

Sunday, December 5, 2010, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Pomegranates & Figs A Feast of Jewish Music

PROGRAM

Teslim

Kaila Flexer *violin, tarhui*
Gari Hegedus *oud, mandocello, divan saz, violin, frame drum*

Special Guests of Teslim

Shira Kammen *violin, viola*
Julian Smedley *violin*
Susu Pampanin *frame drum, riqq, doumbek*
Caleb O'Reilly *vocals, cello*

Sqwonk

Jeff Anderle *bass clarinet*
Jonathan Russell *bass clarinet*

INTERMISSION

North End Klezmer Project

Ben Mink *guitar, violin, mandolin*
Daniel Koulack *double bass, guitar, banjo*
Nicolai Prisacar *accordion*
Myron Schultz *clarinet*
Victor Schultz *violin*

Finale

All of the above!

Credits

Paul Knight *House Sound Engineer*
Kaila Flexer *Artistic Director*
Catherine Rose Crowther & Sara Glaser *Pomegranates & Figs Logo Design*

Cal Performances' 2010–2011 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.



WELCOME TO POMEGRANATES & FIGS!

We hope that you are enjoying the holiday season. Our children are growing up, technology won't leave us alone. As our lives speed up, sometimes to a blur, it's nice to spend an evening enjoying live music together.

Whether you've been following us from the days of *Klezmer Mania!* or are joining us for the first time, we are honored that you chose to spend tonight with us.

Five years ago, Gari Hegedus and I formed the duo Teslim. Since then, we have recorded, performed and written much music together. We're thrilled to be joined tonight by a number of special guests. When Teslim performs with these talented friends, people have dubbed this larger ensemble Teslim Extreme!

As many of you know, I have been programming Jewish music in the Bay Area for a long time, and nothing pleases me more than to bring together inspired performers.

Tonight, we include two wonderful groups. Sqwonk is a duo of bass clarinets (what an instrument!). They are young, gifted, curious, quirky and open-minded musicians.

The North End Klezmer Project is a new group from Winnipeg formed by the founders of Finjan, who performed for *Klezmer Mania!* on this very stage several years ago. This is a fantastic new ensemble that has just released a debut CD. Their sound is fresh and yet familiar. We are thrilled to have them here.

During intermission, go! Have a *nosh* (snack) in the mezzanine. *Kibbitz* (visit) with your friends a little. And then join us for the second half.

We're so glad you came.

Happy Hanukah! *Fargin zikh* (enjoy)!

Kaila Flexer

Special thanks to Lucy Flexer-Marshall and Abe and Bobbie Flexer.

Rugs on loan from Claremont Rug Company's Claremont II: Outstanding original vintage and antique art carpets for the home.

Kaila Flexer photo by Cambria Lowe.

A Feast of Jewish Music

TODAY, THE THORNY QUESTION of what makes music “Jewish” is often avoided (and feared) by scholars, musicologists and cultural historians alike, but it does occasionally spark heated discussions on email lists and gathers the attention of bloggers worldwide. It is indeed a question with a thousand possible answers, and one that generates additional questions, which in turn end up blending and overlapping with one another. Invariably, the answers fail to consider the world of sounds, and instead raise issues concerning the many Jewish identities and cultures that surround us.

However, it was not so in the past, when European scholars—Christian and Jewish—shaped the modern notion of Jewish music, and in a way almost invented it. The first interest in the musical world of the Jews—and especially in what Jews sang in their place of worship, the synagogue—arose since the 16th century among Christian humanists, to whom we owe the very notion of *musica hebraeorum* (in Latin, “music of the Hebrews”). These scholars, who immediately understood that the music of the Jews had long been transmitted by way of oral tradition, hoped to find within Jewish liturgy the traces of Hebraic antiquity, and thus the roots of Christianity itself. Instead, what they found was a universe of diverse sounds (a “world music” of a sort) generated by the fact that Jews had lived in Diaspora for many centuries. In the fourth volume of his *Bibliotheca Magna Rabbinnica* (Rome, 1693), Father Giulio Bartolucci listed three different ways in which the Jews of his times chanted the Torah (the Hebrew Bible), and provided musical transcriptions according to the “German,” “Spanish” and “Italian” traditions, *de facto* stating the cultural differences between Jews who originated from ancient Palestine and those who lived in Central Europe (also known as Ashkenazi Jews) or who descended from the Iberian Jews who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal after 1492 (Sephardic Jews). Other Christian researchers followed in this path, and by the 19th century, when Jewish scholars also became interested in the topic, it was very clear that there was no such

