Klezmer and Concert Bands: An Unexpected Wedding

Presenter:

Itamar Danziger - composer from Kitchener, Ontario

- Itamardanziger.com
- Musical family - mom is an opera singer
- Played Clarinet since age 7.
- For 11th birthday, got a Klezmer album as a gift; fell in love with it.
- Started composing at around 11 years old.
- Compositional interests: combining western music with elements of ethnic music

"Klezmer"

Yiddish is the historically spoken language of the Eastern European Jews

Klezmer comes from the Hebrew / Yiddish words:

- "***Kley***": vessel

[of]

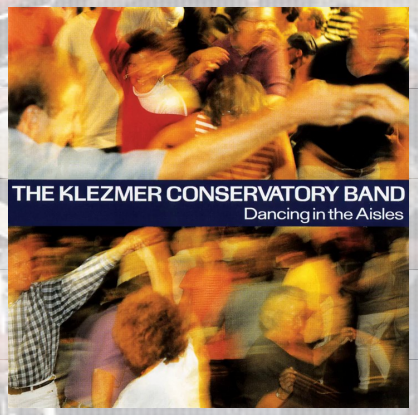
- "***Zemer***": melody, song, or music
- Plural: Klezmorim

- Originally referred to the musician, not to the style

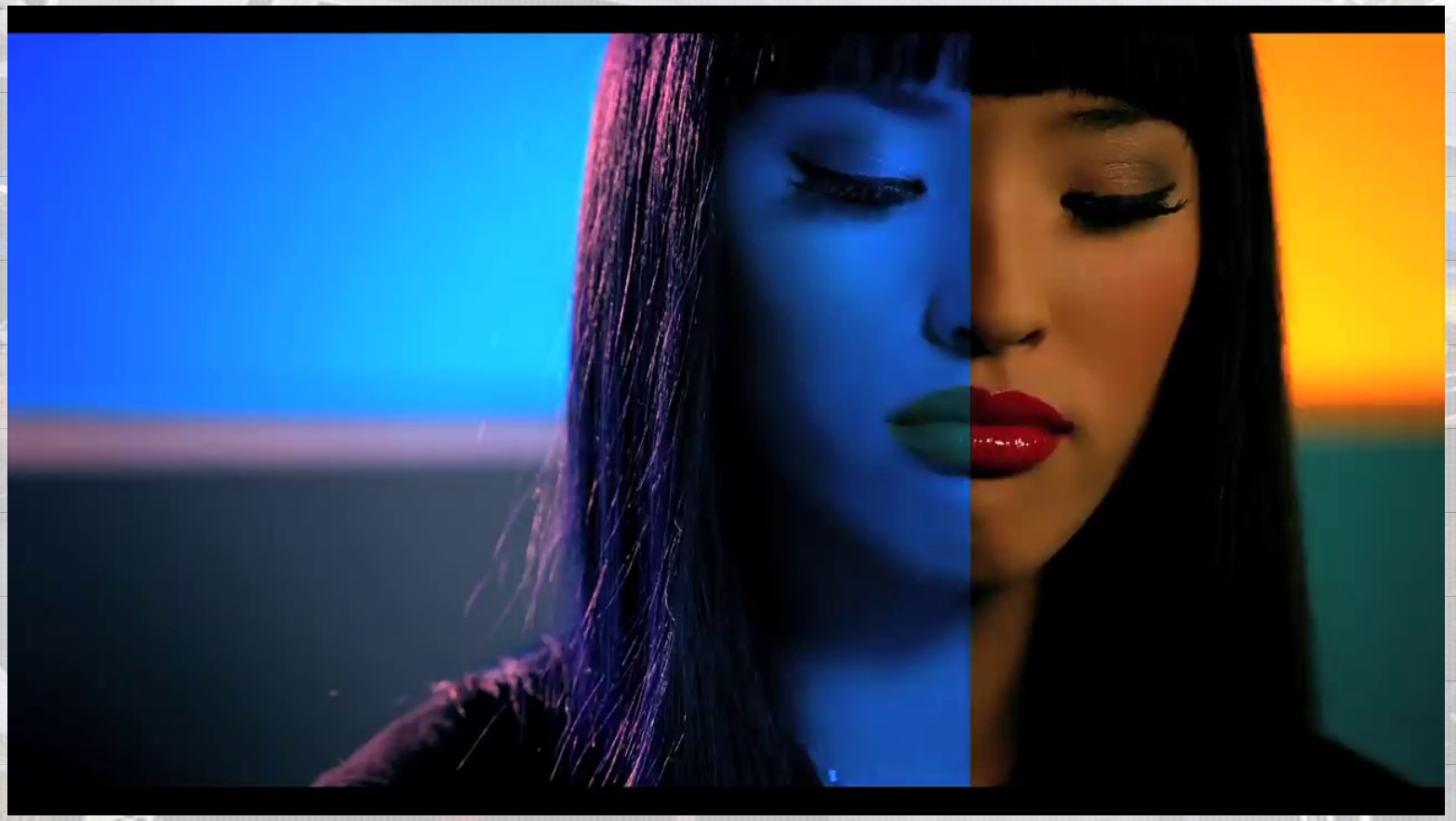
Klezmer defined:

- Broad definition: dance music of the Eastern European Jews from at least the 17th century to contemporary times.

