Klezmer Music

Early Yiddish Instrumental Music: The First Recordings: 1908-1927

by Dr. Martin Schwartz

This disc presents 24 fine and early examples of commercially recorded klezmer music. The Yiddish term klezmer (plural klezmorim), with the z pronounced like the zz of jazz and not like the tz of klotz, means musician in general, but is especially used for instrumentalists of folk music. The term derives from a Hebrew phrase meaning 'musical instruments' and in the Yiddish once spoken in much of what is now Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, klezmer referred to those musicians who professionally performed the Jewish vernacular ("folk") instrumental repertory of these regions. These musicians also frequently performed the local instrumental music of and for gentiles, as well as ballroom music, and even some classical pieces. In addition to their employment at weddings and other ritual festivities, klezmorim performed, depending on their skill and reputation, for Hasidic rebes and for noblemen, at spas, in taverns, and as street musicians.

A later usage of the term klezmer, which arose in the United States and has become widely used in the past twenty years or so, and canonized in English dictionaries, is in the phrase "klezmer music" or "klezmer" itself, to refer to the characteristically Jewish repertory and style of the klezmorim. This is a result of the recent "revival", or to use the more apt term preferred by Michael Alpert, "revitalization" of this musical genre. One even hears and sees "klezmer music" used to describe vocal music of the Yiddish American Theater, folk songs (traditionally transmitted chiefly by non-professional women), and anachronistically, any Israeli style music—in short, for all popular secular Jewish
music. The relatively exotic sound of the word klezmer has probably added to the modern mystique.

The multi-ethnic context of the European klezmorim also entailed the frequent participation of gentiles, especially gypsies, some of whom were klezmer handlearners. Indeed, in recent years, long after the Nazi decimation of the Jewish communities of Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary, many Jewish tunes are preserved and played in gentile and Gypsy families of musicians. Under these circumstances, the repertory of the klezmorim absorbed melodic influences from the various neighboring gentile communities. This began with the music of the Slavic population among whom the Jews had settled after migrating from Germany. Gradually they came to be influenced by other musics of Eastern Europe as well. Furthermore, in the 17th and 18th centuries the klezmorim, already possessing certain easterly elements from their synagogue modes (shiteyger, a term like Greek abromos and Turkish makam), also picked up Tatar musical influences. It is conceivable that they came into contact with Turkish, and more relevantly, Greek music via Ottoman rule in eastern Romania (Moldavia) via Hasidic continuation of Oriental features. Governed by Greeks from Istanbul (Constantinople) in the 16th and 17th centuries it was a center of Greek commercial and cultural activity. Under czarist Russian rule, the city of Odessa became another urban site of Jewish and Greek contact. Toward the late 19th century, Moldavian/Romanian music itself became a dominant influence on the klezorerim, and continued to do so well into the present century, including in the United States.

The vast Jewish immigration to America, World War I, and the continued success of the American record companies during the first quarter of the 20th century, made the United States the center of klezmer recordings. By the 1930s, the commercial viability of authentic klezmer recordings had declined so that only a few ensembles were recorded. Furthermore, an attrition of klezmer music and recording was due to the fact that, as earlier in Europe, klezmerim were generally considered disreputable and their music was considered (except at weddings!) less a part of daily life, devotion, and emotion than folk songs, Hasidic chants, and sentimental songs; less noble than cantorial and conservatory art music; and less chic and catchy than theater and vaudeville music. There was also a marked decline in the sublety of the performances as they became increasingly influenced by American music which was also performed professionally by many klezmer musicians.

By the early 1970s, only a small part of the old repertory and style continued to be heard. Except among Hasidic groups, who developed further their own distinctive dance melodies in America, the majority of Jewish weddings by then featured American and Israeli dance music, with at most a handful of older melodies tossed in. Around the mid-70s, a wave of fresh interest in the old repertory and styles of the klezmorim on the part of youthful musicians, folkdancers, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and record collectors/archivists on both the East and West Coasts, spearheaded a new interest in "klezmer music." A band of young musicians from Berkeley, California, calling themselves simply The Klezmerim, were probably the first to gain recognition, first via local performances and their recordings on the Arhoolie label (CD/C.309) and later via coast to coast concert and club dates. Their ranks were soon to be swelled by musicians and researchers throughout the country, yielding experimental and hybrid influences. In very recent years, the appearance of klezmer bands on radio and television and the participation of such personalities as Itzhak Perlman, has all the more broadened the popularity and prestige of "klezmer music" among Jews and non-Jews alike. As in the past some important klezmer virtuos today are not Jewish.

