

## **GrooveLily – BIOGRAPHY & PRESS QUOTES**

New York City trio GrooveLily inhabits that contemporary space where creative musicians ignore the boundaries laid down by words like rock, folk, jazz and pop. Intelligent original songs with no shortage of wit connect lush musical textures and soaring vocals with the blazing six-string electric violin of Valerie Vigoda, the lightning-fingered piano of Brendan Milburn, and the joyful drums of Gene Lewin. With backgrounds in classical music, musical theater, jazz and rock, the three members of GrooveLily are making a new music that's all their own.

GrooveLily's success of their first concert-musical, the critically-acclaimed holiday show STRIKING 12, has led them farther into the world of theater, where they have carved out a unique niche as a rock band writing and performing shows. After years on the indie touring circuit, they are delighted to be creating many projects with various collaborators: STRIKING 12, the first GrooveLily concert-musical (Off-Broadway 2006, Lucille Lortel Nomination for Outstanding Musical, Bay Area Theatre Critic's Choice Award); TOY STORY THE MUSICAL for Disney; SLEEPING BEAUTY WAKES for Deaf West Theatre/Center Theatre Group (Two 2007 Ovation Awards, including World Premiere Musical; Valerie was also nominated for Lead Actress); WHEELHOUSE, the second GrooveLily concert-musical; LONG STORY SHORT for City Theatre of Pittsburgh/TheatreWorks Palo Alto; A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM for McCarter Theatre/Paper Mill Playhouse; and ERNEST SHACKLETON LOVES ME, a new one-woman fever-dream musical.

**Valerie Vigoda**, electric violinist and singer, is the founding member of GrooveLily. Originally from McLean, VA, Valerie is a classically-trained musician, honors graduate of Princeton University, and former Army lieutenant. She has toured the world with Cyndi Lauper (opening for Tina Turner and Cher), Joe Jackson and the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. She founded GrooveLily (originally "The Valerie Vigoda Band") in 1994, with a critically-acclaimed CD called "Inhabit My Heart." Dirty Linen Magazine wrote: "to call Valerie Vigoda talented barely seems to do her justice. She has a great voice, is an intelligent lyricist ... and an ace violinist. Methinks we'll hear more of her." Valerie is a two-time winner of the Jonathan Larson Award for Excellence in Writing for the Theatre, along with her husband and longtime collaborator Brendan Milburn.

**Brendan Milburn** (keyboards/vocals) graduated from Pomona College and NYU's MFA program in Musical Theatre Writing. He does a lot of arranging for GrooveLily, and he's an accomplished record producer as well. He often yearns for his native San Francisco. Seth Rogovoy wrote: "Milburn was a deft pianist, his nimble fingerwork doing double-duty as the band's bassist and provider of its harmonic foundation, delivered with the jazzy sophistication of Steely Dan's

Donald Fagen and the rock and roll theatrics of Billy Joel." Brendan's music and/or lyrics have been/will be featured in a growing number of off/on-Broadway shows, and he's always on the lookout for new projects/productions which will add more slashes ("/") to his bio/credits.

**Gene Lewin** plays the drums and sings, and hails from Princeton, NJ. Like many of his heroes (Jack DeJohnette, Russ Kunkel, Vinnie Colaiuta), Gene joyfully blurs the lines between jazz and rock, supporting and complementing the music but unafraid to instigate when the time is right. After graduating from Princeton University, Gene earned a Master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music. He tours regularly with Audra McDonald, and has appeared on CDs with George Coleman, John Patitucci, and many others. "His gift lies in his frenzied dynamo attack of cymbals and skins. Think Tony Williams sits in with Weather Report." (Mark Corroto, All About Jazz)  
Press/Media Quotes

"Stunning. Energetic. Clever. Inspired. Pick your adjective. GrooveLily, the unconventional musical trio performing 'Striking 12' at Arena Stage, is all of these and more." - BARBARA MACKAY, THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER

In the quest for an ideal holiday entertainment for adults, "Striking 12" strikes gold. - DON SHIRLEY, LOS ANGELES TIMES

"Vigoda is the group's enormously talented front woman, with superb chops on electric violin, a sweet and powerful singing voice and a warm, inviting stage presence." - NORTH COUNTY TIMES

"Valerie Vigoda unleashes a diva-worthy torrent of passion..."  
- THE WASHINGTON POST

