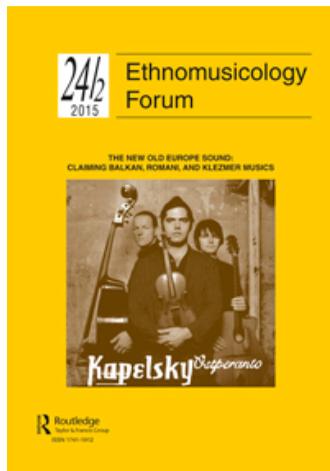


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# Music without Borders in the New Germany: Giora Feidman and the Klezmer-influenced New Old Europe Sound

Joel E. Rubin

*Through his universalising of klezmer and his use of that music as a means of reconciliation between Jews and Germans, Israeli clarinettist Giora Feidman attracted a strong following in Germany. He functioned as a lynchpin in the emergence of the New Old Europe Sound, nurturing German musicians who incorporated klezmer into their world music. Clarinettists Helmut Eisel and David Orlowsky were heavily influenced by Feidman's style of universalising musical mysticism, which allowed them to flaunt or erase their musical Jewishness as the need arose. By contrast, Israeli clarinettist and Feidman protégé Irith Gabriely has anchored her performance persona to specifically Jewish signifiers, eschewing Feidman's universalising discursive strategies. As a result, her popularity has fallen following the decline of German interest in Jewishness, whereas Eisel and Orlowsky, like Feidman, have managed to remain viable.*

*Keywords: Klezmer; Germany; Clarinet; World Music; Jewish; Giora Feidman; Helmut Eisel; David Orlowsky; Irith Gabriely; New Old Europe Sound*

## Introduction

In the darkened theatre, a lone clarinettist appears from the rear of the audience and approaches the stage slowly, coaxing a pianissimo melody from his horn. Once on stage, he is flooded in a single spotlight, which projects his shadow onto the wall behind him. Wearing the cap, clothes and yellow star of a Jewish ghetto inmate, Argentinian-born Israeli Giora Feidman (b. 1936) has in a single move brought

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klezmer into post-war German consciousness.<sup>1</sup> It is the German premiere of Israeli playwright Joshua Sobol's controversial Holocaust piece, *Ghetto*, on 12 July 1984 in the Freie Volksbühne Berlin.

Feidman's idiosyncratic style had already earned him a following as a forerunner of the American klezmer revival in Israel and, to some extent, the United States.<sup>2</sup> But—like the klezmer he popularised—he was virtually unknown in Germany.<sup>3</sup> Since the premiere of *Ghetto*, however, Feidman has enjoyed a tremendous career in Germany, achieving a status ranging somewhere between celebrated entertainer, political figure and guru-like figure. From the boulevard press to the highest echelons of government, he is widely regarded as a healer of the German nation with his universalist message of reconciliation,<sup>4</sup> forgiveness (Birnbaum 2009) and tolerance.

In this context Feidman was one of the main progenitors of the New Old Europe Sound—a world music phenomenon which began to emerge in the early 1990s as a mixture of klezmer, Romani and Balkan musics with various forms of popular, jazz and art music (Kaminsky 2015). In particular, his influence lies in the realm of 'chamber klezmer', with its 'focus on musical innovation and virtuosic arrangements, seeking out intimate listening audiences' (Kaminsky 2014: 257). This article focuses on music in which klezmer is a primary ingredient, for which the admixtures are plentiful: klezmer and tango; klezmer and classical; klezmer and 'Gypsy'; klezmer and punk; klezmer and jazz; klezmer and musette; or often several at once—for example, 'reminiscent of klezmer, flamenco, and swing, accompanied by African beat' (Anonymous 2014).

Through a series of influential music workshops, concerts and television appearances in Germany especially in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Feidman attracted a strong following among musicians. He mentored the careers of several protégés—most notably the German clarinetists Helmut Eisel (b. 1955) and David Orłowsky (b. 1981). Both of these musicians have developed significant careers of their own within Germany and internationally, beginning with klezmer music heavily influenced by Feidman. Evolving personal styles within the New Old Europe Sound, both musicians expanded into territories that allowed them to either flaunt or erase their musical Jewishness as the need arose.

<sup>1</sup>Texts on various aspects of the klezmer revival in Germany include Rubin (2014), Waligórska (2013), Eckstaedt (2003), Ottens (2006b, 2008) and Wood (2004: Chapter 4, 'Was wollen Sie hier in Deutschland?' [What do you want here in Germany?]: American Yiddish musicians respond to contemporary Central Europe), as well as Heiko Lehmann's (2002) online overview.

<sup>2</sup>On Feidman's pre-Germany career, see the video *Jewish Soul Music: The Art of Giora Feidman* (1980).

<sup>3</sup>Feidman's reputation was already cemented in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) five years before the Fall of the Berlin Wall and German Reunification. The relationship to Jews and Jewish culture, and hence to klezmer and Yiddish music, was quite different in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), as Ottens (2008) has shown. I argue here that Feidman's success was largely due to that initial West German response. In the aftermath of the Reunification in 1990, he became an important symbolic Jewish figure in the formation of what some have termed a new German national identity (Ottens 2006a). A study of differences in the reception of Feidman between the former states of the FRG and the GDR is beyond the scope of this article. Since Feidman's pre-reunification career took place almost exclusively in the FRG, my use of the term Germany relates to West Germany prior to October 1990, and to reunified Germany thereafter, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Wolfgang Thierse, then President of the German Bundestag, called Feidman 'a great ambassador of reconciliation' (Anonymous 2001).

# THE ART OF KLEZMER

EINLADUNG

ZUM KLEZMER-WORKSHOP  
FÜR KLARINETTE

MIT  
**GIORA FEIDMAN**

AM 8. OKTOBER 1997



### GIORA FEIDMAN

„Ich bin ein Instrument des Gesanges!“

„EIN KLEZMER!“

„Wenn ich meine Klarinette nehme, dann bleibe ich ein Sänger, und ich singe durch mein Instrument.“

Geboren und aufgewachsen in Argentinien, wurde Giora Feidman zunächst Klarinettist am Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. Von dort aus wurde er als Klarinettist an das Israel Philharmonic Orchestra nach Tel Aviv berufen.

Bewunderer und Förderer seiner Kunst waren Leonard Bernstein und Zubin Mehta.

Als Kind einer berühmten Familie von Klezmer-Musikern in der vierten Generation und anerkannt als führende Autorität der jüdischen Volksmusik, widmet sich Giora Feidman der Interpretation und Aufführung jüdischer Musik aus Gegenwart und Vergangenheit.

### KLEZMER

Den Ursprung dieses Begriffes bilden die beiden hebräischen Wörter „Kli-Zemer“: Instrument des Gesanges. Giora Feidman: „Klezmer bedeutet nicht eine bestimmte Art von Musik und ist keine Widerspiegelung eines musikalischen Stils.... Klezmer bezieht sich auf die natürliche Gabe des Menschen, sich selbst durch Gesang auszudrücken. Das ist die wahre Bedeutung des Begriffes Klezmer.“

### KLEZMER-WORKSHOP

Herzlich eingeladen sind aktive und passive Teilnehmer, Klarinettisten und Nicht-Klarinettisten.

Aktive Teilnehmer können Werke eigener Wahl vortragen, mit welchen sich Giora Feidman auseinandersetzen wird.