- It is not only what you play but ***how*** you play it
  - "Laughter through tears"



EXCELSIOR



What influenced Klezmer?

- Cantorial style of singing
- Hasidic Nigunim
- Roma music
- Slavic music, i.e. Ukranian music
- Western classical music
- Balkan music
- Changing instrumentations due to Jewish military service in the Russian army
- Americanization of Klezmer, Foxtrot

Parallel Development

- Jewish American Music - Bei Mir Bist Du Sheyne, Abi Gezint
- Yiddish Theatre
- New American Jewish music - i.e. MBD, Shulem Lemmer, Matisyahu

Bei Mir Bist Du Sheyn

Of all the boys I've known, and I've known some,
Until I first met you I was lonesome,
And when you came in sight, dear, my heart grew light
And this old world seemed new to me.
You're really swell I have to admit, you
Deserve expressions that really fit you,
And so I've racked my brain, hoping to explain
All the things that you do to me.

Bei mir bistu sheyn please let me explain,
"Bei mir bistu sheyn means you're grand.
Bei mir bistu sheyn again I'll explain,
It means you're the fairest in the land.

North American History

- Klezmer was popular with immigration 1880 and onwards
  - Dave Tarras, Naftulie Brandwein, Abe Schwartz, Harry Kandel, Max Leibowitz, Shloymke Beckerman
- Borscht Belt
- “Died out” in North America in the 50-60s
- Revivals started in late 1970s: i.e. by Klezmer Conservatory Band, Klezmorim, Kapelye

Max Leibowitz Orchestra

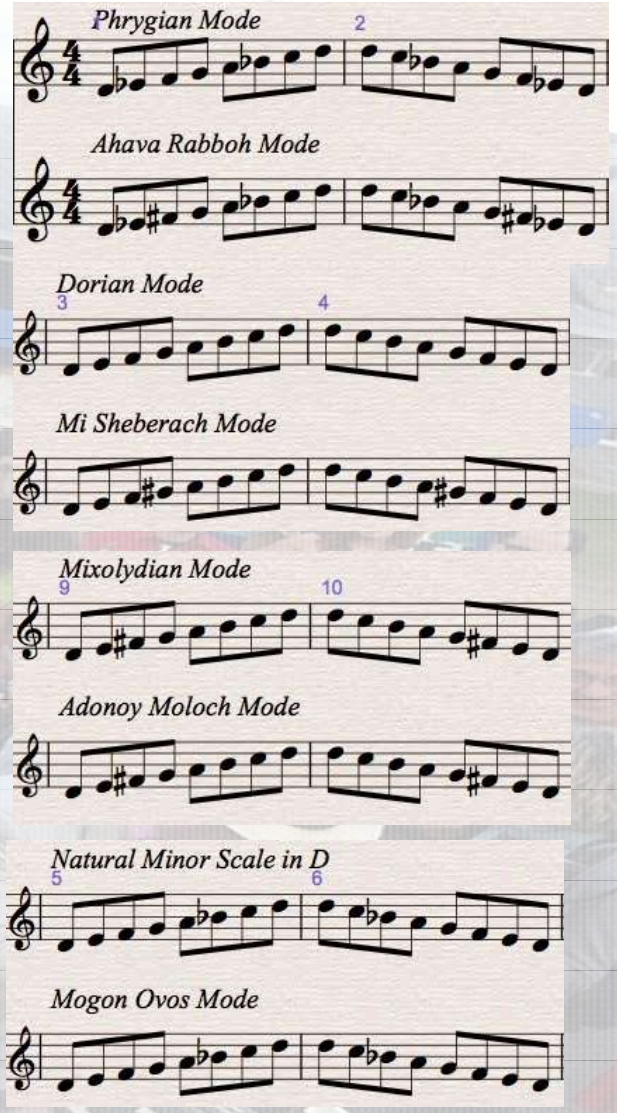
Dave Tarras

Naftuli Brandwein

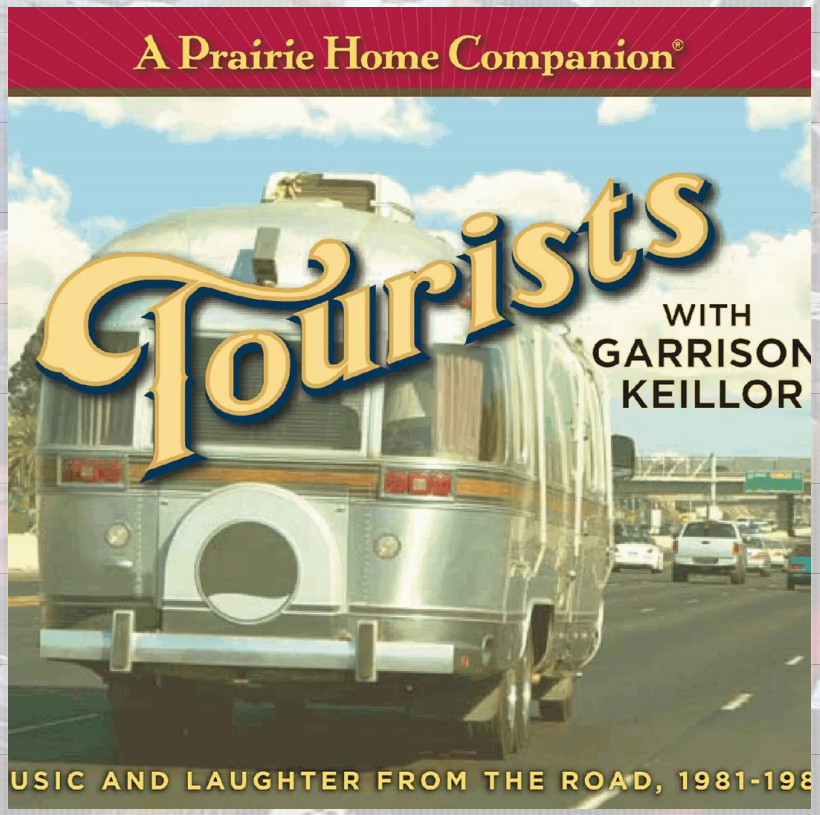
Look for: the mode, ornaments, vibe, audience

