

Tres Hermanicas

Shira Kammen, Daphna Mor, Nell Snaidas

¡Fiestaremos! A Sephardic Celebration

with

Rex Benincasa, Karim Sulayman and Zafer Tawil

This ensemble of musicians, comprised of singers and instrumentalists playing with a colorful mix of western and middle-eastern influences on voices, ney, vielle, recorders, oud, percussion (and more) share the love for this gorgeous repertoire as well as the delight and challenge of the art of improvisation and interpretation, making each performance a celebratory unique experience. **Tres Hermanicas** brings the depth and sweetness of the songs of the Sephardim to the concert stage. This astonishing musical heritage, filled with tales of exile and courtship, family life, expressed in infectious rhythm and haunting melodies has been preserved for over 500 years by oral tradition, primarily by the women of the culture. Telling the stories of the Sephardim, our program celebrates the beautiful, poetic Ladino repertoire, both sacred and secular, including: romanzas (ballads of love, loss and adventure), piyyutim (lyrical embellishments of prayers) and koplás (strophic festival songs)

We are delighted to bring this completely new program created for Indianapolis Early Music and are thrilled to be able to make music with people we love and hold in the highest regard. We close our program with the beautiful piyyut *Ahot ktana* which translates to Little Sister or Hermanica. We send you home with its hopeful final blessing message: *May the old year and its curses conclude and let the new year and its blessings begin.* (Nell, Shira and Daphna)

Rex Benincasa- percussion
Shira Kammen- vielle, rebec, voice
Daphna Mor- winds, voice
Nell Snaidas- soprano
Karim Sulayman- tenor
Zafer Tawil- oud, qanun, voice

Program

La comida la mañana Yfat einaim	traditional Sephardic traditional Sephardic
A la una yo nací La sirena Nuba Ghrib “Kursi”, Qa’em wa nos Adio querida	traditional Sephardic traditional Sephardic traditional Arab-Andalusian traditional Sephardic
Si verías La rosa linda	traditional Sephardic traditional Sephardic
Tala al Badru Alayna Quando el rey Nimrod	traditional Arab-Andalusian traditional Sephardic
<i>INTERMISSION</i>	
Lecha dodi (tune: Rey de Francia) Shachar avakeshka Ein k’eloheinu El Eliyahu	piyyut for Shabbat evening piyyut for Shabbat morning liturgical hymn for Shabbat and festivals piyyut for Shabbat night (Motzae Shabbat)
Siete modos de guisar las berenjenas Morena me llaman Avrix mi galanika La prima vez que te vidí	traditional Sephardic traditional Sephardic traditional Sephardic traditional Sephardic
Achot ktana	piyyut for Rosh Hashanah

Bios:

Rex Benincasa has been a freelancing drummer and world music percussionist in New York since 1978. Along with hundreds of television/radio soundtracks and commercial recordings, he has performed with Apollo's Fire, Ensemble Caprice, Alba Consort, The Bishop's Band, Seraphic Fire, Flamenco Latino, Carlota Santana Spanish Dance, Andrea Delconte Danza Espana, Zorongo Flamenco Dance, Pilar Rioja, Amanecer Flamenco Progressivo, Sacramento Ballet, Ballet Austin, the Washington Ballet and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. He has recorded CDs and/or movie soundtracks for Marty Balin, Karen Mason, Andrea Marcovicci, Craig Rubano, Jamie deRoy, Stephanie Pope, Foday Musa Suso, Douglas Cuomo, Philip Glass, Sesame Street, NFL Films, the Sons of Sepharad, the Ivory Consort and the Gerard Ederly Ensemble, to name but a few. Benincasa has played many show scores for all kinds of productions. A partial list of Broadway and special show appearances include Fosse, Elaine Stritch, The Full Monty, Flower Drum Song, Man Of LaMancha, Never Gonna Dance, Little Shop of Horrors, The Frogs, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Hairspray, The Drowsy Chaperone, Curtains, The Color Purple, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, Shrek, In The Heights, Billy Elliot, Peter And The Starcatcher, Motown The Musical, and The Play Of Daniel. Rex likes all kinds of music. RexVB@aol.com

Multi-instrumentalist **Shira Kammen** has spent much of her life exploring the worlds of early and traditional music of all kinds. A member for many years of the early music Ensembles Alcatraz and Project Ars Nova, she has also worked with Sequentia, Hesperion XX, the Boston Camerata, storyteller/harpist Patrick Ball, singers Azam Ali and Joanna Newsom, the Balkan group Kitka, Anonymous IV, the King's Noyse, the Newberry and Folger Consorts, Tenet, The Compass of the Rose, Vajra Voices, Calextone, the Oregon, California and San Francisco Shakespeare Festivals, the California Revels, and is the founder of Class V Music, an ensemble dedicated to providing music on river rafting trips. She has worked with students in many different settings, among them teaching summer music workshops in the woods, coaching students of early music in such schools as Yale University, Case Western, the University of Oregon at Eugene, and working at specialized seminars at the Fondazione Cini in Venice, Italy and the Scuola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland. She has played on a number of movie and television soundtracks, when weird medieval instruments are needed.

