CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY
SPECIAL PRESENTATION

MAKING SACRED ALL THE WHISPERS OF THE WORLD

A PERFORMANCE OF JEWISH CABARET MUSIC
BY THE NEW BUDAPEST ORPHEUM SOCIETY
Thursday • March 29, 2018
5:00pm • Stage 5
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts
500 S. Goodwin, Urbana
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The performance is part of the Krannert Uncorked series

Reception to follow at the Bread Company,
706 S. Goodwin, Urbana

The eight-member New Budapest Orpheum Society re-sounds the songs of struggle, survival, and sacrifice from the tragic history of twentieth-century Jewish modernity. Repertories unearthed from concentration camps and the ghettos of World War II, set in counterpoint to the popular and political songs from cabaret stage and Jewish cinema, together commemorate and celebrate one of the most powerful moments of modern music history. Echoes from worlds lost to the Holocaust resonate with new life in these new arrangements. The sonic legacies of lives lost are realized with the extraordinary power and beauty of Jewish cabaret. During the course of the evening audiences will journey through the Yiddish songs created by Mordechai Gebirtig for the Cracow Ghetto and bear witness to the message of songs from the Golden Age of Yiddish film. Milestones of metaphor and allegory give meaning to a historical path that passes through cities as disparate as Carpathian shtetls and the cosmopolitan cities of the Duchess of Chicago. Repertories gathered through the research of the ensemble members—works by Viktor Ullmann and Leo Strauss from the concentration camp at Theresienstadt/Terezín, Hebrew songs circulating on postcards between Berlin and Jerusalem and composers such as Kurt Weill and Stephan Wolpe, newly-composed Russian songs by Ilya Levinson—will be experienced in all their staggering beauty. Members of the NBOS pay homage to the past, present, and future, seeking the sacred within the whispers still audible for us in the twenty-first century when we listen.

A lecture by Artistic Director Philip V. Bohlman will precede the performance at 4:00pm

“Some for Laughs, Some for Tears”—
The Cabaretesque and Jewish Music

Word and song together join in the labors of the New Budapest Orpheum Society and Phil Bohlman as they explore the cabaretesque in Jewish music. The cabaretesque is a performative moment in which cultural, religious, and aesthetic differences of modern Judaism converge upon a stage, both metaphorical and physical, mediated by music to reframe the narratives of the everyday and of history. Music becomes a vessel for the cabaretesque by opening the possibilities of transformation: Identities change as sameness is enacted through the performance of otherness; a new dramatis personae accrues to narrative and drama; the backdrop of staged worlds becomes the mirror of lived-in worlds; social relations are turned upside-down and inside-out; the borders between the serious and the comic are blurred and blinded by the footlights. In the course of his pre-concert talk, Phil Bohlman presents cabaretesque moments from thirty years of research devoted to modern Jewish music, especially the traditions that connect the German and Yiddish traditions to modern Hebrew repertories in Israel. Songs from twentieth-century stage traditions form a counterpoint with songs from the Shoah. From the cabaret stage to operetta to Jewish film music, the cabaretesque offers a leitmotiv for interpreting the crisis of Jewish modernity in the twentieth century.
I – Bereshit
. . . Nach Großwardein / . . . To Großwardein – Instrumental overture
II – Shrines of Memory
Varshe / Warsaw
    Benzion Witler
Rumania, Rumania!
    Aaron Lebedeff

III – Sacred Journey
Wir Ladies aus Amerika / We Ladies from America
    Emmerich Kálmán (from Die Herzogin von Chicago / The Duchess of Chicago, 1928)
Theresienstadt Potpourri – Aus der Familie der Sträusse / From the Strauss Family
    Leo Strauss; piano concept Ilya Levinson

IV – The Sorrows of Job
Three songs from Cracow by Mordechai Gebirtig
    Reizele / Rose
    Drei Techterlech / Three Daughters
    Blayb Gezunt Mir, Kroke / Farewell, Cracow

V – Whispers
Immer inmitten / Forever on the Way
    Viktor Ullmann and Hans Günther Adler
Berjoskele / The Little Birch (from Three Yiddish Songs / Březulinka, op. 53 [1944])
    Viktor Ullmann
Vor der Ewigkeit / Before Eternity
    Viktor Ullmann and Hans Günther Adler

VI – Terezín Transit
Kufr a já / The Suitcase and Me (from Prinz Bettliegend)
    František Kovanic and Jaroslav Ježek
Die Kuh / The Cow (from Von was leben die Leut’ / What People Live from)
    Hans Hofer and A. M. Werau
The Final Song from Prinz Bettliegend
    František Kovanic and Jaroslav Ježek

VII – The Nettlis from Prague
Die Novaks aus Prag / The Novaks from Prague
    Hermann Leopoldi and Kurt Robitschek
Composers’ Revolution in Heaven
    Hermann Leopoldi and Robert Gilbert
Ich bin ein unverbesserlicher Optimist / I Am an Irrepressible Optimist
    Hermann Leopoldi and Robert Katscher

VIII – Echoes from the East
Three Russian Songs by Ilya Levinson
    Vse my brazniki zdes’ i bludnizy / We’re All Drunkards Here
        Poem by Anna Akhmatova
    Neveyraziomya Poeza / Unbelievably Sad
        Poem by Igor Severianin
    Strashnaya istoriya / Scary Story
        Poem by Sasha Chornyi (Alexander Glikberg)

IX – Zikharon / Remembrance
Three Yiddish songs of remembrance
    Dos reydele dreyt zikh / The Wheel Spins
        Isadore Lillian
    Mayn Shvester Khaye / My Sister, Khaye
        Binem Heller and Chava Alberstein
    Partizaner Lid / Partisans Song
        Hirsh Glik

