

**FROM WORLD FUSION TO BEAT BOX TO KLEZMER CHAMBER MUSIC
TO POP/JAZZ TO THE LEADING VOICES OF YIDDISH SONG,
CHUTZPAH! HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERY MUSICAL TASTE**

Vancouver BC – “This year’s Chutzpah! Festival is bringing an even more eclectic and diverse range of musicians to Vancouver than ever before” said Artistic & Managing Director Mary-Louise Albert. “For the first time, we will be presenting a group from Italy - the exceptional **Klezmerata Fiorentina** - playing what can only be described as improvised classical/authentic klezmer music. The four members of Klezmerata Fiorentina are also principle players with the leading Florentine symphony and opera orchestra, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale. New to the festival as well this year is **Klezmafour** from Poland, a group I was blown away with after seeing them in concert on a recent trip to the Jewish Music Festival in Amsterdam. They will be opening for the powerhouse **Balkan Beat Box** at Chutzpah!’s first foray to the Commodore Ballroom – this will be a fantastic party and a wonderful celebration to close the festival with a bang. The captivating Ravid Kahalani makes his Canadian premiere with his supergroup **Yemen Blues**, co-founded with the bass virtuoso Omer Avital, fusing the sounds of Africa with blues, funk and jazz. Canadian groups **Jaffa Road** from Toronto and **The Jessica Stuart Few** from Toronto/Vancouver, will treat audiences to inter-cultural music playing a range of more unusual instruments such as the Japanese koto and the Turkish saz, and a moving **multimedia tribute to poet and patriot Avram Sutzkever** featuring **leading Canadian voices in Yiddish music**.

**Canadian Premiere
YEMEN BLUES (Israel/New York)**

Shaped by his origins as a Yemeni Jew, the fascinating voice of Israeli Ravid Kahalani brilliantly evokes the musical universe of his ancestors (**you last heard Ravid Kahalani sing and perform with the *Idan Raichel Project* at the Chan Centre last year!**). Stretching like a caravan crossing the desert, the band winds through West African blues and the thousand and one vibrations of the Sahara, Nubian, Gnawi, Touaregs, Saidi and Bambara. This luscious mix of jazz tonalities, which also crosses into funk, rings out as an ode to African grooves and a modern echo of the ancestral rhythms.

Yemen Blues was co-founded by composer, arranger and bass virtuoso **Omer Avital** “A pioneer in combining jazz with myriad world music elements” – *LA Times*

The stellar nine-member ensemble features virtuoso musicians from several genres, including New York-based bassist-oud jazz-ethnic music player Omer Avital, jazz trombonist-band leader Avi Lebovich, classical players Galia Hai on Viola & Hilla Epstein on Cello, percussionists Yohai Cohen & Rony Iwyrn, Hadar Noiberg (flutes), Itamar Borochoy (Trumpet) with Kahalani enhancing his vocal work with percussion playing too.

Kahalani and Avital and their super group create a musical canvas printed both with deep emotions - when Ravid’s rasping laments tear open the heavens – and popular jubilation when the percussions, the oud, the cello and the brass instruments “dance” resolutely modern complexity! Yemen Blues concerts are new and innovative music at its best!

“The rolling rhythms common to Yemenite music and Saharan musical styles, from the Sudan to Mali, propelled the crowd for most of the night, and the sound was opened up by Kahalani’s top-notch and wonderfully unconventional band that includes a cello, violin, flute, trumpet, trombone, electric bass and two percussion players. Three of the musicians are critically acclaimed Israeli jazz musicians, including the bassist Omer Avital.” *midnighteast.com*

When: Thursday February 24
Doors open at 8pm.

Where: Venue Night Club, 881 Granville Street

www.yemenblues.com

BALKAN BEAT BOX (Israel/New York) Closing Night Party

With their roots firmly planted all around the Mediterranean rim and their solid rock & reggae foundations, this New York and Israel based band is a sensation.

Balkan Beat Box is an astounding live band and their energetic live shows have become legendary. BBB weaves the exotic sounds of the Middle East with urban electronic grooves, hip-hop beats, wailing horns and the fast and furious folk beats found in gypsy and Balkan music. The group breaks down political barriers with their infectious enthusiasm and amazing music.

Don't you dare call it "world music."

"Balkan Beat Box aims for an aesthetic that is anything but diluted, stemming instead from a pursuit of ancient sounds that the band has described as extreme instrumentalism taught on the mountain, not in the conservatory. "We like to ...discover something, some unpolished diamond," founder and saxophonist Kaplan says. "Usually from around the Mediterranean lake — around the pond — it tends to be because that's the cultural/geographical connection we have. It could be Morocco, Spain, the Balkans, Iran — everything to fit what we like to hear." *eyeweekly.com*

Balkan Beat Box is centred around its two founders: saxophone player Ori Kaplan and drummer/programmer/producer Tamir Muskat. After having been active for over a decade in some of NYC's premier bands (including Gogol Bordello, Firewater, Big Lazy, Shotnez), they joined forces with charismatic MC Tomer Yosef and brought together their combined experiences and ideas to create the powerhouse called Balkan Beat Box.

