thrilling intensity. His *Piano Concerto* is a “sonic dream” of a work, constructed on the principle of block-like contrasts that embody startling and glittering sound worlds, and *Infrared Only* is no less stupendous in its impact. The 1994 *Symphony No. 2* is the first of his works to include Turkish elements and these invest the music with a rich panoply of timbres. Folk elements deepen in the *Concerto for Orchestra*, where Ince employs instruments full of potency and power such as the *zurna* and *ney*. The result is music of intoxication and intimacy, violence and tenderness.

Kamran INCE

(b. 1960)

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|---|---|--------------|---|--|--------------|
| | Concerto for Orchestra,
Turkish Instruments and
Voices (2002, rev. 2009) | 20:14 | | | |
| ① | I. | 7:18 | ⑥ | II. Haghia Sophia | 3:38 |
| ② | II. | 5:04 | ⑦ | III. Speeches of Emperor
Constantine and Sultan
Mehmet | 2:40 |
| ③ | III. | 2:57 | ⑧ | IV. Ships on Rails: The
Marine Battle | 3:37 |
| ④ | IV. | 4:53 | ⑨ | V. Fall of Constantinople | 3:32 |
| | Symphony No. 2 ‘Fall of
Constantinople’ (1994) | 23:26 | ⑩ | Piano Concerto (1984) | 19:55 |
| ⑤ | I. The City and the Walls | 9:59 | ⑪ | Infrared Only (1985) | 10:26 |

Kamran Ince, Piano¹⁰ and **Conductor**^{1-9,11}
Işın Metin, Conductor¹⁰

Neva Özgen, kemence¹⁻⁴ • **Celalettin Biçer, ney**¹⁻⁴
Ali Bektaş, zurna¹⁻⁴ • **Cevdet Akdeniz, zurna**²⁻¹⁻⁴
Bilkent Youth Chorus^{1-2,4} • **Bilkent Symphony Orchestra**¹⁻¹¹

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Constantinople (© Pavle Marjanovic / Dreamstime.com) & Fire (© Robert Adrian Hillman / Dreamstime.com)