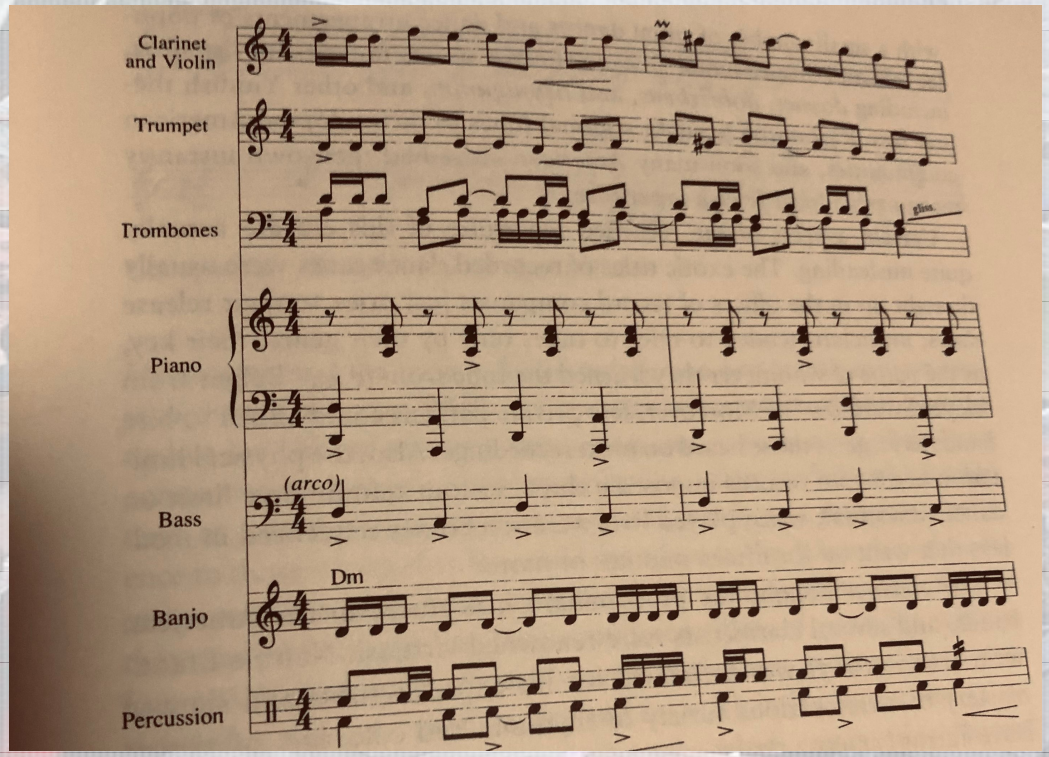
Modes

- Freygish: altered phrygian mode (Ahava Rabba) - Hava Nagila
- Altered dorian mode (Misheberakh) -Freylekhs Fun der Khupe, Odessa Bulgar
  - great mode to cadence on.
- Major -Kishiniever Bulgar
- Myxolidian (Adonai Molokh) i.e. Yasser Bulgar
- Minor Scales: Natural, Harmonic, Melodic