Im Zusammenhang mit diesem Workshop  
veranstalten wir eine Testausstellung  
mit Klarinetten von



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- Buffet RC • Buffet RC Prestige
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Figure 1 Feidman Workshop Brochure, 1997. Courtesy of Die Holzbläser, Berlin.

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The marketability and success of the New Old Europe Sound is intrinsically tied to its capacity to grant ethnically grounded ‘authenticity’ without demanding ethnic specificity. While the New Old Europe Sound may draw strength from individual vogues for Jewish, Romani and Balkan musics, its power lies in the divestment of the cultural capital of those musics from the ethnicities with whom they have traditionally been associated. First, because this divestment allows for a sense of ownership for the—in this case German—audiences of those musics. Second, because it generalises that capital and so immunises it from declines in interest in specific ethnic groups; for example, Jews in Germany after 2001 (Rubin 2014; Waligórska 2013).

By looking at the careers and music of Eisel and Orlowsky, I will show how their internalisation of Feidman’s style, and Feidman’s explicit licensing of klezmer to them as interethnic ‘fair use’, granted them ownership of an ethnically marked musical identity that provided them access to a world music scene full of multicultural collaborations—via klezmer they can also make claims to jazz, classical, Balkan and ‘Gypsy’ musical identities. Feidman, Eisel and Orlowsky all have their own strategies for loosening klezmer from Jewishness (and by extension, Jewishness from Jews). During the Jewish vogue in Germany between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s, their ambiguities helped them cash in on this connection, especially by allowing them to transfer virtual Jewish identity to their audiences (Gruber 2002). After German interest in all things Jewish—including klezmer music—declined in the early 2000s (Rubin 2014), they could continue to profit from klezmer by generalising its cultural capital of authenticity beyond Jewishness. By contrast, Israeli clarinettist Irith Gabriely (b. Haifa 1950)—a former Feidman student who saw great success in Germany in the 1990s and early 2000s marketing herself as the ‘Queen of Klezmer’ (to Feidman’s ‘King of Klezmer’)—never elided the Jewishness of her music.<sup>5</sup> Instead of making use of the universalising mystical significations of the New Old Europe Sound or otherwise generalising klezmer beyond Jewishness, she relied heavily on obvious Jewish clichés. Her popularity was thus linked primarily to a German demand for culturally acceptable channels of philo-Semitic stereotyping, and thus declined once the Jewish vogue receded.

### **Peter Zadek’s Ghetto: The Beginning of Klezmer in Germany**

To say the discourse surrounding Jews in the West Germany of 1984 was loaded would be an understatement. At the level of popular culture, the country was still

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<sup>5</sup>The interviews carried out for this article were conducted via Skype. I was already actively involved in the performance and research of klezmer music before my first concerts in Berlin in 1988. I subsequently lived there from 1989 to 2003 and was involved in cultural life on many levels: as performer, educator, scholar, concert and festival producer, and radio journalist. Because of the nature of the klezmer scene during most of this period in Germany, split as it was into factions around the American revivalists (myself among others), Feidman and immigrants from the former Soviet Union, I had only fleeting contact with Feidman’s circle while living in Germany (Rubin 2014). I had met Feidman and Eisel briefly in Israel at the International Klezmer Festival in Safed in 1993 and had never had contact with either Orlowsky or Gabriely prior to researching this article.

reeling from the 1979 broadcast of the four-part US mini-series *Holocaust*, which ‘wrenched [the discussion] away from its confinement in intellectual circles and placed [it] firmly in the area of everyday public debate’ (Zielinski 1980: 96). In September 1984, just two months after the *Ghetto* premiere, revisionist filmmaker Edgar Reitz’s widely popular *Heimat* series was aired. Conceived largely in reaction to *Holocaust*, this series presented Germany as ‘virtually without victims’ (Hoberman in Hansen et al. 1985: 9). And in the academic realm, right-wing German historians were beginning to question the uniqueness of the Holocaust, setting the stage for the Historian’s Dispute of the late 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Thus a pattern was established by the mid-1980s that allowed for two possible ways of relating to the Holocaust: at the extremes, there was guilt, represented by *Holocaust* and by historians on the left, or denial, represented by *Heimat* and the revisionist historians.

In the immediate post-war period, Germany had seen the rise of the ambivalence towards Jews known as philo-Semitism. As described by historian Frank Stern,

in the wake of the tabooing of anti-Semitism ... a metamorphosis took place in attitudes and behaviours towards Jews as a result of the crumbling racist worldview. Anti-Semitism continued to exist to be sure in the intellectual substratum and on the margins of post-war society, however it took on in public ... a markedly pro-Jewish demeanour. (Stern 1991: 15–16)

It had become socially unacceptable to present morally ambiguous or negative Jewish characters on stage and screen; all Jews were to be positive, like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s Nathan the Wise or Anne Frank (Hargens 2010). *Ghetto* was an exception, with the figure of Gens, the Jewish leader in Vilna, in whom the German media saw ‘an immoral character who had more affinity with the perpetrators than with the victims’ (Mueller 2009: 44). The production only avoided accusations of anti-Semitism because both the author of the piece and its director, Peter Zadek, were themselves Jews (Mueller 2009: 55).

Into this crucible walked Giora Feidman. The initial press response to Feidman can only be described as ecstatic, and helped set the stage not only for his German career, but also for klezmer and the New Old Europe Sound in Germany generally. In the United States klezmer had been received as a rediscovery and celebration of the East European roots of American Jewry, while in Israel it was at best grudgingly tolerated outside very orthodox circles as a relic of the European Diaspora in conflict with the Zionist project (Chaver 2004). In Germany, however, klezmer was weighted with a direct link to the Holocaust and German memory politics from the very beginning.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The questioning of the uniqueness of the Holocaust by historical revisionists culminated in the intellectual standoff known as the *Historikerstreit* (Historian’s Dispute) of 1986–87, led by revisionist historian Ernst Nolte and countered by philosopher and critical theorist Jürgen Habermas.

<sup>7</sup>Besides being linked via *Ghetto*, the performance of klezmer music has been thus directly tied to, for example, the annual commemorations around the liberation of Auschwitz (27 January) and the so-called Reichskristallnacht (9 November). For example, the annual Jewish Culture Days (Jüdische Kulturtage) inaugurated in

In the extensive press coverage of *Ghetto*,<sup>8</sup> the most common adjectives used to describe Feidman's playing included *klagend* (lamenting), *wehmütig* (wistful, nostalgic), *melancholisch* (melancholy) and *traurig* (sad). According to Dan Diner's (1986: 12) German–Jewish negative symbiosis, a 'feeling of fear of expected revenge' was sensed not only by the perpetrator generation, but was passed on to successive generations as well. Describing Feidman's entrance and exit from the stage, one critic wrote:

This long-drawn-out clarinet sound, with which it begins, this wordless lamentation, articulates in a virtually speech-like manner in tones which oscillate between crying and anger, defiance and absurd hope ... In the same way, he exits at the end, once again reminding that in this lamentation everything has already been said. (Glossner 1984)

Here Feidman could be read as a kind of friendly avenger—as a post-war Jewish voice reinforcing the message of guilt by reminding the audience of the Nazi period and the destruction of East European Jewry.

