

# Prelude

75 years



Alive through great music!

## MASTERWORKS #6:

## MOZART MEETS KLEZMER • MARCH 15 - 17, 2019

Mozart and klezmer reflect two different worlds that existed simultaneously in different regions of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. We are familiar with Mozart, but what exactly is klezmer?



Klezmer in Yiddish

Klezmer is a Yiddish word, combining the Hebrew words *kley* (vehicle or instrument) and *zemer* (song).<sup>i</sup>

Klezmer originated in the Jewish *shtetls* (villages) and ghettos of Eastern Europe. Itinerant Jewish musicians, known as *klezmerim*, performed at weddings and *simchas* (joyful events), and invariably improvised music based on secular tunes, popular dances and the simple (and often) wordless Jewish liturgical melodies called *nigunim*. To quote our guest artist, David Krakauer, klezmer is the “musical abstraction of the Yiddish language.”<sup>ii</sup>

Starting in the sixteenth century, lyrics were added to the original wordless melodies when the *badkhen*, the wedding master of ceremonies who doubled as the jester/comedian and entertainer, began injecting humor and words to the melodies.<sup>iii</sup> Using typical musical scales, the sound of klezmer developed through the years as Jewish musicians made contact with Greek, Slavonic, Turkish (Ottoman), Roma (Gypsy) and even American jazz musicians.<sup>iv</sup> The result is a diverse yet unique and immediately recognizable sound. Klezmer music evokes a myriad of emotions, using dissonance, tempo and rhythm changes, and of course, improvisation.<sup>v</sup>



Kapelye Verecke 1895

To appreciate klezmer, it is important to understand the historical stage on which the art form evolved. In the middle ages, Jewish musicians wandered through Eastern Europe, from *shtetl* to ghetto, to help celebrate joyous occasions such as birthdays, a

visit from a famous Rabbi, a *bris* (a circumcision) and especially *khaseneh* (weddings).<sup>vi</sup> Curiously, there is no traditional Jewish funeral music, which gave rise to the expression, “A *khasene iz azoy vi a levaye, nor mit klezmerim!*”<sup>vii</sup> (“A wedding is like a burial, but with musicians!”) Often poor, the itinerant performers were viewed as no higher than *shnorrers* (beggars) on the social scale but gradually developed reputations as talented musicians who were greatly in demand. “*Vi der klezmer, azoy di khasene!*”<sup>viii</sup> (“When there is klezmer, then you have a wedding!”)

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Eastern European Jews were confined to the “Pale of Settlement”, an area of a few hundred miles around Kiev that spanned Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Galicia and Moldavia. Jews were not permitted free access to the important towns, and, as opposed to a *muzikant* (a well-respected musician) who could read music, *klezmerim* learned to play “by ear”, passing



down the profession from father to son.<sup>ix</sup> (Public performance by women was banned.) The instrumentation of klezmer was dictated by the prevailing laws of the ruling society at that moment in history: in the Pale of

Settlement, Jews were only allowed to play on ‘quiet’ instruments (such as violin, flute, or clarinet) and were not permitted access to brass or percussion.<sup>x</sup> The violin was considered the lowest hierarchy of musical instruments, but it was easy to carry and was capable of vast expressive variation.<sup>xi</sup> The violin embodied the essence of klezmer style and soon became a symbol of Jewish music, since “it was easier to flee



a pogrom with a fiddle than a piano.”<sup>xii</sup> The old Yiddish expression, *Yidl mit'n Fidl* (a Jew with a violin) inspired a famous song and a movie.<sup>xiii</sup> Flutes and piccolos were common, as they were relatively inexpensive.<sup>xiv</sup> The moaning sound of the clarinet perfectly suited the intense emotion of klezmer, and was included in the second half of the 19th century by German and Russian musicians.<sup>xv</sup> The klezmer clarinetist quickly acquired a higher social status than the fiddlers.<sup>xvi</sup>



After the European Jewish Holocaust of the mid-20th century, klezmer was relegated to near oblivion, as the children of aging *klezmerim* turned to other forms of music.<sup>xvii</sup> Klezmer was re-discovered in the late 20th century when Henry Sapoznik, exploring the string band music of Appalachia, was asked if Jews had their own music. With this simple question, Henry, the son of a European-born cantor, returned to his musical heritage.<sup>xviii</sup> Starting with a cache of old records at New York's YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Sapoznik unearthed the vestiges of European klezmer music, and by 1979, his klezmer group, *Kapelye*, was touring internationally.<sup>xix</sup> With the addition of clarinetist Andy Statman, they formed *Der Yiddisher Caravan*, also a touring group. In Israel, klezmer was popularized by clarinetist Giora Feidman, formerly of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, while in the United States, Hankus Netsky, at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, formed *The Klezmer Conservatory Band*, recreating the big band sound of early American klezmer recordings.<sup>xx</sup>



*Di Shpilman Kapelye*

Sapoznik's group, *Kapelye*, was the first klezmer band to tour Europe, and one of its best-received concerts in Germany, in a Berlin mansion formerly used as Gestapo headquarters in World War II, is proof that klezmer had returned to its roots.<sup>xxi</sup> Today

klezmer's popularity throughout Europe and America continues with Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike, with newly formed bands of Jewish and non-Jewish players. Popular modern groups, each with its own unique sound, include some with jazz and rock influences (*The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band* and *The New Klezmer Trio*) and the globally-known Grammy-award winning group, *The Klezmatics*.