The klezmer phenomenon has constituted not only a renewed resource of musical ideas, but also a new source of Jewish secular identity, and, accompanied by songs, has for some become a vehicle for liberal activism. In Israel, however, klezmer activity is closely linked to Jewish orthodoxy and has thereby given rise to a fusion of Ashkenazic and Sephardic musical styles applied to the old repertory. The recent addition of Yiddish songs to klezmer performance repertory has also contributed to maintaining Yiddish culture.

In the present collection, I have tried
The Music


Jacob Hoffman (ca. 1889-1974). A native of Europe, Hoffman was (unlike the majority of players) performing klezmer music in his day) a full-time musician in the United States performing on the xylophone. He made klezmer recordings with (Harry Kandel's Orchestra played with the Philadelphia Orchestra, as a long-time resident of the Philadelphia area), and toured with the Boston Pops Orchestra and with the Ballet Russe of Monte Carlo. As a pianist he also accompanied silent films at local movie houses.

This selection consists of the common format doina plus part of a hora (zvok). The term doina, which comes from the word for "song" or "lament" in the ancient pre-Roman Dacian language of Romania, refers to a kind of slow, intense, non-metrical improvisation. Originally a rural genre associated with shepherds, the doina of Moldavia became popular with urban musicians (Gypsies, Greeks, and Jews). It was especially in vogue toward the end of the 19th century and the first quarter of the present century throughout the Yiddish-speaking world. As is frequent with instrumental doinas, our example is followed by a danceable hora in the same mode or scale. The second and concluding part of the hora is a rhythm transposition of a tune in 4/4 time, found e.g. in the folk song "Vos hob ikh gerdart fun mayn heym aveksuforen" ("Why did I have to leave home?"); the first klezmer version of which was recorded as Bucharest Chusiel by Hochman's Orchestra in 1924.

The melody was also taken over for a Greek rebetik love song, "Mangiko" (also called "Skertsopetakhto"), possibly performed in musical cafés of Smyrna before 1922, and heard on various recordings from Athens (and Cairo) from the period 1925-1935. A splendid version of Mangiko, sung by Dalgas and accompanied by the violinist Oghdhontakos (who had used the melody at the end of another tune) is reissued on Greek-Oriental Rebetica, Songs and Dances in the Asia Minor Style (Arboole: Folklyric Cy 7005 cut 7) for which I provided text, translation, and further details of Greek, Jewish, Armenian, and Assyrian variants of the melody.


This is an old Jewish bulgarish tune, probably known as Sirba in Western Moldavia (including Iasi). It was still in the repertory of Avrom Bugich, the last major professional klezmer fiddler in Iasi.

The basic melody (i.e., minus the additional dance tune at the end) was well-known in the Western Ukraine as well, and was often played together with the famous dance-tune "Khosn-kale Mazlitov." The second part of the melody was also set to lyrics including the following: "Geloybt iz Got unzer boyre, Er hot unz gegebn unzer toyre," ("Praised is God our Creator; he has given us our Torah").

Probably the earliest European recording of the basic melody (however, in an undanceable brass-band novelty arrangement) was made by the Russissch-Juedische Orchester (Columbia E6024 = Favorite 1-72083, mx. 2383) probably in Hanover in
January of 1911, and was curiously entitled "Konstan-tinopolisch." It seems unlikely that this title was merely an excitingizing caprice on the part of this band recording in Germany. However, in view of the Orfeon recording heard here, it is not wholly impossible that the melody, though of probably Moldavian provenience, became known among the Ashkenazim of Istanbul. A dance-tempo klezmer recording of the tune was made a little later in New York on April 14, 1913, by A. Elenkrig's Yidische Orchesatra, with the title "Yiddelah Briderlach."

It appears that our anonymous Istanbul klezmer ensemble, for commercial viability, recorded Greek pieces (like the well-known *kalamattanoi* on the reverse of the *sirba*) together with Jewish pieces which could be marketed, with Greek titles, as belonging to the Romano-Moldavian repertory with which Greeks were familiar. At this writing, I have just been informed of other recordings by this ensemble, listed under "Greek orchestras" in the Orfeon catalogue of 1912-1913. The present selection is, apart from its ethnographical interest, notable for its early documentation of humorous effects in klezmer performance style.


*Abe Schwartz*, a native of Romania, was from the late teens well into the 1940s a highly successful bandleader both on record and at hotels in the Catskill Mountains of New York State, which were also a venue for Naftule Brandwine (#4, 7, 14, 17). He was also a composer, arranger, accompanist, and an excellent fiddler specializing in Romanian Jewish repertory. His orchestra produced more recordings than all other American klezmer ensembles of the acoustic period. In the 1940s he continued in the music business as an accompanist and arranger of Yiddish songs for the Apollo label in New York.

