

# Mp3 Metropolitan Klezmer - Yiddish For Travelers

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Eclectic exuberance re-inventing tradition with both irreverence and respect: A spectrum of Klezmer dance, folk swing from all over the far-flung Yiddish map! 24 MP3 Songs WORLD: Eastern European, WORLD: Judaica Details: Explore far-flung musical trade routes with a band noted for its astounding versatility, both in wildly variegated instrumentation and a spirited range of styles. From rollicking dance numbers to entrancing folk melodies shared by neighboring cultures to vibrant versions of lesser-known swing tunes and long-lost Yiddish soundtrack gems, it's a wild exhilarating ride. The group includes clarinet/sax player Steve Elson (co-founder of the Borneo Horns who's worked with everyone from David Bowie to Lenny Pickett to Laurie Anderson) - virtuoso accordionist Ismail Butera (also renowned in Balkan, Greek, Turkish, Persian Arabic circles) - Dave Hofstra on bass tuba (Microscopic Septet, Bill Frisell, Robin Holcomb, Guy Klucevsek, Toshi Reagon, etc.) - jazz-cabaret-opera-Bel Canto vocalist Deborah Karpel - multi-instrumentalist Michael Hess on haunting ney flute, 78-string kanun Middle Eastern zither, viola - Lilith Fair-featured trumpet/flugelhorn artist Pam Fleming - violin wunderkind Harris Wulfson - and drummer/bandleader Eve Sicular (Isle of Klezbos). Sixty minutes, 24 tracks, a myriad of flavors, and a panoply of liner notes with fabulous artwork, lyrics full translations. Klezmer in every dimension. Fabulous 8-page color booklet with full lyrics, translations artwork! Top Ten lists: Seth Rogovoy (MOMENT Magazine/author, The Essential Klezmer), 1999 Ari Davidow's KlezmerShack, 1998 WRUW-FM WorldBeat, 1999 "Excellent klezmer...impeccably arranged yet electrifying" - Richard Gehr, The Village Voice "On Yiddish For Travelers, Metropolitan Klezmer demonstrates virtuosity aplenty on music drawn from deep Eastern European and Middle Eastern roots and from the Yiddish theatre of the Jewish Diaspora. If this is a part of your heritage, you'll know some of it and appreciate all of it. If you're just being introduced to klezmer, this is a fine place to start." - Shaun Dale, Cosmic Debris [cosmik.com/aa-january99/reviews/review\\_metropolitan\\_klezmer.html](http://cosmik.com/aa-january99/reviews/review_metropolitan_klezmer.html) "Subtle but ear-catching arrangements. Strands of Greek fire, substance and rhythm are blended with overlays of drum and Druze dance, and tone colours that show a Turkish leaning here reawaken themes that over-exposure by others elsewhere had jaded. Pleasantly inventive." - Folk Roots Magazine (England) "Easily one of the most

significant klezmer discs in some time" - CMJ New Music Report "Wildly variegated flavors...Clever, spirited and smart musicianship...a formidable debut." - Geo Robinson , Jewish Week "An encompassing survey of selections from Klezmer's origins and crossroads....Eve Sicular's rolling drumbeats and Steve Elson's piercing clarinet melodies lead the orchestra from quietly affecting passages to unexpected bursts of wildly-excited flurries. 'Mangiko/Yoshke fort avek'... hauntingly played on the kanun....'Oy Tate,' a khosidl hypnotically cast via the bendir (hand drum) and ney flute. Metropolitan's klezmer mastery, well-researched selections, and enlightening liner notes translate to one thing: recommended." - Dirty Linen Folk World Music Magazine "This versatile sextet from the Big Apple is comfortable with styles ranging from Middle Eastern-drenched dance music to Yiddish theater music to the classic klezmer of Dave Tarras and Naftule Brandwein -- but its lounge-jazz version of the Yiddish classic 'Rozhinkes Mit Mandlen' (Raisins and Almonds) takes the cake. Extra points for the female drummer..." "Just plain great, versatile ensemble playing... a broad sweep... lesser-known and overlooked tunes... exuberant spirit and wit." - Seth Rogovoy, Top 10 Klezmer CDs, Moment Magazine August 1999 and THE ESSENTIAL KLEZMER, 2000 "a briefcase full of bulgars... upbeat, on-the-go collection by the NY-based ensemble is as peppy as a round trip on a carousel with occasional slower songs that generously allow the listener space to catch one's breath ... an exceptionally well-played, nicely arranged representation of the genre." - Bob Tarte, The Beat "The [NY] neighborhood band for whose concerts I am even willing to drive down from Boston...Yiddish for Travelers is a beautifully-produced, exquisitely packaged CD.... The music is excellent... A lovely revitalization of what we now consider the 'classic' American klezmer repertoire (with touches of Balkan and Greek as well)." - Ari Davidow's Klezmer Shack "Great klez [sextet] that have truly studied the depths of klezmer from many areas eras. Each of these 24 cuts is an historic gem of klezmer's rich heritage. With Steve Elson (Big Joe) Dave Hofstra (Microscopics...) A 1000 year history in 60 minutes!" - Downtown Music Gallery "Usually klezmer gets too humorous for my taste but Yiddish For Travelers is a surprisingly enjoyable album." - D. Holland, US Army "The CD is wonderful, I have been using it for the local (read: Northern Italy) radio show...Thank you very much." - Spagnolo, Yuval Italia Centro di Studia sulla Musica Ebraica Italian Center for Study of Jewish Music "Lovely and it helped me to make a point about music shared around the world. Thanks." - Judy Rose, Wisconsin Public Radio "Some more from Yiddish for Travelers just because it's such a fun album." - Frank Gosar, KLCC-FM Eugene, OR "Very effective use of the accordion and kanun especially. Thoroughly enjoyable -- this is the

