

Musical Healing For A Region In Conflict

by Banning Eyre

Listen Now

[4 min 15 sec] on *All Things Considered*

[add to playlist](#) | [download](#)



Courtesy of the artist

The Qadim Ensemble, led by multi-instrumentalist Eliyahu Sills, brings little-understood worlds of music to a wider audience.

HEAR THEIR SONGS

"Im Nin'alu"

[add](#) | [purchase music](#)

"Yedidi Hashachachta"

[add](#) | [purchase music](#)

"Til'et Ya Mahla Nurha"

[add](#) | [purchase music](#)

June 15, 2009 - Eliyahu and The Qadim Ensemble is a new consort out of San Francisco with a diverse repertoire of Arabic, Hebrew, Armenian and Turkish music. The musicians are out to create musical unity in a region of the world better known for division and conflict. In the process, they provide a gentle introduction into a vast realm of largely unfamiliar music. The group's debut album, *Eastern Wind*, is a diverse set of offerings that are beautifully presented. The players bring palpable enthusiasm to each performance.

Rachel Valfer does much of the singing throughout the album, and even when she's backed by a chorus of other vocalists, they rarely resort to harmony. Unison singing is a common thread that runs through many of these regional styles. The technique is showcased in the album's first track, "Im Nin'alu," a Yemenite Jewish song from the 17th century. The piece might be more than three centuries old, but its refrain contains an effective pop hook. The Qadim Ensemble chooses its repertoire wisely, with pieces that are varied, tuneful and short enough not to tax the attention span.

Eliyahu Sills has studied and performed jazz, Indian classical, Arabic and Turkish music — all of which encourage extended instrumental improvisation. But when Sills takes a solo, usually on the end-blown wooden flute, the *ney*, he is admirably succinct. The ney has been called the most human of Arabic and Turkish instruments, a reflection of the soul. Whether the music comes from Sufi trance ritual or a romantic Armenian lament, voice and ney create a sense of human communication with the divine.

Master musicians devote their lives to perfecting the classical and religious traditions The Qadim Ensemble dips into on *Eastern Wind*. That very American impulse to nudge disparate elements onto common ground inevitably risks offending purists. For the rest of us, The Qadim Ensemble makes little-understood worlds of music accessible and pleasing, without trivializing them. It's hard to find fault with that.

COMMENTS

Please note that all comments must adhere to the NPR.org [discussion rules](#) and [terms of use](#). See also the [Community FAQ](#).

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Post this comment to Facebook, too?

submit

NPR reserves the right to read on the air and/or publish on its Web site or in any medium now known or unknown the e-mails and letters that we receive. We may edit them for clarity or brevity and identify authors by name and location. For additional information, please consult our [Terms of Use](#).