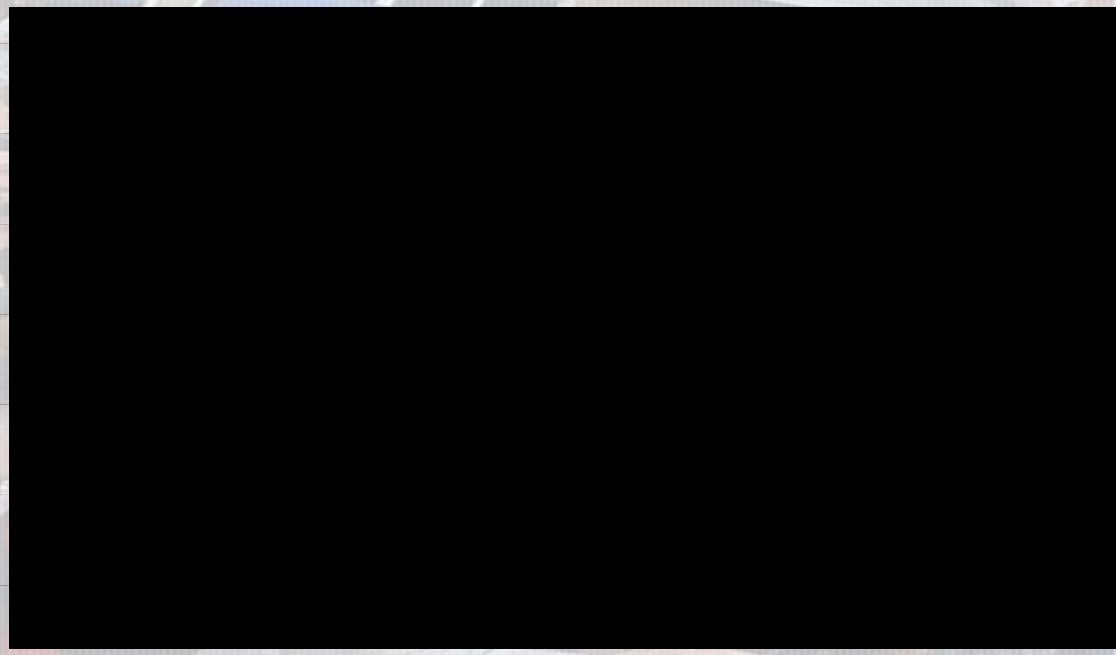
Voicing recognition exercise





Voicing

- Melody: Bonus Klezmer points for rhythmically contrast with bass and tenor lines.
- Second and third voices
- Descant - Violins, Picollo
- Secunda / Secunding
- Tenor line
- Bass line
- Rhythm

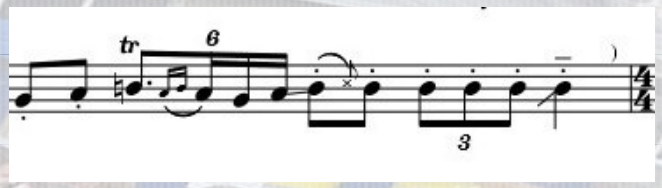


Prelude to ornamenation: Yossele Rosenblatt

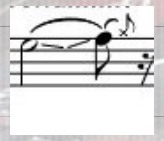
The **inflections** are those many small changes in the voice that gives the listener the “soul” of the singer

Ornamentation examples, a la Jonno Lightstone

Krekhts, pl. krekhtsn (Yiddish - sob or moan). The krekhts is the quintessential klezmer ornament. unique to Jewish music and is associated with a long tradition of synagogue cantors. It is usually played on the violin and clarinet but can be adapted to flute, trumpet and stringed instruments like guitar and mandolin.



Trills - are fast and usually diatonic, generally played by clarinets and flutes.



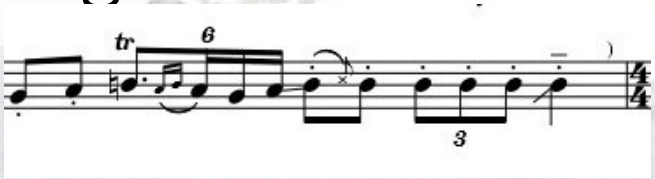
Note bending - starts on the intended pitch, bend downwards, then returning to pitch. Done fairly quickly by violin and clarinet.

Grace notes - can be single notes preceding the beat or on the beat and are generally quite explosive.

Please note:
1) Ornament are personal - and therefore often not annotated on lead sheets;
2) Please do not over-do!

Ornamentation examples, a la Jonno Lightstone

Mordents - both upper and lower, played on the beat.



Glissandi - can be long or short depending on where they occur. Often played by clarinet and trombone.

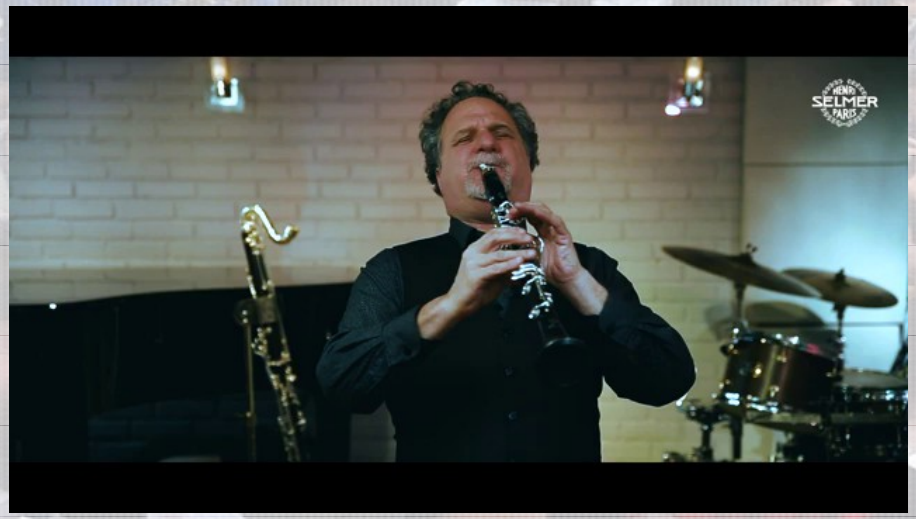
Chirps - idiosyncratic to klezmer music, played by high clarinets (C and Eb) achieved by quickly dropping the jaw after a note has been sounded, works best on very high notes.

Laughing - unique to clarinet, similar to a chirp but more extreme.