way I like my klezmer!" - Wendy Morrison, Klezmos/House of Musical Heritage "Yiddish music has developed a multi-ethnic heritage along its route of development. Metropolitan Klezmer embraces these varied aspects by exploring the roots of wedding music, folk rituals, prayers, lullabies and the joyous celebration of Yiddish history." - Hear's Music, Tucson AZ "If Maxwell Street Klezmer Band brought eclecticism on a grand scale to big band klezmer music, then Metropolitan Klezmer does the same to small to medium band klezmer, in its very own distinct way. Metropolitan Klezmer presents a truly cosmopolitan blend of traditional klezmer tunes, Chassidic nigunim and khsidls, Yiddish song, Balkan and Greek and Sephardic elements, as well as jazz. The traditional is blended very carefully and effectively with the contemporary, the old with the new. The arrangements on "Yiddish For Travelers", credited variously to individual band members or several, or the band itself, are outstanding, even elegant, and in spite of their varying authorship remarkably cohesive. Metropolitan Klezmer prove themselves an incredibly versatile band on "Yiddish For Travelers", aided perhaps in part by the very wide-ranging musical backgrounds of the members, which span Cajun and zydeco to jazz and classical, including opera. The musicianship is impeccable, technical mastery is taken for granted, and everybody is evidently very well attuned to one another as an ensemble. The band not only take great pride in what they do and doing it with excellence, but also do so with great exuberance and flair. Eve Sicular, the founder and leader of Metropolitan Klezmer, reveals herself to be an outstanding drummer, with some very fine and highly inventive drumming (and it must be admitted here that as a rule, in most klezmer music, drummers are usually anywhere from adequate to perfectly competent, but are rarely if ever given much of a chance to shine). Yet at the same time, she shows sufficient restraint to not dominate and get in the way of the music. This is a very difficult, delicate balance to achieve, particularly where the bandleader happens to be the drummer, but Ms. Sicular achieves it with seeming great ease and certainly style. Eclecticism and cosmopolitanism also manifest themselves in the instrumental palette of Metropolitan Klezmer. Violinist Michael Hess also "doubles" on kanun (also transliterated as qanun, a Middle Eastern zither) and ney (an end-blown Middle Eastern reed flute) as well as viola, and acquits himself admirably on all of them. Eve Sicular plays frame drums in addition to her conventional kit. Accordionist Ismael Butera doubles on bendir (also a type of frame drum) also. Steve Elson switches between Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano and tenor sax, and flute. Bassist Dave Hofstra also doubles on tuba. The team is completed by Deborah Karpel, vocal, and Pam Fleming on trumpet and flugelhorn.

"Yiddish For Travelers" is an incredibly tight album, the tracks being consistently excellent throughout and forming a nicely cohesive whole. This is music with heart, soul and ear, for heart, soul and ear, and for the feet as well. While there isn't a single weak track, certain highlights bear pointing out.

