

# Electronic Press Kit

## Contents:

p.1 Odessa/Havana Story

p.2 Review Quotes

p.3 Contact info and links

p.4 One-line Bios and Performance Highlights

pp.5-6 Full Bios

pp.7-16 Selected Reviews

# DAVID BUCHBINDER'S ODESSA/HAVANA

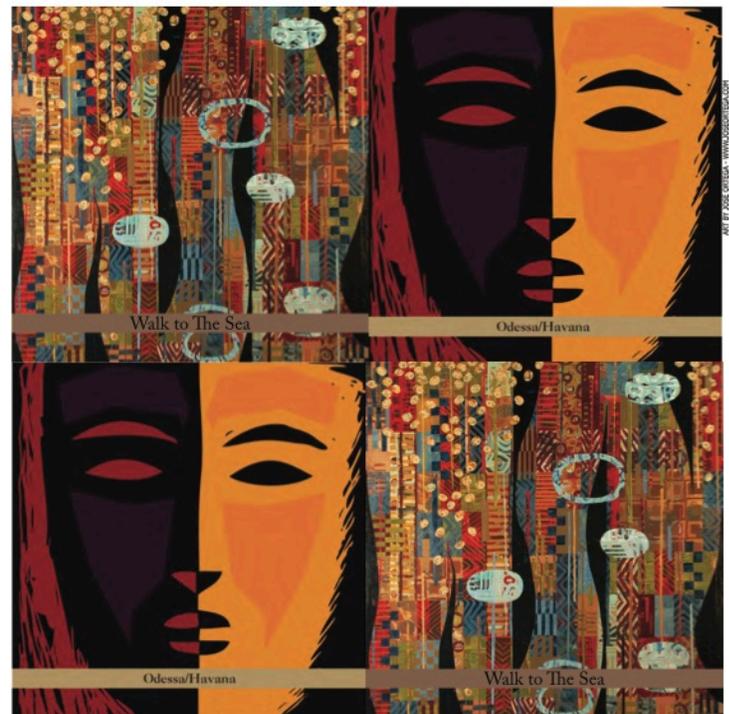
The explosive Jewish/Cuban musical evolution

"[Odessa/Havana is an] absolute cooker... that produces a seamless [blend] of Cuban and Jewish forms, that makes the mesh seem like the most natural thing in the world. Oh man, this is a good one!"

-L.A. Weekly

**Award-winning** trumpeter and composer David Buchbinder teams up with a crew of top Jazz and World musicians to present this exhilarating, unprecedented project of musical discovery: the Jewish-Cuban connection. David Buchbinder's Odessa/Havana presents "delicately textured and dazzlingly tuneful music, with powerful, swinging and lyrical playing", that is "passionate, dancing and completely irresistible." Arising out of the musical ferment of the most diverse city on the planet-Toronto-this truly original sound is a collaboration between the writing of Buchbinder and Grammy-nominated Cuban piano master Hilario Durán, and the band of killer musicians. Together, these forces take audiences on a journey of cross-cultural discovery, that consistently engages, challenges and delights.

**Odessa/Havana's** two CDs have been beautifully received, hailed as outstanding in both the World Music and Jazz realms. Walk to the Sea was recently honoured with a **JUNO** Award (Canadian Grammy) and the group's self-titled debut CD nabbed a Canadian Folk Music Award, while the two recordings (released internationally on the Tzadik label), have received well over 100 rave reviews. The band has toured across North America, playing to sold-out houses in every venue, and was at the core of David Buchbinder's multi-disciplinary creation Andalusia to Toronto, commissioned by one of Canada's greatest venues, Koerner Hall at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Now, on the heels of the release of their sophomore CD, they are ready to take on touring the world.



**While the cities and cultures of Odessa and Havana** might seem many miles apart, their musical associations are many-faceted, multi-layered and rich indeed; rooted in their common ancestry in medieval Andalusia and sharing Arabic, Roma (Gypsy), Sephardic and North African forbearers. The two musics already share haunting minor modalities, improvisatory flourishes, a strong rhythmic drive and deeply spiritual underpinnings. And both musical traditions have long since proven their suitability for creative adaptation, serving as a kind of "raw material" for musical development (Latin jazz, modern klezmer/"Radical Jewish Culture"). Buchbinder and Durán's compositions explore these commonalities as they break new ground, and the recent inclusion of their special arrangements of Sephardic songs have taken the music to a new level of richness. Without a doubt, Odessa/Havana's compelling and powerful performances will bring your audience a peak musical experience. Guaranteed!

[info@odessahavana.com](mailto:info@odessahavana.com) [www.odessahavana.com](http://www.odessahavana.com)

# What Critics say about David Buchbinder's ODESSA /HAVANA



WINNER - 2014 WORLD MUSIC GROUP OF THE YEAR  
- JUNO AWARDS

NOMINEE - 2013 WORLD MUSIC GROUP OF THE YEAR

WINNER - 2008 WORLD MUSIC GROUP OF THE YEAR  
- CANADIAN FOLK MUSIC AWARDS

# 1 JAZZ RECORDING - ALLMUSIC.COM

# 1 JAZZ CD - TORONTO LIFE

TOP 5 JAZZ CDs - *GLOBE & MAIL*

TOP 10 JAZZ CDs - *SONIC TROUBADOUR*

★★★★★ "...[its] immense soul...ranks it among the year's best in jazz...Buchbinder's compositional prowess, abetted by Ochipinti's production, takes the CD to a level higher than just a feel-good exercise in cultural bonding."

-*Toronto Star*

★★★★☆ "...clear, powerful and nimble... this band is full of talented experimentalists who fully inhabit these ambitious charts."

-*Eye Weekly*

★★★★☆ "...an utterly brilliant and deeply moving collaboration that gives an entirely new meaning to the term 'world fusion'.."

-*allmusic.com*

★★★★★ "...a unique delight. [Buchbinder's composition] Cadiz is reminiscent of a Spanish suite by [Duke] Ellington."

