

THE INFLUENCE OF KLEZMER ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY
SOLO AND CHAMBER CONCERT MUSIC FOR CLARINET:
WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF
MANEVICH, DEBUSSY, HOROVITZ, MILHAUD,
MARTINO, MOZART AND OTHERS
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The secular music of the Eastern European Jews is known today as klezmer. Klezmer was the traditional instrumental celebratory music of Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi Jews who eventually populated the Pale of Settlement, which encompassed modern-day Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus and Romania. Due to the rise of oppression and expulsion, many klezmer musicians or klezmerim immigrated to the United States between 1880 and the early 1920s. These musicians found work in klezmer bands and orchestras as well as Yiddish radio and theater. Some of the most influential klezmerim were clarinetists Naftule Brandwein and Dave Tarras who helped develop an American klezmer style. While the American style flourished, the popularity of pure klezmer began to diminish. As American-born Jews began to prefer the new sounds of big band and jazz, klezmer was considered old-fashioned and was in danger of becoming a lost art form. During the early 1970s, a reawakening study of klezmer developed. Henry Sapoznik, Lev Liberman and Andy Statman were instrumental in creating a klezmer revival in the United States. At the same time, Argentinean-born Israeli clarinetist Giora Feidman was popularizing klezmer in Europe. Klezmer had again become popular and the revival's impact on the concert hall was inevitable.

Even though klezmer has existed for centuries, composers have only recently included klezmer elements in their concert works. Characteristic modes (*Freygish* and *Misheberakh*), forms (*freylekhs* and *doinas*), instrumentation, and rhythms all contribute to create a unique style. Three musical works for clarinet are examined in the dissertation: Simeon Bellison's *Four Hebrew Melodies in form of a suite*, Simon Sargon's *KlezMuzik* and David Schiff's *Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool*. Although the compositions reveal different approaches to the elements, the klezmer influence is evident in each of them. An appendix of clarinet klezmer influenced concert works is included.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Music, the sacred and the profane: the former offers a written tradition while the latter offers an oral tradition. Jewish music was no exception. The sacred dominated in this religion-centered lifestyle. Secular music, however, viewed as entertainment and less important, was improvised and passed from generation to generation. As a result, most early information is derived from literary descriptions and personal accounts. The novella, *Stempenyu* by Scholem Aleichem, the story of a popular local violinist, Yosele Druker (1822-1879), provides excellent depictions of secular musicians.

He would grab his fiddle, give it a swipe with his bow—just one, no more—and already it would begin to speak. But how, do you think, it spoke? With real words, with a tongue, like a living person...Speaking, arguing, singing with a sob, in the Jewish manner, with a shriek, with a cry from deep within the heart, from the soul....Different voices poured out all kinds of songs, all so lonely, melancholy, that they would seize your heart and tear out your soul, sap you of your health....Hearts would become full, overflowed, eyes would fill with tears. People would sigh, moan, weep.¹

Joseph Lateiner's musical *David's Violin* (1897) and Jacob Gordin's play *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1902) also give valuable insight into the life of Jewish secular musicians. These instrumentalists were known as klezmer musicians.

¹ Seth Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer: A Music Lover's Guide to Jewish Roots and Soul Music, from the Old World to the Jazz Age to the Downtown Avant-Garde*, (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2000), 17-18.

Klezmer is a type of secular music cultivated by the Eastern European Jews. As celebratory music, klezmer was performed at weddings and other festivities conducted outside the religious service. Most of the repertoire was associated with a functional dance or ritual tradition. The literal translation of the word “klezmer” is “vessels of song” and originally implied only the person or instrument. The term first appeared in a 1937 essay by musicologist Moshe Beregovski (1892-1961) and was later popularized by the clarinetist, Giora Feidman (b.1936). Gradually, the definition expanded to “include the whole musical genre.”²

The study of klezmer is relatively new. At the turn of the century, Joel Engel (1862-1927) devoted his energies to Jewish secular music and “collected and arranged folk tunes, propagated his idea in the spoken and printed word and organized concerts of Jewish music in the capital and the provinces.”³ He worked closely with composer Jacob Weinberg (1879-1956), organizer of concerts “devoted solely to Jewish composers or to popular works in Jerusalem”⁴ and clarinetist Simeon Bellison (1883-1953) who toured throughout the world performing Jewish works. Engel’s groundbreaking research encouraged others such as Moshe Beregovski, who collected and recorded hundreds of folk tunes throughout Russia. Today, experts such as Henry Sapoznik, Joel Rubin and

² Henry Sapoznik with Pete Sokolow, *The Compleat Klezmer*, (Cedarhurst, NY: Tara Publications, 1987), 5.

³ Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel: Its Rise and Growth Through 5000 Years*, (NY: W. W. Norton & company, Inc., 1949), 227.

⁴Gradenwitz, 259.

Mark Slobin continue this important research while musicians including Itzhak Perlman and David Krakauer are performing klezmer tunes.

It is only recently that klezmer has enticed composers to include its secular elements into their classical compositions. Although some of the most prominent classical composers have been Jewish, little of their repertoire incorporates Jewish characteristics, due mainly to European prejudice. Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) even converted to Christianity in hopes of overcoming this obstacle. During the emancipation movement of the 19th century, Jewish composers were tolerated by European society but this acceptance had disappeared by the end of the century. Gustave Mahler (1860-1911) incorporated a spirit and passion that “proved singularly attractive to the Jews,”⁵ which influenced future composers. Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) was one of the earliest composers to promote boldly the Jewish heritage in his compositions such as *Schelomo* (1915) and *Israel Symphony* (1916). Bernstein, Copland and others followed Bloch’s lead. These composers, however, were inspired by the religious music of their faith.

This dissertation investigates the impact of Jewish secular music on the concert stage. It begins with the history of klezmer in Europe and America as well as with the contributions of klezmer performers and researchers. The paper focuses on the elements that create the distinctive style and explore composers’ use of these elements in their concert compositions for the clarinet. Three musical examples are examined: Simeon Bellison’s *Four Hebrew Melodies in form of a suite*, Simon Sargon’s *KlezMuzik* and David Schiff’s *Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool*. Each composer approaches klezmer

⁵Gradenwitz, 184.

in a different manner. Bellison's pieces for clarinet and piano, dating from the first part of the 20th century, are practical arrangements of folk tunes. Sargon's *KlezMuzik* (1995) is a straightforward use of the elements in an original work for clarinet and piano while Schiff's piece fuses klezmer with an aggressive twentieth-century compositional approach. Although each piece is unique, the klezmer influence is evident in each of them.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF KLEZMER

The branches of Judaism have been classified according to geography as well as ritual. There are four clear divisions. The Ashkenazi originally lived in Germany and France and later moved to Eastern Europe after the 15th century; the Sephardi settled in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa and Western Europe. The Oriental (or Southern) lived in the Middle East, Central Asia and India and there were a number of Jews in Ethiopia. Each sect had its unique secular music that developed independently from the others. The secular music of the Eastern European Jews is known today as klezmer. Klezmer was the traditional instrumental celebratory music of Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi Jews who populated modern-day Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary.

Klezmer music was an oral secular tradition passed from generation to generation. Young Jewish males learned the trade by listening to their elders. As a result, klezmer musicians or klezmerim were typically musically illiterate. Due to this reason, little extant music, materials or publications exist prior to the 19th century. Musical notation was not utilized in the klezmer world until the 19th century and documentation and research began in the 20th century.

Klezmer bands provided a valuable service to their community by performing at celebrations, primarily weddings. Old World weddings could last from one to two weeks with musicians present throughout the duration of the celebration. According to Henry

Sapoznik, their function was to provide dancing, ritual and listening music.

Without a doubt, the best known milieu for the Klezmer was the khasene (wedding). It was here that the musician most closely interacted with most of the members of his community. The klezmer played a specifically Jewish wedding repertoire, in addition to local peasant dance tunes. Literally, every step of the way was accompanied by the klezmer from the khosnmol, a party sponsored by the khosn (bridegroom) before the khasenes, to the sheve brokhes, played in honor of the khosn and kale (bride) the week after the khupe (wedding ceremony).⁶

Although the musicians were popular, they were not well respected. This was due in part to their uneducated and ill-mannered reputation. Klezmorim were even associated with criminals since they shared a similar private language (Klezmer-losh). In addition, instruments had no religious association and were often banned from the synagogue, especially during periods of mourning. Only song and incantation were considered an integral part of the religion-centered lifestyle. Therefore, “the function of instrumental music as a means of exciting and releasing passionate emotions without any devotional context put the klezmer and his music in a marginal position within Jewish society.”⁷

The music of the klezmer was constantly changing. As Jews were exiled from their homes, they would adapt to their new often non-Jewish society. Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and his enlightenment movement (Haskalah) even encouraged the Jews to assimilate qualities of their new surroundings. The assimilation affected music and as a result, the klezmer repertoire was greatly expanded. Klezmorim were

⁶ Sapoznik, 6.