"Of course, this is not your grandmother's Balkan music – Balkan Beat Box are to folk revivalism what Lady Gaga is to 1950s rock 'n' roll. But Kaplan is quick to point out that some of their gigs do actually have audiences spanning "three generations." So, who knows, your grandma might relate, providing she has an exceptionally adventurous spirit (and possibly a good set of concert earplugs). Balkan Beat Box are loud, and proud of their music, which "unabashedly drives in so many directions." *Li Robbins, The Globe and Mail*

BBB's new CD, *Blue Eyed Black Boy* will be featured prominently in this guaranteed dynamite concert. Be prepared to dance!

www.balkanbeatbox.com

Opening for Balkan Beat Box:

KLEZMAFOUR (Poland)

The band was founded in 1999 by four (and now five!) talented, dynamic alumni of the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, Poland. The band's artistic inspiration is the history of their own city, Lublin, exploring the historical integration of a past Jewish population with music originating in the Jewish tradition and the Balkan culture, along with their own contemporary infused compositions. "The music is lively and ... very emotional. They blend styles and make just the right transitions, putting the music front and center, making this a magnificent listening experience. The lead duo of brothers Andrzej Czaplinski and Wojciech Czaplinski (Violin and Clarinet, respectively) ... lead the band through a broad range of Klezmer styles, with some Balkan and Middle-Eastern influences. The music is fresh, and I find it irresistible." *Keith Wolzinger, Klezmer Podcast*

Andrzej Czaplinski – Violin
Gabriel Tomczuk – Double Bass
Wojciech Czaplinski – Clarinet
Rafał Grząka – Accordion
Tomasz Waldowski – Drums

**When: Sunday February 27
Doors open at 8pm.**

Where: Commodore Ballroom, 868 Granville Street

www.klezmafour.pl

West Coast Premiere
KLEZMERATA FIORENTINA (Italy)

Comprised of four principal players and extraordinary musicians from leading Florentine symphony and opera orchestra, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale. Their music imbues the unique instrumental language, dance rhythms and authentic melodies of the historical klezmerim with a classical complexity of expression, wide dynamic range, and elasticity of tempo.

Founded in 2005 by violinist Igor Polesitsky, the first year of the group's existence was dedicated to the study and elaboration of archival materials. Since then, Klezmerata Fiorentina has played at prestigious international venues such as the Institute of Russian Culture in Vienna; Moscow's new central concert hall, Dom Muzyki; Teatro Piccolo di Milano; Florence's Accademia Bartolomeo Cristofori; Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; the historic Teatro della Pergola in Florence

Numerous international classical music celebrities -- conductors Zubin Mehta, Daniel Barenboim and James Conlon, cellists Mstislav Rostropovich and Natalia Gutman, pianist Marta Argerich, violinists Vladimir Spivakov, Leonidas Kovakos and Dora Schwarzberg -- have all offered their enthusiastic support and approval after hearing the ensemble. Contemporary composers, the Argentine Jorge Bosso, and the Israeli Betty Olivero, have written works especially for Klezmerata Fiorentina.

"One of my many activities is to be music director of the Orchestra of the Maggio Fiorentino in Florence. There is an ensemble amongst our musicians called the Klezmerata Fiorentina: Jewish music from Eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine, played with authenticity under the guidance of Igor Polesitsky and three of his colleagues. And I must say every time I hear them I don't know whether to laugh or cry because they play music to laugh and to cry. I recommend them wherever possible because it's not only good entertainment, it's great music-making." *Zubin Mehta, conductor*

Musicians:

Igor Polesitsky - *Violin (Founder)*
Riccardo Crocilla - *Clarinet*
Francesco Furlanich - *Accordion*
Riccardo Donati - *Double bass*

When: Wednesday February 16th @ 7pm
Where: Norman Rothstein Theatre, 950 W. 41st Ave.

www.klezmeratafiorentina.com

JAFFA ROAD (Toronto)
with special guests THE JESSICA STUART FEW (Vancouver/Toronto)

Based in Toronto *Jaffa Road* is an award-winning world music group made up of some of Canada's most exciting and innovative interpreters of inter-cultural music. The group has created a unique sonic landscape that draws easily and organically from the worlds of sacred and secular Jewish songs, Classical Arabic and Indian music, modern jazz, rock, pop, and dub. In doing so the group creates a union between acoustic and electronic, secular and sacred, ancient and modern.