-*Audiophile*

★★★★☆ "...a musical paradise that is dancing and completely irresistible. There is beautiful music here, along with ferocity and no small amount of fun. Failure to respond is virtually impossible."

-*Buffalo News*

TOP 20 CDs (All Styles) - *ALLMUSIC.COM*

TOP 20 JAZZ CDs - *MONTREAL GAZETTE*

"...the playing is impeccable. Buchbinder and Durán are aggressive and agile soloists...[The album] is a considerable compositional accomplishment and a solid sonic shot of festive fun..."

-*Down Beat*

"One of the most dynamic world music offerings over the last decade...a dazzling display of the unlimited potential of what world music has to offer."

-*Critical Jazz*

"Yow!...Utterly wild stuff that smashes expectations and genres as it delights in a most high octane way...you have to check this out if you have at least one adventurous bone clanging around in your ear canal."

-*Midwest Record*

"...sultry and diaphanous, Buchbinder's trumpet weaves gloriously sinuous lines... Odessa/Havana is a glorious delight."

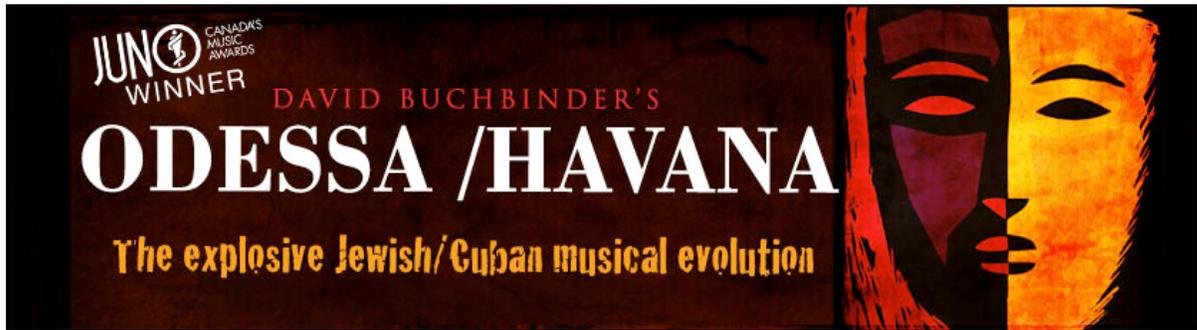
- *The Irish Times*

"...an evocative combination of two celebratory traditions."

- *San Francisco Chronicle*

"...terrifically exciting, hard-swinging fireworks."

- *Wire Magazine*



## Contact Info:

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1 (416) 525-7237  
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[www.odessahavana.com](http://www.odessahavana.com)

## Recordings:

*Walk to the Sea* (2013) Tzadik TZ8121

2014 JUNO Award for World Music Recording of the Year  
2014 INDIE Awards (nomination)  
2013 Canadian Folk Music Awards (nomination)

*Odessa/Havana* (2007) Tzadik TZ8177

2008 Canadian Folk Music Award World Music Group of the Year

## Links to Odessa/Havana Music & Video

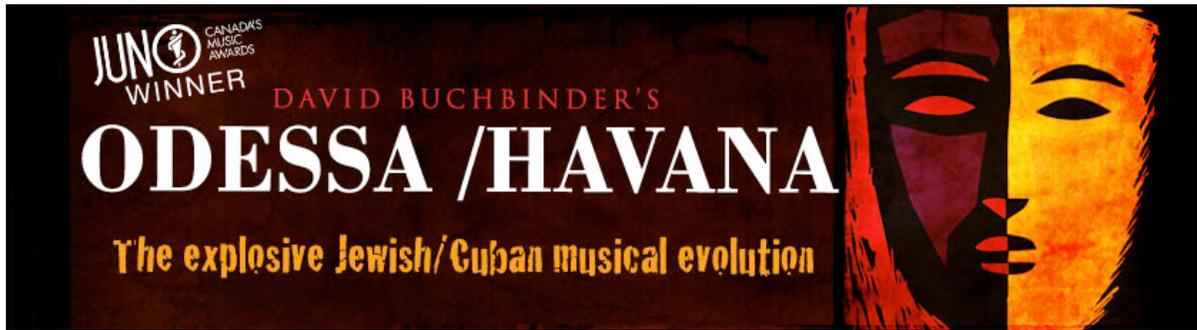
On Soundcloud:

<https://soundcloud.com/odessa-havana>

On Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvvdQkhkInc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHtUB00ctKY>



## Band Biographies & Performance Highlights

### One-line Bios (see full bios below)

**DAVID BUCHBINDER** (*trumpet, fluegelhorn, composition*): a wildly creative cultural inventor, powerhouse trumpeter and a uniquely expressive composer.

**HILARIO DURAN** (*piano/composition*): “an unparalleled pianist, as well as being a composer and arranger of the first order...one of the greatest!” - *Chucho Valdes* (Arturo Sandoval, Paquito d’Rivera)

**ROBERTO OCCHIPINTI** (*bass, CD producer*) a double threat: bassist extraordinaire and award-winning producer. (Jane Bunnet, Gorillaz, Dafnis Prieto)

**ALEKSANDAR GAJIC** (*violin*) a first-call musical chamelon (classical/Latin/Jewish/Serbian/jazz) who plays with fire and wit. (Serbian Radio Television Symphony Orchestra, Beyond the Pale)

**JOHN JOHNSON** (*clarinet/saxophones*) the first-call reed player for everyone from Aretha Franklin to the Boss Brass and everyone in-between (Holly Cole, Diane Krall, Peabo Bryson)

**MARK KELSO** (*drums*) one of the best drummer’s you’ll every hear, in any style. No matter the context Mark makes the music dance! (Gino Vannelli, Peter Murphy, Michael Brecker)

**JOAQUIN NUNEZ HIDALGO** (*percussion*) an AfroCuban percussion master who has branched out to meet the musical and cultural mosaic that is Toronto.

