



MUSEUM
OF JEWISH
HERITAGE

A LIVING
MEMORIAL
TO THE
HOLOCAUST

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SEPHARDIC MASTER GERARD EDERY LEADS ENSEMBLE IN A WORLD PREMIERE EVENT CELEBRATING SEPHARDIC MUSIC *at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust*

NEW YORK, NY— In the spirit of the first Jews who arrived in New Amsterdam from Brazil in 1694, the Museum invites the community to join the critically acclaimed master of Sephardic song, **Gerard Edery** and an accomplished ensemble of international musicians for the world premiere of *The Spirit of Sepharad: From Casbah to Caliphate, A 500-Year Musical Journey*. This evocative program tracing the unique migration of Sephardic music from medieval Spain, across North Africa, to the Middle East will take place on **Wednesday, June 25 at 7 p.m.** in **Edmond J. Safra Hall** at the **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**. The concert officially kicks off *The Spirit of Sepharad* world tour which will play important cultural capitals with deep-rooted connections to the Sephardic musical heritage throughout 2009 and 2010.

The soul-stirring program will feature beloved Moroccan-born singer and guitarist **Gerard Edery**; Persian master of folk and sacred music **Amir Vahab**; world-renowned percussionist **Glen Velez**; foremost Armenian oud player **Ara Dinkjian**; jazz soloist and vocalist **Meg Okura**; and flamenco dancer and actress **Barbara Martinez**. *The Spirit of Sepharad* is more than a concert. It combines music, dance, theatrical narration, illuminating projections, and film footage into a dynamic mixed-media performance that encompasses all the rich cultures that have influenced Sephardic/Mizrahi Jews.

The Spirit of Sepharad is an innovative and eclectic mixed-media performance featuring an array of musicians from multiple disciplines in songs of secular and liturgical origin spanning many centuries to the present. A unique blend of music from Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Persia, Turkey, Greece, the Balkans, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Israel will tell a rich musical story. *The Spirit of Sepharad* is a celebration of the Sephardic/Mizrahi experience that promotes the possibility of coexistence, tolerance, respect, and peace among all peoples.

Gerard Edery, creator and director of *The Spirit of Sepharad*, said, “Launching the tour at the Museum of Jewish Heritage couldn’t be more meaningful or symbolic. This beautiful spot overlooking New York Harbor and facing the Old World, to the lands where it all began, is the right place for us to embark. For the project I’ve gathered a stage-full of world-acclaimed virtuoso musicians who come from a range of traditions, religions, and cultures. The goal of this tour is to invite world-music fans to be a part of a cultural caravan, to experience the many facets of Sephardic music, and to appreciate how enjoying this diversity with people of many backgrounds can promote the cause of cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.”

Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for students/seniors and \$12 for members. Tickets may be purchased by calling the Museum box office at (646) 437-4202 or through the Museum website www.mjhnyc.org.

Please contact Sefarad Records at 212-924-3746 or music@sefaradrecords.com for information about how to bring *The Spirit of Sepharad* to your venue.

About the Performers

Interpreting the sounds, melodies and stories of Sephardic music are:

Gerard Edery (Creator/director/vocals/guitar/saz) Edery’s record label Sefarad Records produces concerts and recordings that synthesize the eclectic traditional folk styles of disparate, far-flung and often inter-related cultures from

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the Judeo-Arab, Judeo-Spanish, Middle-Eastern, Northern European, and Eastern European musical worlds. He sings in fifteen languages and speaks four fluently. In May, he will release Sefarad's 13th recording — “Two Faiths, One Voice” with Maria Krupoves. Visit www.sefaradrecords.com for details.

Amir Vahab (vocals, saz, percussion) Iranian-born, Vahab has been called the “ambassador for a silenced music” by *The New York Times*. An internationally known master of such instruments as the setar, tar, ney, and daf, he is in demand for live performances and in the recording studio. He has composed a variety of music for theater and film and has six albums to his credit as composer, singer, and player.

Ara Dinkjian (oud) Of Armenian descent, Dinkjian, who is considered one of the foremost oud players in the world, was born in the U.S. In addition to his work as an instrumentalist, he is also a composer and the founder of the quartet Night Ark, which records and tours internationally. Many of his compositions are featured on television and film soundtracks and his song “Dinata, Dinata” was performed at the closing ceremonies of the 2004 Olympics in Athens.

Glen Velez (percussion, vocals) A three-time Grammy Award-winning drummer, Velez is a master percussionist, an expert on Central Asian overtone singing, and a master teacher. He has collaborated in performance and recordings with Steve Reich, the Paul Winter Consort, Tan Dun, Israel Philharmonia, Suzanne Vega, Pat Metheny, Zakair Hussain, the NY City Ballet, and the Stuttgart Ballet Orchestra, among others. He currently teaches frame drums at Mannes School of Music and regular master classes at The Juilliard School and Manhattan School of Music.

Meg Okura (violin, erhu, vocals) A leading voice in today's chamber jazz scene, the Tokyo-born Okura directs the Pan Asian Chamber Jazz Ensemble. A soloist, composer, arranger, and vocalist, her credit has appeared on over three dozen recordings. She has toured as a soloist with Cirque du Soleil and backed Herbie Hancock, Shirley Horn, Diana Krall, and Terence Blanchard.

Barbara Martinez (dancer, vocals, palmas, actress) A noted flamenco dancer and actress, Martinez is a principal member of Atrévete Flamenco Dance Theater of New York. Among her theater credits are *Sueños* by Mabou Mines, and *Six Months to Live* at La MaMa Etc.

About the Museum

The Museum's three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Special exhibitions include: *Daring to Resist: Jewish Defiance in the Holocaust*; *Sosúa: A Refuge for Jews in the Dominican Republic*; and “To Return to the Land...” *Paul Goldman's Photographs of the Birth of Israel*. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*, as well as James Carpenter's *Reflection Passage*, Gift of The Gruss Lipper Foundation. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and is a founding member of the *Museums of Lower Manhattan*.

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