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What's a Klezmer? Find Out with The Klezmatics Feb. 22 at the Cohan Center

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA – Klezmer – an exciting, revitalized “old” sound – will explode on stage at the Performing Arts Center through the extraordinary musicianship of Grammy Award winners, THE KLEZMATICS.

Cal Poly Arts presents this world music event on Sunday, February 22, 2009 at 7 p.m. in the Cohan Center.

Upon hearing The Klezmatics in concert, actor/comedian Robin Williams declared: “If you can hear this music and not see God, you are…blind.”

The Klezmatics, featuring Lorin Sklamberg (vocal, accordion, guitar), Frank London (trumpet, keyboards), Matt Darriau (clarinets, sax, kaval), Lisa Gutkin (vocal, violin), Paul Morrissett (bass, tsiymb), and Richie Barshay on drums, erupted out of New York City’s East Village in 1986 and revitalized klezmer for the new century with music that is steeped in tradition and spirituality.

Their sound incorporates contemporary themes, such as human rights and anti-fundamentalism, with eclectic musical influences spanning Arab, African, Latin and Balkan rhythms, jazz, and punk.

During the group’s 20+ year career, they have released nine albums of wild, provocative, and ecstatically danceable music, forever re-defining and transcending traditional labels.

Klezmer music was a product of Eastern European Yiddish culture that Jewish immigrants brought to the United States in the 1880s.

The word “klezmer” comes from two Hebrew words – clay and zimmer, meaning “vessel of music or song.” The idea is that the instrument (the violin, clarinet, etc.) takes on human characteristics like laughing and crying, all with a joyous exuberance or a soulful wailing.

In addition to having topped the Billboard world music charts on many occasions, The Klezmatics have garnered numerous industry accolades, including a 2006 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary World Music Album (for Wonder Wheel: Lyrics by Woody Guthrie); a New York Jewish Music Award (Best Klezmer Band, 2006); a GLAMA (Gay and Lesbian American Music Award); and the German Critics Award (twice).

The Klezmatics have collaborated with numerous luminaries including folk hero Arlo Guthrie, classical legend Itzhak Perlman, Israeli pop icons Chava Alberstein and Ehud Banai, beat poet Allen Ginsberg, the Master Musicians of Jajouka, the Ben Folds Five, and Kosher Gospel singer Joshua Nelson.

Their work has extended to numerous theater, film, dance, and television projects, including Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner's A Dybbuk and It's an Undoing World and Pilobolus Dance Theatre's Davenen.
The Klezmatics have reached millions through performances and features on CBS's “Late Night with David Letterman,” PBS’ “Great Performances,” the BBC's “Rhythms of the World” and the “John Peel Show,” various NPR programs (“A Prairie Home Companion with Garrison Keillor,” “New Sounds Live,” and “Soundcheck”), CBS's “Nightwatch,” FOX's “After Breakfast,” “MTV News,” and HBO’s “Sex and the City.”

Their song, "NY Psycho Freylekhs," was heard regularly on Air America Radio's “The Al Franken Show.”

They have played in over 20 countries at some of the most storied venues and renowned festivals worldwide, including Central Park Summerstage, Carnegie Hall, Pirineos Sur (Spain), Colours of Ostrava (Czech Republic), Pohoda Festival (Slovakia), Jazzsomer Graz (Austria), and the Heimatklänge Festival (Germany).

Student and adult tickets for the performance range from $25 to $38 and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Center Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays.

To order by phone, call 805/756-2787; to order by fax: 805/756-6088.

24-hour on-line ordering is available at www.calpolyarts.org.

Sponsored by Jules & Brenda Hock and Mitch & Marianne Wolf, with additional support provided by KCBX 90.1 FM.

For more information on all Cal Poly Arts events, including audio and video samples, please visit www.calpolyarts.org.