**MARYEM HASSAN TOLLAR** (*vocals*) a singer blessed by an astounding natural talent, a rich, amazing sound and a storyteller’s gift for communication. (Gryphon Trio)

### Performance Highlights

<b>Banff Centre for the Arts</b>	Banff, Canada
<b>Drom</b>	New York City
<b>Washington Jewish Music Festival</b>	Washington, D.C.
<b>Eugene &amp; Elinor Friend Center for the Arts</b>	San Francisco, CA
<b>Berkeley Jewish Music Festival</b>	Berkeley, CA
<b>Rose Kennedy Festival</b>	Boston, MA
<b>Chutzpah! Festival</b>	Vancouver, B.C.
<b>Ashkenaz Festival</b>	Toronto, Canada
<b>Toronto Jazz Festival</b>	Toronto, Canada
<b>Halifax Jazz Festival</b>	Halifax, Canada

## Detailed Bios

**DAVID BUCHBINDER** (*trumpet, fluegelhorn, composition, leader*) is an award-winning trumpeter, composer and cultural inventor. He leads numerous music groups, composes for concert, theatre, film and television, presents large-scale performance projects and has toured extensively in North America & Europe. He has been involved in World music and Jazz since 1987 and has earned a reputation as one of its compositional and instrumental leading lights, through the **Flying Bulgars**, his eponymous **Jazz Ensemble** and, most recently, his **Odessa/Havana** project (released on John Zorn's Tzadik label). For this work he has received two JUNO Awards and one Canadian Folk Music Award as well as 4 JUNO and two National Jazz Award nominations. He was the creator and first artistic director of the world-renowned **Ashkenaz Festival**, leading it through its first three iterations. He is also the creator/producer of multidisciplinary performances **Shurum Burum Jazz Circus**, the **Jerusalem Salon**, **Tumbling Into Light** and **Andalusia to Toronto**, which was commissioned by Koerner Hall to open its 2011/12 season. David was one of the inaugural Resident Artists at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts and is the founder and CEO/Artistic Director of the creativity-based urban transformation organization Diasporic Genius.

**HILARIO DURAN** (*piano/composition*) Best Latin Jazz Artist of the Year 2006 by The National Jazz Award, JUNO winner 2005, and JUNO nominated 2002 (Havana Remembered CD), Hilario Duran, is the latest virtuoso Jazz pianist emerges from Havana, Cuba. After several years working with Arturo Sandoval, touring at major Jazz Festivals around the world, and sharing stages with legendary musicians such the late Dizzy Gillespie, and Composer/Arranger Michael Legrand, Hilario formed his own band "Perspectiva." Following a successful European tour (1995), Duran decided the time was now right for him to pursue his solo career, allowing him more scope to follow the many different areas of his musical interests. Since his move to Canada, Hilario Duran has become an integral and important part of the Canadian music scene, and he is an invaluable member of the Jazz Faculty at Humber College, acting as both and adjunct Piano Professor and Ensemble Director. Hilario Duran last recording "From the Heart," is a tribute to all great Cubans conductors, in this CD Hilario can suddenly switch from a percussive Latin piano pattern to a stride style, but most interesting is how seamlessly he can merge various jazz and traditional Cuban styles.

**ROBERTO OCCHIPINTI** (*bass, CD producer*) is one of Canada's premier bassists, comfortable in a wide variety of musical contexts. He toured and recorded with Blue Note recording artist Jane Bunnett, including the Grammy nominated disc Alma de Santiago and the Juno winning Ritmo Y Soul. In addition, Roberto toured with Juno award winning group NOJO, performing at Canadian jazz festivals with the legendary saxophonist Sam Rivers. Roberto has recorded 3 albums with Cuban piano virtuoso Hilario Durán including 2005 Juno award winning Album New Danzon which he produced and performed. As producer, he's currently working on 3 projects for Quartetto Gelato, Soul Stew and Hilario Durán next album, recorded in Havana . He has also completed Christos Hatzis's "Constantinople" for the Gryphon Trio, David Buchbinder ensemble, "Shurum Burum " Jazz Circus and his own disc for Alma/Universal "Yemaya" recorded in Toronto, Havana and Moscow. As a composer, Roberto Occhipinti has written for Television, Radio and Film ,most notable the Award winning PBS series George Shrinks and for YTV series George and Martha. As a classical musician, Roberto Occhipinti has been a member of the Winnipeg Symphony, Hamilton Philharmonic and Canadian Opera Company Orchestras. He has performed with virtually every classical music ensemble in Toronto and recent performances include the St. Lawrence Quartet, The Gryphon Trio and Via Salzburg.

**ALEKSANDAR GAJIC** (*violin*) has most recently performed in concert as a first violin with Oshawa Durham Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Philharmonia, Sinfonia Toronto, Canadian Sinfonietta, Gould String Quartet, and has also become a member of Beyond The Pale-World music ensemble. He participated in the founding of the String Quartet Bellotti. During seven years of work with this quartet, he took part in over 400 concerts both in the country and abroad. Bellotti made 4 CDs in the production of the national recording house PGP RTS and music for the movie White suite (Yugoslavian candidate for OSKAR Award 2000). They also taped a great

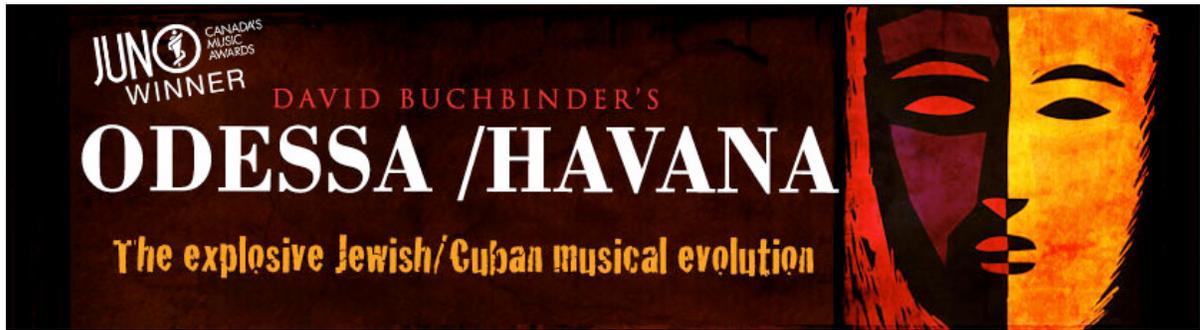
number of TV and radio broadcasts. Aleksandar Gajic also appeared as a soloist with the Serbian Radio Television Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra.

