

Sultana Ensemble



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With the talented collaborators to Sultana Ensemble, Ben-Simhon has composed a rich and satisfying listening experience that draws together the many divergent strands of his life. Listen closely and you'll hear a lot going on here. While the Arabic classical tradition underpins everything here - with ouds, qanuns, and darbukas ruling the roost - plenty of other traditions inform the music. "Yigdal" reconnects Morocco to Spain with a subtle flamenco flavor reminiscent of Radio Tarifa, while "Lord of Pardons" is a traditional Sephardic hymn, sung by an Iraqi cantor, and "Qasidat Essaouria" has a flute-driven Latin jazz flavor. There's even a recording of Ben-Simhon's grandmother herself that can be heard at the end of "Sultana".

The Sultana ensemble definitely fulfills Ben-Simhon's goals of re-uniting Arabs and Jews through music. Mostly what you hear is the sound of accomplished musicians having a great time, reviving old connections and making new ones; tending their roots while shooting off fresh branches in new directions. As Yoel sings on "Berber Blues" "Blues"



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