



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Media Contact: John Hill
johnhillpr@gmail.com
510.435.7128

**Voice of Roma announces its 20th anniversary
Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival**
featuring
Yuri Yunakov & the Grand Masters of Roma Music

Saturday, May 6, 2017



Sal Mamudoski, left, photo courtesy of the artist. Yuri Yunakov, photo courtesy of the Center for Traditional Music and Dance.

Croatian American Center

60 Onondaga Ave
San Francisco, CA 94112

voiceofroma.com

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, [Date] – Voice of Roma, a human rights advocacy organization dedicated to the promotion of Balkan Romani (Gypsy) cultural arts and traditions, is pleased to announce the program for its 20th anniversary **Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival** to take place **Saturday, May 6** at the **Croatian American Center** in San Francisco. An evening dance party featuring **Yuri**

Yunakov, Sal Mamudoski and the **Grand Masters of Roma Music** will culminate a series of workshops for instrumentalists and dancers.

Recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, Yunakov was catapulted to international fame as a saxophonist for his pioneering work in Bulgarian “wedding music” with Ivo Papasov and their legendary band Trakiya. Yunakov’s music showcases electrifying improvisation, rapid tempos, dense ornamentation and complex rhythmic patterns. This style of music was named for its ubiquitous presence at life cycle celebrations such as weddings, baptisms and circumcisions where dancing and music are a requirement.

Yunakov immigrated to New York in 1994, forming the Yuri Yunakov Ensemble, which toured widely throughout Europe and the U.S., including concerts at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the National Folk Festival and the Monterey World Music Festival. Yunakov is featured in the recent Canadian documentary about the saxophone, *The Devils’ Horn*.

“Yuri Yunakov led his ensemble in Bulgarian and Gypsy tunes....racing ahead in dizzy-speeding curlicues and zigzags. They play as if Bulgaria’s national drink were rocket-fuel!” – *The New York Times*

Born in 1988 and raised in New York in a Romani family from Macedonia, Mamudoski trained as a student of Yunakov’s, eventually earning a reputation as one of the leading clarinetists performing Romani wedding music. He last visited the Bay Area with Sazet Band at the 2015 Herdeljezi Festival.

Joining Yunakov and Mamudoski are keyboardist and vocalist **Erhan (Rambo) Umer** and multi-instrumentalist **Rumen Sali Shopov** who will play percussion. Shopov performs and teaches in the Bay Area on tambura, bouzouki, dumbek, drum set and tapan. A master of Greek, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Romani and Turkish musical styles, Shopov has toured extensively in the U.S., including with Yunakov in 2007.

Festival events begin with an instrumental workshop at 4 p.m. led by Yunakov and members of the Grand Masters of Roma Music. The workshop costs \$20 in advance. A free panel discussion with the artists led by Voice of Roma President **Sani Rifati** and Romani culture scholar Professor **Carol Silverman** begins at 6 p.m.

The Festival concludes with a dance workshop with Rifati at 7:30 p.m., followed by a dance party at 8:30 p.m. Food prepared by Bulgarian born Hristo Kolev will be available for purchase throughout the evening. Tickets for the concert and party are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door, and include admission to the dance workshop. Workshop reservations as well as a \$35 Festival Pass including all events may be purchased online at [Brown Paper Tickets](http://BrownPaperTickets.com) or by calling 800-838-3006. For more information visit voiceofroma.com.

ABOUT VOICE OF ROMA

Voice of Roma is a California-based NGO that promotes the rich cultural heritage of Roma dating back over 600 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 build and maintain their communities, and to improve their lives. In its 20-year history, Voice of Roma has supported many educational programs about Roma as well as several national tours of esteemed artists, such as the final American tour of superstar vocalist Esmá Redžepova who passed away in 2016.

Voice of Roma's president, Sani 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. Festival Panelist and Voice of Roma Board Member Carol 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.

"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."

Voice of Roma's 20th annual Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival is supported, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Voice of Roma presents the 20th anniversary **Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival** featuring **Yuri Yunakov & the Grand Masters of Roma Music**.

WHEN:

Saturday, May 6, 2017

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| 4 - 5:30 p.m. | Instrumental workshop with Yuri Yunakov and the Grand Masters of Roma Music |
| 6 - 7:15 p.m. | Free panel discussion on Romani music and human rights with the artists, and led by Kosovo Romani activist and dance teacher Sani Rifati and Carol Silverman, Professor at the University of Oregon |
| 7:30 - 8:15 p.m. | Dance workshop with Sani Rifati, free with admission to dance party |
| 8:30 p.m. | Dance party with Yuri Yunakov and the Grand Masters of Roma Music |

WHERE:

Croatian American Center
60 Onondaga Ave
San Francisco, CA 94112

TICKETS:

- Dance party: **\$20** advance, **\$25** door (includes admission to the panel discussion and the dance workshop); free admission for kids under 12.
- Instrumental Workshop: **\$20**
- Festival Pass: **\$35** (includes admission to the workshops and the dance party)
- Reservations may be made online at brownpapertickets.com/event/? or by calling **800-838-3006**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

voiceofroma.com

For all press requests contact John Hill at johnhillpr@gmail.com.