

SARAH SOMMER
CHAI
Folk Ensemble

AL KOL ELEH

HEBREW
SONGS OF HOPE

A FAMILY-FRIENDLY CELEBRATION
FEATURING CHAI, ALUMNI, AND
YOUTH PERFORMERS

PROGRAM

OCT 25 | 2:00
2026 | PM

SEVEN OAKS PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Includes a segment in support of



All funds raised stay in Manitoba.

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 **CONSEIL DES**
ARTS DU
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ARTS COUNCIL

HELP US KEEP GROWING

Thank you so much for joining us today for “**Al Kol Eleh**” and for supporting Israeli music and dance. Our singers, dancers and musicians have worked so hard to present a beautiful show today. Your presence means everything to us.

Chai has also been preparing to represent Canada this spring at **Festival Aviv**, a large-scale cultural and folk-dance festival showcasing Jewish identity and tradition through choreography, music and performance. Our directors and performers will gather in Mexico City with over a thousand performers and choreographers from Israel, Panama, Miami, San Diego and Mexico. Support from you, our families, friends and fans, is essential for this incredible opportunity to learn and to represent Winnipeg’s Jewish community internationally.

Chai would not be what it is today without the support of our generous donors. If you are one of the many friends who have donated to Chai this year, words cannot express what your support means to us. If you haven’t yet had the opportunity to give this year, we invite you to donate today.

Every gift, at every level, not only sustains who we are today but also helps us grow artistically through local workshops, national conferences and large-scale international events like Festival Aviv – opportunities for creative exchange with other Jewish communities around the globe. Every gift helps us enhance our performances, dream bigger, and expand our reach to an even wider audience.

In just under two years from now, the **State of Israel** will celebrate its 80th birthday. How wonderful it would be for Chai to be able to travel once again to the very centre of Jewish life and culture, to share in this milestone celebration. Then, before we know it, 2029 will mark Chai’s 65th anniversary.

With your steadfast support, Chai will continue to engage and inspire young people in our community to embrace Jewish and Israeli performing arts. With your generous support, Chai will continue to impact our local Jewish community, as well as cultural life in Winnipeg, in Canada and beyond. With your invaluable support, Chai will continue to thrive as a shining artistic light for generations to come.

Thank you again for spending your afternoon with us and for your incredible support for Chai.

**THANK YOU FOR
HELPING US BUILD
WHAT COMES NEXT.**



WELCOME!

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are thrilled to welcome you to “Al Kol Eleh,” our first full concert since celebrating Chai’s 60 years of dance, music and memories in November 2024. Our singers, dancers and musicians are so excited to put on an unforgettable show for you today.

The phrase “Al Kol Eleh” comes from the classic 1980 Hebrew song written by beloved Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer. The song is often known by its opening lines about gratitude: “for the honey and the sting” and “for the bitter and the sweet.” These words remind us that we are grateful for it all – the joy and the pain, the celebrations and the hardships we face.

These words are especially poignant in these times. No matter what we face as a people, we continue to dance, to sing, to gather and to celebrate. In the face of hate, we come together to share the beauty of Jewish and Israeli history, heritage and culture, which you will enjoy on stage today.

For more than six decades, the Sarah Sommer Chai Folk Ensemble has been more than a performing ensemble. Chai is a family. It is a way to express pride and joy that spans generations, brings our community together and enriches cultural life in Winnipeg. By welcoming alumni, children of alumni and young performers to our stage, we keep this legacy thriving and strengthen the future of Chai that is unfolding before us.

Today’s concert reflects the shared vision and dedication of our artistic directors, ensemble leaders, crew and performers—past, present, and future. We are deeply grateful to all who contributed to this meaningful collaboration.

Most important, we are grateful to you who continue to love what we do and support our vision. For the next hours and for decades to come, please continue to enjoy our performances. Come to the shows. Listen to the songs at home (you can find us on Spotify and all streaming services!). Continue your invaluable support for Chai and our unwavering sense of hope for the future.

Thank you so much for being here.

TODAH RABAH.

Enjoy the show!

