A Classical Clarinetists Guide to Klezmer Music
D.M.A. Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor in Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Dylan Mikhail Lloyd, B.M. M.M.
Graduate Program of Music

The Ohio State University
2017

Document Committee
Doctor Caroline Hartig, Advisor
Doctor Russel Mikkelson
Professor Karen Pierson
Doctor Jan Radzynski
Copyright By
Dylan Mikhail Lloyd
2017
Abstract

The overarching purpose of this document is to provide a classical clarinetist/musician with a starting resource that will enable them to better understand klezmer music. Klezmer music is the traditional instrumental folk music of the Jewish people. Klezmer music developed alongside the diaspora of the Jewish people across Europe. The evolution of klezmer includes a plethora of musical characteristics derived from other cultures.

A consistent and official klezmer repertoire does not exist, each band would have a unique collection of songs borrowed and repurposed from Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Palestine, Germany, Austria, Russia, Italy, and many other countries. Klezmer musicians learned local marches, anthems and shepherd songs so they could entertain Jewish and Christian communities. Throughout history the Jewish people have had to wander from country to country, trying to find acceptance. While they may have been welcomed for a time and contributed and participated in the local culture. Each time the Jewish people were forced to leave their homes a portion of the local culture would come with them. This cross-cultural synthesis would become a hallmark feature of klezmer music.

An understanding of the history of klezmer music is necessary, to grasp its spiritual and cultural significance. The wedding ceremony is central to this idea. The role of the klezmer musician was cemented into Jewish society because the wedding was such a important event in the culture. The wedding was the cornerstone of purpose for the
Klezmer musician in Jewish society. Klezmer musicians were often seen as degenerate and existed as a necessary evil within the community because they were needed for weddings.

Included in this document is a brief history from biblical times to the modern era. Since there are relatively few written accounts of the life of klezmer musicians, historians have had to track down any and all writings. These include fictional writings, letters, and many laws. Despite restrictions from local and regional authorities’ Jewish musicians managed to survive and pass on their craft.

Included in this document is a brief bio of seminal Jewish clarinetists Dave Tarras and Naftule Brandwein. Each clarinetist is responsible for inspiring a whole generation of klezmer musicians. Thanks to the advent of the recording age, modern musicians can listen and transcribe their works. The music that they recorded form the core of the American klezmer repertoire.

Klezmer music, in its purest form, is an imitation of the human voice. While a key feature of klezmer music appears to be its improvised nature; it actually follows a carefully prescribed ruleset. The most important rule of klezmer is that the melody is the primary voice. Variations on the melody should occur whenever material is repeated. While these ornamental figures may seem capricious in nature, they can be learned systematically. Included in this document is an explanation of the many ornaments found in klezmer, as well as a brief guide on how to form an ensemble. In the appendices, an aspiring klezmer can find a glossary of terms, a complete list of klezmer scales/modes as well as a handful of songs with suggested ornamentation. These tools together are
included to provide a foray into the klezmer world for clarinetist and non-clarinetists alike.
Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of Professor Dallas Tidwell who always stressed that “If you are not having fun, you are doing it wrong.”
Acknowledgments

I owe a lifetime of thanks to my mother, who always supported my dreams, paid for my music lessons, and bragged about me even when I did not deserve it. She never got to see me graduate college, but her love continues to support my dreams. I also owe a lifetime of thanks to Lin and Dale Billingsley. After my mother passed away they stepped in to support me emotionally and financially as I navigated graduate school. They are the family of my soul, and I am so lucky to have them.

Thank you to Angela Soren my first clarinet instructor, who motivated me, and taught me so much. Many of her lessons resonated years later, as I realized I should have listened better when I was younger. Thank you to Dr. Scott Wright who helped me get through the death of my father while supporting me as an artist. So much of my technique was earned studying under you. My studies with Professor Dallas Tidwell would open up the world of Chamber Music, and an appreciation of New Music. Thanks to him I will always seek the joy in music making. Studying with Dr. Hartig has pushed me further in my development as an artist than I thought possible. Working with her has shown me that I have the potential to realize my dreams. No one has pushed me as hard as she has, and I am better for it. With her help I am ready to take the next step into the professional world. Thank you!

Lastly I would like to thank my significant other, Teil Buck, oboist extraordinaire. My life was forever changed for the better when she entered it. I am a
better man and a better musician for having her in my life. It is thanks to her unwavering support and her willingness to form chamber groups with me that I have achieved so much. She is my best friend, my muse, and my equal in life and music. Thank you!
Vita

May 4, 1985...........................................Born - Louisville, Kentucky

June, 2003...........................................High School Diploma, duPont Manual High School

May, 2011..........................B.M. Music Performance, University of Louisville

August, 2011 - May, 2013..................Graduate Teaching Assistant,

University of Louisville

May, 2013..........................M.M. Music Performance,

University of Louisville

August, 2013 - May 2016..................Graduate Teaching Associate,

School of Music, The Ohio State University

Publications


Major Field: Music

viii
Table of Contents

Abstract.................................................................................................................................................. ii
Dedication................................................................................................................................................ v
Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................................... vi
Vita.......................................................................................................................................................... viii
Table of Contents................................................................................................................................... ix
List of Figures.......................................................................................................................................... x
Chapter 1: An Introduction to the History of Klezmer............................................................................. 1
Chapter 2: Portraits of Naftule Brandwein & Dave Tarras................................................................. 13
Chapter 4: Making a Band..................................................................................................................... 27
Chapter 5: Ornamentation and the Pedagogy of Klezmer ................................................................... 35
Bibliography............................................................................................................................................. 44
Appendix A: Klezmer BootKamp-Scales & Exercises ........................................................................... 47
Appendix B: Music with/out Ornamentation....................................................................................... 50
Appendix C: Glossary of Terms............................................................................................................. 53
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Standard Harmonic Rhythm</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Standard Rhythm for 3/8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Chordal Bass line Rhythm</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Freygish Modal scale</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Misheberakh/ D altered Dorian</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Adonoi Moloh/ D altered Mixolydian</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Der Heyser Bulgar mm1-8 Variant Rhythms</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Der Heyser Bulgar mm1-8 w/trills</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>George Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue mm.1-2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Der Heyser Bulgar mm-18 w/tshoks</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Dave Tarras Bulgar no.4 mm3-6 w/grace note Krekhtsn</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Dave Tarras Bulgar no. 4 mm3-6 w/ written out Krekhtsn</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Dave Tarras Bulgar no.4 mm3-6 notated as heard</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Brandwiens Hora mit Tsibeles mm1-4 with and without Kneytshn</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: An Introduction to the History of Klezmer.

The goal of all musicians should be to express music intelligently, passionately and with an intimate understanding and respect for its purpose. Sometimes artists have to make choices when they present or perform music, but those decisions must come from a place of knowledge and consideration. For a classical musician to study and perform klezmer music, or even music inspired by klezmer music, they must understand its historical role, its cultural significance, and sacred importance to the Jewish community. This chapter attempts to condense the history of the Jewish musician from biblical times to modern times.

Klezmer music has been in existence in various forms for over two thousand years, quite possibly longer. In biblical times, the first musician mentioned in the Bible is from the fourth chapter of Genesis: Jubal, son of Lamech, who played the harp and flute.1 It is a common belief among Jewish music scholars that the roots of klezmer music may be traced to a tribe of elite temple trained musicians called Levites. Despite being trained musicians in a society that had written language, the Levites did not have a traditional system of music notation.2 It should be noted that a form of notation does exist in the

---

religious text as a cue to a cantor in the inflection of the voice, but traditional notated music was not developed at this time.