Especially the ending of *Ghetto* is critical to understanding the initial importance and success of Feidman in Germany. After the brutal massacre in cold blood of the ghetto theatrical troupe by the SS officer Kittel, Feidman once again appears as a kind of phoenix out of the ashes to play his clarinet. Again pianissimo, he intones 'Sholem Aleichem', the prayer that is sung every Friday night before the kiddush blessing over the wine, to its most well-known Ashkenazi melody. Feidman's choice of repertoire is always significant—'Sholem Aleichem' here implying continuance of life after the Holocaust. Another critic writes,

It is a shattering, shredding, a suffocating end ... At least, that's how it appears for a brief moment. But then of course, Zadek has the clarinet virtuoso Giora Feidman once again appear. Just as he did at the beginning of the *Ghetto* production, fetching a Holocaust survivor out of his memories of the deep past, so does he lead the performance back into the past with his music. His clarinet creates distance, and the distance makes the applause possible. (Hensel 1984)

Feidman's role as friendly avenger, however, was not to accuse the Germans of the Holocaust, but rather to forgive them for it. For this reason, along with his philosophy of klezmer as a universal language and his exaggerated and stylised musical delivery, I argue, he was readily accepted by German audiences. As he said himself at the time, 'it should stand as a sign of hope that in the process, Jews and Germans stood together on the stage' (in Anonymous 1984). Of that time, Feidman writes '... the reconciliation with Israel and the Jewish people was far from completed. Through my work on *Ghetto* I had the wonderful privilege to participate

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Berlin in 1988 have taken place most years in early November. See the video *Jüdische Kulturtag Berlin: Im Traum ist der Himmel blauer als blau* (1989). The discourse around klezmer in Germany, in which Feidman plays a prominent role, is often situated more broadly within the general landscape of memory culture including museum and art exhibits, the erecting of Holocaust memorials and the numerous public discourses around so-called German–Jewish relations over the past several decades (Rubin 2014).

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, folders 5398 and 5400 in the Peter Zadek collection at the Archive of the Akademie der Künste (n.d.) in Berlin.

in the healing process between Germans, Jews, and Israelis' (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 186). *Ghetto's* success was thus tied to both Gens, who, as an ambiguous figure, allows Jews to bear some of the guilt for the Holocaust, and Feidman, whose musical message is not accusatory. He seeks not revenge, but closure. That is the power of Feidman: he introduces a third possible response—neither guilt nor denial, but rather forgiveness.

### Giora Feidman's Personal Klezmer

Giora Feidman was born in Buenos Aires into a musical family. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been professional klezmerim and Yiddish theatre musicians in Kishinev. As a youth, Feidman performed at numerous celebrations in Buenos Aires, both with and without his father. He continued to play weekend klezmer gigs even after completing his studies at the music academy and joining the Orchestra of the Teatro Colon.

From this biography, Feidman should have an impressive repertoire of East European klezmer tunes, but his recordings reveal little of it. For example, his second LP contains two tunes from American klezmer Dave Tarras and one piece entitled 'Improvisation', probably based on 'Ahavo Rabo' by the nineteenth-century violinist Pedotser (Beregovski 2001: 78–9; Feidman 1973, tracks A7, B1 and B5). The remaining ten tracks range from instrumental versions of Hasidic *nigunim*,<sup>9</sup> to Israeli folk and popular songs, to a theme from the film *Dybbuk* by Israeli Noam Sheriff. One possible explanation for this disconnect might be a fundamental shift early on in Feidman's definition of klezmer music, influenced by his commitment from the age of 12 to the Zionist movement in Buenos Aires, and his emigration to Israel in 1957. Feidman's Zionism impacted both his repertoire and his style:

After '48, the real Jewish people, the country of Israel is ... the *sabras* [native born] ... I [was] born in the diaspora ... I'm a Jew, and now for the first time after 2000 years, I'm in a country with a home ... If I [had stayed in] Argentina, I will not play like I play today ... Diaspora is a trauma, and you hear it in the way they play, Tarras and all these guys. My father plays, they play in Yiddish; I play in Hebrew ... Even the old repertoire I play in a way that my father or Tarras was not able to play, because they were not Israeli citizens ... The best klezmers that I know, *really* klezmers ... they are in Israel .... I [don't know of] another place. I think it's natural. (Giora Feidman, recorded Skype audio interview with the author, Bünzen/Bad Vibel, Germany, 19 July 2013)

Another important transformation came about in 1969 when Feidman came in contact with the indigenous Meron klezmer tradition. This music developed among Hasidim in the North of Galilee from the eighteenth century onwards (Rubin 1998). The Meron repertoire contains a heavy dose of instrumental versions of Israeli Hasidic *nigunim*, as well as tunes of Arabo-Druze and Greco-Turkish origin, which

<sup>9</sup>*Nigunim* (sing. *nigun* or *niggun*) is the Hebrew word for melody. In the hasidic context, it stands for religious melodies used to attain a state of spiritual elevation (Rubin 2013). See also footnote 10.

are performed in a more Middle Eastern style and are barely known outside Israel (Rubin 1998). It was largely this repertoire and style, along with more mainstream Israeli folk and popular music, that Feidman began to popularise in the 1970s (e.g., Feidman 1975, tracks A4 and B4).

Feidman's idiosyncratic conception of *nigun* reveals a basic contradiction in his musical worldview, which constructs klezmer as not only a Zionist but also a universalist expression:

People are saying the *nigun* is song. It's not. *Nigun* is an energy ... *Nigun* wakes up *devekut*. *Devekut* comes in Hebrew from the word *devek*, glue, and there is a glue, there is a magnet that every human being [has], not only the Jewish people: humanity. This magnet only can be awake when you have *nigun*, [you] have energy. (Feidman, interview, 2013)<sup>10</sup>

To make matters more complicated, Feidman has been on a soul-searching tour through various religions for the past thirty-five years, starting with Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) and extending through yoga and Hinduism, Sufism, Buddhism, Falun Gong, and now back to Kabbalah and Jewishness, which he considers to be the 'deeper source'. This has led Feidman to develop a kind of syncretic spiritualism centred around music:

'Music is a prayer without religion. Music don't have religion, don't have country, don't have nothing'. People 'will ask me ... "You are a religious guy?" No, I don't go with [a] *kippah* [skullcap] ... If music is a religion, I'm [a] religious guy.' (Feidman interview, 2013)

The basic tenet of his spiritualism involves getting in touch with the 'inner still voice', which derives from a Hindu concept (Chopra and Simon 2004: 88). The 'inner still voice' concept has also inflected Feidman's universalising etymology of the word 'klezmer' itself. The biblical Hebrew *kli zemer* translates literally to 'instruments of song' (i.e., musical instruments). For Feidman, the 'instrument of song' is the human body, whether Jewish or otherwise:

We can describe klezmer as a mind-set: whoever shares music from an inner stance, instead of reproducing it; whoever therefore understands himself as an 'instrument of song' ... is a klezmer. [This] corresponds to my conception of klezmer. Therefore one doesn't necessarily have to be a Jew to play klezmer. I am completely convinced that anyone can be a klezmer, independently of where he comes from and in which God he believes. (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 141–2)

All of this led to Feidman's development of a personal and idiosyncratic klezmer clarinet style that—despite representing a radical break with established practice—is today accepted by many in Germany, Europe and Israel as traditional (Eisel 2002).<sup>11</sup> In these contexts, Feidman's style becomes the 'sonic evocation of the ancient and

<sup>10</sup>*Devekut* is a higher state of unity with God which is the goal of every Hasid. The performance of *nigunim* is supposed to aid in achieving that state (Rubin 2013).

