

## The *Klezmer* Accordion: Old New Worlds (1899-2001)

Joshua Horowitz  
*Director, Ensemble Budowitz*

The article looks at the use of the accordion as a *klezmer* instrument, in solo and ensemble contexts. The study begins with an account of leading *klezmer* accordionists of the early recording era, 1899-1929, including both Jewish and non-Jewish performers, and then focuses on ensembles in the period 1937-1942. The author discusses the Hasidic and Israeli *klezmer* styles of the post-Second World War era, and the more recent "revival" of the last quarter of the twentieth century, as well as the continuity of *klezmer* music in the "Old World" of Eastern Europe. The author is a leading *klezmer* accordionist and lecturer, with notable recordings. A discography and bibliography accompany the article.

KEYWORDS: *klezmer*, accordion, early recordings, Hasidic, Eastern Europe, world music

### Introduction

There are many musical cultures of Jews spread across the world today, yet one genre which enjoys almost universal popularity is that of *klezmer* music, the instrumental music of the East European Jews.<sup>1</sup> It is generally accepted that both clarinet and violin are traditional *klezmer* instruments, as defined by the instrumental parameters of recorded documentation from the earliest years. The "*klezmer* revival" has encouraged modern-day *klezmer* musicians to learn the style of their predecessors in the "Old World" by studying the vast corpus of 78 rpm discs still available. Since most of the US recordings made between 1915 and 1942 feature clarinet as the lead instrument, it is that instrument that is considered most traditional in *klezmer* music today. Whereas only three tunes by two of the early solo accordionists (Yankowitz and Tsiganoff) recorded between 1906 and 1930 are featured on modern reissues of *klezmer* recordings that have become available in the past twenty years, there were at least sixty-nine sides of relevant solo accordion tunes and twenty-eight harmonium solos alone released during that earlier period to draw from. By

comparison, the legendary *klezmer* clarinetist Naftule Brandwein, whose recordings have practically defined the older style of contemporary *klezmer* music, released only about fifty-three recordings during the same period; the less prolific but nonetheless refined clarinetist Shloimke Beckerman recorded only fourteen. Subsequently, the clarinetist Dave Tarras, however, recorded many more, imprinting the tastes of American *klezmer* musicians today more than any other figure in its history, thereby achieving cult status for both himself and the instrument.

Yet, as valuable as early recordings are for documenting musical history in the twentieth century, it should be kept in mind that US recordings and their catalogues are an incomplete certificate of musical history, an often misleading source from which to draw conclusions. For instance, in tracing the use of the accordion in the *klezmer* ensemble through early recordings and catalogues, single instruments are often not listed in the ensembles. This is especially true when the ensemble features more than fourteen instruments; but since as early as 1912, *klezmer* ensembles have also simply been listed as "orchestras" of 7-men, 9-men, 12-men or 13-men groupings. The accordion, then, appears in the ensemble listings only when the ensemble was *small* enough to allow mention in the label catalogues, or when the label decided to be diligent enough to list all the instruments. In the larger orchestras, only the names of conductor and soloist appear.

In short, it is only possible to trace the accordion's first entry into the *klezmer* ensemble via recordings when the ensemble was blessed with a detailed discographic catalogue. As a result of drawing on only this partial evidence of recordings, scholars have sometimes misunderstood the accordion's role, and have considered the instrument as a more recent accessory. As Ottens and Rubin have written:

The "neo-traditionalists" among the revivalists propagate a newly fabricated standardized style, which is put together out of only a few "traditional" elements. . . . The inclusion of the accordion as an historical instrument of the East European Klezmer tradition belongs to this "newly fabricated tradition"; in fact it was first used by klezmer ensembles in the 1930s. The resulting traditions which have come out of these standardizations and mythifications have transformed music into a symbol, and with it a romantic replacement for Judaism, the reality and history of which the revival generation willingly closes its eyes to. (Ottens, n.d.: 298)

Nevertheless, as even a cursory survey of the recordings and performance documents from the era of early 78 rpm through to the modern "revival" show, the accordion, far from being a peripheral outsider to the *klezmer* genre ensemble as sometimes perceived in the literature, has been an integral member of it. The important role which the accordion plays and its power in transmitting, defining and changing tradition in the *klezmer* genre is evident from its earliest incursions into *klezmer* music in

the late nineteenth century. Thus, one might conceive the honorary title of *klezmer accordion* for the instrument that has been a favoured member of the ensemble even among the earliest dated recordings of *klezmer* music.

