



777 Glades Road
PO Box 3092
Boca Raton, FL 33431-0992

Contact: Terri Berns:
Email: tberns@fau.edu
Phone: 561.297.1164

Aaron Kula and Klezmer Company Orchestra Take Music “From Self to Stage” *Q & A with Aaron Kula, music director and composer*

Some people have to travel the globe to find world music. Aaron Kula only has to travel steps from his office to find some of the most eclectic music in the U.S.

“It is extremely exciting to open an archival box in the music collections and find exceptionally rare treasures that perhaps have not been heard in 100 years or more, and then bring them back to a new generation—literally taking the music from “shelf to stage.”

— Kula

Kula is director of music collections and performance at Florida Atlantic University Libraries in Boca Raton, Florida. He lectures, composes, performs and archives music from the library’s 50,000-piece printed music collection that contains a wide range of cultures and historical periods. In 1997, inspired by his work with the collections, Kula founded the Klezmer Company Orchestra (KCO) as the library’s professional ensemble-in-residence. KCO is linked to FAU Libraries through Kula’s faculty position and his work conducting and performing with distinguished South Florida jazz and classical musicians. This ensemble has the unique distinction of being the only resident professional orchestra in an academic library in the U.S.

Q. Aaron Kula and the Klezmer Company Orchestra have become synonymous with the catch phrase “from shelf to stage.” Will you explain what the phrase means to you?

Kula: “From shelf to stage” refers to my work in preservation and performance. My goal is to infuse a new level of energy into historical music that I find on the shelves. Drawing upon my experience in multiple musical genres, I strive to create a progressive art form that is relevant for my generation. I use 18th, 19th and 20th century compositions from the collection to recreate, arrange, orchestrate and compose new works for each performance. Ultimately, I want the music to dance off the shelves and on to the stage.

Q. How would you categorize yourself as a musician and how would you label KCO’s sound?

Kula: In essence I am a pluralistic musician because I work with a wide range of musical genres and musicians from different backgrounds. I draw upon Jewish, classical and jazz music for my inspiration and I describe KCO’s unique sound as “ethnic orchestral fusion.” I feel that this approach also mirrors the trends we are experiencing in our multicultural global community. Ultimately, my music no longer fits into one tidy package or a single genre.

Q. How is KCO different from the traditional Klezmer bands and the style of music these bands played in the late 19th to 20th centuries?

Kula: Traditional Klezmer bands focused on instrumental melodies and simple rhythms that were designed for dancing at secular celebrations. These bands served a specific function within the community. KCO is a virtuoso concert ensemble that specializes in highly stylized compositions that embrace multicultural traditions through musical fusion and improvisation. Similar to classical orchestras and jazz ensembles, KCO features core soloists with additional orchestral personnel that vary depending on the repertoire.

Q. Why did you decide to produce the “Beyond the Tribes” CD from the collection? Is it the orchestra’s first recording?

Kula: “Beyond the Tribes” is our first studio recording following two CDs from live concerts. “Beyond the Tribes” was a wonderful opportunity to create a sonic snapshot of where KCO is today, and it reflects a point of arrival for me personally as a composer. The reality is that this CD is a culmination of ideas that evolved over a decade, resurrecting traditional melodies, blending them with unrelated musical genres and creating something new from something old.