THE CHAI FOLK ARTS COUNCIL

MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

JESSE POPESKI & SARAH SOMMER

This spring, a group of ambitious young performers experienced what it's like to be a member of the Chai

Folk Ensemble. Every week, young dancers entered the studio to learn choreography from Chai's dancers, while young singers gathered around the piano with Chai's musicians to rehearse. Over the past month, the sections came together in full group rehearsals, with over 50 dancers, singers, and instrumentalists of all ages rehearsing the medley that will conclude this afternoon's concert.



Al Kol Eleh: Hebrew Songs of Hope celebrates the music of Naomi Shemer. When we pitched this medley to the young performers, we described her as “the Taylor Swift of Israeli music” - her songs are ubiquitous in Israeli life, so much so that Yerushalayim Shel Zahav has been called a second national anthem. These are some of the first Hebrew lyrics and Israeli melodies that we remember singing as elementary school students 25 years ago, and today another generation becomes familiar with this timeless music.

Continuing the celebration of Full Circle, Chai's 60th anniversary concert, some of our local alumni singers and dancers join as special guests. Like our young performers, alumni have been attending regular rehearsals with our dancers. Today we will dance together, sharing the stage and expressing the joy of the Full Circle that is Chai's 62 year legacy.

As co-artistic directors, this is the third concert we've curated, and we are beginning to establish our identity as directors. Today's concert includes many pillars we consider important: one pillar is a connection to Chai's past, with alumni performers as well as favourite traditional repertoire; another pillar is the inclusion of several recent commissions, including the debut of a brand new energetic piece choreographed in-house by our dance director Rachael Buchwald; a pillar of outreach, of tzedakah, in our collaboration with Manitoba Band Association and in support of CancerCare Manitoba with the Manitoba premiere of Wave of Light; and lastly, a pillar for the future of Chai, with the young performers who will take the stage as special guests today, to become performers in the Chai Folk Ensemble of tomorrow.

CHAI FOLK ARTS COUNCIL INC.

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DASHBOARD MEDIA AGENCY

GRAPHIC DESIGN

THE BRIDGE IDEA

SARAH SOMMER CHAI FOLK ENSEMBLE

ARTISTIC TEAM

CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS - JESSE POPESKI & SARAH SOMMER
DANCE DIRECTOR - RACHAEL BUCHWALD
INTERIM MUSIC DIRECTOR - JESSE POPESKI
VOCAL DIRECTOR - BRADEN GANETSKY

STAGE MANAGER - CHAVA ROSEMBLIT
COSTUME DIRECTOR - SHEENA STEMLER
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT - BEN GOLDSTEIN

GUEST ARTISTS:

RACHEL COOPER - CHOREOGRAPHER/YOUTH REHEARSAL DIRECTOR
SHANI GROISMAN - YOUTH CHOIR REHEARSAL ASSISTANT
JOEL GREEN - ALLEY-O PRODUCTIONS

CHAI PERFORMERS

DANCERS

RAYA BRAUNSTEIN
MIRI ESTEIN*
ALISA FESENKO
ZEUS GONZALES
ZACHARY GORDON
CAROLINE HUNTER
ETHAN KATZ
ANNA MALKEVICH
MADDI PENNER-ADAMO
MICHAEL PETROV
MARA RIVERS**
CAITLIN SARNA
ZAHRA SLUTCHUK
MAGGIE SOKOLSKY*
TALI UCHYTEL
SAMANTHA WALDMAN

SINGERS

NICOL DERMAN
BRADEN GANETSKY
AARON GREAVES
SYDNEY KAY
GUY NATAN MARCUS
LIRON POLESCHUK
HAVIVA POLEVOI
NOAH TRACHTENBERG

MUSICIANS

MANNIE BEN OR (CLARINET)
BRADEN GANETSKY (BASS)
JESSE POPESKI (GUITAR)
SAM ROTHMAN (KEYBOARD)
HILLEL SOMMER (DRUM SET)

