

Land of Compassion

Another Look at the World

Krakauer, a Clarinetist on Fire

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David Krakauer is praised the world over for his exceptional ability to play a myriade of musical styles with equally *prodigious chops* (New York Times). Here he shares with us his passion for music and what it is that drives him to give ever more of himself in his mission as a musician.



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A style that's alive, innovative, yet anchored in tradition

Classical clarinetist and composer David Krakauer experienced a turning point in his career when, in 1980, he discovered the traditional Jewish music known as Klezmer. "It's the music of my family, my culture, my roots. But I didn't grow up with it. It was almost like something I had lost. I thought it was really important to reconquer it, and not fall into the trap of just being another American with no real culture." David joined a group called The Klezmatics, then ventured out on his own with the group Klezmer Madness. His music, which can be described as nostalgic, calm, energetic, joyful, but also vivacious and

intense, is if nothing else the kind of music that transports the listener. As a genre Klezmer music is not locked in to any preset concept; for Krakauer it lacks all notion of boundary. His creativity and artistic energy are rooted not just in culture, but also cross-culture, as evidenced by his numerous encounters with performers as diverse as So-Called (which saw him layering Hip-Hop with traditional music) to Fred Wesley, trombonist for the King of Funk James Brown. Not to mention Osvaldo Golijov!

A fervent gift and charisma that get people on their feet, with something to take away.

His concerts are collaborations between artists, cultures, and generations that sweep together an assortment of instruments: drums, guitar, bass, but also the accordion and, lest we forget, DJ turntables. But whatever other artists and instruments there may be, David is always at the helm with his clarinet. Usually a subservient instrument lost somewhere in an orchestra, the clarinet is a lead instrument in Krakauer's able hands. On the track "Moskowitz," for example, the clarinet steps up and hammers out the dance, only after which the rest of the instruments take up the theme and reinterpret it. The result is a sublime sense of unity that, nonetheless, is rooted in the eclectic. This unique harmony flows, of course, from many long hours of hard work but also from the personality and intense friendship the artists share.

MOSKOWITZ



In certain pieces David Krakauer's clarinet resounds so continuously that one wonders whether the man has not been exempted from the biological imperative to breath, or if he's just plain amphibious. Giving himself over to the music totally, ardently, this is the kind of entertainer who wriggles and hops around the stage as one indissoluble body with his inflammable instrument. And the whole spectrum of venues the world over has tasted his revelry: in Paris he's played at prestigious concert halls such as the Salle Pleyel and the Théâtre des Champs Elysée but also in more accessible venues such as the Marciac Festival and Le New Morning; in New York he's graced the stages of Carnegie Halle and Lincoln Center but is no stranger to, for example, le Poisson Rouge. Wherever he goes the effect is the same. Audience members wake up as though doused by a cold bucket of enthusiasm, and multiple generations from Le Poisson Rouge to Carnegie Hall prove defenseless against a swelling urge to dance. After each concert

the people leave full of energy and hope. They're uplifted to see an artist give himself with so much generosity and kindness.

David Krakauer is a man of deep humanity for whom the artist's mission is of utmost concern. One of his projects is called "Abraham's Mission" because, as he puts it: "We are all Abraham's children. The concept of Abraham is especially important because it unites all three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). It speaks to Jews, African-Americans and white Protestants all at the same time. The project is very important to me because it's humanitarian. It's really a way to express the melting-pot, to reconcile races and religions, to fight together to build a better future and have fun making music together." Krakauer's music is a unifying agent. There's the unity between David and his clarinet, of course, but also between David and his group, and ultimately between David and the public. International star though he may be, David continues to be defined by simplicity and humility. His joy is to spend time with friends, amble about the streets of New York and marvel at what's new in the Lower East Side, a neighborhood in perpetual flux. He takes in each person, to the point of remembering many fans' names. Every encounter, every discovery is lived fully.

David was asked to answer to the following question: "How does music help you live the reality of daily life?" His answer is a fitting conclusion to this article:

"Sometimes it can get discouraging for me to see the world today with so much rampant greed and hatred all around. It can make daily life pretty heavy, and from time to time difficult to get through day-to-day existence in this kind of environment. But when I see that making music can actually make a difference by bringing people such joy and helping transport them to another place, it gives me a renewed sense of purpose that helps me see things with a greater perspective. And if, through my music, I can bring a message of greater cooperation, compassion and understanding between different groups of people . . . then all the better !"

David Krakauer's website

<http://landofcompassion.com/2012/01/06/krakauer-a-clarinetist-on-fire/>