### The Solo and Duo Recording Era (ca 1899–1929)

The earliest known *klezmer* accordion recordings catalogued in the USA are those by A. Greenberg in New York, made for the United Hebrew Disc and Cylinder Record Company. Greenberg recorded the Jewish *Breiges Tanz*<sup>2</sup> in 1906, along with a Russian *Walse, Kamarinskaja* and a *Troika*. In 1907, he again recorded the *Kamarinskaja* and *Breigas Tanz*, this time on organ. However, nothing is known about Greenberg's personal history and style.

#### *Grigori Matusewitch*

One of the first outstanding Jewish accordionists to make recordings was Grigori Matusewitch.<sup>3</sup> Grigori was one of the nine sons of Hyman Matusewicz, who owned a large house-furnishing shop in Belorussia, and studied violin as a child with a private teacher in Minsk. Whilst a teenager he happened upon Mulka, an inebriated Tartar who appeared in Minsk playing the English concertina. Matusewitch was so fascinated by the instrument that he bought Mulka a bottle of vodka, to which the drunk replied by handing over his concertina in gratitude. Matusewitch taught himself to play the instrument and developed a rich career, which included playing for the Czar's family. In 1920 Matusewitch moved with his family to the free city of Danzig, Germany, where he gave frequent concerts and was able to obtain a League of Nations passport, which enabled him to play concerts on both sides of the Atlantic until 1923.

Although only three recordings of Matusewitch's Yiddish-style concertina playing exist,<sup>4</sup> he deserves to be considered as one of the finest of the early Yiddish music "accordionists". He was primarily a classical concertinist, but enjoyed playing folk music and delighted his audience by including some in almost every programme.<sup>5</sup> Matusewitch later enjoyed an illustrious, though brief, career in the USA, lasting from 1923 to 1939, though he felt he could have been much more successful than he was.

Matusewitch's style represents a well-balanced amalgamation of the classical and the folk *klezmer* style. In the nineteenth century, there were *klezmer* performers who actually composed longer works in a folk style, showing complete familiarity with the *klezmer* genre but combining it with a classical sensibility. Well-known composers in this vein were: Joseph Michael Guzikov, xylophone (Sklov, Russia-Poland, 1806 or 1809–1837); Aron Moyshe Kholodenko, violin (Berdichev, 1828–1902, also



**Figure 1**  
Matuswitch, Russia 1909 with a 2-row bayan and surrounded by what seem to be Vyatskaya accordions. Photo courtesy of Eric Matuswitch

known as Pedotser);<sup>6</sup> and Alter Goizman, violin (also known as Alter Tshudnover, 1846–1912).<sup>7</sup> Matuswitch can be considered as belonging to this tradition – a crossover musician at home in both worlds. Often accompanied by a classically trained pianist, he made use of a plethora of techniques, which are usually considered part and parcel of the classical



Figure 2

Matusewitch, Danzig, 1920s. The caption reads *Grigori Matusewicz, Virtuos*. Photo courtesy of Eric Matusewitch

world – extensive use of broad rubato (the folk style also uses rubato, but usually in much shorter time spans), a clear tone and a wide, carefully mapped-out and controlled dynamic range. His bellows technique was immaculate, and his long notes often featured a “Saratov tremolo”.<sup>8</sup>

On 27 January 1928, a review in the *Houston Post-Dispatch* described his style thus:

Under his fingers the small instrument resounded with bell-like tones resembling a flute, trills of a violin expertly fingered, the baritone of a cello, the mellow richness of a clarinet and then dropped to a softer key giving the illusion of the murmurings of the woodwinds of a large orchestra.