*APPRENTICE

**JUNIOR APPRENTICE

YOUTH PERFORMERS

DANCERS

HANNAH BORODITSKY
EMMY BOWYER
ARIEL DORI
MAYA NIKITIN
LINOY SANDLER
NOAM STERLIN
MICHAELA UCHYTEL
LILLY WELTMAN

SINGERS

NAOMI BUKS
LEVI EMANUEL
ALANN MELLON
ADEL SANDLER
LEAH STEINDEL
LIEL STERLIN

CHAI ALUMNI PERFORMERS

DANCERS

CINDY CHODIRKER
ALEXANDRA COOPER-GAMLIEL
LISA DIAMANT
MICHELLE GLASS
RICK MAYHEW
LAINIE ROSNER
RENA SOLOMON
SHEENA STEMLER

SINGERS

TRACY KASNER
RACHEL STEINDEL

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES 2026

JESSE POPESKI

CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR &
INTERIM MUSIC DIRECTOR

Jesse Popeski is a Winnipeg-based guitarist and music educator. He received his Bachelor of Music from the University of Manitoba in 2015. Jesse has toured across Canada with folk trio Casati, and performs regularly in local venues. As an educator, he teaches guitar students of all ages at the Winnipeg Conservatory of Music, and in 2026 was brought on as an instructor at the University of Manitoba.

Jesse joined the Chai Folk Ensemble in 2015, and has taken on many roles in his time with the ensemble, as guitarist, music director, vocal director, and co-artistic director.

Highlights from his time with Chai include travelling to Cuba, performing with alumni at the 60th anniversary concert, and rehearsing with the eager and talented group of young performers in preparation for Al Kol Eleh.



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES 2026

SARAH SOMMER CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Sarah Sommer is an active choral conductor, vocalist and music educator in Winnipeg. She has completed her Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Education from the University of Manitoba, and a Post Baccalaureate diploma in vocal performance under the tutelage of Tracy Dahl. Sarah currently teaches music and performing arts at Technical-Vocational High School. In addition to her role as co-artistic director of the Chai Folk Ensemble, Sarah is also the co-founder and co-artistic director of NUOVOCE Chamber Choir. She has appeared as choir member and soloist with many local ensembles, including Canzona, Dead of Winter (Camerata Nova), the Winnipeg Singers, and the Shaarey Zedek Quartet, as well as cantorial soloist with Services on the River. Sarah's other directing credits, past and present, include:

2026 Guest Conductor for WSD's Early Years Choral Celebrations, the Etz Chayim Synagogue Choir, Kolot Community Voices, Yona Children's choir, guest conductor of LRSD's choral celebration, and assisting with the Winnipeg Girls' Choir.

Sarah is grateful to Chai for the opportunity to help tell stories through music and dance that celebrate and preserve Jewish culture and connect communities across generations.



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES 2026

RACHAEL BUCHWALD

DANCE DIRECTOR

Rachael Buchwald has spent most of her life dancing! Rachael's formal training began with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School's Recreational Division's Intensive Training Program where she studied ballet, pointe, and modern. She also danced in the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School's Recreational Division's Dance Ensemble Program training in jazz, contemporary, and hip-hop.

Rachael furthered her professional ballet training at the Colorado Ballet Academy's Summer Training Program and at the Goh Ballet Academy's Ballet Academic Program in Vancouver. Since 2017, Rachael has been a dancer with the Sarah Sommer Chai Folk Ensemble, travelling with the group to Cuba, Israel and Ukraine. Rachael was appointed Rehearsal Director in 2022 and now serves as Dance Director. In this role, she has enjoyed preserving traditional Chai pieces as well as exploring and setting new choreographic works alongside the Artistic Team. She values her time in the studio with her dancers and is continually inspired by the dedication and growth of her dancers.

Outside of dance, Rachael has a Bachelor of Health Studies from the University of Manitoba, and is a current student of law at Robson Hall.



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES 2026

BRADEN GANETSKY

VOCAL DIRECTOR

Braden Ganetsky has been playing bass since age 10 and singing since age 11, and it wasn't too many years until he joined Chai doing both of these.

Braden joined the Chai singers in 2013 as a tenor, and he joined the Chai band in 2015 as the bassist, where he sings from the orchestra pit. To this day, Braden is grateful to have Chai as his main artistic outlet, to continue singing and playing bass, and to bring his passion for music to the Chai singers as the vocal director.

Outside of Chai, Braden also sings under Sarah Sommer's direction in the NUOVOCE Chamber Choir.

