

Celebrating the Godfather with klezmer and soul

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The Apollo Theater celebrated soul emperor James Brown's 75th birthday on a recent Friday night with a unique performance fusing two unlikely music genres together. Brown's famed trombonist Fred Wesley, klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer and Canadian beatmaster Socalled make up the group Abraham Inc., which mixes Jewish music with traditionally African-American music.

The one-night-only performance brought the three together along with a stellar back-up crew mashing together klezmer, hip-hop and funk making a sound new to music

lovers. To add to the mix, Bronx-based emcee C-Rayz Walz lent his lyrical flavors on a few songs while performing in front of crowd that mirrored the diversity of the artists who took to the stage.

But this isn't the first time that klezmer and soul have met. Since the mid 1990s, Krakauer has been experimenting with putting a twist on traditional Jewish music. His group Klezmer Madness! has received rave reviews for giving new attitude to the genre that has its roots in Eastern Europe.

The concert contained a repertoire of traditional klezmer songs with a remixed version of "Hava Nagila" called "The H Tune," and

"Fred the Tzadik." Wesley and Krakauer wowed the audience and even brought many patrons out of their seats and into the aisles of the Apollo Theater. But audience members gave exceptional praise to Socalled, who showcased his musical skills on the piano, drum machine and even an accordion.

"One of the most important parts of the Apollo's history over time has been the continual exploration and presentation of new types of music," said Laura Greer, the Apollo's vice president of programming. "The debut performance of Abraham Inc. is part of the Apollo's legacy of legends and new artists coming together."

Friday night's performance was part of Apollo's "Art & Soul" series that launched last fall to reinforce the theater's commitment to the performing arts. The concert was also part of a three-day celebration for the Godfather of Soul's birthday. Other activities

included a panel discussion, a screening of rare film footage and an exhibit with Brown's memorabilia.

Abraham Inc. will release their debut album later this spring. For more information on the group, log onto www.bernsarts.com.

HarlemStage