This selection is an archetypal three-part Jewish dance-nign in *Abaya Rabba* or three parts. The title means "dance of the parents of bride and groom" (mekbutotonim). The second part (or a melodic variation thereof) figures in Prokofiev's Overture on Jewish Themes (Opus 34), and in a vocal nign associated with Nikolaev (southern Ukraine) by Lubavich hasidim.


*Naftule Brandwine* (Brandwine), 1889-1963, was an immigrant from Galicia, and a member of a musical family. Brandwine was famous both as a virtuoso clarinetist, brilliantly creative while clinging to an old-world style, and as a fun-loving eccentric. His career as the premiere klezmer clarinetist was diminished somewhat in the latter 1920s by the increasingly stellar Ukrainian-born Dave Tarras (1897-1989), who was far less of a traditionalist.

Based on a Romanian song for the *zhok* dance, this piece became a standard tune among klezmorim. This version has one of the standard modulations within the so-called *misbebyrakh sbteyger*. It is followed by a nign for dancing. The original is a zmir (song with Hebrew religious lyrics) for the Sabbath, *Lekebu neramey.* The selection's title is the name of a town in Bessarabia. In the last section, the sound reminiscent of a "Roman candle" is a whirl produced by blowing on a disc.


Max Leibowitz, probably a native of Romania, was an excellent traditional klezmer fiddler and bandleader, recording in both capacities between 1916 and 1920.

This is a dance *nign* in minor, played in old world fiddle style with American "straight ahead" rhythm on the piano accompaniment. This melody had been recorded earlier in Europe by Bell's ensemble as "Amerikanaska" on Sirena 12421, July, 1912, and on the Kiev label Extraphon in July of 1914. Due to damage on the original disc, the conclusion of the piece was masterfully repaired by David J. Gray by "patching" from the corresponding earlier section.


*Goldberg*, of Orchestra Goldberg, is so familiar to the world from only two discs which he made for Odeon in 1908, this *kleftico vlahiko* (and its reverse side, *sirto*) and a disc with two Turkish fanfares or concert-marches, one of which, "Midhat pacha
Kanto," was reissued by the ethnomusicologist-collector, Dr. Christian Poché, on Turque: Archives de la musique turque (Ocora CD 560091, cut 3). Although Goldberg’s orchestra is clearly a klezmer ensemble, it is uncertain whether they recorded any distinctively Jewish pieces, in addition to the known Greco-Moldavian, Greek and Turkish selections. Mr. Poché, who received me in Paris, denied knowing any of discs by Orchestre Goldberg other than these two (his and mine).

The first part is obviously a dina, but not in the same melodic pattern of other klezmer recordings. Possibly it represents a local (Moldavian?) type which is undocumented. For the 19th century it is known that several Moldavian klezmer troupes (especially from Iasi, but not from Bessarabia) traveled to Istanbul, where they played for Greeks, Ashkenazic Jews, and others (but not Sephardic Jews). The dina is followed by a well-known Bessarabian dance tune. The latter seems first to have been sung with Romanian lyrics, which began with words meaning ‘Nearby in the garden’, either as in Colea in gradina or Colea in gradinita. In the years before the First World War, many Romanian, Greek, Jewish, Croatian, etc. songs and instrumentals using this tune appeared in Europe. In the United States, the melody became associated with a song “Nokh a bisi.”

Although there is nothing intrinsically Jewish about the tune, and it had been performed among various gentile populations of Eastern Europe, it became identified with Jews in the United States and later on it seems, in Europe a recent Hungarian CD of instrumental performances of old tunes characterizes it as being Jewish provenience, and the melody serves for the Russian underworld comic song “Khaim, lovachku zakroy” (Khayim, close up shop). In the United States, in 1920, the second part of the tune was adapted (along with fragments of the klezmer tunes “Ma-Yofes,” “Kolomeyke,” and “Khosn-Kale Maztov” for the composition “Palesteena” by Con Conrad (Conrad Dober) and J. Russel Robinson and was recorded that year as a jazz instrumental by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and as a vaudeville vocal by Eddie Cantor, in which our tune-segment is found in the title-refrain, “Leno was the queen of Palesteena, just because she played her concertina.”

The title of the present selection, “Klefiko Vlachiko,” is made up of two Greek words, the adjective viabiko, in this context amounting to “Romanian (Moldavo-Wallachian),” and the noun klefiko, referring to a type of Greek regional non-rhythmic heroic ballad, named after klefêtes or brigands, mountain warriors who took part in the Greek revolution against the Turks which ended in 1821.

The flip-side of this disc is a well-known Greek sirtos played by the same group, clearly a klezmer ensemble, but marketed for Greek audiences, as was the other Istanbul recording on this CD, the “Sirba” (#2) by another orchestra. Both records attest to the cosmopolitan nature of some klezmomir and specifically document the klezmer performances of Greek music in Istanbul.


