



Music Review: Eliyahu & The Qadim Ensemble - *Eastern Wind*

Something wonderful happens when passionate people draw together to play music. With *Eastern Wind*, an enchanting chain of compositions from the multi-talented Eliyahu Sills and the San Francisco Bay-based [Qadim Ensemble](#), the passion is evident from the haunting opening notes through to the last stirring numbers.

The voices and instruments swell with sumptuousness, filling traditional Jewish, Armenian, Moroccan, Egyptian, and Turkish music with life.

Eliyahu has studied music for over 20 years. He is an amazing talent, dedicated keenly to several instruments from around the world. He plays with a distinct sense of jazz, stylishly underlining each note with a strong sense of assurance and mischievousness. Whether Eliyahu's performing on the ney (reed flute) or the oud (11-stringed lute), his poise and vigour is apparent.

The Qadim Ensemble, led by Eliyahu Sills, has amassed a growing global audience. Their instrumental capabilities are incredible to behold and the interplay is remarkable. Featuring Rachel Valfer (oud, lead vocals), Faisal Zedan (Arabic percussion), and John Villa (Moroccan, Middle Eastern & North Indian drums), the Qadim Ensemble splendidly constructs a beautiful and lingering assortment of music.

While Sills could certainly be considered the backbone here, it is Valfer that slides to the front of most pieces with her dazzling voice and striking pitch. Her breathtaking, sweeping vocals on "Im Nin'alu" speak of the Creator in worship, breathing powerful modern life into the 17th century piece.

Eliyahu Sills' original composition, "Maghrebi," is vigorous and greatly danceable. Featuring guest vocals by Casablanca native Bouchaib Abdlehad and a hefty percussion environment that includes darbuka and dhola (Middle Eastern goblet-shaped drums), the song's lyrics about returning home to one's family disclose the spring of such exuberance.

Valfer is centre stage again with "Saza Niye Gelmendin," a focused piece from Turkey. Her tone, always broad and always yearning, remains long after the song has dissipated.

In bringing together various musical cultures from the Middle East, Eliyahu and the Qadim Ensemble establish a sense of harmony and enthusiasm. *Eastern Wind* is a truly exhilarating album; it brims with heartiness and spirit. By combining so many impressive textures and sounds, this is one musical collective unafraid to stand for peace and friendship in maddening times.