

Mp3 Wholesale Klezmer Band - Prayer For A Broken World

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Through Yidish song, stories and instrumental music, this CD is a musical prayer for peace that reminds us that in order to repair the world one must find a little joy. 11 MP3 Songs WORLD: Eastern European, WORLD: Judaica Details: This CD represents a Jewish response to news of genocide in the post-Holocaust world. In the fall of 1994, during the wars in Bosnia and Rwanda, the group decided to use their music to speak out against genocide, to help the relief efforts for people in those countries who were still in danger, and to support those working for peace and reconciliation among the religious and ethnic groups involved in the conflicts. The band created a special concert of Yiddish music, story and poetry to raise funds for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's non-sectarian relief work in Bosnia and Rwanda. The members of Wholesale believe that their music bears witness to their responsibility, as Jews and human beings, to oppose intolerance, oppression, and genocide, and to promote peace, reconciliation and justice. The recording itself includes a wide range of materials drawn from Jewish and Yiddish sources, as well as new material written by band members Yosl Kurland and Sherry Mayrent specifically to address the theme of the CD. As well as a number of songs in both Yiddish and Ashkenazic Hebrew and several instrumentals that express emotions related to the stated themes, there are a story and a poem, both in English, and a pair of lively instrumentals that convey both pride and happiness in taking on the responsibility and privilege of helping to repair the world. Ya'acov Gabriel, Tikkun Magazine, July/August 1998 I sat weeping in my in-laws living room this morning, listening to an extraordinary CD. It's true that I'm leaving for a sabbatical in Israel, that I haven't slept much this week, and that I just schlepped my wife, my one-year-old son, and nine bags to Philadelphia last night. I have enough accumulated pain at the moment to make anyone cry. Still, the hot tears were specifically released by a beautiful, poignant recording called "Prayers for a Broken World" by the Wholesale Klezmer Band This is a recording with very high kavannah (intentionality). It reproduces a set of songs, original and traditional, that were done as a concert and fundraiser for relief work in Bosnia and Rwanda. In the liner notes, the group links the Yiddish and instrumental tunes with efforts in late 1994 to stop genocide in both of those calamitous places. Aside from good intentions, the music is right where it should be. It's a

little bit worn, a little bit naked, and elegantly streetwise, the way Bob Dylan and the Grateful Dead are at their best. "Avrom Tate" is a beautiful interpretation of the story of Isaac and Ishmael. To hear the song and its yearning for an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict is to know the deep power of the Yiddish language to be emotional and intuitive in expressive ways. The fact that the lead singer Joe Kurland wrote it in 1991 makes it even more amazing. Obviously, Yiddish is alive and well and living in Massachusetts. The title song, another Kurland original, is poetically subtle. It first accuses God of being a Father too busy playing at His next creation to keep genocides from happening among His children. Then it shifts its focus and says people need to participate in repairing this world. It's not God's responsibility to heal this world, but ours. There are also Hasidic prayers and happy dance tunes, a brilliant anti-weapon poem, a story teaching tolerance between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and some great instrumental jams. The group has other releases, "Yidn fun Amol" and "Shmir Me," that also balance their sense of social justice with a sense of fun. This is Soul Music with a heimish (down home) intelligence that really delivers.

Another kind of soul explorer is Wally Brill.....[a review of Wally Brill's new album appeared at this point in the article and is omitted here.] ... What both these projects have in common is a respect for the musical past without it limiting one's creative horizons. That's what makes them Renewal, and that's what makes them enjoyable. Sharon Desmond Paradiso, Jewish Weekly News of Western Massachusetts, 1997 There's something about folk music of any description that touches both heart and feet even while you're nodding at the timeless truth of the words, your toes start tapping and you just have to move.

Klezmer music takes this to the next level, and the Wholesale Klezmer Band, with their new CD *Tfile far a tsebrokhener velt* (Prayer for a Broken World), takes it to the next level yet. Their approach to klezmer is more traditional than many bands of the so-called "Klezmer Revival" of the past 15 years. As Kurland pointed out in a recent interview with the Jewish News "In America, there has been some sort of cross pollination between klezmer and jazz, but we avoid that. We base our model on a much more European sound, an older sound." And perhaps older themes as well. The theme of *Tfile far a tsebrokhener velt* is nothing less than *tikkun olam* (healing the world) itself. The wars in Bosnia and Rwanda in 1994 provided the inspiration for the group to produce a concert to benefit non-sectarian relief in those two areas. By 1996, when the CD was released, uneasy peace had come to Bosnia, yet the message, the band realized, was still appropriate, given the conflicts still arising all over the world (and not least of all, in Israel). The result is this stunning volume that answers the question asked at the beginning of the liner