Throughout history, music has played an important role within the Jewish community. It was an ancient Jewish belief that music held a divine power, a power that could inspire musician and listener, and offered succor to those suffering from mental illness. An early biblical figure known as King David perfectly illustrates the belief of music as a divine power. “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took the harp, and played with his hand; so Saul found relief, and it was well with him, and the evil spirit departed from him.”³ This passage about David and Saul seems to corroborate the belief that music held the divine power to alleviate suffering.

The full scope of music’s role in ancient Jewish life is impossible to know, but we do know that its function within the Jewish community was irrevocably changed with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. As the Jewish people were scattered to the winds, without their temple and unable to attend services by the Levites, the rabbis declared a ban on all instrumental music during the time of mourning.⁴ It has been speculated by many rabbis and other Jewish scholars that this proscription against musical instruments served as a reminder for the destruction of the temple. In some modern congregations this prohibition has been removed.

It is at this point that “history” of klezmer and its musicians becomes difficult to trace. Without a State to call their own, the Jewish people spread into many nations.

³ Strom Book of Klezmer 2.
⁴ Sapoznik Klezmer 5.
These Jewish diasporas have existed for thousands of years as tribes of Israelites wandered across Europe and parts of Asia. At first they were welcomed, but later expelled from cities, counties, and nations. This would be a reoccurring theme for the Jewish people as they faced anti-Semitism everywhere they went.

Despite the ban on instrumental music, the role of klezmer within the community was never completely eliminated. The need for joyous music at wedding ceremonies meant instrumentalists were allowed as a “necessary evil.” This stigma would follow them for over a thousand years, as the role of klezmer music within the Jewish society took on a negative stature.

The status of music in Jewish society is further hampered by unsavory depictions found in the religious text. Hankus Netsky's description of the Orthodox view is particularly illuminating.

“According to the commonplace Orthodox rabbinical perspective, music by itself (i.e. without a religious connection) can be quite dangerous and, by definition, be associated with corruption and moral degeneracy. The basis of this belief is found in the biblical account of music’s origin. In midrash (often quoted narrative elaborations of biblical stories), Jubal, the inventor not only of music but also of singing and all manner of instruments, is thought to be a son of Cain, the originator of many forms of corruption including, of course murder.”

---

5 Sapoznik Klezmer 6.
6 Strom History of Klezmer 1
The history of sacred Jewish music history is extremely well documented with a veritable cornucopia of sources. Despite all of those sources, they hardly touch on the history, musicians, or lifestyle of Jewish Instrumentalists. This lack of history extends to early twentieth century New York and Philadelphia. Feldman writes that “klezmer music in America was not studied when it was still a vital musical form, roughly from 1881-1950… it attracted virtually no scholarly or even literary attention.”

Klezmer musicians were treated as outsiders and occupied the lowest social echelon in the Jewish community. Being a klezmer was a family occupation, if your father was a klezmer you were a klezmer, with few options to do otherwise. With a public perception of degeneracy, it is no surprise that written accounts on klezmer life and music are scarce. Despite the low status that musicians had, they were also a necessity in Jewish society. These degenerate musicians were highly sought after for celebrations and weddings. Feldman writes that “the klezmer was a special kind of Jew… most Jews regarded the Klezmorim as irresponsible, sexually overactive, and violent.” These views are further corroborated by literary sources. Isaac Bashevis Singer demonstrates this in his story “The Dead Fiddler,” when a young woman is possessed by a dead fiddler who is an irreverent promiscuous drunkard. In Sholem Aleichem’s novel Stempenyu a more flattering tale is told where the hero is not violent, or irreverent, but he is a bit of a Lothario or Duan Juan, stealing the virtue of young women.

---


9 Feldman Bulgar 88.
As the Jewish communities lost favor with local governments and were forced to relocate, elements of the local culture (music, food, stories) accompanied them to their new locations. Evidence of this can be seen in the repertoire of the klezmer musician as they learned marches, anthems and dance songs of the local population. This music would later become an integral part of a klezmer musicians repertoire. Of particular note is the Yiddish culture that developed in the 9th century when a society of Jews lived on the shores of the Rhine River in present day Germany.\footnote{Sapoznik Klezmer 6.} As the culture expanded beyond the Rhine river, elements of language from many cultures were added. In the end, the Yiddish language evolved out of this amalgam of languages.

Since little was written about klezmer music, klezmer historians had to track down any source. The Yiddish language reveals clues as to how a klezmer musician was viewed in society and within the Jewish community. Whilst having the ability to converse in a cultural language separate from the dominant culture had benefits, it also bred a level of distrust among non-Jewish locals. Jewish musicians took it a step further and had a secret code called \textit{klezmer-loshn}, that allowed for them to converse in secret in Jewish communities. Local police published in-house dictionaries to assist with investigations of the criminal world. Rothstein notes that many words of this \textit{klezmer-loshn} argot can be found in the argot of thieves.\footnote{Robert A. Rothsten. “Klezmer-loshn” \textit{American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots}. ed. by Mark Slobin. (Berkely; University of California press, 2002),28.} This is further evidence that klezmer musicians were thought of as no better than criminals by Jewish people and local authorities.
In the middle ages, Jewish musicians were called *shpilman*, a term similar to troubadours and minstrels. Instrumental music was still unsanctioned by the majority of rabbis throughout Europe. Furthermore, Jewish musicians were forbidden from performing in groups larger than three unless it was for a wedding. The context of this law is lost, but it is easy to speculate based off of more modern times. The Jewish people were seen as outsiders and the musicians as degenerates, a large amount of them gathering in one place may have been seen as dangerous to many local police forces. In many places it was also common for Jewish music performances to be heavily taxed. To get around this prohibition, many Jewish musicians would unite and build dance halls so they could make money. These *Juden Spielhäuser* featured theater, music and cards, and could be found in Jewish ghettos all over Europe as early as 1190.12 The only other option for many klezmer musicians to earn a living was by maintaining a secondary profession. Many of the klezmorim came from families of tailors, cobblers, handymen and barbers.13

Whole written accounts of klezmer musicians are few; the amount of laws passed, repealed and then passed again that deal with Jewish musicians were staggering. From rabbis forbidding instrumental Jewish music in the community to Christian musicians growing frustrated with a competing workforce that underbid them, Jewish musicians found a way to make a living. An early written account describes how a fourteenth century rabbi in Mainz declared a period of mourning within his district, but the rabbi did

12 Storm *History Klezmer* 1-2.
13 Sapoznik *Klezmer* 9.
consider that a wedding was to occur during the time of mourning. Since music was forbidden within the Jewish district, he moved the celebration outside his district because music was an essential part of the wedding celebration.\(^{14}\)

In sixteenth century Poland, music guilds began to form. These guilds were fiercely opposed to Jewish musicians and would not allow them to join on the basis of their faith. This was an effort to keep Jewish musicians from performing for Christians. Jewish musicians were in need of any additional income regardless of religious beliefs of the clientele. However, in 1549 the Polish music guild received a royal decree forbidding Jews from performing for non-Jews and forbade guild musicians from playing at Jewish weddings.\(^{15}\)

As Jewish communities were forced to move throughout Europe, the musicians continued to run afoul of guilds and local governments. On the other hand, these disagreements and tax documents provide one of the few historical records that portray a fraction of the life of the klezmer musician. In 1692 the musicians guild of Lwów and the Jewish musicians reached an agreement that allowed klezmers to perform at Christian events and weddings. They could also hire Christian musicians to cover for the Jewish musicians on holidays and Sabbath when they were not allowed to perform.

