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Volume 18  
Issue 5

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## Rabbi Shelton Donnell Honored at Joe's Garage



Nothing is more joyous than when good friends get the home they have always wanted nor is anything sadder than when that home is far away. Shelton Donnell and Wendy Bocarsky have found **(continued on page 2)**

## American Independence: 229 Years of Sharing Freedom



We the people, had our first "We Will be Free" celebration on the east coast of North America 229 years ago. Soon to be former colonists planted the seed of freedom and celebrated just like we do today. **(continued on page 3)**

## Jason Bock: Intelligent Talk about Orthodontics



Tommy Lee Jones has always been one of my favorite actors, because while he is gifted in the arts theatrical he just isn't that good looking. I'd go see one of his movies, despite the fact that my teeth were at angles most geometers couldn't calculate with triangle, protractor and compass, without a care in the world. But all that **(continued on page 6)**

## Todd White's "Future of Food" a Huge Success. Now about that Cow



Todd White paints with passion, dedication, and a vision some say may be too large for this talented nineteen-year-old, but I assure you that despite his age he may someday change the way you and I think about art. "The **Future of Food** art exhibit has the potential to be a foundation for a career in art that will be exemplary," said Jerry O'Brien of BBP. **(Continued on page 15)**

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# The Road to Jerusalem is Lined with Friends and Good Wishes



Larry & Norma Leifer attended Rabbi Donnell's Soirée at Joe's Garage. These photos don't do justice to the Leifers or the room.



the home of their dreams. Unfortunately for all those who know and love them that home is very far away. Actually it is in the city of Jerusalem in the country Israel. But putting sadness aside 400 or so of their closest friends threw Shelly and Wendy a party which displayed the affection that is universally felt for these two very generous, wise and caring people.

Choosing a venue in Tustin, Joe's Garage and telling Hollis and her team to pull out all the stops the room and the evening were prepared in a manner suiting the purpose and intention of those gathered. The meal was Middle Eastern, like the food which we will eat when we visit Shelly and Wendy in their new home.

However, the evening started off with simple western elegance; champagne and hors d'oeuvre. Larry and Norma Leifer were elegant and early arrivals, and they took a moment out from their evening for a portrait.

Hollis decided that for this evening she would run the on-site kitchen herself. Preparation as usual was expertly handled by Chef Phillip Hoffman and his growing staff. Desserts also were prepared at our kitchen in Brea by baker Reina Rodriquez and her growing staff.

After the hors d'oeuvre and cocktails which were accompanied by a silent auction and the beautiful music of the Orange County Klezmers, chopped Greek salad was served.

Hollis with her finishing staff of eight cooks brought the meal of b'stilla, lamb tagine and chicken with olives and preserved lemon to the point of perfection and then it was plated and served.

The evening included a long series of brief farewells from an enormous group of friends and dignitaries who shared their joy in knowing and sadness at losing, our friends Rabbi Donnell and Wendy Bocarsky.

## Klezmorim Heed the Commandment to Spread Joy

The Klezmorim and all musicians to the extent that their hearts are in the right spiritual place **(continued on page 5)**



(Above:) Salmon Canapés, Carrot Mint Salad, Grilled Vegetables (Below:)B'stilla, Carrot Mint salad and mini Moroccan desserts



# Simcha Shel Mitzvah: The Joy of Performing a Commandment

perform very special good works when they perform at a simcha. A simcha for those who might not know is the celebration of joy and a joyous occasion. At a Jewish wedding, it is a post-ceremony party whose purpose is to heighten the jubilation of the bride and groom. A Mitzvah is a commandment. And Klezmerim perform a Mitzvah when they play at a simcha.

After attending Rabbi Donnell's simcha I asked some Klezmer players how they felt fulfilling this commandment. The Klezmerim that I spoke with were Barry Friedland of Orange County Klezmers, Margot Leveret of Margot Leveret and the Klezmer Mountain Boys, Lori Lippitz of the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band and Cantor Beth Cohen of Nahalat Shalom, who is also the leader of the Nahalat Shalom Community Klezmer Band.

**Performing music at a Simcha, is a mitzvah, does this affect you as a musician in some way?**

**Beth Cohen said:** I hope someone up there is listening!

Really, I love performing for joyous events. Not only is it a blast to get everyone dancing into a frenzy, but for me, there really is a feeling of completing a sacred obligation.

Also, as a Jewish musician, I take my job and tikkun olam - 'repairing the world' very seriously so I don't only play for gelt (paying) gigs (which simchas usually are.) I also perform gratis for nursing homes, fundraisers for charitable and ecological organizations, and any place where less fortunate people can appreciate, benefit from, and hopefully become uplifted by my music. The Nahalat Shalom Community Klezmer Band regularly plays gratis at the David Spector Shalom House for the elderly, the New Mexico Federation of the Blind's annual convention, and Project Share (which feeds homeless people in Albuquerque).

**Margot Leveret said:** Of course! Our role is to provide the joyous atmosphere for the event. Being able to contribute in such a meaningful way is one of the most rewarding ways of working as a musician.

**Barry Friedland said:** There is nothing like the feeling of having lots of people dancing with great joy to our music. I have had people tell us that they have never danced before but were compelled to do so when they heard us play. To bring such joy to people, especially the very young or old is a great deposit in one's karmic bank account.

**Lori Lippitz said:** It is the reason that I do it!

I was inspired in my youth by a wedding at which the music and dancing was a wonderful Jewish experience. When I discovered this music, which had been missing from my Jewish education, I sought to revive it, and with it, that spirit.

