

Holiday Programming at The Soraya**The Klezmatics*****Happy Joyous Hanukkah*****Saturday, December 16 at 8:00pm**

(Los Angeles, CA | November 29, 2017) Valley Performing Arts Center (The Soraya) welcome The Klezmatics on Saturday, December 16 at 8:00pm as they celebrate Yiddish culture at this time of year when candles and family warm the dark nights. As outspoken human rights advocates, their Hanukkah celebration embraces audiences of all cultures and backgrounds as they explore Hanukkah lyrics by Woody Guthrie, father of American Folk Music.

Since their emergence more than 30 years ago, The Klezmatics have raised the bar for Eastern European Jewish music, made aesthetically, politically and musically interesting recordings, inspired future generations, created a large body of work that is enduring, and helped to change the face of contemporary Yiddish culture. Often called a “Jewish roots band,” The Klezmatics have led a popular revival of this age-old, nearly forgotten art form.

Today, with three original members—Lorin Sklamberg (lead vocals, accordion, guitar, piano), Frank London (trumpet, keyboards, vocals) and Paul Morrisett (bass, *tsimbl*, vocals)—still on board, alongside longtime members Matt Darriau (*kaval*, clarinet, saxophone, vocals) and Lisa Gutkin (violin, vocals), The Klezmatics are without a doubt the most successful proponents of klezmer music in the world.

The Klezmatics’ music is rooted in but is not a strictly traditional variety of the klezmer genre. Rather it is a comfortable hybrid that appeals equally to those with no previous exposure to the music and those already familiar with it.

“Klezmer,” says London, “is the unique sound of East European Jewishness. It has the power to evoke a feeling of other-worldliness, of being there and then, of nostalgia for a time and place that we never knew.”

About *Happy Joyous Hanukkah*

In 1942, Woody Guthrie moved to Brooklyn and soon, through his mother-in-law (the renowned Yiddish poet Aliza Greenblatt), he became involved with the Coney Island Jewish Community. He wrote songs about Hanukkah, about Jewish history and about spiritual life.

After his death in 1967, these songs sat forgotten in archives. “Lost” for almost 30 years, Guthrie’s “Jewish” lyrics were discovered in 1998 by Woody’s daughter, Nora Guthrie. She was so inspired by what she found, she asked the Klezmatics to write new music for Woody’s words.

Woody Guthrie’s Happy Joyous Hanukkah is one of two Klezmatics release based on this amazing material (the other, *Wonder Wheel: Lyrics by Woody Guthrie*, won the band a 2006 Grammy Award for Best World Music Album). Deftly intermingling Klezmer with American folk and bluegrass, *Woody Guthrie’s Happy Joyous Hanukkah* is destined to become a holiday classic for generations to come.

This collection of Guthrie's songs, including "Hanuka's Flame", "Hanuka Gelt", "Honeyky Hanuka" and others, is among the best of the dust bowl balladeer's work, and the Klezmatics playful renditions cast a new light on the Hanukkah tradition.

Tickets for *Happy Joyous Hanukkah*, which start at \$33, can be purchased by calling 818.677.3000 or visiting www.valleyperformingartscenter.org.

More About The Klezmatics

They have performed in more than 20 countries and released 11 albums to date—most recently the album *Apikorsim (Heretics)*, produced by Danny Blume (who helped the band win a Grammy in 2006) and the first of the band's albums to feature only the 6 members. On their Grammy-winning 2006 album *Wonder Wheel*, the Klezmatics set a dozen previously unsung Woody Guthrie lyrics to music, widening their stylistic base by largely diverging from klezmer. They have also recently served as the subject of a feature-length documentary film, *The Klezmatics: On Holy Ground*.

During their third-of-a-century existence the Klezmatics have collaborated with such brilliant artists as violinist Itzhak Perlman, Pulitzer prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner and Israeli vocal icon Chava Alberstein, plus many other prominent artists working within multiple genres.

Although tradition is at the core of what they do, since the beginning the Klezmatics have adapted to the artistic sensibilities of a contemporary world. "Klezmer has everything you want, ethnically, and yet it's so intertwined with American culture," says Morrisett. "We want to make sure that we are part of a living tradition, and living traditions change; they don't stay in a pickled form."