The title, “Fihren Die Mekhutonim Aheym” (‘Leading the bride’s and groom’s parent’s home’), is an example of a gas nign (“street tune”), with which the in-laws were escorted to their home. In the recently seen video program In the Fiddler’s House, Itzhak Perlman is shown escorting his daughter, at her wedding, to this tune. Recently Kurt Bjorling used the melody as basis for his composition “Calling The Children Home,” a tribute to the early New Orleans horn man Charles “Buddy” Bolden (Brave Old World, Beyond the Pale, Rounder CD 5135, cut 12).

This recording, the seventh disc on which Brandwine is featured, seems to have made him especially popular. That perhaps he had not yet, at the time of this recording, established himself as a commercially saleable act for Columbia records, appears to be the case, since the reverse side of this record consists of imitations of farmyard animals by a comedian named “Noe” (French for Noah). This selection is a gas nign in the shteyger Abava Rabba, or in the 3/8 rhythm of the Moldavian zvok. This pattern had evidently been adapted by Jews no earlier than the 19th century, and was employed for several functions: (1) the gas nign for wedding processions; (2) tunes used for ritual moments in the wed-
had been recorded earlier the same year by Abe Schwartz Jewish Orchestra, (Columbia E4260), is based on a Yiddish song whose fuller title, "The little bag of coal", appears in two variants on the vocal recordings, Abraham Moskowitz, "Dus Zekele Koilen" (Columbia E7088 ca. March, 1921) and Morris Goldstein, "Dus Zekele Mit Koilen" (Victor 75277 ca. March, 1922). The melody also reflects Russian influences and the performance style features ornaments more typical of Russian than of Jewish music.

9. Ch.'Sidishche Nigunim (Part 1) - Boiberiker Kapelle (Hirsch Gross, leader; Dave Tarras, clarinet; Beresh Katz and Abe Schwartz, violins; Sam Spielman, trumpet; New York City, June, 1927).

Beresh Katz, a fiddler from Galicia, recorded this and, again with H. Gross and Abe Schwartz, one other Columbia record under the pseudonym, "Boiberiker Kapelle" (named after a mythical shtetl in the writings of Scholem Aleichem). The other disc, resuscited on Klezmer Musik, (B.5 & 6), draws upon Katz's European career as a badkhn, i.e., the ritual master of ceremonies at the wedding, who recited rhymes to doina fiddle accompaniment, making the bride weep, and/or cracking jokes. Katz, in his later years can be heard on Ruth Rubin's compilation, The Old Country (Folkways LP FG3801), announcing and fiddling beautiful summaries of five old badkhn (marabshike) tunes for the wedding ritual. Named by Ruth Rubin, he is identified for the latter cut in the annotations in Klezmer Musik, to which it should be added that Katz is heard again on The Old Country, (cut A:1), singing a folklorically important old call to prayer services. This is a medley of old Hasidic tunes, chiefly of the Modzhits tradition, the first of which is from "Yedid nefesh," a well-known zmir (slow devotional song with lyrics in Hebrew).


H. Steiner, who like Solinski, is one of the bare handful of pre-World War I European klezmer fiddlers whose records have surfaced, also is known from his "Potpourri jüdischer Melodien," (Victor 65514B), recorded shortly after the present selection. This is a klezmer composition in the Slika sbytegg (the mode used for peniten-

atorial hymns in preparation for the Day of Atonement) followed by a dance-tune in minor. The composition belongs to a melody-type used both in prayers and in devotional tunes in Yiddish (e.g., "Keyn Kotsik Fort men Nish"). It is doubtful that this tune was meant to accompany the prayer after which the title is named. This title is based on the Southern Yiddish pronunciation of Hebrew Ha-neroh Halalu ("These lights", i.e., the Hanukkah candles).

A Russian source of the 1860s mentions purely instrumental performances of the fiddle and tsimbl in the synagogue during Hanukkah and this piece was evidently part of that tradition. During the late 1980s the Hungarian musical group Muzsikás used this recording (from the earlier Folklyric LP reissue) to elicit Jewish music from Transylvanian gypsy musicians, as it was the most markedly Jewish violin piece available to them on record.


Joseph Moskowitz (Muscovic) (1897-1953) was a child prodigy on the cymbalom
which he studied with his father in his native Romania. Moskowitz toured Europe and came to the United States in 1908 for further tours, often with the Matus Gypsy Ensemble. From 1913, he operated and performed at the Moskowitz wine cellar on Rivington St. on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He thereafter performed in other restaurants in New York and Washington D.C., to which he moved in 1945 and where he died. His repertory included not only Jewish material, but also Romanian, Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, Turkish and ragtime tunes. (This diversity is addressed in the reissue The Art of the Cymbalom, The Music of Joseph Moskowitz, 1916-1953, annotated by Dick Spottswood and Nicholas Blanton, Rounder CD 1126.)

