

A Taste of Persia

Sourena Sefati, santour, vocalist
Gregory Gutin, percussion

Saturday, November 30, 2019
Ballroom
7:30 p.m.

Historic Plaza Hotel
Las Vegas, New Mexico

presented by
Meadow City Academy of Music
Ronald Maltais, artistic director

Heir to a Persian musical heritage that stretches back millennia, Iranian santour virtuoso Sourena Sefati carries that tradition into the modern era with stunningly original compositions that reveal the extraordinary breadth of expression concealed in this ancient instrument's small wooden frame. The grandfather of China's yanqin, Eastern Europe's cimbalon, and the United States' hammered dulcimer, the santour is played with delicate felt-tipped mallets, or *mezrabs*. Its structure has changed little since its first representation in inscriptions in Susa, Iran, dating back to 699 BC.

Born in Ramsar, a small, beautiful city in Northern Iran, Sefati fell under the sway of the santour upon his first experience with the instrument at age 11, dedicating his life to mastering this trapezoidal box's 72 metal strings. Sefati earned a bachelor's degree in music in 2002 from the University of Tehran and went on to achieve a master's degree in Iranian music performance in 2009 from Art University in Tehran, where he won the award for Best Composer of Iranian Music. In his native country, Sefati launched a successful career as a performer, a recording artist with appearances on more than 50 albums, and as an in-demand composer with numerous commissions. He has appeared in concerts in Africa, Asia and Europe, both as a member of prestigious ensembles and as a soloist. He has appeared as a featured soloist with the Iran Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra, the Iranian Chamber Orchestra and the Mehrnavazan National Orchestra. In 2016, his album *Az Roozegare Rang Amiz (From Deceitful Ages)* won him the award for Best Composer of Iran. Sefati dedicated himself to teaching at Art University and Elmi-Karbordi University in Tehran from 2008 to 2014. In 2014 he published *Dorrab—117 Etudes for Santour*, the first work of its kind for the instrument, offering a structured approach to santour technique. In addition to his accomplishments as an instrumentalist, Sefati is a dedicated vocalist, having devoted significant time to learning the technique of Persian singing called *Avaz*.

In 2014, Sefati moved to the United States, allowing him the opportunity to spread awareness of his beloved motherland's musical heritage and his own classical compositions, which are marked by lyricism, rhythmic complexity and fast tempi requiring highly technical playing. In 2015, Sefati started working with Rahim AlHaj, the Iraqi oud master who settled in Albuquerque. In 2016, they first performed together at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and Sefati continues to tour the world as a member of the Rahim AlHaj Trio. They released the album *One Sky* in March 2018 on Smithsonian Folkways. In 2017, Sefati organized the

Alborz Trio with Deborah Ungar (clarinet) and Gregory Gutin (percussion), performing Sefati's original works and traditional Persian compositions in regional concerts. In 2018, Sefati established the NuAeen Ensemble with Mojgan Shajarian, Persian singer, Pejman Hadadi, percussionist, and Ali Pajooeshgar, oud player. He released his album *Arghavan* with Mojgan Shajarian in 2019.

In this program, Sefati will mainly perform compositions from his latest album *The Sound of Peace*. The pieces include "To my beloved Motherland," "Holy Peace," "Migration," "Gazelle," "Improvisation in Nava Scale," "A Kurdish Music Piece (Kabuki)," and others.

Meadow City Academy of Music (MCAM), founded by artistic director Ronald Maltais in the spring of 2017, has set out to provide excellent musical/dance training and performances for the Las Vegas, New Mexico, community. The academy seeks to present professional New Mexico musicians and dancers in venues throughout our city. To date the academy has featured 62 performing artists from New Mexico and 4 visiting artists from New York. Previous Meadow City Academy of Music events include 13 concerts, 4 Flamenco shows, 10 dance classes and 5 theater screenings at 7 Las Vegas venues. Due to the generosity of our donors, we are committed to offering music scholarships to talented Las Vegas youth. Please visit us at www.meadowcitymusic.org.

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Admission: \$10

Indigo Theater, Las Vegas, NM

