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Jazzing up the New Year

September 14, 2012 | By Shani McManus, Staff Writer

On the eve of the Jewish Holidays, what better way to welcome in the New Year than by attending a holiday concert by renowned music director Aaron Kula and his Klezmer Company Orchestra?

That's exactly what a throng of people did on Sunday when they packed the Crest Theater at Old School Square in [Delray Beach](#) for two, sold-out performances to hear Kula and his brother Rabbi Irwin Kula present the second annual "American Jewish New Year: Jazz Wisdom Spirit."

Guest vocalist and Palm Beach resident Laura Whitten performed with the celebrated orchestra that included accordion, violin, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, drums, percussion and piano.

It was impossible to keep from toe tapping as the nine-member ensemble offered a lively celebration of music that fused the spirited rhythms of jazz, Latin, Klezmer and world music with wisdom on holiday themes of forgiveness, compassion, gratitude and love.

"The performance celebrates the intersection of tradition and innovation," Aaron Kula said. "The experience is a blending of cantorial melodies with American Jazz and swing."

After each musical selection, Rabbi Irwin Kula addressed the audience, recounting personal, inspirational stories and offering uplifting, spiritual words of wisdom.

Rabbi Kula counseled those attending to become "a little more aware" of every single moment. "Our time is limited," he said. "Think of the shofar as a spiritual alarm clock."

After Aaron Kula gave what could only be one of the longest-lasting shofar blows on record, Rabbi Kula told the audience to, "Wake up. Wake up from your sleep. Let's celebrate. We begin our life this very minute."

The audience clapped loudly in approval after each musical selection and spiritual oration.

Dottie Pierce, vice president of the Jewish Cultural Society at Florida Atlantic University, and a big fan of Aaron Kula, attended the concert. Pierce said the goal of the Society is "to promote and preserve Jewish culture" and to "promote Aaron Kula."

Kula is closely associated with FAU.

"It's incredible what [Kula] does," Pierce said. "He transforms cantorial music into jazz music. He is a marvel and FAU is lucky to have him. He has done a lot for Jewish culture."

Evelyn Solomon, Jewish Cultural Society president, also attended Kula's concert and echoed Pierce's sentiments.

"The concert was one of the warmest, spiritually uplifting and beautiful events that I have ever attended," she said. "I attend all of Aaron's presentations. It was a privilege to be there."

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