**Sirba Octet**

In 2003, violinist Richard Schmoucler took up the challenge of forming an ensemble that combines conventional classical music with traditional eastern European folk. He brought together five fellow musicians from the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchestre National de France and the Orchestre de l’Opéra de Paris, along with a pianist, a cimbalom player and arranger Cyrille Lehn to create Sirba Octet.

Richard Schmoucler, violin & artistic director

Laurent Manaud-Pallas, violin

Grégoire Vecchioni, viola

Claude Giron, cello

Bernard Cazauran, double bass

Philippe Berrod, clarinet

Christophe Henry, piano

Iurie Morar, cimbalom

Cyrille Lehn, arranger

This unique ensemble which offers a fresh perspective on the klezmer, yiddish and tzigane repertoire released their first album A Yiddishe Mame on Naïve Classic in 2005. A personal selection of acoustic music steeped in the melodies of Eastern Europe, the album is an anthology of songs with Slavic and Yiddish flavours, memories of founder Richard Schmoucler’s own family gatherings and celebrations. This music, a cornerstone of his culture and his personal consciousness, inspired him to envision an array of performances and to reintroduce this music into his life and his career as a classical musician.

**A BRAND NEW GENRE: CLASSICAL WORLD!**

While these melodies, characterized by the migrations of the communities they come from, are naturally imbued with emotion and finesse, it is the colour, depth and originality of Sirba Octet’s particular musical rewriting which sets them apart. Eight musicians with an exceptional gift for spectacular and sensitive interpretation, Sirba Octet stand out from the conventional circuit, skillfully blending genres as well as combining folk instruments with orchestral and chamber music to great effect. Whatsmore, Sirba Octet has developed this sphere of music into an entirely new genre, ‘Classical World’.

**SIRBA OCTET: THE ART OF CELEBRATION, AS IT WERE**

The common theme throughout the ensemble’s series of shows since 2003, has been a complete immersion into Eastern European folk music. Tantz ! which means ‘dance’ in Yiddish, provided a starting point for exploring the traditional sound of klezmer and tzigane celebratory dances from Romania, Moldova, Russia and Hungary. The album Tantz !, which came out in 2015 on Dolce Volta, was rereleased by Deutsche Grammophon in 2017. On the same label, in 2018, Sirba Octet released Sirba Orchestra ! an album recorded with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Liège led by Christian Arming with Nicolas Kedroff at the balalaika. A three-way dialogue deeply rooted in the great Russian melodies which intermingle with a bountiful miscellany of Romanian, Yiddish, Moldovan and tzigane folk music. Later, Sirba Octet chose to produce a version without the orchestra but with the same compelling energy, giving the ensemble an opportunity to work with Alexeï Birioukov at the balalaika.

**SIRBA OCTET ON TOUR**

The Sirba Octet have performed their shows both as an octet and with a symphony orchestra (A Yiddishe Mame, Tantz !, Sirba Orchestra ! and Sirbalalaïka) at renowned concert halls and festivals in France and abroad. These include: Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Théâtre de la Ville, Philharmonie de Paris, Shanghai Concert Hall, Japan’s Hyogo Performing Arts Center, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Vienna’s Musikverein, Russia’s Ural Philharmonic Orchestra, La Folle Journée in Nantes and Japan, Festival de Pâques, Martha Argerich Festival in Hamburg, Flâneries Musicales de Reims, Festival International de Piano de la Roque d’Anthéron, Festival de l’Abbaye de Sylvanès, and the national concert halls of Perpignan, Brest and la Rochelle, among others. They have also appeared for longer runs at Théâtre Mogador, L’Européen, La Cigale and Espace Pierre Cardin in Paris.

Sirba Octet have performed with Belgium’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Liège, Austria’s Tonküstler Orchester, Japan’s Orchestra of the Hyogo Performing Arts Center, Russia’s Tatarstan Symphony Orchestra, Germany’s WDR Funkhausorchester Köln and the Trier Philharmonic Orchestra , Switzerland’s Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Biel Solothurn Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de Lille, the Orchestre Pau/Pays de Béarn, the Orchestre de Cannes, the Orchestre Lamoureux, the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, the Orchestre de Bretagne and the Orchestre Victor Hugo Franche Comté among others. They have played under the baton of Christian Arming, Yutaka Sado, Alexander Sladkovsky, Enrico Delamboye, Kaspar Zehnder, Alexandre Bloch, Fayçal Karoui, Benjamin Levy, Rudolf Piehlmayer, Jean-François Verdier and John Axelrod.

Sirba Octet’s discography is acclaimed in the media and has received special recognition, being awarded a Choc Classica and a prize from the European Association for Jewish Culture. The ensemble has also been invited to appear on television programmes such as Musiques en fête live from the Chorégies d’Orange festival, Fauteuils d’Orchestre, Victoires de la Musique Classique, Le plus grand cabaret du monde. France 3 has also made a documentary about them entitled Une journée avec le Sirba Octet et Isabelle Georges and presented by Alain Duault.

**MAJOR ARTISTIC COLLABORATIONS AND COLLECTIVE PROJECTS**

Both new and well-known pieces are often added into Sirba Octet’s performances, thanks to the talent of their indispensable arranger Cyrille Lehn. Echoing the traditional music of Eastern Europe and the musical theatre and variety repertoires, Sirba Octet have collaborated with singer Isabelle Georges for two shows, Du Shtetl à New York and Yiddish Rhapsody, with recordings released in 2008 and 2009 on Naïve Classic, and also with Catherine Lara for Catherine Lara au cœur de l’âme Yiddish, a highly original album released in 2012 on Sony Music.

**TZUSAMEN, IN COLLABORATION WITH A CHILDREN’S CHOIR, PLANNED FOR 2022**

Tsuzamen : Together and united in remembrance of genocide. That of the Jews, the Armenians and the Romani community whose music Sirba Octet seek to cross-pollinate to produce a musical embodiment of solidarity. United for the survival of popular traditions, a symbol of social harmony. In Tsuzamen the songs and instruments convey a collective memory and a forward-looking momentum, driven by a sense of kinship. For this new show, the ensemble needed the regenerative energy of a children’s choir. Naturally, they joined forces with the Orchestre de Paris, who have supported Sirba Octet since the early days, inviting their children’s choir to take part. The project, postponed due to the public health crisis, launched in 2022.