

# OVES – Resonance of the Past

## New program and CD with the Ensemble WAKS

**Inge Mandos (vocalist), Klemens Kaatz (piano, accordion), Hans-Christian Jaenicke (violin)**

Thanks to our encounters with the descendants of the singers, some of them heard in the first WAKS recording, we have learned that our music can fill the gap of silence between the generations.

With the help of genealogist Ayana Kimron, WAKS found four descendants of the singers whose voices were recorded on the wax cylinders in 1928 to 1941 by Soviet ethnomusicologists Sofia Magid and Moshe Beregovski. They are:

*The niece of Rakhmiel Grin, who was born in 1910 in Delatyn and Helena (Hela) Grin (maiden name Neuman), born in 1909 in Lodz, Poland, the great-niece of Basya Fayler (maiden name Shamis), born in 1911 in Sheptovka, Ukraine. the 93 year old daughter of Shmuel Bronshvayg, born in 1878 in Sheptovka, the great niece of Nokhem Shternheim, born in 1879 in Rzeszow, Ukraine.* The new CD “OVES” revives the songs of the ancestors for their descendants featuring more songs of the wax-cylinder recordings.

Imagine hearing a voice of a long lost relative, a relative of whom nothing is known, except his name and place of birth. Imagine hearing his voice on a sound recording, the smile in the voice, the power, maybe the sorrow. In your mind’s eye a picture emerges, an impression of a long forgotten life. The project starts with sound fragments from a culture that was supposed to be eradicated. The preservation of this culture has become extremely important to the descendants (Yiddish: NOKhKUM).

The songs originate from before the Holocaust. “Di OVES”, these Yiddish ancestors showed a great joy of life. They were highly educated and passionate people; incorrigible optimists or fatalists and “Luftmentshn” who knew how to create something out of nothing. They had a remarkable adaptability to their ever-changing way of life, which is reflected in their songs. Using simple lyrics, they depict the fate of the oppressed and say exactly what needs to be said. The texts and songs are packed with lessons from grandparents who the grandchildren never knew.

The project OVES aims to form a bridge between past and present, thus creating a future of respect and understanding. The medium of this connection between the ancestors and their descendants (Yiddish: OVES and NOKhKUM) is the music.

The motivator for this project was our contact with the relatives of the “wax-cylinder-singers”: *Yehudith Shalev and Nekhama Biederman, nieces of Rakhmiel Grin and Helena Neuman/Grin, as well as Genia Dubinsky, the 93 years old daughter of the singer Shmuel Bronshvayg, Alla Genison, a great-niece of Basya Fayler, and Tzafi Fishbein, a great niece of Nokhem Shternheim.* In talking with them personally, we realized how important it was for them to re-connect with their ancestors and how important messages from the past are for them. Yehudith Shalev felt strongly enough to connect with her past, that she studied Yiddish and researched and translated the publications of her ancestors.

Due to the fragmented material (published by Elvira Groezinger and Suzi Hudak, 2008), many pieces had to be recovered, reconstructed and supplemented, musically. The arrangements of the ensemble WAKS have achieved this musical integration. As necessary, Inge Mandos supplemented the texts. She sings either together with the original voices or continues a song no longer audible in the original wax recording.

The end result of the OVES project is a concert program and a CD with until now totally unknown Yiddish songs. In the CD the ensemble WAKS is joined by the beautiful guest musicians Efim Chorny (vocals), Stella Jürgensen (vocals), Merlin Shepherd (clarinet) and Maria Rothfuchs (double bass). Together they interpret the old songs with great sensitivity and energy so that they don't only reach the hearts of the "NOKhKUM", but also the hearts of a broader public.

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