-- For Immediate Release -- contact: ProfessorLesser@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A winner at the New Mexico Music Awards, Larry Lesser's eclectic album *SPARKS* links today's times to timeless texts.

Larry Lesser makes *SPARKS!*

Reflecting a decades-long journey, award-winning songwriter/educator Larry Lesser released *SPARKS*, a 24-song bounty of concise guitar-driven, lyric-centered non-liturgical songs grounded deeply and accessibly in Jewish text and values with universal meaning.

As the album's opening rocker sparked by a Ben-Gurion quip says, 2 Jews have 3 opinions, but performers/clergy across denominations give praise, including tributes from ASCAP or GRAMMY winners like Peter Himmelman or Joanie Leeds as well as heads of diverse Jewish organizations (CLAL, USCJ, Mussar Institute, Partners in Torah, Women Cantors' Network).

Like Judaism, the songs are timely and timeless. For example, the Midrashic theme of interdependence in "Rowboat" is salient as we face today's pandemic, racism, and climate change; the message in the Talmudic "The Best" echoes the Garth Brooks #1 hit "Unanswered Prayers"; the centuries-old proverb in "Two Pockets" arose at a televised election year town hall; today's antisemitism and Holocaust denial gives urgency to "One-Way Train" and "Stack the Stones"; and the title cut refers to fragments of a shattered world we are charged to heal.

The album sparks dialogue by respecting each denomination's limits and by acknowledging Jewish diversity in origin (e.g., the Spanish-inflected Crypto-Jewish "Lights Lead Home") or observance (e.g., the folk-grass romp "Shabbos Keeps the Jews" or pluralistic paean "Deep and Wide"). *SPARKS* is distinctive in how many songs dive deeply and accessibly into the sea of Talmud, such as "Bruria," a rocking tribute to a woman who held her own with 2nd-century rabbis.

SPARKS musicians span Judaism's major denominations and all major Abrahamic faiths. Larry Lesser, Bill Radcliffe, Amalia Zeitlin, Sabiha Khan, Ross Ingram, and Larry Karol have made their own albums or recorded/performed with Midland, The Platters, El Paso Symphony, Las Cruces Symphony, Camerata Del Sol, Layali Al-Sham, Pet People, EEP, or Paperwork.

SPARKS, a Finalist in 4 categories (including Best Album) and **winner** of Best Humorous Song for the New Mexico Music Awards (NMMA), and a International Songwriting Competition Semifinalist, spans folk-rock, folk-grass, rock, country, and spoken word poetry. Despite its release just before the pandemic, *SPARKS* has had NPR-station interviews (#1 and #2), airplay of 13+ different songs in several states, exhibits, articles in newspapers and journals, and performances in college, synagogue, opera, festival, and online settings and the 2021 NMMAs.

For more information: **larrylesser.com/sparks**

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