

malka
& joso



FOREVER

Malka & Josko were a major force in bringing about the change in perception that saw the Ethnic, the Immigrant, the Newcomer in Canada, not as aliens, but as importers of vitality, hope, daring, ancient and avant-garde sophistication, humour and culture.

Today, Canada supports a vital world music scene, with artists who perform everything from Spanish flamenco to Yiddish folk. When Malka & Josko launched their careers they were their own "scene"—any song not performed in English was considered "exotic." Yet their albums for Capitol were unlikely hits of the 1960s, outselling many of the label's English-language albums. "At a time when folk singers sang as if detached from their bodies and emotions, Malka & Josko came on the scene oozing sexuality and passion, proving that while the words are important, how you sing them is what makes the performance 'art'", recalls the painter Helen Lucas. "Theirs

was a partnership that legends are made of... they made quaint and nostalgic songs of the past refreshingly contemporary."

"Many of their renditions became classics," says master guitarist Eli Kassner. "They made an immediate impact on the concert scene and went from success to success to become world famous."



"Malka & Josko are Canadian icons..." Joe Florito, author and columnist for the National Post.

Malka Marom, the daughter of a cantor, came to Canada from Israel, and Josko Spralja, the son of a fisherman, from the Dalmatian coast. The two met in Toronto's Yorkville district in early 1963, at an after-hours coffeehouse called The 71. It proved a fateful meeting. As Josko recalls, "Often, at 71, I'd stay on to sing until three in the morning for other artists who dropped by." One of those artists was Eli Kassner. "I used to go frequently and listen to Josko's marvellous voice," remembers Eli. "One day I invited Malka to come with me. She sang a few Hebrew and Yiddish folk songs and Josko instinctively hummed the harmony....their singing sessions were magical from the start."

Soon after they met, Malka and Josko were introduced to the Canadian talent agent Sylvia Train. "I had just received a call from the Lord Simcoe Hotel. They asked me if I could

suggest some talent to open up their new club," recalls Train. "In two minutes flat I had Malka and Josko in my car and on the way to an audition at the Simcoe. They were wonderful, and were hired immediately to open that night. Then panic set in. 'We only know three songs,' they said. 'Sing them twice,' I said."



"In the 1960s we rushed to find seats in the crowded coffeehouses to experience this unique and memorable duo singing international folk songs," David and Sylvia Miller.

The Lord Simcoe agreed to wait three weeks to open their new club with Malka & Joso. Three weeks was not long enough to learn and arrange fifteen songs, as the duo discovered when they walked on stage. Unsure of themselves and their new material, most of which was in a language that was essentially foreign to one or to the other, they clung to each other, and huddled close to the mike they shared, each desperately trying to read the lyrics on the lips of the other. Thus, their style was born.

"With Malka & Joso, one always remembers the visual impact of their performance," recalls Helen Lucas. "Regardless of their very separate personal loves, they sang as if (they were) lovers

– looking at each other as if they had secrets we could not share. This made the watching all the more fascinating. We felt we were eavesdropping ... and we wanted more."

"Joso was lean, dark, and mysterious, while Malka was a bird of paradise, hauntingly beautiful in vibrant plumage, (her) black hair framing perfect features," remembers the writer Sylvia Fraser. "The notes were so full and pure, each one seemed to hang in the smoky air an unnaturally long time before dissolving. Though I didn't understand the words, or the experience that gave birth to them, the authenticity of feeling was unmistakable. They were an elegant surprise. No one else came close."

Although Malka & Joso had seven languages between them, the only language they shared in common at that time was music. Since Joso didn't know English, Malka introduced the songs, translated the lyrics, and invented stories to supplement the short songs that made up a set. Her self-deprecating humour and dramatic presentations of the material added dimension not only to the songs, but also to the personalities of the singers, and made their performance universal. This "filler" would become an integral part of their program.



"On stage, both are instinctively dramatic; with their chiselled profiles linked they create a striking image," wrote Arthur Zeldin in the Toronto Star. "Malka's English, in her introductions to the songs, is delicious, like a powerful Mediterranean wine."