Vibrato - depends on the instrument. Clarinet; is very fast and not too wide. Violin; traditionally no vibrato is used. Flute: can be used

Tremolos - help to push the rhythm and during rubato, played by piano, tsimbl, mandolin, guitar and banjo(!)

David Krakaur on Klezmer ornaments



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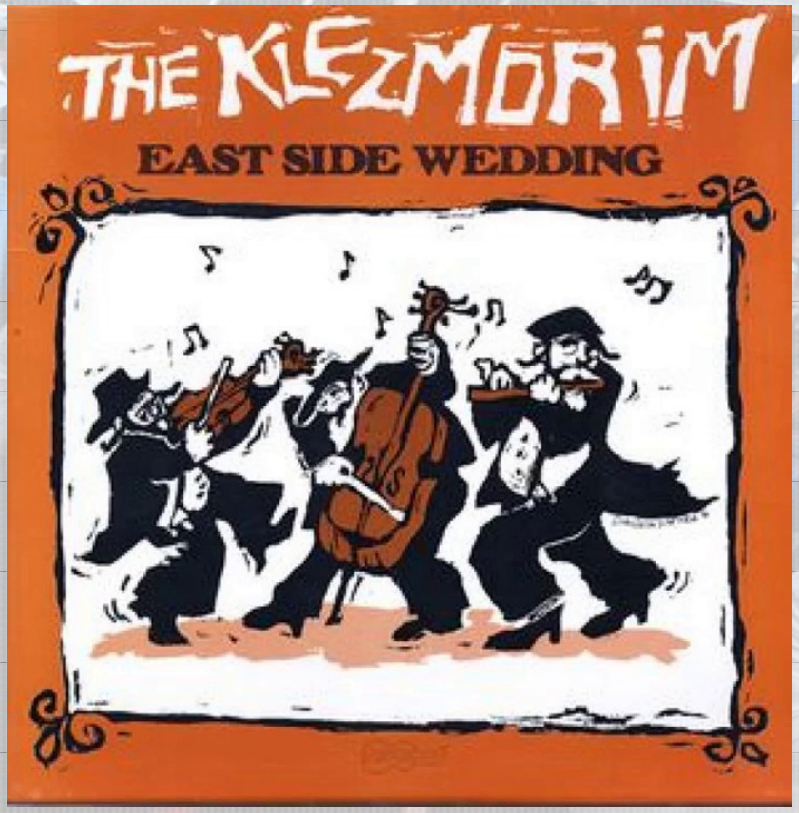