Ronnie Malley is a multi-instrumentalist musician, actor, producer, and educator. Recent theatre credits include: American Griot co-author/composer (Moraine Valley FPAC), Macbeth Hecate/musician (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre), Great Expectations composer/sound designer (Silk Road Rising/Remy Bumppo), A Disappearing Number musician (Timeline Theatre), Ziryab, The Songbird Of Andalusia author/solo performer (Silk Road Rising), The Secret Garden musician (Court Theatre), The Jungle Book musician/consultant (Goodman, Huntington), The White Snake co-composer/musician (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), The Who And The What composer/co-sound designer (Victory Gardens), The Sultan's Dilemma associate producer/actor (International Voices Project), and The Arabian Nights musician/actor (Lookingglass). Recent music producer credits include: Aurad Fathiya, East Meets Middle East, Lamajamal – Tsikago, Omar Offendum, Surabhi Ensemble, The Andalusian Trail (staged production), and The Reminders. With a degree in Global Music Studies from DePaul University, Ronnie is a teaching artist with Chicago Public Schools, a faculty member at Old Town School of Folk Music, and a guest lecturer at universities. He is an international artist and has worked on initiatives for Arts Midwest, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, and the Inner-City Muslim Action Network. Ronnie has performed with the music groups Allos Musica, Apollo's Fire, Diwan Al-Han, EMMÉ, Lamajamal, Mucca Pazza, Newberry Consort, Surabhi Ensemble, and the U of C Middle East Music Ensemble.

Daphna Mor's "astonishing virtuosity" (Chicago Tribune) has been heard throughout Europe and the United States as both a soloist and ensemble player. She appeared a soloist with the New York Collegium, the New York Early Music Ensemble, Apollo's Fire and more, and as orchestra member with the New

York Philharmonic, New York City Opera, American Classical Orchestra and Orchestra of St. Luke's. She appeared with many Early Music ensembles including Tenet, Piffaro, Newberry consort and Peabody consort.

Devoted to new music, Mor has recorded on John Zorn's Tzadik label, and has performed the world premiere of David Bruce's *Tears, Puffes, Jumps, and Galliard* with the Metropolis Ensemble. She co-composed WAVES- for recorders, voice, cello and a beat boxer for Carolyn Dorfman Dance performed on New York's Summer Stage.

Mor appeared in a duo with Joyce DiDonato on the singer's tour 'In War and Peace'. She can be heard on Sting's album *If On A Winter's Night* for Deutsche Grammophon

Mor serves as the Music Director of Beineinu, dedicated to the modern cultivation of Jewish culture, and is a performer and teacher of liturgical music of the Jewish diaspora. Mor co-directs the ensemble East of the River with Nina Stern. She leads programs for the Education Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. www.daphnamor.com www.eastoftherivermusic.com

Nell Snaidas has been praised by the New York Times for her "beautiful soprano voice, melting passion" and "vocally ravishing" performances. "One of the world's leading interpreters of Sephardic Song" (Commonwealth Magazine), she was featured on Canada's CBC radio alongside Montserrat Figueras and Victoria de los Angeles. She has served as guest artist/Sephardic music consultant for many groups, including The Rose Ensemble, Schola Antiqua, the Toronto Chamber Choir and co-directed/created the highly acclaimed "Sephardic Journey" for Apollo's Fire with conductor Jeannette Sorrell (which debuted at #2 on the Billboard World Music Chart).

Of Uruguayan-American descent, Nell began her career singing in zarzuelas in New York City's Repertorio Español. Favorite projects include performing and co-directing with beloved Tom Zajac in his beautiful production of "Codex Trujillo del Perú" with their group, The Bishop's Band, and recording the movie-soundtrack of *The Producers* with Mel Brooks in the booth.

In addition to her busy performing career, Nell is an active Iberian/Latin American language coach to many of the leading Early Music ensembles in the USA. Ms. Snaidas is the co-Artistic Director of the NYC concert series GEMAS:Early Music of the Americas. Nell is grateful to Mark Cudek for the opportunity to create this program for IEM with her dear friends. www.nellsnaidas.com

Lebanese-American tenor **Karim Sulayman** has garnered international attention as a sophisticated and versatile artist, regularly performing on the world's stages in orchestral concerts and opera, as well as in recital and chamber music. Highlights this season include his debuts at Stockholm's Drottningholms Slottsteater, Florentine Opera, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, Venice's Teatro Goldoni, and his return to the Ravinia Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Last season marked debuts with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, and his role debut as Monteverdi's L'Orfeo in a US national tour with Apollo's Fire. Other recent engagements include Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, Houston Grand, Boston Lyric and New York City Operas, and the Aldeburgh, Marlboro and Casals Festivals. His growing discography includes his debut solo album, *Songs of Orpheus*, which was released to international acclaim on the AVIE label. Named "Critic's Choice" by Opera News, and praised for his "lucid, velvety tenor and pop-star charisma" by BBC Music Magazine, Karim was recently honored with the GRAMMY® Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. www.karimsulayman.com

Program Notes:

Deshame entrar, yo me hare lugar
(“Let me enter, I will make a place for myself”) Judeo-Spanish Proverb

The edict went public during the week of April 29, 1492. All the Jews of Spain who would refuse to renounce their faith and convert to Catholicism would be expelled, never to “dare to return” under the penalty of death.