"Mangiko/Yoshke Fort Avek" combines two versions of the same tune, shared by two different traditions. First, a rendition in the Greek Rebetica style, then in the Ashkenazic style of Eastern Europe. Both share the same highly effective and simple, elegant instrumentation of kanun, accordion, bass and drums. Michael Hess excels on kanun here and only makes one wish this instrument with its seductive sound had been used more widely. On "Sheyn vi di Levone", Deborah Karpel shows her mettle as an excellent Yiddish singer, superbly offset by Steve Elson's swinging, jazzy soprano sax, which again surfaces, this time to lead, to superb effect on "Yosl, Yosl". The almost obligatory favourite, "Der Gasn Nigun", trades off leads among clarinet, trumpet, viola, and accordion, interspersed with fine ensemble playing and solidly grounded by gorgeous tuba playing. "Metropolitan Raisins" is a brilliant jazz rendition of Abraham ("Father of the Yiddish Theatre") Goldfaden's classic lullaby "Rozhinkes Mit Mandlen" (a straight rendition of which precedes the former) from his 1880 operetta, Shulamis. This baby rocks! Steve Elson's fine tenor sax makes you wish for an extended improv here. The next track, "Oy Tate", a khosidl or chassidic tune, contrasts with a superbly elegant Middle Eastern arrangement and likewise instrumentation of ney, bass and bendir. Again, one is left to wish for more of Michael Hess' ney! "Der Miropoler Rebe's Nigun Dybbuk March", the former based on a chassidic meditative tune intended to induce an ecstatic state and sense of connection to the Creator, closes the album with a wonderful treat in the form of a sublime bass clarinet, and what's more, a bass clarinet lead, complemented by a restrained voiceless chorus in the first part of this track. The liner notes are very informative, and include the lyrics for songs in Yiddish, romanised Yiddish, as well as English translation by Eve Sicular. What's more, the notes for each track also include full listing of personnel as well as instrumentation. Metropolitan Klezmer excel on their debut album, "Yiddish For Travelers". It is hugely enjoyable, and I hardly know how I got by without it for so long!" -Rainlore's World of Music [rainlore.demon/WorldOfMusic.html](http://rainlore.demon/WorldOfMusic.html) "Die Aufnahmen sind vorwiegend ausgezeichnet und im klassisch traditionellen Stil arrangiert mit nur wenigen experimentellen, leicht jazzig angehauchten Anstzen. Die Interpretation ist überwiegend zeitlos. Mit diesem Debutalbum hat sich die New Yorker Formation auf einen Schlag einen sicheren Platz in der Klezmer-Szene erspielt. Ich würde sie, obwohl sie erst ein paar Jahre alt ist, zu den Klassikern zählen. Eine CD, die ich immer wieder gerne

auflege und ein berzeugendes Beispiel zeitgemer traditioneller jdischer Musik." - Stefan ("Gus") Bauer, Virtual Klezmer (klezmer.de) German-language site

Some people, me for example, think of klezmer as great party music, even though they've never been to a Jewish party! I always think of partying when I hear klezmer, even if I am deep in the Cascadian forest and the other partygoers are pine trees! The Metropolitan Klezmer is from the huge metropolis of New York City, far from these Pacific mountains. Formed in 1994, they released their first album, Yiddish For Travelers in 1997, and their second, Mosaic Persuasion in 2001. The women in MK do double time in an all-girl band called Isle Of Klezbos, which has other members as well. Both groups have similar instruments and arrangements and include some non-Jewish musicians. Most have played several other styles of music, ranging from Cajun to Greek to jazz. As in many bands, these influences have led to a cosmopolitan sound, integrated at the roots, so that the music sounds like vivid, solid klezmer instead of fusion. And they don't sound cheesy either -- something people out here worry about! What an ethnic party headbanger! There is not a track on Yiddish For Travelers that drags; the slower tracks move a long like a diesel ferry through the dark waters of night. MK, with its often perky brass and drums and more subtle clarinet, violin, and accordion, visits a number of locales. Most are similarly rich, eastern, and captured with energy and soul, but a few break the pace. "Mangiko/Yoske Fort Avek" sounds Greek to me, because the first part is the Greek original played by Michael Hess on kanun (Middle Eastern) zither; the second part is the Yiddish derivative. Speaking of trips to other places, "Russian Sher" and a string of Romanian tracks seem not really so unlike each other in style, and point towards ahomeland based on culture and religion rather than geography. But those geographic differences do exist in the tunes. Yiddish For Travelers also includes a few show and movie tunes, not uncommon for klezmerites. Deborah Karpel sings two of these, in a sweet but piercing low soprano. "Farlangen/Longing" is from a 1937 Polish movie. "A young woman sits in an alcove with her face against the wall." The jazzy "Sheyn Vi Di Levone/Beautiful As the Moon" is from the Yiddish theatre.

-Judith Gennett, Green Man Reviews (KPSU Radio)

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