

After mapping the lay of the land (in Tashkent, Bukhara, Khorezm, and several mountain villages in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), Levin, a professor of music at Dartmouth College, introduces the musicians. One of the most memorable is Turgun Alimatov, a native of Tashkent steeped in the classical Islamic song cycle, *Shash maqâm*. Alimatov's performance of a traditional melody on a long-necked lute called a *tanbur* is probably the most stunning track on the 74-minute CD accompanying this book. Yet as Levin shows, this consummate musician was never part of his homeland's cultural establishment—administered as it was, for most of Alimatov's 70 years, by the Soviet authorities.

Levin does not caricature Soviet cultural policies but rather presents them as a complicated mixture of the preservationist and the assimilationist. The exception, of

course, was religion: another musician, Ma'ruf Xâja, recalls being asked to perform "folk music" on the radio in 1937 with this proviso: "There couldn't be any mention of God or the Prophet."

Yet Ma'ruf Xaja continued to play religious music, as did most of the Muslim and Jewish musicians Levin chronicles. And, in the post-Soviet era, so does a pop singer named Yulduz Usmanova. Her songs exhorting listeners "to love one's parents, to love God" are resisted not by Stalinist commissars but (in her words) by "people who love rock music." One of Usmanova's songs (featuring a solo by Turgun Alimatov) was a hit in Germany. Levin includes it on his CD, as if to admit that there is little point in searching for the unsullied wellsprings of this or any other ancient musical tradition. The best one can do is bathe in the living waters as they flow.

—Martha Bayles

Contemporary Affairs

TIME FOR LIFE: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time.

By John P. Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey. Pennsylvania State University Press. 367 pp. \$24.95

"For the first time since his creation, man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem, how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure . . . [and how] to live agreeably and wisely and well." John Maynard Keynes was right, according to Robinson, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, and Godbey, a professor of leisure studies at Pennsylvania State University. In this study of what Americans do all day, the authors conclude that, yes, economic growth and productivity have won for us the leisure that Lord Keynes prophesied in 1928.

But what are the trends in how Americans use their time? We are spending more time visiting art museums, doing needlework, participating in sports, pursuing hobbies, and (above all) watching television—at the expense of caring for children, visiting parks, socializing, reading, exercising, and working. Of all the trends the authors reveal in the period they study (1965–85), the most con-

troversial is the last. Robinson and Godbey are in the minority when they argue that the American work week has shrunk by five hours in 20 years. Other scholars, such as Juliet Schor, Arlie Hochschild, and this reviewer, have pointed to longer working hours and correspondingly fewer leisure hours.

Social science theory is sufficiently flexible to have it either way. Do the higher wages that accompany economic development coax workers to raise their incomes by spending more hours on the job? Or do rising wages encourage workers to enjoy greater leisure without sacrificing income? When theory predicts diametrically opposed outcomes such as these, only an empirical solution will reveal the truth. Now the fun begins.

Armed with what they refer to as "controversial ideas in all of their quantitative splendor and detail," the authors try to disprove the claim that Americans are working longer, not shorter, hours. The difference turns on the authors' methodology. While other researchers have relied on published statistics and surveys that ask their informants to recall numbers of hours worked in an earlier period, Robinson and Godbey rely

on data obtained from respondents who keep time budgets of activities as they unfold. This data collection method, they maintain, avoids the errors inherent in recalled information.

So far, so good. Yet the authors show a troubling carelessness when it comes to handling even the most straightforward information. For example, they challenge the “questionable belief” held by other researchers that Americans are spending less time reading. Yet their own data reveal that time spent reading dropped by 48 minutes per week—a change considered significant in studies of this kind. Similarly, the authors argue that there has not been a trend away from organized religious activities. Yet their data for matched samples of respondents show a 10 percent decline in time spent in such activities. If these conclusions can be checked against the authors’ own published data, one wonders about the accuracy of those conclusions that cannot.

—Lee Burns

MORAL JUDGMENT:
Does the Abuse Excuse Threaten Our Legal System?

By James Q. Wilson. Basic Books.
134 pp. \$18

To the question posed in its subtitle, this book offers a resounding “yes.” In these 1996 Godkin Lectures delivered originally at Harvard University, Wilson, a professor of management and public policy at the University of California at Los Angeles, presents a scathing indictment of recent trends in criminal law. His special target is the elaboration of excuses, especially those based on alleged histories of abuse, as in the sensational trials of Erik and Lyle Menendez, who murdered their parents. Wilson also objects to expert testimony involving dubious social-scientific findings, such as the percentage of

battered women who (in Wilson’s words) “become so utterly dependent on the abuser that they really believe there is no escape short of his death.” Wilson finds these tendencies offensive because they undercut responsibility. Accused individuals are encouraged to avoid accountability; judges and lawyers evade responsibility for the integrity of legal judgment.

The linchpin of Wilson’s argument is the opposition between judgment and explanation. Judgment is stern and rule-bound, unblemished by passion or sentiment. Explanation, by contrast, evokes sympathy on the basis of the presumed causes of irresponsible or criminal behavior. This opposition makes sense, up to a point. In defining burglary, homicide, and other crimes, the law looks for reasonably clear-cut and objective criteria of guilt or responsibility, while trying to avoid issues of motivation, character, and circumstance.

But these devilments soon reappear: the insanity defense presumes that a person’s actions are explained by mental disease or defect; a plea of duress appeals to the ways in which a person’s will may be constrained; self-defense invokes an accepted motivation. The problem is not, as Wilson claims, that we confuse responsibility and causation. Rather, it is that legal sophistication *requires* us to discern and evaluate causes. Some causes mitigate culpability, as in the “abuse excuse” cited by Wilson. Others, such as drunk driving, aggravate it. Paradoxically, the search for greater precision in assessing degrees of blameworthiness can open the door to untested and imprecise theories. This has happened in the past, and it will continue to happen. Wilson tells us much about the bad results, but I wonder if he fully appreciates the virtues that produce the defects he decries.

—Philip Selznick

History

DERELICTION OF DUTY:
Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam.

By H. R. McMaster. Harper Collins.
446 pp. \$27.50

In early 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson, heir to John F. Kennedy’s commit-

ment to defend South Vietnam, was less concerned about the conflict in Southeast Asia than about the upcoming November election. Summoning the Joint Chiefs to the White House, he listened to their argument that there were only two options in Vietnam, “win or get out.” He did not like what he heard. He told them, “I’ve got to win the