

# ARTS MIDWEST WORLD FEST

## Study Guide Israel - Music and Instruments



From left to right: Daniel Hoffman, Ori Naveh, Gilad Ephrat, Talya G. A. Solan, Gershon Waiserfirer

### The Israeli Ethnic Ensemble

The cultural mosaic of Israel comes to life with the music of Eastern European, Balkan, Gypsy, Sephardic and Yemenite melodies. The product of an immigrant society, Israeli culture brings together Balkan music alongside the sounds of Morocco, traditional Russian music side by side with Arabic and Middle Eastern traditional music and so on. Featuring the captivating vocalist Talya G. A. Solan, the five members of the Ethnic Ensemble come from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds reflecting the rich diversity of musical styles in Israel. The ensemble's unique performances represent the diverse and colorful cultural characters of Israeli music – the Sephardic traditional music, Mediterranean influences, the music of Yemenite Jews – and some original music as well. The ensemble was established in 2004 by leading figures in the vibrant Israeli music scene.

### About the musicians

#### Daniel Hoffman (Violin)

Daniel was born in the United States, but relocated to Israel in 2004 and now lives in Tel Aviv. He has earned a reputation as a leading innovator in new Jewish Music and as one of the foremost experts of the Yiddish violin style, he has recorded and performed with the top players in the field. He has written silent film scores, concert pieces, and numerous theatrical scores, including two musicals.

#### Ori Naveh (Percussion)

Ori studied percussion at the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music and in El Salvador, Brazil where he explored and embraced the rhythms of Brazilian, samba and other tropical genres. He frequents Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria as well as Israeli and Central and South American venues. He is a percussionist much sought after for his mastery of exotic ethnic instruments (including the Darbuka, Frame Drums, Jember, and Cachon) and his remarkable facility with the rhythms of Africa, South America and the Middle East.

#### Gilad Ephrat (Double Bass)

Gilad Ephrat was born in Sweden but his family immigrated to Israel when he was still very young. After serving in the Israeli Defense Force as a bassist in the air force orchestra, Gilad completed his music studies at the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music.

### **Talya G.A Solan (Voice)**

Born in Rehovot Israel. Talya graduated Tel-Aviv University's Art Faculty with honors. Her singing is versatile and represents a wide range of traditions and musical heritages including folk songs, Gypsy songs, the Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) music, and liturgical songs for holidays and weekdays from the Jewish religious texts. From Yemenite trills and Bulgarian folk songs she expresses her soul through song.

### **Gershon Waiserfirer (Oud, Tuba)**

Gershon was born in Tajikistan but he, too, immigrated to Israel as a young boy. He started playing the piano and the baritone horn at age 11 and added the trombone while at the Conservatoire of Tel-Aviv. In addition to music and theater studies, he began exploring different string instruments – the guitar, the oud and the jumbush – on his own. With his many talents in western and ethnic music, he is now a regular member of a large number of successful musical groups in Israel and has participated in many festivals in Israel and around the world.

## **About the Instruments**

The Israeli Ethnic Ensemble plays a variety of instruments from all over the world. In addition to instruments you might be more familiar with, like the violin or guitar, there are some other instruments that may not be so familiar. These instruments all make different kinds of sounds and add something unique to the ensemble's music.

### **Oud**

Since the 9th century the musical tradition of the Mediterranean Sea was based in great part on the Oud. Often called the prince of Arab instruments, it is an ancient stringed instrument which probably originated over 3,500 year ago in Persia. A similar instrument is shown in Egyptian paintings and was used in the times of the Pharaohs. The Arabic name, Al Oud, means wood - specifically thin wood. The strings were originally made of gut and are now often made of plastic. The moors or the Crusaders carried the Oud to Spain, where it entered Europe as the lute ("al-ud") and was ultimately transformed into the 6 stringed fretted guitar.



An oud maker in Cairo, Egypt. Photo by Flickr user tronics.

The Oud sound box is pear shaped, and it has a relatively short handle and no frets. The precise shape and dimensions differ throughout the Arab world, as do the number of strings - up to six and even seven.

### **Jumbush**

The Jumbush is an instrument that looks very much like a banjo. It originated in Turkey and the Balkans. The instrument has six doubled strings and a fretless grip. Its body is made from light metal with stretched skin.

### **Darbuka**

The darbuka (or dombek or tablah) is an hour-glass-shaped drum popular throughout the Middle East. The drum head or skin is stretched tight with rope or leather thongs or even nails. The body may be made of copper, ceramic, pottery or wood. It is used a great deal in belly dancing music.



Photo of a darbuka by Flickr user asubtle glance.