⁷ W. Z. Feldman, “Bulgaresca/Bulgarish/Bulgar: The Transformation of a Klezmer Dance Genre,” *Ethnomusicology* 38 (Winter 1994): 2.

requested to perform at non-Jewish affairs, ranging from peasant to nobility functions. These audiences demanded music other than traditional Jewish tunes. Instrumentalists were forced to include dances such as the waltz, polka and quadrille into their ever-expanding repertoire. Even light classical music made its way into the klezmer inventory.

Judaism began to stretch its cultural boundaries which “led to the contestation of the very foundations of traditional Judaism.”⁸ The Hasidism movement, founded by Israel Baal-Shem-Tov, reached its peak at the end of the 18th century. Hasidism persuaded Jews to “express their piety in a way unacceptable up to that time: through the ecstatic fervor of music and dance.”⁹ The reform movement in the early 19th century produced the non-observant or secular Jew as well as the liberal (the Reconstructionist, the Conservative and the Reform) Jew, all of which allowed more musical activity and freedom. As attitudes toward secular music changed, klezmerim were more accepted by the general Jewish public.

Yet, life for klezmerim remained difficult. As Jews were confined to smaller regions, competition for work between Jewish musicians rose sharply. Klezmerim were forced to vie with resident musicians and Gypsy entertainers. Problems were created when local governments restricted ensemble size and acceptable performance days and required Jewish musicians to purchase expensive permits. In addition to financial difficulties, klezmerim encountered prejudice from non-Jews as well as Jews.

⁸*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Jewish Music,” 26.

⁹Sapoznik, 5.

However, a thorough musical education was prevented not only through the official blocking of access to institutions of higher learning, but also from within the Jewish community itself, as sacred vocal music, for prayer and praise of God, was the only musical expression fully approved of by the rabbinical authorities. *Klezmer* musicians had been tolerated only because the entertainments provided by this low stratum of east European Jewish society evoked a suitably lively atmosphere at weddings and other communal festivities. Therefore, talented individuals with an interest in ‘serious music’ had no legitimate outlet except as synagogue cantors or choristers...¹⁰

As a result, wages were modest, forcing klezmerim to supplement their income with second occupations.

During the 19th century, many restrictions imposed on the Jewish community were relaxed. Jews were now permitted entrance to institutions of higher education, including music conservatories, as well as military service. In Russia, Tsar Alexander II tolerated the Jews and granted them more freedom. This time period experienced “some of the most dramatic social upheavals and cultural developments in European Jewish history.”¹¹ The quality of Jewish life appeared to be improving.

During the second half of the 19th and early 20th century, animosity toward the Jews increased. Spain, Portugal and Central Europe no longer tolerated the Jews, forcing them to move east. They inhabited a portion of land in Russia known as the Pale of Settlement, which encompassed modern-day Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus and Romania, approximately 362,000 square miles. This area eventually contained five and a half million Jews or 70% of the Jewish population in the world, “making it perhaps the

¹⁰*The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 93.

¹¹*The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 92.

largest contiguous Jewish settlement in history.”¹² Even though the Russians accepted the Jews, difficulties continued to plague the klezmerim. Travel was still regulated and wages were low. The assimilation of other cultures was slowed in the Pale of Settlement while the secular music of the klezmer flourished.

With the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the liberal restrictions in the Pale of Settlement disappeared. “A series of anti-Jewish decrees, expulsions, and violent pogroms, as well as the chaos brought about by war, revolution, and the dissolution of the Russian empire, provoked a steady wave of emigration from the region.”¹³ A mass immigration of Jews to the United States began in 1880 and continued until the early 1920s.

By 1900, about half a million East European Jewish refugees had arrived in North America, and of the one and a quarter million who reached the USA between 1900 and 1924, the vast majority remained in New York, their port of entry. The culture shock was overwhelming for these mainly Orthodox Jews coming into daily contact with the vast and varied minority groups that comprised the city’s population, then as today.¹⁴

Once again Jews were exposed to and influenced by other cultures. Their strong desire to be a part of the new society affected not only their religious life but also their musical opportunities. In addition to traditional cantors or choisters, musicians could now be employed through klezmer bands, Yiddish theaters and Yiddish radio.

Yiddish theater in particular grew in popularity in the United States. Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1956), known as the father of Yiddish theater, first established Yiddish

¹²Rogovoy, 26.

¹³Rogovoy, 51.

¹⁴*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 98.

theater in Romania in 1876. Under his direction, Yiddish theater flourished in America in the 1920s and early 30s. Goldfaden was known to borrow from a variety of sources for his shows: Synagogal chants, Jewish and Slavonic dances and folksongs, Western European opera and even popular music. Many immigrants were hired to perform in the pit orchestras. Yiddish radio was also popular. More than twenty stations in the New York metropolitan area broadcast Yiddish programs in the first quarter of the 20th century. Live Yiddish radio provided more jobs for Jewish musicians.

Meanwhile, the new surroundings initiated even more changes in klezmer music. This was most apparent in repertoire. Since weddings were no longer the extended celebrations of the Old World, many functional dances and tunes were abandoned. The core repertoire became associated with “an increasingly obsolete, religion-centered life-style”¹⁵ and as a result, new dances emerged. Instrumentation was also modified; Old World instruments (tsimbl and harmonica) were discarded for standard big band instruments such as the piano and the drum set. Klezmer was also influenced by the popular swing style. An American klezmer sound materialized, encouraged by two leading clarinetists, Naftule Brandwein (1889-1963) and Dave Tarras (1897-1989) as well as by the recording industry. Between 1894 and 1942, United Hebrew Disc and Cylinder Record Company, Columbia, Victor and other companies issued approximately 700 klezmer records. In order to attract larger audiences, recording companies diluted the pure klezmer culture and in the process lost much of its unique and regional sound.

¹⁵Feldman, 27.

The popularity of klezmer extended beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community. Printed music became available to the general public. In 1916, Wolf Kostakowsky produced *International Hebrew Wedding Music*, the earliest substantial American printed collection. Many klezmer tunes could be heard in jazz arrangements and popular songs. Eddie Cantor's "Lena from Palestina" is based on the bulgar "Nokh a Bisl." Another traditional klezmer melody, "Der Shtiler Bulgar," was the foundation of the popular jazz tune "And the Angels Sing" recorded by Benny Goodman & His Orchestra and the Glenn Miller Band. Even the Andrews Sisters had a huge top seller when they recorded "Bay Mir Bistu Sheyn" in 1937. American Klezmer continued to move farther away from its pure European roots.

A. Z. Idelsohn's *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* was first published in 1929. It is considered to be a "landmark in its field that is still widely consulted today."¹⁶ Interest in the study of klezmer also emerged. Joel Engel (1868-1927), one of the earliest researchers and collectors of klezmer music, established the Jewish Folk Music Society in St. Petersburg (1908). The Russian musicologist Moshe Beregovski (1892-1961) continued this important work and "amassed the single most significant collection of klezmer music."¹⁷

The 1920s found klezmer fully entrenched in the music scene of the New World. But the popularity of pure klezmer began to diminish in the United States for several reasons. First, since the core repertoire was considered too simple, emphasis was placed

¹⁶*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 24.

¹⁷*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 89.

on the new creative and more sophisticated forms. Next, many abandoned their Jewish traditions in order to blend into modern American society. As a result, traditional klezmer was replaced with the new sounds of jazz and popular music.

In America a greater range of social opportunities became open to the Jewish musicians and relatively few of the American born children of klezmerim retained their professional involvement in this music. Most of them seem to have branched out either into classical music, popular entertainment music, or jazz. In some cases this branching out had already begun in Europe, but it accelerated greatly in the New World.¹⁸

The United States imposed heavy immigration restrictions in the 1920s slowing Jewish immigration. Klezmer no longer had a fresh audience longing to hear the tunes of the Old World. In addition, klezmer recordings and Yiddish radio broadcasts were limited due to the economic difficulties incurred by the Great Depression in America.

The record companies were interested in the exploitation of those eager markets which were willing to purchase recordings of their own ethnic performers in numbers sufficiently large to warrant the companies' investment and to ensure a profit. These records were kept in the catalogs so long as they sold; if they did not, they were dropped.¹⁹

American Jews simply could not afford to purchase the recordings. Other Jewish outlets were in decline as well. Yiddish Theater lost its cultural appeal as big bands and Broadway became fashionable. The Catskills in New York was no longer considered the prime vacation destination for Jews and musicians lost yet another entertainment venue.