X – Shir Chadash / A New Song
Two songs from Shireh chalutzim / Songs of the Pioneers (1938)
    Ra’inu amalenu / We Beheld Our Toil
        Stephan Wolpe and Levi Ben-Amitai
    Ba’a m’nucha / There Comes Peace
        Kurt Weill and Nathan Alterman
The New Budapest Orpheum Society

The New Budapest Orpheum Society is an Ensemble-in-Residence in the Humanities Division at the University of Chicago. The self-styled Jewish cabaret was founded in 1998, and its eight members perform locally in Chicago synagogues, universities, and cultural institutions. The ensemble tours widely, performing at Symphony Space and the Café Sabarsky in New York City, the Center for Jewish History, and the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum, as well as internationally in venues such as the Jewish Museum of Berlin, European Center for Jewish Music in Hannover, and the universities of Cambridge, Leeds, and York. The ensemble draws upon a wide range of repertoires, many forgotten, others preserved in European archives, all poignantly bearing witness to the great tradition of Jewish cabaret. Its programs celebrate modern Jewish life and twentieth-century Jewish history. In 2011, Artistic Director, Philip Bohlman, and the NBOS were the recipients of the Noah Greenwood Award for Historical Performance from the American Musicalological Society, and 2016 they received a Grammy Award Nomination for “Best Classical Compendium.” The ensemble has released four CDs: Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano (Cedille Records 2002), Jewish Cabaret in Exile (Cedille Records 2009), Moments musicaux of Jewish Music (University of Chicago Press 2008), and As Dreams Fall Apart: The Golden Age of Jewish Stage and Film Music, 1925–1955 (Cedille Records 2014). During 2018, the ensemble is preparing to record a new double-CD, "When We Remembered Zion": Songs of Love, Loss, and Life from the Jewish Diaspora.

Julia Bentley, mezzo-soprano, enjoys a broad range of genres, from operatic roles of Mozart and Rossini to the dusky back rooms of cabaret in her appearances with the New Budapest Orpheum Society. She has appeared as a soloist for such conductors as Raymond Leppard, Robert Shaw, and Pierre Boulez, and has premiered more than 200 pieces, thanks to her passion for newly composed works. A regular guest with Chicago’s ensembles, she also teaches voice at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Her CD of early songs by Alban Berg, Wo der Golgarragen steht, appeared on Centaur in 2016.

Philip V. Bohlman, artistic director, is the Ludwig Rosenberger Distinguished Service Professor in Jewish History at the University of Chicago and Honoraryprofessor of the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover. He has received the British Academy’s Derek Allen Prize, the Jaap Kunst and Bruno Netti prizes from the Society for Ethnomusicology, and, most recently, the Koizumi Fumio Prize of Japan. Among his recent and forthcoming books are Wie singen wir Seinen Gesang auf dem Boden der Fremde? (2018), Song Loves the Masses (2017), and the edited volume (with Goffredo Plastino), Jazz Worlds / World Jazz (2016), which received the 2017 Ruth A. Solie Prize from the American Musicalological Society. Phil received both master’s and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Jim Cox, double bass, grew up in Chicago, Illinois, where he also attended and graduated from the University of Illinois in 1979. He has worked as a full-time professional musician since then based out of Chicago. He toured with Earl “Fatha” Hines from 1979–82. He also worked regularly with Marian McPartland for more than 200 pieces, thanks to her passion for newly composed works. A regular guest with Chicago’s ensembles, she also teaches voice at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Her CD of early songs by Alban Berg, Wo der Golgarragen steht, appeared on Centaur in 2016.

Danny Howard, percussion, is the newest member of the New Budapest Orpheum Society. With strong roots in the UK, he has built an international career that stretches across the repertoires and genres, no less than across the English Channel and the Atlantic. Having studied in Cuba and Brazil, Danny has specialized in Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Folkloric music for over a decade and now runs his own Latin band. His first passion, nonetheless, was classical music. The New Budapesters could not be more thrilled that he’s recently put down his diverse musical roots in Chicago.

Jordanka Kissiova, violin, is active as an orchestral and chamber musician throughout the Chicago area and the state of Illinois. A native of Bulgaria, she studied in Sofia at the Bulgarian National Academy of Music before immigrating to the United States in 1993. She performed widely in Europe, among others with the Sofia women’s orchestra. A string teacher with Quinan and Friends, she has played regularly in regional orchestras throughout the Midwest, among them Ars Viva. She has recorded for the Bulgarian Radio Orchestra and the New Budapest Orpheum Society.

Ilya Levinson, music director, arranger, and pianist, holds degrees in composition from the Moscow Conservatory and the University of Chicago (Ph.D. 1997). His works for chamber music and orchestra have recently enjoyed performances in France, Germany, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. His Klezmer Rhapsody is recorded by the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band on the Shanachie label. Composer-in-residence with American Music Festivals, he is Associate Professor of Music at Columbia College Chicago.

Don Stille, Chicago pianist and accordionist, has performed throughout the country with a long list of internationally acclaimed jazz artists and has opened for Herbie Hancock and Stephane Grappelli. Among his achievements are recognition as “Mainstream Jazz Pianist of the Year” by the Twin Cities Jazz Society, and house pianist and often-featured jazz artist on NPR’s “First House on the Right.” Don recently performed in five concerts on accordion with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, both at Orchestra Hall and on tour. He also was recently featured on accordion in the movies, Picture Paris and Swan Song.
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