

78TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | DECEMBER 1, 2019



FROM A WALL STENCIL
GRAY MAINE 1800

PROGRAM

Alicia Svigals, klezmer fiddle and voice

Uli Geissendoerfer, piano

With special guest William Schimmel, accordion

Beregovski Suite: Reimagining a Long-Lost Klezmer Archive

December 1, 2019 | 3:30 p.m.

West Building, West Garden Court

The program will be announced from the stage.



Alicia Svigals, Uli Geissendoerfer, and William Schimmel, photo by Kyle Ober

THE MUSICIANS

Alicia Svigals

Violinist, vocalist, and composer Alicia Svigals is the world's leading klezmer violinist and a founder of the Grammy-winning Klezematics, which she codirected for seventeen years. She has composed music for violinist Itzhak Perlman, the Kronos Quartet, playwright Tony Kushner, documentary filmmaker Judith Helfand, and singer/songwriters Debbie Friedman and Diane Birch, with whom she has also collaborated, as well as with the late poet Allen Ginsburg, Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, Gary Lucas, and Najma Akhtar. Svigals has appeared on *Late Night with David Letterman*, MTV, *Good Morning America*, PBS's *Great Performances*, and the soundtrack for the *L-Word*. Her klezmer roots band, Alicia Svigals' Klezmer Fiddle Express, plays at festivals around the United States and the world.

Svigals was awarded the Foundation for Jewish Culture's annual New Jewish Music Network Music Commission for her original live score to the 1918 film *The Yellow Ticket*, which she is currently touring. She has been a fellow at LABA: A Laboratory for New Jewish Culture, located at the 14th Street Y in New York. Every year LABA invites a group of artists to consider ancient texts and create works that push the boundaries of what Jewish art can be. While at LABA, Svigals composed a song cycle based on Yiddish poetry. She is currently touring her newest project, which features a music score she wrote with Donald Sosin—a legendary silent film music pianist—to the 1923 silent film, the *Ancient Law*.

Uli Geissendoerfer

Jazz pianist, composer, and scholar Uli Geissendoerfer has worked with Grammy-nominee William Cepeda, Groove Collective, Blood, Sweat & Tears, Leslie Uggams, Tito Puente, Cirque du Soleil, and David Cassidy. His current projects include "Colors" a World Jazz Quintet; *Bangalore Breakdown*, and an Indian world jazz project featuring multi-wind player Premik Russell Tubbs. In 2009, Geissendoerfer moved to Las Vegas where he was the conductor, pianist, and bandleader for the Cirque du Soleil's *Viva Elvis* show. He resurrected the Latin Jazz Ensemble at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, which has since won *DownBeat* awards in 2013, 2014, and 2015. He has also initiated a lecture series at the university and serves as curator for the Steinway Concert Series. He founded the Jazz Club at the Dispensary Lounge.

William Schimmel

William Schimmel earned his doctor of music degree from the Juilliard School. A composer, author, lecturer, philosopher, and virtuoso accordionist, he performs in a wide variety of styles and has appeared with major symphony orchestras. He has recorded with such noted performers as Sting and Tom Waits, the latter of whom said, "Schimmel doesn't play the accordion—he is an accordion." An authority on Kurt Weill, Schimmel has recorded all of Weill's music with accordion. He is a prolific composer for both the concert stage and Broadway and founded the renowned Tango Project. In 1992, he was named "Best Accordionist" by *Keyboard Magazine* and was also recognized as the person who has done the most to elevate the instrument's image.

PROGRAM

Beregovski Suite: Reimagining a Long-Lost Klezmer Archive

Twenty years ago, violinist Alicia Svigals released her groundbreaking album *Fidl*, the first contemporary recording of the deep and ecstatic klezmer fiddle music that had been beloved across Jewish Eastern Europe for hundreds of years. In 2018, she followed up this recording with *Beregovski Suite*, a project with Grammy-nominated jazz pianist Uli Geissendoerfer. Together the musicians bring to life long-lost melodies from the early twentieth-century fieldwork of Moshe Beregovski (1892–1961) and reimagine them for the twenty-first century.

In the 1930s, Moshe Beregovski, a Jewish scholar from Ukraine, set out with eerie prescience to collect and preserve the deep and rich Jewish musical tradition around him. On what turned out to be the eve of the destruction of European Jewry, Beregovski organized expeditions to Ukrainian shtetlach (small Jewish towns) and sought out the eldest singers and instrumentalists, asking them to pour their collective folk knowledge into his recording horn. In this way, he managed to save thousands of beautiful Jewish folk songs, klezmer dance tunes, and religious melodies on wax cylinders, the medium of the day. A few years afterward, the culture he had documented was destroyed in the Holocaust, and Beregovski himself was arrested and sent to the Gulag. He never saw his work published in his lifetime, and for decades it was thought that those precious and important recordings were forever lost. But in the 1980s, ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin published Beregovski's transcriptions of his collection, and in the 1990s, with the opening up of the Soviet Union, the cylinders were unearthed in a dusty archive in Kiev. Now those long-lost melodies and voices are beginning to speak to us again.

Program notes by Alicia Svigals

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Eighth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Capitol Hill Chorale Frederick Binkholder, Artistic Director

Caroling in the Rotunda

December 7, 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m.

West Building Rotunda

JACK Quartet

Modern Medieval

Music by Thomas Morley, Solage, Rodericus, Chaya Czernowin, Marcos

Balter, and John Zorn.

December 8, 3:30 p.m.

Xaverian High School Choir Joseph Loposky, Director

Caroling in the Rotunda

December 14, 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m.

West Building Rotunda

Calmus Vocal Ensemble

Carols from around the World

December 15, 3:30 p.m.

East of the River

Solstice: Darkness Is Your Candle

Music of the Mediterranean, Balkans, Armenia, and the Middle East.

December 21, 3:30 p.m.

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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cover Mildred E. Bent, *Design from Gray, Maine 1800 (no. 1): From Proposed Portfolio "Maine Wall Stencils," 1935/1942*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Index of American Design, 1943.8.18116

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