In Europe, Jews continued to be persecuted. With the rise of the National Socialist movement, control of the Jewish people, their culture and their music became stronger.

¹⁸Feldman, 5.

¹⁹Sapoznik, 11.

“The Holocaust put a complete end to *klezmer* music in Poland, while the genre and professional were largely suppressed in the Soviet Union.”²⁰ Many Holocaust survivors immigrated to the United States. Unfortunately, they associated klezmer and Yiddish theater with the atrocities of World War II and did not want to hear it. This ended the golden era of Yiddish theater and greatly curtailed the klezmerim.

Even the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 posed problems for struggling klezmerim. The secular music of Israel differed greatly from the Ashkenazi’s music. As Jews pledged allegiance to the new homeland, loyalty toward their own folk music faltered. The Israeli hora became the new trend and klezmer all but disappeared.

Many European-born klezmerim living in America were dying and performers such as Dave Tarras slipped into obscurity. Since the next generation of Jews showed no interest in the folk music of their ancestors, klezmer was in danger of becoming a lost art form.

During the early 1970s, many young people became interested in discovering their “voice” or heritage. The popularity of the television mini-series *Roots* helped to encourage this newly found interest. A reawakening study of Irish and Appalachian music was developing as well as the secular music of the Jews.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to most of the older *klezmerim*, a new generation was looking for its roots. Imbued with the aesthetic of 1960s self-expression, playing in the raw musical styles of blues, bluegrass, old-time swing, jazz, folk, and soul, and impressed by the African-American roots movement, young Jewish musicians began asking questions about their musical ancestry.²¹

²⁰*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 89.

²¹Hankus Netsky, “An Overview of Klezmer Music and its Development in the U.S.” in *Judaism* 47/1 (Winter 1998): 10.

Klezmer music fascinated many young Jewish musicians. Some studied hundreds of rediscovered recordings from YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City and other locations. A few musicians sought the knowledge of living klezmerim, such as Dave Tarras, and established important mentor relationships.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the groundbreaking bands Kapelye and The Klezmerim were greeted with enthusiastic audiences. The new style flourished in New York City as Jewish and non-Jewish listeners loved the energetic music. As the groups toured the United States, the fan base rapidly expanded. Kapelye and The Klezmerim paved the way for later bands such as The Klezmatics and Brave Old World, who became fashionable in the popular music world. But as time passed, klezmer was again influenced by its surroundings. Jazz, Latin, World and popular music all fused with klezmer to create hybrids. The hybrids were more marketable and resulted in an even larger, worldwide audience. Klezmer was also the subject of thorough research. Beregovski's landmark study was rediscovered in a Kiev library in the 1990s, and new research by current experts became readily available. Klezmer was recognized as a legitimate art form of Jewish music.

CHAPTER 3

ELEMENTS OF KLEZMER

Klezmer style is achieved by combining several elements: characteristic modes, instrumentation, ornamentation and rhythmic patterns. To gain an appreciation of the contribution of these elements, an overview of the entire repertoire must first be addressed. According to Walter Z. Feldman, the repertoire can be divided into the four categories of core, transitional, co-territorial and cosmopolitan.²² Each category includes functional dance and ritual music that follows a generic formula.

The core repertoire represents rituals associated with the Jewish faith. The most prevalent dance forms are the *freylekhs*. Freylekhs (linguistic variants: *hopke*, *dreydl*, *rikudl*) are happy circle or line dances commonly performed at a wedding. Although many types exist, all freylekhs have the same structure: two to three sections with eight or sixteen measure phrases. They have a duple meter with a moderate to brisk tempo. The *sher* (or scissors dance) was one of the most common freylekhs in the Jewish repertoire, similar to a square dance. It was intended for a group of dancers and has a moderate to fast tempo. In contrast, the *khosidl* was a slower circle or line dance. The slower tempo allowed more ornamentation and improvisation.

The non-dance or ritual tunes were an integral part of an Old World wedding as well. Seth Rogovoy warns of the danger in overlooking these tunes.

²²Feldman, 6.

What is all too often lost in the well-intentioned discussion of klezmer as functional party or dance music, however, is its equally important function as music for listening and reflection. Weddings, then as now, were about more than just dancing, and thus wedding bands, then as now, played more than just dance music. At least a third of the Old World klezmer repertoire was music meant for listening to—poignant music that expressed and enhanced the serious religious and spiritual aspects of the event.²³

The core repertoire of non-dance tunes includes the *bedekns* and the *kale-bazetsn*. The *bedekns* or veiling of the bride was performed prior to the ceremony; the *kale-bazetsn* was played during the seating of the bride. Both works are very flexible and highly expressive. They were intended to highlight the seriousness of the ceremony and bring tears to the wedding party. Other listening pieces include the *dobranoc* (good morning) and *mazl tov* (good luck).

The next category is the transitional (orientalized or Southern) repertoire. This collection reveals the influence non-Jewish cultures had on klezmer music. Transitional music includes the popular *hora* (*sirba* and *volekh*) and *bulgar*. The *hora*, a popular Romanian Jewish dance often notated in 3/8, was referred to as a “crooked dance” due to the emphasis on beats one and three. The *bulgar*, another circle or line dance, was primarily developed in the United States by Dave Tarras. Feldman describes the popularity of the *bulgar* in the New World.

After World War II, the American conception of “Jewish” dance music centered around the *bulgars* (mostly of American vintage) and the new *bulgar* hybrid melodies. The older core klezmer dance repertoire, which had been somewhat current in America until the 1940s, and in Eastern Europe until the contemporaneous Holocaust, was replaced almost entirely by the new American klezmer genres, the *bulgar* and the *bulgar* hybrids.²⁴

²³Rogovoy, 35.

²⁴Feldman, 2.

The bulgar was highly creative and as a result developed further than other forms of the time.

The *doina* dominates the non-dance music of the transitional repertoire. Doinas were performed while the wedding party was seated at the banquet table, which allowed time for reflection. Although the doina “may originally have been improvised, once the piece is ‘set’, improvising is out.”²⁵ The work is very free, highly ornamented and intended to display the performer’s expressiveness and virtuosity. Typically doina are followed by a faster dance such as the hora or freylekhs.

Since the klezmerim traveled extensively and performed for a variety of audiences, it was necessary to know the popular music of the current region. The co-territorial repertoire contains these non-Jewish songs and dances such as the Polish mazurka or the Ukrainian kozachok.

The final category, cosmopolitan repertoire, encompasses the fashionable tunes or dances of the time, for instance the polka and the waltz. These are comparable to “Macarena,” “Bunny Hop,” or “Cotton-Eyed Joe,” popular songs often requested at modern festivities.

Klezmer utilizes several modes similar to the Ashkenazi synagogue modes. However, “a comprehensive theory of the Ashkenazi synagogue modes is still lacking.”²⁶ According to Pete Sokolow, klezmer music incorporates five basic modes or scales (*gustn* or *shteyger*) that are often referred to by the synagogue mode name: *Ahava-Raba*

²⁵Sapoznik, 20.

²⁶*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 56.

(*Freygish*), *Misheberakh*, *Adonoi Molokh*, minor and major. Moshe Beregovski and Joel Rubin describe only four modes, stating that *Adonoi Molokh* is an alteration of the major scale. Sokolow's information is based on Idelsohn's theories and will be used for this paper.

Freygish is the most common mode used in klezmer music. It is also known as *Ahava Raba*, meaning "great love," the first words of the prayer from the Shabbat Musaf service. The scale includes an augmented second created by raising the third scale degree. Half steps exist between first and second, third and fourth (caused by the alteration of the third), fifth and sixth scale degrees. The seventh note is flexible and can be a major and/or minor second.

D	Eb	F#	G	A	Bb	C (C#)	D
—	—	1—	—	—	—	—	—

Freygish is often given the key signature of the minor fourth note. For example, D Freygish uses the key signature for G minor (a B flat and an E flat). The F# (raised third) is notated in the music, not in the key signature. For this reason, Beregovski referred to this scale as the altered Phrygian scale. The typical chords used for harmony would be I, iv and vii. The minor vii functions as the dominant with occasional use of the true dominant.

The *Misheberakh* ("He who blesses") scale employs half steps between the second and third, fourth and fifth, sixth and seventh scale degrees. An augmented second is located between the third and altered fourth.

D	E	F	G#	A	B	C	D
—	—	—	1—	—	—	—	—

Beregovski refers to this mode as altered Dorian or Ukrainian Dorian (due to the

popularity of this mode in the Ukraine). Common supporting chords are i, II and v.

Misherberakh is used extensively in the Doina.