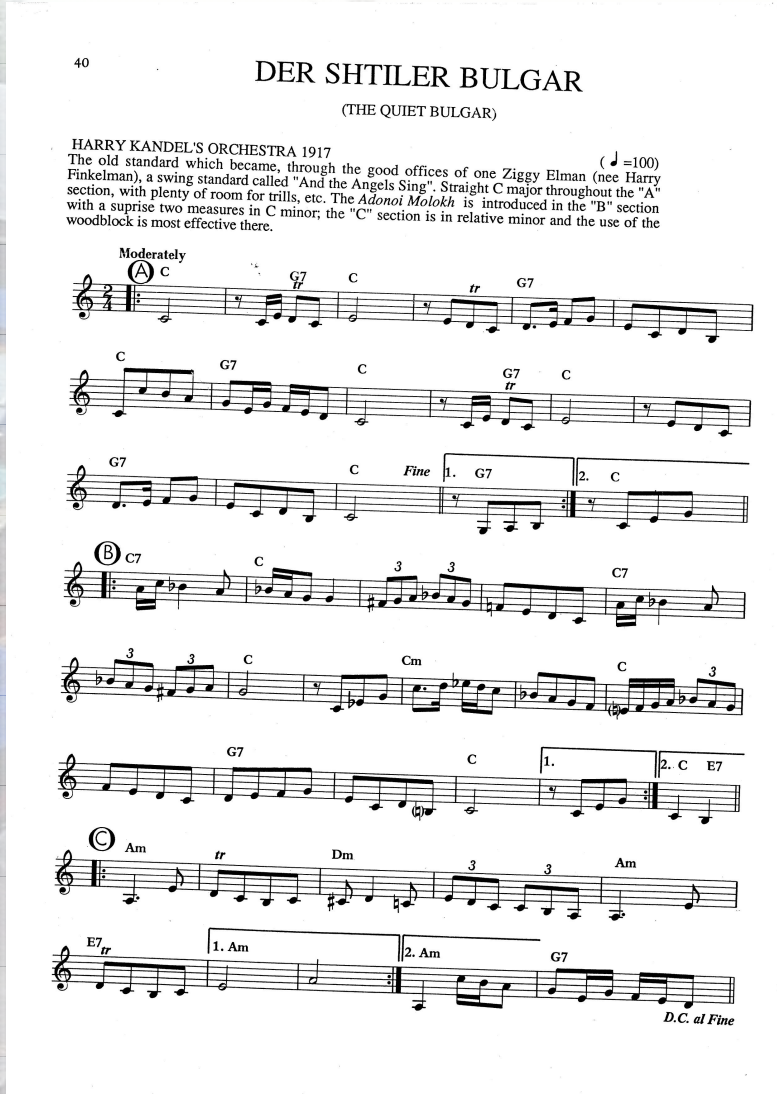
Terkisher

Hora

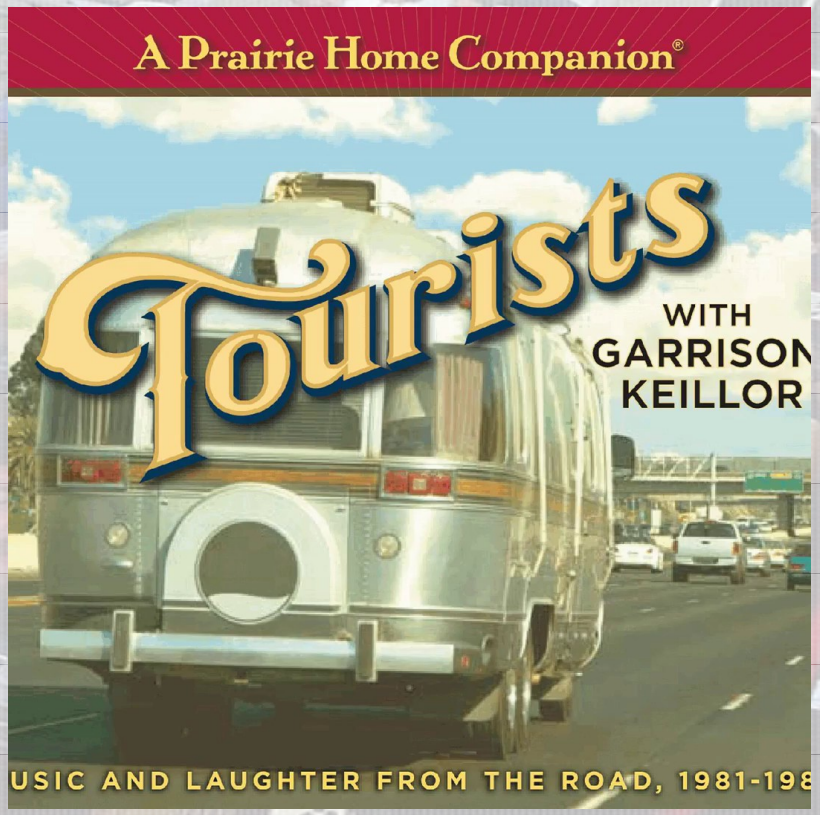
Khusidl
“Ukranian Khusidl”, I. Hochman

Der Shtiller Bulgar (And the Angels Sing)

- P.s. Benny Goodman / Ziggy Ellman knew klezmer



Freylechs



Dancing at KlezKanada
2011

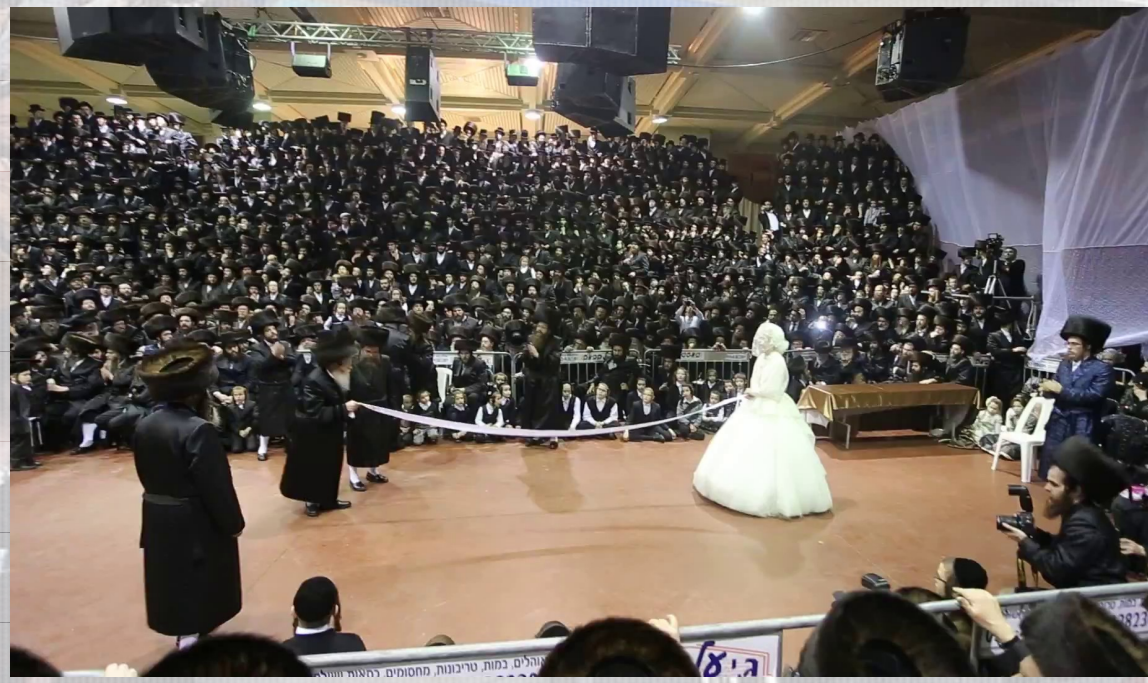
Function of pieces

Dance music

Tish music

Weddings:

