

MEDIA CONTACT: Carol Lewis
561-297-0245, clewis36@fau.edu

Klezmer Company Orchestra Scores Big with CD Produced from Music in FAU Libraries' Print Music Collection *Ensemble Wins Two Awards in International Competition*

BOCA RATON, FL (September 23, 2009) - Years of combing through worn boxes of generations-old music at Florida Atlantic University on the Boca Raton campus have earned Aaron Kula, director of music collections and performance at FAU Libraries, some high scores among musicians internationally.

Kula and his Klezmer Company Orchestra (KCO), the only professional ensemble-in-residence at an academic research library in the country, have been awarded "Best Klezmer Album" for their CD "Beyond the Tribes" and "Best Klezmer Song" for "2nd Avenue Hoedown" for 2009 from Just Plain Folks, the world's largest grassroots music organization.

"Aaron brings a unique passion to our university with his soulful music, and I am delighted that he and KCO were recognized for their efforts and innovation," said Dr. John Pritchett, FAU's interim president.

The groundbreaking "Beyond the Tribes" draws attention to FAU Libraries' print music archives, which provided Kula with melodic material for the album's compositions. The 12-track recording is a celebration of cultural fusion and a tribute to ethnic melodies. The music is energetic and pulsates with Latin, Arabic and Jazz rhythms.

"Being nominated in one category would have been enough, getting first place in one category would have been a bigger thrill, but first place in two categories is a further validation that our music is relevant beyond the FAU community," said Kula, a prolific composer and accordionist. "What a thrill to be recognized for work that I love."

Just Plain Folks, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is comprised of more than 51,000 independent songwriters, recording artists and music industry professionals nationwide. "Beyond the Tribes" was one of 42,000 albums and 2nd Avenue Hoedown was one of 560,000 songs submitted for competition. Musicians are nominated by their peers and voting is exclusively by members.

"Beyond the Tribes" was independently produced by Kula and KCO associate producer Terri Berns, who also is the library's director of communications, cultural affairs and donor relations. Nine core soloists and a vocalist with accomplished backgrounds in classical and jazz music make up the ensemble's 22-member orchestra.

The album balances tradition and innovation throughout the 50-minute recording. Kula morphs exotic melodies into entirely different songs that push innovation to the extreme and ultimately propel klezmer into the 21st century. Absolute rules have no place in “Beyond the Tribes.” Simply put, the music defies common classification. One writer even described KCO’s sound as “world music on steroids.”

Each song of the album has its own back story and features different KCO members who contribute their improvisational style to the orchestrations, and “2nd Avenue Hoedown” is no exception. The song, which is a klezmer version of a country music hoe-down, includes a solo fiddle section with strings, saxophones and xylophone.

Kula holds degrees in music and Judaic studies from the University of Minnesota and in orchestral conducting with distinction from New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where he is a guest conductor. He has taught conducting at Boston University, and has been a guest conductor with the Boston Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Boston Conservatory Symphony, Santa Fe Symphony, New Hampshire Ballet and others internationally.

Kula’s goal at FAU is to always preserve and perform music from the library’s collection. KCO, which he founded 12 years ago, is his instrument to showcase updated versions of music from the library’s shelves, literally taking the music from “shelf to stage.” KCO has performed more than 300 pieces of music from the collection, and Kula has composed at least 100 works based on original printed music in the collection.

“We have the raw materials in our collection, and it is good to see an artist like Kula, who is able to transmute them into new creative works,” said Dr. William Miller, dean of Libraries at FAU.

The CD is available online for purchase through CDBaby.com, iTunes music store and DigStation.com, or it can be ordered through www.klezmercompany.com. To experience KCO, go to the music and video link at www.klezmercompany.com/media.html.

-FAU-

Cutlines:

Photo #1: “Beyond the Tribes” CD cover.

Photo #2: Aaron Kula with Klezmer Company Orchestra.

Florida Atlantic University opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University serves more than 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses strategically located along 150 miles of Florida's southeastern coastline. Building on its rich tradition as a teaching university, with a world-class faculty, FAU hosts ten colleges: College of Architecture, Urban & Public Affairs, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Biomedical Science, the College of Business, the College of Education, the College of Engineering & Computer Science, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Graduate College, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science.