

Barely Enough Bread: The Klezmer Connection Between Jewish and Gypsy Musicians

Description

When it comes to the commingling of Jewish and Roma folk music, the Romanian province of Bessarabia cannot be ignored as a rich source. There are important historical memories of Jewish *klezmers* as well as Romani *lautari* playing at weddings, engagements, family parties, at Purim, and other Jewish and non-Jewish festivals. In Bessarabia, Jews played in Romani *tarafs* (bands), learning to speak Romani and sometimes even becoming the leader of the ensemble while Romani played *klezmer* music in Jewish ensembles, learning to speak Yiddish and sometimes playing at Jewish weddings where the band was made up entirely of Romani musicians. Both the Jewish and Romani musicians influenced each other. Despite the older Hungarian use of the instrument, the small ensemble with cimbalom favored by Roma musicians most likely came from Jewish *klezmer* usage in the eighteenth century. Likewise, the appearance of the little cymbal in Romani *tarafs* was a reflection of a Jewish *klezmer* presence in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Finally the Roma introduced certain dances like the *zhok* and *honga* to the *klezmers* repertoire.

“Barely Enough Bread: The Klezmer Connection Between Jewish and Gypsy Musicians” will examine the fascinating symbiotic relationship between the Jews and Roma musicians in Eastern Europe. Both minorities have been marginalized by the various governments they have lived under and by the local indigenous people they have worked and lived amongst. And if the Jew and Roma already were not marginalized enough, being an itinerant musician caused the klezmer and lautar (Romani for musician) to often band together for personal protection and economic stability.

[Yale Strom bio](#)