<sup>11</sup>Critique of Feidman's style is nothing new. In an interview from 1990, Israeli ethnomusicologist Yaacov Mazor stated that Feidman 'doesn't represent klezmer tradition. He represents himself and his own ideology' (quoted in Kidron 1990).

mystical' implicit in his transposition of *kli* and *zemer* to the universal human body (Kaminsky 2015).

Yet in a text posted on his own website, Feidman also defines klezmer as the 'unique music of Eastern Europe Jews ... Jewish songs are an inseparable and integral part of the Jewish culture and society. A tremendous spiritual profoundness is hidden in the simplicity of the melodies and, simultaneously, the Yiddish language is a powerful medium to articulate "life"' (Anonymous n.d.-a). Feidman's mixed messages—is the music Jewish or not? Is he religious or not? Does he represent Yiddish (East European Jewish) or Hebrew (Israeli) culture?—and the contradictions in his philosophy between the Zionist and the universal make him an ideal projection screen for Germans. The superimposition of these two modes is the very mechanism by which Feidman's version of klezmer grants forgiveness and closure to German musicians and audiences. Klezmer's simultaneous Jewishness and universalism restores a Jewish presence to Germany—a balm on the traumatic void that otherwise serves as a constant reminder of the Holocaust—and licenses stewardship over that presence to gentiles, turning the scarcity of actual Jews into a non-problem and divesting Germany's small Jewish community of any interpretive precedence.

Irith Gabriely observes: 'you know how many Germans are imitating note for note... Giora Feidman? ... At least a hundred of them ... When you close your eyes, when you hear it on the radio, ... you think it's Feidman, but then they say it's not' (Irith Gabriely, recorded Skype video interview with author, Charlottesville/Darmstadt, 9 February 2014). A close reading of Feidman's musical approach to klezmer is critical to understanding his success in Germany, his influence in the development of chamber klezmer and the New Old Europe Sound, and his impact on his protégés and other followers. A number of differences can be discerned between Feidman's playing and that of the masters of the klezmer tradition in East Europe, North and South America, and Israel. Feidman's approach is marked by pianissimo playing, an emphasis on vocalism, a specific palette of sound effects, unusual instrumentation, a specific recurring rhythmic motif, idiosyncratic use of dynamics and other arrangement techniques, and gestures of spiritualism. The following paragraphs address each of these in turn.

Perhaps most importantly for the development of Feidman's personal style—and his influential invocation of the ancient and mystical—has been his much-celebrated and oft-copied, barely audible pianissimo playing. This technique represents a significant departure from traditional klezmer, which normally maintains a mezzo-forte to fortissimo range. Feidman writes:

It is of course much more beautiful to let the inner still voice sound with a pianissimo. It is also child's play. One only has to let their breath flow ... My concerts begin calmly and quietly—and exactly so do they fade away. Silence you use—sound you produce is my maxim. Each first tone is in reality the second tone. The first is silence. We listen to both tones, and when the sound is in the air, it doesn't mean that the silence is over. (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 57 and 67)

The importance of pianissimo playing, silence and a music without beginning or end in Feidman's music relates to his successful melding of the yogic concept of the 'inner still voice' with Jewish mysticism and Hasidic concepts such as *devekut*.

Feidman's 'inner still voice' concept and his notion of the human body as an 'instrument of song' also positions vocalism as a central element of his approach: 'A scale is more than a stringing together of tones; it is a song. A wonderfully beautiful song with a gorgeous sound. From this music is made' (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 49). The classic trope of 'singing through one's instrument' is a recurrent theme in Feidman's discourse, one that further emphasises his universalist narrative. Feidman's approach of literally singing together with his audiences has been especially attractive to German audiences alienated from their own group-singing folk traditions (cf. Kearney 2007: 203). Feidman views communal singing as a tool to break down the borders between himself and the audience, 'because for me these boundaries do not exist' (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 266).

From a stylistic standpoint Feidman has also adopted—albeit in a formalised fashion—several of the most notable characteristics of traditional klezmer clarinet playing; for example, the frequent use of trills, grace notes, note bends, and glottal stops. He has also added two techniques, both of which probably derive from the swing jazz clarinet playing of Benny Goodman (whose general influence he acknowledges). These consist of what in jazz has sometimes been referred to as a 'growl'—a sound created by playing and simultaneously humming into the instrument on almost the same pitch—as well as flutter-tongue, a technique used both in jazz and twentieth-century art music. Feidman's growl in particular has the quality of a cry or a shriek, and he often uses it as a way of creating intensity. Feidman's vocal approach to the clarinet is clearly intertwined with his concept of connecting with the soul. At the same time, jazz holds a special place in German society. Banned as degenerate during the Nazi years, 'in the postwar German cultural landscapes [it] was part of the efforts in both states to newly define "Germanness"' (Poiger 2002: 219).

Feidman has performed for most of the past 40 years with a trio of clarinet, classical guitar and (mostly plucked) string bass, a format that can be traced back to his earliest small ensemble recording (Feidman 1973). This set-up represents a clear break from traditional klezmer ensembles, in which guitar was never a presence and the bass was traditionally bowed. In addition, Feidman introduced the bass clarinet into the klezmer ensemble for the first time as early as 1975 (Feidman 1975: track A4). It would seem that Feidman's choice of the classical guitar as a primary instrument in his ensemble related to his concept of soft playing as well as his attempts to appeal to classical audiences. It also points to his interest in the tango music of his native Buenos Aires. Similarly, his choice of a primarily plucked bass iconic of jazz could be seen as an attempt to domesticate jazz for classical—and, by extension—klezmer audiences. Finally, his choice of plucked instruments leaves a lot of sonic space for the more liquid sounds of the clarinet. Feidman's instrumental set-

up has proven quite influential in Germany—Eisel and Orlowsky in particular have mimicked it consistently in their own klezmer ensembles.

Feidman and his ensemble have also popularised a certain rhythmic technique to the extent that it has become more or less standard in both Germany and Israel. They simplified the so-called bulgar rhythm into a syncopated ostinato rhythm, doubled on guitar and bass, ♩ ♩ ♩ over two 2/4 bars, with accents on the quarter notes. This represents a significant departure from the traditional klezmer ensemble's interlocking rhythms, in which rhythmic tension is generated via the interaction between the unsyncopated bass and the syncopations of the other accompanying instruments. Here again, the simplifying of the bulgar rhythm domesticates it for a predominantly classical, seated audience, foregrounding the vocal aspect of the melody played by the clarinet and downplaying the dance aspect.

Feidman began to create a new kind of klezmer concert music by the early 1970s. The idea, as stressed in his early album liner notes, was to elevate folk music to the stage (Eisel 2002; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 64). Key elements were sentimental, highly stylised arrangements with frequent tempo and mood changes, an extremely wide dynamic range and carefully orchestrated long held-out notes. A primary motivating factor was probably to make the music interesting for listening audiences not familiar with the traditional style.<sup>12</sup> Some of the effects, such as the long held tones, were the stock-in-trade of traditional klezmerim, but here Feidman invests them with spiritual meaning via his gestural language.