The Sephardim (from Sepharad, the Hebrew word for Spain) were given until the last week of July of 1492 to gather themselves and “depart” from the land they had called their own for 1500 years. Left to wander throughout the Mediterranean in search of hospitable refuge (though some drifted as far north as London, Amsterdam, Vienna and Hamburg) the majority settled in various parts of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire welcomed this educated population that brought with them usefulness of craft, trade, and technological skills considered valuable to the growth of the Empire. Because of the Ottoman policy allowing their minorities almost total autonomy, the Sephardim were able to continue to identify themselves as Spanish Jews, preserving their old Castilian language (*Ladino*), and much of the culture of their Iberian experience. Since music was so central to their daily lives, particularly in the domain of women, they were able to preserve this astonishing musical heritage for 500 years by oral tradition. Telling the stories of its people, our program celebrates the Songs of the Sephardim, which are filled with tales of exile and courtship, family life, weddings and pranks, infectious rhythm and haunting melodies. This beautiful, poetic *Ladino* repertoire includes *Romances* (ballads of love, loss and adventure), *Piyyutim* (lyrical embellishments of prayers) and *Koplas* (strophic festival songs), some of which even feature recipes within their texts.

In order to begin to understand the Sephardic culture one must also consider the cultures of the Muslims and Christians of Medieval Spain. From the time of the Muslim conquest in 711 to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 there was a relationship between these Three-Faith-Communities that is referred to as *Convivencia* (“co-existence”). This is not to say that these cultures lived together in total harmony, but that they existed in an environment of cultural openness, where they often lived in the same neighborhoods, engaged in business together, and naturally affected and influenced each other with their ideas.

It is evident in the edict of Expulsion, that despite being forbidden by the Inquisition which “for twelve years been made and is being made” the King and Queen were informed by the inquisitors that “Christians have engaged in and continue to engage in social interaction and communication” with Jews. And so it remains to this day the music of Spain itself is comprised of the sounds and stories of the Sephardim and the Muslims as well as Christians.

There have been many programs devoted to this fascinating musical *convivencia*, however our program today will focus on the music of the Sephardim, whose own journey – both physically and musically covered the globe, borrowing here, influencing there and in the end, is a story not

only of survival, but of flourishing against all odds.

Our program, *Fiestaremos* (we will celebrate) is also the title of a song by the wonderful Sephardic troubadour, Judy Frankel, whose sweet voice and folk style guitar picking delighted generations. *Fiestaremos* is an interesting word; immediately recognizable, a cognate in many languages, and yet – it isn't quite Spanish. *Festajaremos*, the Spanish equivalent, wouldn't be as universally understood. This is the brilliance of language, it changes and adapts to its surroundings and speakers. This celebratory word works as a perfect metaphor for the Sephardim, and honestly, any refugee culture. When people are forced to flee their homeland, they must try to be understood in their new country, while remaining who they are.

Like the living language, Ladino or Judeo Español, the music of the Sephardim also evolved. While there are arguably aspects of Medieval Spanish melodies in some Sephardic songs, much of the repertoire took on the melodies of their adoptive homelands, while often retaining the various dialects of Judeo Spanish. Elements of more complex eastern rhythms are found in pieces like “La comida la mañana”, with a complex rhythm (7) where divisions of 2 and 3 are on display. To provide some musical context, we have also incorporated two pieces from the Arab Andalusian tradition. In our desire to present the full spectrum of Sephardic Music, we have included a combination of secular songs, mostly about courtship, betrayal, and love (both romantic and culinary) and sacred pieces. The sacred works, in Hebrew, which remained the literary and liturgical language, are *piyyutim*. Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon, *B'nai Jeshurun* and Yair Harel, *Hazmanah Le-Piyut – Israel, explain*: “the piyut began as sacred poetry adorning the prayers of the individual and the community, as well as religious rituals. Over the years the piyut, a living creative work that is constantly renewed, widened its scope and reached out beyond the range of formal prayer.” And while religious music was only sung by men in the middle ages, we feel it is only fitting that we all embrace this beautiful and deep expression of poetic spiritual longing in our concert.

There is theme that is shared by the Andalusian Muslims and the Sephardic Jews of the existence of a mythical key. Someone in the family still has it, and it opens the door to the house they were forced to leave behind in Spain. Like so much of the music on this program, this concept feels at once ancient and modern. I recently met a woman who was forced to leave Russia with her family when she was 10. They were allowed to bring very little with them and had to abandon their home, friends and relatives. She told me that someone in her family still had the keys to their apartment in St. Petersburg. It left me wondering how many refugees are wandering through the world at this time in history with a key as one of their sole possessions, hoping for the day that they might return to their lives and homeland. Looking back at the history of the Spanish Jews, examining both convivencia and expulsion, makes for a meaningful reminder that coexistence is possible, and while never perfect, cultural tolerance proves to be a much kinder, more humane, and more interesting way to reside together on this increasingly smaller planet in which we live.

Nell Snaidas

