

## ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

# How Aleksey and Hyung created claugthical music

BY SIMON YAFFE

**V**IOLINIST Aleksey Igudesman and pianist Hyung ki-Joo could not stand the sight of each other when they first met.

But, more than 25 years later, the Russian and British-South Korean are close friends, as well as performing together in the classical music and comedy combination Igudesman and Joo.

They were pupils at the prestigious Yehudi Menuhin School, in Surrey, when their paths first crossed as 12-year-olds.

"It was hate at first sight," Aleksey told the *Jewish Telegraph* from his home in Vienna.

"We fought a lot, but at some stage he decided to make piece and brought fish and chips to my room.

"At boarding school that was the equivalent of bringing in gold.

"We started talking and from then on we were pretty much inseparable."

The duo have since toured for many years and bring their unique show to London's Cadogan Hall on March 9.

"We have introduced theatricality and humour into classical music," Aleksey said.

"It is a new type of artform which grabs the audience in such a way that they listen and therefore enjoy classical music more."

Eight years ago they created



PICTURE: JULIA WESELY

LEAN ON ME: Aleksey Igudesman, left, and Hyung ki-Joo

their show *A Little Nightmare Music*.

And it has been so successful that they have performed with major symphony orchestras around the world and have played at some of the world's biggest festivals.

Many of classical music's biggest names, such as Emanuel Ax, Mischa Maisky and Julian Rachlin, have joined in with the musical and comedy sketches.

Aleksey explained: "I always thought classical music was presented in a way which was very stale.

"I didn't understand why it had to be like that.

"I later found out that many of

the great composers' music was, in fact, a celebration — it was funny and furious.

"Parents have brought their children along to our shows and thanked us because their children really get into it and started learning instruments.

"They are now listening to classical music.

"The idea was to create something new for ourselves, but we now also cherish what we do for the younger generation."

The duo regularly run workshops for youngsters.

A combination of youthful enthusiasm and a passion for music led Aleksey to leave his native St Petersburg — it was

known as Leningrad when he was growing up.

"Being Jewish wasn't hard in the Soviet Union — it was impossible," he recalled.

"It was not a help if you had a Jewish background and my mother reverted to her maiden name, Suchov, because it was more Russian.

"The Leningrad Conservatory, for example, only let in a certain amount of Jews per year, which is obviously incredibly racist."

The irony is that the Conservatory was founded by the Russian Jewish pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein.

The Igudesman family left the Soviet Union when Aleksey was six, moving to the German city of Bremerhaven.

"During the late 1970s, an agreement was reached between the Soviets and Israel to let a certain amount of Jews out every year," Aleksey said.

Virtually banned from practising their Judaism in the Soviet Union, the Igudesman family didn't have a Damascus moment regarding their religion once they reached the democratic west.

"We never practised Judaism, even when we were in Germany," he said. "I know it is part of my heritage, though."

Music is in Aleskey's genes, as mother Nina is a piano teacher, while father Michael was the concertmaster at Leningrad's Opera House.

Older brother Leonid is a violinist with the San Francisco Symphony.

Having been accepted into the Yehudi Menuhin School, Aleksey

went on to study in Austria with legendary Jewish violinist Professor Boris Kuschmir at the Vienna Conservatory.

In addition to touring as part of Igudesman and Joo, Aleksey has spent time composing film music in Hollywood.

Among the films where his music can be heard are Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, Johnny Depp's *Rango*, *The Road to El Dorado* and *Spanglish*.

Aleksey teamed up with Oscar-winning German Jewish composer Hans Zimmer to compose and arrange music for *Sherlock Holmes* and the soon-to-be-released documentary *Jealous of The Birds*, about Jews who returned to Germany after the Holocaust.

They both won best soundtrack for *Sherlock Holmes* at America's Newport Film Festival.

And their music for *Jealous of The Birds* won the grand prize for the best original score at the Rhode Island International Film Festival.

Aleksey, who has written more than 300 works, returned to his home city two years ago to play at a concert.

But it wasn't the effusive moment some might have expected.

He recalled: "Although I had always dreamed of returning, it was less emotional in the obvious sense — I didn't have tears in my eyes. It just felt really warm.

"I went back to where we used to live and recognised certain things."

