

For the love of music

By Viva Sarah Press

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(March 15) - When Marvin Goldstein and Gali Atari take the stage at Jerusalem's YMCA on March 20 it will be the culmination of a three-year dream for him, and for her it will be the first time she has been hosted by another musician.

While Atari's presence in the local music scene has been a mainstay for the last 20 years, Goldstein - an acclaimed pianist - heard about her only in 1997. He was given an old recording of Atari's winning performance of "Hallelujah" at the 1979 Eurovision Song Contest.

He fell in love with the song, and ordered the video. "As I watched it, I was enthralled with how much she seemed to be able to translate her emotion through song," says Goldstein, in a telephone interview from his home in Florida. "I said to myself that I need to get in touch with Gali Atari and do a musical effort with her."

Despite numerous failed attempts at contacting Atari, Goldstein persisted and finally got through.

Last year, while here on a visit, he met Atari at a luncheon in Tel Aviv and told her that he was inspired by her "intensity that represented her love for Israel."

"I thought we'd match up really well," he says, noting that he usually performs solo.

After a myriad of faxes, e-mails and telephone calls, Atari agreed to share the stage with the 51-year-old pianist.

Atari, used to hosting other musicians, says this is the first time she'll be hosted at a concert. "He'll play the piano while I'm singing, and he'll also play instrumental pieces. I'm excited to do the concert. It's a challenge... it's a different thing to do."

GOLDSTEIN has been playing the piano for 43 years. A national keyboard artist with Kawai America, he has performed throughout the US, Canada and England - sharing his love for music along the way.

"I get joy from what music does for other people," says Goldstein, who has nearly 30 albums to his credit.

His repertoire mainly consists of Broadway hits and classical compositions - many of which he wrote.

Goldstein first learned to tickle the ivories at the age of nine. At 18, he won a music scholarship to Tel Aviv University School of Music.

From here he went on to continue his studies at the "Mozarteum" of Salzburg, Austria; he then completed Bachelor and Master of Music degrees at Florida State University. His performance degrees were earned on the French horn.

"I always played both the piano and French horn," he says. "I felt I could make a better living through the French horn. But I was wrong."

He has a number of honors to his credit - and isn't shy about citing them - including being listed in Cambridge's "Who's Who in Music."

"I always wanted to be famous," he notes. "But I outgrew that when I got to be 30... Now what I do is for other people... I'm sensitive to what music can do for humanity."

According to one reviewer, "[Goldstein] has the unique ability to translate his ideas and emotions through the love of piano. In presenting a mood that may be happy or sad, the piano comes alive under his direction."

AS WELL as being known as a concert pianist, Goldstein is revered in his community for his devotion and leadership in the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

Born and raised Jewish, he converted to Mormonism in 1985 at the age of 35.

"I know it's a very difficult thing for Jewish people," he says of his conversion. "I feel very sensitive about it, not for myself but for people taken aback by it. My goal in the church is to explain to the 11 million members the validity of Judaism and how it is the basis of all religions, and how they should be sensitive and loving and kind and understand the pain and suffering Jews have gone through."

Though his testimonial on his Web site - www.marvingoldstein.com - exudes with pride of his conversion, Goldstein sounds somewhat uncomfortable when talking about it in his interview with The Jerusalem Post.

"My musical interpretations don't deal with practices or doctrines. My conversion has absolutely nothing to do with the concert," he says.

His co-performer, Atari, agrees. "It doesn't bother me," Atari says of Goldstein's conversion. "People can be whoever they want to be. If I were to duet with Bruce Springsteen, it wouldn't bother me that he isn't Jewish."

Anyway, says Atari, music can help unify people. "It's an international language. Music brings people together in the good sense of the word."

Goldstein, who is married and has one son, also notes that his conversion "doesn't mean [that I have] any diminished feeling for my family or Judaism or the Jewish people... I don't proselytize."

In fact, Goldstein goes on to say that he is very excited about his upcoming visit here - he has been here six times before - as he "loves the people [in Israel] so much."

"I love coming to Israel," he says, happily. "I'm not afraid [to come despite the unrest]. There are quite a few places in the US that are quite a bit more dangerous."

Then he adds, joyfully: "I'm so excited to be performing with Gali Atari. It's amazing that it's happening."

Marvin Goldstein hosts Gali Atari in concert on March 20 at 9 p.m. at the YMCA in Jerusalem. Tickets will be available at the box office preceding the show. Sponsored by The Jerusalem Post and the Jerusalem Hyatt Hotel, Goldstein will perform international love songs and Broadway musicals. He'll also accompany Atari as she sings some of Israel's most popular folk songs.