In his professional life, he holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Manitoba, and works as a Professional Engineer in software.



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES 2026

SHEENA STEMLER

COSTUME DIRECTOR

Sheena started as a dancer with Chai in 2004 and has been involved with the organization ever since in several roles: board member, dance co-director, archivist, and volunteer. Originally drawn to Chai after seeing the beautiful blue and white costumes at an annual concert, Sheena is happy to come full circle and help the current dancers shine on stage.

A life-long dancer and supporter of Winnipeg's vibrant arts and culture community, she has worked at several not-for-profit organizations, including the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada, and she is the board chair of Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers.

Sheena holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Winnipeg and a master's degree in Information Management from the University of Toronto and works in communications and knowledge management at Manitoba Hydro.



DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES 2026

CHAVA ROSEMBLIT STAGE MANAGER

Chava Rosemblit has been the Stage Manager for the Chai Folk Ensemble since Folklorama 2010. Known for her calm problem-solving skills and ability to keep productions running smoothly, she manages everything backstage — from coordinating performers to making sure every show goes off without a hitch, no matter the theatre or country.

Chava also serves as a translator for the group in Hebrew and Spanish when traveling, helping the ensemble navigate international performances with ease.

Outside the stage, she works as a Supply Chain Specialist and holds a degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management —skills that come in handy when managing both global supply chains and busy backstage environment.



GUEST BIOGRAPHIES 2026

RACHEL COOPER

CHOREOGRAPHER

Rachel Cooper is a former student of Royal Winnipeg Ballet School and a graduate of the School of Contemporary Dancers Senior Professional Program. With a background in ballet, jazz, and modern dance, she has developed a deep appreciation for both the technical and expressive aspects of movement.

A dedicated educator and leader in the dance community, Rachel currently serves as the Dance Program Director at Maples Collegiate, is a faculty member at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School and the Shelley Shearer School of Dance, and previously held the role of Dance Director for the Chai Folk Ensemble.

She is also the President of the Manitoba Association of Dance Educators.

Rachel's commitment to her craft has been recognized with several prestigious honours, including the University of Winnipeg Gold Medal, multiple Manitoba Arts Council Grants, and a scholarship to the Limón Intensive in New York.



GUEST BIOGRAPHIES 2026

RACHAEL BUCHWALD

CHOREOGRAPHER

Rachael Buchwald is proud to present Machol Ha'teruf. The choreography reflects the tension between panic and routine. In the "dance of madness", the dancers move through waves of chaos, contrasted by softer sections that represent a return to normalcy.

The innocence referenced in the lyrics is no longer whole, yet a shared melody remains. Ultimately, the piece is about resilience and the ability to move through fear, return to life, and hold on to hope.

Rachael is deeply proud of this piece and of the dancers who brought it to life.



GUEST BIOGRAPHIES 2026

SHANI GROISMAN MUSIC EDUCATOR

Shani Groisman is an Israeli-born pianist and music educator based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She moved to Canada at the age of nine and has since developed a deep passion for music, performance, and teaching. Shani is currently studying piano at the Desautels Faculty of Music at the University of Manitoba, where she continues to refine her musicianship and performance skills. In addition to her studies, Shani has been teaching piano for the past six years, working with students of various ages and levels. Fluent in both English and Russian, she offers lessons in either language and enjoys helping students build confidence, strong technical foundations, and a lasting love of music. Shani also has a strong background in musical theatre, with experience performing in productions that combine singing, acting, and movement. Her love for collaborative music-making has shaped her long-term goal of becoming a music educator specializing in musical theatre and choir direction.

Her experience working with children, combined with her musical training and love of performance, continues to shape her path toward a future in music education and the performing arts.



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1 ZEMER LACH A SONG FOR YOU זמר לך

MEDLEY CONTAINS:

BO'U VE-NASHIR
COME AND SING
בואו ונשיר

CHOREOGRAPHY: JESSICA CASIRO
MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: AVRAHAM GISLASON & CASEY CHISICK
VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK, ADAPTED BY DAVID VAMOS

ORIGINAL:
LYRICS: AVRAHAM BEN ZAHAV & LEAH EMANUEL
MUSIC: TRAD. FOLK MELODY & NIMROD TENEH

This joyful opening medley invites us into a celebration of music and community. Encapsulating the spirit of Israeli folk tradition, this piece captures the joyful optimism that has long characterized communal singing and dance in Israel—from the country's humble beginnings of kibbutz gatherings and youth movements to family celebrations and festivals. The rich harmonies and spirited movement reflect the vibrant communal spirit that lies at the core of Israeli folk culture. At its heart, the medley is an invitation: to sing, to gather, and to celebrate the enduring power of music to unite people across generations and backgrounds.