Moskowitz’s performance in his restaurant is vividly recalled for several pages in Michael Gold’s Jews Without Money (as Lev Liberman first pointed out to me):

“Moskowitz runs a famous restaurant now on Second Avenue. In those days he kept a wine cellar on Rivington Street. It was popular among Romanian immigrants...I remember his place; it was a long narrow basement lit by gas-lamps hanging like white balloons. Between the lamps grew clusters of artificial grapes and autumn leaves. There were many mirrors, and on them a forgotten artist had painted scenes from Romanian life—shepherds and sheep...a horse fair, peasants shucking wheat, a wedding. At one end of the room, under a big American flag, hung a chromo showing Roosevelt charging up San Juan Hill. At the other end hung a Jewish Zionist flag...It draped a portrait of Dr. Theodore Herzl...To one side was an open charcoal fire, where lamb, scallops and steaks grilled in a pit. Near this, on a small platform, Moskowitz sat with his cymbalom. Strings of red peppers on festoons dried behind him. A jug of wine stood at his elbow and after every song he poured himself a drink...As Moskowitz played, his head moved lower and lower over the cymbalom. At the crescendo one could not see his face, only his bald head gleaming like a hand mirror. Then, with a sudden upward flourish of his arms, the music ended. One saw his shy, lean face again, with his gray mustache. Everyone cheered, applauded and whistled. Moskowitz drank off his wine, and played an encore...

“A hundred Jews in a basement blue as sea-fog with tobacco smoke. The men wore their derby hats. Some were bearded, some loud, sporting and young, some brown as nuts. The women were fat and seated happily, and smoked their children...The waiters buzzed like crazy bees...Mrs. Moskowitz was making change. Moskowitz played a sad and beautiful waltz ballad. A little blubber-faced man with a red beard beat his glass on the table, wept, then talk, talk, talk again. Jewish talk. Hot, sweaty, winey talk. A sweatshop holiday. Egypt’s slaves around the campfire in the shadow of the pyramids...And Moskowitz played the Babylonian harp.”

This is a three part instrumental dance in Abava Rabbi followed by a second modulating three-part tune, and was also recorded by the Abe Schwartz Orchestra as Tzate Siser, in 1917 and by Max Leibowitz as “Die Silberne Hochzeit,” the same year. Moskowitz’ version is a rather simplified first part and is played at a faster tempo than the later ones.

12. Doina (Part I) - S. Kosch (flute, and unknown tsimbel, probably recorded in Lemberg [Lvov] ca. 1911).

S. Kosch is quite likely to be Shloymke Kosch, a flautist member of a musical family of Lemberg (Lvov) which flourished around the time of our recording, as Z. Feldman has observed from information in J. Stuchevsky’s book, Ha-Klezmorim. The recording is a rare illustration of Jewish playing of flute and tsimbel.

The selection is a Jewish doina followed by a zvok in minor and a sirba, both probably of non-Jewish Bessarabian origin. Similarly, the tsimbel accompaniment is unlike that of known Romanian recordings of the period.

13. Doina (Part II) - S. Kosch.

O'yshpil’ using the syncopated rhythm originating ultimately in the Greek sirtó dance, the tune is probably of Bessarabian provenience. The doina itself seems to be of the de jale variety, a particularly sad type of doina, always played instrumentally. It is followed by a tune for the Bessarabian bonga dance, also known among the Crimean Tatars as the kalabakik.

14. Turkische Yalle Vey Uve (tanz) - Naftule Brandwein’s Orchestra (including
Brandwein, clarinet; Sam Spielman, trombone etc. N.Y.C. ca. April, 1923).

A Greek sūrtō with an additional section in Ababa Rabbi by Brandwein, but I have not heard an exactly comparable sūrtō among the great many early Greek recordings to which I have access. However, Dr. Zev Feldman assures me that Brandwein’s tune corresponds to a specific sūrtō which he has heard since Brandwein had a Greek musician friend, possibly named Tsopandhis or Nikos Tsopanakis.

The melody is certainly in the style of Greek sūrtō tunes from Constantinople and the towns of Asia Minor. This would explain the designation “terkish.” For the ethnological imprecision, cf. Brandwein’s “Araber Tanz,” Victor 78658 (N.Y.C., Feb., 1926), which is not an “Arab dance” but an old kalamatianō from Greece, first recorded by Yangos Psamatialis as “I Plighēs” in Istanbul in 1906. A genuinely Turkish tune, the well-known Kāṭīp or Katībim (popularized by Eartha Kitt as “Uskudar”), which is also in sūrtō rhythm, and was recorded by Brandwein as “Der Terk in America,” (Victor 77599 N.Y.C., March, 1924). As in the case of Turkisher “Yalle Vey Uve” and “Araber Tanz,” in the latter composition Brandwein added a section of his own.