Adonoi Molohk mode derived its name from the opening prayer of the Friday night Shabbat service, “The Lord is King.” It closely resembles a major scale but is more flexible. The seventh scale pitch is a major step below tonic. A major dominant chord, however, is normally used to harmonize the melody, resulting in a minor second below tonic as well.

(C#)	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D
			—			—		

Major and minor modes are used in klezmer music. Sokolow states the harmonic minor to be the most common form of minor, yet Beregovski believes natural minor is the most prevalent. Joel Rubin makes no distinction between the two scales.

Even though the keys of C and D are very popular, these modes may start on any given note as long as the interval structure remains intact. Josh Horowitz explains each mode implies more than a series of half, whole and augmented steps.

Klezmer modes are comprised of more than 7 notes—a fact which alone makes them unsuited to Western heptatonic theory. A mode, then, is more than just a scale, implying also the way the notes making it up are used. Each mode implicitly contains a mood and a set of motives which are specific to it, though the melodic contour of these motives overlaps extensively from mode to mode, whereby the intervals are the varying factor.²⁷

Even though instrumentation of the klezmer ensemble has been effected by time as well as exposure to non-Jewish cultures, the function of the instrument groups

²⁷Josh Horowitz, “The Main Klezmer Modes” www.klezmershack.com/articles/horowitz/horowitz.klezmodes.html, 1.

remained the same. Ensembles are composed of at least one melodic instrument, one harmonic support instrument, and one rhythm/chord instrument. Melodic instruments generally include: violin, clarinet, flute/piccolo, trumpet, mandolin, xylophone, and soprano saxophone. If the ensemble contains two melodic or lead instruments, each will ornament according to personal taste and create heterophony. The harmonic support consort may include: alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, trombone, viola, cello or a second melodic instrument. These instruments follow the melodic contours and provide simple harmony. They may play a straight harmonic pattern parallel to the melody, a counter-melody or a reinforcement of the bass line. The rhythm and chord instruments are the “foundation of the klezmer band”²⁸ and could be one of the following: piano, accordion, electric keyboard, guitar, banjo, bass, tuba, cymbalom (*tsimbl*), dulcimer, autoharp, drum set or percussion. These instruments provide simple rhythms and harmony, remaining close to the root and fifth of the mode.

Early klezmer ensembles generally contained four to five members. The string family, flutes, harmonica (small accordion) and valve trombone were common instruments. The *tsimbl* (hammered dulcimer) was used in Central Europe and eventually Eastern Europe during the 16th century for approximately 100 years. It was usually combined with another melodic instrument such as flute or violin, sometimes with cello or bass.

The violin was the prevalent melodic instrument prior to the 19th century. “The violin is the original klezmer-and gypsy-instrument. From it comes everything. Trills,

²⁸Sapoznik, 25.

bird imitations, spiccato bowings, harmonics, glissandos up and down the fingerboard, expressive vibrato variation—the whole gamut is available to a capable violinist.”²⁹ In addition, the violin was capable of imitating the human voice. The cantors’ vocal inflections contained in *ningums* (wordless melodies) were integrated into the klezmer style by the violin. In the early 19th century, the clarinet took over the lead position, especially in Moldavia, Ukraine and Lithuania. The C and E-flat clarinets were prevalent in the beginning. As Pete Sokolow explains, the clarinet is able to produce a number of unique sounds.

The clarinet has inherited the mantle of “Number One Klezmer Instrument.” Clarinetists can do all sorts of tricks—“chirps,” made by loosening and abruptly tightening the lower jaw; side-key trills, using the two side keys on the upper joint with the right index finger; glisses, which combine varying lip pressure and gradual finger motion, finger trills, appoggiaturas and lip vibrato.³⁰

These techniques allow the clarinet to imitate the voice as does the violin.

By the end of the 19th century, the ensemble had grown from four to ten to fifteen members. Brass instruments became more popular especially in the Pale of Settlement. After immigrating to the United States, klezmer ensembles began to resemble American big bands and vaudeville house orchestras. The soft *tsimbl* was abandoned while the drum set and piano were incorporated. The accordion became an indispensable member as well. Modern ensembles range from small to large, however, they generally include lead, harmonic support, rhythm and chord instruments.

²⁹Sapoznik, 24.

³⁰Sapoznik, 24.

In a klezmer composition, the melody is the most important element. The simplicity of the harmony and bass line gives the performance a powerful interpretation. But it is the ornamentation played by the lead instrument(s) that bestows each performance a distinctive sound. Ornamentation should be tasteful and not overdone. Sokolow states “THE MELODY COMES FIRST!! The *dreydlekh* (ornamental turns) decorate the melody, NOT VICE-VERSA. There is always the tendency for the inexperienced player to try to ‘throw in the kitchen sink’ in trying for authenticity....”³¹ Quick trills, mordents, bent pitches and glissandi are all common but each performer embellishes according to personal preference. Many of the ornaments are intended to mimic the voice. Joel Rubin explains moans (*krehtsn*) are a “break in the voice between regular voice and falsetto, common in Eastern European synagogue chant, and Hasidic and Yiddish folk song.”³² Imitated laughing (*tshok*) and crying are often incorporated as well even though there is no standard system of notation for some of these sounds. According to Rogovoy, this type of ornamentation is “arguably the single most important characteristic of klezmer, both musically and in terms of its ‘Jewishness’.”³³ Since there is a high degree of flexibility when inserting ornamentation, students are encouraged to listen to recordings of the early masters and learn through oral tradition.

Many of the dances have common rhythmic patterns, usually located in the accompaniment. The slow hora with its 3/8 meter emphasizes beats one and three.

³¹Sapoznik, 24.

³²Joel Rubin, *Mazltov! Jewish-American Wedding Music for Clarinet*, (Germany: Schott Musik International, 1998), 13.

³³Rogovoy, 44.

Even though this pattern can be varied, it still gives the dance an unbalanced feel.



or



The faster freylekhs and its variants (such as the khosidl) have the following common rhythms:

freylekhs



khosidl



The fast bulgar contains a few rhythmic layers. The meter is typically 4/4 (or 8/8) but the eighth note groupings vary in the rhythm/chord instruments. The drums provide a 123 123 12 grouping while the piano and bass line play a straight-forward down-up or oom-pah pattern.

drums



piano/bass



Unlike swing or jazz, klezmer eighth notes are even or straight. Triplets are not played as three even notes, rather rushed at the beginning with a longer final note. A dotted eighth-sixteenth-note pattern is snapped; the first note is long and the second note is very quick.

Klezmer music employs several formulaic cadences. The bulgar cadence uses a syncopated rhythm followed by chromatic triplets leading to tonic. Another typical cadence uses a glissando or chromatic scale to reach tonic.

CHAPTER 4

IMPORTANT KLEZMER PERFORMERS IN THE UNITED STATES

The music scene in America produced several important klezmer performers. Some of the most influential were clarinetists: Shloimke Beckerman, Naftule Brandwein and Dave Tarras. Beckerman (ca. 1880 - ca. 1970) was born in Poland and immigrated to New York in 1910. Since he was a well-trained klezmer musician, Beckerman quickly found work in Yiddish Theater, Broadway, silent movies and recording studios in addition to klezmer ensembles. He was known for his fast technique and his heavily ornamented style. Although most of his contemporaries used the Albert clarinet, Beckerman played a B-flat Boehm clarinet. Fortunately, Beckerman's son, Sid, continued the klezmer tradition and provides a valuable link to the music and memories of his father.

Naftule Brandwein (1889-1963) was born into a well-known Polish klezmer family. He arrived in the United States in 1913 and quickly became a star soloist. Brandwein worked with some of the most prominent orchestras such as Abe Schwartz's Orchestra and Joseph Cherniavsky's Yiddish-American Jazz band, both of which made several recordings featuring Brandwein. He was famous for his fast technique, tight vibrato and florid ornamentation. Regrettably, he was also famous for his outrageous antics. Sapoznik tells how Brandwein wore "an Uncle Sam costume made entirely of Xmas tree lights and very nearly electrocuting himself with his perspiration...."³⁴ As a

³⁴Sapoznik, 10.

womanizer and a drinker, Brandwein fit the stereotypical description of a klezmer musician. Even though incredibly talented, his behavior and his inability to read music confined him to the klezmer world. Brandwein continued to work, playing weddings and shows in the Catskills but employers and audiences began to favor Dave Tarras.

