



Daniel Kempin & Dimitry Reznik

mir lebn eybik!

[mir 'le:bn 'e:bik!] (We'll live forever!)

Daniel Kempin, accompanied by Dimitry Reznik on the fiddle, describes the particulars of Jewish everyday life. In the first part, the theme is one of cultural identity of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, as well as historical stages. Inner-jewish groupings as a reaction to these conditions are explained, and performed with a exuberant, self-ironical style.

The second half includes musical selections from the Ghetto diary by the famous Jewish poet and composer Mordechai Gebirtig (1877-1942). These selections were recorded as a CD by invitation from the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.

But also here – as the title of the program and the defiant song from the Vilna Ghetto suggest – there is the expression of a huge will to live and to survive and an almost unbelievable hope.



Nebbekh is a characteristic of Jewish songs.

Irony and self-deprecation for Jews is like the breath of life, a survival strategy, says Kempin and refers to *Chutzpah*, the Jewish "pushiness".

He tells the following anecdote:

In two months, a new biblical flood will destroy the world.

The Buddhist monk tells his faithful to look deep into themselves to prepare for Nirvana.

The Catholic priest tells his flock to repent and believe the gospels.

The rabbi says however: OK boys, you have two months – go figure out how to live under water!

CD Publications

mazl un shlamazl

1992, Melisma, MELI 3033

mir lebn eybik!

1994, Melisma, MELI 3035
German Record Critic's Award

Mordechai Gebirtig: Krakow ghetto-notebook

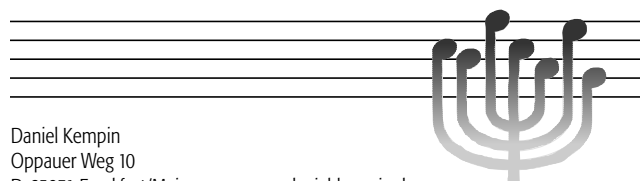
1995, Koch international classics 3-7295-2H-1

benkschaft – Longing

1998, Melisma, MELI 3046
German Record Critic's Award
German Folk Music Award, 2002



A fascinating spectrum of songs from the ghettos and concentration camps.
Guest artists: Sima Skurkovitch and Rabbi Avigdor Zuker



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DANIEL KEMPIN

DIMITRY REZNIK



mir lebn eybik!
לויזאנאן אויבוק!
lider fun getos un lagern
- לויזאנאן אויבוק!



YIDDISH SONGS

www.daniel-kempin.de



Photo: Dirk Vogel

Daniel Kempin – A musician from an unusual family

An unusual family, these Kempins! One son is the church organist of a catholic community in Germany. The other lives in Jerusalem and is a devoted christian with a jewish identity. The third, Daniel Kempin, was christian, and returned as a young man to the religion of his fathers, to judaism. One thing they have in common: They are all accomplished musicians. This gift was inherited from their parents, who were both church musicians.

Daniel Kempin sings in a language that his parents hardly would have understood, and that he himself worked hard to learn: Yiddish. He sings "Ven er tshespilt zikh mit zayn fidl, oy, mame vert mir gut on a shir" on his CD "benkshaft" (longing), which won him the German Record Critic's Award: "When he plays on his fiddle, oy mama, I feel so good". That a "Klezmer-boy" can set a girl's head spinning is understandable, if you consider the exciting Klezmer music that Daniel Kempin plays, just as generations of jewish musicians before him.

But it's not just happy love songs that Kempin sings best. "Arbetloze zenen mir, on a beged on a haym" (Unemployed are we, without clothes, without a home) is the marching song of the poet Mordechai Gebirtig who

was murdered in the Cracow Ghetto in 1942. Kempin devoted an entire CD to this man: "Krakow Ghetto Notebook", recorded by the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.

Jewish culture isn't only created in Israel, but much more in the "Galuth", in Exile. America is a magic word for Daniel Kempin. He loves the natural feeling of life there compared to Germany. "Jewish life is much more diverse. In Crown Heights, for example, there are Kosher fast food restaurants". Also the tolerance and the religious life in America deeply impressed him. "In Germany, you don't go to a prayer house, but to a high security building", he says. For this reason Daniel Kempin is also known to the jewish community in America.

By contrast, in Germany he sings less for a jewish than for a German public. "Confusion" characterizes the reaction of some concertgoers. "People have even congratulated me for my 'fluent command of german'!" Or he is asked where he was born in Israel, since of course as a jew he couldn't possibly be German. There was also a stage manager who didn't want to put a bar stool on the stage for him. The reason: Typical jewish arrogance, wanting to sit higher than other people...

But it is Kempin's special wish to bring the richness of jewish culture particularly to gentiles. When in his concerts he uses songs from the middle ages to the recent, he is in a certain sense a historian, bringing jewish history to life through its music. Many a jewish song he has rescued from obscurity by (for example in Jerusalem) tape recording it and including it in his repertoire. There he visited a talmudic university, where he stayed even through the gulf war.