The title represents yale neyve, the southern Yiddish pronunciation of a Hebrew phrase meaning “May it ascend and come,” which, in the High Holy Day liturgy, refers to the arrival of the prayer before God. Since there can hardly be a real connection of the dance tune with the liturgy, I suspect that the phrase was adopted in klezmer jargon to express the rhythm or movement of the sūrtō, which figured as an exotic element in the European klezmer repertoire, as evidenced, for example, in a Jewish composition in sūrtō rhythm recorded in the 1970s by the Moldavian klezmer Avrom Bugich.

Finally, it should be observed that the term terkish was also used by klezmorim for pieces resembling the Aecan (sea of Marmara) and Constantinopolitan ballos sousta which was itself rhythmically similar to the sūrtō.


A modulating three-part nign-like tune, this selection is unconnected with the similarly entitled piece played by Moskowitz, and the implied link to the Sadegurah (Hasidim named after a town in western Ukraine) is in this instance dubious; often the names of well-known Hasidic groups were arbitrarily used on recordings as title of klezmer pieces.


The title, Baym rebbns sude (side) means ‘At the rebe’s sacral meal’ (rebe here is a charismatic leader of a Hasidic sect), derives from the fact that this three-part melody is in the style of old Hasidic dance nign. Other American recordings of the tune, with the same title variously spelled, are by Leibowitz’ Yiddish Orchestra (Pathé 0)3526, N.Y.C. ca. 1917); I.J. Hochman’s Yiddisher Orchestra (Edison 59501, New York City, Dec. 1918); and the Abe Schwartz Orchestra (Columbia 13055, New York City, ca. March 1920). Belf’s ensemble had recorded it twice in Europe under the Russian title “Na Razvete,” (“At dawn”) (Sirena 11090, April 1911, also on Extraphon 22.626). The latter record is subtitled in Russian “After the wedding.”

The melody was used in Joseph Cherniavsky’s incidental music to Ansky’s “Dibuk,” and recorded as part of the “Mechutanim Tanz” by Cherniavsky’s Yiddish-American Jazz Band (Pathé 05865, N.Y.C. ca. May 1924), and again as “Jewish March” (Victor 78422, New York City, Nov. 1925).

17. Oi Tate, S’s Gut - Naftule Brandwein (clarinet solo with the Naftule Brandwein Orchestra, N.Y.C., April, 1925).

A three-part tune (1. Ababa Rabbi; 2. major, 3. Ababa Rabbi), apparently a freylakh rephrased in New York as a bulgarish. The last part of the tune occurs as part of “Berdichever Chusidel,” recorded by the Abe Schwartz Orchestra (Co E4069, New York City, ca. May, 1918, but not listed in R. Spottwood’s Eibnic Music on Records). The title, Oy, Tate, s’is gut means ‘Oh, (heavenly) Father, it’s good!’


Entitled “Father-in-law and mother-in-law dance” (“s'vber un svbiwer tants”), this piece closely belongs with the other in-laws’ dance reissued here (“Mechutanim Tanz” #3) from the same very old repertory of ritual dances. It is also known as a shabes (Sab—
dance, imitating a dancing Hasid, attested from a description in 1848 of a wedding in the (predominantly non-Hasidic or anti-Hasidic) Jewish community of Brest-Litovsk (Old-Jewish Folk Music, p.503, fn.95). It should be observed, however, that many of the tunes called kobsidl or khusidl ("Hasid"), including the present one, are, in rhythm, melody and tempo, of a type once actually sung and/or danced (with devotional fervor, rather that grotesquery) by hasidim, including the tune from Vinnitsa (where hasidism flourished), published by Beregovski, Old Jewish Folk Music (p.446), which motivated his comment.

21. Der Shtiler Bulgar - Abe Schwartz
Orchestra (New York City, Sept., 1918).
This well-known, originally non-Jewish Bessarabian dance tune here is designated as: "quiet (shtiler) bulgar," and was also recorded as: "Der Shtiler Bulgar" by Kandel's Orchestra (Victor 72054, N.Y.C., Dec. 5, 1907). The present recording was also released under the Romanian title "Hera Bulevardului." The tune appears also as a concluding motif after a doina by Max Leibowitz, "Orientalische Melodien (Emerson 1343, New York City, 1919) and there are several other instrumental versions. My mother sang a Yiddish version with lyrics "Oy, a nakht (selt) a shayne... "Oh, a lovely night (world)...

