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INTERVIEW

For the unfortunately uninitiated, klezmer music is a traditional folk form for Jewish weddings and parties. The Klezmatics, New York's modern klezmer champs, have just released an album called *The Well*, in collaboration with Chava Alberstein, an Israeli singer. This interview is with Lorin Sklamberg, singer, pianist, and accordion player for The Klezmatics.



Jesse: Well, it's good to speak with you.

Lorin: Thanks. Same for me.

Jesse: Let me start off with a basic, predictable question. How did you become exposed to klezmer, and is it something that you have always pursued?

Lorin: I was first exposed to klezmer music probably when I was around sixteen or seventeen. I was in a band in Los Angeles that played mostly Jewish music, mostly Israeli folk dance music. We had a clarinetist who was really into klezmer music, although at the time it was before what is now known as the klezmer revival started in the late seventies. That was my first exposure, yeah. The klezmer revival is generally considered to have started in the mid-to-late seventies.

Jesse: Okay. I notice that in the past couple of years, that's the kind of klezmer that most people would be acquainted with. But I was wondering if you could explain why the revival occurred, or why this music seems to be growing in popularity?

Lorin: Well, for the people who play the music, the klezmer revival was kind of spurred on by the popularity of the book and the TV series, *Roots*; that people were encouraged to look at their own heritage as a source of pride and also a source of things you could do artistically, by extension. And so, people who had been into playing other kinds of music were encouraged to look into their own Eastern European-Jewish roots. And that's basically how the revival started. As far as my own experience goes, I was interested in the music because it is part of my heritage. And in fact, I moved to New York from Los Angeles specifically because I wanted to be in a place that had a very strong Eastern European Jewish community—which does exist here in a way that doesn't seem to be the case in Los Angeles, or wasn't the case at the time. And basically, what happened was that through the process I discovered myself as a singer and a musician.

Jesse: That's very interesting. Did you start out on the same instruments you play today, or has that sort of evolved?

Lorin: Well, the two instruments that I played when I was really young were guitar and piano and, I've always sung, but when I was in high school I started to play the accordion and since then, next to my voice, it has been the instrument I use the most.

Jesse: Going back to what you were saying about exploring your own ethnic background, does everyone in the group have the same ethnic roots as you?

Lorin: No, there are two members of the band who aren't Jewish.

Jesse: So what are their reasons for being involved in the music? Is it for them, purely the music, or is it also exploring a cultural kind of tradition?

Lorin: I'm sorry?

Jesse: Are they also interested in the cultural tradition of klezmer, or do you think for them it's

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