Jewish musicians were also barred from joining the music guild in Prague at the end of the seventeenth century. In 1641 they were granted the right to perform for non-Jewish weddings and events. The ability of the Jewish musician to earn money was

\(^{14}\) Netsky \textit{Klezmer Philadelphia} 23

greatly enhanced with a plethora of work options. However, the non-Jewish musicians soon found themselves struggling to make ends meet. They were left with little recourse but to lodge numerous complaints against the Jewish musicians. These complaints included reports of poor musicianship, a failure to adhere to tempos and making a mockery of elevated music.\textsuperscript{16}

As the Jewish were forced across Europe, the klezmorium (klezmer musicians) was exposed to different national music styles, shepherd songs and other regional musical forms. True “Jewish” music was performed rarely, so musicians supplemented their income and their musical repertoire by playing for non-Jews. The klezmorim became fluent in multiple musical styles and combined the repertory of many cultures. This cross-synthesis of culture and music would become the bedrock of the klezmer style.

The richest and most significant cross-synthesis with “Jewish” music was with the Romany, specifically the gypsies. Historically the gypsy culture has mirrored the Jewish people more closely than any other. The Romany were often considered little better than thieves. The similarities between Jewish musicians and the Romany would be even closer as Jewish musicians were considered degenerates within their own culture. This led to an uneasy alliance between Jewish musicians and gypsy musicians. The cross collaborations with the gypsies would result in the \textit{Doina} (rhapsodic solo showing virtuosity) becoming a standard in klezmer repertory. It would be one of the many influences the Romany had on Jewish musicians.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Beregovski \textit{Folk Music} 35.
\textsuperscript{17} Sapoznik \textit{Klezmer} 7.
Another dance form that the Romany would share with Jewish musicians besides the doina, was the **Bulgar** (traditional dance tune in 4/4) into the klezmer repertoire. The bulgar would be amongst the last musical adaptations in Europe before the mass immigration to the United States. The bulgar is from Bessarabia and the Ukraine and would gain prominence in the New York klezmer scene between 1920 and 1950.\(^\text{18}\) Feldman points out that as Jewish dance music gained more attention, the bulgar became more popular with the local New York Jewish population which culminated with the majority of recordings during this time featuring bulgars. Feldman holds Beregovski’s collection as proof that the bulgar is not a traditional klezmer form because Beregovski only recorded five examples of a bulgar out of the two hundred and fifty songs he transcribed.\(^\text{19}\) Dave Tarras is best known for his elevation of the bulgar to the klezmer music scene. It is likely because of his popularity that modern audiences accept the bulgar as a fundamental part of the klezmer repertoire.

For nearly two thousand years, the primary instruments of the “klezmer” band was comprised of strings. The inclusion of the clarinet in Jewish culture occurred in Russia under the Reign of Czar Nicholas I (1825-1855). After forcing his Jewish subjects through the brutal farm system, the Czar imposed a required term of military service of 25 years for Jewish men when they reached their 18th birthday. This was the Czars “gentle” solution to the Jewish problem as few Jewish men would be able to get married and raise a family. It was thought that this would be an easy way to control the size of the Jewish population who was seen as undesirable and problematic. Jewish men quickly

\(^{18}\) Feldman *Bulgar* 84.  
\(^{19}\) Feldman *Bulgar* 96-97.
discovered that performing in the band was much safer than fighting on the front lines. Since strings were of no use in the bands, many musicians switched and learned brass or woodwind instruments. When these musicians returned to “Jewish” life after the military, klezmer music adopted these new instruments and some melodies such as marches. The use of woodwind and brasswind instruments accompanied the Jews from the Soviet Union and Europe to the United States of America.

The dream of a fresh start in America drew immigrants from around the world. As families began to set down roots and procreate, a degree of culture was lost as Jewish people assimilated into American society. The new generation of Jewish-Americans found themselves with opportunities beyond the trade skills passed down from one generation to another. Interest in the Yiddish culture and klezmer music waned as the new generation assimilated. Yale Storm addresses the assimilation of the Jewish people and the use of the Yiddish language very succinctly.

“The use of the Yiddish language helped to clearly define the Jewish experience for the early immigrants. For the religious orthodox, exclusively using Yiddish in all aspects of daily life helped them to insulate themselves from the not Kosher world. For the secular Yiddishists, it helped define them politically, socially, and culturally. But for the majority of the modestly religious and cultural immigrants, knowing only Yiddish was a major stumbling block in the process of becoming American.”

---

21 Strom Yale. *Dave Tarras: The King of Klezmer*. (Kfar Sava: OR-TAV publications,
Like the Yiddish language, klezmer music was a remnant of the old world, a holdover from a time and place where the Jewish people had a separate culture, living space, laws and language to survive. Jewish-American musicians did not have to live in a Jewish part of town, they did not have separate laws, they did not have to speak a separate language, they were free to pursue their own goals and dreams.

To be a successful musician in New York at the turn of the century meant one had to be adaptable. Young klezmorium would begin learning tunes by heart as part of their training, which resulted in knowing hundreds of waltz’s, shers, freylekhs and bulgars. The ability to read music became necessary if they performed music outside of the klezmer repertoire, and as more young Jewish musicians grew up the focus shifted away from the klezmorium training to include a diverse new American repertoire. One of the places musicians could earn a steady paycheck would be performing in pit orchestras of popular vaudeville theatre productions. Learning to read music and play well eased the transition into American musical life. Many of the older klezmorium (who did not read music) struggled to find musical opportunities and permanent jobs.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the meaning of the word klezmorium shifted. Klezmers or klezmorium meant that you played klezmer music, but in the early part of the twentieth century it meant that you only played klezmer music, and could not do anything else. Eventually the word klezmorium became a “derogatory

2010), 26.

reference to those whom they felt could not adapt to the demands of the contemporary American music scene.” An ironic twist considering the history of klezmer music and its musicians who had to be adaptable by their nature.

In the 1930’s klezmer music continued to fade, but a resurgence in the “Jewish” sound could be found in popular jazz bands. Many famous clarinetist/bandmasters used the modal Jewish scales to enhance their charts. In 1939 Artie Shaw fused the songs St. James Infirmary Blues and a “Khosn Kale Mazeltov” where he also quotes in a solo “Bay Mir Bistu Sheyn” and “Yossel, Yossel.” Benny Goodman similarly fused swing music with a klezmer interlude in the tune “When the Angels Sing” which was based on a popular bulgar called “Der Shtiler Bulgar.”

From this point on the history of klezmer music becomes easier to trace, as it has been the source of many scholars and klezmer enthusiasts research. This chapter was meant to give the reader an overview in the collective history of the Jewish instrumentalist. The following two books offer a comprehensive overview of the history, in particularly of the recording age of klezmer music


---


Chapter 2: Portraits of Naftule Brandwein & Dave Tarras

In this chapter the focus will be on two clarinetists that serve as models for aspiring klezmer students. The majority of klezmer artists working today cite these two musicians as primary sources in their journey towards klezmer mastery and authenticity. It serves as an obligatory starting point to learning the style.

