Girls Don’t Play Drums….
Oh Yes We Will

by Elaine Cooper

How wonderful to make a dream come true. I have always wanted to learn to play the drums. I lived vicariously through my son for years…. I heard my friends talk about drumming when they went to weekend workshops. One of my close women friends was drummed in to her simcha chomah, and I was starting to feel left out.

Then, that old Chinese proverb “When a student is ready, a teacher is found” came true.

The package came from KlezKanada, and there was a program given by a woman who was even older than I am. “Girls Don’t Play the Drums”. Yesterday I went to my first class, and my learning began: how to hold the drumsticks. “The sticks are to be held with the thumb and the first finger.” “Hold the elbows just so…” “Hit the pad in the center.” And then we learned all the basic rhythms.

Elaine Watts Hoffman has the patience, an ability to translate instrument, and can transmit all of

Continued on page 4
Jenny Levison is doing a workshop. But, why limit a workshop to one session a day? Here is her first daily writing assignment for the whole camp.

Playwriting is an inherently Jewish art form, because in order to write a good play, the playwright must ask, “What makes this day different from all other days?”

Drama begins with broken ritual. Something happens that isn't supposed to. Something happens that never happened before. Something happens that sets the normal world of the play into motion. It's sometimes called the inciting incident. I like to think of it as the broken ritual.

Think about the first few pages, minutes, or moments of your favorite plays. What ritual is broken? Master playwrights do this with such subtlety that they don't have to spend ten pages saying to you, “This is a world in which the women have to remove their shoes before entering any building, and (flashing arrows!) oh look! Mindy just clomped in with her Doc Martins on and that means trouble.”

It's likely that instead, Mindy would just clomp in with her Doc Martens on, and this broken ritual, which we don't know is even a ritual yet, will disturb the world and set off the drama. When you break ritual, you disturb the world, and you plunge your play into action. This is what creates drama.

Note: ritual is different from habit. Habit is unaware. Ritual is focused and purposeful.

Exercise:
Think about the ritual in your daily life. What do you do—perhaps the same way, perhaps at the same time—every day? Every week? Every month? Every year? Free write a list of all the rituals you perform in your life. Consider breaking that ritual. See how it disturbs the rest of your life.
Hatching a Klezmer Band—KlezKinder

by Richard Kurtz

While you are going to workshops, working in ensembles or relaxing by the lake there is a hive of activity in a building tucked away in the woods behind the dining hall. As you approach this building you can feel the energy emanating from its inside and spilling out onto its porch. Its our Klez Kanada children. Seven violins, 2 flutes, 1 trombone, clarinet, recorder, Melodica, 2 stray dragonflies and purple gimp combine to produce, under the direction of Sruli Dresdner's and Lisa Mayer's beautiful music. The kids are either putting together their first tune to be played at the flag pole before meals or demonstrating artistic talents.

Sruli, using his recorder, assigns notes to various instruments over and over again G to C to D to E. It is no easy task. Sruli and Lisa have to search for wandering musicians who at a whim leave the group to hug and schmooz with friends from Klez Kanada's past. The fearless Sruli and Lisa eventually round the aspiring musicians together as they explore the 4 notes of the 6 note song they are preparing for your Kvelling pleasure later in the week. Alas one more interruption as a joyous Klezmer trumpeter belts out the Michigan State fight song. Sruli, with his Rebbe-like patience announces we will play the first half today and after cookies tomorrow we will learn the second half. So do not forget about that special place in the woods behind the dining hall come visit to see the future superstars of Klezmer music rehearsing.

THE CATSKILLS ONWARD: PETE SOKOLOW AND IRVING FIELDS

by Marc Dolgin

It would be hard to imagine a more appropriate way to start off this year's KlezKanada, especially for the debutants and kibitzers, than the tag team presentation on Monday from what could well have been a famous Catskills institution, “Sokolow and Fields.” Each drew from his extensive experience and knowledge both to trace and illustrate the evolution of klezmer from very humble roots to its innovative and dynamic place on today’s music palette.

