

2023/24
SEASON

CWRU MUSIC

CONCERT SERIES

Klezmer Music Ensemble

The American Klezmer Experience

A Concert of American Klezmer Music from 1920–1960

7:30 p.m.

Thursday

December 7, 2023

STEVEN GREENMAN
DIRECTOR



Harkness Chapel

11200 Bellflower Road Cleveland, OH



**CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY**
College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Music
10900 Euclid Avenue Cleveland, OH
case.edu/artsci/music

PROGRAM

Sam's Bulgar

Sam Musiker (1916-1964)

from the recording
Tanz! With Dave Tarras and the Musiker Brothers (1955)

Zug Es Mir Nokh a Mol
("Tell It To Me Once Again")

Abraham Ellstein (1907-1963)
Lyrics by Jacob Jacobs (1890-1977)

Vocal soloist
Gillian Beckman, soprano

"Rumania" Bulgar

Alexander Olshanetsky (1891-1946)

from the recording
Tanz! With Dave Tarras and the Musiker Brothers (1955)

Der Cholem Fun Yid
("The Jewish Dream")

Sam Musiker (1916-1964)

from the recording
Tanz! With Dave Tarras and the Musiker Brothers (1955)

Hopkele
("Little Hopke Dance")

Alexander Olshanetsky (1891-1946)
Lyrics by Jacob Jacobs (1890-1977)

from a recording by Seymour Rechzeit and the Abe Ellstein Orchestra (1941)

Second Avenue Square Dance

Dave Tarras (1897-1989)
Abraham Ellstein (1907-1963)

from a recording featuring Dave Tarras and the Abe Ellstein Orchestra (1950)

Doina Pt. 1
("Romanian Shepherd's Lament")

Traditional Improvisation

Der Alter Tsigayner
("The Old Gypsy")

Abraham Ellstein (1907-1963)

Vocal Soloists
Gillian Beckman, soprano
Matthew Haimowitz, tenor

INTERMISSION

PROGRAM CONTINUED

Leena from Palesteena
("Lena from Palestine")

Russel Robinson (1892-1963)
Lyrics by Con Conrad (1891-1938)

A Heymisher Bulgar
("A Homey Bulgar")

Abraham Ellstein (1907-1963)

Vocal Soloists
Gillian Beckman, soprano
Matthew Haimowitz, tenor

Baym Rebn's Sude
("At the Rabbi's Feast")

Traditional/Abe Schwartz Orchestra

Der Yidisher Marsh
("The Jewish March")

Joseph Cherniavsky (1891-1959)

Doina Pt. II
("Romanian Shepherd's Lament")

Traditional Improvisation

Di Goldene Khasene

Dave Tarras (1897-1989)

from a recording by the Abe Ellstein Orchestra (1949)

Rumeynye, Rumeynye
("Romania, Romania")

Aaron Lebedeff (1873-1960)

from a recording featuring Aaron Lebedeff and Sholom Secunda's Orchestra (1941)

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

Matthew Haimowitz (tenor, guitar)

Isabel Fedewa (flute)

Gillian Beckman (soprano)

Gabrielle "Gabby" Olivares (oboe)

Gabriel Stossel (piano)

Kevin Maxwell (clarinet)

Oscar Heft (violin)

Weichien Huang (clarinet)

Aubrey Williamson (violin)

Samhita Tatavarty (bassoon)

Lourdes "Lola" Pinney (viola)

Nicolas Shafer (euphonium)

Nilli Tayidi (viola)

Hao-Wei Tsai (double bass)

Rowena Bakke (cello)

Kai-Che Chen (double bass)

Tatum Hodgson (cello)

Steven Greenman (director)

Martha Sprague (cello)

Kate Huang (cello)