In the early part of the twentieth century, four klezmer musicians brought the clarinet to the forefront as the predominant instrument in the klezmer scene. Their recordings made on 78s constitute the core repertoire that serious klezmer students should hear and study. While Max Epstein and Shloimke Beckerman are pivotal names in the history of modern klezmer, it was Naftule Brandwein and Dave Tarras who would have the most profound effect. This is most easily seen in the catalogue of recorded music. Those recording would become one of the primary methods that many modern artists learned klezmer.

Naftule Brandwein (1884-1963) immigrated to the United States in 1908 from Poland. Like many Jewish musicians of the time, Naftule started working in Vaudeville productions to earn a steady paycheck. His virtuosity was such that it would not be long before the public started paying more attention to the clarinetist in the pit than the show on the stage. A self-branding machine, he took the moniker “King of Jewish Music” and quickly drew the attention of the professional Jewish music community.26

---

26 Sapoznik Klezmer 100.
In the 1920’s, Brandwein became a prominent member of Abe Schwartz’s band and produced an abundance of recordings featuring his musicality. Despite producing a solo album and collaborating with Schwartz on many records, Brandwein left Schwartz’s band and Columbia Records to the rival record company, Victor Records so he could lead his own band.27

After Naftule left Schwartz’s band he was replaced by Shloimke Beckerman. Beckerman was known for his ability to play by ear and read music as well as his pleasant demeanor. In many ways Naftule was a nod to the past and Beckerman was a glimpse into the future as klezmer musicians had to adapt to the American musical scene. Interestingly, Beckerman and Brandwienv worked together for a brief amount of time in a vaudeville inspired Yiddish dance band put together by composer/cellist and failed playwright Joseph Cherniavsky. Cherniavsky handpicked his musicians and gave them costumes to dress up as Cossacks (Russian military horseman) and Hasidims (Jewish religious sect from Ukraine). The act met with great success and even performed in the Manhattan Center.28 The partnership did not last as Brandweins personality would clash with many of his fellow musicians. Because Brandwein did not read music, Cherniavsky had to dictate the music to him so he could memorize it, which increased rehearsal time. Secondly, Brandwein was a known drunkard and many of the musicians complained about him to Cherniavsky during tours and hotel stays. One musician recalls.

“When we would go on the road we would always have to double up- two guys in a room, sometimes three!... Somehow, I ended up with

27 Sapoznik Klezmer 101
28 Sapoznik Klezmer 107-108.
Naftule. Once was enough! He’d you know, he’d get shiker, and he was not a nice drunk…. So I went back to Cherniavsky and said, ‘Please, Mr Cherniavsky, it’s killing me. Let someone else take him for a while.’ But by that time, everyone had him and everyone complained.”

The virtuosity of Brandwein’s music made him a star, but it was his personality that would make him a legend. Brandweins antics spread like wildfire through the Jewish community. He was known to be a womanizer, drunkard, meshugena (Yiddish for crazy person) and was a known associate of gangsters. Despite his less than savory reputation, demand for live performances continued to grow. Always a showman, he would often make a spectacle of himself by performing in an Uncle Sam outfit, complete with Christmas tree lights that had to be plugged into the wall. He was also known to perform with his back to the audience so that if any clarinetist was in attendance they would be unable to steal his tricks. When he wasn’t presenting his back to the audience, he would wear a giant sign with his name on it around his neck to cover his fingers.

Ultimately his legacy would be determined by his recordings and the memories of those who witnessed his unique brand of showmanship. Pete Sokolow describes Naftules’ playing style as middle eastern in conception with a focus on Turkish melodies that involved a great deal of trills, glissandos and jumps at a very quick tempo. His music is rollicking and rough, but passionate. A stark contrast to the tempered and controlled music by Naftules primary competitor Dave Tarras.

---

29 Sapoznik Klezmer 107-108
30 Storm Dave Tarras 18.
31 Sapoznik Klezmer 99.
Dave Tarras (1898-1989) was born in Ternovka, Russia on March 30th of 1898 in the Jewish ghetto. A product of generations of klezmer musicians, he study of clarinet began when he was 13 years old. He learned his craft from his father, but was heavily influenced by the local Romany. The assimilation of gypsy music would become a defining feature of his repertoire. While Russian life for Jewish people had been very harsh under the reign of Czar Nicholas I, these programs would be relaxed by the next two subsequent Czars Alexander II and the last Czar Nicholas II.

When Dave was a young man, he joined the military where he impressed superiors with his musical aptitude. It was in the military that Tarras would develop the skills to read and arrange music, he would use those skills to transcribe and compose authentic klezmer music. Life however would take a turn for the worse for the Jewish people when the Bolsheviks defeated the Czar regime in 1917. A return of harsh pogroms (organized massacres) against the Jewish people took effect, and Tarras, along with thousands of other Jews, fled across Europe to the United States.

In America, Tarras would eventually supplant Brandwein as the resident “King” of klezmer clarinet. Tarras replaced Naftule in Cherniavskys Band when Naftule was fired. In many ways this was the beginning of Tarras dominance of the klezmer music scene. Soon, Tarras would be recording on the RCA Victor label with Cherniavsky’s and with the Abe Schwartz orchestra, who had also fired Brandwein. Following these gigs, Tarras’s services as a klezmer musician would be in demand as he performed in a countless Yiddish theatre groups and bands including, but not limited to, the Abe Ellstein...
Orchestra, Al Glaser’s Bucovina Kapelle and the Yiddish Swing orchestra.32

While the name of Tarras grew and became more synonymous with klezmer, Brandwein continued to work and was regarded as a great klezmer clarinetist. Each musician featured two separate and distinct repertoires determined by familial connections in the old country. Depending on whom you asked, one was more “Jewish” than the other.

Zev Feldman wrote “When you compare Tarras to Brandwein and Beckerman, he is the least Jewish of the three… Brandweins repertoire was closer to what the klezmorim actually played in Europe and not here in New York… Tarras [performed] almost entirely dance pieces… [Tarras’ music] has elements of Bessarabia, Gypsy and Jewish Dance music. Brandwein hadn’t gone so far- he still responded to the Jewish melos and modality.”

From the quote it is obvious that Feldman feels that klezmer music is distinctly Jewish. He makes the assumption that Brandweins repertoire is more authentic but fails to support that statement, rather he writes that Tarras is less Jewish because of these other music styles. It has already been established by dozens of sources that Jewish music assimilated other cultures music into their own, yet Feldman asserts that because Brandweins music keeps to the Jewish modal language it is more ‘authentic’.

Pete Sokolow has an interesting take on the authenticity of each clarinetist as well as how they were perceived in the community. He points out that Naftule’s music was heavily influenced by Greek and Turkish melodies. The quick and ornamented music of

32 Storm Dave Tarras 18.
eastern melodies became a distinct part of Naftules style. In contrast Dave Tarras style was more conservative and classical in practice, and his melodies had a more distinct cantorial quality. Tarras was partial to European modes, Romanian fiddle pieces, and Hungarian music. Sokolow even addresses that the way in which Naftule and Tarras would attack the notes differed. Naftule had started as a trumpeter and because of that he had a “ta ta ta” attack, while Tarras’s first instrument was the flute and his attacks were smoother in contrast. Sokolow believes that a combination of Tarras’s controlled technique, cantorial phrasing and smooth articulation made his sound more accessible to the next generation of people.  

Dave Tarras, and Naftule Brandwein could not have been more different in temperament and personality, and it showed in their music. Numerous testimonies by other klezmer artists, family members and friends reveal a wide range of opinions and tastes. Max Epstein, a fellow klezmer clarinetist, who grew up hearing both live in person, recalls, “My idol was Dave Tarras but he played like a cold fish. His technique was classical and he played wonderfully. But the one who played with fire, who ripped your heart out of your body, was Naftule Brandwein.”  