*Let us join hands together,
Sons and daughters together we will march,
The song will be sent across the sea,
To the children of all the world.*

2

SHIREI RO'IM VE-OHAVIM SONGS OF SHEPHERDS AND LOVERS שירי רועים ואוהבים

MEDLEY CONTAINS:

SHIR HA-SHOMER - SONG OF THE WATCHMAN-שיר השומר
RO'EH VE-RO'AH - THE SHEPHERD & SHEPHERDESS-רועה ורועה
EREV SHACH - EVENING LOW-ערב שח
SHIR HA-KAD - THE JUG SONG -שיר הכד
DEBKA RAFIACH - DEBKA RAFIACH -דבקה רפיח

CHOREOGRAPHY: TAMAR BARR

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK

VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK, ADAPTED BY DAVID VAMOS

ORIGINAL:

LYRICS: EMANUEL LIN, MATITYAHU SHALEM, EMANUEL ZAMIR, AVRAHAM CHALFI

MUSIC: BINYAMIN OMER, MATITYAHU SHALEM, EMANUEL ZAMIR, MORDECHAI ZEIRA, TRAD. BEDOUIN MELODY

This sweeping medley pays tribute to the early pioneers of Israeli song and dance, drawing inspiration from the pastoral landscapes, communal ideals, and romantic imagery that shaped the cultural identity of the young State of Israel. Featuring a series of vignettes of beloved folk classics, the piece evokes a world of shepherds, watchmen, campfires, and communal celebration. Influenced by Middle Eastern, Bedouin, and Eastern European musical traditions, the medley reflects the cultural mosaic that shapes Israeli folk music and dance. Performed alongside Chai alumni for the first time, this piece has been a long-standing favourite amongst Chai repertoire.

Interesting fact: *Debka Rafiach*, the final piece of the medley, is attributed to Moshe Presser, who spent a lot of time in the 1940s interacting with the Bedouin communities of the Negev. He learned many of their songs and dances, and brought them back to his home communities. During *Operation Agatha* of June, 1946, Moshe was captured by British Authorities and detained in the Rafah internment camp, where he shared and taught some of these 'new' melodies and dances to boost morale, one of which he coined *Debka Rafiach*.

3

MIZMOR LAYLA NIGHT SONG מזמור לילה

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK

VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: DAVID VAMOS

ORIGINAL:

LYRICS: LEAH GOLDBERG

MUSIC: ACHINOAM NINI & GIL DOR

Made famous by Yemenite-Israeli singer Achinoam Nini, *Mizmor Layla* is a deeply evocative song that journeys from darkness into light.

The song's opening in a minor key reflects the bleakness of the dark night as it describes a world where "all the stars were hidden away" and "there is no ray of light... from the North to Yemen in the South."

Later, the song shifts into a major key, signaling the arrival of light and hope. The heartfelt plea to "light a white candle in my heart's black tent" becomes a powerful metaphor for renewal and faith, emphasizing the resilience and enduring spirit of the Yemenite Jewry.

Mizmor Layla is a testament to the enduring light that shines even in the darkest night.

4

DEZILE A MI AMOR TELL MY BELOVED

CHOREOGRAPHY: REBECA SHAMAH

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: CAMERON DENBY

VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: JESSE POPESKI

ORIGINAL:

TRAD. SERPHARDIC, AS PERFORMED BY MOR KARBASI

Dezile a Mi Amor by Israeli-Sephardic folk artist Mor Karbasi, is both a musical and dance-inspired reflection of the journeys of Sephardic Jewish communities across generations. Infused with Moroccan and North African rhythms, the piece traces the movement of Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, many of whom resettled in Morocco and across North Africa before later immigrating to Israel and other parts of the diaspora.

