



**Cindy Byram PR**  
201-400-4104 cell  
[cindybyramPR@aol.com](mailto:cindybyramPR@aol.com)  
[www.cindybyram.com](http://www.cindybyram.com)

**Pianist ROGER DAVIDSON debuts “ON THE ROAD OF LIFE”  
on JULY 12, 2011 on SOUNDBRUSH label;**

**NEW YORK CONCERT debut on SEPTEMBER 17 at DROM;**

**CD features Klezmer giants FRANK LONDON and ANDY STATMAN,  
with PABLO ASLAN, RICHIE BARSHAY and JOSHUA HOROWITZ;**

**Founder of SOCIETY FOR UNIVERSAL SACRED MUSIC,  
Davidson finds resonance in Jewish traditions**

Some artists find a world to explore within a single genre, while others constantly seek to travel farther and wider. **Pianist/composer Roger Davidson** finds himself resonating with many musical traditions. His journey has previously taken him down several diverse artistic roads, traversing—among others—Western classical, jazz, tango, and Brazilian music. Now, on his latest release, ***On the Road of Life* (Soundbrush Records, July 12, 2011)**, Davidson and an all-star crew share the joy of klezmer in a dozen original songs.

Why klezmer, the celebratory Jewish folk music whose roots date back to the 15th century? “It’s been a part of many of my orchestral compositions in the past,” says Davidson. “The spirit of this music has been with me all my life. I only recently started to write music for small klezmer ensemble and it was a very natural way to express myself.”

Produced and arranged by Frank London—best known as a founding member of the Klezmatics—*On the Road of Life* draws from the traditional Eastern European Yiddish form as well as numerous other sources, ranging from Hungarian music and English country dances to tango and Israeli folk music. The music is undeniably contemporary in sound and production, but Davidson did not set out to create a fusion of traditional music and cutting-edge sounds.

“I am an American and European and I took from the spirit of my own heritage,” Davidson says. “My father’s family was German Jewish and although he did not practice Judaism it was a significant part of his heritage. In fact, I relate to this part of my background almost entirely through music.”

*On the Road of Life* features an all-star aggregation assisting the composer in fleshing out his concepts. In addition to Davidson’s piano, the Frank London Klezmer Orchestra—**Frank London** on trumpet, **Pablo Aslan** on bass and **Richie Barshay** on drums—is joined by special guests **Andy Statman** (clarinet, mandolin) and **Joshua Horowitz** (cimbalom, accordion). All are on hand for a **NYC debut concert on September 17<sup>th</sup> at DROM.**

The credentials of Davidson's collaborators are unassailable. Frank London has long been one of the most prolific artists around, a mainstay of the "Hasidic New Wave" who has recorded and performed with dozens of artists as diverse as John Zorn, Mel Torme, LL Cool J and They Might Be Giants, as well as countless world music artists. He also writes for film, theater and dance and has released numerous albums under his own name. Aslan is an Argentine GRAMMY®-nominated musician whose work in fusing tango with jazz has been lauded by critics. He has collaborated with such giants as Yo-Yo Ma, Wynton Marsalis, Shakira, Joe Lovano, and Paquito D'Rivera. Barshay is a world-class drummer-percussionist who has been called upon by the likes of Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Esperanza Spalding and Lee Konitz. *Downbeat* has called Barshay "a major rhythm voice on the rise."

*On the Road of Life* also features contributions by Joshua Horowitz, who is not only a respected musician but also a klezmer teacher and ethnomusicologist. He plays in klezmer groups Budowitz and Veretski Pass. And Andy Statman is a klezmer legend in his own right, a mainstay on the downtown New York scene who has been performing the style for more than 30 years, while also a master of bluegrass and other styles of music. For Statman, working with Davidson on this new project has been a rewarding experience. "Roger's melodies are very natural, well-crafted extensions of traditional genres," Statman enthuses. "And a lot of fun to play on!"

While each track on the album is a standout, Davidson points to three in particular to illustrate the musicians' contributions. "Hungarian Waltz" began, he says, when the band was "fooling around with it as a Dixieland jazz tune. Frank just jumped in and started playing trumpet and soon everyone was jamming just for fun. We decided to tag this ending to the waltz and now it's on the recording. There were many examples of this," he continues. "It was a very collaborative effort. When Andy came up with a wacky mandolin solo during 'Dance of Hope' it was totally unexpected and wonderful. Also, for 'Sunflowers at Dawn,' Frank suggested we play it really fast and that became the tag to the tune."

In the past Davidson has found common ground among genres as seemingly dissimilar as tango, jazz, choral music and Brazilian rhythms. His decision to make a statement via klezmer came, he says, "directly from listening to a performance of Frank's music for *A Night in the Old Marketplace*, a klezmer opera that he collaborated on with Glen Berger (*Spiderman—Turn Off the Dark*) and director Alex Aron, who is also a manager of Soundbrush Records. I went home from the first performance of the musical and started to write some tunes. So one of my inspirations was Frank London himself."

Davidson describes himself as "a very spiritual person...with a strong and direct relationship to God," and his faith manifests in the compositions included here. He describes the track "From the Desert to the Sea" as "a spiritual meditation and a prayer. Some of my writing comes directly out of meditation and this is one strong example."

But just as much of an influence is the Eastern European musical tradition itself. "I have always had a strong connection to Hungarian, Romanian and Russian music and I think that a number of the tunes—'Sunflowers at Dawn,' 'Freedom Dance,' 'Hungarian Waltz' and 'Moscow Dream'—reflect my interest in those traditions," Davidson explains.

"Something that distinguishes the album is its variety," he adds. "A lot of this is due to Frank's open-mindedness about what would work and which tunes to include. For example, I was

surprised that Frank wanted to include ‘Moscow Dreams,’ even though it was not technically a klezmer tune.”

Born in Paris in 1952, **Roger Davidson** moved to New York with his French mother and American father when he was a year old. He began playing piano at age 4 and violin at 8, eventually studying at Boston University, where he earned a Master’s degree in composition in 1980. He learned improvisation and played jazz but it was during his post-graduate studies at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, N.J., that Davidson became involved in composing choral music, which greatly affected his life and career path.

Realizing that choral music celebrated the commonalities of all people, in 2000 Davidson founded the **Society for Universal Sacred Music**. Now in its 11th year, SUSM’s website (<http://www.universalsacredmusic.org>) describes the organization as “a community of musicians and listeners, with a common desire for peace and spiritual harmony,” and explains that “Each year we sponsor several events with new and existing works in many different styles.” Davidson serves as its president.

Davidson’s quest for diversity also led him to launch **Soundbrush Records** in 2002. “It is a multi-cultural label that seeks to bring the best musicians together,” says Davidson, “mostly in jazz, Latin and world music. We are now expanding Soundbrush to include a classical division.”

Soundbrush, to date, has released several albums by Davidson, among them *Umbrellas & Sunshine: The Music of Michel Legrand*, released earlier this year, 2010’s *Brazilian Love Song*, and *Pasión por la vida*, tango duets with bandoneon virtuoso Raul Jaurena. In addition, Soundbrush has released titles by London, jazz bassist David Finck, guitarist Francisco “Pancho” Navarro, and several other artists.

Davidson is immensely gratified that his life has brought him opportunities to make a difference through his art and work. “I love learning from other musicians and artists. Life is a wonderful journey and a celebration.” One listen to *On the Road of Life* is all the confirmation one needs to appreciate where that journey has taken Roger Davidson—and to ponder where it might possibly take him next.



[www.soundbrush.com](http://www.soundbrush.com)