thing as one “Jewish music” that characterized all Jews living in the far-flung corners of the Earth, and that Jews sang and played a host of musical traditions, almost all transmitted orally, which shared their traits more with the host non-Jewish cultures than among themselves. This diversity preoccupied Jewish intellectuals, whom in the midst of the Romantic and nationalistic fervors of 19th-century Europe were instead trying to prove, once and for all, the unity and distinctiveness (and thus the intrinsic value) of Judaism. The study of Jewish music by Jews themselves was therefore initially aimed at creating a place for Jewish musical culture, and not just for its supposedly ancient Hebraic construct, within the canons of Western cultural history. This preoccupation, and especially the rise of Zionism, led to a progressive focus on the diversity of the oral tradition and on the importance of non-European Jewish cultures.

In 1907, when Abraham Zvi Idelsohn (1882–1938), the founder of modern Jewish musicological research, moved to Palestine, he was confronted with an overwhelming variety of Jewish oral traditions, which included liturgical music, folksongs and instrumental practice by Jews originating from Eastern, Central and Southern Europe, the Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula and Central Asia. Already, then, the Eurocentric dichotomy between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish musical worlds was proving insufficient: Arab music, its modes (or *maqamat*) and aesthetic sensibilities were equally essential to Jewish musical history and required a whole new consideration. Throughout the 20th century, Idelsohn's quest for the unifying traits in this panoply of sounds has morphed into a research field that combines musicology, ethnography and anthropology, and that examines the variables of musical production in the context of the cultures of the Jews in the global Diaspora.

While the notion of “Jewish music” is clearly a scholarly construct, the place of sounds and of musical practice within Jewish life is a fascinating reality that presents itself in many different guises. Since at least the beginning of the 20th century, Jewish music has existed in two parallel

arenas. On the one hand, it continues to be produced (and consumed) within the specific context of communal Jewish life, and thus as part of synagogue liturgy and life-cycle events, throughout the globe. The Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel have had a great impact on Jewish musical traditions. The destruction of countless European communities forever changed the soundscape of Europe, and the relocation of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from North Africa and the Middle East equally changed the soundscape of the Islamic world. Reconstructed Jewish traditions were subsequently recreated in Israel and the United States, where new musical expressions, including secular musical cultures, have progressively been shaped.

On the other hand, Jewish musical traditions have been the constant object of study and reinterpretation by Jewish performers and composers, primarily since the diffusion of commercial sound recordings. Artistic involvement has traditionally focused on Ashkenazi (i.e., East European) traditions, but also, and possibly for a longer time, on Sephardic (i.e., “Iberian” and/or “Mediterranean”) music. Early attempts to present the liturgical music of the Sephardic Jews on stage date back to late 19th-century Italy, while the Jewish Folk Music Society, active in St. Petersburg between 1908 and 1918, focused on the *klezmer* (instrumental) music, and the Hassidic and Yiddish song of the Ashkenazi Jews. The fact that traditional Jewish music, performed by professionally trained musicians, has been prominently featured by the recording industry has in turn influenced the practice within communal life, and traditional performers have increasingly attempted to sound more “like a recording” by adopting the repertoires popularized by their artistic counterparts. A symptomatic by-product of the confluence between “tradition” and “art” is the flourishing, in Israel first and then in the United States, of a new musical genre—labeled *musiqah mizrachit* (in Hebrew, “Oriental music”) in Israel and “Mizrahi music” in the United States—which includes Arab (and thus, “Oriental”) modes, pop and rock arrangements, hints of a “world music” aesthetics, and lyrics

that combine religious references and liturgical Hebrew with nods to the international canons of the “love song” repertoire.

The Jewish musical genres that have been the center of artistic and cultural revivals are klezmer music and Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish (or Ladino) song. These genres are all prominently featured in tonight’s program through the interpretations of outstanding performers. While music from their repertoires is sometimes presented together, often on the grounds of their shared “Jewishness,” they belong to very different soundscapes and social contexts.

Klezmer music is the instrumental repertoire of the Jewish professional instrumentalists (*klezmerim* or, in Yiddish, “vessels/tools of song”) of Eastern Europe, who traditionally accompanied Jewish weddings and other festive occasions, and also earned a living by playing at the weddings of their non-Jewish neighbors. The *klezmerim* had to be fluent in a variety of musical styles in order to please their highly multi-ethnic patrons, and their musical repertoires incorporated elements from Bulgarian, Rumanian, Hungarian, Polish and Ukrainian music, synagogue influences and globalized styles like the polka. Upon the mass immigration of Eastern European Jews to the Americas, the *klezmerim* adapted to the changing taste of their Jewish audience and incorporated elements of swing and jazz into their sounds, until their music became unappealing to the new generations of American Jews.

