

ECHOES OF THE SHTETL

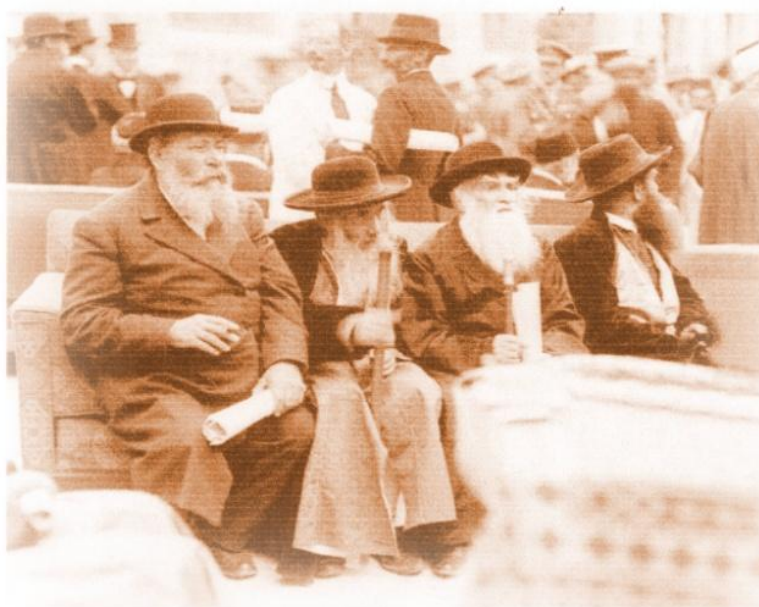
My passion for recreating the sounds of the music of the ancient world originates mainly from my many years as a self-taught Klezmer fiddle player ("[Klezmer](#)" is the name now given to the Jewish Wedding Music of the [Shtetls](#) of old Eastern Europe, the word being derived from the Yiddish, meaning "*Vessels of Song*") - I was captivated by the sound of the ancient Middle Eastern scales used in Klezmer music, and it was this which fuelled my fascination to eventually discover their ultimate origins in Biblical Antiquity, and eventually, my ongoing quest, to recreate the sounds of the Music of the Ancient World. This is the reason why, in 2006, I named my then new-fangled Youtube Channel "[Klezfiddle1](#)"!

Indeed, most of the repertoire from my first 2 albums, "[King David's Lyre: Echoes of Ancient Israel](#)" & "[Lyre of the Levites](#)" is derived from the traditional Klezmer repertoire, uniquely arranged for replica 3000 year old Biblical Lyre...

My album "*Echoes of the Shtetl*" attempts to evoke the sounds of the tragically lost Shtetls of Eastern Europe - the entrancing refrains, of the traditional Jewish Klezmer Fiddle...

ECHOES OF THE SHTETL

MICHAEL LEVY



This album is my attempt to recreate the wonderful sounds of the traditional Jewish Klezmer fiddle, which once wafted through the many Shtetls of Eastern Europe, prior to the ravages wrought on Eastern European Jewish musical culture by the Holocaust.

The first couple of tracks on this album are particularly poignant. "[Khosid Dance](#)" (track 1) & "[Dance From Maramaros](#)" (track 2) - these melodies uniquely demonstrate the fusion of Jewish and Romanian-style Gypsy Music which existed in Hungary, prior to the totally pointless, barbaric destruction of both these communities and their centuries of fabulously rich and diverse musical culture, during the sheer horror of the Holocaust. I first learnt them by ear from a fantastic recording [called "The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania"](#) (Hannibal 1973)...



This recording uniquely features Hungarian Jewish Klezmer melodies, thankfully remembered by a handful of surviving Hungarian Gypsy musicians, who played these very melodies with Jewish musicians, and also at Jewish Weddings in Hungary before World War II - thus preserving a

precious remnant of the amazing Hungarian Jewish/Gypsy culture which once so wonderfully merged & thrived together for literally centuries...

