

# A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

## KLESMER, BAROQUE AND TARTAN: A JEWISH MUSICAL ODYSSEY

*The Adrienne Greenbaum trio: Scotshne and Fleytmusic*

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Polling still had 3 hours to go on Referendum Day, as guests assembled at the Kalpna Restaurant in Edinburgh for a memorable night of entertainment, Indian vegetarian food and drink.



The crowd represented the full range of the Jewish (and Jew-ish) community of Edinburgh, from EHC members to Sukkat Shalom, the Yiddish class, Klesmer enthusiasts and those who don't participate in any formal groups. Ephraim Borowski, the Director of SCoJeC, and his wife joined us along with Hilary Rifkind, the Chair. The whole event was compered by the incomparable and energetic Fiona Frank, SCoJeC's Outreach and Events officer, the

event coinciding with her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday (Mazal Tov Fiona).

The Adrienne Greenbaum ensemble was on a Scottish tour organised by the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) with support from BEMIS through Homecoming Scotland 2014. They had already been to Dundee, Inverness and Aberdeen and were due to go to Ayr, rounding off in Glasgow on 21 September.



Adrienne Greenbaum is internationally known as the pioneer of the klezmer flute tradition, performing on historical instruments of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Her recordings and performances of

FleytMuzik have garnered special attention from audiences and critics who appreciate her raw passion, her elegance and her soaring tone that is achieved on a variety of wood flutes. She has also enjoyed a full career as Professor of Flute at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and as Solo Flutist in two fine orchestras. She showed an infectious enthusiasm as she led her co-players in a range of numbers from baroque to klezmer and jazz. She was supported by Michael Alpert, who has been a pioneering figure in the renaissance of East European Klezmer music for 30 years and who played a mesmerising range of instruments, from fiddle to accordion to bhdoran. Joining them was Lev Atlas, whose 'day job' is as Principal Viola of Scottish Opera and who is also a 'living encyclopaedia' of hundreds of traditional tunes, as well as recently gaining a PhD from the University of St Andrews on Russian Chamber Music.



The programme notes prepared by Adrienne Greenbaum give something of the background to their endeavour.

“Scottish, Celtic, Klezmer, baroque, and gypsy dance tunes are rather surprising dots to connect. Found fairly recently is a large volume of

music, a notebook filled with 350 scratchily-penned dance tunes This Uhrovska Collection, named for the town in Slovakia where it was found, contained tunes that serve as an important catalogue of melodies and dances of the gypsy itinerant musicians. These were Hungarian, Czech, and Polish tunes for dancing and for listening. The prolific eighteenth century baroque composer and multiinstrumentalist George P Telemann himself was fascinated and delighted by such tunes as these, proclaiming in writing that he enjoyed the "barbaric beauty" of the music performed by the klezmer. In one of his autobiographies, Telemann also exclaims that a skilled composer could gain enough musical inspiration so as to last a lifetime, listening to gypsy musicians, referring to the klezmer as well. Perhaps a leap of faith, but my thinking is that these tunes, or like tunes, were what Telemann was referring to as "music of the klezmer." Our Telemann selection offers a glimpse into this appreciation.

“Let us now skip over to an area of the world where similar music is being composed and performed: Scotland. A Scottish Jewish history? Read the many sources that inform us of where Jews settled, why and how Scotland - for the most part - welcomed them. What music did they enjoy? We feature in this program Scottish composer, Isaac Nathan. Here was a man who was quite eager to make a pound or two by composing music of his own people. A proposal to collaborate with Lord Byron -albeit Byron needing to be asked a few times before accepting - and we have a *shiddukh* of two men eager to publish for their own reasons, money notwithstanding. Byron states that he is always interested in bettering the oppressed, and the Jewish people had his heart. Nathan was having some difficulty

getting a clear response from Byron. He decided to send a package with this letter in hopes of spurring a commitment to his project:

*“My Lord, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of sending your Lordship some holy biscuits, commonly called unleavened bread, and denominated by the Nazarites Motsas, better known in this enlightened age by the epithet Passover cakes; and as a certain angel by his presence, ensured the safety of a whole nation, may the same guardian spirit pass with your Lordship to that land where the fates may have decreed you to sojourn for a while.*”



Byron wrote back:

*“My dear Nathan, - I have to acknowledge the receipt of your very seasonable bequest, which I duly appreciate; the unleavened bread shall certainly accompany me on my pilgrimage; and, with a full reliance on their efficacy, the Motsas shall be to me a charm against the destroying Angel*

*wherever I may sojourn; his serene highness, however will, I hope, be polite enough to keep at desirable distance from my person, without the necessity of besmearing my door posts or upper lintels with the blood of any animal. With many thanks for your kind attention, believe me, my dear Nathan,  
Yours very truly,  
BYRON.*”



“Other Scottish tunes on the program will represent what the Jews in Scotland might have enjoyed and played at the time of Byron and Isaac Nathan. And so, complete the connections with klezmer and we have found musics that not only entertain but tell a great historic tale of wandering, hidden Jewry throughout Great Britain, Ireland and Scotland, with klezmer coming full circle to what we know it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

The concert more than lived up to expectations, with a mixture of Baroque, and Gypsy music, classical Hebrew songs and Yiddish numbers with some Scottish folk

music thrown in to the mix. The trio were gifted, charismatic and totally in sympathy with each other. In vocal numbers they created beautiful harmonies. Soon they had the whole restaurant clapping or stomping in time to the music and joining in the singing.



Even more magically, other performers began to join in. Simon Carlyle of The Klatsch began with his tuba. Simon was joined by other members of the Klatsch, as well as fiddler and a guest with a box of ocarinas. By now the Referendum had closed but no-one seemed to be in too much hurry to go home and watch the results. The Kalpna looked set to stay open for some time yet.

Thanks go to SCoJeC for bringing this amazing and memorable happening to Edinburgh and to the Kalpna for their hospitality.