**JOHN JOHNSON (clarinet/saxophones)** A Toronto native, John Johnson studied music at Humber College and began his professional career in 1979. Within four years he established himself as a force on the Toronto music scene. His strong, emotional playing and versatility was desired by many groups and he became an integral part of diverse groups such as Manteca and The Boss Brass, Holly Cole, . John's soaring, passionate musical phrases emanate from the most visceral part of the human soul. This attribute has made him a first call player for many producers and contractors and John is featured on numerous television and film soundtracks, records and jingles. He has also played with Molly Johnson, Holly Cole, Diane Krall, Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, Dionne Warwick, Peabo Bryson, Cal Dodd, Dianne Reeves, Bill Mays, the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band, as well as guest spots with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra on a number of occasions.

**MARK KELSO (drums)** Mark's ability to play a wide variety of musical styles has helped him become one of Canada's most sought after drummers. An all around player, Mark has worked with Gino Vannelli, Pete Townsend, Holly Cole, Peter Murphy (Bauhaus ) Amanda Marshall, Amy Sky, Randy Brecker, Michael Brecker, Donny Osmond, Shirley Eikhard, Hilario Duran, Paquito D'Rivera, Michel Cusson, The Montuno Police, Brian Hughes, Jane Bunnett, Soul Stew, Carol Welsman, Gordie Sampson, Mary Jane Lamond, Joe Sealy, John-Allen Cameron, Marc Jordan, Bruce Guthro, Jane Siberry and Shania Twain. His new CD entitled "Lost Kingdoms" is an exciting blend of African, Brazilian, Celtic and Pop influences. Featuring 12 original compositions of instrumental and vocal tunes, there is also some fine playing by some of Canada's finest musicians. Currently, Mark is Head of the Percussion Department at Humber College's School of Music in Toronto.

**JOAQUIN NUNEZ HIDALGO (percussion)** was born and raised in Cuba where he benefited from the musical instruction of his father, Porfirio Nunez, a member of the renowned Cuban orchestra "Brisas de Nipe". As a professional artist, he has had a very successful music career in Cuba; performing in multiple music events and festivals. While in Cuba, he was accredited as a Master Percussionist in both classic and contemporary genres at the National Art School (El Yarey). In Canada since 1999, Joaquin Nunez Hidalgo has performed, with acclaim, in a multitude of international and local music events. A brief synopsis of live performances include: The Canadian Tenors Tour; 2011 Vancouver Olympic Games – World Performance Stage with Hilario Duran and Jane Bunnett (Latin Jazz Big Band); Montreal International Jazz Festival; and Japan Tour – Alexcuba Band. Toronto prestigious events such as: Luminato Festival; Downtown Jazz Festival and Beaches Jazz Festival. Joaquin has generously supported community and multicultural events such as: Muhtadi International Drum Festival and Afrofest; and theatre productions of the Rose Theatre and the Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts (please visit: [rumberos.ca/performances](http://rumberos.ca/performances)). From television to musical theater, Joaquin has contributed his expertise and musicality to great success. An example of appearances include: PBS special – Canadian Tenors, David Foster, Sarah McLachlan and CBC Holy Days Special with Canadian Tenors, with special guest Paul Anka. Joaquin also performed in highly popular musicals such as; Ross Petty production of "Beauty and the Beast" and Mirvish production of "Dirty Dancing".

**MARYEM HASSAN TOLLAR (vocals)** Over the last decade and more, Maryem Tollar has built a reputation as a singer who can live and thrive in a variety of musical milieus. She was born in Egypt and raised in Canada with frequent sojourns in the Middle East. She has toured across Canada several times with a variety of projects including her own ensemble; Christos Hatzis' multimedia project, "Constantinople" and his large scale work "Sepulcher of Life". She premiered a new work by Christos Hatzis commissioned by Tafelmusik in March 2008. Maryem has sung on several film and television scores including the theme music for CBC Television's "Little Mosque on the Prairie" and A.R.Rahman's hit "Mayya Mayya" in the Bollywood movie "Guru". Her 2008 performances include a concert in the Toronto Downtown Jazz Festival with guest master musicians Alfred Gamil (violin, oud) and Mohamed Aly (vocals, violin, oud) from Egypt, and Bassam Bishara (vocals, oud) from Toronto/Palestine; as well as a concert at the Calgary Folk Festival and at the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival.



## Selected Press & Reviews

DAVID BUCHBINDER

# CANADIAN DRIVE

By Thomas Staudter

**F**or Toronto-based trumpeter and composer David Buchbinder, an enduring career as a musical artist has involved maintaining a bandstand presence while branching into dance and film scoring, and then, into the realms of community organization and event production. Music remains his focus—he is still promoting the second CD of his Odessa/Havana ensemble, *Walk To The Sea* (Tzadik), which was released in the fall of 2013—but he is using his talents to complement and augment a number of other creative pursuits as well.

Buchbinder is, indeed, full of ideas; some are confined to pages of sheet music and others are grand in scale. Luckily, he possesses an abundance of energy and enthusiasm to work on several projects at once and bring them to fruition. In many ways, he exemplifies the hustling, perpetually driven independent musician, always looking ahead to the next project and the touring dates it may generate. A significant influence on this strategy is Buchbinder's residence and involvement in what UNESCO calls the "most multicultural city in the world," which has led to a willful celebration of diversity in his art.

"A lot of what I do comes out of conversations with other people and paying attention to what's out there, and getting a sense of when things are building," Buchbinder says. "I'll get reasonably interested in something, then focus on it, and figure out how to make it work and keep it going." The downside, he adds, is that his restless imagination prevents him sometimes from stewarding projects past their initial acclaim and success.

