

SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

Thank you for your help in spreading the word about San Francisco Classical Voice. We appreciate your help.

Feb. 8, 10, and 14

The Klezmer Shul That Transcends Tradition

By [Jason Victor Serinus](#)

How can religious music devoid of language serve as a unifying force in a world divided by doctrine? This question led Veretski Pass, a unique klezmer trio, to create a new body of Jewish religious music titled *The Klezmer Shul*. Premiering in Jewish venues in Alameda (Feb. 8), Berkeley (Feb. 10), and Palo Alto (Feb. 14), the 45-minute, four movement instrumental suite — a pioneering attempt to fuse the spiritual essence of Jewish cantorial music with a modern instrumental aesthetic — intends to transmit the emotional power of traditional synagogue singing without the use of words.

Veretski Pass Although *The Klezmer Shul* will debut in religious venues, it is also intended to serve as a purely musical, extra-religious experience. In his grant proposal for the work, Stu Brotman, a Berkeley-based founding member of Veretski Pass, muses, “By its very lack of text, this service may be acceptable to a broad spectrum of religious and non-religious Jews, as well as to a general audience attracted to the music as pure concert music ... It is our hope that the music created will provide an emotional experience derived from, but not specific to, devotional music, and that it will take its place in concert literature suitable for religious services and general programming.”

The group specializes in a collage of “Old Country Music” that blends Carpathian, Jewish, Romanian, and Ottoman styles. Brotman, who plays string bass, *basy* (bass from the Polish Carpathians), *baraban* (Carpathian bass drum), *tilinca* (Romanian/Hungarian shepherd’s flute and trombone); and his fellow musicians, Cookie Segelstein on violin, violin *scordatura*, viola; and Joshua Horowitz on 19th-century Budowitz button accordion, *tsimbl* (Jewish hammered dulcimer); have spent the last six years touring North America and Europe with their unique blend of traditional, newly arranged, and newly composed klezmer music. Acutely aware of the forces that divide and conquer — the trio is named for the multicultural Eastern European birthplace of Segelstein’s father, who was a Holocaust survivor — the group attempts to transcend religious and secular division by uniting audiences in celebration and reverence.

While *The Klezmer Shul* is rooted in Jewish liturgical melodic principles and emotional intonations, it also incorporates jazz, avant garde, classical, klezmer, and folk elements. Whether this musical melting pot can fulfill its lofty goals, the vital spirit of klezmer will certainly make for a moving, perhaps thrilling experience. Be sure to stick around for the post-performance discussion, which at KlezCalifornia’s Yiddish Culture Festival (Feb. 14 in Palo Alto) will transition into a traditional klezmer dance party. That should make for a Valentine’s Day like no other.

Jason Victor Serinus writes about music for *Opera News*, *Opera Now*, *American Record Guide*, *Stereophile*, *San Francisco Magazine*, *Muso*, *Carnegie Hall Playbill*, *East Bay Express*, *East Bay Monthly*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Bay Area Reporter*, *hometheaterhifi.com*, and other publications.

Event Information

World Music

[Veretski Pass](#)

- **Organization:**
- **Venue:** [Congregation Etz Chayim](#)
- **City:** Palo Alto
- **Date:** February 14, 2010 8:00 PM
- **Tickets:** (510) 522-9355

Additional Dates:

[February 10, 2010 8:00 PM](#)

Congregation Netivot Shalom

[Buy Tickets](#)[Learn More](#)

- [Email](#) |
- [Share](#)

Add Comments