

**GYPSY CROSSINGS, FEATURING GUITAR VIRTUOSO BIRÉLI LAGRÈNE AND THE
INCOMPARABLE ROMA BAND TARAF DE HAÏDOUKS, TRAVEL TO
CAL PERFORMANCES, SUNDAY, MAY 8 AT 7:00 P.M.**

BERKELEY, March 28, 2005 – *Gypsy Crossings*, an evening of Gypsy (or Roma) music featuring French guitar master **Biréli Lagrène** and Romanian Gypsy band **Taraf de Haïdouks**, comes to Zellerbach Hall on **Sunday, May 8 at 7:00 p.m.** presented by Cal Performances. Mr. Lagrène will perform original material as well as compositions by famed Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt. Taraf de Haïdouks, whose name means “band of brigands,” both a nod to, and a comment on, the stereotypical view of Gypsies, will perform Gypsy-influenced Romanian folk songs. The multi-generational, 12 *lautari* (traditional musicians) play guitars, violins, the cimbalom (a cross between a hammer dulcimer and a piano), accordions, and other instruments. Both Mr. Lagrène and Taraf de Haïdouks represent the epitome of Roma music today; under the banner of *Gypsy Crossings*, this is their first tour together.

BIRÉLI LAGRÈNE

Guitarist **Biréli Lagrène** is one of the world’s greatest Gypsy guitarists and an influential figure in jazz guitar. His style combines lightning speed, remarkable precision and virtuoso musicality in a style described as “wizardry” (*Global Rhythm*), “dazzling” (*JazzTimes*) and “seamless” (*Down Beat*). Guitar players and aficionados study Mr. Lagrène’s playing to decipher his technique; *Acoustic Guitar* magazine wrote, “As he plays, he effortlessly mixes alternate picking with tricky changes in pick direction, tossing in sweep picking or cross-picked passages so quickly and casually that at times it seems his right hand is out of sync with the music he’s playing.”

In 1980 at the age of 14, Mr. Lagrène appeared on the international music scene with *Routes to Django*, his live album of music by famed Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt, who died in 1953. A Sinti Gypsy from the Alsace region of France, Mr. Lagrène, started playing guitar at age 4 and had spent years listening to Reinhardt’s recordings. *Routes to Django* proved that he

had mastered, note for note, Django Reinhardt's breathtakingly fast and ultra-precise guitar solos. (Reinhardt was from the Manouche Gypsy tribe in Belgium.)

In his teens, Mr. Lagrène toured the world playing Reinhardt's music and produced several more Reinhardt tribute albums. He often played with Reinhardt's friend and frequent collaborator, violinist Stéphane Grappelli, who had helped Reinhardt create the genre of Gypsy jazz in Paris' legendary Hot Club of France in the 1930s. In 1985, Mr. Lagrène abruptly changed musical course. He set aside the acoustic guitar that had made him famous, took up the electric guitar, and played rock-flavored fusion jazz. The release of the album *Stuttgart Aria* with former Weather Report bassist Jaco Pastorius in 1986 established him as a guitar stylist independent of his work as a Reinhardt interpreter. *Acoustic Guitar* magazine wrote, "Lagrène forged a brilliant electric guitar style that merged the speed and daring of his mentor with the altered chords and jagged distortion that defined the style in the 1980s and 90s."

Mr. Lagrène returned to Gypsy music in 2000 on Didier Lockwood's album, *A Tribute to Stéphane Grappelli* who died in 1997. In 2002, Mr. Lagrène recorded two albums, *Gypsy Project* and *Gipsy [sic] Project and Friends*. *Jazz Times* said of the latter album that Mr. Lagrène "raises the roof with commanding technique that includes blistering tremolos, blinding runs and an imposing cadre of other devices." Mr. Lagrène told *Acoustic Guitar* magazine that "People now look at my personality and my guitar playing as a tribute to Django Reinhardt and not a re-creation like it was before," and defined his current music as "play[ing] around in that style."

TARAF DE HAÏDOUKS

The band **Taraf de Haïdouks** played exclusively in their home country of Romania until 1991. They were discovered in 1990 by Stephanie Karo and Michel Winter, Belgian travelers who, upon hearing the band, arranged concerts in Belgium and introduced the band to Crammed Discs which released their first recording. Since then, the group has toured extensively, including several trips to the United States. The band members ranging in age from early 20s to late 70s, all of whom come from the village of Clejani southwest of Bucharest, Romania. Between international tours, band members return to their village and their traditional lifestyle.

The music of Taraf de Haïdouks has been called “The ultimate in Eastern European roots music,” by the *Boston Globe*. The playing is, simultaneously, both joyfully spontaneous and precisely constructed; as the *Guardian* (UK) wrote, “... improvisation is tightly rationed as embroidery rather than extemporization, and the structures revolve with the regularity of the solar system.” Taraf de Haïdouks’ music acknowledges its traditional roots, even as the band receives rock-star treatment. The *Metro Times* of Detroit says that “... the group continually rescues tradition so that the rest of the world can listen and remember.”

Since 1996 the band has recorded several albums for the Cramworld label and issued a compilation disc through Nonesuch Records. Its most recent CD, a concert recording entitled *Band of Gypsies*, was an Amazon.com Best of 2001 selection; according to Amazon.com, “the playing is incendiary, accelerating almost to the speed of light, while the songs have their trademark, mournful gypsy quality.” Taraf de Haïdouks provided music for the soundtrack of the 2000 film, *The Man Who Cried*, written and directed by Sally Potter and starring Cate Blanchett and Johnny Depp. (The band has since performed at Mr. Depp’s notorious Los Angeles nightclub, The Viper Room.) The band also appeared in the acclaimed 1993 film *Latcho Drom* (Safe Journey) by French film director Tony Gatlif.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *Gypsy Crossings* on **Sunday, May 8 at 7:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$22.00, \$30.00, and \$42.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Sunday, May 8 at 7:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

World Stage

Gypsy Crossings

Biréli Lagrène, guitar

Taraf de Haïdouks

Program:

An evening of Roma music featuring Biréli Lagrène performing original music and compositions by Django Reinhardt, with Gypsy band Taraf de Haïdouks performing traditional Romanian folk songs.

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