

Pinecrest

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PINECREST

Klezmer ‘orchestra’ to play Purim concert

You don’t have to be a rich man to hear music that weaves *Fiddler on the Roof* sounds with Latin and jazz influences at a Pinecrest synagogue.



Members of the Klezmer Company Orchestra: Front: Aaron Kula, music director and accordion Left to Right: Scott Klarman, saxophones; Teresa Flores, world percussion; Doug Friend, drums; Chaim Rubinov, trumpet; Randi Fishenfeld, violin; David Levitan, trombone; Jackie De Los Santos, double bass
COURTESY OF KLEZMER COMPANY ORCHESTRA

IF YOU GO

What: Klezmer Company Orchestra

When: 3 p.m. Sunday

Where: Bet Shira Congregation, 7500 SW 120th St. in Pinecrest

Cost : a \$5 donation is requested

For information: call 305-238-2601.

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BY MARGARITA SWEETING
SPECIAL TO THE MIAMI HERALD

When Teresa Flores-Diaz told her mom she wanted to play the drums, she didn’t get the response she expected.

“She was sort of surprised and was like, ‘Can’t you play piano, the violin or something else?’ Then, I told her I saw Karen Carpenter playing the drums. So, if she could do it, why couldn’t I,” said Flores-Diaz, 35.

Since 2005, the West Kendall resident has played percussion for the Klezmer Company Orchestra, a group that has combined traditional Klezmer music — think *Fiddler on the Roof* or a traditional Jewish wedding — with everything from Latin rhythms to jazz orchestrations.

“I had never even heard of Klezmer music,” said Flores-Diaz. “But, when I heard them it had such a folk style, it reminded me of Mexican polka and had a Latin feel. I just felt at home with it.”

Music has always given Flores-Diaz a sense of security. She grew up in Los Angeles and was admittedly shy. So shy that even though she played piano in fifth grade, she was afraid to join a band. By eighth grade, she had been bullied and became a loner. Then, the school band changed her perspective.

“When I joined the band it literally changed my world. It raised my confidence. I had friends, and I actually wanted to go to school. It changed everything,” said Flores-Diaz.

She now offers this same experience to her students at Devon-Aire K-8 Center and Zora Neale Hurston Elementary School, where she teaches music for kindergarten through fifth grade. Band member David Levitan is a teacher as well, at Park Springs Elementary School in Coral Springs.

A native of South Florida, he attended Arvida Middle School and Sunset Senior High. Now a Davie resident, Levitan joined the Klezmer Company Orchestra in 2006 as a trombone player.

“When I was 6, I went to see the Shriner’s Circus. What I remember the most is watching the band in the pit and I was fixated on the trombone,” said Levitan. “When we left, I was only allowed to buy one souvenir. I bought a trombone-kazoo.”

Unlike Flores-Diaz however, Levitan grew up listening to Klezmer music. Klezmer, which in Hebrew means “vessels of song,” is a classic style of Jewish folk music, predominantly used for celebrations, dances, and weddings.

“I grew up listening to that music. I’m Jewish. But what we play now is very different. It’s an exciting mix of Latin, Egyptian, Arabic and Greek music. It’s world music,” said Levitan.

The Klezmer orchestra will bring its distinct style to the Bet Shira Congregation, 7500 SW 120th St. in Pinecrest at 3 p.m. on Sunday for a Purim holiday concert. A \$5 donation is requested.

The orchestra, which is made up of a core group of nine, includes Flores-Diaz; Levitan; Jackie De Los Santos, double bass and guitar; Randi Fishenfeld, violin; Doug Friend, drums; Scott Klarman, saxophones and flute; Chaim Rubinov, trumpet and flugelhorn; and Valerio Cantori, piano. They are directed by the group’s founder and accordion player, Aaron Kula.

Founded in 1997, KCO’s debut CD earned them a Best Klezmer Album award, along with a Best Klezmer song award in 2009. The concert is the kick off for a tour that includes Phoenix, Los Angeles and San Diego.