

# Goran Ivanović and Fareed Haque

## Unclassifiable classical duo is ignited by world rhythms and jazz

Taking a fluid approach to boundaries of all kinds, classical guitar duo Goran Ivanović and Fareed Haque draw inspiration from the musical idioms of the Balkans, combining propulsive rhythms, improvisational flights of fancy, odd meters, and insane bursts of speed and crafting an original sound of startling originality and beauty. On their new CD, *Seven Boats*, as on their stunning 2001 debut, *Macedonian Blues*, Ivanović and Haque's classical- and jazz-infused solos and duets transcend geographical, cultural, and musical identity and defy any easy characterization.

The two guitarists build their unique rapport on backgrounds that couldn't be more dissimilar. The Chicago-born and widely traveled Haque ([www.fareed.com](http://www.fareed.com)), 41, is the son of a Chilean mother and Pakistani father. A master of both jazz and classical guitar, with pop sensibilities, he has performed with artists as diverse as Paquito D'Rivera and Sting, recorded a cover version of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's entire *Déjà Vu*, formed both the experimental Fareed Haque Group, in which he plays a guitar-sitar hybrid, and the newer jam band Garaj Mahal, and has taught at Northern Illinois University since 1989.

Ivanović ([www.goranivanovic.net](http://www.goranivanovic.net)), 27, was born in Yugoslavia to a Serbian father and a Bosnian-Croatian mother. A child prodigy, he left his war-torn country at 12 to study at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, joining his parents in Chicago in 1996. Studies completed, prestigious competitions won, and with the desire to break from strict classical repertoire, he found musical direction in Haque's looser, club-based style. "His way of playing is furious," says Ivanović, who approached Haque after hearing him perform. The two soon began collaborating. But while their *mélange* of musical inheritance is appar-



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Goran Ivanović (above) and Fareed Haque (below).

ent, their music goes much further and deeper than ethnic eclectic.

"When I came with a few arrangements, he could feel it right away," Ivanović says of Haque's affinity for the folk-based music of the Balkans, a cross-fertilization of Jewish, Gypsy, Turkish, Spanish, North African, Egyptian, and Indian cultures. Using old recordings of village musicians, Ivanović worked out the melodies and harmonies and then, with Haque, created new arrangements. The pieces are primarily based on dances in meters like 7/8, 5/8, and 11/8 that are unfamiliar to American ears and belie the notion that popular music is necessarily simple. "When you go to Bulgaria, where people have been dancing in 11 and 9 and 14 and 19, or India, where you turn on pop radio and the melodies are full of altered scales, you realize that the human condition can appreciate great complexity," Haque says. But only if it is organic, he maintains, based on the natural rhythms of the human body.

The music also refutes the corollary that classical music need be as sterile and inorganic as it is serious. To this end, the duo embraces an exuberant improvisational approach. Believing that the loss of improvisation in classical music accounts for its shrinking audience, Haque has long cultivated such spontaneity. "The hard part is to improvise in a way that is stylistically related," Haque says, "to have it fulfill the function of the development section in a typical sonata. Can we take some of the motifs and try to vary them and develop them in a way that relates to the overarching architecture?"

When it sounds like a spontaneous development of the material, it's really exciting." "Zajdi Zajdi," from *Seven Boats* (Proteus, [www.proteusentertainment.com](http://www.proteusentertainment.com)), is a case in point, a simple folk tune that was almost completely improvised as it was recorded. When they work together, Ivanović says, things sometimes take off and "completely new parts come." They both maintain that working together has broadened their playing. "I enjoy classical music more now when I am able to be more relaxed in terms of rhythms," says



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By Céline Keating

Ivanović, who has also started the Goran Ivanović Group to play upbeat “loosely Balkan” music.

This melding of the complex and the passionate, the classical and the improvisational, makes for exhilarating listening. The alchemy is apparent on the evocative “Walls of the White City,” the driving “Topansko Oro,” and the dreamy “Seven Boats,” which moves from a hypnotic repetitive motif to a sultry improvisation embedded in an elusive melody. Each guitarist’s beautiful individual tone is most apparent on their respective classical solos—Haque’s rendition of Georg Philipp Telemann’s *Fantasia in D*, which he transcribed, and Ivanović’s “Pour le Moment.”

How can a duo maintain the spontaneity required to reinvent their music every time out? “Trust,” says Haque. “Hopefully, when Goran and I play, people will get excited about the music and will forget that it’s classical and just think it’s fun or moving.” They are planning several long tours to further deepen their rapport and a new CD of perhaps half originals and half Spanish Baroque music. As Ivanović says of their ongoing collaboration, “It should always be a new beginning and a growing experience.” ■

### What They Play

On *Seven Boats*, **GORAN IVANOVIĆ** switched between Frederich Holtier ([www.holtierluthier.com](http://www.holtierluthier.com)) and Richard Bruné ([www.rebrune.com](http://www.rebrune.com)) classical guitars. The Holtier has a spruce double top, Indian rosewood back and sides, and “volume, warmth, and character.” The Bruné, a 1985 with cedar top, Indian rosewood back and sides, and mahogany neck, was adapted for Ivanović with an extra soundhole he calls “really cool, very funky looking.” Ivanović uses D’Addario EJ-46 strings.

**FAREED HAQUE** played his “old, trusty” 1974 cedar/Indian Germán Pérez Barranco ([www.geocities.com/Nashville/8901/granada.htm](http://www.geocities.com/Nashville/8901/granada.htm)) on his solos, except for the Telemann. On that and the duets, he used a 2002 spruce/Brazilian, 650 mm.-scale guitar made by Jeronimo Peña Fernández (Utica, 7 Marmolejo, Jaen, Spain). He praises the instrument for its fantastic projection and sustain. Haque uses D’Addario composite strings.