Since the early 1970s, the music of the *klezmerim* became the object of a new revival launched by musicians in Israel (Giora Feidman), New York City (Walter Zev Feldman and Andy Statman) and the San Francisco Bay Area (The Klezmerim). These early revivalists became the source for a small “army” of followers, and their music has become a new “primary source.” By the 1980s, klezmer music became a mass phenomenon within the World Music market, and it progressively incorporated Yiddish songs. Songs in Yiddish, which were not traditionally sung or accompanied by *klezmerim*, had been created in traditional Jewish contexts (bridging secular and

religious themes) like other folksong repertoires in Jewish languages throughout the Diaspora, including Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish. Beginning with the 19th century, however, Yiddish songs started to be written by Jewish poets and composers both as theater songs—in the growing arena of Yiddish theater—and as art songs, and to involve a virtually endless variety of musical styles, ranging from synagogue modes to tango, from Russian folk themes to jazz. The revival of *klezmer* music has bridged the distance between these two genres, and today Yiddish songs (with all their aesthetic implications) are often considered an integral part its repertoire. Similarly, the genesis of Judeo-Spanish songs is the result of many layers of music and text. Their lyrics are in Judeo-Spanish, a language developed by the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula following the edict of 1492, promulgated by the Kings of Spain. Some of these lyrics originate directly from medieval Spanish literary models, and include detailed references to Spanish historical events. Others were instead created later, as part of the oral tradition of the Sephardic Jews living in the Ottoman Empire, where they found a new home after their expulsion. Their music varies greatly, as it was created in the Balkans, in Greece, Turkey and Morocco, and it is often based on the Arab *maqam* system. Traditionally performed by women with minimal instrumental accompaniment, that of Judeo-Spanish song is, however, a relatively recent musical repertoire (traceable to the late 19th century), which bears traces of the melodies popularized by the global recording industry, and thus includes tangos and references to opera. The staged versions of these songs frequently include arrangements based on the canons of medieval, early and Mediterranean music, in an attempt to bring Judeo-Spanish songs back to an ancient, and often idealized, past.

Francesco Spagnolo

Francesco Spagnolo, Ph.D., holds degrees in philosophy and music from the University of Milan and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Teslim (*tes-leem*), meaning both “commit” and “surrender” in Turkish, features violinist Kaila Flexer, a descendant of Polish klezmer musicians, and Gari Hegedus on (mostly plucked) strings, including *oud*, Turkish *saz* and mandocello. Formed in 2005, this potent duo performs original and Sephardic music as well as traditional and contemporary music from Greece and Turkey. As composers, their original work reflects their deep respect for traditional music. Teslim released its debut (self-titled) CD in 2008. Visit www.kailaflexer.com/teslim.htm.

Kaila Flexer (*violin, tarhui, Artistic Director of Pomegranates & Figs*) is a violinist, composer and music educator. She founded *Klezmer Mania!*, a much-loved annual Bay Area Jewish music event presented for more than ten years (1989–2002). In addition to her work with Teslim, she has been at the helm of bands such as Third Ear, Next Village and Kaila Flexer’s Fieldharmonik and has performed with Club Foot Orchestra, Kitka Women’s Vocal Ensemble and Persian singer Hamed Nikpay. As a music educator, Ms. Flexer works with both adults and children. She has a thriving educational practice in her Oakland studio, where she teaches violin, composition and improvisation. She holds workshops on Balkan and klezmer music, improvisation and playing by ear around the country. One of her passions is encouraging classical musicians to explore folk music and improvisation. She is the creator of The Music Deck, a teaching tool to help people learn to read music while having fun playing familiar games like Go Fish and Crazy Eights. Ms. Flexer’s 11-year-old daughter, Lucy, keeps her in line and gives her (often unsolicited but incisive) fashion advice on a regular basis. For more information, visit www.kailaflexer.com.

Gari Hegedus (*oud, divan saz, mandocello, violin, frame drum*) plays both bowed and plucked strings, including violin and viola, and a variety of instruments from Greece and Turkey, including *lauoto, oud, saz* and hand drums. In addition to performing with Teslim, he works with many groups, including Stellamara, The Helladelics and Janam. Mr. Hegedus travels frequently to Greece and Turkey to study and to collect instruments and for inspiration. He has studied with *oud* master Naseer Shamma and has recorded and performed with Ross Daly. Mr. Hegedus had been playing fiddle and plucked stringed instruments for 15 years when he found out that his last name, Hegedus, means “fiddler” in Hungarian. For more information, visit www.garihegedus.com.