It is easy to see why so many klezmer musicians and Jewish people would debate the merits of each as the recordings of both artists are outstanding. 

Dave Tarras would become a student of many styles during his lifetime, and while he is best known for his time recording dance tunes, he supplemented his klezmer repertory with the study of classical music. Many of his relatives remained in the Soviet

33 Storm Dave Tarras 20.
34 Stachel Clarinet 62.
Union and were employed by national orchestras which gave Tarras great pride. His klezmer protege Andy Statman recalls that Tarras regretted he was unable to play classical music professionally. Statman also points out that Tarras studied with noted classical clarinetist Simeon Bellison, a fellow Soviet klezmer musician, who was employed as principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic. Statman remembers hearing Tarras warming up before gigs with classical etudes and that his classical studies influenced his klezmer style. These studies would yield a precise and clean approach in Dave’s playing that would catapult him to the forefront of the klezmer scene.

During the so called “revival” movement of klezmer that occurred in the early 1970’s, Dave Tarras became a living icon of the musical style as musicians would come to visit his home in Brooklyn. Drawing from his knowledge and experiences, musicians begin to reconstruct a klezmer style based largely on his teachings. Many noted klezmer artists of today cite Dave Tarras as the primary inspiration for their learning the repertoire and style of the music. Dave Tarras inspired a whole new generation of clarinetists including Giora Feidman who visited Tarras on three separate occasions in the early 1970s and then began to perform regularly as a klezmer musician in 1972. Feidman had grown up listening to Tarras on a weekly Jewish radio program in Buenos Aires. Feidman is just one example of the dozens that drew inspiration from Tarras.

Any student looking to supplement their klezmer knowledge should listen to the old recordings of klezmer greats like Dave Tarras and Naftule Brandwein. By listening to their music the student can gain a better grasp of the ornamental language and overall

35 Storm Dave Tarras 42.
musical style of the genre. With that sound in mind, study of klezmer music will be enhanced.
Chapter 3: What is Klezmer? Art Imitating Voice? Or Wedding Music?

This chapter focuses on what makes klezmer music distinct from most other musical styles. This requires thinking about the music in two important ways. What is the music trying to convey? What is the purpose of the music? The music is attempting to tell a story without words. To create moments that elicit joy and sadness in listeners. Klezmers primary purpose in Jewish culture is music for weddings. Weddings were a place where it was expected to experience the highs and lows of life. Sadness was intrinsically connected to Jewish life, but weddings offered a chance for joy and happiness.

Unlike traditional Western art music, relatively little is known about klezmer music before the nineteen-hundreds. What is known, is that klezmer music today is derived from the collective experiences transferred as an oral tradition for over two thousand years. To further complicate matters, the terminology used by klezmer musicians and scholars creates a level of confusion. Klezmer music is a term used in modern times to label a specific style of Jewish instrumental folk music. The musicians are called klezmer’s and klezmorium, and can be used as a compliment that shows that a musician is competent and authentic. However, in previous times the term klezmorium was more common and could mean singular or plural klezmer musicians, it could also be used to signify the music style. Additionally in the early twentieth century, the word
klzmer or klezmorium could be used derogatorily by average people and Jewish musicians that were attempting to go more mainstream in the classical world.

It is impossible to trace how the music has evolved and changed over the years, but one element remains unshakeable; the music is modeled after the voice. Folk tunes from Eastern Europe offer some idea of what the music may have sounded like, but the primary evidence begins and ends with the musical rituals of the cantors. The cantor’s role is to lead prayer which utilize a variety of modes and unique vocal sounds to communicate prayers. The influence of the cantor is best illustrated in the most recognizable musical ornament found in klezmer music; the krekhtsn³⁶(see chapter 5).

Within the Yiddish culture another important figure is known as the Badkhn had a great influence on the development of the klezmer style. The badkhn was known as a Jewish folk bard or jester. The job of the badkhn was to humorously critique the lives of the people in song and verse with optional accompaniment by klezmer musicians. This was a common position in many European ghettos.³⁷ Many of the rituals and wedding ceremonies were coordinated by the badkhn. The badkhn or leytsim (jesters) would use humor to amuse wedding guests in the form of poetry. This comedic commentary could be of any nature from humorous wisdom to defying rabbinical authority, and became an integral part of the wedding celebration.³⁸

In the old world, the badkhn’s song moved wedding guests through a sequence of emotions with his badkhones (badkhn rhymes). A call and response would occur between

---
³⁶ Sapoznik Klezmer 9.
³⁷ Storm History of Klezmer 4.
the badkhn and the lead instrument accompanying him, typically a violin. The badkhn was at the center of all the ceremonies at a wedding from risqué rhymes for the groom’s assembly, to the serious veiling of the bride and her new responsibilities as a wife and leaving childhood behind. In some cases, badkhns took the revelry too far and would earn the ire of the rabbis and even the town council. Badkhn, were known to have “fiddled, juggled, impersonated a woman in labor, danced, and mimicked an ecstatic Hasid, a circus bear, or a cruel Cossack.” It is likely that inebriated guests found these antics to be less offensive than the clergy.39

The heavy immigration into the United States of European Jews meant that many badkns made the trip. In the city, it became fashionable to have weddings in lavish ballrooms. Catering halls in New York like Pythagoras Hall or Manhattan’s Victoria Hall would supplant the badkns role with a caterer. The caterer would determine when the cake cutting ceremony was performed. Manhattan’s Victoria Hall also replaced the traditional khupe (wedding canopy) with an electric khupe made up of a couple dozen lightbulbs.40

By the 1930’s, the badkn had vanished altogether, permanently replaced by the caterer and the halls. Henry Sapoznik writes about the disappearance of the badkn below.

“The badkn was gone, but the music that used to accompany him remained, transformed into a dinner-music feature. A drum roll and then an announcement:

“Waiters, get off the floor. Get off the floor, waiters.’ Sid Beckerman recounts.

---
39 Sapoznik Klezmer 16-18.
40 Sapoznik Klezmer 41-43.
“Mir shpin a doina. We’re playing a doina. Don’t serve. In the middle of dinner.
Right after the soup, before the main dish.” The clarinet soloist would then walk to the middle of the floor and, microphone or no, play his pièce de résistance.”

This description shows how the role of the badkn was overtaken by the caterer. As time went by traditions would change, and adapt.

Another way in which the voice would influence the modern repertory of klezmer music is from a Jewish philosopher Israel be Eliezer, the founder of the Khasidim. The Khasidim was a religious sect of Judaism that developed in the Ukraine in the 18th century that believed prayer through song was the most effective and sacred way to commune with God. Some of these Khasidim would integrate local folk melodies into their prayers, which created a new vocabulary of music for the Jewish people, the Nigunim. The nigunim or nigun is a song without words, many of the features of klezmer music can be heard in the unique vocalizations found in nigns. The Khasidic culture within Judaism would elevate music’s role in society. Walter Zev Feldman believes that the Khasidic culture was a primary reason for the proliferation of the klezmer genre throughout Europe. The nigunim would become a core part of the repertory alongside the older traditional folk tunes and Greco-Turkish music.