Indeed a characteristic of Matusewitch's "folk" style was his frequent use of a warbling fast trill using the upper third. When playing *klezmer* tunes he made ample use of vocalistic escape tones (or *Nachschläge*, sometimes known in Yiddish as *Krekhtsn*), appoggiaturas, trills and occasional syncopation. Favourites of Matusewitch's repertoire were the Jewish liturgical prayer *Kol Nidre*, a pot pourri of Yiddish melodies called *Yiddishe Melodien*, his original *klezmerish* tunes entitled "Oriental" and "Wolach", Russian and Ukrainian folk songs, a "London Polka", a "Serenade", and in more crowd-pleasing vein, Monti's "Czardas" and Sarasate's "Zigeunerweisen", popular tunes composed in a quasi-Gypsy salon style. His main concert fare concentrated upon classical violin repertoire.

Grigori was survived by his sons, Boris Gregory (English concertina) and Sergei (piano accordion). Concerning the continuity of *klezmer* music in the family's repertoire, Eric (Boris's son) – who still occasionally plays the concertina in concert – wrote that Boris was:

"... a very serious" classical musician, sticking to pieces found in a typical violin recital. ... Boris did, however, arrange many Jewish pieces for his students, immigrants from Eastern Europe who enjoyed that musical style.

#### *Intercultural influences: Andónios 'Papadzís' Amirális and rembetika*

One particular accordionist who seemed to embody the typical *klezmer* sound more than any other, though he never actually recorded any *klezmer* tunes, was Andónios "Papadzís" Amirális. He recorded frequently with the great singer of early Smyrniac *rembetika* music, Antonis Diamantidis (otherwise known as Dalgas) in the 1920s and 30s. His style was as close to a synthesis of vocal and instrumental Yiddish style as could be found. It is generally recognized that Greek music and *klezmer* music share many stylistic characteristics. One reason is that under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Greek Phanariots were set up as rulers in many of the regions where Jews played *klezmer* music. The *klezmorim* (*klezmer* players) of Bessarabia and Vallachia especially, commuted regularly to Constantinople, where contact with Greeks and Turks was assured. Amirális' playing exemplifies those elements common to – though not exclusively – *klezmer* musicians at the end of the nineteenth century.

The first such overlapping feature was the use of the *krekhits* mentioned above – the sobbing sound produced upon the release of a note – typical to Yiddish music, but also found throughout Balkan and Turko-Arabic musical systems. The second element was the use of a *klezmer nokhshpil* (postlude) found at the end of the *rembetika hasapiko* *Hasapaki Dhen Se Thélo Pia*, featuring Dalgas, Papadzís and an unknown mandóla or guitar player. This *nokhshpil* features a simple, slow descending line often typically used as a transitional phrase in *klezmer* – but also in non-Jewish Romanian music – between the slow *doina* and the medium *Hora* dance which follows. It was first observed by Professor Martin Schwartz of Berkeley, California, who interpreted it as possible evidence of the activity of Ashkenazi Jewish musicians in the early *rembetika* scene. Previously, the only hard evidence of that interaction had been the few scattered descriptions and documents of *klezmer* musicians frequenting Constantinople in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Subsequent to Schwartz's observation, the collector and Turkologist Hugo Strötbaum, in Utrecht, Holland, unearthed some fascinating "missing link" 78s recordings of the Blumenthal Bros.<sup>9</sup>

The third element was Amirális' flowing, constant ornamentation of the melody, which was as pervasive as it was inconspicuous. Here was a way of dealing with the melody that seemed so typically *klezmerish*: nuances on every note of the phrase, yet the impression of a crystal clear melody line. Perhaps what made this melodic transparency possible was the fourth element: a jagged way of phrasing that brought out every curve and resting point of the line. This emphasized the asymmetry of the melody and clarified its contours. Underscoring it was a notable absence of unrelenting chords, which not only would have obscured the subtle ornamentation, but also softened the modal dissonances. The early recordings thus highlight the extent to which "recognizable" *klezmer* styles are inextricably connected to a range of intercultural influences.