Klezmer music continues to undergo a vibrant revival, widely appreciated by 'ethnic insiders' as well as larger and broader audiences throughout the world.<sup>xxii</sup> Perhaps the reason for klezmer's popularity is best-expressed by Helmut Eisel: "A klezmer doesn't make music; he speaks, prays and consoles with his instrument." <sup>xxiii</sup>



*The Klezmer Conservatory Band*

Join us!

Please join the Hartford Symphony Orchestra for **Mozart Meets Klezmer, March 15 - 17, 2019**. Our Masterworks concert features the music of Mozart, alongside the klezmer-inspired music of Osvaldo Golijov, who grew up in an Eastern-European Jewish household in Argentina, surrounded by klezmer music and the tango-nuevo sounds of Astor Piazzolla, whose music we performed in February. The colliding musical influences formed the inspiration for Golijov's unique music. Golijov is a frequent collaborator with Yo-Yo Ma, the Silk Road Ensemble and our guest artist, David Krakauer.



## WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC WILL SOUND?

Try HSO'S Listening Guide, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!

To hear Mozart's Overture to *Lucio Silla*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sukIWVPRa8>

Osvaldo Golijov's *Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, performed by the Kronos Quartet:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUN\\_qdzqm87\\_idhSPulyeLZaVA3deRnns](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUN_qdzqm87_idhSPulyeLZaVA3deRnns)

A performance of Mozart's Symphony #39 by the Berlin Philharmonic:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k16t0zdgelU>

### Are you interested in sampling more examples of klezmer music?

A short video of the origins of klezmer, complete with music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6hJpvXSCzg>

Selections by the Andy Statman Orchestra:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv8gZWkiUvw&feature=youtu.be>

Scenes from the PBS special, *In The Fiddler's House*, with Itzhak Perlman:

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDwgkZnXAIQ>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUO1dRfyy1E>

Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3uDW8de0HE>

Part 4: Perlman with The Klezmatics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJLB3f0opeU>

Part 5: Perlman with The Klezmer Conservatory Band:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwB-h6tw4EM>

From David Krakauer, our guest artist, an explosion of klezmer!

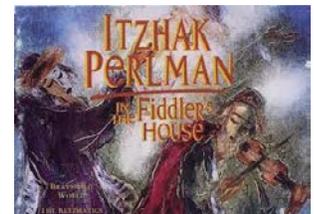
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf69VJcklZk>



Artwork by Mark Chagall



Artwork by Mark Chagall



In *The Fiddler's House*

RICHARD P. GARMANY FUND  
at  
Hartford Foundation  
FOR PUBLIC GIVING  
Together for good!

75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season  
Lead Sponsor



1939 - 2019  
80 Years of Excellence  
75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Season Supporting  
Sponsor

The Edward C. & Ann T.  
ROBERTS  
FOUNDATION

Masterworks Series  
Sponsor

### Did you borrow this Prelude? Get your own free copy!

Whether you're a ticket buyer, donor, curious about the music, or know someone who is, just send an email to [rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org). We'll make sure you receive *Prelude* by email, in advance of each HSO Masterworks concert!

Casey's  
Classics

**Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.**

Mozart's frothy curtain raiser, *Overture to Lucio Silla*, is included in a number of collections of recordings of Mozart overtures, among the best of which are Yehudi Menuhin conducting the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra (VIRGIN) and Colin Davis conducting the Dresden State Orchestra (SONY/RCA).

Oswaldo Golijov's *Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* has not yet, to my knowledge, received a recording in its orchestral garb, but there is an idiomatic and powerful performance in its original chamber music dress with the Kronos Quartet (NONESUCH).

Mozart's Symphony #39 ranks among his most popular and greatest late symphonies, and therefore has been recorded many times, but Otto Klemperer and the Philharmonia has been a long-standing favorite (EMI/WARNER). The performance may not be as effervescent as some, but the rugged mastery of Mozart's genius comes completely to the fore.



## REFERENCES

- i. <http://borzykowski.users.ch/EnglMCKlezmer.htm>
- ii. Ibid
- iii. Ibid
- iv. Ibid
- v. Ibid
- vi. Ibid
- vii. Ibid
- viii. Ibid
- ix. Ibid
- x. Ibid
- xi. Ibid
- xii. Ibid
- xiii. with a link to the music performed by the Barry Sisters:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XcR8CPzfPA>
- xiv. Ibid
- xv. Ibid
- xvi. Ibid
- xvii. <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/klezmer-music/>
- xviii. Ibid
- xix. Ibid
- xx. Ibid
- xxi. Ibid
- xxii. Ibid
- xxiii. <http://borzykowski.users.ch/EnglMCKlezmer.htm>