



שיר

# SHIR

*from the Heart*

JEWISH FOLK MUSIC




  
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**SHIR**– the popular Jewish music quartet from London. Although commonly called a klezmer group, Shir describe themselves as playing “Complete Jewish Music” – Israeli, Ladino, Yiddish, Mizrahi, Sephardi, simcha as well as klezmer and even liturgical, and do not like to be pinned down to any one style.

Co-leader and singer/guitarist Ivor Goldberg explains, *“We started out with the styles that we knew and had grown up with, more the Ashkenazi side. But there is such a huge variety of Jewish music with influences from all over the world that we felt restricted within that area. As musicians we also needed the musical variety that the Sephardi and Mizrahi sides offer.”*

The band was formed in 1997 by Maurice Chernick, co-leader and clarinetist/singer from Liverpool with a music degree from Cardiff University.

*“I was running the music department in a secondary school in London and needed an outlet for my playing,” says Maurice. “The opportunity came along to put a band together for a Jewish wedding. I had already played with Piotr (Jordan – violin) and pieced a unit together with him. Ivor was a guest there, we were introduced and he joined us shortly afterwards.”*

Ivor goes on, *“Being a jazz musician I had never really wanted to play wedding or function music, but when I started playing Jewish music with Shir it*

*felt like the most natural music for me to play, like I was coming full circle. Jewish music was the first music I had known, in synagogue and at home, plus my 8 years as a teenager-soldier living in Israel – and it felt like it was coming from a place deep within my soul.”*

Maurice continues, *“We feel a responsibility here – as if we’re linked directly to the past and carrying on a tradition. Music and merry making are an important part of Jewish life.”*

Piotr Jordan, the band’s virtuoso Polish violinist, was born in Lodz, studied in Warsaw and Prague and moved to London in 1994. His influences range from classical to gypsy to Hot Club jazz. *“I grew up playing all the klezmer tunes in Poland, after all the music is based in gypsy and Eastern European musical tradition.”*

Robert Levy (double bass) studied at Dornbirn Music School and at Bregenz Conservatory, Austria. He works mainly in musical theatre and performs with other groups including Gregori Schechter’s Klezmer Festival Band (ARC Music, EUCD 2317), Klezmer Groover, Burning Bush (ARC Music, EUCDs 1513, 2332, 2540) and Loby Bobby (Brazilian jazz).



**Ivor Goldberg**



**Maurice Chernick**



**Piotr Jordan**



**Robert Levy**

## 10. PAPIROSSEN

(translated from Yiddish by Kico Gonzalez-Risso)

*A cold wet night, a fog so heavy, darkness all around  
See the sad young boy who waits there, hoping to be found  
A wall keeps rain from where he stands  
A basket rests between his hands  
His eyes are pleading, but he makes no sound.*

*I've lost the strength I used to have, to hit the street again  
Weak from hunger, looking ragged, soaking from the rain  
I start my day with dawn arriving  
No one cares if I'm surviving  
They all laugh and joke about my pain*

*Come on and buy my cigarettes, come buy them  
Rescued from the rain, they're dry, so try them  
Here's a bargain, why not take it  
Buy from me and help me make it  
Free me from my hunger and the fog*

*Come on and buy good matches here - just try them  
And save a starving orphan when you buy them  
What's the use of all my yelling  
No one buys a thing I'm selling  
Must I die just like some wretched dog*

*I had a little sister once, like Mother Nature's child  
She hung around me for a year, the last time I smiled  
With her a better life had started  
Thoughts of hunger soon departed  
Every time I looked into her face*

*One day she grew weaker, and her hands began to clench  
I held her in my arms as she lay dying on a bench  
When I lost her, I stopped living  
Life had nothing else worth giving  
Now it's time for death to take my place*

1997 Kico Gonzalez-Risso



### SHIR:

**Maurice Chernick** – clarinet, voice

**Ivor Goldberg** – guitars, voice

**Piotr Jordan** – violin

**Robert Levy** – double bass

Produced by **Ivor Goldberg** and **Maurice Chernick**

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