PROGRAM NOTES

Tonight's concert features music from the American Klezmer music tradition. With East-European Jewish immigration to the United States (1880-1920), Jewish professional musicians, aka *klezmerim*, brought their traditions of instrumental wedding music, Yiddish song, and the drama of the Yiddish theater to the New World often while incorporating elements from American popular music. While the traditional Jewish wedding in Eastern Europe was a multi-day affair with music played for both listening and dancing, the American Jewish wedding focused mainly on the dance music. This was due to the fact that in America, the Jewish wedding was relegated to the synagogue, temple, or banquet hall with a subscribed number of hours to celebrate. While the violin or *fidl* was the most important instrument and the leader of the European klezmer ensemble, the clarinet assumed the leadership role in America. The old combination of *fidl* (lead violin), *tsimbl* (Jewish hammered-dulcimer), string bass or cello, *sekund fidl* (rhythmic-harmonic accompanying violin), and wooden flute was usurped by the clarinet, saxophones, trombone, drum set, piano/accordion. This gave the ensemble more of a "big band" sound that reflected the current musical tastes in America. The klezmer repertoire showed a significant change as the artistic listening repertoire from Europe (*dobriden*, *mazltov*, *dobranotsh*, *gas nign*, *skotshne*, *tish nign*) was no longer featured. The most important Yiddish dance music played for Jewish weddings in America was the *bulgar*, a Yiddish line dance formerly known as *bulgarish*, and derived from the Moldavian/Romanian *bulgareasca* dance. The *bulgar* is known for its driving and accented rhythms. A main propagator of the *bulgar* in New York in the 1920's-1950's was the illustrious clarinetist, Dave Tarras (1897-1989). Tarras (facetiously known as "The Jewish Benny Goodman") had a celebrated recording career with multiple Jewish orchestras, Jewish theater ensembles, and with his own bands. Tarras was a famed composer of klezmer music and further developed the form of the *bulgar*. By the 1940s-1950s, klezmer music often incorporated jazz and swing rhythms and developed a more substantial harmonization from the pedestrian European chord progressions. The album "Tanz," featuring Dave Tarras and clarinetist/saxophonist Sam Musiker (1916-1964), revolutionized the way klezmer music was heard and advanced its forms and harmonies.

In addition to the contributions of Dave Tarras, Sam Musiker, and many others to American klezmer music, Yiddish theater music blossomed. Founded in Eastern-Europe, Yiddish theater productions were prevalent in New York (Second Avenue -Yiddish Broadway) and expanded to several large American cities populated with European Jews. Great Yiddish theater composers included: Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908), Joseph Rumshinsky (1881-1956), Alexander Olshanetsky (1891-1946), Abraham Ellstein (1907-1963), and Sholom Secunda (1894-1974). Yiddish theatrical song became an important fabric of American Jewish cultural life in addition to Yiddish instrumental music.

By the 1950's, with the creation of the State of Israel, the cultural focus of Jews world-wide drifted from the older Eastern European traditions. The birth of a new nation, contrasted sharply with the memories of the horrors of the Holocaust, relegated Yiddish arts, language, and culture to a secondary level. While Yiddish culture continued in America through the 1960's, it no longer assumed the focus it once had. The 1970's brought about a revitalization of Yiddish culture, music, and art led by second and third generation American Jews searching for connections to their Jewish ancestry and culture. Older generations of Jewish musicians were interviewed and celebrated at Yiddish Folk Arts Festivals with the teaching of klezmer music, Yiddish song, and Yiddish dances. New technologies enabled the transcriptions of old 78 rpm recordings of klezmer music and greater accessibility to old sources. Today, klezmer and Yiddish music is an international phenomenon with festivals and masterclasses in many countries. Scholars continue to unearth old documents and recordings and the evolution of klezmer music continues with increasing creativity.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Sam's Bulgar – Released in 1955, the album *Tanz! With Dave Tarras and the Musiker Brothers* featured legendary virtuoso Jewish clarinetists Dave Tarras and Sam Musiker bringing new innovations to the traditional forms of klezmer music with expanded harmonizations and jazz sensibilities. Michael Simmons' captures the spirit of the album with his review:

*When Tanz! was released in 1955 its revolutionary blend of klezmer and swing failed to excite fans of either style and the LP promptly disappeared without a trace. Which was too bad because the record not only offered an intriguing vision of what klezmer could have become, it featured some of the finest playing by two of klezmer's most important figures, the legendary clarinet players Dave Tarras and Sam Musiker. The 14 tracks were arranged by Musiker, a **Gene Krupa Band** veteran, who skillfully combined the wild melodic flights and rhythmic drive of klezmer with the sophisticated harmonies of jazz. Tarras is one of those musicians whose playing is always wonderful, but on tracks like his composition "Tango," or the traditional tune "Gypsy," he seems particularly inspired by the innovative settings. Tanz! was unjustly ignored when it was realized in 1955. Don't make the same mistake with this reissue.*