The melody was the basis of an American pop song hit "And The Angels Sing," recorded in 1939 by Benny Goodman's Orchestra with vocalist Martha Tilton. Goodman has related the history of the song as follows: "It was Ziggy Elman who brought that to us. He had recorded it as an instrumental with his own little group on the Bluebird label, and when it started to become a hit, I asked Johnny Mercer to write some lyrics for it. It was originally a Hebrew folk-tune, you know, and Ziggy had done it as a freylekh— in fact part of his solo on our record is in freylekh tempo... " (edited from the quotation in G.T. Simon, The Big Bands Songbook, 1973, p.6). In 1943 Elman recorded the song with Tommy Dorsey's band. It has been reported that this song was the subject of an unsuccessful plagiarism lawsuit by Abe Schwartz.

This three part nigi in minor was also recorded as a kobsidl. The mitswe-tants or mitswe-tents ("commandment" or "good deed" dance) was one of the ritual wedding dance-occasions.

23. National Hora (Part II) - Abe Schwartz
(violin, accompanied by his daughter, Sylvia Schwartz on piano. New York City, May, 1920).
The first part is a famous tune for Opferen di mokhatonim (leading away the in-laws). The characterization of the rhythm as hora is due to Schwartz' origin in western Moldavia; in Bessarabia the term would be zbro. This is followed by a freylekh, in the Abava Rabba mode, consisting of three tunes. The sequence of these three tunes was later recorded by Kandel's Orchestra as "Simkhas Toye in der alter haim" ("The holiday celebration of the Torah in the old country"). (Victor 77163, N.J. Feb. 22, 1925). The dialogue which opens our recording goes "Schwartzy brother, you've pleased me so much with the first piece, I'd like you to play me another piece!" Schwartz: "Why not? With the greatest pleasure! Here, I'm playing already!" (The "first piece," i.e. Part I, is reissued on Yikhes (cut 14) and is no-
table for its Turkish-style bowing on two-strings, and its imitation of bagpipes).

24. Sher (Part II) - Abe Schwartz Orchestra (New York City, October 1920).

The sber ("scissors"), an old distinctly Jewish kind of group couples-dance was popular throughout the Yiddish-speaking world, and even spread in some areas of Eastern Europe among gentile populations. The dance apparently has no East European prototype. M. Beregovskii noted rhythmic and structural parallels in German Seher dances of the 16th century; conceivably, then, a Jewish version of the dance came from Germany with the Ashkenazi immigration into the Polish Kingdom.

(Prof. Martin Schwartz - 1996 with contributions by Dr. Walter Zev Feldman, and editing & summarizing by Chris Strachwitz & Leticia Del Toro)

DISCOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following reissues provide both excellent examples of early klezmer recordings, and contain informative liner notes. By studying all of these fine productions one can gain a well-rounded basic background on what may be called klezmerology.

1) Our original reissue, Klezmer Music 1910-1942. Recordings from the YIVO Arch.


4) Yikhes: Frühre Klezmer-Aufnahmen von 1907-1939 aus der Sammlung von Prof. Martin Schwartz. (Trikont CD 26, soon to be available in an English version). A showcase of aesthetically excellent older European and American recordings, chiefly of solos and small ensembles, mostly featured also on the present Anthology/Folkways reissue. Magisterially produced and annotated (in German), with all sorts of interesting information, in what amounts to an exhaustively researched monograph, by Joel Rubin (himself one of the very best clarinetists of the klezmer revitalization), with the collaboration of Rita Ottens.

5) I also recommend Like in a Different World: Leon Schwartz, a Traditional Jewish Klezmer Violinist from Ukraine, produced by Michael Alpert and Michael Schlesinger, Global Village Music CD Cassette 109. A well-edited documentary of the playing (and comments) of Leon Schwartz (1901-1990), notable for his repertory (secular and spiritual), skill, and human presence. The notes, which show Alpert's usual quality of incisive illumination (he also is a fine accompanist on several cuts), bring out the interethnic and intergenerational nature of the traditional klezmer world.

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In beginning an alphabetic list of thanks, the A’s and B’s serendipitously form a first rank foursome: Michael Alpert and Kurt Bjorling, for their intellectual and material contributions, and with their co-members of the superb Brave Old World, Stuart Brotman and Alan Bern, musical joy and conversational pleasure. Also, Marvin Elias, Fyuush Finkel, Robert Friedman, David Julian Gray, Benno Häupl, Elaine Hoffman, Riccardo Laspina, Lev Liberman, Hankus Netsky, Dov Noy, Dino Pappas, Christian Poché, Joel Rubin, Mitchell Shandling, Steve Shapiro, Mark Slobin, David Soffa, Dick Spottwood (especially for his monumental 7 volume “Ethnic Music On Records - A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942”; University of Ill. Press 1990), Gerry Tenney, Carment Valentina and Stefan Zimmer.

