**London Klezmer Quartet Calling**

**Review by Tony Smith in ‘Trad and Now’, Vol 13 No.10, Issue 100 p.61**

Klezmer music might seem mysterious to many Australians. Initially expressing the experiences of European Jews and their unique religious and cultural concerns, Klezmer now has wide appeal. While remaining true to the roots of the genre, London Klezmer Quartet removes any social barriers to enjoyment of the music. Their individual virtuosity and superb sense of ensemble make Klezmer accessible and easy to appreciate. Some of LKQ’s tunes come from the Synagogue. Some are carousing songs. Some are laments about the experiences of Jewish people during other people’s wars down the centuries. Others are compositions by famous British, American and East European Klezmer players. LKQ broadened their repertoire by collaborating with other Klezmer players or musicians from tangentially related genres, especially from the Balkans. And the band members have added their own compositions. This is world music in more ways than one.

The new CD by the LKQ is in many respects their best. ‘LKQ Calling’ shows a confidence that few groups achieve even after years playing together. Fans of LKQ have long recognised as world class the playing of Susi Evans on clarinet and Ilana Cravitz on violin. While the other members of LKQ have always played essential roles, in ‘LKQ Calling’ Carol Isaacs on accordion and Indra Buraczewska on double bass are foregrounded strongly. Indra’s singing adds dimensions to the group’s repertoire. Indra renders ‘Go Down Moses’ in a rollicking bluesy style, which she attributes to the well known Klezmer trumpeter Louis Armstein, makes the Polish song of praise for bulbes (potatoes) accessible and leads the group in harmony in the powerful Yiddish women’s folk song Shnirele Perele (String of Pearls). LKQ joke that they met Indra online at [www.lonelyklezmerbassplayer.com](http://www.lonelyklezmerbassplayer.com) and that she auditioned on skype, but however they got together, it was fortuitous. From Melbourne, Indra speaks Yiddish with a Yarrah accent. She has added a brash Australian enthusiasm and her powerful voice would cope with the noisiest cabaret.

An impressive aspect of LKQ’s performance is their ongoing dedication to research into Klezmer history. On this CD alongside the traditional pieces, are works by Emil Kroiter, Avrim Bughici, Joseph Hoffman and Naftule Brandwein. Brandwein was a clarinet player renowned for ‘drinking, alleged association with mobsters, and a tendency to wrap himself in fairy lights, sweat and electrocute himself’!

Add LKQ’s own compositions and the Klezmer tradition is both safe and evolving. Carol Isaac’s accordion provides an earthy backdrop to all these pieces. While folk purists might favour the button accordion, Carol’s use of her keyboard is very earthy. She evokes peasant dances, gypsy swing and tango rhythms with equal ease and draws on her familiarity with these forms in her own composing. ‘Hora De La Tescani – Kilburn Koomeyke’ provide a fitting climax to this set of 14 tunes.

LKQ tour their new album in Australia in March 2015. With ‘LKQ Calling’, the growing hordes of Australian fans of the band, and of Klezmer, and indeed of good music generally, are bound to respond.