Beyond the merely audible, Feidman's physical countenance became an integral part of his stage performance, as did his way of quietly moderating in an inimitable mishmash of English, Spanish, German, Yiddish and Hebrew. His physical gestures while playing often had clear spiritual significations—he would rock back and forth with eyes closed, like a Jewish man lost in prayer, or raise his left arm with palm extended upwards while holding an open G, or his right arm in a similar gesture (while holding the instrument above his head) holding a high C, or both arms wide open above his head at the conclusion of a piece (cf. Dahl and Friberg 2007: 433). Feidman views his audience as 'my family for this evening' (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 249), with whom he has an exchange and shares his feelings. He personalises the sacred space of his syncretic spiritualism by standing at the entrance and greeting the audience members as they arrive. It comes as no surprise that many of his appearances take place in churches.<sup>13</sup> This could also be read as an invocation on German turf of the *shirah ba-tzibbur*, institutionalised communal song gatherings

<sup>12</sup>The problem of making what was originally a functional music interesting for the concert stage has been persistent throughout the revival of klezmer music. See, for example, Bern (1998).

<sup>13</sup>Approximately half of the 2015 performances listed online are in churches and cathedrals, or in a Christian setting such as the Kirchentage: see <http://www.giorafeidman-online.com/en/tour-dates> (accessed 18 April 2015). Feidman's other performances take place in concert halls and at festivals as a soloist with orchestra, in chamber music series and with his various klezmer and klezmer-crossover projects. He also appears at Jewish and commemorative events organised both from within and without the Jewish communities. To date, no demographic study on Feidman's audience in Germany has been published. For more on the general reception of Giora Feidman, see Bauer (2010).

that had been used to unify the new State of Israel in its early decades (Regev and Seroussi 2004).

With his forgiving attitude towards Germans, his philosophy of klezmer universalism, his exhortations to audience participation and singing, the apparent freedom with which he played, and his audience's virtual lack of reference points to Jewishness beyond the Holocaust, Feidman's positive reception by a German nation coming to terms with its Nazi past and reassessing its national identity should come as no surprise. Beyond the purely socio-political, his highly emotional and idiosyncratic playing filled a vacuum for German musicians. As with the feeling of liberation felt by audiences participating in communal singing at Feidman concerts, numerous classically trained musicians in Germany have commented on feeling liberated by Feidman from the strictures of German classical training. One such musician exclaimed, 'Giora really hocked a loogie [*reingerotzt*] into the clarinet and ignored the convention to play beautifully—everything, with which I had been completely fed up. He played and hocked, and that really impressed me' (in Eckstaedt 2003: 198).<sup>14</sup>

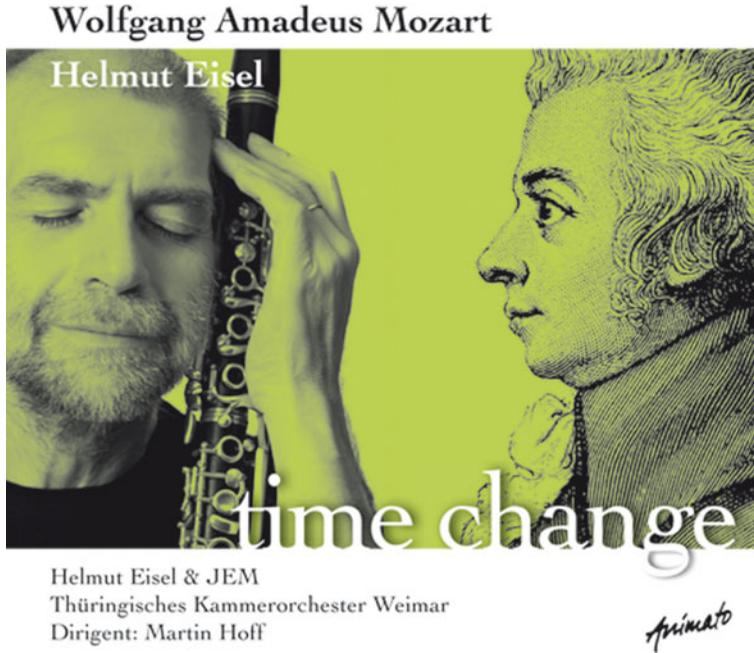
During the period between Feidman's earliest recordings (1971–77) and the release of the first recording in Germany by Pläne (Feidman 1985), all of the stylistic elements discussed here had become quite exaggerated. It was these sounds that Germans first heard in the mid-1980s and which were adopted by both Eisel and Orłowsky, each in their own way.

### Feidman's Protégés and the Separation of Klezmer from the Jewish Context

Helmut Eisel is a self-taught clarinetist and saxophonist who was a semi-professional entertainment and jazz musician in Saarland before he met Feidman. He says 'my primary concern at that time was to express myself, and felt 'the corset that jazz specified with its many rules, was too confining'. Eisel attended Feidman's first klezmer workshop in Berlin in 1989. 'I had bought one of his LPs and thought, ok, it seemed somehow strange [*befremdet*]. I didn't know this world at all' (Helmut Eisel, recorded Skype video interview with author, Bünzen/Saarbrücken, 5 July 2013). Almost immediately, Feidman encouraged him to compose new klezmer-style tunes. Eisel says he already felt a closeness to melodies with augmented seconds in them, such as Bechet's 'Petite Fleur' (1952), which he feels is based on the klezmer scale known as *freygish* or *ahavah Rabah* (Eisel, interview, 2013).<sup>15</sup> While Eisel's claim is dubious from a musical standpoint, its conflation of *freygish* with Western European harmonic minor (which contains the same intervallic relationship, starting on the fourth scale degree) is typical of the intercultural blurring that makes the New Old Europe Sound so accessible to West Europeans. The two scales create a kind of bi-

<sup>14</sup>On the German relationship to classical music, see Applegate and Potter (2002).

<sup>15</sup>*Freygish* is a Yiddish word derived from Phrygian because the mode has a flat second degree. *Ahavah Rabah* ('Great Love') are the opening words of the Hebrew prayer often associated with the prayer mode containing the same tones (on E, the basic tones are E-F-G#-A-B-C-D).



**Figure 2** Helmut Eisel, *Time Change*, CD cover. Animato Records ACD6125, 2010. Courtesy of Bauer Studios, Ludwigsburg.

modal East–West tension due to their very different modal–harmonic functions (Kaminsky 2014: 265–7).

Eisel was particularly excited by Feidman’s universalising philosophy of klezmer. He insists he is not trying to play Jewishly, or even to play ‘klezmer’ in the traditional sense:

I don’t come from Jewish culture, and for me it is simply interesting ... In the course of my quest for musical expression: what helps me further along? And it was especially these ideas that I learned from Feidman: What can I do with this music; how can I carry over this model into my improvisation? And that is also what I teach at workshops today: the approach to improvisation via the mind-set [*Denkweise*] of klezmer. (Eisel, interview, 2013)

Eisel sees no contradiction in the move to separate klezmer from Jewishness, and Feidman in turn has given him his seal of approval: Eisel ‘is one of the only people who have really understood my special spiritual approach to music... It fills me with great pride to see how my former student developed into one of the best klezmerim in the German-speaking world, who also has a high reputation in Israel’ (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 141 and 270).

