

GUY MENDILOW ENSEMBLE



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The Guy Mendilow Ensemble is now touring its project ***Tales from the Forgotten Kingdom: Ladino Songs Renewed*** throughout the United States and Canada. [Micro-Documentary Video](#) [Additional performance videos](#) filmed live at Shalin Liu Performance Center, Rockport MA.

What happens to a song when it moves, and moves again? What happens when a music that is the product of hundreds of years of migrations continues to travel?

Get ready for a musical voyage awash with warm harmonies, intricate textures and spellbinding rhythms. Starting in ancient Spain and winding through Sarajevo, Salonica and Jerusalem. The award winning Guy Mendilow Ensemble breathes new life into centuries-old Sephardi *romanzas* and *canticas*. Epic tales of sailors and love lost to the seas, fantastic dreams and the intrigue of kings and queens abound in arrangements that crackle and evolve in rich musical storytelling. Step into a new world of Ladino music, re-imagined by a team of internationally recognized players and spearheaded by charismatic Israeli composer/performer Guy Mendilow. It's a recasting that shifts from spare to sweepingly cinematographic, taking the music out of the realm of art songs and back to its roots as songs of the streets and of fiestas: A music alive with adventure and humor and grit.

THE FULL STORY

"Tales from the Forgotten Kingdom tenders an incredible gift; a resurgent force of musical settings that explode with artistry, refinement, and excitement. This project is living proof that the power of art will always triumph." **Cantor Yvon F. Shore, Director of Liturgical Arts & Music, Hebrew Union College**

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When the Sephardi Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they eventually settled in communities from Northern Africa and the Middle East to the Mediterranean and the Balkans. In each adopted home, their language, food, customs and songs retained their identity and also began soaking in local flavors of the new cultures. Musically, this resulted in a rich, deep and fascinating blending of rhythms, modes, melodies and, of course, legends.

The objective of *Tales from the Forgotten Kingdom: Ladino Songs Renewed* is to bring this music to broader audiences, regardless of listeners' religion or ethnicity. "Simply put," says Mendilow, "great music should be known by all. You don't need to be Lutheran to listen to Bach, and you don't need to be Jewish to be swept away by the power of these songs and stories. Time has already vetted this music: Unmemorable songs don't often endure for hundreds of years."

"There's an even greater responsibility when we work with music that is so old and rich," Mendilow adds. "We must be careful to remain true to the tradition, preserve the song's essential identity, even as we use a modern musical tool box to bring the message and mood home to listeners today."

Each ensemble member personally identifies with the migrations at the heart of Ladino music. A citizen of Israel, Great Britain and, most recently, the United States, Guy Mendilow played continental hop-scotch for many years. From Jerusalem and Johannesburg to rural Ohio, he was subtly changed by each home. The same can be said for the other members who have come to the United States from places as diverse as Palestine and Japan.

"Ladino music is fascinating to me because these communities in diaspora integrated elements of local culture into their own traditional music." Mendilow explains, "So the very same song might sound quite different in a community that settled in Sarajevo or in Rhodes. This story is not unique. It's the story of many types of music. And it reflects each of our own stories, how we incorporate fresh elements into our lives through our own migrations."

Through *Tales from the Forgotten Kingdom*, the Guy Mendilow Ensemble explores a universal experience, relevant to today's listeners. What happens to a song when it moves, and moves again? What happens to us when we move from one home to another, remembering ourselves yet inevitably being shaped by our new environs?

For Guy Mendilow, the music cannot be separated from the message. From his first touring experience as a boy, swapping songs with Ladysmith Black Mambazo as a vocalist with the American Boychoir; to currently thrilling listeners at venues such as the Chicago World Music Festival or Rockport MA's Shalin Liu Performance Center; to building cross-cultural understanding through facilitating musical workshops with government education ministers from Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon; Mendilow and his Ensemble continue to journey beyond musical boundaries, blending antiquity and modernity, and bringing new audiences to an ancient music.

Reviews:

"It's a folk music of hope and affirmation, sophisticated in its delivery but easily accessible to listeners anywhere." — **Chicago Tribune**

"Guy Mendilow is an international tour de force." — **Bethlehem Morning Call**