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CONTACTS

Frank Luzi/Please Touch Museum

Director of Media Relations

215-581-3171

fluzi@pleasetouchmuseum.org

PUTUMAYO KIDS LAUNCHES INTERNATIONAL 'JAZZ PLAYGROUND' TOUR WITH FEB. 28 CONCERT AT PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM'S JUNIOR JAZZ FESTIVAL

Israeli-born clarinetist Oran Etkin to be featured artist

Putumayo Kids celebrates the release of "*Jazz Playground*," a new collection of international jazz songs for children, with an appearance at Please Touch Museum's 18th Annual Junior Jazz Festival on Sunday, Feb. 28 at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Performances are free with museum admission.

The featured artist is Oran Etkin, the Israeli-born, New York-based clarinetist whose 2009 release, "Kelenia," was hailed by the New York Times as "ebullient," and by the All Music Guide as setting "a new standard for world music in the decade of the 2000s." The critically acclaimed debut recording was recently awarded an Independent Music Award for Best World Beat CD. Etkin's next release, "Wake Up, Clarinet," is a jazz recording for children and will be released this spring. One track, "Little Lamb Jam," will be featured on Putumayo Kids' March 9 release, "Jazz Playground," a multicultural CD which celebrates the vibrant diversity and global influence of jazz.

"Jazz Playground" demonstrates how artists in North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania have adopted jazz and made it their own. Featuring a new, colorful storybook-style booklet and glossary of musical terms, "Jazz Playground" pairs sophisticated sounds with kid-friendly lyrics. Etkin enlisted fellow Brooklynite Charanee Wade to contribute vocals on "Little Lamb Jam."

To promote the release of "Jazz Playground," Etkin and fellow artists **Ingrid Lucia**, **Barbara Morrison** and **Lewis Franco** will share their love of jazz with families at children's museums and music venues in Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Amherst, MA through March 28. For more information about the international tour visit Putumayo Kids.

Working with children is hardly unusual for the 30-year-old Etkin. For several years, he has been offering classes to children ranging in age from 18 months to six years throughout New York. His educational approach influenced his next recording, "Wake Up, Clarinet," which will be released later in 2010.

Etkin has been described as a "great clarinet player" and "an excellent improviser" by the New York Times' jazz critic Ben Ratliff and a "woodwind maestro" by PRI's internationally syndicated show, "Afropop Worldwide." He has performed around the world with musicians ranging from jazz guitarist Mike Stern to rapper Wyclef Jean. His latest album, "Kelenia" (Motema Music), fuses traditional Malian and Jewish music with modern jazz creating what the Boston Globe dubbed a "hypnotic balance between straight-ahead jazz and world music."

The CD features Oran's working group with Malian griot musicians Balla Kouyate, Makane Kouyate and bassist Joe Sanders as well as guests including vocalist Abdoulaye Diabate, Grammy Award winning artists Lionel Loueke and John Benitez, and even a string quartet on one track. The resulting sound is a reflection of Oran's musical personality rooted in jazz but shaped by the many musical worlds that Oran is a part of in New York, including African, Jewish, Haitian and New Orleans music.

Oran continues the tradition of music education as a faculty member of the Brooklyn Conservatory and through the unique new method that he developed for teaching music to 2-6 year olds that has been implemented with over 500 young students in New York. Oran is in the process of adapting this method into a set of children's books and writing a book for adults on how children learn music.

The concert wraps up Please Touch Museum's five-week Junior Jazz Festival, the only area event to introduce young children to the wonderful world of jazz. The museum will also host a **Big Band Swing Dance Party** on Feb. 28 at noon and 2 p.m. Under the direction of Matthew Schwartz, the St. Joe's Prep Jazz Band will have little jazz cats swingin' to the music in Hamilton Hall to end Junior Jazz in style! Four swing dancers will also take the floor and demonstrate their moves to families.

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About Please Touch Museum

Please Touch Museum® at Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park is dedicated to enriching the lives of children by providing learning opportunities through play. Recognized locally and nationally as one of the best children's museums, Please Touch is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-581-3181, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.