His Odessa/Havana ensemble project, having been rekindled last year with *Walk To The Sea*, seems deserving of Buchbinder's continuing attention. It involves a musical partnership with Hilario Durán, the magnificent Cuban pianist and Toronto resident known for his solo recordings and work with Arturo Sandoval and Jane Bunnett, and grew out of the trumpeter's earlier efforts in melding jazz with world music styles. One of his first serious bands played salsa, "straight out of the Fania All-Stars," he notes, and afterward co-founded the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band in 1987, which has released five CDs and earned three Juno Award nominations. While arranging a Yiddish folk song for the band 20 or so years ago, Buchbinder says he was amazed how it fit into a piano montuno.

"I started thinking about putting together the two musical styles, klezmer and Cuban, but then shelved the idea because I didn't want it to be a bullshit representation from the Cuban side," recalls Buchbinder. In 2005, he was introduced to Durán at a Juno Awards ceremony in Halifax, and the two discussed Buchbinder's cross-cultural music idea. "I immediately recognized how open Hilario is to all kinds of music, and learned that his experiences in Cuba as an arranger and composer for film and theater taught him to be malleable with source material. When we started working together, I laid down what our approach should be: not to copy the other musical style, but to absorb it and feel where it intersects."

Buchbinder was more conversant in the Cuban musical idioms than Durán was in klezmer and Eastern European music, so he shared a number of early 20th-century field recordings of secular Jewish music with the pianist. The two composed five songs apiece, making sure they didn't "slap things together," and instead "traveled to this world of how jazz works," says Buchbinder. Confirmation that they were on the right track came after enlisting some top Torontonians (reedman John Johnson and violinist Aleksandar Gajic) and Durán's regular rhythm section (bassist and Juno Award-winning



CYLLA VON TIEMANN

producer Roberto Occhipinti and drummer Mark Kelso) for a club date that caused the audience “to go nuts,” says Buchbinder. The Odessa/Havana band’s self-titled first CD, produced by Occhipinti and released on John Zorn’s Tzadik label the following year, won the Canadian Folk Music Award for Best World Group recording.

On *Walk To The Sea* Buchbinder took over more of the composing work and based the music on research he had done on the nearly extinct Ladino language, a Judeo-Spanish variant spoken in Sephardic communities spread from southern Spain through the Balkans to Turkey and the Middle East. The shared linguistic and cultural roots made sense in terms of the Odessa/Havana project. They gave him added inspiration and advanced the group’s stylistic approach.

Instead of featuring the back-and-forth musical dialogue of the first CD, *Walk To The Sea* offers a soundscape where Ladino influence blends together with subsequent cultural evolution. Here, there are identifiable ethnic elements amid peppery, insistent rhythms, syncopated horn playing and breathtaking solos by Durán, Johnson and Buchbinder. With percussionists Jamey Haddad and Joaquin Nuñez Hidalgo in the mix, along with oud and tres guitar, the music continuously *moves*—up and down, across oceans, over continents.

Even so, the album’s dynamic deepens on four cuts abetted by vocalists Maryem Hassan Tollar and Michal Cohen, with lyrics on two tracks, “La Roza Una” and “La Roza Dos” taken from poems by early 20th-century Ladino poet Lina Kohen Albukrek.

“David is an amazing conceptualizer, and that comes through in the music he has created with Hilarrio,” said Occhipinti. “This new record is very representative of David’s point of view and aesthetic. It’s also very much a Toronto record.”

Buchbinder’s abiding community awareness comes from his parents, both 1960s activists, who grew disillusioned with U.S. politics and moved their two children to Toronto in 1968. The trumpeter, who is 54 and married to dancer-singer Roula Said (the couple have a 10-year-old daughter) has embraced collaboration throughout his career and searched for novel ways to present music. “People are interested in jazz, but they’re afraid of it,” he says. “I think it has to be experienced in relaxed and different settings.”

To this end, he created Shurum Burum Jazz Circus in 2002 and is developing an even larger jazz circus based on the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. He founded Toronto’s Yiddish culture festival, Ashkenaz, in 1995, and is currently heading a citywide initiative, Diasporic Genius, that brings together storytelling, music, food and entrepreneurship in celebration of Toronto’s cultural diversity. The aim, Buchbinder says, is to “transform the city by learning how to connect with creativity and access wisdom.”

DB



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David Buchbinder—*Odessa/Havana*

## Best of Toronto Jazz

Stuart Broomer

### 1 David Buchbinder—*Odessa/Havana* (Tzadik)

Trumpeter Buchbinder has explored the contemporary applications of traditional Jewish klezmer music, while pianist Hilario Durán is a skillful exponent of the music of his native Cuba. Here they brilliantly fuse elements of apparently disparate heritages, ultimately touching on common roots, from medieval Spain to the mambo craze of the 1950s.

## Jazz

### DAVID BUCHBINDER AND ODESSA/HAVANA

*Walk to the Sea (Tzadik)*

★★★★ (out of 4)

*Walk to the Sea* first seems like a jazz version of an ethnic TV sitcom where a culturally disparate couple — macho Cuban pianist/composer Hilario Durán and suave Toronto trumpeter and flugelhornist David Buchbinder — keep a robust musical marriage going years after getting together in 2007 for *Odessa/Havana*, their initial Jewish-Cuban fusion release that became such a critical hit.

With *Walk to the Sea*, equal time for both is seemingly established from the two opening tracks where the Klezmer groove on Buchbinder's "Coffee Works" is followed directly by Durán's funky arrangement of "Landarico," a traditional tune based on the exploits of a legendary Sephardic knight.

But, psst, here's the skinny. *Walk* is mostly Buchbinder's baby. His

composition-  
al prowess,  
abetted by  
Roberto Oc-  
chipinti's pro-  
duction, takes  
the CD to a  
level higher  
than just a feel-good exercise in cul-  
tural bonding.