Dave Tarras (1897-1989) came from a well-known klezmer family in Ukraine. His father was a trombonist as well as a respected *badkhn* (wedding poet). Tarras quickly learned to play the balalaika, mandolin and flute but preferred the C and E-flat clarinets, eventually performing in his father's band. Tarras explains the band did not use arrangements since "we knew hundreds of waltzes by memory, shers, freylekhs and bulgars. Each instrument knew exactly what they should do, how to fill in."³⁵ After moving to New York in 1921, Tarras first found work in a fur factory since his clarinet was destroyed during the fumigation process on Ellis Island. The clarinet was replaced one year later and Tarras began playing small jobs and weddings. His reputation spread and he was soon performing with Cherniavsky's Yiddish-American Jazz Band (position previously held by Shloimke and Brandwein). Unlike Brandwein, Tarras could read music and was employed outside the klezmer world as well. Tarras, respected for his "legitimate" sound and clean technique, preferred the Albert clarinet, switching from C to B-flat clarinet in 1929. Tarras created a unique style that "ornamented more sparingly and stuck closer to the melody"³⁶ than his contemporaries. Joel Rubin considers Dave Tarras

³⁵Henry Sapoznik, "Dave Tarras: Father of Yiddish-American Klezmer Music" liner notes, 3.

³⁶Joel Rubin, "The clarinet in Klezmer Music" in *The Clarinet* 18/3 (May/June 1991), 36.

to be one of the most important performers of early American klezmer.

In what was primarily functional music, few performers stood out as individuals or were considered to be great artists. Dave Tarras, who led his own ensembles at literally thousands of Jewish weddings and other festivities in the New York area, became undoubtedly the most famous and respected klezmer musician of the 20th century. With his flawless technique and artful ornamentation, Tarras has had a tremendous impact on virtually every traditional Yiddish musician who has come after him.³⁷

Max Epstein (b. 1912) stands apart from the other well-known clarinetists in that he was born in New York. Epstein began as a violinist and saxophonist but switched to the clarinet. Unlike his predecessors, he received a formal music education at New York University. Epstein worked in Rumanian and Russian Jewish cabarets and Yiddish theater, learning much of the klezmer trade from his fellow immigrant musicians. He formed the Epstein Brothers Orchestra with his three brothers: Julius (a leading drummer in Jewish music), William (a leading Jewish trumpeter) and Isidore (died in 1986). During the 1950s and 60s, they were very popular and were known as the Kings of Klezmer.

Perhaps the most famous jazz clarinetist of this era is Benny Goodman (1909-1986). Goodman is known primarily for his contribution to swing and big bands, not his klezmer playing. Although the Goodman group performed and recorded a few klezmer hits, the trumpeter Ziggy Elman performed the solos. Even so, American-Jews admired Goodman.

On the other hand, someone like Benny Goodman (1909-1986) came to represent to the 1930s American Jewish community what Mischa Elman had

³⁷Rubin, *Mazltov!*, 5.

to an earlier European generation: a Jew who could make it in the non-Jewish world playing non-Jewish music and not have to convert to do it. Goodman, however, did not play Jewish music. It was his star trumpet player Ziggy (Harry Finkleman) Elman (1914-1968) who introduced and played the “Jewish” solos in the orchestra. This misconception has fostered the impression that Goodman played “klezmer,” which he never claimed to do.³⁸

In addition to these soloists, several band and orchestra leaders contributed to the development of American klezmer. Abe Schwartz, a popular Romanian-born bandleader in the New York Yiddish theater scene, “produced more klezmer recordings than any other bandleader.”³⁹ He was also known for his piano and composition skills. Between 1917 and 1927, Harry Kandel produced numerous klezmer recordings with his Arch Street Theater Orchestra in Philadelphia. Joseph Chernaisky’s Yiddish-American Jazz Band employed many talented clarinetists and made significant recordings.

Each of these individuals left a unique impression on the klezmer world. They helped shape the American-Jewish klezmer style and repertoire and entertained generations of Jews. They left their legacy on invaluable recordings. Almost ninety percent of early klezmer recordings were made in America and the rediscovery of these forgotten recordings helped ignite a revival in the United States and Europe.

³⁸Sapoznik, *The Compleat Klezmer*, 13.

³⁹Rogovoy, 59.

CHAPTER 5

INFLUENTIAL PERFORMERS OF THE REVIVAL

By the late 1960s, klezmer had lost the majority of its audience. Although a few musicians were still performing klezmer, it no longer had the attraction it did at the turn of the century. An entire generation of the Jewish population was unfamiliar with klezmer, preferring the new rock-n-roll music. In the early 1970s, young adults became interested in their heritage and identity. For a few Jewish musicians, this implied a reconnection to klezmer.

Lev Liberman was performing folk music when he found a small collection of Yiddish recordings in a museum closet in California in 1975. He transcribed the klezmer tunes and added them to his repertoire, performing them with a new group, Klezmorim. Klezmorim, the first revival band, “laid down the parameters for the new klezmorim and played a large role in building expectations among audiences and critics.”⁴⁰ Although the Jewish community did not readily accept the music, the general public did and the klezmer revival was born.

Henry Sapoznik, highly interested in Bluegrass and Appalachian music at this time, turned his attention toward Jewish secular music after he rediscovered hundreds of abandoned klezmer recordings at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York. During his search for more recordings, Sapoznik found other musicians interested in

⁴⁰Rogovoy, 80.

klezmer such as Michael Alpert and Lauren Brody. Together they formed one of the earliest klezmer revival bands, Kapelye. By 1981, Kapelye was touring throughout the United States, greeted by enthusiastic Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.

While Liberman and Sapoznik studied early klezmer recordings, other musicians searched for the early performers themselves. Andy Statman learned that one of the best musicians was living in a neighboring community.

It was there in the Hasidic enclave in Brooklyn that Andy Statman would rediscover Dave Tarras in the mid-1970s, leading to one of the most remarkable mentor-protégé relationships in modern music, one that would in no small part be responsible for the revival of klezmer in the last two decades of the twentieth century.⁴¹

Statman along with Zev Feldman gave klezmer performances featuring Dave Tarras. The concerts were a huge success. Joel Rubin began working with Max Epstein. Although the Epsteins had retired to Florida, they were actively performing klezmer for senior citizens. Joel Rubin became a founding member of the popular group Brave Old World.

Klezmer was now reaching an even larger audience. In 1984, Klezmerim performed at Carnegie Hall and the Klezmer Conservatory Band (founded by Hankus Netsky) was featured on Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion* (National Public Radio). *KlezKamp* was established the following year and musicians from all over the United States were attending.

At the same time, Giora Feidman was popularizing klezmer in Europe. Feidman, Argentinean-born Israeli clarinetist, realized very little Jewish music existed in Israel. "It was then that he began his researches into the tradition and art of the Klezmer, dedicating

⁴¹Rogovoy, 74.

himself to interpreting music of the Jewish soul and spirit, past and present.”⁴² Even though Feidman’s interpretation is different from his contemporary American musicians, his contribution had a huge impact. Due to his efforts, klezmer now had an international following. Feidman even received the title of “the undisputed King of Klezmer” by *Jewish Monthly*.

By the mid 1980s, the klezmer style and repertoire were again influenced by new idioms. Jazz, Latin, world music, popular and even rock-n-roll were fused with klezmer. David Krakauer (formerly of the Klezmatics) incorporated jazz improvisation into his klezmer performances. Joel Rubin, Stuart Brotman, Joshua Horowitz and Michael Alpert were experimenting with new approaches to traditional klezmer as well. As creativity and flexibility were emphasized, the definition of klezmer expanded.

The revival influenced many musicians from folk artists to classical performers. Violinist Itzhak Perlman produced a Jewish secular music recording, *In the Fiddler’s House* (1996). The revival’s impact on the concert hall was inevitable.

⁴²Liner notes from *Magic of Klezmer* CD, 5.

CHAPTER 6

CONCERT MUSIC FOR CLARINET

For many years, Jewish musical elements have been evident in classical compositions by great composers such as Bruch, Bloch, Mahler and even Arnold Schoenberg. The popular klezmer style, however, has only been present in classical music for the last century. Some of the earliest klezmer influenced concert works are arrangements of traditional tunes by the clarinetist Simeon Bellison.

