

## **Klezmer Roots and Klezmer Toots**

"If music be the food of love, play on," says lovelorn Orsino (in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night") so we're not the first to make an analogy between food and music. Klezmer is to music what the bagel is to cuisine: It has been pumpernickeled, salted, garlicked, studded with sun dried tomatoes, and everything-ed. Like the bagel, Klezmer is ubiquitous and improved or degraded. It has made it so big that it has been abbreviated to Klezmer, like a fashionable dish, restaurant, or disease. From a musical style firmly set in east European agrarian village culture, it has become a world-wide sound track, partly because it has borrowed heavily from Rom, Romanian, Turkish, Polish, Russian, Greek, Spanish and any other musical tradition in which rent-evading musicians sat to catch a breath. It has been jazzed, swunged, rapped, and Broadwayed. It is true fusion music. In the eight weeks of this course we'll dine fully, if not elegantly. As I used to say before I went to college, "Enjoy," or now "Bon Appetit!"

This seminar style course will include lecture, discussion, sharing of reactions to records (78's and 33 1/3's), discs, CD's and videos, as well as selected readings. This will require a bit of tolerance for participants, because shifting between types of media is sometimes difficult. Klezmer was and is participatory (it was dance music) and we might even do a dance or two. Sharing is crucial, so read the first handout before the first class.

The course will be roughly chronological, moving through four phases of evolution in Europe and this country that I have labeled: Traditional, Transitional, Reverential, and Referential, roughly a movement from a time when the music was a community ritual to a time when it has become a touchstone of symbolic ethnicity (like chopped liver, or a pastrami sandwich).

Week 1: What is Klezmer?

Week 2: European roots and the earliest recordings.

Week 3: The first American klezmerim.

Week 4: Music for a Jewish wedding.

Week 5: Crossover Klezmer.

Week 6: Klezmer and the Jewish theater.

Week 7: The Klezmer Revival- stages 1,2,3,4,?

Week 8: A Klezmer celebration

**Leaders:** Bob Mehlman taught English at The College of New Jersey for nearly 40 years and worked in psychological counseling services as a psychologist. He plays clarinet in the band

Odessa Klezmer and Greek music in the band Baklava. Bill Selden directed the Geology Museum at Rutgers University. Well-versed in Balkan music, he plays accordion with the klezmer band Tzu Fil Dovids, Greek music with Baklava, and Bulgarian and Macedonian gajda and kaval.

**Wednesdays:** 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon, 8 weeks: September 26 through November 14

**Location:** PSRC