

## East of the River

### **SULTANA**

Music of the Sephardic Diaspora

Nina Stern: recorders, chalumeau  
Daphna Mor: recorders, voice, ney  
Shane Shanahan: percussion  
Jesse Kotansky: violin  
Guest artist: Kane Mathis, oud



Led by woodwind virtuosos Nina Stern and Daphna Mor, SULTANA is a transporting journey through bazaars, kitchens, dance circles, prayer houses, and public squares. Mor and Stern literally breathe life into ancient forms, braiding together the rich musical traditions of the Sephardic diaspora through North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, inflecting the music with infectious Eastern rhythms, and uniquely steeping their performance in the art of improvisation.

The history that informs this energetic and soulful performance carries a personal connection for both artists. Mor's own Sephardic great-grandmother, Sultana Magrisso emigrated with her family from Bulgaria to British Palestine in 1944, traveling through Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. Her voyage, and those of expelled Jews that date back 450 years prior, inform this moving performance. The haunting sound of Stern's chalumeau—a precursor to the clarinet—evoke the love and loss of exile and Mor's singing in Ladino has a personal authenticity and beauty. Thrilling percussion, shimmering Middle Eastern strings, and stunning woodwind harmonies, enliven colorful Sephardic folksongs—both bawdy and mournful—sacred melodies, and the traditional instrumental music of Morocco, Turkey, and the Balkans, all interwoven in this unforgettable program.

Program:

***SULTANA***

**Morocco**

Ein K'eloheinu  
Mosé salió de Misrayim/Rotta  
Volviendo de Casablanca  
Bayn L'barah Wilyoum  
Coplas de Purim

Sephardic Liturgical Song  
Sephardic Song/ Stern Mor  
Sephardic Song, Tangier  
Traditional Moroccan/Andalusian  
Sephardic Liturgical Song, Tangier

**Constantinople and The Ottoman Empire**

Hicaz- Saz Samai  
Hicaz Sirto

Yusuf Pasa (19th century)  
Rasid Efendi (19th century)

Porke Llorach  
El Rey the Francia

Sepharadic Song  
Sepharadic Song

Tzur Mishelo/los Bilbilicos  
Ygdal

Sepharadic Liturgical Song  
Sepharadic Liturgical Song  
(Constantinople)

Longa Nehavand

Traditional Turkish

***Intermission***

**The Balkans**

Sandansko Horo  
Makedonsko Sedenka (Kopanica)

Traditional Bulgarian  
Traditional Macedonia

Percussion Solo

Shane Shanahan

Siete Hijos Tiene Hanna  
Bucimis

Traditional Sephardic  
Traditional Bulgarian

Yo M'enamori D'un Aire  
Shir ha Shirim  
A la Una yo Naci

Traditional Sephardic  
Songs of Songs, Cantorial, Salonica  
Sepharadic Song, Sarajevo

*East of the River* was founded by internationally renowned recorder players Nina Stern and Daphna Mor. The project explores gems of the European classical repertory together with haunting and virtuosic melodies of traditions to the East, arranged and interpreted by musicians whose backgrounds include classical, jazz and world music. Together they create the unique blend that is East of the River.

Stern and Mor each have impressive careers as soloists and chamber music players and have appeared as a duo with groups as varied as The New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's and world music ensemble Pharoah's Daughter and in venues including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and the Music Before 1800 concert series. In *East of the River* they collaborate with acclaimed kanun virtuoso Tamer Pinarbasi, Balkan violin sensation Jesse Kotansky, and Yo Yo Ma's "Silk Road Ensemble" percussionist Shane Shanahan. They frequently invite guests such as John Hadfield (percussion), Kane Mathis (oud and kora), Max ZT (hammered dulcian) and Uri Sharlin (accordion) .

The group has performed at venues including Bargemusic, Joe's Pub, and Le Poisson Rouge, on concert series such as Early Music Now (Milwaukee), San Francisco Early Music Festival, The Academy of Early Music (Ann Arbor), and The Five Boroughs Music Festival and on many university campuses. Festival appearances include Connecticut Early Music, Madison Early Music, and Indianapolis Early Music. *East of the River* was invited to create a special solstice concert for the prestigious PEAK Performances at Montclair State University and has been invited for three consecutive years to perform for WQXR/WNYC's 'Live at the Greene Space'.

The ensemble released their first album "East of the River" in 2009 and "Levantera" in the spring of 2013.