During the early decades of the 20th century, several Jewish musicians, most of them students of either Rimsky-Korsakov or Liadov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, composed pieces based in part on the klezmer repertory. The major figures in this movement were Joel Engel, Joseph Achron (1886-1943), Alexander Krein (1883-1951), Mikhail Gniessin (1883-1957) and Jacob Weinberg (1879-1956). The clarinetist Simeon Bellison (1883-1953), an early associate of Engel, continued to perform this repertory with his *Zimro Ensemble* (1918) and, after 1920, with the New York Philharmonic.⁴³

Bellison worked closely with fellow Russian Joel Engel, performing for his lectures. As a founding member of the chamber music group Zimro (Bellison, Jacob Mistechkin, Gregory Besrodney, Nicholas Moldavan, Josef Cherniavsky and Leon Berdichevsky), he performed Jewish influenced music including Prokofiev's *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, one of the earliest works to use Jewish ideas from a non-Jewish composer. Zimro toured throughout Europe, China and the United States for approximately three years, giving more than two hundred concerts. Even after Bellison moved to the United States to become principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic, he continued his

⁴³*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 89.

involvement with Jewish music. He arranged over one hundred melodies and commissioned new “Jewish” compositions. Of interest are the *Four Hebrew Melodies in form of a suite* set by Bellison for clarinet and piano. The movements, “To The Wedding,” “Hebrew Dance,” “Canzonetta” and “The Maypole,” are concise depictions of traditional secular music. This paper examines “To the Wedding” by Grzegorz Fitelberg, arranged by Bellison.

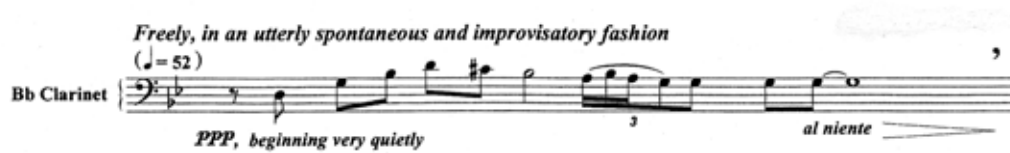
“To the Wedding” contains two parts: Kale-Besezen and Procession. The Kale-Besezen (seating of the bride) exemplifies the inherent flexibility of this ritual tune. *Accelerandos*, *ritardandos* and *fermatas* are precisely indicated, implying a sense of improvisation. The virtuosic clarinet melody is highlighted by the piano’s simple harmonic support. The main key of the work is A minor.

The lively Procession follows the serious Kale-Besezen. This simple dance employs a duple meter and includes three short sections, utilizing the common eight-and-sixteen-measure phrase structure. Set in the keys of D minor and F major, the light-hearted style is achieved with staccatos and grace notes. Both movements clearly display klezmer fundamentals.

While a few early compositions contain klezmer elements, the majority of klezmer-influenced classical works appear after the revival. Simon Sargon’s *KlezMuzik* (1995) for clarinet and piano clearly illustrates the influence. This seven-minute work contains many different klezmer characteristics such as form, mode and ornamentation. The introductory section for solo clarinet is reminiscent of the improvisatory and virtuosic nature of a doina or kale-basezen. The opening phrase incorporates an altered

fourth (C#), a characteristic of the Misherberakh mode.

Example 1: Opening



Throughout the introduction, glissandi and bent pitches, common klezmer ornamentation, can be included. Near the end of the unaccompanied passage, *KlezMuzik* modulates to the Freygish mode to prepare for the following faster sections.

The remainder of the work is a succession of four lively dance-like sections with a few transitional passages. The sections incorporate bulgar and freylekh elements such as meter, rhythmic patterns and phrase structure.

Section:	A	T	B	T	C	A ¹	D	A ¹	B	C	T	closing
Measure:	1	23	31	41	48	59	67	85	118	130	140	149

In the A section, the piano plays a two measure introduction, establishing the rhythm that dominates the rest of the composition.

Example 2: Measure 1 – 3

1 Moderato (♩ = 96)
Bb Clarinet
Piano
PP, ben ritmico

If the performer leans on the downbeat, upbeat of 2 and 4, the result is a common bulgar rhythmic pattern. Although initially given to the piano, the lead position is quickly usurped by the clarinet and the piano becomes a supportive instrument. The melody contains elements of the Freygish mode.

Example 3: Measure 4 – 9

The image displays a musical score for measures 4 through 9. The score is written for piano (p) and clarinet (cl). The piano part is in the bass clef, and the clarinet part is in the treble clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'p' (piano). The score shows a two-measure introduction, followed by two eight-measure phrases, and a four-measure extension. The piano part provides a typical after beat accompaniment underneath the clarinet melody.

This section contains a two-measure introduction, two eight-measure phrases and a four-measure extension, a common klezmer phrase structure. The following transition uses many of the opening ideas but at a faster tempo.

The B section retains the characteristics of the Freygish mode but presents a new clarinet melody. The piano provides a typical after beat accompaniment underneath.

Example 4: Measures 31 – 33



In the second transition, the piano plays a melodic unit from the A section while a new rhythmic pattern is in the clarinet line.

The quickest tempo of the piece is found in the C section. The clarinet plays chromatic passages that lead to long sustained notes. Although there is no indication to bend these pitches, tradition dictates this would be appropriate. The after beat accompaniment outlines the harmony.

Although the clarinet occupies the lead position for the majority of the work, the A¹ section features both the clarinet and the piano through imitation. The section temporarily abandons the functional instrumental roles.

The mid-point or D section is enhanced by the unusual mode of Freygish in B-flat. The clarinet plays a melody full of grace notes and quick trills, ornaments intended to imitate laughter. Even though the accompaniment is a simple eighth-note pattern, it is highly dissonant and sharply contrasts with the lighthearted melody.

During the first sixteen measures of the next portion (measures 85 – 117), the piano assumes the lead role while the clarinet provides rhythmic support. The piano repeats the opening melodic idea a final time. In measure 101, a unique solo piano

passage alternates between triple and duple meter. This is the only section that abandons the characteristic dance pulse. The clarinet resumes the lead for the final twelve measures.

The conclusion of *KlezMuzik* repeats earlier sections. A standard cadence incorporating a fast trill and a glissando to the final note completes the piece.

Example 5: Measures 149 – end

The image displays a musical score for measures 148 through 154. The score is written for a clarinet (treble clef) and piano (grand staff). Measure 148 begins with a clarinet melody featuring a trill and a glissando, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. Measures 149-150 show the clarinet continuing its melodic line with trills and glissandos, while the piano part provides harmonic support. Measures 151-152 feature a piano section with a 'cresc' (crescendo) marking and a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic, characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages. The final measure, 154, concludes with a fast trill and a glissando in the clarinet, leading to a final note.

Throughout *KlezMuzik*, Sargon employs traditional klezmer modes (Freygish and Misherberakh), forms, ornaments and rhythmic patterns. The use of klezmer style is intentional and the influence is obvious in this composition.

CHAPTER 7

DAVID SCHIFF'S *DIVERTIMENTO FROM GIMPEL THE FOOL*

Schiff's *Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool* is derived from his klezmer opera, *Gimpel the Fool* (1975-79). *Gimpel the Fool* was originally an hour-long Yiddish vaudeville production with piano accompaniment. Several years later, it was expanded, translated to English and reorchestrated for a small orchestra including accordion, mandolin and electric harpsichord. The opera is based on Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story of the same title, first published in 1953. The story follows the life of a gullible Jewish man, Gimpel, who is constantly tormented by the citizens of his hometown. Gimpel seeks the advice of the Rabbi who replies "better to be a fool all your days than for one hour to be evil. You are not a fool. They are the fools. For he who causes his neighbor to feel shame loses Paradise himself."⁴⁴ The local matchmaker pairs him with the town tramp, Elka. Although Gimpel refuses the match, the town persuades him of Elka's virtues and the two are married. Gimpel quickly discovers his instincts were correct but over time grows fond of her and her illegitimate son. Late one night, Gimpel finds his wife in bed with another man. Furious, Gimpel again goes to the Rabbi who mandates divorce. Upon hearing this, Gimpel recants his story but is too late; Gimpel is not allowed home until the council reviews the situation. In the meantime, Elka gives birth to another child. After several months, Gimpel is permitted to return to his wife.

⁴⁴Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Gimpel the Fool and other stories* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957), 5.

Unfortunately circumstances remain unchanged and Elka delivers five more children during the next twenty years. At this point, Elka becomes ill and confesses everything to Gimpel on her deathbed. After the funeral, an evil spirit persuades Gimpel to seek revenge upon his hometown. He poisons the local bread with his urine. Elka, however, visits Gimpel in another dream, urging him to reconsider. Gimpel awakes with a jolt and buries the bread; he does not seek revenge. For the remainder of his life, Gimpel travels, tells stories and anticipates heaven for “God be praised: there even Gimpel cannot be deceived.”⁴⁵

Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool was written for Chamber Music Northwest, a group consisting of clarinet, violin, cello and piano. The four-movement work borrows modes, dance and ritual forms as well as ornamentation from the klezmer tradition. The movements, “Overture/The Rabbi,” “Wedding Song,” “Pantomime/Bread Song” and “Who knows one?/Mazal Tov,” outline Singer’s short story.