A composition of Musiker, "Sam's Bulgar" is a rollicking *bulgar* dance containing an opening and closing chromatic passage supported rhythmically with the ever-present *bulgar* rhythm (accented eighth notes 1, 4, and 7 of **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8**). Each section of the piece reveals a different klezmer mode adding variety. The third section in the *C mishebeyrakh mode* (notes C, D, Eb, F#, G, A, Bb, C) exhibits surprising harmonizations that would have been non-existent in a more traditional rendition with a major IV chord (F major) and a deceptive cadence major VI chord (Ab major).

Zug Es Mir Nokh a Mol (Tell It to Me Once Again) – Written by famed Yiddish theater composer Abraham Ellstein with lyrics by Jacob Jacobs, "Zug Es Mir Nokh a Mol" was featured in the operetta production of "Der Berditshiver Khusin" (The Bridegroom from Berdychiv, Ukraine) and was later recorded by the famous Jewish singing duo The Barry Sisters (formerly "The Bagelman Sisters"). The melody opens in the form of the Romanian slow *hora* with its limping rhythm while the refrain displays a jazzy-swinging rhythm.

Rumania Bulgar (Romanian Bulgar) – was composed by Alexander Olshanetsky and is another *bulgar* dance featured on the *Tanz!* album. The use of whole sections of the melody played in thirds departs from the traditional klezmer practice of only playing the melody in thirds for brief phrases. Sections two and three show a creative interplay of the two main melodic voices.

Der Cholem fun Yid (The Jewish Dream) – Composed and performed by Sam Musiker for *Tanz!*, "Der Cholem fun Yid" is a soulful and heartfelt composition written in the style of the Romanian slow *hora* dance (aka *zhok*). The occasional foray into the minor V chord (G minor) adds a surprising and inventive harmonic element.

Hopkele (Little Hopke Dance) – The *hopke* is a Yiddish line dance similar to the ubiquitous *freylekhs* dance. "Hopkele" was composed by Alexander Olshanetsky with lyrics by Jacob Jacobs and was featured in the operetta "Vus Meydlakh Toen" (What Girls Do). Our version is derived from Yiddish tenor Seymour Recheit's 1941 recording "Hopkele" with the Abe Ellstein orchestra.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Second Ave Square Dance – Composed by Dave Tarras in homage to New York City's former Yiddish Theater District located on Second Avenue in Manhattan and recorded with the Abe Ellstein Orchestra, this virtuosic *bulgar* is filled with syncopations and off-beat accents together with the traditional rhythms of the *bulgar*.

Doina Pt. I – The *doina* (also “*doyne*”) is a Romanian-improvised display piece in rubato-rhythm favored by both Romanian musicians and *klezmerim*. A solo improvisation is performed over a prescribed chordal structure. The *doina* is one of the few Yiddish rubato display pieces that were still played in America.

Der Alter Tsigayner (The Old Gypsy) – This *bulgar* was written by the Yiddish theater maven Abe Ellstein with lyrics by Jacob Jacobs for the production of the Yiddish operetta *Bublitshki* (Little Bagels). “Der Alter Tsigayner” was also recorded by the Barry Sisters.

“Listen to the strain of the old gypsy's fiddle. Its haunting melody will touch your soul, excite your emotions, and make you feel great to be alive.”

INTERMISSION

Leena from Palestina – Composed in 1920 by Russel Robinson with lyrics by Con Conrad, “Leena from Palestena” was recorded by the Dixieland Jass Band and displays elements of both klezmer music in the style of New Orleans' Dixieland jazz. The minor section of the klezmer tune “*Nokh a Bis*” (Just a Little More) forms the basis of the main melody. Later in the song, a segment of a Ukrainian *kolomyjka* dance, popular among *klezmerim* can also be heard in the clarinet under the main melody.