Indeed, the Klezmatics are very much of the modern world. Says London, "By putting forth a consistent and coherent political and aesthetic Yiddish/klezmer music that embraces our political values—supporting gay rights, workers' rights, human rights, universal religious and spiritual values expressed through particular art forms—and eschewing the aspects of Yiddish/Jewish culture that are nostalgic, tacky, kitschy, nationalistic and misogynistic, we have shown a way for people to embrace Yiddish culture on their own terms as a living, breathing part of our world and its political and aesthetic landscape."

"People are quite detached from their Jewish roots," says Gutkin. "The Klezmatics fill an incredible void." Formed in New York in 1986, the Klezmatics quickly built a devoted following that expanded outward once word spread about this exotic new band that was bringing klezmer back from the abyss. For some fans, the group's appeal went beyond the music itself. "People have a need for something to hold onto," says Gutkin. "They want to be part of something."

Throughout the years a wide range of lyrical ideas has inhabited the Klezmatics' songs, ranging from contemporary issues of global import facing each of us to matters of intimate love, and from leftist politics to age-old Jewish mysticism. "From early on," says Sklamberg, "even before we made a conscious effort to make the music our own, we decided that if we sang songs, they would be ones we believed in."

Live at Town Hall captures the group's March 5, 2006 20th anniversary concert at the New York venue. Recorded in conjunction with the *On Holy Ground* documentary, the set features a cross-section of music from throughout the Klezmatics' history, and includes a lengthy list of special guests, among them previous members David Krakauer and Margot Leverett, who had never recorded with the band until this gig. The repertoire draws from the group's earliest days and material as recent as the Guthrie adaptations.

Says London, "We wanted to celebrate being together for so many years with everyone who has been part of our family."

Indeed, the Klezmatics have always been as much about community as music. Says Sklamberg, "The energy and support we received from the local community fueled the band, rather than it being a particular sensibility. At the very least it allowed us the freedom to be us."

Thirty years after their formation, the Klezmatiks remain committed to their music and to the close relationship they share with their fans. “In 1986,” says Sklamberg, “I never imagined that preserving, disseminating and helping to redefine Yiddish music would become my life’s work. “I certainly don’t think we sound like anyone else.”

Indeed, they don’t. Never have and—should the Klezmatiks (hopefully) last another 30 years—it’s a safe guess that no one else ever will!

About Valley Performing Arts Center (The Soraya)

The Soraya opened its 2017-2018 season on September 16 with a performance of *AMADEUS Live* (Milos Foreman’s 1984 Academy Award-winning Best Picture with live orchestra) with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and members of the LA Opera Chorus. The evening honored the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Foundation in recognition of the family’s recent \$17 million gift that will rename VPAC as the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Performing Arts Center, known as The Soraya. The gift is one of the largest in the history of the California State University and the system’s largest single gift to support the arts; gift to support the programming and operations of the award-winning Valley Performing Arts Center – which has become one of the cultural jewels of the region in the six years since it opened.

The 2017-18 Soraya season signals a new era for the premier event venue. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thor Steingraber, the renamed Younes and Soraya Nazarian Performing Arts Center expands its programming and outstanding multidisciplinary performances. The mission of The Soraya is to present a wide variety of performances that not only includes new and original work from the Los Angeles region but also work from around the world that appeal to all of LA’s rich and diverse communities. Located on the campus of California State University, Northridge, The Soraya’s season offers a vibrant performance program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family and international events that will serve to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley, and further establish itself as one of the top arts companies in Southern California. The award-winning, 1,700-seat theatre was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and was recently cited by the Los Angeles Times as “a growing hub for live music, dance, drama and other cultural events.”

Calendar Listing for The Klezmatiks *Happy Joyous Hanukkah*

Date: Saturday, December 16 at 8:00pm

Venue: Valley Performing Arts Center (The Soraya)
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

Tickets: **Prices:** Starting at \$33. Prices subject to change.

By Phone: (818) 677-3000

Online: ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org

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