Dedicated to the memory of my mother, Anna (Eynyle) Schwartz (1906-1996).

She was blessed with song and with song she blessed us.

She was Jewish music.

Edited by Dr. Martin Schwartz.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz.

Cover art by Beth Weil.

Notes by Dr. Martin Schwartz with editing and summarizing by Chris Strachwitz and Leticia Del Toro.

Sound restoration of the 78 rpm discs by David Julian Gray using the NoNoise system.

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KLEZMER MUSIC
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1. DOINA AND HORA (Hebrew dance)
   Jacob Hoffman - xylophone; with Kandel's Orchestra
   (Vi 77163A; New York 1/25/1923)

2. SIRBA – Orchestra Orfeon (recorded by Blumenthal Co.,
   Istanbul, Turkey 1912)

3. MECHUTONIM TANTZ – Jewish Orchestra
   (Abe Schwartz’ Orchestra) (84012, CoE4137; New York 2/1918)

4. KALLARASH – Naftule Brandwine - clarinet solo; &
   his Orchestra (88764; CoE7770; New York 9/1922)

5. YIDDISH CHUSEDEL – Max Leibowitz – violin solo;
   Philip Friedman – piano (44136, CoE2953; New York ca. 7/1916)

6. KLEFTICO VLACHIKO – Orchestra Goldberg
   (w.cornet solo) (Odeon 5470, XC. 2051 Istanbul 1908

7. FIHREN DIE MECHUTONIM AHEIM (tanz)
   N. Brandwine (Naftule Brandwine & Abe Schwartz’s
   Orchestra) (89008, CoE9012; New York 2/1923)

8. KOILEN (dance) – Mishka Ziganoff (accordion solo)
   (85579; Co E 4636; New York 10/1919)

9. CH'SIDISHE NIGUNIM (H. Gross & B.Katz) (Part I)
   Boibriker Kapelle (H. Gross - leader; Dave Tarras - clarinet;
   Beresh Katz & Abe Schwartz - violins, etc. - trombone or
   tuba) (W 108029 - Co 8221-F; New York 6/1927)

10. HANEROS HALULI
    H. Steiner - violin with unknown cymbalom
    (5698r; Vi 63842-A; recorded in Lemberg, Poland - 1909)

11. SADIGURER-CHUSID (Moskowitz)
    Joseph Moskowitz - cymbalom; Max Yussim-piano
    (B 17390-1, Vi 67827-B; New York 3/27/1916)

12. DOINA (Pt. 1) S. Kosch - flute solo w/ cymbalom
    acc. (1-24163, 4944-1, CoE6020; Lemberg, Poland ca. 1911)

13. DOINA (Pt. 2) S. Kosch - flute solo w/ cymbalom
    acc. (1-24164, 4945-1, CoE6020; Lemberg, Poland ca. 1911)

14. TURKISCHE YALLE VEY UVE (tanz) (N. Brandwein)
    Naftule Brandwein's Orchestra (Vi 73895-A; New York 5/10/1923)

15. SADEGURER CHUSE'DL
    Abe Schwartz' Orchestra(58782, CoE3671; N.Y. Nov. 1917)

16. BIEM REBEN'S SIDEH
    Yiddisher Orkester (Abe Schwartz’ Orchestra)
    (58785-CoE3671; New York 11/1917)

17. OI TATE, S'IS GUT – Naftule Brandwein's Orchestra
    (105612, Co8076-F; New York 4/1925)

18. SCHWEIR UND SCHWIGER TANZ
    Abe Schwartz’ Orchestra (86191, Co E 4746; New York 4/1920)

19. RUMÄNISCHE FANTASIE NT (Pt. 1)
    Joseph Solinski – violin solo, with cymbalom acc.
    (1-24159, 4920-1, CoE6018; Warsaw, Polnad ca. 1911)

20. KHOSIDL – Belf’s Rumanian Orchestra
    (Sirena Grand 12419; OK 14009; probably Russia ca. 1912)

21. DER SHTILLER BULGAR
    Jewish Orchestra (Abe Schwartz Orchestra)
    (84671, CoE4122; New York 9/1918)

22. A MITZVAE TENZEL (Tabak)
    Hochman’s Orchestra (6116, Br.40,001-A; New York 8/1921)

23. NATIONAL HORA (Part II)
    Abe Schwartz - violin; with Sylvia Schwartz - piano
    (86284, CoE4745; New York 5/1920)

24. SHER (Morris Fried) (Part II)
    Abe Schwartz’ Orchestra (Abe Schwartz - violin)
    (86692-1, CoE4905; New York 10/1920)

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