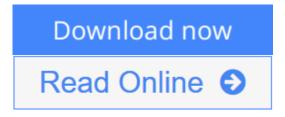


Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer

From Scarecrow Press



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Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer is both a history of this popular form of traditional Jewish music and an instructional book for professional and amateur musicians. Since the revival of klezmer music in the United States in the mid-1970s, Yiddish songs and klezmer dance melodies have served as the soundtrack for a resurgence of interest in Ashkenazic Jewish culture across the globe. Klezmer has taken root not only in America's major urban centers—New York City, Chicago, San Francisco—but also in emerging Jewish music hotspots like St. Petersburg, Buenos Aires, Krakow, and Tokyo. Its high energy, emotionally driven sound, and evocative Yiddish lyrics have found audiences everywhere.

Shpil offers an expansive history of klezmer, from its medieval origins to the present era, and its contributors encompass a cast of world-renowned musicians who have recorded, performed, and studied klezmer for years. Individual chapters concentrate on the most common instruments found in a klezmer ensemble—violin, clarinet, accordion, bass, percussion, and voice—and conclude with a selection of three songs that illustrate and exemplify the history and techniques of that instrument. Shpil includes a glossary and a discography of both classic and new klezmer and Yiddish recordings, all designed to guide readers in an appreciation of this remarkable musical genre and the art of playing and singing klezmer tunes.

Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer is ideal for amateur enthusiasts, musical scholars, beginning artists, and professional musicians, both solo and ensemble—indeed, anyone who wants to experience the joy of listening to and playing this thousand-year-old folk music.



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Editorial Review

Review

Shpil is Strom's latest book on klezmer. In less than 30 pages of the book's opening, he gives an almost breathless history of Jewish music, from its earliest mentions in the Bible through the 1990s. The tour includes the fall of the Temple in the first century, the empires of the Ottomans, Russia, and Austro-Hungary, U.S. labor and immigration history, the development of the Borscht Belt in New York's Catskills, World War II, and the Nazi Holocaust through the recordings and performances of Mickey Katz and Don Byron. Carlos Santana even gets a mention....In its 153 pages Shpil could not possibly contain all that one might want to know about klezmer or its performance. But with its densely packed chapters, it provides a perfect place to start in understanding and playing this most joyous and wonderful music. (San Diego Troubadour)

The past decade or so has witnessed a flourishing of books tackling various aspects of klezmer, a term referring both to a style of Eastern European-born Jewish folk music and the musicians who perform it. Growing interest in the centuries-old genre has spurred the printing of a variety of songbooks, fake books, instrument-specific collections, historical analyses and ethnographic studies. All of these areas find a home in *Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer*, a slim yet information-rich volume edited by accomplished klezmer violinist and ethnographer Yale Strom. Filled with historical details, practical advice, technical instruction, musical examples and illustrative anecdotes, this all-in-one book gathers the wisdom of renowned klezmer performers, specifically Peter Stan (accordion), Jeff Pekarek (bass), Norbert Stachel (clarinet), David Licht (drums), Yale Strom (violin) and Elizabeth Schwartz (vocals). (*The Daily Rabbi*)

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The material is rife with references to specific artists and tunes, making this volume an excellent place for those interested in the genre to begin a serious, studied exploration of the tradition. Those more familiar with the genre will be interested in Strom's observations about the evolving cultural context of klezmer throughout the twentieth century....This new volume is a welcome addition to the growing field of klezmer scholarship. Readers will find this book to be a valuable resource for deepening their knowledge of performance practice as well as the cultural context from which klezmer music emerged and continues to develop. (*Music Reference Services Quarterly*)

The various contributors point out that Klezmer music [has] distinctive features...[T]his is a successful manual for a beginner in the field. (Association of Jewish Libraries Reviews)

About the Author

Yale Strom is one of the world's leading ethnographers of klezmer culture. He has been conducting field research in Central and Eastern Europe on the topic since 1981.

Users Review

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