Their debut CD, *Sunplace*, was nominated for a Juno Award. Jaffa Road's songs have won them Grand Prize and the Lennon Award in the John Lennon Song Writing contest and Best World Music Artist at the Toronto Independent Music Awards.

"Jaffa Road blends Jewish, jazz, Indian and Arabic music with electronica and dub. The result is fantastic." *CBC Radio One*

"Their music is incredibly diverse, rooted in centuries-old traditions yet with a keen eye to the future ...It's played to the highest level of skill with infectious chemistry amongst the musicians, and has an inherent consciousness about it that is truly inspiring to hear live. And they bring out a strong crowd of enlightened people with similarly positive energy that just lights up the room." *Sebastian Cook, Small World Music Society*

"Aviva Chernick is a fearless musical adventurer. Her clear and persuasive voice takes us places we would not go on our own". *Tom Allen CBC Radio 2.*

Aaron Lightstone - *guitars, oud, saz, synthesizers*

Aviva Chernick - *vocals*

Chris Gartner - *bass*

Jeff Wilson - *drums*

Sundar Viswanathan – *saxophone*

www.jaffaroad.com

Opening for Jaffa Road:

Opening for Jaffa Road is Vancouver's own Jessica Stuart with her Toronto-based trio *The Jessica Stuart Few*. Fit to groove through the bounds of all parameters, Jessica Stuart embodies the essence of pop and jazz, creating a dynamic sound, merging outstanding creativity with traditional roots.

With innovative and catchy songs, The Jessica Stuart Few consists of:

Jessica Stuart - *vocals, guitar, koto*

Dan Fortin – *bass*

Nico Dann - *drums*

"The Few meld their undeniable pop instincts with a playful no-linear approach to jazz and crank up the charm." *Bob Klanac, London Scene Magazine*

"When Jessica Stuart took the stage, I was very taken with their musical approach and ability to engage – the crowd was very responsive to their energetic and charismatic set. Their sound was a mix of upbeat grooves, a mix of jazz, pop, soul and folk, but nothing you can quite put your finger on . Jessica's voice shimmers on top of rich guitar chords, thumping upright bass, and head-nodding drum grooves. Jessica occasionally puts down the guitar and introduces us to the traditional Japanese "koto". To future amazement, the Japanese folk instrument mixes with reggae and jazz without sounding out of place. I can't say enough great things about this band... They have an original sound that needs to be heard." – *Jay Cleary, Artistic Director, NuJazz Festival, NuFunk Concerts*

www.jessicastuartmusic.com

Saturday February 19 @ 8pm
Norman Rothstein Theatre, 950 W. 41st Ave.

A TRIBUTE TO AVRAM SUTZKEVER

Straight from the 2010 Ashkenaz Festival in Toronto, Chutzpah! presents singers **Theresa Tova , Mitch Smolken and guests** in *A Tribute to Avram Sutzkever*. Featuring leading Canadian voices of Yiddish Song this moving tribute includes Sutzkever's poetry and music and relevant work by contemporaries that contextualizes this great 20th Century Yiddish poet and partisan who recently died earlier in 2010 at the of 96.

The evening will present Sutzkever's work through song, poetry, film, and music in a multifaceted exploration of the artist's prolific literary contribution.

Sutzkever came of age as a poet in 1930s Vilna, as a member of Yung Vilne ("Young Vilna"), an avant-garde group of Yiddish writers and artists whose work was cut short by the Holocaust. The group included such literary luminaries as Shmerke Kaczerginski and Chaim Grade. The evening will interweave musical compositions based on Sutzkever's poems, his most important writings (such as "Sibir", his collaboration with Chagall), reflections about his life and work as a poet, and archival recordings of his readings (including "Vos Vet Blaybn" in Rabin Square). Sutzkever's penchant to describe the natural world in his work, as well as his vivid and poignant accounts of the Holocaust will be highlighted. The performance will use the landscape of Sutzkever's writings to delve deeper into the poet's life and times, and to celebrate and explore his artistic and cultural legacy.

Mitch Smolken – *Vocals*

Theresa Tova – *Vocals*

Eileen Thalenberg – *Actor*

Andrew Downing – *Upright Bass*

Aleksander Gajic – *Violin*

Martin van de Ven – *Clarinet*

Sasha Luminsky – *Accordion*

When: Sunday February 20 @ 7 pm

Where: Norman Rothstein Theatre, 950 W. 41st Ave.

Visit the Festival's website at www.chutzpahfestival.com for complete information. Tickets can be purchased by phone at the Chutzpah! Festival Box Office (604-257-5145), online at www.ticketstonight.ca and the Chutzpah! Festival website www.chutzpahfestival.com or in person at the JCCGV (950 W. 41st Ave). Online Tickets for Balkan Beat Box can be purchased only through Ticketmaster (604.280.3311) www.ticketmaster.ca as well as by phone or in person through the Chutzpah! Festival Box Office (604-257-5145)

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