'Refreshing' is indeed the best way to describe GrooveLily's songs and shows. Fluid, melodies, remarkable musicianship and a performance attitude bursting with energy are the band's trademarks. - THE STATE, COLUMBIA, SC

"Brendan Milburn is a brilliant keyboardist, vocalist and co-author. Their curmudgeonly percussionist, Gene Lewin, who plays all the straight men and foils in the chamber jazz rock operetta, is an absolute delight."  
- FAHRENHEIT SAN DIEGO

Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle award for Best Touring Company: GrooveLily & "Striking 12"- BATCC

"Sometimes the brightest gifts come in the strangest packages. One of this year's more captivating new holiday shows is less the product of a theater

company than of a jazzy rock trio called GrooveLily, and not so much a musical as a story threaded through a concert.”

- ROBERT HURWITT, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

“Part rock concert, part musical, "Striking 12" uses convention for kindling and leaves us all basking in the glow of the hippest holiday show in recent memory. "Striking 12" is too hot to miss.”

- KAREN D'SOUZA, SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

"Striking 12," created and performed by the New York-based band GrooveLily, is thoroughly entertaining and musically rich.

- CHAD JONES, OAKLAND TRIBUNE

“Valerie Vigoda is truly amazing, an awesome vision of embodied musicality, moving as one with her violin, making it sing and singing with it in a voice both smoky and angelic. Anyone in town who plays violin ought to see her-she's the future.” - JEANIE FORTE, PALO ALTO WEEKLY

“Valerie Vigoda, Brendan Milburn and Gene Lewin are GrooveLily. Together they weave their songs of fierce hope in an uncooperative world into moody tapestries. Vigoda's violins are the primary solo voice, Milburn's keys the atmosphere and occasional solo, Lewin's drum the pulse and punctuation. GrooveLily's music addresses both brain and body with clever lyrics and music you can move to. Heady fun.” - MT, SING OUT! MAGAZINE

“Spritely and sweet-natured, richly tuneful, lyrically playful and comforting. That's the like-no-other, adult-rock trio Groovelily in a nutshell, on the charming indie release "Are We There Yet?"

- JONATHAN TAKIFF, THE PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

“This holiday-themed show by the pop trio GrooveLily is an inventive presentation that is part theater piece, part concert, and wholly entertaining.”

- DOUGLAS J. KEATING, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

“...New York's GrooveLily cut loose in a set of urban bluegrass, spiritually uplifting ballads and various pop-eratic arias that showed off singer and violinist Valerie Vigoda's angelic voice.” - DENIS ARMSTRONG, OTTAWA SUN

“Look, up on the stage. It's a jazz band. It's a power pop trio. It's a performance art ensemble. No, it's Groovelily, which is all those things and a whole lot more.

- MICHAEL MILLER, THE STATE (COLUMBIA, SC)

**Press for "Sleeping Beauty Wakes":**

“A thing of beauty...the sign-language musical, pioneered by Deaf West and championed by Centre Theatre Group, has roared into exciting new life...magical and poignant... 'Beauty's' music just plain rocks.”

- EVAN HENDERSON, LA DAILY NEWS

“A beguiling tour de force that looks at love, sleep and time by setting the familiar fairy tale in innovative performing context...The result is a brilliant entertainment in three dimensions...keyboardist Milburn and violinist Vigoda singing the lovers are superb...Every element, from costume design to sound and lighting, has that rare combination of thorough professionalism and deeply devoted love of art and craft that distinguishes the merely excellent from the unforgettable.” - LAURENCE VITTES, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

“A work of art, talent and humor in which the combination of deaf and speaking actors feel completely organic...a delightful score...the lyrics are crafty, and the songs charmingly melodic...the pair also deftly play their own instruments on stage. (Vigoda is especially sexy on the electric violin).”

- JONAS SCHWARTZ, THEATERMANIA

“Sleeper hit...a winning combination of catchy music, deft storytelling...inventive and highly entertaining...the songs...are almost all hummable winners.”

- PAUL HODGINS, OC REGISTER

“Scintillatingly directed and choreographed by Jeff Calhoun, who also did the Deaf West award-winning production of Big River, this co-production of The Center Theatre Group and Deaf West Theatre is everything a dream ought to be ... the score ... is charming, eerie in "Uninvited," enchanting in "Dream With Me." Vigoda, who sings and plays the violin simultaneously and co-composed the score, comes across as a real star of this production.”

- LAURA HITCHCOCK, CURTAIN UP