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## Klezmer is gonna get you

Aaron Kula's JubanoJazz! gives Jewish folk songs a Latin accent.



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The Klezmer Company Orchestra, with conductor and founder Aaron Kula, will blend klezmer melodies and Latin rhythms during its 'JubanoJazz!' concert on Sunday, March 2, at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. (Florida Atlantic University/Courtesy / March 2, 2014)

By Phillip Valys, SouthFlorida.com

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The concert that Aaron Kula will premiere Sunday at Florida Atlantic University — a fusion of Latin rhythms and klezmer melodies — is more or less what the Klezmer Company Orchestra founder has done for years: dusting off old Yiddish folk songs with vibrant musical updates.

On Sunday, Kula will premiere 'JubanoJazz!' a concert of 23 original compositions marrying Yiddish with Afro-Cuban, mambo, bolero and tango rhythms at the university's auditorium. The show coincides with FAU's Kultur Festival 2014, the university's sixth annual celebration of Jewish culture, which began Saturday and continues daily through March 8.

"I'm trying to put the hip back into klezmer music. It's a blending of old and new, South American and old Jewish folk songs," says Kula, KCO's maestro and its accordionist. "I'm fitting klezmer into its current home and geography, which is South Florida and full of Latin music."

If Kula is trending younger with his company's music, he does so to attract younger patrons. In 2013, he organized a KCO Composition Competition, in which emerging Latin composers created pieces combining klezmer sheet music archived at FAU's Wimberly Library with music reminiscent of their heritage. Eric Benaim, a 24-year-old, Miami-based, Venezuelan-born composer, contributed a jazzy, up-tempo piece that recalls Venezuela's annual carnival festival. The 27-year-old, Brazilian-born Diego Lyra Medeiros, meanwhile, created a dance rhythm Kula describes as a "machine of sound."

"When they blend their musical culture with my musical culture, you create a kind of third musical culture, updated with rhythms that Ricky Martin or Gloria Estefan might have used," Kula says.

*JubanoJazz!* will be staged 3 p.m. Sunday, March 2, at the Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium, 777 Glades Road, in Boca Raton. Tickets cost \$20-\$45. Call 800-564-9569 or go to [FAUEvents.com](#).