Peter Sokolow, a long time veteran on the KlezKanada scene, sketched out the origins of klezmer, from its liturgical roots, through its instrumentalization by a community unable to secure formal musical education and often relying on the training provided by the Tzar’s army whose portable instruments defined the genre’s original character. Ironically as it turned out, it was also a very rigorous, even inflexible, form, according to Sokolow, dependent on learning by ear and inhospitable to improvisation, even in North America where it arrived with the major migrations from eastern Europe. That rigidity might have consigned klezmer to the status of an archaic bit of folklore, of interest mainly to cultural anthropologists, were it not for the contribution of young Irving Fields (aka Campos, el pianista), a synagogue choir bocher, who discovered the beauty of Jewish melody and then stumbled into a obsession for latin rhythms while playing a gig on a cruise to Cuba. In response to requests for both Jewish music and dance music, Fields hit upon the notion of combining and transcribing these two passions, Jewish melody and latin rhythm, and in so doing, demonstrated (possibly inadvertently) the potential for evolution and imagination that carried the music forward to the “klezmer revival” and on to the range of artistic expression that is so evident at Klez Kanada today. It was probably appropriate that Fields was interviewed by SoCalled (aka Josh Dolgin) whose fusion of Jewish music and contemporary hip-hop lies firmly within this relatively new but firmly established trend in which tradition’s best defense has become the untraditional.
Continued from front page
these to this mixed bag of students
her knowledge, and love of her from
young prepubscent girls to an old
broad like me. One, two three four five
… start with your left, alternate your
hands … don’t hit too hard, remember
this is an musical instrument.” “Listen
to me while I play the bass drum …
listen to the rhythm and play faster”.
”Not so loud” (and she was wearing
earplugs).

As I heard her speak, I was
reminded of one of my graduate
college professors. He used to say this: “I don’t
understand you any better when you
talk louder!”

This morning, I am faced with a
very difficult choice at 10.45 hours,
do I go to hear Bikel or go to second
drumming class? Guess which one!

Sheyn vi de levana
for Ilana Dresdner, by Lisa Mayer
Sheyn vi di levana
Our Bas Mitzvah Ilana
We wish her mazel brocha
On this most special night
Her hair is zayer tayer
Never-cut—always on fire
Mir vinchen dir hatzlokhe
And all your heart’s delight
In your eyes so blue
We can see that you
Have Koyekh Kheyn and Khokhme
Here where we belong
joined in joy and song
At KlezKanada
Sheyn vi di levana
Our Bas Mitzvah Ilana
We love you like a sister
Mazel Tov
Mazel Tov
Mazel Tov
Mazel Tov
On this—magical night!

Coming Tomorrow

Personal Ads
To submit a personal advertisement,
accompany it with a $5 (or more)
contribution to the KlezKanada
Scholarship fund.

The Kurtz Family has made a donation
to the KlezKanada Scholarship fund in
honor of Ilana Dresdner’s Bas Mitzve.

Mazel tov to KlezKanada’s
First Bas Mitzve from Ari
Davidow and Judy Pinnolis in honor of
Ilana Dresdner’s Bas Mitzve.

Mazel tov to Ilana and the
whole Dresdner family from Aaron and Merceditas Alexander on
Ilana’s Bas Mitzve.

Congratulations to Ilana
and the whole Dresder
family from Sandy and Hy
Goldman

Helen and Bob Smolkin have made a
donation to the KlezKanada Scholar-
ship fund in honor of Ilana Dresdner’s
Bas Mitzve. Khazak Khazak v’titkhazki.

KlezKanada Afloat. Join fellow
klezmorim on a Klezmer Cruise on the
Dniper River, May, 2007. Brochures
available in the KlezKanada Boutique
(in the Retreat Center), or see Marc
Dolgin.

Join us in Toronto at
Ashkenaz Festival 2006!
A kvelling Yiddishe Mame would like
to invite all to the Ashkenaz Festival
2006 in Toronto, Ont., Canada, Aug
29–Sept 4. For more information and
a brochure, please see Helen Smolkin.