Weddings are the primary reason klezmer survived. The role of the klezmorim, and by extension the badkhn, were the frivolous entertainment that allowed common people to take a break from the harsh realities of their lives. Lifshitz writes:

---

41 Sapoznik Klzman 119.
42 Storm History of Klzman 4-5.
“All the complaints by the rabbis and the criticism of communal leaders that weddings were being transformed from sacred events to secular gatherings, in which jest, humor, satire and dance were the most important components, were to no avail. The masses of people, yearning for amusement and frequently having to seek it outside the ghetto, seized upon a wedding as a legitimate opportunity for such amusement… The wedding celebration provided the Jew with practically the only opportunity for such recreation.”\(^{43}\)

The music that the klezmorim performed was a mix of traditional wedding tunes and local songs. Each part of a wedding would have a specific kind of dance or associated tune. These included pieces performed to welcome members of the wedding party that would conclude with a lively *Freylekh/Freilach*. The freylekh a fast merry dance in two or four. The most well known of these tunes being the *kale bazetsns* which is an improvisatory (almost doina-like) piece to be performed while the bride is presented. The purpose of the *kale bazetsns* was to elicit tears from the brides family and friends.\(^{44}\) The wedding banquet was where the liveliest tunes would be performed including theme and variations on local or Jewish themes, *Skotshnes and Freylekhs, Doinas*, and *Nigunim*. The wedding would then end with a collection of farewell tunes such as “O zit gezuntetheyt, mayne like extern”. After a lyrical or farewell tune was played, the klezmer musicians would follow with a lively Freylekh.\(^{45}\)

---

\(^{43}\) Lifshutz. Merrymakers 43.


\(^{45}\) Beregovski *Jewish Instrumental Folk Music* I:21.
were a place that celebrated life for its’ beauty but also mourned for its’ loss. The music reflects this duel nature in the lives of the people listening.

Understanding the importance of the human voice in the development of Jewish music is critical to approaching klezmer music. The klezmer musician seeks to emulate the voice with their instrument. To communicate happiness, joy, and sadness with their music. This is incredibly important at weddings as a simple shift of music is one of the primary ways that a wedding ceremony moves forward. The wedding ceremony is the cornerstone of a klezmer musician’s livelihood and craft.
Chapter 4: Making a Band

The purpose of this document is not intended as the definitive path to klezmer mastery, as none exists. Rather, it is a resource guide intended to enhance one’s journey into the klezmer world. The contents of this chapter are designed to help a beginner create an ensemble that fulfills the needs of a klezmer band.

In previous times, most klezmorium held other jobs in the community, they did not perform full-time, and the majority did not belong to a troupe of musicians. However, some musicians formed kapelye’s (Yiddish for band or gang) that gained a reputation as an ensemble. These groups varied in size due to certain restrictions placed on them by local authorities, many of who often limited the group to a few musicians. Klezmer music requires the cooperation of a few musicians to create a unique blend of music and sound. There are three core components to a klezmer ensemble; a melodic lead, harmonic support, and a chord/rhythm section to drive the music forward.

The quintessential Jewish ingredient to klezmer music it the ability of the musician to mimic the human voice. This is a key feature for many musicians, but is absolutely essential to klezmer. The soloist is expected to produce effects that go by many names that reflect the vocal traditions of cantors. In a very simplistic view, this is the only ingredient that is necessary to replicate the “Jewish” sound.

Each kapelye required a leader. In the old world this was typically a violinist, and as the Jewish people began migrating west in the later part of the nineteenth century the
clarinet rose to prominence as the primary melodic band instrument. The ability to mimic the cantorial vocal style is the primary requirement of a lead instrument, but the dynamic range is a key reason why the clarinet supplanted the violin as the traditional klezmer lead instrument. The leader of the kapelye picked the tunes, and had to astonish audiences with his virtuosity on the more improvisational numbers, like doinas and fantasies.46

Early klezmer groups had a section of violins to fill out the harmonic support by playing in parallel melodic contour, or a counter melody. As the ensemble has morphed and changed over the years, the instrumentation of a kapelye has become free form with traditional holdovers. It is not uncommon to see kapelyes with guitars, accordions, trombones, trumpets, tubas, or even banjos. The musicians make it klezmer, not the instruments. Most of these new instruments would end up filling a harmonic role in the band. Pete Sokolow explains that harmonic support can be achieved by having a secondary instrument move parallel to the melody either a third or fourth below the melody, likewise a tenor instrument may think a third or fourth above the melody and then transpose to a lower octave.47 This is not always easy, especially if the tune is complicated and moves at a spritely tempo.

The most common role that a harmonic support section needs to fill in a kapelye are the call and response figures. Typically towards the end of a phrase the soloist will land on a long tone, sometimes for several beats or measures. It is the responsibility of another


47 Sapoznik and Sokolow Compleat Klezmer 25
member of the band to respond with a short counter figure. This job can be performed by one or two members easily, and it could be passed around the ensemble if the communication between members is excellent. These moments give the soloist a much needed chance to catch a breath and reset, but it also increases melodic interest in the line by adding new material.

The final component to a kapelye is a chord based rhythm section. Without this section, a klezmer band will sound lifeless. The “camel walk” or “oom-pah,” bass line and strummed percussion gives the music its forward momentum. Keyboard instruments like pianos, and accordians are prime examples of an instrument that can both play a chord-rhythm function in the kapelye as well as an occasional solo. String instruments like a double bass, guitar (electric or acoustic), mandolin, or even the banjo are excellent chordal accompaniment to a kapelye. Just like a jazz band, everyone should get a moment to shine and receive audience approval. Some examples of a typical chordal rhythm are below. Note that in the Zhok the emphasis is on beat three rather than the downbeat.

![Figure 1: Standard Harmonic Rhythm](image1.png)

![Figure 2: Standard Rhythm for 3/8](image2.png)
Having a true bass instrument in the band goes a long way to adding vibrancy to a klezmer group. Many instruments can fulfill this role such as the Baritone Sax, Tuba, Trombone, or the double bass. Their role is roughly equivalent to the role of a string bass player in a jazz band. In the more traditional groups, the role of the bass line was quite simple, however; due to the melting pot of influences encountered by the Jewish musicians in the twentieth century, the bass line grew more complicated. A bassist named Pekarek wrote an article on playing a string bass in a klezmer band that has several examples of a typical bass line. Many feature arpeggios between the root and fifth of the key. Pekarek also points out that in a hora, sher or a khosidil that the musician should play arco (or in the case of a wind musician clipped) to achieve the proper tone. The hora sher and khosidil are all moderate tempo song forms which allows the arco articulation to be heard. An understanding of walking bass line is very beneficial.\(^\text{48}\) Pekareks article is an excellent resource for a musician seeking information on how to learn the klezmer style for low instruments. An example of a bass line can be seen below that features both harmonic support as well as rhythmic interest.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chordal_bass_line_rhythm.png}
\caption{Chordal Bass line Rhythm}
\end{figure}

**Authenticity**

Strom notes that among modern klezmer musicians a ‘silent conspiracy’ has formed to allow klezmer to become a sort of party music rather than the spiritual and evocative music for which it was designed. The khasidic nigunim were developed to bring happiness to a bridal couple, to bring them to a higher state of mind with song and dance.

There are many klezmer and Jewish musicians who believe that the music should be preserved within a Yiddish cultural bubble. They are adamant that it is not party music, and should not be separated from its cultural heritage. This is not an easy subject to discuss, as it brings forth many emotions. However, understanding that klezmer music is more than just a kitsch style of Jewish jazz is important, as it represents personal history, and culture. Musicians should always perform music with dignity and passion, which comes from understanding.

