

Midnight East

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Music is the Sound of Peace

22 September 2011 No Comment

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“What shall we seek on our path? What shall we silently ask? Let rain make the earth green, let the sun rise.” (White Rainbow – words: Bruria Schweitzer, music [Yosef Hadar](#))

The wind from the sea and the voices of young girls singing rose up into the night like a prayer at the [Arab-Jewish Community Center](#) in Jaffa last night. The media is ablaze with constant coverage of the conflicts here, updates flashing across my computer screen even as I write, but last night listening to the music, I felt another kind of dialogue, simple as water, flowing in and around us all. [Saffron Caravan](#), a multi-cultural ensemble of musicians, performed a free concert at the community center with guest artist Peter Yarrow, Israeli youth ensembles Bat Kol, the Voices of Peace Choir, and the trio of Yehonatan Gitelman, Guy Mintos and Daniel Benhorin from the Israel Conservatory of Music.

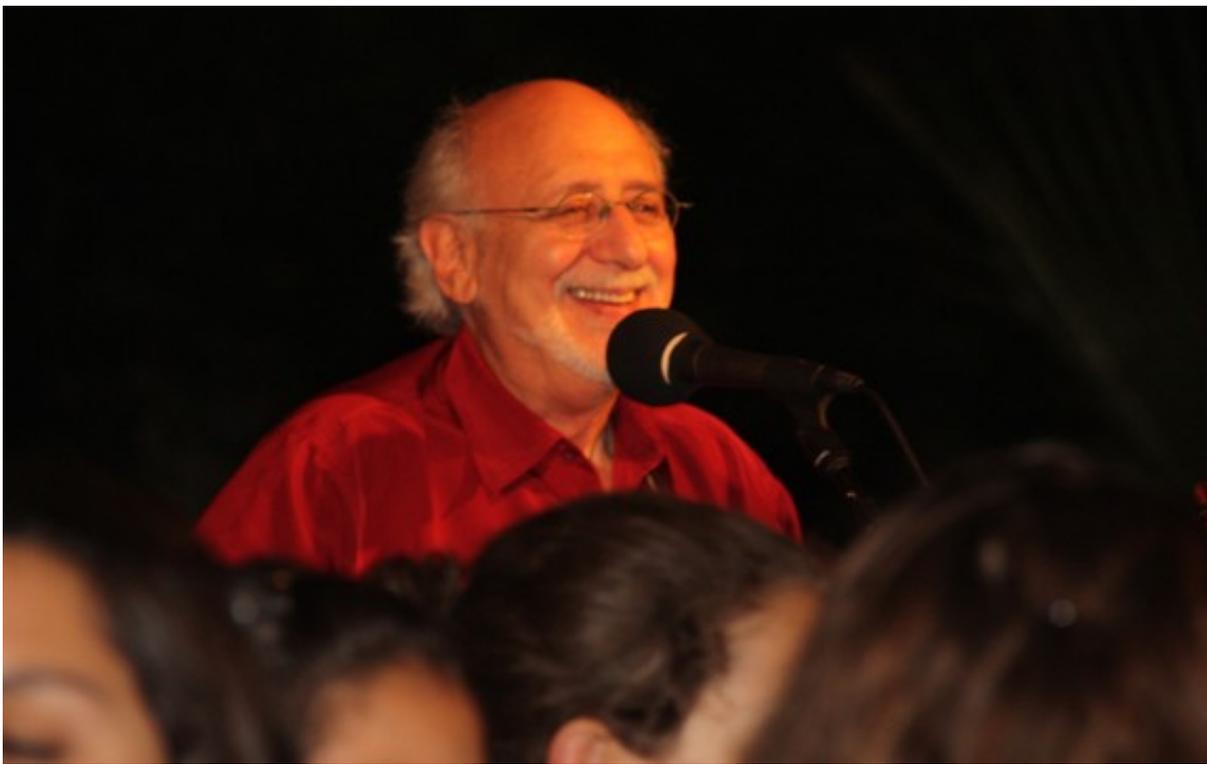
Greek born Chicago based (Anshe Emet Synagogue) Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi introduced the ensemble's first number – a Greek version of Lecha Dodi (Come My Beloved – Jewish liturgical song in Hebrew, welcoming Shabbat) with an Afro-Cuban touch. From Howard Levy's opening arabesques on the harmonica, to Haytham Safia on oud, Kalyyan Pathak on tabla, Jean-Cristophe Leroy on percussion and Mizrahi's tenor wide as the night – it was liturgy come alive, music to make the spirit dance. When I hear Lecha Dodi again, I will hear the harmonica and oud in my mind.



Howard Levy, Alberto Mizrahi, Kalyan Pathak of Saffron Caravan at the Arab-Jewish Community Center in Jaffa

Liturgy, love songs in Ladino and Sama Maqam, Saffron Caravan's merging of styles and instruments bring radiance and energy to every piece. Iranian born Kiu Haghighi performed wonders on the santour, mallets dancing in the air at dizzying speeds, diving deep into spirals of sound. Levy, Saffron Caravan's musical director, was a revelation on the harmonica (and piano), an inspirational force throughout the concert.

A talented young Israeli trio joined the caravan to perform Juan Tizol's Caravan – Yehonatan Gitelman on drums, Guy Mintos on piano and Daniel Benhorin on bass. It always fills me with wonder to hear musicians who have never met before, come together onstage and play. Somehow they find a common key, a shared understanding of different rhythms, and they don't seem to worry too much if it takes a bit of searching. Riding on the moment; a conversation without words.



Peter Yarrow



Peter Yarrow with the Voices of Peace Choir and the Bat Kol Choir

Mizrahi led the Arab-Jewish Community Center's Voices of Peace Choir (musical director: Idan Toledano) in an Arabic-Aramaic chant/song, inviting the audience to join in: "With God's help." There was a warm reunion onstage and off, as the wonderful musical ambassador of peace and

love [Peter Yarrow \(Peter, Paul and Mary\) sang the touching song “Don’t Laugh at Me” once more with the Voices of Peace](#), with the Bat Kol Choir (musical director: Anat Moragh) joining them. Arabic and Hebrew flowed in and through the music, Shalom Aleichem and Salaam Aleikum by turns, come and go in peace, the sound of the heart.

Saffron Caravan is a project of [Genesis at the Crossroads \(GATC\)](#). The non-profit organization founded in 1999 by Wendy Sternberg, MD is dedicated to building peace and dialogue through the arts. The full Saffron Caravan ensemble includes ten musicians from Iran, Afghanistan, Cuba, Morocco, India, Israel and the United States. Their tour in Israel included concerts and workshops in Beer Sheva, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv – Jaffa, initiating the Junior Saffron Caravan Ensemble. Sternberg embraced the young Israeli musicians with a personal gift, donating her mother’s cello to the trio from the Israel Conservatory of Music. The Saffron Caravan tour was made possible through the support of the Public Affairs Office of the US Embassy in Tel Aviv.



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