In my own personal arrangement of "*Khosid Dance*", I have attempted to convey this fusion of Romanian Gypsy and Jewish Klezmer fiddle styles, by beginning and closing the piece passages in the style of a typical, mournful Romanian "*Doina*" - a free improvisatory style of fiddle playing, which the Klezmer musicians seem to have directly adopted and adapted from the Romanian-style Gypsy music they heard. In certain parts of "*Khosid Dance*", hints of the familiar Jewish Klezmer "*Ahava Raba*" mode can be heard (AA#C#DEFGA), but the Gypsy/Romanian influence can clearly be felt in both the phrasing and general "mood" of the music. The fiddle playing heard in these precious few surviving Hungarian Klezmer melodies (as performed on the Muzikas recording) has a much "fuller" fiddle style/sound, than the much more ornamented, sinuous, almost "vibrato-free" fiddle styles of Jewish Eastern European Klezmer .

Another fascinating recording I can recommend is called "*Like a Different World*", by the late [Leon Schwartz](#). In this unique recording, can be heard a Jewish fiddle player who was born in Poland in 1902, and was actually taught to play fiddle by the local Gypsy musicians who lived near his village - a fantastically beautiful fusion of styles...

"LIKE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD



LEON SCHWARTZ



A TRADITIONAL JEWISH KLEZMER VIOLINIST FROM UKRAINE

In my intention to convey the terrible loss of the Hungarian Jewish & Gypsy cultures which once so harmoniously blossomed together in Hungary for

centuries, until their almost total destruction in the holocaust, my arrangement of the melody is much slower and mournful than the dance-style rendition heard in the performance of this piece by [Muzsikas](#).

I also attempt to emphasize this sadness by means of the fiddle technique often heard in traditional Jewish Klezmer music, which is known as a "*cretche*" - literally attempting to create a "sobbing" effect on the fiddle, by means of lightly stopping the strings at the end of playing certain notes in the melody...which has the effect of "cutting short the breath" of these notes, just like the sound of someone sobbing.

This fascinating cultural exchange of musical ideas is certainly not unique to Jewish Klezmer music - it seems to have happened throughout all of History, whenever two entirely different cultures find themselves living side by side, for example, [Cajun music](#) - an absolutely incredible fusion, of quaint French Dance Music...*and Louisiana Blues!*

Above all the musical styles which influenced the traditional Klezmer musicians of Eastern Europe, the Romanian influence seems to be the strongest and most enduring. This fact is reflected in the dance forms found throughout the entire surviving Klezmer music repertoire, e.g. [Horas](#), [Doinas](#), and [Bulgars](#) etc. I have also featured examples of such piece on the album, for example & "[Yiddish Hora](#)" (track 6) & "[Oriental Hora](#)" (track 5).

This influence on the old Jewish Klezmer music of Eastern Europe may again be due to the sounds of Romanian Gypsy music heard on the fringes of Eastern European society, near to the old Jewish Shtetls, which the Klezmer musicians heard, adopted and adapted.

It is so often overlooked, that the fact that any Klezmer music has survived today, is mostly thanks to the emigration to America of Jewish musicians from Eastern Europe, prior to the advent of World War II. Some of these musicians recorded the traditional Klezmer melodies they took with them, (their "invisible baggage"), mostly during the 1920s. It was thanks to these crackly vintage recordings, that the revival of Klezmer music, starting in the 1970s, was made possible. "*Oriental Hora*" (track 5) is an example of one of these traditional Klezmer melodies which survived, thanks to an early recording of it in the USA, made by the Klezmer violinist, [Max Liebowitz](#).

The rather rustic "rough edges" in my fiddle playing, (which the classically trained violinist will no doubt detect), is simply a consequence of the fact

that I am totally, entirely self-taught - just like most of the Eastern European Jewish Klezmer musicians of old, I never had either the money or the opportunity to take violin lessons. In my own opinion, folk music played by a classically trained violinist, simply no longer sounds like authentic folk music.

If music can "Capture the Soul" of a People, then may this recording be my tribute to the Jewish & Gypsy musicians of Eastern Europe who were so brutally & pointlessly butchered by the Nazis during the Holocaust - at least this little selection of Klezmer melodies which some of them once played, will now, forever, live on...



THE TRACKS

1. Khosid Dance (Rare Surviving Hungarian Klezmer Melody)
2. Dance From Maramaros (Rare Surviving Hungarian Klezmer Melody)
3. Dobriden (Good Morning)
4. Unzer Toyrele
5. Oriental Hora
6. Yiddish Hora
7. The Happy Nigun
8. Nokh a Glezl Vayn (Another Glass of Wine)