Eisel’s closeness to Feidman—he has been his workshop assistant for over two decades—has granted him the opportunity to carve out a significant career for himself, especially in Germany. Eisel has transformed and secularised Feidman’s esoteric interpretation of klezmer into what he now terms the ‘Talking Clarinet’.

Within this framework, the term klezmer appears, but the terms Jew and Jewish are elided: ‘The idea to tell stories with the clarinet, to curse, to console, to laugh and to cry ... has excited Helmut Eisel since childhood. Pivotal was the encounter with Giora Feidman ... Helmut Eisel’s Talking Clarinet was born’ (Anonymous n.d.-c). Eisel’s self-granted artistic licence has allowed him to diversify into numerous areas, going far beyond his klezmer trio Helmut Eisel & JEM. One recent project was a rewriting of Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto as if Mozart had known klezmer music and had written the concerto for Eisel. Another is ‘Gypsy Meets the Klezmer’,<sup>16</sup> a typical New Old Europe style collaboration with guitarist Joscho Stephan, which blends Django Reinhardt-style swing arrangements with Eisel’s clarinet and new klezmer-style compositions. His most recent project is a rethinking of songs popularised by Frank Sinatra, demonstrating how far afield his ‘Talking Clarinet’ can stretch from its klezmer origins.

Eisel has also created a series of narrated children’s stories in the manner of *Peter and the Wolf* for klezmer band and orchestra, about a mythical figure named Naftule. In the first of the series, *Naftule and the King*, Naftule and his band of improvising klezmerim are pitted against the stiff inhabitants of the fictional land Sinfonien, ‘pretty far away’. Both groups can speak only via music, but the inhabitants of Sinfonien can only play what is written on the page. Over the course of the ‘symphonic poem’, Naftule and his musicians are led by their inner still voices to show up in Sinfonien, because they sense that there is a royal wedding about to take place. Overcoming great resistance, they are eventually invited to perform at the wedding of the king’s daughter. In the end, they teach the Sinfonier a lesson, getting them to loosen up and learn that not everything has to be arranged or played note for note, and to learn to be tolerant of musicians who do not play from written arrangements (Eisel n.d.). In this allegory, although Jewish names such as Naftule, David, Sara and Lea appear, and Jewish terms such as *nigunim* are introduced, the word Jew and the origins of klezmer are never mentioned.<sup>17</sup> When I asked Eisel about this and whether it represented a universalising of the story of clarinetist Naftule Brandwein (1884–1963), he responded affirmatively: ‘There aren’t any Jews, but there aren’t any Germans, either’. When pressed as to whether the Sinfonier represent the Germans, he said laughingly, ‘The Sinfonier are rather, yes, German or Swiss ... It has

<sup>16</sup>As Carol Silverman shows, in the years since 1989 Roma and Romani music have played an increasingly important role in the West European and German musical landscape, both physically and symbolically as the other European Other besides the Jews. This has often led to a conflation of Jews and Roma and their music in the public mind (Silverman 2012 and in this volume)—an important ingredient in the formation of the New Old Europe Sound. While Feidman essentially elides Roma, the younger musicians Eisel and Orłowsky incorporate some aspects of Romani music and culture. In the example cited here, Eisel uses elements of ‘gypsy swing’ associated with guitarist Django Reinhardt; Orłowsky’s incorporation of elements of Balkan (Romani) music is discussed below.

<sup>17</sup>Alex Lubet writes about a similar case involving the elision of Jews in the 1996 film *Jenseits der Stille*, in which Feidman has an important cameo role. He and his co-authors read it as a philo-Semitic fantasy in which the terms ‘Jew’ and ‘Jewish’ never appear (Lubet, Richter and Hofmann n.d.).

to do with the issue of tolerance: how much must one accept that someone else is different' (Eisel, interview, 2013). Eisel's children's stories are significant because he not only completely separates klezmer from the Jewish context; he places it in that most Germanic of contexts, the 'symphonische Dichtung' or tone poem associated with composers like Franz Liszt and Richard Strauss.

In all of these projects, Eisel employs an idiosyncratic clarinet style characterised primarily by a melding of Giora Feidman-style klezmer with improvisatory jazz conventions—regardless of context. This is his primary innovation: jazz-like solos based on klezmer modes such as *freygish* and replete with klezmer-type ornaments. According to Eisel, his main goal has always been to communicate with the audience via his instrument. At the same time, he was unhappy with the perceived restrictiveness of jazz. He saw how effectively Feidman was able to communicate via klezmer music, and recognised that a successful synthesis between klezmer music and improvised jazz was a possible solution to his dilemma.

David Orlowsky was 15 and a relative beginner on clarinet when he heard Giora Feidman for the first time in 1996:

That was ... a key moment for me ... Giora always does this thing where he enters the hall from the back. That was for me at the time sensational. And then the whole thing somehow grabbed me immediately, the trio as such. Not only the clarinet, but also ... when they started with this oom-pah oom-pah that slowly gets going ... I can't really express it in words, but it became instantly clear to me that I also wanted to do that. (David Orlowsky, recorded Skype video interview with author, Bünzen/Berlin, 14 July 2013)

Soon after that initial concert, Orlowsky attended one of Feidman's workshops and Feidman, recognising his talent, took him under his wing. Feidman invited Orlowsky on stage to perform with him at numerous concerts. According to Orlowsky, Feidman announced him as the 'next Giora Feidman' to the audiences on several occasions, an endorsement of which Orlowsky would make ample use in his press materials (Orlowsky, personal communication, 22 May 2014).

Through a combination of talent and that initial proximity to Feidman, Orlowsky has been able to build a remarkable career, first as the leader of a near-exact copy of the Giora Feidman Trio, and later also as a classical chamber musician and soloist. Speaking of his early relationship to Feidman, Orlowsky comments:

He never taught me in that sense; I learned actually from listening, like you learn a language ... I had only a few key sentences in my head, which all who attended the workshop also heard ... He talked about that with the inner still voice ... and I translated it for myself ... that it has to do with authenticity. I never tried to really fulfil stylistic requirements; it was never a scholarly pursuit for me. Rather, I approached it purely from a sonic standpoint, and that I believe I borrowed from him. (Orlowsky, interview, 2013)

By the trio's second CD in 2001, the group had already developed its own musical voice with original compositions by bassist Florian Dohrmann. Later, Orlowsky himself began composing originals, as did guitarist Jens-Uwe Popp. In recent years, the group has tried to distance itself from the term klezmer entirely, rebranding its

sound as ‘chamber.world.music’. However, they have also accepted the fact that klezmer is both an important element of their eclectic sound and an important marketing label. ‘When we were still called “Klezmorim”—the times that they [the press] did complain—they were upset about: “but this is actually not klezmer!” ... And now that we’ve taken it out, they say, “what’s all this about, chamber world music? ... it’s of course klezmer!”’ (Orlowsky, interview, 2013).

