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**“KULTUR Festival 2009,” a Five-Day Inaugural Celebration of  
Jewish Music and Arts, Kicks Off at FAU**  
*Klezmer Company Orchestra and the Ebony Chorale of the Palm Beaches  
Reunite in Concert for “Tantz, Samba & Soul,” the Festival’s Finale*

**BOCA RATON, FL (January 26, 2009)** – “KULTUR Festival 2009,” an inaugural five-day celebration of Jewish music and arts, will kick off at Florida Atlantic University on Wednesday, February 25, with a multimedia presentation of the award-winning children’s book, *Mendel’s Accordion*, and conclude Sunday, March 1, with “Tantz, Samba & Soul,” a concert reuniting the 25-member Klezmer Company Orchestra (KCO) and the 40-voice Ebony Chorale of the Palm Beaches.

The celebration, the first of its kind in South Florida, promises to be engaging for the entire family. Distinguished New York City Cantor Jacob Mendelson, filmmaker David Weintraub and authors Rabbi Irwin Kula and Heidi Smith Hyde are among the featured world-class artists and speakers.

Aaron Kula, director of music collections and performance at FAU Libraries and conductor of KCO, the library’s professional ensemble-in-residence, said he is fulfilling a dream by hosting this festival. “I have been dreaming about hosting an interdisciplinary arts festival at FAU for some time, and I am delighted to finally offer these events to our entire community,” said Kula, a Klezmer revivalist and music scholar. “My goal is to use the arts to connect tradition with change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each event confronts the issues of balancing cultural tradition with cultural revolution.”

Kula is incorporating a cross-section of materials from the library’s special collections throughout the festival’s programs. Among the featured materials are recordings from the Judaica Sound Archives, artist books from the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts and Jewish sheet music.

“It is gratifying to have our collections brought to life in this way,” said William Miller, dean of University Libraries at FAU.

Events will be held in four locations on FAU’s Boca Raton campus, 777 Glades Road. Concert tickets range from \$18 to \$42. Tickets for other events range from \$5 to \$8. Festival passes are \$85 and include entrance to all events, premier seating at the concert, a copy of KCO’s nationally released CD “Beyond the Tribes” and the exhibition catalog “Women of the Book.”

The celebration kicks off with “Klez4Kidz,” a multimedia presentation of the award-winning children’s book *Mendel’s Accordion*, featuring author Hyde and KCO members, on February 25 at 7 p.m. at the Live Oak Pavilion in the University Center. A dramatic reading, live music and projected illustrations from the book will bring the charming bedtime story to life. Parents and children are encouraged to bring blankets and dress up in pajamas for this event. Grandparents are sure to enjoy this unique program too.

An exciting variety of events follow on February 26, including two films that document endangered cultural traditions. Weintraub, creator of “Where Neon Goes to Die,” and Cantor Mendelson, the subject of “A Cantor’s Tale,” will speak and participate in a question-and-answer session following the films. Mendelson also will lead six of his South Florida colleagues in a unique presentation on cantorial improvisation that features live performances, classic recordings and a panel discussion.

Distinguished musician and scholar Dr. Leonard Lehrman and vocalist Helene Williams will present a song recital and lecture about the close musical and personal relationship between Jewish-American composers Leonard Bernstein and Marc Blitzstein on February 27 at 11 a.m. in the library.

Book artist Lynne Avadenka will discuss the use of Jewish themes and Hebrew language in her work, using an exhibition from FAU Libraries’ Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts at 2 p.m. on February 27 at the Wimberly Library.

“Tango & Tantz,” a lively social gathering, will allow participants to engage in traditional Latin and Jewish folk dancing. Dance experience is not required, and all ages are welcome. The dancing begins on February 28 at 6 p.m. at the Live Oak Pavilion.

Rabbi Irwin Kula, noted radio and TV personality, author, international speaker and co-president of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership in New York, will deliver the festival’s keynote address at 1 p.m. on March 1 at FAU’s Lifelong Learning Center. Kula will share his progressive philosophy on Jewish wisdom and examine the role of Jewish arts and culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The festival’s grand finale, “Tantz, Samba & Soul,” will be performed at 3 p.m. on March 1 at FAU’s Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium. This tour de force performance of new orchestrations and arrangements pushes cultural boundaries and celebrates the connections of Jewish, Latin and African-American music.

“This collaboration between the KCO and The Ebony Chorale of the Palm Beaches represents a unique opportunity for displaying cultural diversity, not only from a musical standpoint, but also from the collaboration of two cultural heritages, both with rich historical significance,” said Orville Lawton, founder and director of The Ebony Chorale.

KULTUR Festival 2009 has been made possible in part through a grant from American Express. Additional support is being provided by WXEL, the Nathan and Marion Crosby Holocaust and Judaic Library Collections Endowment Fund, the Jewish Cultural Society at FAU, the South Florida Association of Jewish Libraries, FAU’s Lifelong Learning Society and FAU’s Student Union. Proceeds from the festival will benefit FAU Libraries.

For tickets and a schedule of events, call 800-564-9539 or visit [www.faevents.com](http://www.faevents.com). Festival passes can be purchased by phone or in person at the FAU Box Office. For more festival information, visit [www.library.fau.edu/news/kultur.htm](http://www.library.fau.edu/news/kultur.htm), and to experience KCO visit [www.klezmercompany.com](http://www.klezmercompany.com).

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*Cutlines*

**Photo #1 Cutline:** Klezmer Company Orchestra, Aaron Kula, music director and conductor

**Photo #2 Cutline:** Cantor Jacob Mendelson

**Photo #3 Cutline:** *Mendel's Accordion*