- Walking different family members to, from, and through the ceremony and party
  - Broiges tanz
  - Di mekhutonim geyen
  - Bedeken
  - Mitzvah Tanz
  - Dobranotsh waltz– “good night waltz”
  - Patsh Tanz - clapping dance
  - Badkhan (MC)



Fusions

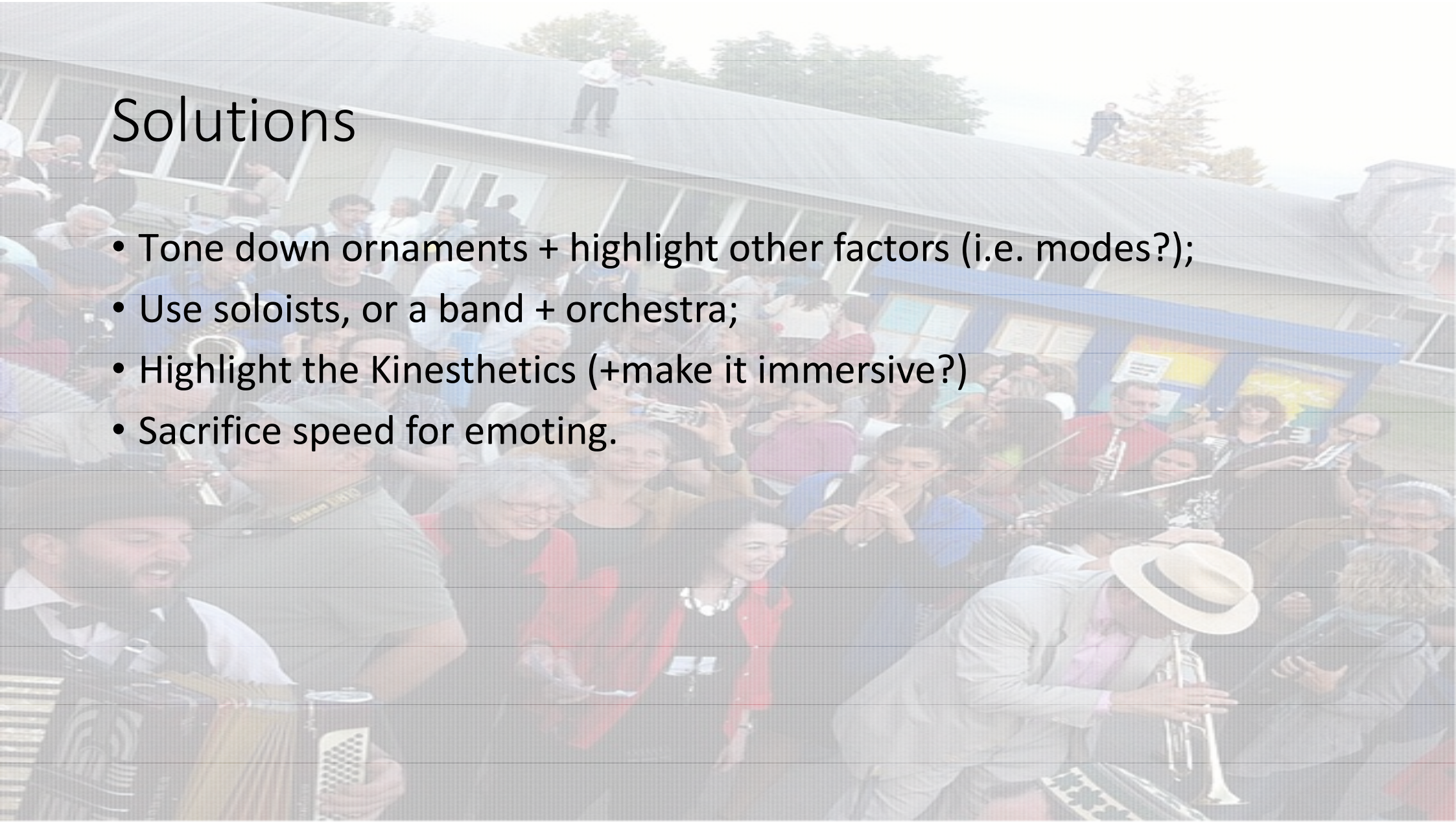
- fusions already attempted:
  - Jazz
  - Hiphop
  - Rap
  - Country
  - Hard metal
  - Orchestras (symphonic, concert band)*

*this marriage needs caution

Klezmer and orchestras - the next frontier?

- Translating dance music onto stage
  - Cannot rely on repetition as much
  - Harder to interact with the crowd

- Competing demands to bill music.
- Harder to replicate ornaments / “emoting” - on a sectional level
- Some of the ornaments are considered “extended technique”
- Beat phasing preferences



Solutions

- Tone down ornaments + highlight other factors (i.e. modes?);
- Use soloists, or a band + orchestra;
- Highlight the Kinesthetics (+make it immersive?)
- Sacrifice speed for emoting.