Sung in Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), the song carries the sounds, language, and movement of a culture shaped by centuries of travel and resettlement.

5

ZEMER NUGEH MELANCHOLY SONG זמר נוגה

MUSICAL & VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK

ORIGINAL:

MUSIC: YOSSI MUSTAKI

LYRICS: RACHEL

This poignant setting of the poetry of Rachel (1890-1931), the first widely recognized female Jewish poet in Israel, captures the quiet ache of longing, love, and memory. Rachel's poetry became a defining voice of early modern Hebrew literature, expressing both personal vulnerability and the emotional landscape of a generation building new lives in the Land of Israel.

Set to music by Yossi Mustaki, Zemer Nugeh unfolds with quiet, haunting simplicity. The melody keeps the poetry front and center, inviting a moment of reflection and tenderness.

6

SISU ET YERUSHALAYIM **REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM** **שִׂשׁוּ אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**

MEDLEY CONTAINS:

VE-HA'ER EINEINU
ENLIGHTEN OUR EYES
וְהָאֵר עֵינֵינוּ

CHOREOGRAPHY: MEMO TRIESTMAN

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: CHRISTOPHER WOLF/CASEY CHISICK

VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: DAVID VAMOS

ORIGINAL:

LYRICS: ISAIAH, CHAPTER 60-66 & JEWISH SHABBAT LITURGY

MUSIC: AKIVA NOF & SHLOMO CARLEBACH

Taken from the words of the book of Isaiah and from the siddur, this joyful medley invites all who love her to celebrate Jerusalem.

With vibrant rhythms and spirited movement, it reflects not only reverence for the city's sacred history, but also the jubilation and pride in its present and future.

7

HALLELUYAH הללויה

MUSICAL & VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: JESSE POPESKI

ORIGINAL:

LYRICS: PSALMS, CHAPTER 15

MUSIC: YONATAN RAZEL

With the rich harmonies of the Chai singers, this piece brings an uplifting sense of joy.

Drawn from the sacred poetry of the Book of Psalms, this lively musical setting of *Halleluyah* is an expression of gratitude, humility, and praise.

Composer and artist Yonatan Razel, known for blending contemporary Israeli music with Jewish spiritual tradition—set this ancient text with a soulful and lively flair, creating a piece that feels both rooted in tradition and relevant in contemporary daily life.

8

MACHOL HA-TERUF THE DANCE OF MADNESS מחול הטי'רוף

CHOREOGRAPHY: RACHAEL BUCHWALD
MUSICAL & VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: JESSE POPESKI

ORIGINAL:
LYRICS: SHIR SOFER & OFER PINHAS
MUSIC: OFER PINHAS

Wild, theatrical, and electrifying, *Machol Ha-teruf* explores the chaos of movement, rhythm, and range of human emotion. Blending contemporary Israeli musical styles with explosive choreography, the piece pulses with relentless energy, capturing moments of frenzy, joy, tension, and release.

Driven by dynamic percussion and bold contrasts, the work reflects the juxtaposition of emotions and experiences that Israelis face in everyday life: moments of fear, chaos, loss, and uncertainty, punctuated by moments of joy, softness, and normalcy. These experiences are represented by the stark contrasts in music and movement of the piece.

This performance marks Chai's premiere of the original choreography created by Chai's own dance director, Rachael Buchwald.

*The Hebrew word *machol* (מחול) represents the traditional circle dances that are synonymous with Israeli folk dance.

INCLUDING CHAI'S YOUTH CHOIR

9

WAVE OF LIGHT



COMPOSER: PETER MEECHAN

Wave of Light is a moving contemporary musical work that speaks to resilience, compassion, and the power of collective hope. Composed by Canadian composer Peter Meechan, the piece was created as part of the Manitoba Band Association's initiative supporting CancerCare Manitoba, using music as a vehicle for healing, remembrance, and community connection.

Through soaring melodies and luminous harmonies, this work for orchestra and choir evokes the image of light spreading outward—an expression of comfort and strength shared among individuals and communities during times of hardship. Performed by Chai, joined by Chai's Youth Choir, this performance brings special meaning to the work's message of hope and renewal.