The key piece of advice a klezmer musician will give to a novice, is to start by listening to the old masters like Tarras and Brandwein. By transcribing and learning the melodies and stylistic language, one should learn to model the tune as it was presented on the recording. The end goal is to become so familiar with the ornamental language that it becomes a natural response as opposed to an academic reason. The only way to elicit this kind of response is to listen and participate as often as possible, and to learn by doing.

Stachel echoes this collective sentiment very eloquently.

“The most important component of learning how to play any particular style of music well and “Authentically,” is immersing yourself into the music to such a degree that it feels like it’s entering into your bones and flowing into
your bloodstream. This is the only way to prepare yourself to feel the true
essence of the music and appreciate its vibrancy. After all, folk music such as
klezmer is a living testament to the history and collective emotional
experiences of that culture and its people. It has been passed down from one
generation to the next; and that transcends any professor’s attempt to
mechanically and coldly “explain” in a theoretical way the essence of
Ashkenazic music.”

The idea that the music is “felt” and that it transmits the history and culture of an
entire people is emotionally very moving and mystical. Stachel writes that the music
cannot be explained or even theoretically examined. This is not an absolute truth. He may
have meant that to get to the core of the music, and feel the vibrancy of the culture, one
must immerse themselves. However, there is no reason why a competent musician or
scholar should not be able to understand the music in a theoretical way.

An in depth look into the inner workings of klezmer is still possible without
stripping the culture and mystical features of the music. It is important to note that
Stachel makes a point not to mention that “authentic” equals “Jewish”, which can be a
divisive statement amongst living klezmers. He may be attempting to address the issue of
learning the music by being respectful of the culture by immersion rather than say that
authentic klezmer is exclusive to Jewish participants.

Stachel’s article on klezmer clarinet then proceeds to lay out a sequence of learning
for the potential student that is very similar to the training jazz students go through.
Beyond being familiar with the tune and the language, a klezmer should be able to hear
what key/mode the tune is based on, and be fully fluent in all related scales, arpeggios,
and modes used in the music. Having said this, Stachel recognizes that certain key areas are of specific advantage on a Bb clarinet, which is one of the reasons why so much of today’s repertoire are in keys that favor the clarinet i.e.. F, C, D, and G. A listing of all relevant modal scales can be found in the appendices of this document.

Pete Sokolow is considered one of the most important klezmer artists of the past generation because he represents a “missing” link from Tarras to modern klezmer musicians. As such he takes the transmission of the “traditional” repertoire very seriously and writes

“It has lately become fashionable to associate klezmer music with jazz… Let it be stated here that we are operating in a highly proscribed, somewhat narrow musical milieu with a set vocabulary and phraseology… The Klezmer (musician) is expected to embellish the melody in a tasteful, artistic manner, even in the case of the doina, the player must adhere to stringent idiomatic strictures."

While Sokolow is certainly referring to a traditional approach to performing klezmer, experimentation is also an inherent aspect of klezmer, and many artists today move beyond the “narrow milieu and set vocabulary” to make their own mark on the art form. However, his advice on learning the music is an indispensable place to start for the beginner, but should not be used as a way to stifle creativity.

Putting a klezmer band together requires that everyone learn about the music. For the band to truly turn into a kapelye requires a basic understanding of how the group

---

49 Sapoznik and Sokolow Compleat Klezmer 20.
functions and the musicians roles in the group. Listen to recordings of established groups. Design a set list that features multiple musical song types. Be creative, and most importantly have fun. It is joyous music.

Further readings on putting a band together and the elements that make up a klezmer band can be found in the following books


Sheet Music


Chapter 5: Ornamentation and the Pedagogy of Klezmer

Learning how to play in the style of klezmer is a tricky subject. If you asked your average clarinet player what makes klezmer distinct you will likely get a few inaccurate responses including but not limited to, swoops, bends, trills, and improvisation akin to jazz musicians. As mentioned earlier, the traditional way many modern klezmer musicians learned the style of the music was by listening to old recordings. Thanks to the advancement of technologies those recordings are much easier to find and access than ever before. Gone are the days of digging through dusty bins of records looking for a rare gem, now musicians can go online and listen to klezmer music that’s over a hundred years old from the comfort of their couch.

Some people will want more guidance than can be found by just listening to a song from youtube. Some people seek teachers, which is the other way in which many of today’s klezmer musicians learned their trade. Finding a klezmer teacher is not always a sure or easy thing. If you live in a major metropolitan city with a large Jewish population it is possible to find a klezmer musician that may take you on as a student. Otherwise it may be difficult to find a klezmer mentor and a student may feel lost. Once again we come to the purpose of this document, which is to create a resource that a musician can use to help introduce an aspiring klezmer enthusiast to the music style.

**Featured scales and modes found in Klezmer music**

The traditional major and natural minor are key fixtures in klezmer tunes and need no
further introduction to a serious musician. Most klezmer songs are based on three modal scales. They are included below.

**Ahava Raba/ Freygish (Great Love)**

This is an adaption of another mode more musicians are familiar with called *phrygian*, the key difference is the inclusion of a major third. The scale ends up having a flat 2nd degree, a raised 3rd degree and a lowered 6th degree. Pieces using this mode are typically written in the minor because most of the pitches fall in that key.

![D Freygish/ Gmin](image)

*Figure 4: Freygish Modal scale*

**Misheberakh (the one who blesses)**

This modal scale is used less often than the Freygish, but can still be found in tunes that come from the Rumanian repertoire. This scale is very similar to the Dorian mode and the noted Soviet musicologist Beregovski refers to it as an altered dorian, but the inclusion of an augmented 2nd between the fourth and fifth note differentiates it. Because of the placement of the altered note the typical subdominant chord must be substituted with either a II chord or a diminished chord.
Adonoi Molokh (God King)

This mode is essentially a mixolydian scale with a lowered 7th. This scale is unusual because it contains a lowered 7th and a naturalized or raised leading tone. This gives the mode a unique sound and allows for major and minor V chords in the texture of the music.

Suggested ornamentations trills and effects.

In Baroque and Classical music there exists a theory and practice behind the art of ornamentation. Numerous treatises such as Quantz’s *On Playing the Flute* help decode this system so that modern performers can be historically informed in their own performance. No such universal standard exists with klezmer music. As such, some klezmer musicians call things by descriptive yiddish words, but no true system has ever
emerged. In this document the author attempts to describe the sound of these ornaments/effects in such a way that it is unmistakable, but he also recognizes that some confusion will always exist without an audible example. Many of these descriptions have been adapted from Yale Strom's article on violin playing as he is one of the few to attempt to write down and describe these ornaments and how the music is performed,

When learning these ornaments and techniques, two things should be remembered at all times. The melody is primary to the music, it should never be compromised for the sake of an ornament or an effect. The only other thing a musician should worry about is creating variety within the melody on any and all repeats. This is where a deep understanding of ornamentation and tricks can be invaluable, especially on long solos. The simplest trick of the trade is doubling up on rhythms. This can be seen in the below example. A variant of this also exists in the changing of triplets to dotted eights two sixteenths notes. Combining both creates variety while maintaining the integrity of the tune.

![Original tune mm 1-8](image1)

![Variant 1 with doubled rhythms and triplet substitution](image2)

*Figure 7: Der Heyser Bulgar mm1-8 Variant Rhythms*
**The Trill** is the most familiar ornament for most musicians. The modern clarinet is very adept at adding trills to melodies as there are many keys on the clarinet designed with that function in mind. Keeping the above example in mind we can see how a trill can be added to the melody.