Kempin learned his Yiddish in intensive courses in England and Israel. This form of Eastern European jewish slang is no dialect of German, but a complete and independent language, with its own grammar and vocabulary. Since the nearly complete destruction of Eastern European Jewry in the Holocaust and the founding of the modern state of Israel, fewer and fewer people speak Yiddish, Kempin doesn't believe it is dying out. The death of Yiddish has been predicted for the past 100 years, he says, and there have always been renewal movements. In this art form he is considered one of the leaders in Germany.

Along with jewish music, Kempin has also found his jewish identity. He did not convert to judaism. Rather, he says, he reversed his grandmother's decision. She had herself and his mother baptized during the time of national socialist oppression.

Daniel Kempin fought a ten year internal battle with himself and finally decided for the jewish faith. But even here, the artist is conflicted to a certain degree: On the one side he is a board member of the Jewish Community in Mainz, and on the other he is a member of the Frankfurt Kehilla Chadascha.

And no wonder: Daniel Kempin just comes from an unusual family.



Daniel Kempin

Born in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Member of the Jewish Community in Frankfurt am Main. Studied music in Darmstadt, with several semesters of Jewish Studies at the University of Frankfurt and a Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Intensive Yiddish in places such as Great Britain and Israel. Concerts and workshops with jewish music since 1983 in Switzerland, Luxembourg, Great Britain, Poland Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Israel and the USA.

Many radio and television programs in germany and elsewhere and participation in numerous book and CD ROM publications.

Dimitry Reznik

Born in Petrozavodsk, Russia.

Studied music in St. Petersburg, Cologne (Germany) and Utrecht (Netherlands). Master classes with Philipp Hirschhorn and Yehudi Menuhin. Studied in a Lubavitscher Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Intensive solo concert activity amog others in France, Great Britain, Poland, Russia, Israel, Chile, Canada, and the USA. Numerous CD productions, among others with the piano trio of St. Petersburg, and the Tango- and Klezmer Quartet. Since 1992 works with Daniel Kempin.

Mainspitze: Introversive, Daniel Kempin holds his head low over his guitar and Dimitry Reznik closes his eyes while playing his violin. Each appears to be entirely immersed in his own instrument. Suddenly, with a short moment of eye contact they become a team and the show can start: Life is a joy!

Westdeutsche Zeitung: Dimitry Reznik proves himself to be a violinist of great talent: On the one hand a sensitive accompanist with many nuances, on the other side his solos present his devilish virtuosity. The audience goes wild.

Ruhrnachrichten: The manner in which they interpret the songs shows clearly the passion with which the two artists approach their art. The palette of feelings, highly expressive, range from the gentlest tone colors to rousing, fiery outbreaks of emotion.

Frankfurter Rundschau: Sensitive and rousing at the same time, Daniel Kempin adapts his voice, gestures, facial expressions and his virtuoso guitar playing to the alternating pulses of joy and melancholy and hope and despair that determined the lives of the Eastern European Jews.

Mannheimer Morgen: One has the impression that Yiddish is a part of the singer and great entertainer himself. With his guitar and his way of singing he breathes fiery life into the songs. The musicians filled the audience with enthusiasm with their breath taking virtuosity.

Thüringische Landeszeitung: A broad spectrum of moods from tender melancholy to mischievous boisterousness; from self ironic barbs to reflective observations. Dimitry Reznik is a congenial partner who conjures sparkling lights on his violin.

Die Welt: Songs of unusual color, full of strength and melancholy, resigned and unbelievably unbending all at once.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: Daniel Kempin has brought the heart of the Yiddish language back to life, as if Yiddish and its musical presentation were part of the singer himself. The same is true for his music: with a beautiful velvety tone that is equally capable of a sudden cry, Kempin's baritone combines with his unobtrusive mastery of the guitar to bring his songs vividly to life. ... He is not only a remarkable folk singer, but also a first-class entertainer.

Süddeutsche Zeitung: The singer-guitarist Daniel Kempin shows, with his breath taking manner of performance, how a message can be transported through song.

Wetschernije Nowostij (Lithuania): Professionalism combined with vast knowledge of Jewish culture and music and the great talent of the artist conquered the audience. The brilliant mastership of the guitar and voice, and the poignant performance helped the artist make the entire depth of his vast repertoire accessible to the Vilna audience. The folksongs, the songs of the Vilna Ghetto and the Jewish-American hits will remain long after in the memories of the public. (Translated from Russian).

Litowski Jerusalem (Lituania): men hot gehert a sakh oysfilers, nor do iz geven epes naves: dos akomponirn mit a gitare in di hent fun a virtuoz, in dem tifn araynlebn zikh in inhalt fun yeder lid: a freylekh lid hot geklungen hultayish, an umetike – mit a tifn yomer, un alts azoj hartsik, nit gekinstlt.

Jewish United Fund News (Chicago): Daniel Kempin performs the songs with lev and nefesh (heart and soul). The musical settings are simple and powerful.

Jewish Chronicle (Manchester): The arts will be better than ever, with some incredible musicians such as Daniel Kempin and Dimitry Reznik from Germany.