■ [www.igudesmanandjoo.com](http://www.igudesmanandjoo.com) and [www.youtube.com/igudesmanandjoo](http://www.youtube.com/igudesmanandjoo)

## Ellroy was fascinated by Oren's war stories

**ISRAELI** filmmaker Oren Moverman was quizzed by novelist James Ellroy on his time as a paratrooper when they met to discuss new film *Rampart*.

Moverman, who directed the film, had been asked to rewrite Ellroy's draft.

And the crime novelist was fascinated with Moverman's tales of serving in Lebanon.

*Rampart* — released in cinemas today — stars Woody Harrelson as Sergeant Dave Brown, a violent, racist and alcoholic police officer in Los Angeles.

Moverman helped prepare Harrelson for the role through discussions about post-traumatic stress disorder and other war-related trauma:

"Oren went through some heavy stuff in Israel, so there was always something going on,"



TRUE STORY: Oren Moverman, centre, with *Rampart* stars Woody Harrelson, right, and Ben Foster

Harrelson told the *Jewish Journal of Los Angeles*.

"But he'll never talk about his own experiences, and if you do bring it up, he'll kind of side-step the issue."

*Rampart* is based on the *Rampart* scandal where more than 70 LAPD officers were implicated in some form of misconduct in the late 1990s.

Moverman's directorial debut

*The Messenger* also starred Harrelson. It was awarded the Silver Bear for best screenplay and the Peace Award at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival. It was also nominated for a Golden Globe and two Oscars.

Moverman has reportedly been in negotiations with Universal Studios to re-write and direct the studio's planned Kurt Cobain biopic.

## Lillian destroyed much of her photographic work

**INFLUENTIAL** fashion photographer Lillian Bassman died aged 94, having carved out a career in a male-dominated industry.

Making her name at *Harper's Bazaar* magazine in the 1940s, she fell out of favour in the 1970s.

She abruptly disposed of her significant body of photographic negatives.

Only in 1991 when she reprinted some of her graceful, monochrome images did interest in her work return.

Born on June 15, 1917, in Brooklyn, Lillian was the daughter of Russian Jews.

She met her future husband, photographer and psychotherapist Paul Himmel, when she was just six and he was nine, on holiday in Coney Island, New York.

They married in 1938 and had a son and daughter before Paul died in 2009.

In 1945, she was appointed co-art director of *Harper's Bazaar* spin-off publication *Junior Bazaar*.

The role allowed Lillian to develop her own style.

By the time the spin-off ceased publication three years later, she

was in demand as a photographer and earned a job on *Harper's Bazaar* as a photographer, working with its fashion editor Diana Vreeland.

Photography was still a male-dominated field and Bassman forged her reputation by taking photographs with "a woman's eye for a woman's intimate feelings".

Towards the end of the 1960s she became disillusioned with fashion photography as her interest in "pure form" clashed with the changing fashions and increasingly skinny models.

She destroyed decades' worth of negatives and stuffed others into a bag.

Lillian instead began experimenting with abstract photography and established a clothing line.

The negatives were discovered in a bag in 1991.

Bassman printed the images, which brought her work back into demand.

She worked into her 90s using digital technology to create her images.

"The palette has changed, the end result is the same," she said.

## Clooney to track down stolen art

**ACTOR** George Clooney is to star in a film about American and British art experts who tracked down Nazi-looted artworks, mainly

from Jewish owners.

Clooney has optioned Robert Edsel's book *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the*

*Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*.

The same events were explored in the 2006 documentary *The Rape of Europa*.

## Guns to be heard in Israel

**AMERICAN** rockers Guns 'N' Roses will perform in Israel this summer — two years after their last concert there was axed.

Axl Rose will lead the band at Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park on July 3.

It is 19 years since they last performed in Israel.

## Writers Guild prize for Woody

**WOODY** ALLEN scooped the best original screenplay for *Midnight in Paris* at the 2012 Writers Guild of America awards on Sunday.

*Modern Family*, co-

created by Steven Levitan, won the best comedy series, with *Homeland*, based on the Israeli drama *Hatufim*, best new series.

The *Modern Family* episode *Caught in the*

*Act*, written by Levitan and Jeffrey Richman, picked up best episodic comedy.

Screenwriter David Seltzer's drama *Cinema Verite* won best long form script — original.