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Oct. 12-22, 2007

A Great Day on Eldridge Street

Klezmer musician, composer, author Yale Strom just let me know about a fascinating event taking place next week in New York. He's calling it "A Great Day on Eldridge Street," modeled after the famous photograph "A Great Day in Harlem."

Strom's idea is to assemble 75 top klezmer musicians from around the world for a 10-day celebration, including workshops, concerts, and a group photo on Oct. 12.



Participating artists include: Aaron Alexander, Michael Alpert, Art Bailey, **BRIAN BENDER**, Phyllis Berk, Eric Berman, Mina Bern, Mark Berney, Steven Bernstein, Theo Bikel, Joanne Borts, Judy Bressler, Paul Brody, Tamara Brooks, David Buchbinder, Ismail Butera, Don Byron, Neshama Carlebach, Bob Cohen, Marty Confurius, Adrienne Cooper, Matt Darriau, Peggy Davis, Di Gojim (Holland), Sruli Dresdner, Larry Eagle, Marty Ehrlich, Yaeko-Miranda Elmaleh, Annette Ezekiel, Yankl Falk, Barry Fisher, , Brian Glassman, Beyle Schaechter Gottesman, Burton Greene, Steven Greenman, David Julian Grey, Jim Guttmann, Glen Hartman, Michael Hess, Avi Hoffman, Dave Hofstra, Alex Jacobowitz, David Krakauer, Alex Kontorovich, Joe Kurland, Shifra Lerer, Rachel Lemisch, Marilyn Lerner, Howard Leshaw, Margo Leverett, Marty Levitt, David Licht, Shura Lipovsky, Frank London, Gary Lucas, Ken Maltz, Lisa Mayer, Robin Miller, Barry Mitterhoff, Zalmen Mlotek, Ray Muziker, Hankus Netsky, Alan Oresky, Leon Pollak, Eleanor Reissa, Ron Robboy, Leon Robinson, Jason Rosenblatt , Eric Rosenthal, Joel Rubin, Peter Rushefsky, Basya Schechter, Michael Schlesinger, Elizabeth Schwartz, Harold Seletsky, Paul Shapiro, David Shneyer, Eve Sicular, Grant Smith, Peter Sokolow, Sprocket, Norbert Stachel, Ilene Stahl, Peter Stan, Andy Statman, Theo Stone, Deborah Strauss, Yale Strom, Alicia Svigals, Stephanie Tarras, Sy Tarras, Joshua Waletsky, Greg Wall, Jeff Warschauer, Elaine Watts, Susan Hoffman Watts, Jim Whitney, Doug Wieselmann, and John Zorn.

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Fire & Water Featured Artist - Brian Bender

BRIAN BENDER HAS BEEN PERFORMING, teaching, and recording music in the area since 1993. He plays comfortably in a variety of genres as a member of the *Wholesale Klezmer Band*, *Black Rebels* reggae band, and *The Pangeans* world music group. He is also active in *Fiddle Hill*, a Celtic ensemble with Adam Sweet, *Kano y Su Banda*, a salsa and meringue band, as well as his own Jazz and Klezmer groups. He has performed at Carnegie Hall and the Knitting Factory in New York, President Clinton's Inauguration, and in many other venues across the states and beyond in Anchorage, Omaha, New Orleans, North Carolina, and the Cape Verde Islands. Just recently, he performed at the Drumming in the New Millennium World Music Festival at the Great Pyramids in Egypt and did a solo performance in Jerusalem.

Brian comments on his profound experience in the Middle East, "What I did at the festival in Egypt was take a peace song based on verses from the Book of Isaiah that says, 'Nation shall not live against nation, nations shall study war no more.' I sung the song in three different languages, English, Arabic, and Hebrew. This was accompanied by two percussionists from the Arabic Conservatory while the audience was dancing in a circle... This was my first time in the Middle East, it was particularly special to

play my trombone alone in the Israeli desert. I walked away from there with a strong feeling that although there are historical places that have great religious and cultural significance it is not worth killing people over."

Brian likes to share his music as a means to bring forth peace in the world and unity among people. "To me, music has the ability to bring people together and to address social and political concerns in a more effective way than politics. Ultimately, music is a great healing force. I like to think of a musical group as a microcosm of how a society can function and operate. Within a group there are individual members who are all given



opportunities to express themselves while maintaining a sense of a larger collaboration with the whole."

"As I get older, it's becoming more important to me to feel that there is a sense of purpose to the music that I make. I feel very fortunate that I am involved with groups such as *Black Rebels* and *The Wholesale Klezmer Band* since both groups are committed to working for peace, justice, tolerance, and unity."

Currently, Brian is working on his own recording, a project that is two years in the making. It will be a two CD set of original music that blends jazz, salsa, samba, calypso, reggae, klezmer, and celtic music. He describes the spirit of the recordings by saying, "It is a musical statement that elements from different musical traditions can be combined in a way that respects each tradition and creates something new."

In addition to creating compositions that reflect a wide variety of influences, Brian is also strengthening his skills on various instruments. Most know him for his trombone playing, but he is actively studying piano with Andy Jaffee and Percussion with Tony Vacca. This, he finds, has a very positive impact on his overall musicianship as well as his ability to teach.

"I like to bring more of the oral traditions into teaching music," Brian says. "One time a teacher noticed I wasn't using notated music during a particular lesson and said that she never saw music taught that way. Actually, in most countries, music is taught completely orally. Also, music is a language in itself. If we look at how we learn to speak, of course we've been taught grammar, vocab, spelling, reading, and writing, but before and alongside this more formal instruction we learn by hearing things and repeating them."

Check our listings for Brian's upcoming performance dates with his various groups.