*Chai's performance of this work is part of a series of performances for Manitoba Music Month's month-long premier.

10 **ELECHA EKRA YA** I WILL CALL TO YOU, O G-D אליך אקרא יה

CHOREOGRAPHY: ELAN MARCHINKO

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: CAMERON DENBY

VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: JESSE POPESKI

ORIGINAL:

MUSIC: DAVID WEINKRANZ & TRAD. MOROCCAN-JEWISH PIYYUT

LYRICS: TEHILLIM 128 & RABBI SHLOMOH ZRIHEN

AS PERFORMED BY YOSSI AZULAY

Elecha Ekra Yah ("I call to You, O G-d") is a joyful song of praise. Its choreography highlights the strong Moroccan-Jewish influence that heavily shapes the diversity of Israel's culture, incorporating elements of Flamenco, North African, and street dance forms.

INCLUDING CHAI ALUMNI DANCERS

11 HEM RAKDU YECHEFIM

THEY DANCED BAREFOOT

הם רקדו יחפים

CHOREOGRAPHY: MEMO TREISTMAN
MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: RICK BOUGHTON

ORIGINAL:
MUSIC: YEHUDA POLIKER

This lively instrumental piece choreographed by Mexico City's Memo Treistman has been a staple in Chai's repertoire for many years. A few years ago, Chai had the opportunity to perform this piece with the WSO!

As stated in the title, *Hem Rakdu Yechweifim* is a tribute to the Israeli tradition of dancing barefoot.

This afternoon, Chai will be joined by alumni dancers to celebrate the piece's history and unite dancers from all eras of Chai's past and present.

12 **OR GADOL** A GREAT LIGHT אור גדול

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: DAVID VAMOS & JESSE POPESKI
VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: DAVID VAMOS

ORIGINAL:
MUSIC & LYRICS: AMIR DADON

Be prepared to be uplifted by the soaring voices of the Chai singers.

This inspiring contemporary Israeli anthem by Amir Dadon shares a powerful message of perseverance, healing, and finding light in moments of darkness. *Or Gadol* speaks to the universal search for hope and meaning, reminding the audience that even through hardship and uncertainty, “a great light” can still emerge.

Chai premiered this song on their 2022 album of the same name, *A Great Light*.

INCLUDING CHAI ALUMNI AND YOUTH

13 MACHROZET NAOMI SHEMER

NAOMI SHEMER MEDLEY

מחרוזת נעמי שמר

MEDLEY CONTAINS:

YERUSHALAYIM SHEL ZAHAV - JERUSALEM OF GOLD- **שיר השומר**
ZAMAR NODED - WANDERING SINGER- **זמר נודד**
OD LO AHAVTI DAI - MY LOVE IS INCOMPLETE- **עוד לא אהבתי די**
ANASHIM TOVIM - GOOD PEOPLE - **אנשים טובים**
MACHAR - TOMORROW - **מחר**
AL KOL ELEH - OVER ALL THESE - **על כל אלה**

CHOREOGRAPHY: RACHEL COOPER

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK, ADAPTED BY JESSE POPESKI

VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: CASEY CHISICK

ORIGINAL:

MUSIC & LYRICS: NAOMI SHEMER

This celebratory medley honours the enduring legacy of Naomi Shemer, one of Israel's most beloved composers and lyricists. Often referred to as the "First Lady of Israeli Song," Shemer's music helped define the emotional and cultural soundtrack of Israel through melodies that captured the beauty of the land, the complexity of national identity, and the intimate moments of everyday life. The medley is book-ended by two of Shemer's most well-known anthems:

Yerushalayim Shel Zahav: this haunting and iconic melody is often regarded as Israel's unofficial second national anthem. The song became a symbol of longing and hope, expressing the Jewish people's millennia-old dream of returning to their beloved Jerusalem.

Al Kol Eleh: a heartfelt prayer of gratitude for life's simple gifts and everyday blessings, in spite of hardship.

Featuring performers from multiple generations of the Chai community, this piece is both a tribute to Naomi Shemer's extraordinary artistic legacy and a celebration of the enduring connections forged through music, memory, and shared cultural heritage. This performance also marks the premiere of original choreography created by a Chai alumni dance director, Rachel Cooper, continuing the tradition of artistic collaboration across generations.