**How does performing at a wedding, bar or bat mitzvah, or other simcha make you feel?**

**Beth Cohen replied:** like I said before, its a blast and I really get into the joy being expressed by the families at the simchas-- and I play off of it - especially when I taxim (solo). I also need to pay my bills, so its a double reward - spiritual and material.

**Margot Leveret said:** It's a very emotional experience. Sometimes when I'm playing simn tov mazel tov and they're lifting the bride and groom up on chairs I get tears in my eyes.

**Barry Friedland said:** I really enjoy Bar/Bat Mitzvahs; they are always lots of fun. I also enjoy weddings but they are often more stressful, especially the ceremony.

This is because, besides wanting to play well, we have to be aware of the timing of the processional. For example, when we play at Orthodox weddings, the bride often does a ritual of circling the groom seven times. The challenge here is to end the song just as the 7<sup>th</sup> revolution completes. Since there are no dress rehearsals, to time it just right gives a great sense of satisfaction.

**Lori Lippitz said:** It's a very emotional experience. Sometimes when I'm playing simn tov mazel tov and they're lifting the bride and groom up on chairs I get tears in my eyes.

**How is this different from other events at which you perform?**

**Beth Cohen said:** At simchas, you make a special connection with the person's/ family's joy and share in their nakhes. Your job as the musician is to help bring that joy and ecstasy out. *(continued on Page 10)*



Orange County Klezmers performing their soulful music at Rabbi Donnell's simcha



Margot Leveret and the incredible musicians of the Klezmer Mountain Boys



Lori Lippitz and the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band ready to get you up and dancing with their fantastic music



The Nahalat Shalom Klezmer Youth Band in concert

## Klezmorim: Observing the Commandment to Spread Joy

**Margot Leveret said:** Each one is unique.

**Barry Friedland said:** For a bris, you got to play quietly and delicately.

**Are there other Simcha at which you have performed?**

**Lori Lippitz said:** We perform at weddings, bar and bat mitzvah parties, anniversary parties, and anything else one wishes to celebrate. We have also played at deathbeds, and our violinist and pianist played at my father's funeral last year. All the cycles of life.

**Margot Leveret said:** Oh yes, weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings, funerals, simchas Torah services, Yom Hashoah events, all kinds of events.

**Barry Friedland said:**

Besides playing numerous shows, we have performed for weddings, anniversaries, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, 80<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> birthday parties and even a few Bris Milas. We have also added a more serious side to our music with the release of our new CD "Echoes of Vilna". We have been asked to play this music for events of remembrance. The calls and letters have been unexpected and very beautiful. I feel this CD has made an impact in areas I am just beginning to discover.

**Beth Cohen said:** Baby namings, dedications, anniversaries, birthdays, parties...

**Do you have a memorable event regarding a Simcha performance that you could share?**

**Beth Cohen said:** They are all memorable and special-- as if I knew the people myself and was a member of their family. There are also events that should have been simchas, but the people who hired us just wanted background music and didn't really want to party and dance. Those gigs aren't as much fun or as rewarding, but they are pretty common too. I've performed at a few concerts that have felt like simchas - where I really connected with the audience, but I guess that doesn't really count as a simcha - just a fun gig.

**Margot Leveret said:** People love the big horas. We go back and forth from klezmer to bluegrass without skipping a beat. Sometimes they lift up the bride and groom just when we're in the middle of a bluegrass hoedown! It's wild. It just adds to the general joyousness of the occasion.

How does your playing at your temple with members of the congregation, as well as others, make you feel?

My synagogue is like my family - we're very close. I love to play for them.

Are there any particular experiences at the Friday night session that stand out as an example of the best that can happen at one of these events?

I lead an open klezmer jam session at my synagogue one Wednesday night a month. It's very informal, like a family gathering in the living room to enjoy music together. Musicians come and many people come just to enjoy the music. It's very hamish.

**Barry Friedland said:** One of the most memorable events was for a Hassidic temple where I think everyone was a little tipsy, singing loudly and dancing with great abandon to all our tunes. I think we had as much if not more fun than the people.

**Lori Lippitz said:** An evening of contrast:

We started out performing at an early wedding, around 6-9 PM. (It was the evening that Princess Diana died, so that dates it). The wedding was informal as could be--a picnic-potluck-style wedding. It was laid back and fun, and we had a blast. Then, we jumped in our cars and ran downtown to play an interlude at a very high-end wedding. (There was a society band for the night--we played a hora set at 11 PM, to give the evening a Jewish note.) In this lovely, gilded ballroom, so much went so wrong. I remember the videographer accidentally backing into the wedding cake before the room was open; a six-tiered four-foot-high affair that came down in an avalanche of whipped cream....During the horas, the bride slipped off the chair and fell to the floor (escaping injury, thank goodness). The contrast between these two affairs demonstrated that money cannot always buy the best experience (although you can't hire a band without a *little* of it!).

The most original wedding we played for was a few years ago. Also outdoors, also informal and unpretentious in the extreme. The groom's family had lived for some time in Hawaii, so the bridal party was dressed in Hawaiian shirts with leis. The bride was happy and pregnant. There was a communal yoga stretch in the middle of the ceremony, and the groom made a brick for the bride (also as a part of the ceremony) to symbolize the way in which he would provide the foundation of their home. California comes to Chicago!



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