

VERETSKI PASS MUSIC FROM THE CARPATHIAN BOW

Cookie Segelstein - Violin, Viola

Joshua Horowitz - Cimbalom, Chromatic Button Accordion, Piano

Stuart Brotman - Bass, Basy, Tulinca, Baraban

The Klezmer Shul Project

The Klezmer Shul Project, the latest work of Veretski Pass, attempts to bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular, not through the prism of participatory religious music, but rather through the means of the klezmer concert musician.

The musicians of Veretski Pass became intrigued with the possibility of leading a congregation through a religious journey by playing in place of praying. Toward that end, Stu Brotman obtained a grant from the *Creative Work Fund* in San Francisco for Veretski Pass to create a purely instrumental Jewish service, inspired by and dedicated to the memory of these klezmer shuls. They posed the question to each other, "Where would WE go to Temple?"

There is historical evidence that many trades had their own places of worship, specialized synagogues or shuls, in the Jewish communities of pre-WW2 Eastern Europe. There were shuls for tailors, for bakers, for woodworkers, stone-cutters and even klezmerim - the musicians who served as the binding musical thread connecting the Jewish and non-Jewish celebrations in the communities they served. Did these highly trained professional musicians conduct traditional services, or did they sometimes host all-night jam sessions, perhaps with famous visiting musicians? Did they improvise and recombine, mixing the melodies of the service with folk music of the region, or with the classical and popular music of the day?

Words, by conveying concepts, also elicit feelings. Setting the words to music intensifies the power of those feelings, with the effect of validating and emphasizing the message of the text. But it's through those words that emotionally charged boundaries can be drawn, and walls, religious or political, constructed and defended. Texts and their interpretation separate one people from another, one religion from another; and even within Judaism, one denomination from another, as Reform from Orthodox.

Religious services in Judaism subjugate music to make liturgical texts more memorable and to elevate their emotional power. Composers of religious music often use traditional melodic formulas and modes to amplify texts. Compositional techniques include tone painting and expressive devices intended to bring the emotions to the extreme: instrumental evocations of sighs and cries. sounds that suggest pain or

anguish, passages that express joy and exultation.

But music in its purest form is by nature abstract; it expresses feelings, not ideas. Musicians and their listeners have non-specific internal, personal experiences, from enthralled to sublime, calm to empowered.

In composing *The Klezmer Shul*, Veretski Pass sought to develop a new body of klezmer-based Jewish religious music with the emotional power of a traditional synagogue service, but without the use of language. For Jews of East European heritage, whether religiously observant or unaffiliated with a place of worship, this could be a unifying force.

With that prime directive, they created this four-movement suite, at once fresh, yet familiar, that could be called spiritual or even religious by broad definition. They present it as a service or a concert, to Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Renewal congregations, secular Jews and non-Jews alike.

They chose klezmer music - traditional Eastern European Jewish instrumental music - as the conduit for this work from their experience of teaching and performing throughout North America and Europe for over twenty years. Veretski Pass concert audience members have frequently commented that they felt spiritually transported by a particular melody or experienced a wonderful feeling of cultural connectivity. Klezmer music appeals to both religious and secular Jews, and since the 1970's has achieved broad popularity as an important World Music.

“For musical inspiration, our sources ranged from the traditional melodies of the synagogue to the folk music of the many cultures among whom Jews have lived and worked: Rom (Gypsy), Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, Moldavian, Czech, Polish melodies. Employing techniques of modern Classical composition, modern Jazz, and even Gospel music styles, we felt it important to leave the structure of the arrangements open in order to allow room for improvisation, which generates the core of our work. In this way each performance is spontaneous and unique.”

A major new composition by Veretski Pass, *The Klezmer Shul* is compelling, both as a religious experience, and as pure concert music. They offer it as a gesture of reconciliation in a world divided by doctrine.

For Booking Information:

**Please contact Cookie Segelstein, 510-705-1497,
cookie@veretskipass.com, www.veretskipass.com**