

Bogdan Djukic • violin, percussion

Bogdan's passionate virtuosity and electrifying stage presence make him a fan favourite at Beyond the Pale live shows. A captivating performer in every sense, Bogdan's magnetic personality and infectious joy in playing music radiates to both the audience and his bandmates. His background in classical music combines with a deep affinity for folk music to create the perfect blend of precision and soul. A former winner of three national violin championships in his native Yugoslavia, Bogdan came to Canada in 1999 and has since had extensive performance experience in klezmer, classical, Mariachi, Latin and Serbian folk music. Bogdan is also a member of the touring violin stage show *Bowfire*, the jazz/Balkan fusion group *Blok*, and the *Mirobolus String Trio*.

Aleksandar Gajic • violin, viola

Aleksandar Gajic brings a distinctive personal style and interpretive nuance to Beyond the Pale's music. He contributes unique original compositions and arrangements to the group's repertoire, and his amazing virtuosity is evident at all times whether soloing or providing strong rhythmic accompaniment. Aleksandar has a distinguished career in classical, chamber, and symphonic music, but also bears a deep affinity for folk and world music. In his native Yugoslavia Aleksandar was a member, soloist, and concert master with a number of the country's leading orchestras, including the Belgrade Philharmonic and both the Symphony and Chamber Orchestras of Radio and Television of Serbia. Aleksandar was also first violinist for seven years in the renowned Bellotti String Quartet. Since arriving in Canada Aleksandar has performed with a number of leading ensembles in the Toronto area.

Bret Higgins • bass

A founding member of the band, Bret's bass is the pulse at the heart of Beyond the Pale's music, driving the group with his impeccable timing, muscular presence, and rock-solid groove. His background in jazz and improvised string music broadens the palette of musical ideas at play in BTP. Bret studied at Humber College and has performed/recorded with a number of other artists, including Hilario Duran, Lee Pui Ming, Tony Quarrington, and Yale Strom. Bret is also founder and leader of the *Mirobolus String Trio*, and has received grants for composition and sound recording from the Ontario Arts Council.

Milos Popovic • accordion

Milos is known for his masterful technique, astounding virtuosity, and eclectic tastes. An exceedingly intense performer, when Milos gets into the "zone" his focus is unmatched, producing fiery and highly inventive solos. His broad musical palette encompasses traditional folk styles, classical music, jazz, and much more, resulting in a truly singular style which frequently shatters expectations of what the accordion is capable of. Beginning on accordion at age 8, Milos completed music college in his native Belgrade, Serbia, before moving to Canada in 1990, thereafter earning a degree in classical accordion at University of Toronto (B.Mus), under the tutelage of Joseph Macerello. Milos has won a number of contemporary new music competitions.

Eric Stein • mandolin, mandocello, cimbalom

Beyond the Pale's founder and leader, Eric's fiery mandolin style and sharp musical vision have guided BTP throughout its history. A versatile multi-instrumentalist, his eclectic tastes and background in rock, funk and bluegrass are always evident, particularly in his award-winning, genre-bending original compositions. Eric's deep knowledge of klezmer music has earned him stature not only as a performing artist with numerous groups (*BTP*, *Hu Tsa Tsa*, *Socalled*, *Toronto Mandolin Orchestra*), but as a leading lecturer, educator, and artistic curator in the contemporary Jewish music world. A longtime faculty member at the *KlezKanada Festival*, he has recently joined the faculty of *KlezKamp*, and is currently the Artistic Director of Toronto's *Ashkenaz Festival*. Eric was educated at McGill University (B.A., M.A.).

Martin van de Ven • clarinet

A unique stylist, Martin brings fire, elegance and humour to his performance of klezmer music with Beyond the Pale. On both clarinet and bass clarinet Martin's explosive solos can rouse an audience to a frenzy, but he's also an extremely sensitive player, providing perfectly subtle ensemble parts to support the group. His daring original compositions carve new musical territory, rooted in traditional folk styles but informed by Jazz, Classical, and New

Short Band Bio, Quotes, and Performance Highlights

Music. A mainstay of the Canadian klezmer scene for well over a decade, Martin is a former member of the *Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band* and is a frequent performer and instructor at klezmer music festivals around the world. He has published two instructional volumes of his klezmer transcriptions and has composed and performed music for many film, television, theatre, and dance productions. Martin is a graduate of Queen's University (M.Mus).