

VERETSKI PASS MUSIC FROM THE CARPATHIAN BOW

Cookie Segelstein - Violin, Viola

Joshua Horowitz – Cimbalom, Chromatic Button Accordion, Piano

Stuart Brotman - Bass, Basy, Tilinca, Baraban

Instruments

The violin, a 19th C. Maggini copy played by Cookie Segelstein, remained the quintessentially Jewish instrument of klezmer music until the beginning of the 20th Century, when it was replaced by the clarinet. Early documents from the 16th Century use the violin as the emblem for klezmer guilds. Older styles of bowing, fingering, phrasing and ornamenting, imitating various gestures of East Ashkenazic synagogue singing, were considered lost and forgotten until just recently. The violin is sometimes retuned in a double stringed (*Ciftetelli*) Ottoman tradition. These techniques form an integral part of the unique sound of Veretski Pass. The viola, also called Groyse Fidl (Yid. Big Fiddle), Sekund, Kontra or Zsidó Bratsch (Hun.), played by Ms. Segelstein, is typically used for playing chords in a rhythmic style. According to interviews with older Romanian and Hungarian Roma (Gypsy) musicians, Jewish ensembles used three- or four-string violas and violins as rhythm instruments. The function of string accompaniment fell out of use with the increased inclusion of wind instruments in the klezmer ensembles around the end of the 19th Century, and although still commonly used in the folk music of Hungarian minorities throughout Romania, Cookie is the only one to have explored the viola as a solo voice in klezmer music.

The tsimbl (hammered dulcimer, or cimbalom), played by Joshua Horowitz, formed the rhythmic and timbral backbone of klezmer music from the 16th to the late 19th Century. Its ability to play accompaniment as well as melody made it a versatile and indispensable member of the klezmer ensemble. The construction and tuning of the tsimbl used in Veretski Pass were only made possible after years of detailed research into the iconography, descriptions and early existing recordings of the instrument. The various types of strokes, ornaments and asymmetric phrasings and rhythms Josh uses point to an older, more refined approach to playing, and lend a combination of percussive brittleness as well as a soft ethereal sound cloud to Veretski Pass.

The accordion used by Joshua Horowitz was built in 1889 By Karl Budowitz. It represents the earliest type of fully chromatic button accordion, and formed the basis of the Russian Bayan developed in the early 20th Century. The warm, reedy sound, which at times yields the uncanny illusion of a small wind orchestra, is made possible through the materials used for its construction - bone, wood, goat skin and brass. Its ability to ornament and phrase like the human voice is achieved largely through the smaller, more controllable bellows and the specific fingering techniques used. The earliest recordings of klezmer music on accordion (ca.1913) reveal an identical sound and style to that in employed in Veretski Pass.

The piano, played by Joshua Horowitz has recently been added to the stage by Veretski Pass, specifically to provide a Modern Jazz element for The Klezmer Shul Project. In this 4 movement suite, the third movement features an expressive fusion composition and extended improvisations by Josh.

The basy played by Stu Brotman is a small bass played in the Tatra Mountains of Poland. It is now usually made out of a standard cello. The traditional three-string tuning is an A string and a pair of D strings tuned an octave apart. Small basses are frequently seen in early depictions of klezmer ensembles from the 16th Century, often carried on a shoulder strap to enable processional playing. Stu also plays an original three-string bass made in Germany in 1822. Rather than merely providing a schematized bass line, the bass in Veretski Pass weaves in and out between bass and tenor roles, also interacting with the melody in the lower octave. It provides the very distinct “moaning” sound typical in klezmer music, through frequent use of special bow technique, glissandi, and speech-oriented articulation.

The tilinca played by Mr. Brotman is a Carpathian folk flute traditionally made by Romanian shepherds. It is an end-blown flute without finger holes, a simple wooden tube sharpened on one end to form the mouthpiece. It is blown in such a manner as to produce overtones; the end is opened or closed with one finger to select even or odd harmonics.

The baraban or **poik** is a small bass drum with a cymbal mounted on top, and was reconstructed by the Remo Company under Stu’s supervision. It provides the beat for dance tunes.

For Booking Information:
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