

Alisa Fineman - Cantorial Soloist



Alisa Fineman grew up in California's San Fernando Valley, born to a family rich in musical heritage. Her great grandfather played first trumpet with the New York Philharmonic under the legendary Toscanini. Her grandmother, a concert pianist, gave Alisa her first piano lessons. At the age of eleven Alisa began learning guitar, and a year later she was writing her first songs. Early inspirations, both musically and lyrically, include Joni Mitchell, Odetta, Willa Cather, Kate Wolf and Mary McCaslin. As with these artists, Alisa's repertoire of songs speak of love, of a sense of place and an appreciation for the earth's beauty and fragility, and of life's sometimes-difficult choices.

Alisa Fineman has served as Cantorial Soloist in several synagogues and at a variety of Jewish settings and celebratory events in Northern California since 1990. These include synagogues, the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center's healing services, J.C.C's, summer camps, religious schools, fundraisers, life cycle rituals and homes for the elderly as well as many inter-faith events. Alisa is also an award-winning singer and songwriter, performing, recording and touring nationally since 1988.

We are so blessed to have [Alisa Fineman](#) who brings her beautiful voice to our services. CBI's own musical voice has grown as we have had the privilege of working with Alisa as our Cantorial Soloist. Alisa has contributed greatly to the transformation of our Shabbat evening service, bringing her beautiful voice and soulful spirit to our new Shabbat evening worship service. She has also been integral in training our B'nai Mitzvah students, and has brought a new spirit and musicality to our children in Sunday school.



Alisa has just released her latest and first Jewish music recording entitled: [Closing the Distance- Prayers, Poems and Love Songs](#), contemporary arrangements of traditional and original songs from the Jewish Diaspora, "a sensual, compelling and richly rewarding new experience in world music." Along with producer, Alex de Grassi, Alisa has collected and arranged these songs in a lush setting of world-music instrumentation to showcase the richness of her Jewish musical and spiritual heritage.

This recording marks a radical, but also natural, departure from Alisa's contemporary personal music and a new direction for her musical and humanitarian sensibilities.

Randee Friedman of Sounds Write Productions says: "***This new recording by Alisa Fineman focuses on spiritual commonalities among all people, with the intent of building bridges thru music to promote peace and understanding.***" She further

describes the CD: *“These 12 contemporary arrangements of traditional and original Hebrew and English songs from the Jewish Diaspora, are flavored with lush settings of world-music instrumentation to compliment Alisa’s warm, vibrant and captivating voice. Noted producer and musician, Alex de Grassi, infuses well known melodies Eit Dodim, Eli Eli, Iti Milvanon, Yih’yu L’ratzon (Max Janowski), and Ocho Kandelikas (Flory Jagoda) with a refreshing perspective and energy. As a composer, Alisa creatively intertwines two distinct sounds in Modah Ani/Asher Yatzar, beautifully blends Arabic and Jewish hopes for peace in Salaam, Shalom, and expresses her interpretation of a High Holy Day prayer in Uv’chein, And Then. Her Middle Eastern feeling Mah Gadlu, contemplative Y’varechecha (Priestly Blessing), and a unique twist of Haftarah trope in K’isha, are all memorable selections. Many artists join the talented group of musicians on this first class recording. Alisa’s luminous vocals meld with inspired musicianship on this superb album - listen now!”*

And from the composer of the track ‘Ocho Kandelikas’ on Closing the Distance: *“Dear Alisa, I am an 80-year-old Nona and I love to tango. So your ‘Ocho’ is beautiful. I love it. You have a beautiful voice- keep on recording”.* **Salud I Buena Viola, Flory Jagoda**

Alisa is also currently a member of the San Francisco Bay-based vocal and instrumental band, **Ya Elah!**, a spiritual and interfaith ensemble endeavoring to inspire unity through sacred text led by artistic director, Bon Singer, founder of Kitka. Their repertoire is mostly inspired by Jewish text, connecting with ancient wisdom from other traditions to highlight the wealth of diversity and the power of healing and spirituality at the core of our world traditions. Their CD debut is entitled *Each of Us Has* and is available at www.yaelah.com.

“National award winning singer-songwriter Alisa Fineman has earned renown for her world-class alto voice with it’s dusky tones and original songs.” (The Moab Times Independent). She is past winner of the Kerrville New Folk award at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas, has played at numerous festivals across the country, and her songs appear on many notable CD compilations from across the country. These include *Octaves Beyond Silence, a benefit For Women Survivors of Violence*, with **Eve Ensler, the Indigo Girls and Ani Di Franco, The Kate Wolf Retrospective** (1997) and *The Women of Kerrville, Vol. 2*.

Alisa’s songs from previous her previous CD, **Better With Time**, speak of love, of joy, of a sense of place and an appreciation for the earth’s beauty and fragility, and of life’s sometimes difficult choices. Once a fire look-out in the River of No Return Wilderness of Idaho and a co-manager of a University of California nature reserve in Big Sur, the music of Alisa’s first album, **Cup of Kindness**, emerges from the wild, beautiful and solitary places in which she’s lived.

“Alisa’s voice is at once delicate and powerful, warm yet mysterious, but above all, it is an open invitation to musicians from diverse traditions to share in the discovery of something new.” -**Alex de Grassi**.

“Alisa’s CD is a marvelous addition to the contemporary voices who continue to give life and vitality to the Jewish tradition. Alisa’s heart is as warm as her superb voice.”

- **Peter Yarrow** (of Peter, Paul & Mary).

For more information on Alisa, please visit her official website alisafineman.com.