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On the Town

ROBYN HELZNER TRIO **"Signs & Wonders"**

Independent

YOU NEEDN'T BE Jewish to enjoy "Signs & Wonders," though you'd have a big head start. Truth is, Robyn Helzner's lovely voice radiates warmth and hope, whether she's singing in Hebrew or English, drawing from ancient texts or performing contemporary tunes.

More than a celebration of faith, "Signs & Wonders" is a musical delight, enhanced — and often enlivened — by Dov Weitman on mandolin and Matt Holsen on bass and keyboards, as well a few guests, including violinists Mike Stein and Bruno Nasta. English translations are provided, along with brief song annotations, but the music is its own reward, distinguished by neatly tailored vocal harmonies

and arrangements that alternately emphasize Eastern European zest ("Ch'vil Nisht Aza Chosn") and shimmering, string-woven textures ("B'reishit"). "Turn, Turn, Turn," which serves as a remembrance of 9/11, quietly complements the album's opening track, Shelley Orbach's "Summer's End," and the lyrics Rachel Shapira composed for "Shir Tishrei." The musicians make for a particularly soulful ensemble

on the Judeo-Spanish ballad "Dia De Shabbat," then vibrantly underscore Helzner's spirited vocal on "Hillel Haya Omer," which is capped by tiered vocal harmonies.

Throughout the CD, Helzner communicates her love for these songs — and the cultures that spawned them — with a winning mix of charm and sincerity.

— *Mike Joyce*