"La Roza Una" and "La Roza Dos" — both co-written by Buchbinder and lyricist Lina Kohen Albukrek, and sung with immense soul by Maryem Hassan Tollar — give *Walk* the richness to rank among the year's best in jazz.

The album grows deeper in feeling with a following pair of Buchbinder pieces: "Valentin," with a moonlit melody that's almost Chopinesque, and his sashaying "Calliope," with its commanding soloing by saxophonist John Johnson.

The ending track, "Conja," a Durán arrangement interpreted majestically by Tollar, is on its own worth getting *Walk to the Sea*.

**Peter Goddard**

# DOWNBEAT.

April 2008

## Reviews

**David  
Buchbinder**

*Odessa/Havana*

TZADIK 8121

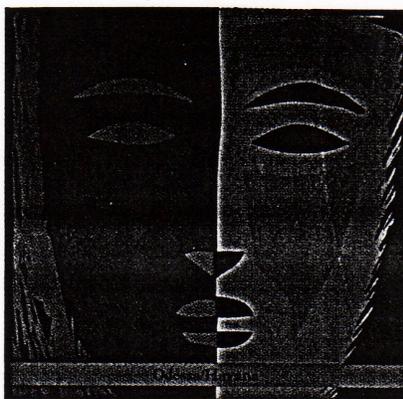
★★★

The sum doesn't have to be greater than the parts for the result to be satisfying. That's what occurs with *Odessa/Havana's* creative collusion of Jewish and Cuban music styles as Canadian trumpeter David Buchbinder and Cuban émigré pianist Hilario Durán find common ground and build upon it.

The band presents a unified approach that proudly displays its individual, and surprisingly compatible, components. The edgy energy of klezmer lines and the supple elasticity of Afro-Cuban rhythms carry only distant echoes of their shared ancestry, one often incorporating minor modalities, but their kindred spirit and evolved sensibilities shine through on *Odessa/Havana*.

The playing is impeccable. Buchbinder and Durán are agile and aggressive soloists, and clarinetist/saxophonist Quinsin Nachoff and violinist Aleksander Gajic perform admirably in demanding situations. The energetic rhythm section makes the music work, deftly mixing and matching the internal subdivisions of compound time in one style with the multitextured polyrhythms of the other.

The album's most ambitious and extended



track is its most representative. Buchbinder's "Cadiz," living up to its namesake city as the meeting ground of the two cultures, showcases each style before fusing them to create a new style. "Impresionés," with violin and trumpet intertwining, and the percussive romp "Rumba Judia" join Buchbinder's meditation

"Prayer" as highlights.

The cross-cultural collaboration is an ethnomusicologist's delight, but the overly analytical will miss the point, as well as much of the excitement and entertainment, if they fixate on the music's archival past instead of its present and future possibilities. A tune like Durán's "Freylekhs Tumbao," featuring a joyous hora dancing over a tumbao rhythm, is a considerable compositional accomplishment and a solid sonic shot of festive fun. That is the true value of *Odessa/Havana*, a project devoted not to academia but instead to popularizing a revitalized take on traditional styles.

—Michael Point

**Odessa/Havana.** Lailadance; Impresionés; Cadiz; Next One Rising; Rumba Judia; Prayer; Colaboración; Freylekhs Tumbao. (49:58)

**Personnel:** David Buchbinder, trumpet; Hilario Durán, piano; Quinsin Nachoff, reeds, flute; Aleksander Gajic, violin; Luis Guerra, piano; Mark Kelso, drums; Rick Shadrach Lazar, percussion; Dafnis Prieto, drums; Jorges Luis "Papiosco" Torres, percussion; Roberto Occhipinti, bass; John Gzowski, oud.

» Ordering info: [tzadik.com](http://tzadik.com)

**David Buchbinder***Odessa/Havana*

Tzadik TZ 8121 | ★★★★★

David Buchbinder (t), Quinsin Nachoff (fl, ts, cl, b cl),  
Hilario Duran, Luis Guerra (p), Aleksander Gajic (vln),  
John Czowski (oud), Roberto Occhipinti (b), Mark Kelso,  
Dafnis Prieto (d), Rick Shadrach, Jorge Luis 'Papiosco'  
Torres (perc), drums and percussion. Rec. 2007

To mix eastern European klezmer with Afro-Cuban music played by top-notch improvisers makes musical sense; and this is a fusion that is pulled off with flair by Canadian trumpeter David Buchbinder. Largely played by a cast of Canadian jazzers and Afro-Cuban based players (notably pianist Hilario Durán and bass player Roberto Occhipinti), *Odessa/Havana* sizzles with up-beat originality. Like drummer Michael Stephans' recent collision of Jewish traditions with the music of John Coltrane, this is an innovative and fresh sounding project. The jauntiness of the opener, Buchbinder's 'Lailadance' starts the record on a high; while the broody 'Next One Rising' makes for serious, gritty improvisation. Durán, stretches the piano dazzlingly to its limits, but Occhipinti's thoughtful bass playing and the bass clarinet and tenor playing of Quinsin Nachoff offer earthier listening. Big, brassy arrangements bring a downtown New York quality to the music, which also touches on Arabic, gypsy and Sephardic influences. Meanwhile, violinist Aleksander Gajic's violin emphasizes the Cuban folklore references on Durán's percussion-heavy 'Rumba Judia' to make the record quite a melting pot. Buchbinder, no slouch himself in the trumpet department, calls his fusion a "mash-up" but there is nothing random about the record's success. Tom Barlow

# Globe Review

The Globe and Mail

JAZZ  
J.D. CONSIDINE  
December 11, 2007

ODESSA/HAVANA  
David Buchbinder  
Tzadik



This isn't an exercise in Klezmer/Cuban fusion so much as an exploration of the musical roots the two styles have in common. As such, this collaboration by trumpeter David Buchbinder and pianist Hilario Duran is a genuine hybrid, strongly flavoured by Russian-Jewish modality and Afro-Cuban rhythms, but with those strands so strongly intertwined (and grounded in Spanish/Moorish music) as to seem inextricable. A lot of that comes down to the writing, which is delicately textured and dazzlingly tuneful, but it's the playing that ultimately sells the project — not just the power Buchbinder and Duran provide, but also the swinging, lyrical contributions of saxophonist Quinsin Nachoff, violinist Aleksander Gajic and bassist Roberto Occhipinti.