The first movement is an energetic dance in duple meter with occasional meter changes. The shifts move the work farther away from its functional dance origins. The movement employs the E-flat clarinet, violin, cello and piano. The instruments provide the traditional klezmer functional roles of melody, harmony and rhythm. The texture, however, is very dense and occasionally conceals the melody in the E-flat clarinet. The mode of the eight-measure melody, Freygish on E (E F G# A B C D E), is obscured by tone clusters in the piano.

⁴⁵Singer, 21.

Example 6: Measures 1 – 3

The musical score is for measures 1 through 3 of a piece. It is written for four instruments: Clarinet in Eb, Violin, Cello, and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Vivo' at the beginning. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 2/4. The Clarinet part features a melodic line with ornaments (trills and grace notes) and a dynamic of *f*. The Violin part starts with a *f* dynamic, then moves to *mf* and includes 'sul pont.' markings. The Cello part also starts with a *f* dynamic, then moves to *mf* and includes 'sul pont.' markings. The Piano part is marked *ff* and provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The melody is repeated with added ornamentation in the clarinet and cello. The piece comes to an abrupt halt when the cello performs a “quasi recitativo,” which represents the Rabbi. The doina-like solo is sparsely supported by the rest of the ensemble.

Example 7: Measure 22 – 25

The image displays a musical score for measures 22 through 25. The score is written for a vocal line (top) and a piano accompaniment (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line begins in measure 22 with a melodic phrase marked with a fermata. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Performance instructions include "Quasi recitativo" (twice), "colla parte", "normal", "colla parte molto rubato", "normal", "mf", "sp", "p", and "f". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The piano part includes a section labeled "harmonics" in measure 24.

In measure 48, the opening melody is softly repeated by the piano. The section gains volume and excitement as it nears the end of the movement. The cello rudely stops the momentum to perform a closing recitative. As the tension fades, the cello is the final sound of the movement. The Rabbi has the last word.

The slow second movement represents the seriousness of Gimpel's wedding ceremony. The somber character of "Wedding Song" is partially achieved when the shrill

E-flat clarinet is replaced with the darker B-flat clarinet. The clarinet presents the long D minor melody sparingly accompanied by chromatic pitches from the other instruments.

Unlike the dense writing of the previous movement, the second movement texture allows the melody to dominate in true klezmer fashion. Each instrument is clearly designated as melodic, harmonic or rhythmic. The antecedent phrase is repeated in measure 13 with little melodic variation.

Example 8: Measure 13 – 16

The image shows a musical score for measures 13 through 16. It consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It begins with a measure rest, followed by a melodic line starting on G4, moving stepwise up to D5, then down to C5, B4, and A4. A box labeled 'A' is placed above the first measure. The second staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains a complex accompaniment of eighth and sixteenth notes, mostly chromatic, with a measure rest in the first measure. The third staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains a simple harmonic accompaniment of quarter notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. A measure rest is in the first measure. The fourth staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. A measure rest is in the first measure. The dynamic marking *mp* is placed above the third staff in the first measure.

The consequent phrase of the melody is heard in measure 22. Once both phrases are established, the remainder of the movement is a beautiful treatment of the entire melody. Violin, clarinet and cello individually highlight the tune over a simple but dissonant accompaniment. Even though countermelodies and canon technique are used, the melody remains the focus of the movement.

The third movement opens as a lively dance between the clarinet and the cello in Misherberakh on A. Syncopation, accidentals and glissandi give the melody an unusual character. The jovial atmosphere is disfigured when the violin enters in a different key,

Misherberakh on D.

Example 9: Measure 1 – 13

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) is titled 'Scherzando' and features a Clarinet in Bb and a Cello. The Clarinet part begins with a first ending bracket over measures 1 and 2, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Cello part starts with a pizzicato (*pizz.*) and mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in measure 1, then switches to arco (*arco*) and piano (*p*) in measure 2. The second system (measures 4-6) continues the Clarinet melody, while the Cello part features glissando (*gliss.*) markings. The third system (measures 7-9) shows the Clarinet melody continuing, with the Cello part also featuring glissando. The fourth system (measures 11-13) is marked with a box 'A' above measure 11. It features a Violin part and a Cello part. The Violin part has a first ending bracket over measures 11 and 12, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The Cello part has a first ending bracket over measures 11 and 12, marked with a pizzicato (*pizz.*) dynamic. The score ends with a page number '- 28 -'.

The piano entrance in measure 20 further distorts the sound. Only the arrival of a new melody and key (Misherberakh on E) relieves the building tension. The melody is featured in the clarinet as a cello drone provides stability. The apparent calm ends abruptly with a dissonant outburst from the entire ensemble.

The following *grazioso* section reinstates the calm atmosphere but retains the dissonance. An introduction played by the violin and clarinet initially establishes Freygish on C. The piano initiates a simple new melody based on degrees 5 3 2 1 of the F scale. First, the normal third scale degree (A-flat) is used, a characteristic of Misherberakh. The third is then altered (A-natural) in the following measure, creating a Freygish sound. The melody appears to alternate between the two modes. The cello, however, clearly outlines the Misherberakh mode.

Example 10: Measure 38 – 41

The image displays a musical score for measures 38 through 41. The score is written for four staves: two vocal staves (soprano and alto) and two piano staves (treble and bass). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. Measures 38 and 39 show the vocal lines with eighth-note patterns and accents, while the piano accompaniment provides a harmonic foundation. Measures 40 and 41 continue the vocal melody, with the piano part featuring a 'cantabile' section marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) section. The piano part includes a short interlude in 6/8 meter, which delays the repetition of the melody. The overall texture is characterized by the interplay between the vocal lines and the piano accompaniment, with the piano part providing a stable harmonic base through the repetition of the tonic in the bass.

The conflict is resolved when Misherberakh is firmly established in measure 49.

A short interlude in 6/8 meter delays the repetition of the melody. During the repetition, the melodic unit is passed from instrument to instrument. Even though modal instability is still present in the melody, the repetition of tonic in the bass offers stability.

Example 11: Measure 54 – 57

The image displays a musical score for measures 54 through 57. The score is written for four staves: Violin (top), Viola (second), Cello (third), and Piano (bottom). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 5/4. Measure 54 is marked with a box containing the letter 'E' and the tempo marking 'Grazioso'. The Violin and Viola parts feature melodic lines with slurs, while the Cello part has a melodic line starting in measure 55. The Piano part begins in measure 55 with a series of chords marked 'p' (piano) and 'leggiero' (light). Measure 56 shows the Violin and Viola parts continuing their melodic lines, with the Violin marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The Piano part continues with chords marked 'pp' (pianissimo). Measure 57 shows the Violin and Viola parts concluding their melodic lines, with the Violin marked 'mp' and the Viola marked 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The Piano part continues with chords marked 'pp'.

Another temporary interruption occurs (measure 68) when violin repeats the melodic pattern in a new key and tempo accompanied by explosive low Cs in the keyboard. The calm of the *grazioso* melody returns only to be silenced by the gentle 6/8 interlude. As the end of the movement nears, the cello softly performs a final statement of the melody. Good triumphs over evil; Gimpel does not seek revenge.

The last movement, “Who Knows One?/Mazal Tov,” contains two large sections. It begins with an expressive and extremely flexible doina. The solo line, played by the returning E-flat clarinet, includes klezmer ornamentation. The other instruments supply harmonic support. Although F minor is indicated, lowered seconds and raised thirds give the opening a Freygish sound.

Example 12: Measure 1 – 4

The image displays a musical score for measures 1 through 4 of a piece. The score is written for four instruments: Clarinet in Eb, Violin, Cello, and Piano. The key signature is F minor (three flats), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 1-2) features the Clarinet in Eb with a melodic line marked 'Quasi una cadenza rubato, parlando' and 'f'. The Violin and Cello provide harmonic support with sustained notes. The Piano part includes a bass line with a 'f' dynamic. The second system (measures 3-4) continues the melodic development in the Clarinet, with the Violin and Cello playing chords and the Piano providing a rhythmic and harmonic foundation. Dynamics like 'f' and 'fp' are used throughout to indicate volume changes.

A lively *Mazal Tov* or congratulatory dance follows. The clarinet presents a new melody (A) accompanied by countermelodies in the strings and an after beat piano pattern. Overall, there is a high amount of rhythmic interest and intensity.

Example 13: Measure 21 – 22

The energetic section is disrupted by a playful clarinet melody (B), quickly echoed a fifth lower by the cello. The violin answers with a contrasting idea in 6/8 meter. The parallel fifths obscure the mode until a lowered second is introduced near the end of the melody (measure 41). At this point, the violin repeats the melody starting on tonic, confirming the Freygish mode. With the absence of the piano, the texture is significantly thinned and the melody is featured.

