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Kula's klezmer at FAU

June 21, 2011 | By Marvin Glassman, Special to the Jewish Journal



Submitted photo

One may not immediately relate klezmer music to the 1940s big band sounds of Duke Ellington or Glenn Miller, however, conductor Aaron Kula puts a strong emphasis on the klezmer influence when he conducts his 60 member Klezmer Company Orchestra in "Spirit Of America: American Masters Of Song and Dance", a concert featuring the music of Ellington, George Gershwin and Miller June 26 at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

"Klezmer music is not just the music you hear at simchas such as bar mitzvahs and weddings. Klezmer is diverse and heard in all elements of world music. Klezmer music explores rhythms, jazz harmonies and is heard in the big band sounds that will be played in concert," said Kula.

Kula's extensive knowledge of klezmer comes from heading the Klezmer Company Orchestra since 1997 as well as being director of the music collections housing more than 50,000 musical scores at the FAU Libraries.

"Aaron's love of klezmer is heard in the early jazz music that the audience will see and hear for themselves in the concert," said vocalist Lianne Lyons, a jazz music professor at University Of Miami, who will be singing at the concert. "Aaron's knowledge and enthusiasm for researching and keeping the history of klezmer alive on the stage is unparalleled."

The 52-year-old Kula, born and raised in Long Island, had deep roots in Jewish music from his family. Kula's father was Cantor Morton Kula, considered one of America's top cantors and his mother Charlotte was a classically trained pianist.

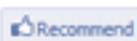
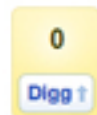
Kula started playing the piano by age eight and later honed his skills on the accordion and developed his love of Jewish music and klezmer in his teens. Kula has six brothers, one being Cantor Marc Kula of Congregation Beth Shira in Miami and another is famed Rabbi Irwin Kula, who is known for his best selling books on Judaism and his many television appearances.

Kula has conducted orchestras for 30 years, leading orchestras in Boston as well as South Florida and also conducted many performances with Miami City Ballet. Kula's first recording with the Klezmer Company Orchestra, "Beyond The Tribe" (2009) has been critically acclaimed.

"The concert is very exciting to have the opportunity of performing works by Ellington and Miller that have never been done in our past performances. It is so exciting to play these works and to restore so many historical scores from our libraries going from the shelf to the stage," said Kula.

Highlights of the concert include Ellington's jazz symphony "Black, Brown and Beige," Gershwin's "Cuban Overture" and Miller's "Candy."

Kula conducts the Klezmer Company Orchestra in "Spirit Of America: American Masters Of Songs And Dance" with guest vocalists Daniel Cochran and Lianne Lyons, June 26 at 3 p.m. at FAU Kaye Auditorium, 777 Glades Road in Boca Raton. For tickets and information, call 800-564-9539 or go to <http://www.fauevents.com>



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