## TIMES COLONIST

Published: Monday, February 18, 2008

DAVID BUCHBINDER  
Odessa/Havana (Tzadik)

Trumpeter/composer David Buchbinder's collaboration with fleet-fingered, Juno-winning jazz pianist Hilario Duran and a team of hip, Toronto-based rhythmists has produced something truly unique. This Jewish-Cuban synthesis is an inspired musical mash-up reflecting Toronto's multicultural mosaic.

Produced by award-winning bassist and bandmember Roberto Occhipinti, the eight daring tracks on *Odessa/Havana* are a rich, rhythm-charged treat. Drummers Mark Kelso and Dafnis Prieto are joined by percussionists Papiosco Torres and Rick Shadrach Lazar in a tumultuous, cross-rhythm foundation for Buchbinder and Duran's multilayered compositions. With violinist Aleksander Gajic and Quinsin Nachoff's modern jazz-inspired reeds and flute, they produce a stirring melange of influences that is much more than the klezmer-meets-rumba main ingredients.

— Joseph Blah

Vue Weekly  
[www.vueweekly.com](http://www.vueweekly.com)  
January 9, 2008, Issue #638

David Buchbinder  
Odessa/Havana  
Tzadik

LEWIS KELLY / [lewis@vueweekly.com](mailto:lewis@vueweekly.com)

*Odessa/Havana*, the brainchild of veteran trumpeter David Buchbinder, is a refreshing and fascinating take on jazz. Buchbinder and a cast of Canadian jazz all-stars throw Cuban and Jewish folk music in the pot together and see what comes out. The result is much less weird and twice as awesome as you would expect. The styles fit one another like two pieces from a 2000-piece puzzle: complementary, intricate and absolutely unique. There are times when the sound is distinctly Jewish or Cuban, but much of *Odessa/Havana* is a wonderful alloy of the two. At times it can slip into the territory of pretentious, boring jazz noodling, but such occasions are few and far between. *Odessa/Havana* is a great record for anyone with a thirst for musical adventure.

## Cuban beat makes for unique sound

Mark Andrews  
Vancouver Sun

Thursday, November 29, 2007

DAVID BUCHBINDER  
Odessa/Havana  
Tzadik  
ft

If I'm ever a guest at your house and you want me to vamoose, just put on some klezmer music and I'll be gone quicker than the American army high-tailing it out of Vietnam.

Klezmer, a Jewish folk music given to expressionistic playing, was appropriated by jazz musicians in the 1990s, and for a while there you couldn't escape it because everyone and his kelev was playing it. Hence my tendency to run at the mention of the K-word.

Toronto trumpeter David Buchbinder has some klezmer elements on *Odessa/Havana*, primarily in instrumentation and melody, but he blends it with Cuban rhythms to come up with a unique sound. The band, which includes the great Cuban-Canadian pianist Hilario Duran, has two horns, violin, piano, bass, drums and two percussionists (plus guest artist John Gzowski on oud), and they launch into most numbers dramatically.

This happens on Duran's *Next One Rising*, where the band rides on a percussion wave, takes a break, then builds things all over again, and on Duran's *Rumba Judia*, which opens with an explosive drum solo. Other pieces, like Buchbinder's *Cadiz*, are more open, with Duran, violinist Aleksander Gajic, and Buchbinder all playing moody solos before the rhythm even kicks in. The only full-out klezmer number is Duran's closer, *Freylekhs Tumbao*, which sounds like a wedding dance.

- David Buchbinder and most of his *Odessa/Havana* band play Sunday, 8 p.m., at the Norman Rothstein Theatre.

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<http://www.canada.com/vancouver/sun/news/westcoastlife/story.html?id=bd172968-d5dc-4f4a-8292-12eb472>

## EYEWEEKLY.COM

David Buchbinder: *Odessa/Havana*

November 14, 2007  
Editorial Rating: 4 out of 5 stars

Two solitudes? Hardly. The many musical styles of both cities in this album's title feature complex polyrhythms balanced by melancholic ballads. Both locales prize virtuosic musicianship, especially where speed and intense emotion are concerned. Buchbinder's tone on trumpet fits well in a Cuban context — it's clear, powerful and nimble when he's in an uptempo arrangement, and reflective elsewhere. Most importantly, this band is full of talented experimentalists who fully inhabit these ambitious charts. The two linchpins to this music are bassist Roberto Occhipinti and pianist Hilario Duran, who navigate the shifts in rhythmic emphasis from East European to Cuban with great assurance. And Occhipinti's light touch in the producer's role gives the band, and particularly the funky synopsations of kit drummer Dafnis Prieto, room to breathe.

Review By David Dacks

## The Province

Tuesday, January 08, 2008

### Ultra Sound

JAZZ  
DAVID BOOKBINDER  
Odessa/Havana  
(Tzadik)

Billed as "the explosive Jewish/Cuban musical mash-up," this eight-track disc lives up to its claim. Pairing Bookbinder's trumpet with pianist/composer Hilario Duran and a sextet of top-ranking Toronto jazz players to find the places where the common roots of wailing orchestras from Odessa and killing dance bands from Cuba arise, makes for some really exciting music. Track 3, "Cadiz," captures those common zones with its Andalusian flair, bringing Sephardic Jewish and North African and Roma styles under one nine-minute-plus-long musical roof. B+

- Stuart Derdeyn



<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/music/reviews/57871/david-buchbinder-odessa-havana/>

by Will Layman

Boy-o-boy do I hate the term “world music”. There is something mushy about the term (isn’t all music, well, . . . “world” music?), and there is certainly something mushy-gushy about much music marketed with that term—Peruvian flutes and droning synthesizers, that kind of thing. Somewhere along the line, “world music” started to mean “charming, soothing, and non-offensive sounds from other cultures.” Blech! It is as if the term “world cheese” meant Velveeta. I want some Roquefort or Italian Fontina!