Example 14: Measure 32 – 46

In measure 50, the movement returns to the vibrant character of the opening melody (A¹). The cello plays an altered version of the melody but retains the rhythmic structure of the original tune. The clarinet reinforces the melody as the violin and piano provide accompaniment.

Example 15: Measure 50 – 51

The image displays a musical score for measures 50 and 51, consisting of four staves. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 5/4. Measure 50 begins with a treble clef staff containing a whole rest, followed by a box labeled 'E' and a fermata. The second staff has a half note G4 with an accent, followed by eighth notes. The third staff features a half note G4 with an accent and a 'f' dynamic, followed by eighth notes. The fourth staff starts with a half note G4 with an accent and a 'mp' dynamic, followed by eighth notes. Measure 51 continues with various musical notations, including a 'f' dynamic, a '3' fingering, and a '6' fingering. The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

The remainder of the work alternates between the playful melody (B) and the opening melody (A and A¹). Ornamentation, instrumentation, dynamics and key are altered to create excitement and build tension. At the climax, the piece unexpectedly revisits the opening melody of the first movement that brings an exciting end to this klezmer-influenced classical composition.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

To understand the importance of klezmer, its European and American history must be understood. To comprehend the character, its components must be recognized. Choice of mode, instrumentation, ornamentation, function, and rhythm all contribute to create the unique sound. To appreciate the style, its vintage recordings must be examined. Early recordings of Dave Tarras, Naftule Brandwein and others provide a valuable link to an authentic performance practice. Once these foundations are established, a better insight into the klezmer influence can be achieved.

Musical examples of Bellison, Sargon and Schiff reveal varying amounts of influence in each composers' approach to the klezmer style. Bellison arranged and ornamented popular folk tunes for the clarinet and piano but did not compose any new material. His initial efforts to promote Jewish music in the concert hall paved the way for future klezmer influence. Sargon's *KlezMuzik* is a stylized version of klezmer music employing characteristic modes, style, and form in this original composition. On the other hand, Schiff weaves klezmer elements into a new, twentieth century work utilizing dissonance and shifting meters.

Appendix A is a list of klezmer-influenced clarinet works. It is a compilation of research and suggestions from well-known classical clarinetists in the klezmer field. Even though there is a wide variety of compositional style, all were inspired by Jewish secular music. The use of klemzer is obvious in some works while in others it is subtle. The list,

though not comprehensive, provides a beginning for the musician interested in klezmer-influenced works.

The classical music world has long been influenced by secular music and popular trends. From Dufay's *Missa L'homme arme* to Copland's *Piano Concerto*, the impact of secular music is apparent. Today, the Jewish folk music known as klezmer is again fashionable and influential in concert music. Klezmer has a devout worldwide following and has been fused with a variety of genres from jazz to rock and to classical. Musicians with varying backgrounds have been enticed to perform klezmer and composers, especially Jewish composers, are realizing its importance. The classical concert stage is once again influenced by secular music.

APPENDIX

KLEZMER-INFLUENCED CONCERT COMPOSITIONS FOR CLARINET-
A SELECTED LIST

Adler, Samuel	<i>Canto XIX (A klezmer fantasy)</i> (1965), solo clarinet, Ludwig Music
Bellison, Simeon, arr.	<i>Four Hebrew Melodies in form of a suite</i> , clarinet and piano, Jibneh-Verlag
	Fitelberg, Grzegorz The Wedding
	Weinberg, Jacob Canzonetta
	Levinson, Boris Hebrew Dance
	Weinberg, Jacob The Maypole
Bellison/Forrest, arr.	<i>Four Hebraic Pictures in Klezmer Tradition</i> (1996), clarinet and piano, Southern Music
	Fitelberg, Grzegorz The Wedding
	Weinberg, Jacob Canzonetta
	Levinson, Boris Hebrew Dance
	Weinberg, Jacob The Maypole
Ben-Amots, Ofer	<i>Celestial Dialogues</i> (1994), tenor, clarinet and string Orchestra, Kallisti Music Press
Ben-Haim, Paul	<i>Three Songs without Words</i> (1952), clarinet and piano, Theodore Presser
Benyas, Edward	<i>Two Hassidic Dances</i> (1997), woodwind quintet, International Opus
Braun, Yehezkel	<i>Three Hassidic Dances</i> (1978), clarinet and piano
Brill, Elissa	<i>Klezmer Music</i> (1988), clarinet, viola and piano, Arsis Press
Buss, Howard J.	<i>Klezmer! Awakening</i> (1989), clarinet, guitar and double bass, Brixton Publications
	<i>Traditions</i> (1990), clarinet, violin, guitar and double bass, Brixton Publications
Curtis, Mike	<i>A Klezmer Wedding</i> (1996), woodwind quintet, Tara Publications

Dorfman, Joseph	<i>Bewitched klezmer</i> (1987), solo clarinet, Peer Music
Ellstein, Abraham	<i>Chassidic Dance</i> (1963), clarinet and piano or orchestra, EMI Music
Fink, Myron	<i>A Bintl Lider-Rhapsody on Jewish Melodies</i> (1999), klezmer ensemble and orchestra
Flowers, Jonathan	<i>Visions in the Dark</i> (1988)
Gardner, Samuel	<i>Hebrew Fantasy</i> (1979), clarinet and strings
Glick, Srul Irving	<i>Suite Hebraique No. 4</i> (1979), clarinet and piano, Dorn Publications
Golijob, Osvaldo	<i>The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind</i> (1995) clarinet and string quartet, Ytalianna Music Publishing (BMI)
Goodman, Joseph	<i>Capricho Goyesco</i> , solo clarinet, General Publishing
Krein, Alexander	<i>Esquisses Hebraiques</i> (1951), clarinet and string quartet
Levanon, Aryeh	<i>Play, Klezmer</i> (1957), clarinet and piano, Israel Music Institute
Levenson, Boris	<i>Two Jewish Folksongs</i> , clarinet and strings
Maderich, Robert J.	<i>Klezmer Dances</i> (1990), clarinet, violin and orchestra, American Music Center
Phillips, Mark	<i>One of a Kind</i> (1995), solo clarinet, MMB
Prokofiev, Sergei	<i>Overture on Hebrew Themes</i> , Op. 34 (1919), clarinet, string quartet and piano, International Music
Sargon, Simon	<i>KlezMuzik</i> (1995), clarinet and piano, self published
Schiff, David	<i>Clarinet Concerto (Cantididavide)</i> (2001), clarinet and orchestra, MMB
Schiff, David	<i>Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool</i> (82/85), clarinet, violin, cello and piano, self published

Schiff, David	<i>Two Prayers</i> , clarinet and piano, MMB
Schiff, David	<i>Vashti</i> (1997), mezzo-soprano, clarinet and piano, MMB
Schechter, Gregori	<i>Klezmer Rhapsody</i> (1998), clarinet and orchestra
Schoenfield, Paul	<i>Trio</i> , clarinet, violin and piano, Davidge Music
Starer, Robert	<i>Kli zemer: Instrument of song</i> (1982), clarinet and orchestra, MMB
Steinberg, Paul	<i>Klezmer Rhapsody</i> (1995), solo clarinet, manuscript
Stutschewsky, Joachim	<i>Memories</i> (1982), solo clarinet, Or-Tav Music
Wyner, Yehudi	<i>Tanz and Maissele (Dance & Little Story)</i> (1981), clarinet, violin, cello and piano, G. Schirmer Inc.
Zuckert, Leon	<i>Doina</i> (1970), clarinet and piano

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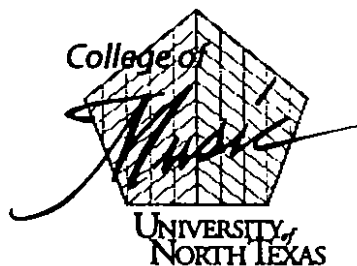
Fantasy - Sonata (1943) John Ireland
(1879-1962)

- Intermission -

A Set for Clarinet (1954) Donald Martino
Allegro (b. 1931)
Adagio
Allegro

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Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano (1981) Joseph Horowitz
I. Allegro calmato (b. 1926)
II. Lento, quasi andante
III. Con brio

KlezMusik (1995) Simon Sargon
(b. 1938)

— PAUSE —

Trio for Clarinet, 'Cello, and Piano, Op. 3 (1895) Alexander von Zemlinsky
I. Allegro ma non troppo (1871-1942)
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Form of a Suite (arranged in 1918) (1879-1953)
arr. Simeon Bellison

Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool (1982-1985) David Schiff
Overture/The Rabbi (b. 1945)
Wedding Song
Pantomime/Bread Song
"Who knows one?"/Mazal Tov

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