Both highly regarded for their educational initiatives, Stern and Mor have made outreach to the community and musical education a centerpiece of the *East of the River* mission. When traveling to perform, the group is eager to reach out to the local community by engaging in workshops and performing in schools, community centers, and cultural organizations.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Nina Stern** (recorders and chalumeau) has carved a unique and astonishingly diverse career for herself as a world-class classical clarinetist and recorder player. She performs widely as a soloist and as a principal player with the finest orchestras including The New York Philharmonic, Philharmonia Baroque, Apollo's Fire, Opera Lafayette, The American Classical Orchestra, and New York City Opera. She has recorded for Erato, Harmonia Mundi, Sony Classics, Newport Classics, Wildboar, Telarc, and Smithsonian labels. Nina Stern's latest projects include performances and recordings of traditional music of Eastern Europe, Armenia, and The Middle East, as a soloist, and with her ensembles *Rose of the Compass* and *East of the River* (Daphna Mor, co-director.) Recently, *Rose of the Compass* has collaborated annually with the conductor Kent Tritle and the Choir of St. John the Divine in creating programs for the "Great Music in a Great Space" concert series at the Cathedral. That collaboration resulted in the recent release of

the album “The Four Quarters of Jerusalem” on the Pro Organo label. Also in 2015, Stern released a solo album “Amaryllis”, with percussionist Glen Velez, for MSR Classics. Ms. Stern was appointed to the faculty of Juilliard’s Historical Performance program in 2012 and has served on the faculties of the Mannes College of Music, the Civica Scuola di Musica (Milan), and Oberlin Conservatory. The founder and Artistic Director of S’Cool Sounds, an award winning music education project in New York City public school classrooms, she has traveled throughout the U.S., in Europe, and in East Africa to introduce her innovative instrumental program to school children and their teachers. ([www.ninastern.com](http://www.ninastern.com))

**Daphna Mor** (recorders, voice, ney) has performed throughout Europe and the United States as a soloist and ensemble player. Her appearances include solo recitals in the United States, Croatia, Germany and Switzerland. She has performed as a soloist with The New York Collegium, the New York Early Music Ensemble and Little Orchestra Society, and as a member of the orchestra with the New York Philharmonic, New York City Opera and Orchestra of St. Luke’s. Ms Mor was awarded First Prize in the Settimane Musicali di Lugano Solo Competition, and the The Boston Conservatory Concerto Competition. Mor is frequently involved in performing and recording of new music. She recorded on John Zorn’s Tzadik Label, and has performed the world premiere of David Bruce’s ‘Tears, Puffes, Jumps, and Galliard’ with the Metropolis Ensemble. Mor is the Music Director of ‘Beineinu’ in NYC and is a researcher, performer and teacher of liturgical music of the Jewish diasporas. She is an active musician in the World Music scene, performing in festivals and on stages around the world including New York’s “Summer Stage” and Munich’s Gasteig. She appears on Sting’s album “If On A Winter’s Night” for Deutsche Grammophon. Ms. Mor leads programs as a musician for the Education Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. ([www.daphnamor.com](http://www.daphnamor.com))

**Shane Shanahan** (percussion), a percussionist/composer/arranger, has been touring around the globe performing with Yo-Yo Ma since 2000 as an original member of the Grammy-nominated Silk Road Ensemble. His arrangements and compositions are featured on several of the group’s recordings for Sony Classical. He has performed and/or recorded with Bobby McFerrin, Aretha Franklin, Philip Glass, Alison Krauss, Deep Purple, Jordi Savall, Sonny Fortune, Fantasia, Chaka Khan, and Glen Velez, among others. Shanahan’s dynamic performances have brought people to their feet in the greatest concert halls of the world, including Carnegie Hall, after which the New York Times proclaimed, “By the time he finished in a virtuosic jester’s dance, limbs flying as he whirled back and forth between doumbek, cymbals and body parts, the audience roared with delight.” A strong believer in the power of education, Shanahan has taught and/or presented workshops at schools and universities around the world including Princeton, Harvard, and NYU. ([www.shaneshanahan.com](http://www.shaneshanahan.com))

**Jesse Kotansky** (violin) Born to dancers Stephen and Susan Kotansky, Jesse was exposed to and surrounded by Balkan and Middle Eastern music from the time he was a very young child. At age two he was given his first violin and had many opportunities to study and perform with master musicians from an early age. Jesse has bridged many worlds of music as a professional recording artist and performer with Aerosmith, David Bowie, Teddy Thompson, Merita Halili, Raif Hyseni, J Mascis, and Ivan Milev, just to name a few. Jesse is the co-founder of Brooklyn based Indi rock band Walking Shapes, whose album has a February release date. and you can see his debut of film scoring with the up and coming film, Blemished Light.

**Guest Artist:** Kane Mathis



Performing on Turkish Oud and the 21-string Mandinka Harp, **Kane Mathis** renders compelling interpretations of these traditional musics. Years of study with generous masters have given Kane a rare opportunity to share these traditions with other cultures. Kane's Oud study began with Mutlu Torun of the I.T.U. conservatory in Istanbul and continued with 5 and a half years of courses with Oud virtuoso Münir Nurtin Beken. As a Kora player Kane began taking trips to The Gambia, West Africa in 1997 and has continued rigorous study of the Mandinka Kora. Over the past ten years his performances have earned him recognition by the Gambian president, The Gambian minister of culture, and both national television and radio of The Gambia. His Teachers are Malamini Jobarteh and Moriba Kouyate of The Gambia. The Jobarteh family remain one of The Gambia's most important musical legacies. Tata Din din Jobarteh, Pa Bobo Jobarteh, and Siffai Jobarteh are the families current most visible exponents touring the world. Since completing his study Kane has been sought after as a soloist and accompanist internationally on both instruments. As a composer Kane is generating new works for both instruments as well as experimental work for electronic fixed media for film and modern Kane is currently based in Brooklyn, New York.