Mahler’s 1st Symphony

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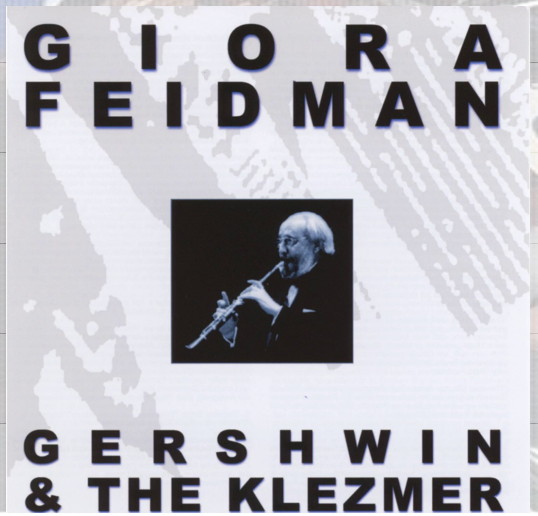
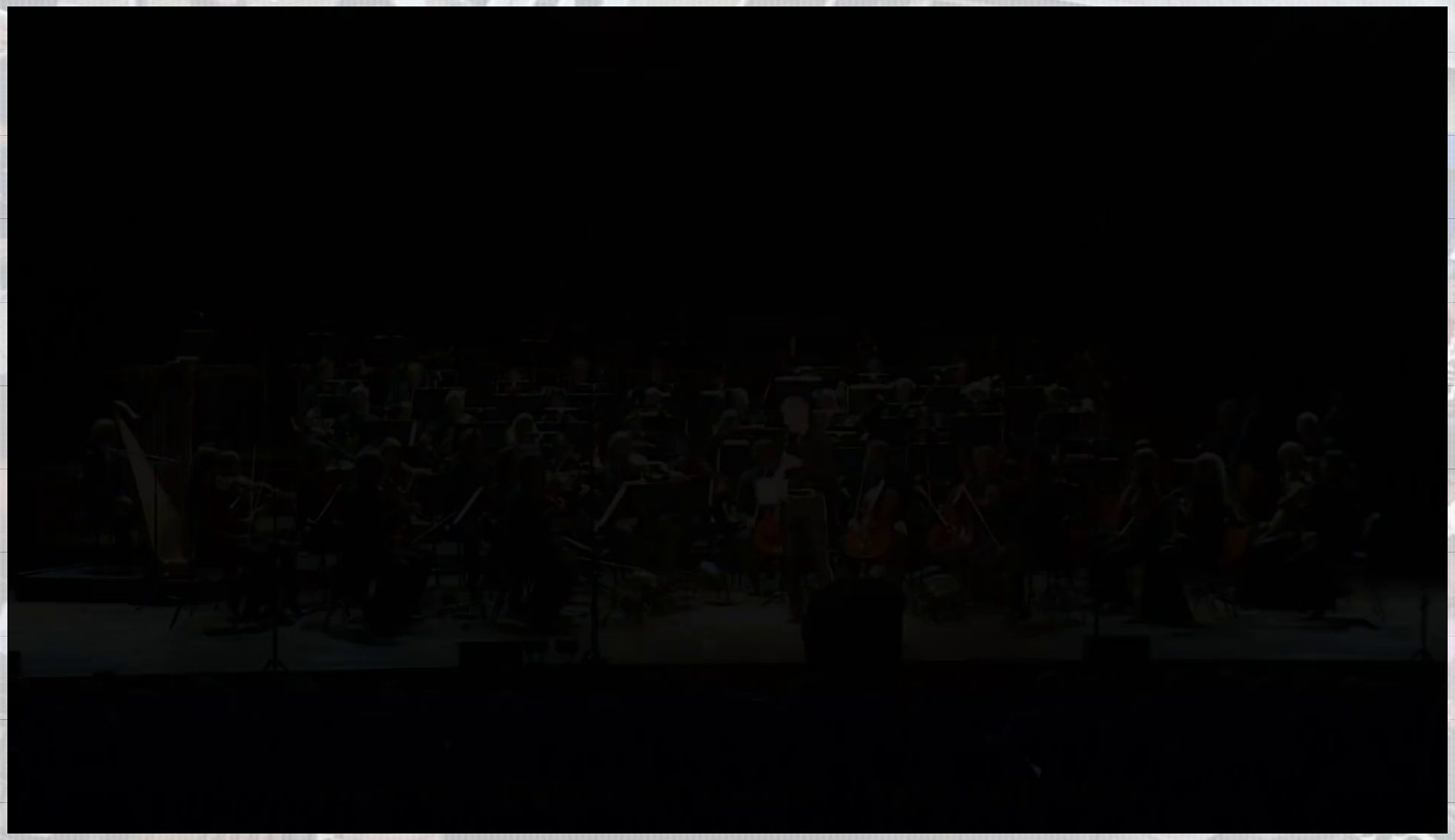


Giora Feidman + Terem Orchestra

Martin Fröst plays Klezmer Dances by Göran Fröst:



Klezmer Karnival - Philip Sparke

Margot Leverett: "Klezmer Fantazi" arranged by Matt McGarrell, with Mesilla Valley Concert Band

Klezmer Fantasy, Marcel Saurer

Odessa Bulgar - Jonathan Hadas

Kitchener Bulgar - Itamar Danziger

Arbutus Dance in the Park

Music: Arbutus Dance.
Composed by Itamar Danziger.
Played by the Greater Victoria Concert Band.
Conducted by Mike Keddy.
Dancing in the Mill Pond Park in Richmond Hill with Riki Adivi

Nonantum Bulgar - Hankus Netsky