#### *The klezmer accordion as voice – Max Yankowitz*

The essence of the earliest *klezmer* style derives from the characteristics of the voice as used in liturgical, para-liturgical and Yiddish song. In other words, the accordion comes nearest to being a representative mouthpiece for *klezmer* music when not being an accordion at all, but rather a voice disguised as an accordion. As Alan Bern explains:

From the beginning . . . I approached the accordion as a wind instrument that accidentally happens to have buttons and keys. In Yiddish and all other musics I play on the accordion, I listen to what wind instruments and the voice do and model my playing on them. (Horowitz 1999)

This is particularly true of the music of Max Yankowitz. Listening to it one becomes aware of a combination of qualities coming together to form

his sound. The “inefficiency” of the bellows with only nine to fourteen folds – typical for the 3-row instruments of the time – made it possible to ornament a main melody note with trills or escape tones by touching other notes on the instrument, without having them come out too clearly. In other words, the limited air volume of the bellows made the ornamental notes softer when played. The tuning of only one pair of reeds for each tone also provided a more plaintive sound and forced the player to imply timbral variation through phrasing, since there are no register buttons to hit which would magically change the timbre. The reeds were tuned almost at the unison, lending the instrument a dry, slightly melancholy sound that didn’t drip with sentimentality.

Virtually nothing is known of the life of Max Yankowitz. The only recordings we have of his music are in a duo formation, either with *tsimbl* (dulcimer), for instance those with Goldberg from 1913, or with piano, as in the 1929 recordings with Abe Schwartz. Yankowitz remained active as an accordionist at least until 1937, after which no further recordings appear.

The 1913 recordings create an understated pastoral atmosphere, with sparse, tasteful ornamentation and a subtly “vocal” sound. Yankowitz often accents notes in a phrase through the use of the crushed grace note – whereby the melody is played simultaneously with the note a half-step above it, creating a dissonant effect. What first struck me about these recordings was the way in which Yankowitz used the left hand. In the slow pieces it often doubles the melody in antiphonal passages or for short spurts *colla parta*, or in parts of the melody which move stepwise. Otherwise he leaves the bass part to the accompanist, but doubles it occasionally to accentuate parts of the melody. Because the *tsimbl* often doubles his own melody in the bass register, at first the listener may not notice this.<sup>10</sup> The technique of weaving in and out of the melody is indigenous to early *klezmer* arranging style. In larger ensembles one often hears an instrument that appears for a snippet of the melody and then leaves again. Listening to Yankowitz, one gets the impression that this technique adds definition to the melody.

The fact that Yankowitz used the bass so sparsely was the first indication that his instrument may have been a 3-row chromatic right-hand with a push-pull left-hand system, as it would have been difficult, though not impossible, to have continuously doubled some of the fast-moving bass lines of the *tsimbl* with the graceful right-hand phrasing Yankowitz displays.<sup>11</sup> Among Yankowitz’s repertoire we find the solemn and stoic *Kol Nidre*, which is anything but disgraced by the backwoods accordion and *tsimbl* instrumentation. Indeed, it is disarmingly straightforward, delicately ornamented, and exquisitely phrased with no extra filigree.

*Nathan Hollander and the harmonium*

It would have been impossible to exclude the harmonium from a *klezmer* accordion history, given the persistent, dedicated, utterly unavoidable recordings of Mr Nathan Hollander. As the "Florence Foster-Jennings of the *klezmer* world", Hollander's twenty-eight recordings from 1915 feature Russian, Polish, Greek, Hungarian, Turkish and no small amount of *klezmer* music, played on his inimitable harmonium, sometimes mistakenly called "accordion" on the discs. But it would be unfair to consider him as a seminal figure in the *klezmer* accordion scene by virtue of the fact that he neither played accordion nor played his instrument of choice, the harmonium, artfully. His performance of one *doina*<sup>12</sup> is a superb example of primordialism; in it we encounter the *Ur-doina*, which is too difficult to uncover in others' performances, as they are inevitably belaboured with idiosyncratic ornaments and cryptic diversions. Hollander shows us the genuine, pure, almost prenatal Jewish expression of the *doina* – and of other genres as well – by virtue of a disarming delivery. He is the perfect performer for ideologists who would like to see folk music as the generic property of the common people, rather than the inspired individual.