And that’s why Odessa/Havana tastes so good.

This project on John Zorn’s Tzadik label is credited to Canadian trumpeter/composer David Buchbinder. It consists of a sparks-flying collaboration between Buchbinder and Cuban pianist/composer Hilario Duran (recently based on Toronto)—a seamless blend of Jewish klezmer music and Afro-Cuban music that manages to retain both traditions even as it sounds like something wholly new. In the end, of course, Odessa/Havana most resembles a jazz recording: rich in polyrhythm, improvisation, collaboration, and cultural overlap.

The band that Buchbinder and Duran have put together mines the natural overlap between salsa and klezmer. In addition to piano and trumpet, the band includes saxophone (Quinsin Natchoff), violin (Aleksander Gajic), congas (Jorge Luis Torres), dumbek and other hand percussion (Rick Lazar), and drum kit (Mark Kelso or Dafnis Prieto). The composition credits are split nearly down the middle, with four Duran tunes, three by Buchbinder, and one collaboration. But the surprise is that the tunes do not follow type—Duran’s “Freylekhs Tumbao” sounds primarily klezmer-ish while Buchbinder’s “Lailadance” is driven by a hip montuno and decidedly Latin percussion groove. This is music, to use Duke Ellington’s lovely phrase, “beyond category”.

Most of the songs here, however, achieve a unique balance between the two types. Though “Lailadance” is driven by an Afro-Cuban rhythm, the contour of the minor melody and the voicing of the instruments evoke Eastern European yearning as certainly as can be. On Duran’s “Impresiones”, the two worlds lock together like puzzle pieces and inspire

extremely hot solos from Natchoff and Duran. “Rumba Judia” starts with a massive percussion workout, then it moves into a snapping jazz head and a violin solo over Latin piano vamp. The fiddle drips with klezmer tonality even as the groove percolates like Spanish Harlem itself. It is a combination as pleasing as it is natural.

Some of the finest music on Odessa/Havana is slower and more contemplative. “Prayer” begins with a melody articulated on acoustic bass, then shifted to trumpet, then to violin and bass in unison, then to a whining soprano saxophone. The tune is mournful and blues-drenched but in a different way. “Cadiz” is even more compelling, with a droning beginning that slowly builds with the horns and violin harmonizing over the piano and then a gradual build-up to a dancing groove that allows for lines that bring out bebop feeling, salsa fire, and Jewish hope. The tenor solo here is restless and unique—roiling like Coltrane but utterly original because of the mixture of contexts.

The tune written by both Buchbinder and Duran is, of course, “Colaboracion”, and it has the most jazz punch. The violin solo looks most intelligently at the song, and Buchbinder’s trumpet solo sounds like Freddie Hubbard unleashed on a hip Latin chart. This is, for me, the unwritten secret of the Tzadik series of recordings. While the disc-art is festooned with the Star of David and label trumpets a Jewish aesthetic, it all still comes back to jazz. “Jazz” is a word that arguable means less and less each year, but the concept still suggests that American music can be a creative pot into which many varied ingredients can contribute to a sound that is constantly improved by openness to the new or the “other”. Odessa/Havana is certainly that.

In the end, it’s music like this that feeds jazz and keeps jazz fresh. The players here come from different places and different traditions, but they bring it all into a music that asks them each to listen carefully and take some chances. It sounds like at least three different cultures at once, which is to say that it sounds a whole lot like the U.S.—like one terrific Manhattan block.

If you love “world music”—make that just music—that gets the blood to boil, then Odessa/Havana is a disc to catch up with.

RATING: 8/10

May 7, 2008



Review Courtesy [AllAboutJazz.com](http://AllAboutJazz.com)

Odessa/Havana  
David Buchbinder | Tzadik  
By Dan McClenaghan

Two distinct and seemingly very different musical galaxies spin into each other on trumpeter David Buchbinder's *Odessa/Havana*, setting off a gravitational push-and-pull of musical momentums. It's a **Cuban/Klezmer blend that stirs up the best of both musical styles**--the churning, bubbling, rhythms of the mambo and the rubbery freewheeling exuberance of traditional Jewish sounds.

Canadian trumpeter/composer/band leader David Buchbinder, who leads the Juno-nominated Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band, joins forces with pianist Hilario Duran, who did a nine year stint with Arturo Sandoval, **on this stimulating multi-cultural outing**. The ensemble sound has a sinewy richness--violin and clarinet, trumpet and oud and piano, underlain by the sometimes simmering, often boiling percussion.

The Buchbinder-penned opener, "Lailadance," contains a bunch of bravura blowing, and a gorgeous piano solo by Duran. Duran's "Impresiones" turns the heat up, sounding like a mini-big band, with violinist Aleksander Gajic spearing sharp lines into the flow, and multiple reedist Qunsin Nachoff injecting an element of danger to the mix with his searing tenor sax solo.

Buchbinder's "Cadiz" turns the heat down in the beginning, opening up as a melancholy lament that swells to a riotous frenzy. Duran's "Next One Rising" opens on a mellifluous groove, with Nachoff's dark wood rumination leading into Duran's bubbling fountain piano solo.

The back-and-forth between the Buchbinder and Duran-penned tunes, the ebb and flow between Jewish and Cuban and the inevitable mix of the two musical cultures, the swirling reed/trumpet/string mix blowing and bowing over the beautiful clutter of percussion, makes for a **uniquely uplifting listening experience**.

**Track Listing:** Lailadance; Impresiones; Cadiz; Next One Rising; Rumba Judia; Prayer; Colaboracion; Freylekhs Tumbao.

**Personnel:** David Buchbinder: trumpet; Hilario Duran: piano; Qunsin Nachoff: reeds, flute; Aleksander Gajic: violin; Luis Guerra: piano; Mark Kelso: drums; Rick Shadrach: percussion; Dafnis Prieto: drums; Jorges Luis "Papiosco" Torres: percussion; Roberto Occhipinti: bass.