Orlowsky and his band-mates do not have a philosophical–mystical platform such as that of Feidman or Eisel. ‘There’s actually no statement ... For us, it’s really about the music. No abstract affair’. Orlowsky describes the band’s other influences: ‘We improvise fairly modally. For example, I have a lot from Arabic music, from Turkish music. Because I know a few clarinetists whom I really treasure in that field’.<sup>18</sup> Besides asymmetric (*aksak*) metres drawn from Balkan sources, there are obvious classical influences flowing into the ensemble via Orlowsky and Popp, and jazz influences from Dohrmann. Orlowsky also mentions influences from pop music, Electronic Dance Music and the minimalism of Steve Reich: ‘I go often to concerts and listen to a lot. We all do, and that shapes somehow what we want to do. We make sure that we as a trio write what we want to play. It’s actually quite intuitive’ (Orlowsky, interview, 2013).

An examination of Orlowsky’s ‘Carnyx’ shows how he and his band-mates have developed a multivalent style that references klezmer music at certain points, but at others goes far afield (Orlowsky 2011: track 4; 2013: 16–17). The composition has three sections with vastly different soundscapes. The A section is an aggressive melody in E Phrygian characterised by staccato and rhythmically-accented unisons with guest mandolinist Avi Avital, in an irregular metre clearly influenced by Balkan asymmetries. Orlowsky takes the lead in the 4/4 B section, shifting into a Feidmanesque klezmer style marked by flutter tonguing, growls, glottal stops and grace notes. The C section is an ethereal waltz in F major alternating with E minor, dominated by the mandolin and far removed from the klezmer idiom. Here, unlike in Eisel’s music, Feidmanesque sound is reduced to just being one world music flavouring among others, showing how far afield Orlowsky has moved from klezmer. Yet his music is still predominantly received as klezmer.

Meanwhile, the trio’s newest programme, ‘Klezmer Kings: A Tribute to N. Brandwein, D. Tarras and Others’, presents the band’s take on traditional klezmer clarinet music (Orlowsky 2015). As exemplified in their rendition of Brandwein’s ‘Nifty’s Freilach’, the group revert to their earlier mode of sounding like a copy of the Giora Feidman Trio, complete with extensive use of flutter tongue and growls, but without the sophisticated arrangements present in ‘Carnyx’ (Orlowsky 2014). Brandwein’s influence seems negligible, demonstrating once again that Feidman’s

<sup>18</sup>Here he mentions Ismail Lumanovski (USA), Hüsni Şenlendirici (Turkey) and Ivo Papasov (Bulgaria), all well-known Romani musicians.



**Figure 3** David Orlowsky Trio, *Chronos*, CD cover. Sony Classical 88697892642, 2011.

style has superseded all others to become for many the definitive ‘traditional klezmer’ in Germany.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly it was the approach and inspiration of Giora Feidman that allowed musicians such as Eisel and Orlowsky the freedom to be as Jewish or non-Jewish as they wanted within a given musical context. From the beginning, Feidman encouraged musicians not trained in the minutiae of klezmer performance practice to create new compositions and interpretations based on their understanding of his

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<sup>19</sup>I present a counter-narrative to the influence of Feidman and his protégés in Rubin (2014), where I discuss the American-influenced klezmer scene around Berlin-based musicians such as Alan Bern and the Yiddish Summer Weimar workshops he directs. There, the musical style of Feidman appears to play no role. To the average German, however, I argue that Feidman’s style is definitive of klezmer.



**Figure 4** Irith Gabriely, publicity photograph. Courtesy of Irith Gabriely.

conception of klezmer. Because elements of traditional style were not important to Feidman, his followers felt empowered to each seek their own path with the music.

### **Irith Gabriely's Jewish Presence on the German Stage**

In contrast to the others, Irith Gabriely views herself as playing klezmer from a primarily classical standpoint. She was first exposed to Hasidic klezmer in Jerusalem as a young girl in the 1950s, while attending a family wedding. She also had parents

and grandparents from Poland who sang at home and wanted her to play Jewish tunes on the clarinet. Her contact with klezmer music was thus initiated long before she encountered Feidman, with whom she later studied at the Rubin Academy in Tel-Aviv. She describes her studies with him as follows:

he said, 'we'll go to the Philharmonic'. We go to the hall of the Philharmonic, [a] big empty hall, and he says 'stand with your back to the hall, and play very quietly' ... He worked with imagination: 'imagine that the last person ... sitting way in the back, hears you' ... Then I asked him, ... 'how do you do this kwak kwak kwak kwak?' And he said to me, 'you can do it, when you feel it ... then it comes out from alone'. And I was angry ... because I thought he does not want to share his secrets. Getting older, I know that he was right. (Gabriely, interview, 2014)

Gabriely emigrated to Germany in 1973, where she played principal clarinet in two different opera orchestras. It was not until after Feidman's first successes in Germany that she started to perform klezmer there:

when I played my chamber music concerts, I played a piece of klezmer, and all of a sudden, I saw that the people are jumping ... on the tables ... [via word of mouth] all of a sudden everybody asked me to play klezmer ... But it's not very klezmer. It's more the round, fine, full classical sound ... I never thought of imitating him [Feidman]. I liked what he played, but I never wanted to play like him because—even [though] I begged him to tell me the secrets of these nuances—I still thought classically til today. (Gabriely, interview, 2014)

Gabriely plays with a more classical tone, with a good sense of Israeli Hasidic klezmer's ornamental style, but without the pianissimo playing, exaggerated dynamics, growling, flutter tonguing and other effects used by Feidman. Like Feidman, Gabriely's band initially played a mixture of East European klezmer, Meron tunes, liturgical music, Yiddish folk and popular tunes, Hasidic *nigunim*, and Israeli folk and popular tunes. Over the years, her repertoire expanded to include originals by herself and her band-mates, arrangements of jazz standards by musicians like Paquito D'Rivera and Chick Corea, as well as arrangements of Jewish classical pieces by composers like Joseph Achron, and even of compositions by Haydn and Schubert.

Her recording of band-mate Martin Wagner's tune, 'Busy Waiting', is more sophisticated both melodically and modally than any of the examples previously discussed (Gabriely and Wagner 2004). It is sort of a klezmer tune, but while it employs some traditional characteristics—such as augmented seconds, trills, note bends and glottal stops—it is also replete with unusual accents and syncopations, chromatic passing tones, and modulations that imply jazz and tango. Although the A section is based on klezmer's 'Altered Dorian' scale (E-F♯-G-A♯-B-C♯-D; Beregovski 2000), the rest of the tune does not stick to any particular klezmer mode or scheme of modal progression. Instead, it has jazzy passages featuring seventh, ninth and other extended chords, accordion and clarinet arpeggiations, and blue notes. The combination of klezmer with jazz and tango is not unusual for world music fusion generally, or the New Old Europe Sound specifically. What is missing here is the influence of Feidman's various stylistic innovations, and with them any invocation of

the generalised ancient and mystic that has otherwise become a lynchpin of the New Old Europe Sound, especially of the European chamber klezmer of which all four artists discussed in this article are arguably a part.