Not only is **Julian Smedley** (*violin*) a wonderful jazz violinist, arranger, producer and sound engineer, he is a *mensch* (Yiddish for a really nice guy). Originally from England, where he co-founded the Bowles Brothers Band, he emigrated to the United States in 1979.

Mr. Smedley lives in Berkeley, where he has performed and recorded with many groups, including Kaila Flexer’s Third Ear, Clubfoot Orchestra, Dan Hicks, Paul Horn, Jim Kweskin, Mike Wollenberg, the Hot Club of San Francisco, Duo Gadjó and Café Americain, and with his singer-guitarist wife, Alison Odell. Recent projects include the “Some Enchanted Evening” performance with the Residents and the orchestration of a klezmer tune, “Little Gouda,” for the San Francisco Symphony.



Multi-instrumentalist and vocalist **Shira Kammen** (*violin, viola*) is one of the leading early music performers in the world. This is not hyperbole. Not only that, she is one of the most energetic people you will ever meet. Her enthusiasm for music and for life is positively

contagious. She has played with Ensemble Alcatraz, Project Ars Nova, Medieval Strings, The King’s Noyse, harpist-storyteller Patrick Ball, Kitka and the California Revels, and she is the founder of Class V Music, an ensemble dedicated to performing on river-rafting trips. The strangest place Ms. Kammen has played is in the elephant pit of the Jerusalem Zoo. For more information, visit www.shirakammen.com.



Susu Pampanin (*frame drum, riqq, doumbek*) was raised listening to music of the Middle East as a daughter of local belly dancer Amina. She began her studies of

Middle Eastern rhythms at age 12. She has recorded and performed with many groups, including Wild Mango, Light Rain, Keith Terry and Crosspulse, Stella Mara and the Vince Delgado Quintet. She has released two of her own recordings, *Susu and the Cairo Cats* (Dancing Drums) and *Susu Pampanin: Hands of Time*, as well as an instructional DVD with Zeina Zahesha. For the last five years, she has been on the faculty at Women Drummer International’s “Born to Drum” (Women’s Summer Drum Camp). She performs at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival and was a featured artist in 2010 at the Percussion Arts Festival in San Francisco. Ms. Pampanin currently teaches at Zambaleta School of Music in San Francisco. She just returned from her third trip to Guatemala, where she taught workshops, accompanied dance classes, and performed with Troupe Joweh R.A.W.



The San Francisco-based bass clarinet duo **Sqwonk** (Jeff Anderle and Jon Russell) is a dynamic and adventurous ensemble devoted to exploring the full expressive range of the bass clarinet, from

deep resonances to raucous wails. Though grounded in the classical tradition, Sqwonk plays music that draws on a wide range of influences, from klezmer to heavy metal to blues to minimalism to free improvisation, creating a repertoire that is strikingly contemporary, yet broadly accessible to a wide audience. For more information, visit www.sqwonk.com.

An exponent of contemporary classical music, **Jeff Anderle** (*bass clarinet*) performs with the bi-coastal ensemble Redshift and the bass clarinet quartet Edmund Welles, as well as Sqwonk. In addition, he performs regularly with other cutting-edge groups in the Bay Area, including the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Magik*Magik Orchestra, the Paul Drescher Ensemble and the Del Sol String Quartet. Mr. Anderle is a co-founder of Switchboard Music, an organization dedicated to supporting music that fuses different genres and styles of music through its annual marathon concert and other activities. He also works for Clark Fobes, making clarinet and saxophone equipment, and is a Reiki master.

Composer and clarinetist **Jonathan Russell** (*bass clarinet*) is active in a wide variety of music, from classical to experimental to klezmer to church music. He has received commissions from the San Francisco Symphony, Emyrean Ensemble, ADORNO Ensemble, Woodstock Chamber Orchestra, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Imani Winds, and has collaborated with choreographers Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton. In addition to his work with Sqwonk, he is a member of the Edmund Welles bass clarinet ensemble and co-director of the Switchboard Music Festival. Mr. Russell holds a B.A. in music from Harvard University and an M.M. in music composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He is currently a student in the Ph.D. program in composition at Princeton University.