*They say that Lena is the Queen o' Palestena
Just because she plays the concertina.
She only knows one song,
She plays it all day long.
Sometimes she plays it wrong,
But still they love it, want more of it.*

A Heymisher Bulgar (A Homey Bulgar) – A splendid instrumental arrangement and performance by Sam Musiker and his Orchestra of a song composed by Abe Ellstein originally written for a recording with the Yiddish vocalist Seymour Rechzeit. Musiker's arrangement displays a clever interplay of the *bulgar* melody with creative answering counter lines from the accordion and saxophone.

Let's dance as we used to in the old hometown. Forget your troubles, as you dance with your friends.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Baym Rebn's Sude (At the Rabbi's Feast) – Recorded by Yiddish bandleader Abe Schwartz in 1920, "Baym Rebn's Sude" is a classic *khosidl* (aka *khusidl*), a Yiddish instrumental dance piece based on Hasidic vocal hymns. Schwartz' arrangement includes a unique bass line movement throughout that compliments the melody. Arrangements of this melody in a faster tempo can be found in Joseph Cherniavsky's (1891-1959) "Der Yidisher Marsh" and also in "Freilachs", the second of Joel Engel's (1868-1927) "Two Violin Pieces – Op. 20" for violin and piano accompaniment.

Der Yidisher Marsh (The Jewish March) – The Jewish-American cellist, Yiddish theater and film composer, orchestra director, and recording artist Joseph Cherniavsky recorded "Der Yidisher Marsh" in 1925 with his Yiddish-American Jazz Band. "Der Yidisher Marsh" is an augmented arrangement of the traditional klezmer tune "Baym Rebn's Sude" that includes an opening *forshpil* (introduction) and *doina* (Romanian improvisation) by the clarinet followed by the melody in the form of an aggressive march. A slower middle section uses the opening melody from the klezmer tune "Der Heyser Bulgar" (The Hot Bulgar).

Doina Pt. II – Further explorations of the Romanian shepherd's lament with improvisations by the CWRU Klezmer Music Ensemble.

Di Goldene Khasene (The Golden Wedding) – Klezmer clarinet master Dave Tarras recorded "Di Goldene Khasene" with the Abe Ellstein Orchestra in 1949. Tarras was an exemplary composer of the Romanian-Moldavian-influenced Yiddish *bulgar* dance and furthered its development in America. "Di Goldene Khasene" is a classic example of the American-styled *bulgar* which features a driving rhythm throughout.

Rumeynye, Rumeynye (Romania, Romania) – Written and performed by the great Yiddish vocalist Aaron Lebedeff (1873-1960), "Rumeynye, Rumeynye" details the high-spirited love of Romanian food and wine and echoes motifs from Enesco's "Romanian Rhapsody" and the Romanian violin showpiece "Ciorciria" (The Lark). Our version is taken from Lebedeff's 1941 recording with Sholom Secunda and his orchestra.

Oh, Romania, you were once a wonderful land, where it was a pleasure to live, and to delight in the joys of wine, women, and comradeship.

ABOUT

The Department of Music, an academic department within the College of Arts and Sciences, serves undergraduate and graduate students at Case Western Reserve University as well as all students at the Cleveland Institute of Music through our Joint Music Program.

A top-ranked private research university with programs spanning the arts and sciences, engineering, health sciences, law, management, and social work, CWRU excels in musicology, historical performance practice, and music education. CIM is one of just three independent conservatories in the United States devoted exclusively to classical music performance. For over half a century, these distinguished institutions have used the JMP to share collective resources, focusing on the strengths of each institution.

Our campus provides a thriving and holistic learning experience where students feel comfortable in a diverse and supportive setting. The Department of Music aspires to be an inclusive environment in which all members feel empowered to participate in the community, fostering creative energy and insights that result in a better institution.

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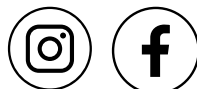
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We would like to express our sincere gratitude for attending our event. Your presence and engagement are truly appreciated. We hope that you found our performance enjoyable and that you were able to connect with others in our community. We value your support and look forward to seeing you again soon!

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