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Saxophone

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Review

by Paul Wagner

LAUGHTER AND TEARS—A JEWISH SAGA

Dale Wolford

Centaur, CRC 2521

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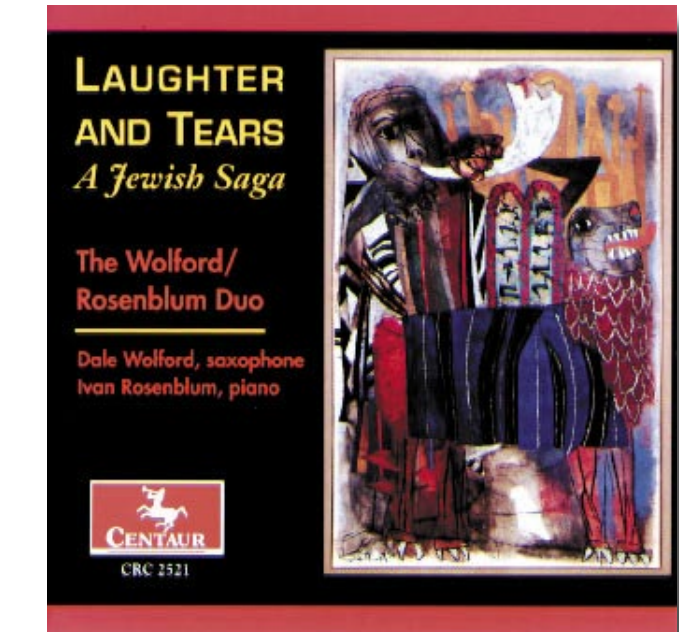
It is seldom we hear a CD that is so intertwined with one cultural history. At the same time one could say this CD goes far beyond the “Jewish Saga” and becomes a human saga for the ages. The music appears under subtitles, or sections (*Classical Klezmer, Holocaust Remembrance, Synagogue Prayer, Sounds From Israel, Classical Klezmer, and An Encore From Jewish Vaudeville*). *Laughter and Tears* is presented to us by the Wolford/Rosenblum Duo featuring Dale Wolford on saxophone and Ivan Rosenblum on piano.

Dale Wolford is an internationally recognized performer on the saxophone and Yamaha WX5 Wind Controller. He has performed in Europe and the Western United States. Along with pianist Ivan Rosenblum he has premiered many new works for saxophone, including music composed by Gunther Schuller. Wolford is also a member of the Morosco Saxophone Quartet. He has performed with Philip Glass, the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Saxophone Quartet, and the Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra with whom he made two recordings. He is the on call saxophonist with the San Jose Symphony. He is currently on the faculty of California State University, Stanislaus.

Pianist, composer, and arranger Ivan Rosenblum has a B.A. from Queens College, N.Y.C. and a Masters and Doctorate from Harvard University. He is much in demand as a pianist and a composer. This is a musically potent duo and for this CD they add several important friends including William Trimble on saxophone, Kathleen Nitz, soprano; Sylvie Braitman, mezzo-soprano; Stephanie Friedman, mezzo-soprano; and Erica Lann-Clark, an actress who fills out the roster for this musical team.

Dale Wolford is an outstanding soloist with a great sound on both the soprano and the alto saxophones. His phrasing and choice of dynamics excel and the melodic lines soulfully tear at your heartstrings. Because of this your thoughts will be deeply imbedded within the life of the music. His saxophone tone is rich, full, and vibrant. The instrumental technique Dale Wolford exhibits is quick, precise, and unhampered by mechanical aspects of playing the saxophone. Staccato is light, precise, and at all times effortless. This duo operates on an intuitive level of performance and the listener reaps all the benefits.

The CD opens with selections that are labeled as *Classical Klezmer*, including *Four Hebraic Pictures In The Klezmer Tradition*, arranged by the renowned clarinetist Simeon Bellison. These are charming pieces and come alive within the traditions of Jewish



history and immigration. The next piece leads us deeper into the past setting the listener up for the very moving composition by Carl Anton Wirth, *Jepthah-Invocation and Dance*, written for Sigurd Rascher and his daughter Carina Rascher. This is a very powerful piece for soprano and alto saxophone with piano. William Trimble’s saxophone joins the duo for *Jepthah-Invocation and Dance* and they will totally surround you with emotion.

The next section is titled *Holocaust Remembrance*. As stated in the CD liner notes, “Music, with its ability to represent the inexpressible may be the only way to express that horror. Ellwood Derr’s *I Never Saw a Butterfly* has both the power of its music which is then coupled with the power of the poetry written by children incarcerated in the Terezin concentration camp.” Only 100 of these children survived and none were under the age of 14. The music presented in this section is a powerful performance that reinforces the imagination of the horror.

The Synagogue Prayer section features *Eli, Eli*. It is a well-placed selection that serves to pay tribute to what came before on the CD.

The CD then lightens up with *Songs from Israel* by Paul Ben-Haim, and *Maypole* by Jacob Weinberg. We come full circle back to Classical Klezmer before closing with two selections from Jewish Vaudeville, *Sadie Salome* and *Yiddle on Your Fiddle, Play Some Ragtime*. These gems from the past were written by none other than Irving Berlin.

This CD was put together with a great deal of loving care that you will feel in the very first opening notes. Dale Wolford is an excellent saxophonist supported by an equally artistic team that produced nothing less than a superb CD. §