Caleb O'Reilly (*vocals, cello*) is a 14-year-old freshman at the College Preparatory School in Oakland. He discovered that he loved singing Jewish music at his Bar Mitzvah and has had the honor of chanting Torah at Kehilla Community

Synagogue's High Holy Day Services since then. Mr. O'Reilly has also studied cello for six years and currently plays in the Young People's Symphony Orchestra. He is the lead singer in a rock band, The Uncomfortables, in which he also plays electric cello and drums. When he's not playing music, he enjoys spending time with his twin sister, Mia, playing computer games with his friends, reading fantasy fiction, snowboarding and taking his puppy, Zoe, to the beach.



Born out of the North End of Winnipeg, Alberta, the **North End Klezmer Project** (NEKP) presents an original spin on the klezmer tradition. Daniel Koulack, Victor Schultz and Myron Schultz—members of the seminal Canadian klezmer band, Finjan—created NEKP along with veteran musician, producer and klezmer aficionado Ben Mink and the extraordinary accordionist Nicolai Prisacar. The five perform a combination of original material influenced by both traditional and contemporary styles, and traditional material set with contemporary arrangements. The combination is an invigorating blend of old and new that respects the Eastern European roots of the music. Signed to Rounder Records, NEKP released its debut CD in December 2009.

Born in New York City and raised in Winnipeg, multi-instrumentalist **Daniel Koulack** (*double bass, guitar, banjo*) made his first appearance at the Winnipeg Folk Festival as a banjo *wunderkind* at age 13. Since then, he has been an unstoppable musical force. As a bass player, Mr. Koulack has worked with a variety of jazz ensembles, played for many theatrical productions, and recorded extensively. He became the guitarist with Finjan in 1984 and toured and recorded four albums with the group over the next 20 years. He has been a member of From Both Ends of the Earth with Marylyn Lerner and David Wall and recorded and toured with Ted Longbottom. He recorded *Camptown* by Sid Robinovitch with the Winnipeg Symphony. As a banjo player and composer, he has led his own band, the Knappen Street All-Star Band, which was nominated for two Juno Awards.

Vancouver-based multi-instrumentalist **Ben Mink** (*guitar, violin, mandolin*) is highly regarded for his work on both sides of the recording studio. As a musician, his work covers the spectrum from string band to FM to Rush to k. d. lang, Ann Wilson and Feist. His production and writing credits are equally diverse and notable: as a multi-Grammy and Juno winner, he is one of the leading creators of music in Canada. Among his many career highlights, one of his songs, "Turn Me Round," was featured in the closing ceremonies at the 1986 Winter Olympics in Calgary, and in 1993 and 1994 he won Grammy and Juno awards for the song "Constant Craving" (on k. d. lang's recording, *Ingenue*), which he co-wrote and produced. Mr. Mink enjoys exploring his own musical roots, including production work for Finjan, the Klezmatics and Chava Alberstein and performing with NEKP.

Nicolai Prisacar (*accordion*) was born and raised in Moldova, where received his master of arts degree in music and music education at the National Cultural Education College and the Moldavian National Conservatory. Mr. Prisacar worked as a musician and conductor of the National Academic Dance Company Zhok from 1966 to 1985. He emigrated to the United States in 1995 and currently resides in Northern California. His recent

performing credits include the California Wind Orchestra, Ciocarlia, Next Village, Kaila Flexer's Fieldharmonik and Third Ear. He serves as a rehearsal accompanist for the Sacramento Ballet.

Myron Schultz (*clarinet*) was at the forefront of the klezmer revival in North America, first as leader of his own trio in Winnipeg and then as a founder of the pioneering klezmer band, Finjan. He has performed with numerous chamber ensembles, premiered many works by Canadian composers, and worked with the Winnipeg Symphony and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet orchestras. Mr. Schultz has recorded and performed with many pop and jazz artists, notably k. d. lang, Chava Alberstein and Michal Cohen. As a composer and arranger, he created and produced music for the Guy Maddin film, *Saddest Music in the World* and conducted the Melting Pot Orchestra in a live CBC broadcast of music from the movie.

An active freelancer in New York City, **Victor Schultz** (*violin*) performs everything from Classical to Broadway. He has played with several chamber groups and orchestras, including the Little Orchestra Society, Riverside Symphony and Da Capo Chamber Players. He has recorded and performed with such pop and jazz artists as k. d. lang and Jenny Scheinman. Born in Winnipeg, Mr. Schultz has commissioned and recorded numerous works by Canadian composers and is a founding member of the klezmer band Finjan, which toured throughout North America in the 1980s and 1990s and was recently featured in the Guy Maddin film, *Saddest Music in the World*.