notes: "How does a Jew respond to news of genocide in the post-Holocaust world?" How indeed. It's all well and good to decry the sadness, but going about repairing the world takes a little more than easy emotion. That's why klezmer music in general and the Wholesale Klezmer Band's approach in particular works not simply to point to the horror, but to remind us that despair is a useless response. To repair, one must find a little joy. Hence the CD begins with the raucous "Khsidim tants: ("Dance of Chassidim"), with Davis' boisterous beat and Bender's strong trombone glides. Likewise, the album ends with "Khevre nit gezorgt: ("Friends, Don't Worry"), which following "The Chassidic Kaddish for the Conclusion of Ne'ileh," reminds us that despite the sadness, we must also feel joy in being alive. In fact, even the musical setting for the Kaddish conveys this feeling. If you didn't know the prayer, you might believe that this was some kind of drinking song, such is the vigor and force of the music. In between these cuts lie the meat of this CD. "Avrom Tate" ("Abraham Papa"), a midrash on the story of Isaac and Ishmael, works to illustrate the border disputes that go on not only in Bosnia but in Israel, Rwanda and other war-torn areas. "Dremlen Feyglekh" ("Drowsing Birds"), a lullaby to a Holocaust orphan, gives voice to the injustice visited upon the most innocent victims of war, children. Its mournful refrain, "lyu-lyu," is sung by Kurland with a typically klezmer breaking grace note, making it sound more like crying than crying itself. And "Tfile Far a Tsebrokhener Velt" is a demand that G-d explain these atrocities that get visited upon this broken world. There are two spoken-word pieces on the CD: "The Spear and the Needle," in which a weapon of death and an instrument of creation disparage each other's purpose, and "The Magic Ring," which the liner notes describe as "a lesson in tolerance for different religions." In other hands, the effect of these stories could have been didactic and heavy-handed, but Kurland's theatrical renditions and Mayrent's and Davidson's musical accompaniment to "the Magic Ring" ensure that these pieces fit with both the theme of the CD and the feel. Davidson's cover illustration, of human hands wrapping a cracked (but not shattered) globe with bars of music, is a visual complement to the message this album. Tikkun Olam is not a mandate to perform miracles, only to do we can. With Tfile Far a Tsebrokhener Velt, the Wholesale Klezmer Band did perform a little miracle: by doing what they could do, and doing it so they show us that what we do can have an impact too. - - - - - Ari Davidow, Klezmer Shack, 1/15/97

When you first listen to a CD from a band that you've never heard, and it starts off with a decent dance number, life is good. But, still, the mind is really still on other things. It wasn't until vocalist Joe Kurland began singing "Avrom Tate,"... that I paid real attention. And I found impossible to stop. Impossible not to listen to this

album at least once a day for weeks now. This isn't an ordinary klezmer album.... You'll never listen to Brandwein's "Der Yidisher soldant in di trenches" the same way again. And you'll find yourself dancing to a simple story, "The Magic Ring." Kurland's title track, and clarinetist Sherry Mayrent's "Hineni" are also special. But this isn't a collection of songs. Instead, it is a very real prayer for a broken world. Amen. - - - - -

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Paradiso, The Jewish News of Western Massachusetts, 1997 There's something about folk music of any description that touches both heart and feet--even while you're nodding at the timeless truth of the words, your toes start tapping and you just have to move. Klezmer music takes this to the next level--and the Wholesale Klezmer Band, with their new CD Tfile far a tsebrokhener velt [Prayer for a Broken World], takes it to the next level yet....Their approach to klezmer is more traditional than many bands of the so-called "Klezmer Revival" of the past 15 years...Tikkun Olam is not a mandate to perform miracles, only to do what we can. With Tfile Far a Tsebrokhener Velt, the Wholesale Klezmer Band did perform a little miracle: by doing what they could do, and doing it beautifully, they show us that what we do can have an impact too. - - - - - About the Band - - - - -

The Wholesale Klezmer Band's approach to performing traditional Ashkenazic Jewish music is to unite elements from the older, European Yiddish melodic style with an ensemble approach modeled on traditional Ashkenazic community prayer style. As in the synagogues of the old country, there is a strong melodic voice, usually the clarinet, leading the group as the cantor would lead the prayers, with other individual voices echoing, anticipating, murmuring in the background, rising and falling with each individual's involvement in the flow of sound. It is a dense style, at times strongly in unison or deeply introspective, at other times almost argumentative, again, very similar to traditional Jewish prayer style. But whether the other voices join, echo, or respond to the

leading voice, everything played by each musician is closely tied to the melody itself, as each person's prayers are anchored in the words s/he chants. The Wholesale Klezmer Band performs in Yiddish and Ashkenazic Hebrew, and specializes in making their material accessible to English speakers through translations, stories, explanations, visual aids, and that universal language, the music itself. They write many of their own dance tunes and Yiddish songs that speak to contemporary concerns. It is fitting that the Wholesale Klezmer Band's style should reflect the important Jewish values of community and egalitarianism, since their song repertoire deliberately focuses on other important aspects of Yiddish culture, especially humor, social justice, and tikun olam or the repair of the world. Unlike most working klezmer bands, Wholesale refuses, as a general rule, to perform non-Yiddish material. The effect of this overall grounding of musical elements in the very core of the culture from which they stem is a powerful merging of form and content that is recognized by Jewish and non-Jewish listeners alike. In its 17-year history, the Wholesale Klezmer Band has grown from a local pick-up group to a professional ensemble bringing vibrant Yiddish music to a wide variety of audiences, young and old, throughout New England and New York state. In addition to performing concerts and workshops for both Jews and non-Jews, Wholesale remains firmly anchored in the Jewish communities it serves, carrying out the traditional function at weddings and bar mitzve celebrations through-out the region. The Band has performed at Carnegie Hall and at the 1994 Presidential Inauguration of Bill Clinton.

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