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**KITKA ANNOUNCES VOICE OF ROMA'S 19TH ANNUAL
Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival**
featuring

**“Queen of Romani Song” Esma Redzepova
& The Folk Masters Band**

Saturday, April 30, 2016

5 p.m. – 11 p.m.

First Congregational Church of Oakland
2501 Harrison Street
Oakland, CA 94612

kitka.org
voiceofroma.com

OAKLAND, CA, March 14, 2016 – Kitka announces Voice of Roma's 19th annual **Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival**, featuring the legendary “Queen of Romani Song” **Esma Redzepova & The Folk Masters Band** from Macedonia in their final U.S. tour. This yearly event organized by Voice of Roma, a human rights advocacy organization dedicated to the promotion of Romani (Gypsy) cultural arts and traditions, celebrates Balkan Romani music, dance and culture. An evening concert and dance party will culminate a series of workshops for singers, instrumentalists and dancers. The Festival takes place **Saturday, April 30** in **Reidenbach Hall** at **First Congregational Church of Oakland**.

Esma is internationally acclaimed as the “Queen of Romani Song,” and has been hailed by NPR as one of the world's “50 Great Voices.” Born in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, she began her professional career at the age of thirteen. She was the first Balkan performer to make Romani music popular with non-Romani audiences on elite concert stages in the early 1960s.

Esma, who sings in over ten languages, earned the title “Queen of Romani Song” at the World Festival



Esma, photo courtesy of the artist.

of Romani Music in India in 1976. At the Festival of Roma Experiences in Moscow in 2000, she was proclaimed Laureate and Roma Singer of the Century. In 2013 she represented Macedonia in the Eurovision Song Contest. Esma has performed for many heads of state and has toured for more than four decades, giving more than 8,000 concerts in over 30 countries. Her appearance in Oakland marks the culmination of her U.S. tour, one which she insists will be her last overseas.

In addition to her stage work, Esma is a world-renowned humanitarian. Over the past thirty years she has fostered 49 children, many of whom have become professional musicians like master accordionist and ensemble arranger **Simeon Atanasov**, who leads The Folk Masters Band.

Esma has been a major contributor to countless advocacy and assistance programs for women and underserved populations, including the disabled and Romani refugees from Kosovo. She is honorary president of the Macedonian Red Cross, and has given more than one thousand benefit concerts. In 2000, the Sorority of Roma Women proclaimed Esma "Woman of the Millennium." In 2002 Esma was nominated as United Nations Ambassador for Refugees in Macedonia, and was nominated a second time for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2010, she was awarded the Macedonian Order of Merit, and in 2013 she was proclaimed a National Artist of Macedonia.

Festival events begin with concurrent vocal and instrumental workshops at 5 p.m. led by Esma and members of her Folk Masters Band. Each workshop costs \$30 in advance. A free panel discussion led by Voice of Roma President **Sani Rifati** and Romani culture scholar Professor **Carol Silverman** begins at 6:45 p.m. The Festival concludes with a dance workshop with Rifati at 8 p.m., followed by Esma's concert and dance party at 8:30 p.m. Tickets for the evening dance party are \$27 in advance and \$30 at the door, and include admission to the dance workshop. Workshop reservations as well as a \$55 Festival Pass including all events may be purchased online at Brown Paper Tickets or by calling 800-838-3006. For more information visit **Kitka.org**.

Voice of Roma's 19th annual Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival is supported, in part, by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Trust for Mutual Understanding, and the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program.

ABOUT VOICE OF ROMA

Voice of Roma is a California- and Kosovo-based NGO that promotes the rich cultural heritage of Roma dating back over a thousand 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.

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.”

ABOUT KITKA

Kitka is an Oakland-based women's vocal arts ensemble and presenting and educational organization inspired by traditional songs and vocal techniques from Eastern Europe. Dedicated to developing new audiences for music rooted in Balkan, Slavic, and Caucasian women's vocal traditions, Kitka also strives to expand the boundaries of folk song as a living and evolving expressive art form.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Kitka presents Voice of Roma's 19th annual **Herdeljezi Romani Music Festival** featuring **Esma Redzepova & The Folk Masters Band**.

WHO:

Esma Redzepova, vocals

Simeon Atanasov, accordion; **Filip Nunevski**, trumpet; **Aleksandar Stamenkovski**, guitar; **Nikola Mitrovikj**, bass; **Safet Demirov**, drums

WHEN:

Saturday, April 30, 2016

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|-------------------------|---|
| 5 - 6:30 p.m. | Romani vocal and instrumental workshops with Esma Redzepova & The Folk Masters Band |
| 6:45 - 7:45 p.m. | Panel discussion on Romani culture, music, history and human rights with Kosovo Romani activist and dance teacher Sani Rifati and Carol Silverman , Professor at the University of Oregon |
| 8 - 8:30 p.m. | Romani dance workshop with Sani Rifati |
| 8 p.m. | Concert and dance party with Esma Redzepova & the Folk Masters Band |

WHERE:

Reidenbach Hall at First Congregational Church of Oakland

2501 Harrison Street
Oakland, CA 94612

TICKETS:

- Concert and dance party with Esma and her Folk Masters band: **\$27** advance, **\$30** door (includes admission to the panel discussion at 6:15 p.m. and the dance workshop at 7:30 p.m.); free admission for kids under 12.
- Singing and Instrumental Workshops: **\$30** each
- Festival Pass: **\$55** (includes admission to all workshops, the panel discussion and the party)
- Reservations may be made online at brownpapertickets.com/event/2524195 or by calling **800-838-3006**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Esma on YouTube: [youtube.com/watch?v=nUBmm45H43o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUBmm45H43o)

Voice of Roma: voiceofroma.com

Kitka: kitka.org

High-resolution photos and **CDs** of Esma are available upon request.