

Translation of Dena Ressler's letter in the January 23, 2004 *Yiddish Forverts*

More about "KlezKamp"

Allow me to add another report about this year's KlezKamp, which took place in the Catskill Mountains, Swan Lake, New York. There one could choose from many classes about Yiddish music, culture and language.

Like every year, classes were held at different levels and on various themes. For example, in Michael Wex's class, "The Psychological and Social Origins of Yiddish," we learned about the links between klezmer music and Yiddish language. In her class, Professor Miriam Isaacs described how Y.L. Peretz wrote about Yiddish music while the klezmerim Jeff Warschauer and Deborah Strauss played examples.

An interesting program took place every evening and at night. The actors David Rogoff, Mina Bern and Shifra Lerer dedicated their fine program to Itzik Manger's poetry. On other evenings, we watched a film or heard a concert. One program was on the theme of "Yiddish Melodies in Swing," that is, about the synthesis of jazz and klezmer music. The *maven* on this theme, Pete Sokolow, played the piano and sang along with other fine klezmerim, young and old.

The musicians who came to KlezKamp could choose on which musical level they wished to learn. Fortunately, there were several levels, both for beginners and advanced students. There were three dance bands and a fiddl *kapelye*. There was a class which used written music and a class that learned by ear. There was also a band which played only Khasidic music.

There was dancing every night to the music of various live bands in which students and teachers played. Among those teachers were famous *klezmerim* such as Frank London, German Goldenshteyn, Cookie Segelstein, Josh Horowitz, Mark Rubin, Jim Guttmann, Deborah Strauss, and others.

An interesting part of the program were the two classes about the history of Jews in the Catskills taught by Phil Brown and Irwin Richman. Their lectures were on the themes of Hotels, Politics and Culture, Religion and Entertainment in the Catskills and they spoke as well about Popular Culture in Hollywood and Home Movies.

Lastly, I would like to add that the week of KlezKamp took place in a hotel in which 425 KlezKampers stayed. We could take a walk near the frozen lake or take a ride to look at the towns and synagogues in the area.

It was, for me, a piece of Paradise!

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