

Paul Renz Appointed Director of Jazz Studies at West Bank School of Music

The West Bank School of Music announces the appointment of Paul Renz to Jazz Director at the school. Renz has been at the school for several years and has a strong background in jazz education. He will be focusing on expanding the school's jazz program and providing students with a high-quality education in the field.

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NEW!! Twin Cities CDs

The Minnesota Klezmer Band, *Bulka's Song*



by Joseph Vass

A "klezmer" is not a musical style, but a person: an "instrument of song." What some call "klezmer" music is just a collection of styles one group of klezmers used to play. To identify that particular style as the only authentic "klezmer" music would be as constricting as to identify 1920s New Orleans style jazz as the only authentic jazz.

The Minnesota Klezmer Band is a klezmer band not because we play only one style of music, but because we are a band of klezmers. Like our forbears, we play not only Jewish-style instrumental wedding music, but other music. Like our forbears, we incorporate elements of the music around us into the new Jewish music we compose and perform. Like our forbears, we stay true to our roots, but our roots have penetrated to a lot of places.

Thus, every single member of the Minnesota Klezmer Band can play not only Eastern European wedding music, but other musics like jazz and classical as well. Versatility is a requirement of a true klezmer.

The new CD *Bulka's Song* reflects our approach. The tunes are both commonly identified as klezmer and also other Jewish music not commonly characterized as "klezmer." We also compose and perform new Jewish music that learns freely from Jewish traditions outside Eastern Europe and other traditions not Jewish at all. Some of the old songs we sing are in Yiddish, but the new songs are in English, the language most commonly spoken by contemporary Jews all over the world.

Perhaps most distinctively, we make our music the American way, or more precisely, the jazz way. In performance, our band is not a dictatorship based on one individual's conception, but a freewheeling and democratic conception. We want improvisation, interplay, conversation, and spontaneity. This approach is modern, yet consistent with traditional Jewish ways of praying and making music.

The Minnesota Klezmer Band includes

clarinetist and vocalist Jerry Gotler, drummer Phil Hey, violinist Yuri Merzhevsky, bass player Gary Raynor, and composer/pianist Joe Vass. Their new CD is called *Bulka's Song*. They will appear again at the Dakota Bar and Grill on Sunday, June 7, at 8 p.m.

Vicky Victoria, *I'm Having a Good Time*



The dazzling "newcomer" and rockin' romantic blues and jazz standards singer's new CD *I'm Having a Good Time* was listed as one of the top ten local discs in the Twin Cities by Jim Meyers of the *Star Tribune* in 1997.

"The songs Vicky Victoria sings are deliciously authentic, soulful, and straight from the heart. The melodies are classy backdrops of honky-tonk, Tin-Pan Alley styles, and then there's a tune 'Black Coffee' which is a slow, smokey jazz filled number, and a couple of blues shuffles," reported Jean Verstraete in the *Twin Cities Blues News* (Nov. 1997).

The musicians on the CD are: Don Stille and Willie Murphy, piano; Rick O'Dell, clarinet and saxes; Dave Maslow, bass; and drummers Rich Snyder and Michael Valesquez. Verstraete said, "Victoria had done her homework on this CD. She brought out tunes from the attic, dusted them off, and with her smooth crisp vocals gave them life."

The CD has played on KBEM-FM 88.5 and is available at the Electric Fetus and independent record stores.

Dean Magraw Releases New CD *Seventh One*

Master guitarist Dean Magraw's latest CD *Seventh One* includes tracks by jazz trio Souls of Kilimanjaro, co-starring Anthony Cox and Happy Apple drummer Dave King, plus a few songs familiar to fans of the jam band, Eight Head. Four years in the making, the recording also features a collaboration with mandolinist Peter Ostroushko and a duet with percussionist Jimmy Higgins (from the Riverdance band.)