

Program Notes – Klezmer Dances

Premiere: April 19, 2002, The O’Shaughnessy, Saint Paul, Minnesota

Music by Giora Feidman

Choreography by James Sewell

Lighting by Kevin A. Jones

Costumes by Mary Hansmeyer

Original Cast:

Stephanie Fellner

Penelope Freeh

Benjamin Johnson

Matthew Keefe

Justin Leaf

Peggy Seipp

James Sewell

Samantha Ernst

The word Klezmer refers both to a style of music and to a traditional Jewish musician. The music’s medieval roots are found in the bands of itinerant Jewish musicians who played for weddings, festivals, and other special events throughout Eastern Europe. By the early 20th century, the musicians had developed a sophisticated repertoire drawing on religious and secular influences to express life’s joy and sadness. The clarinetist Giora Feidman (b. 1936, Buenos Aires) is a fourth generation Klezmer. At age 18, he became a principal member in the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, and at 20 joined the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. He also served as professor of clarinet at the University of Tel Aviv. His artistry is credited with the resurgence of Jewish music in the world today. In addition to Jewish soul music, the range of his clarinet includes the great classics, jazz, swing, and the blues. James Sewell’s introduction to Feidman’s music owes much to the generous spirit of Judith Brin Ingber, a Minnesota-based writer, choreographer, and dancer.

— Gary Peterson, 2002