At Mariposa

In the summer of 1964, Malka & Joso played the Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia, Ontario on a bill with Ian & Sylvia, The Travellers, and Gordon Lightfoot. By the following year, record retailer Sam Sniderman was an enthusiastic fan and recommended them to Capitol Records Canada's Paul White. Recalls White: "I didn't meet with Joso at first, but Malka came in to my office and completely charmed me. She was gorgeous. I think (Capitol president) Geoff Racine melted as well. I went to see them at a Yorkville coffeehouse and they were absolutely great together. I signed them right away."



It's only fair to warn you that if you go to see [Malka & Joso] you'll probably have trouble tearing yourself away... So disarming are their personalities and... artistry..." wrote Alex Barris in the Toronto Telegram.

In December 1964, Malka & Joso went in to Toronto's RCA Studios with guitarist Rafael Nuñez and bassist Fred Muscat to begin recording for Capitol. They recorded each song as though it was being performed live — vocals with instruments in one take. The recording session went into overtime, producing enough material for two albums! The first album, *Introducing Malka & Joso*, released in both England and the United States, garnered rave reviews.

As music critic Clyde Gilmour wrote in the Toronto Telegram, "In refreshing contrast to many another contemporary balladeer, Malka & Joso do not specialize in suicidal dirges about lynching, chain gangs, mortgage foreclosures and industrial unrest. They sing about such timeless matters as young love, the serenity of shepherds and the way of a man with a maid."

Malka & Joso's second album, *Mostly Love Songs*, came out in late 1965 - just as the duo won an RPM Gold Leaf Award as the year's Best Folk Group. Their third album, *Jewish Songs*, featuring Hebrew and Yiddish

songs, proved to be another best-seller. Their fourth, *Folk Songs Around The World*, featured "the best" of the tracks from the Malka & Joso recordings. It was released in Britain, France, Holland, and Italy.

Soon after their first album came out, in the depth of winter, Malka & Joso went on a concert tour to the Northwest Territories, the Prairies, and the mountain country of British Columbia. "We were fascinated even by the names of these places," wrote Malka in the Toronto Star. "You see, we both came from hot countries, and names like Cold Lake, Flin Flon, Yellowknife, and Fort St. John sounded



"We fell in love with Canada on that tour," says Malka. Canada loved them in return.

romantic. So we collected thermal underwear and fur coats and flew to Le Pas, our starting point for twenty-eight concerts in thirty-seven days. Such audiences! They came from a hundred miles around. In Roblin, Manitoba, we were the first live professional concert the people had ever seen. They were so excited, they forgot what a racket the heating system made. They had to choose between hearing us and being warm. It was a chilly 40 degrees below; still, they turned off the heat in the hall,



while on the stage they placed a silent heater to keep us warm.."

Joso's knowledge of the sea and boats came in handy at Campbell River, B.C. They were booked to sing at Powell River, across the Georgia Strait, but a vicious snowstorm grounded their plane. Joso went down to the wharf, surveyed the boats tied up there, then said, "You see that little fishing boat? If her captain is a clever seaman, we could cross." The captain was: they made the 35-

mile journey in four very rough hours, arriving at the theatre in Powell River five minutes before concert time. Despite the obstacles winter threw in their path, they didn't miss a single concert during that 20,000-mile tour.

In the fall of 1966, Malka & Joso's "A World of Music" TV show followed the Saturday-night tradition "Hockey Night in Canada." The weekly CBC series took the duo's international repertoire into the living rooms of the nation.



"Congratulations! Your show has been excellent! [It projected] an image of cosmopolitanism that is, let me say it, perfect..." Robert Fulford, Toronto Star.



"In 'The Great Folk 'Scare' of the Sixties,' Malka & Joso were a rarity among those great artists," recalls Shelly Schultz, Vice President of the William Morris Agency in New York. "I first heard about them from Gordon Lightfoot, who urged me to see them. I went and, captivated by their sound, their personal chemistry on stage, and their repertoire, I booked them into Carnegie Hall, on concert tours, for club and TV appearances in the United States." They were favourites of Johnny Carson, Salvador Dali, and Samuel Bronfman.

Before they dissolved their musical partnership in 1967, Malka & Joso were invited to represent Canada at a Royal Command Performance at the Canadian Centennial Ball.

Today, Malka Marom is better known as the author of the novel, "Sulha", which received praise from Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Ann Michaels, and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, as well as from numerous reviewers.