![Figure 8: Der Heyser Bulgar mm1-8 w/trills](image)

Alternatively, trills can be used to support another musician's solo. If a flute or trumpet is “soloing” it is common for a secondary melody instrument to play the third or fifth of a chord and trill for the duration of the chord at cadence points.

**Glitshn (y. slippery, slide)** is a portamento that goes very high and shrill and not typical in the clarinet's traditional effects, but is not out of bounds for someone mixing styles with jazz. Many traditionalists in the klezmer Yiddish revival consider the upwards gliss a part of the jazz idiom and the downward bend as a distinctly Jewish idiom. Incidentally many people think that the glissando from Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* was influenced by Gershwin’s Yiddish roots. Gershwin originally notated a seventeen note scale, but the non-Jewish clarinetist of the Whiteman jazz band Ross Gorman embellished it with the gliss more as a joke than an attempt to make it sound Jewish.
Tshoks (y. splendid, swagger) or Kvetsh (y. press, squeeze, pinch) this bent note is the more traditional effect that clarinets employ as it simulates a human laugh. The trick to understanding this ornament bending the note down and back up while releasing the embouchures control on the reed. By performing multiple “laughs” in a row the clarinet can make a sound that is eerily similar to a real laugh. An example using Der Heyser Bulgar can be seen below.

Krekhtsn (y. groans, moans) is the most recognizable ornament in the klezmer lexicon. This effect is meant to simulate an uncontrolled sob, or hiccup in the sound. This ornament is sometimes even marked in many modern editions of klezmer sheet music but can be placed almost anywhere in the music. Krekhtsn are typically written out or as a grace note. An example of a grace note is included below.
A krekhtsn in featured in the melody line of Dave Tarras’s Bulgar No. 4 measure 4.

In classical music the grace note is often accented when going to the main note. In klezmer music, the grace note is actually softer than the two pitches it is surrounded by. Andy Statman describes it by “leaning on the first note, stifling the second note, then accentuating and sometimes holding the third note.” Alternatively many klezmer musicians insist that achieving an audible pitch on these groans is not necessary for the effect, because the accent before and after the space can create the effect. When playing in the chalumeau range of the clarinet the use of the trill sidekeys can create an instrument specific krekhtsn that is particularly effective.
Kneytshn (y. fold, wrinkle, bend) A confusing variant on the tshok and krekhtsn, this ornament has the sad nature that the krekht is known for but is more similar to the tshok in practice. While the tshok requires a pitch to bend down and back up creating a “click” or “laugh” effect the kneytshn acts as a fast disappearing downward portamento. This effect creates a somber cry sound that can be heard in slower songs to great effect. An example of this can be demonstrated in Brandwiens Hora mit Tsibeles (onions)

Growling is a relatively new technique that has become popular with certain klezmer artists such as Giora Feidman and David Krakauer. The typical application of this ornament is by singing into the horn at the pitch the clarinetist is playing creating two sounds. Flutter tonging can also be incorporated into creating this effect.
**Vibrato** is a common enough technique to many musicians but foreign to many clarinetists. Amongst klezmer clarinetists vibrato is always present. The amount of vibrato varies depending on personal tastes. Some clarinetists emulate a wider vibrato to achieve a more authentic Dave Tarras sound, while many modern klezmer clarinetist utilize a more narrow and refined vibrato.

The author of this paper has attempted to codify the expertise of many great klezmer scholars into this document. Readers will have a starting place, as well as a list of pertinent books and articles.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Klezmer BootKamp-Scales & Exercises

Klezmer scales
Klezmer Scales

Misheberakh/Altered Dorian

D altered Dorian

A altered Dorian

E altered Dorian

B altered Dorian

F♯ altered Dorian

C♯ altered Dorian

Gb altered Dorian

Eb altered Dorian

B♭ altered Dorian

F altered Dorian

C altered Dorian

G altered Dorian
Klezmer Scales
Adonoi Molokh/Altered Mixolydian
Appendix B: Music with/out Ornamentation

#1 Bulgar in D
#2 Freilach in Dm
#3 Rumanian Hora
Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

Argot: Slang or jargon. See Klezmer-loshen
Ashkenazi: Jewish Person of European descent.
Badkhn/leytsim: A Jewish Jester. An important figure at weddings, the badkhn was responsible of the progression of the ceremonies. The badkhn would create humorous rhymes and tell tales to entertain guests. Also known to act lewdly and be disrespectful of rabbinical authority. In modern times the position has been usurped by the caterer.
Badkhones: The humorous rhymes that the jester would recite at the wedding party.
Bolsheviks: Originally the Russian Social Democratic Party which renamed itself into the Communist Party after usurping power from the Czars in the October Revolution of 1917. Responsible for harsh pogroms that decimated Jewish people.
Bulgar: a dance of Bessarabian/Romanian origin made popular by Dave Tarras. This moderate to fast dance is frequently dances in a circle.
Cantor: The member of the clergy that leads a prayer in song. The vocalizations of the cantor are one of the primary influences of klezmer.
Cossacks: Members of an elite Russian/Ukrainian military cavalry unit.
Doina: slow free form Rumanian lament that features short sequences of melodic material over a soft harmonic accompaniment. A song that is a virtuosic showpiece for the leader of a klezmer ensemble.
Freilach/Freylekh: a merry or festive dance in 2 or 4. This is a traditional circle dance allowing all to join in freely. One of the most distinctive and popular dance forms.
Hasidims/Khasidim: An orthodox sect within the Jewish faith that focuses on find the Joy in G-d. The Hasidim would focus less on an academic approach to the Torah and search for the mysticism found in the teachings. Also known for the nign.
Hora: another circle dance, but this one is derived from Romania. The odd use of rests and accents make this a very unique dance. Typically notated in 3/8 or ¾ the accented beat falls on three.
Kapelye: Word for Band, Orchestra, or even gang.
Khosidil: Ecstatic music based on folk melodies usually in 2/4 or 4/4. Begins moderately but frequently speeds up to a big exciting conclusion.
Klezmer (noun): Originally the word described the musician. It meant vessel of song. Later it would become a derogatory word for a musician that could not read notated music and could only play Jewish music. Now it is a compliment for a player that plays with great passion.
Klezmer-loshn: A specific jargon known to klezmer musicians so they could communicate secretly from Jews and non-Jews alike.
Klezmorium: A word that once meant the people that played the klezmer music. In modern time it can mean the musician or the music, or even multiple musicians.
Khupe/Chuppah: is a Jewish Wedding canopy meant to symbolize the new home the married
couple will build together.

**Meshugena:** a common Yiddish expression for a crazy, mad or even stupid person.

**Nigunim/nigun:** are songs without words that are thought to more closely communicate with G-d. The nigun repertory comes from the khasidic sect within Judaism.

**Pogrom:** organized destruction of ethnic groups, such as the Jewish people in Russia in the Twentieth century.

**Romany/gypsy:** Responsible for many folk music forms that would later be acquired by klezmer musicians. Shared many similarities with Jewish people.

**Sher:** Originally a German shepherds dance. Moderate to fast 2/4 dance song for couples.

**Shiker:** Yiddish word for drunk.

**Shpilman:** Jewish equivalent to the French troubadour in the 11th-13th centuries.

**Yiddish:** Culture that developed next to the Rhine river in modern day Germany. Yiddish is both a language and a culture.