

Voice of Roma announces the 18th annual
Herdeljezi Balkan Romani Music Festival

*Featured musical guest is New York City's high-octane **Sazet Band***

Saturday, May 2, 2015



Photo courtesy of Sazet Band.

Croatian American Cultural Center
60 Onondaga Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94112

VoiceofRoma.com

SEBASTOPOL, CA, [Date] – **Voice of Roma**, a human rights advocacy organization dedicated to the promotion of Romani (Gypsy) cultural arts and traditions, is proud to announce the 18th annual **Herdeljezi Balkan Romani Music Festival**, Saturday, May 2 in San Francisco. This year's festival will culminate in a dance party led by the high-octane **Sazet Band** from New York. Events earlier in the day include separate workshops for singers and instrumentalists led by members of Sazet Band, a dance workshop taught by Kosovo Romani activist and dance researcher **Sani Rifati**, and a panel discussion on Romani culture, music, history and human rights led by Rifati and **Carol Silverman**, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oregon.

“Herdeljezi” is the name for the Romani spring holiday of renewal and fertility. Just so, the Herdeljezi Festival seeks to renew interest and attention on the continued struggles of Romani people around the world, striving to counter negative Gypsy stereotypes and supporting efforts by Roma to rebuild and maintain their communities, improve their lives and strengthen their international voice and visibility.

“Few Americans know that one million Roma reside in America today, that Roma are the largest minority in Europe today and that Roma have a rich and varied culture in spite of centuries of discrimination,” says Silverman. “Furthermore, festivals of ‘Gypsy Music’ are often stereotypical fantasies geared toward exoticism. Voice of Roma’s Herdeljezi Festival, on the other hand, places the music in its cultural and historical context.”

This year’s Herdeljezi Festival is the sequel to a two-day conference at New York University titled ***Beyond Gypsy Stereotypes: Voicing Romani Pluralities***, April 24-25. Bringing together academics, activists and performers, day one of the conference will conclude with a dance party led by Sazet Band and dance workshops led by Rifati. The conference at NYU is organized by the Initiative for Romani Music in conjunction with the Center for Traditional Music and Dance and Voice of Roma.

Sazet Band, an eight-piece Romani band from New York City comprised of musicians from Macedonia, was formed in 2011 under the leadership of clarinetist **Sal Mamudoski** and saxophonist **Romeo Kurtali**. The band performs what it describes as a "New York City-style" of Romani music: traditional folk music from the Balkans mixed with influences from classical, jazz, funk, and fusion styles of Western music. Sazet Band performs frequently for weddings and other community celebrations, and has appeared as part of the annual New York Gypsy Festival and at Golden Festival, New York’s largest Balkan music event.

Rifati is a Rom from Kosovo who immigrated to the United States in 1993, co-founding Voice of Roma three years later. Rifati has taught at many international dance camps and festivals. Panelist and Voice of Roma Board Member Silverman is an activist and scholar of Romani music in Eastern Europe. Her book *Romani Routes: Cultural Politics and Balkan Music in Diaspora* (2012) won the book prize from the Society for Ethnomusicology.

The Herdeljezi Festival takes place this year at the Croatian American Cultural Center in the Balboa Park neighborhood of San Francisco. The event begins with a singing workshop at 3pm led by **Ferdi Demir** of Sazet Band. At 4:30pm other members of the band will conduct a Romani instrumental workshop. Each workshop costs \$20 in advance. A free panel discussion led by Rifati and Silverman begins at 6:15pm. The Festival concludes with a dance workshop with Rifati at 7:30pm and Sazet Band’s dance party at 8:30pm. Tickets for the evening dance party are priced at \$20 (advance) and \$25 (at the door), and include admission to the dance workshop. Workshop reservations as well as a \$60 Festival Pass for all events may be purchased online at Brown Paper Tickets or by calling 800-838-3006. For more information visit VoiceofRoma.com.

Voice of Roma’s 18th annual Herdeljezi Balkan Romani Music Festival is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

ABOUT VOICE OF ROMA

The mission of Voice of Roma is to promote and present the rich cultural heritage of Roma that

dates back over a thousand years through festivals, workshops, performances and educational presentations. Voice of Roma also works to heighten awareness of human rights issues faced by Roma in today's world, and to support efforts by Roma to (re)build and maintain their communities, and to improve their lives.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Voice of Roma presents the 18th annual **Herdeljezi Balkan Romani Music Festival** with featured musical guest, **Sazet Band** from New York.

Sal Mamudoski, *clarinet*
Romeo Kurtali, *sax/clarinet*
Remzi Demo, *keyboard*
Nenad Kamo, *guitar*
Kurte Kurtali, *drums*
Amdi Seyfedinov, *dumbek/percussion*
Ferdi Demir, *vocals*

PROGRAM:

May 2, 2015

3:00 - 4:30pm Romani singing workshop with **Ferdi Demir** of Sazet Band
4:30 - 6:00pm Romani instrumental workshop with members of **Sazet Band**
6:15 - 7:15pm Panel discussion on Romani culture, music, history and human rights with Kosovo Romani activist and dance teacher **Sani Rifati** and **Carol Silverman**, Professor at the University of Oregon
7:30 - 8:30pm Romani dance workshop with **Sani Rifati**
8:30pm Dance party with live music by **Sazet Band**

WHERE:

Croatian American Cultural Center
60 Onondaga Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94112

TICKETS:

Singing Workshop: **\$20**
Instrumental Workshop: **\$20**
Dance party with Sazet: **\$20** advance, **\$25** door (*includes admission to the panel discussion at 6:15pm and the Dance Workshop at 7:30pm*)
Festival Pass: **\$60** (*includes admission to all three workshops, the panel discussion and the party*)
Reservations may be made online at brownpapertickets.com/event/1353177 or by calling **800-838-3006**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Voice of Roma: voiceofroma.com
Sazet Band: ctmd.org/touringartists/sazet.htm
Sazet Band on YouTube: youtube.com/channel/UCWj4iRPvND-wPwyqACpTEGg/feed?activity_view=3