Today, we perform this special composition as part of a global musical movement throughout the month of May.

We are proud to support



All funds raised stay in Manitoba.

and their mission to provide hope, healing, and research for families in our community.

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

If you wish to contribute, a donation box for cash gifts is located in the foyer.

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Thank you to our generous donors who have supported us this year.

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JOYCE & SID ROSENHEK
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NAOMI SOMMER, HART GREENBERG & FAMILY
ROBYN RYPP & ARNIE USISKIN
PAULETTE & LORNE WEISS

\$180 TO \$359

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SAMANTHA MORRY & STEVEN BAKER
MICHAEL & DEBI BASS
CAREY & HARRIET BORODITSKY
AVROM & FAYANNE CHARACH

(continues in next page)

\$180 TO \$359 (continues)

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\$18 TO \$179

SUSAN ALBERSHEIM
ANONYMOUS X 2
SHAYLA SOLOMON & ZACK ANTEL
MICHAEL AVERBACH
TAMAR BARR
MARIE BARRETT

(continues in next page)

\$18 TO \$179 (continues)

DONNA LAZAR & MARTIN BILLINKOFF
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JUNE BLACK
JESSICA CASIRO BRADBURY
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KARLA BERBRAYER & ALLEN KRAUT
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THANK YOU!

We apologize for any errors or omissions received after our deadline.

SARAH SOMMER
CHAI
Folk Ensemble



JEWISH
FOUNDATION
— OF MANITOBA —

THE FUTURE OF CHAI

The Chai Folk Ensemble organizational endowment fund is an essential cornerstone of its success as a cultural arts group.

By helping grow the Chai Folk Ensemble endowment, you ensure they have an annual flow of income that can be relied on.

Any contribution you make to Chai's endowment fund will also be matched through the Foundation's **FundMatch II** initiative.

The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba's mission is to encourage and facilitate the creation and growth of endowment funds to enable our community to realize its full potential.

PLEASE HELP GROW OUR ENDOWMENT



Tap or Scan for
more information

To support the Chai Endowment contact the
Jewish Foundation of Manitoba at

204.477.7520 | 1.855.284.1918

WWW.JEWISHFOUNDATION.ORG

BE PART OF WHAT COMES NEXT

Thank you so much for joining us today for “**Al Kol Eleh**” and for supporting Israeli music and dance. Our singers, dancers and musicians have worked so hard to present a beautiful show today. Your presence means everything to us.

Chai has also been preparing to represent Canada this spring at **Festival Aviv**, a large-scale cultural and folk-dance festival showcasing Jewish identity and tradition through choreography, music and performance. Our directors and performers will gather in Mexico City with over a thousand performers and choreographers from Israel, Panama, Miami, San Diego and Mexico. Support from you, our families, friends and fans, is essential for this incredible opportunity to learn and to represent Winnipeg’s Jewish community internationally.

Chai would not be what it is today without the support of our generous donors. If you are one of the many friends who have donated to Chai this year, words cannot express what your support means to us. If you haven’t yet had the opportunity to give this year, we invite you to donate today.

Every gift, at every level, not only sustains who we are today but also helps us grow artistically through local workshops, national conferences and large-scale international events like Festival Aviv – opportunities for creative exchange with other Jewish communities around the globe. Every gift helps us enhance our performances, dream bigger, and expand our reach to an even wider audience.

In just under two years from now, the **State of Israel** will celebrate its 80th birthday. How wonderful it would be for Chai to be able to travel once again to the very centre of Jewish life and culture, to share in this milestone celebration. Then, before we know it, 2029 will mark Chai’s 65th anniversary.

With your steadfast support, Chai will continue to engage and inspire young people in our community to embrace Jewish and Israeli performing arts. With your generous support, Chai will continue to impact our local Jewish community, as well as cultural life in Winnipeg, in Canada and beyond. With your invaluable support, Chai will continue to thrive as a shining artistic light for generations to come.

**THANK YOU AGAIN FOR
SPENDING YOUR AFTERNOON
WITH US AND FOR YOUR
INCREDIBLE SUPPORT FOR CHAI.**

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