Joso is famous now for his restaurant, Joso's, which is among the most popular in Toronto.

In keeping with their harmony, Malka & Joso, married to their respective spouses, each have two children and both live part of the year in Canada and the other in their respective native lands.



Malka & Joso personify true Canadian Unity," said Jack Meredith in The Windsor Star on March 16, 1967. "To see them perform is to know that there can be no such thing as racial disunity, unless we so-called Canadian-born choose to make it so."

With thanks to:

Eli Kassner, our beloved friend, teacher and master guitarist who introduced us.

Paul White, who invited us to record World Music long before the term was invented. He became and remained our "guardian angel".

Rafael Nuñez, Fred Muscat, Nico Mavridis, and the musicians who recorded each song with us in one take, in the heat of live performance. Their passion and talent transported the music to a realm unique and fresh to this day.

The late Nathan Cohen, the legendary critic and

entertainment editor of the Toronto Star, who recognized the effect of the songs on the Canadian Community long before all others, ourselves included.

Deane Cameron, who initiated the re-release of our recordings on this CD.

Shan Kelley, a dream of a producer who made it happen, in such joy and passion. We're almost sorry it's done.

Added thanks to: Sylvia Train, Sheldon Schultz, Leo and Shirley Spralja, Beverley Beetham Endersby, Casey Fuetsch, Teresa Ho and Elizabeth Singer

- 1) **Malaguena** / Gracious One. *Mexican* 4:14
(Rameriz/Galindo) Edward B. Marks Music Company
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 2) **Abakaila** / Under The House. *Antilles* 2:22
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 3) **Ma Yafu Dodaikh** / How Fair Is Thy Love. *Hebrew* 3:29
(Lyrics: Traditional, Music: Amrit Neeman) SODRAC
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 4) **El Vito** / The Wind. *Spanish* 2:25
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 5) **Rozhinskes Mit Mandlen** / Raisins And Almonds. *Yiddish* 3:38
(Abraham Goldfaden)
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 6) **Ay Cosita Linda** / Lovely Linda. *Columbian* 1:58
(Pacho Galan) Peer International
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 7) **Moishele Main Fraind** / Moishele My Friend. *Yiddish* 3:39
(Mordoch Gebirtig)
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 8) **Tziganochka** / Little Gypsy Girl. *Russian* 2:50
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 9) **Kretchma** / Tavern Song. *Russian* 3:15
(G.Ruskin) Nina Music
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 10) **Erev Shel Shoshanim** / Evening of Roses. *Hebrew* 3:14
(J. Hadar / Moshe Dor) Appleseed Music
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 11) **Cu Cu Rru-cu-cu Paloma** / Cooing Dove. *Mexican* 4:05
(T. Mendes/R. Carson/P.Valando) Peer International Publishing
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 12) **Gondolella** / The Little Gondola. *Italian* 2:05
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 13) **Havah Nagilah** / Let Us Rejoice. *Hebrew* 2:31
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 14) **Curima** / Fisherman's Song. *Brazil* 3:00
(Donal Cayrol/G. Raskin) Amadeo-Brio
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 15) **Dodi Li** / My Beloved Is Mine. *Hebrew* 3:04
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 16) **Tumbalalaika** / Riddle Song. *Yiddish* 2:59
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 17) **Tri Sulrara** / Folk Song. *Dalmatian* 3:03
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 18) **Ma Yafim Hallelot** / How Beautiful The Nights. *Hebrew* 1:57
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Introducing Malka & Joso". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 19) **Chi-Ri-Bim** / Traditional Hassidic Song. *Yiddish* 3:58
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 20) **Vendieno Alegria** / Selling Happiness. *Spanish* 3:49
(Naranjo) SODRAC
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 21) **Kochav Alei Adama** / Like A Star on Earth. *Hebrew* 3:07
(Rachel D. Setzer) SODRAC
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada
- 22) **Mala Mare** / Little Marie. *Dalmatian* 1:43
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 23) **Un Canadien Errant** / A Wandering Canadian. *French-Canadian* 3:24
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Mostly Love Songs". © 1965 Capitol Records Canada
- 24) **Mode Ani** / I Thank Thee, O Lord. *Yiddish* 4:13
(Traditional) Arranged by Malka & Joso
From "Jewish Songs". © 1966 Capitol Records Canada