In her live performances, Gabriely has done very little of the work that allows klezmer to be separated from Jewishness; quite the opposite. In the early years she actually dressed up as a Hasid in a kind of ‘self-ethnic drag’ (cf. Sieg 2002). Wearing a black hat and *talit* (prayer shawl) with her hair arranged into stylised *peyot* (sidelocks), she evoked the kind of uncomfortable clichés of East European Jews that can so easily be misunderstood in post-Holocaust Germany. When I asked her about her choices, she replied that that was the way the klezmerim she saw as a child in Jerusalem dressed:

Everyone in those bands was a Hasidic guy and they were dressed Hasidic ... I was very impressed by them and till now I love the looks of Hasidim and yeshiva students. So the reason I used to dress up like a Hasid was because to me—that was the way a Klezmer musician looks like and should look like—no other reason ... I think the audience loved it; there was never a bad reaction. (Gabriely, email, 10 February 2014)

Nowadays, Gabriely dresses colourfully, wearing bright pink and purple outfits that are not immediately coded as Jewish. Still, in one of her current programmes, ‘Rabbi Jokes and Klezmer Music’, actress Iris Stromberger dresses up as a rabbi with a fake beard and sidelocks and tells jokes and does skits to Gabriely’s clarinet playing. Gabriely feels that ‘I’m giving them an insight how Jewish life is, and that [it] is more than ever not in the clothes, but in *what* I tell them’ (interview, 2014).

At the high point of her klezmer career, around the mid-1990s, Gabriely was performing 100 concerts per year, some at major venues like the Berlin Philharmonic, the Alte Oper in Frankfurt and the Musikhalle in Hamburg. Since 2001, however, the market for klezmer in Germany has declined significantly (Rubin 2014). One possible explanation for this decline—although it does not seem to impact Feidman’s popularity as a kind of honorary German and citizen of the world—is the rise in anti-Israel (and anti-Jewish) sentiment in Germany since the Second Intifada (Embacher and Reiter 2010; Maurer and Kempf 2011), as well as new attitudes towards German suffering and memory politics (Kaiser 2008; Taberner 2002). Gabriely admits that she reached a low point of ten concerts per year sometime after 2001. While her popularity has recovered somewhat,<sup>20</sup> the contrast between that major dip in her career versus the uninterrupted success of Orlowsky, Eisel and Feidman is stark and worthy of examination. Certainly, in a period when interest in things Jewish has ebbed, Orlowsky’s lack of obvious Jewish markers in his persona and music is an advantage. Eisel is somewhere in between—while clearly calling his music klezmer, he does not draw attention to its Jewishness. Feidman has always played both sides of the Jewish-universal equation, but it is Feidman as universalist and as for-giver-peacemaker that wins out in the end—his universalisation of klezmer

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, the recent television documentary, *Irith Gabriely: Königin der Klarinette* (2015), broadcast the evening before Passover on German public television ARD.

seems to have immunised him to any downturn in popularity. But since Gabrieli has held fast to a public presentation of her Jewish identity, and has not exploited the New Old Europe Sound's capacity to separate musical sound from ethnicity, she has benefitted from no such immunity.

## Conclusion

Giora Feidman's rise in Germany was intimately tied to that era of renegotiated German–Jewish memory politics that began in the mid-1980s. By the turn of the twenty-first century he had become a truly national, guru-like figure, performing on numerous significant political occasions like the Bundestag's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of war's end on 8 May 1995 or the ground-breaking for the German Holocaust Memorial in 2003. In his position as absolver of German sins, he has also gone to considerable extremes. In one of the numerous television portraits about him, for instance, Feidman performed Wagner's 'Pilgerchor' from *Tannhäuser* while standing among the bunk beds of the Birkenau death camp (in *Wenn du singst ...* 1995). 'This music is god's property; we are only the deliverers. We cannot attack music as anti-Semitic', he claims (Feidman and Wolters 2011: 214–15). Even Eisel (2002) distanced himself from this controversial move.

Feidman has appeared more and more guru-like over the years. He bears special stage clothes, favouring plush purples and rich maroons, often accented with gold medallions. His pronouncements place him not only at the centre of the international klezmer revival narrative, but of the German healing process as well:

The revival of klezmer is Giora ... I understood my role in Deutschland, now why God put me in this country. I understood that there is a healing process between the Jew and the German. I know that I was in those days an element in the contribution to the process, of the healing process. Now the healing process *zwischen* [between] the Juden and Deutsche, this is *gestorben* [dead]. Now is a society, you know? Is one society. (Feidman, interview, 2013)

Feidman's mixed messages of particularism and universalism have been key to his positive reception in Germany, the mechanism behind the reconciliation he promotes. He successfully combines ethnomusicologist Steven Feld's anxious and celebratory narratives of world music in a single persona (Feld 2000). In the anxious mode, the music belongs not only solely to Jews, but in the best case only to native-born Israelis; in the celebratory mode, klezmer music belongs to the world. This entire discursive complex is the secret of Feidman's success in Germany, bringing him and his music more acclaim and to a much wider audience than might have otherwise been possible.

In taking after elements of Feidman's musical style and ideology, Eisel and Orłowsky have also appropriated his capacity to emphasise or elide the Jewishness of the music as need be. Neither of them, however, makes any personal claim to Jewish identity. While Eisel makes regular trips to perform and teach in Safed and Jerusalem, he is quick to state 'I don't come from Jewish culture'. Of klezmer he says;

I would describe it as originally Jewish. I mean, jazz is in its origins unquestionably black music (Eisel interview, 2013). But in the later development of jazz, white musicians— and since 1950 also Europeans—played a crucial role, and in the final analysis jazz influenced and enriched all music including pop and classical. In the same way, anyone can take up klezmer music and its intrinsic elements today and develop it further. I am certain that, like jazz, klezmer will also be a great enrichment to our entire musical culture. (Eisel, email, 26 July 2014)<sup>21</sup>

Orlowsky is more oblique. In response to my question as to whether he had concerned himself with the cultural or historical background of klezmer music, he answered,

I read a few books ... but it was never so that I thought, now I have to learn everything in order to play it; I always had the feeling, I understand the music. I didn't have the feeling that I had a need to create a connection [*Zugang*]; rather I noticed, wow, this is my music. (Orlowsky, interview, 2013)

This statement suggests that in the process of appropriation that began with the klezmer boom of the 1990s, Feld's celebratory narrative has won out. With the inspiration of Giora Feidman and the help of musicians such as Helmut Eisel and David Orlowsky, klezmer music truly belongs to the world. From the standpoint of the New Old Europe Sound, claims of ethnic or national ownership of music, especially of Jews, Roma and other minorities, no longer apply.<sup>22</sup>

Within the transformation that universalised klezmer music in Germany, however, there remains limited space for Jewish particularity. The relative success of the annual Yiddish Summer Weimar workshops, which emphasise the Yiddishness of klezmer music, is one example (Rubin 2014).<sup>23</sup> Another is the continued, yet limited success of Irith Gabrieli who—even when reaching across the divide to embrace Christian and Muslim traditions and musicians (Anonymous n.d.-d)—still emphasises the Jewish aspect of klezmer music.

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<sup>21</sup>Upon reading my translated transcription of our initial interview, Eisel expanded his thoughts in an email.

<sup>22</sup>At a visit to the bookstore of the Jewish Museum in Hohenems, Austria in March 2015, I noted that the only klezmer CDs available were those by Orlowsky and his trio.

<sup>23</sup>In Weimar, great emphasis is placed on klezmer as a tradition and a style stemming from a specific Yiddish-speaking East European Jewish culture that can be studied, learned and acquired (Rubin 2014), as opposed to Feidman's universalist message of klezmer as feeling. (See, for example, the website text 'Giora Feidman: His Life, His Achievements, His Dreams' [Anonymous n.d.-b].)

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