*Misha Tsiganoff*

Misha Demitro Tsiganoff (his surname means "Gypsy", and he was commonly called by his nickname, Mishka)<sup>13</sup> was born on 15 January 1889, in Odessa, the son of Yanchie Demitro Tsiganoff and Vorgja Nickolarna, and died in February of 1967. He lived in Brooklyn and Manhattan, was Christian and spoke fluent Yiddish. Any speculation as to his having been Jewish on the basis of his familiarity with the *klezmer* style should be seen in relation to the fact that he himself wrote, on his US social security application, that he was Gypsy when he was 47 years old. It is possible, as some claim, that he later converted to Judaism, though this has never been substantiated.

Tsiganoff began his recording career in New York in 1919 and made his last solo record ten years later in 1929. In the 1930s he was billed as "The Gypsy Accordionist" on Philadelphia radio WPEN. He performed frequently with Molly Picon, the Pincus Sisters, David Medoff and Moishe Oysher, among others. Apparently two of his relatives, Steve and Millie Tsiganoff appeared in the film *Angelo My Love* (1983, written and directed by Robert Duvall), as well as a film about Misha at some point.

In contrast to Matusewitch and Yankowitz, Tsiganoff's style is more distinctly accordionistic. He does use the vocal imitation ornaments typical to Jewish and Gypsy style, but above and beyond that, his approach features very audible bass lines which enter at asymmetric



מישע ציגאנאוו

פאפולערער אקארדיאניסט

**Misha TSIGONOFF**

Gypsy Accordionist

Figure 3  
Tsiganoff. Photo courtesy of Henry Sapoznik

points of the melody, and a more hard-driving attack in the right hand. In contrast to Yankowitz, Tsiganoff accents the melodic rhythm of a phrase by sporadically adding an octave to certain melody notes, using a harder bellows press and sometimes adding a dissonant bass note in the left hand. His fast lines are aggressive and clearly articulated with syncopated accents that give his music a danceable quality. One significant aesthetic difference exists between Tsiganoff and the others: Tsiganoff, when varying the melody, strays further away from it than either Matusewitch or Yankowitz, who stay very close to the melody. He tends to fill out the lines with more notes than the other accordionists. On two of the 1919 recordings there is a second voice, which is probably a simple register organ melody line, or clarinet, played by Nathaniel Shilkret.<sup>14</sup> The second melody is ornamented somewhat differently from the main line, and is a good example of early *klezmer* heterophony, the like of which one frequently hears on the European ensemble recordings of early *klezmer* music. Tsiganoff's instrument may have been a bayan, which was commonly played in Odessa, his birthplace, as his name is listed in 1937 under "accordion", as opposed to "piano accordion" in the same section as Yankowitz (see footnote 10), which seems to have indicated the button accordion.

Standard repertoires are always bound to arise out of the collection of pieces each era brings forth. Certainly in the case of the above three accordionists, a miniature selection of "signature tunes"<sup>15</sup> has emerged. Rather than merely having become fair game for the ensembles of the recent *klezmer* "revival" they have curiously become musical banners of the instrument itself. The first of these was a signature medley commonly played by Matusewitch as a choice example of his popular concertina repertoire (*Yidisher Melodien*) and the other two have been played as envoys of the *klezmer* accordion in recent years. They include *Shulems Bulgarish Parts 1 and 2* (Yankowitz) and *Koilen Dance* (Tsiganoff). No *klezmer* accordion case should be without them and rarely is.

### Orchestral Cross-influences (1930–1936)

Although we know that most of the *klezmer* accordionists who recorded in the early years presented solos and duos, many of them also played with various groups of artists and were active in the many orchestras that existed, most noticeably in the studios of the recording companies and the Yiddish Theatre. By the end of the 1930s there were around forty accordionists with Jewish family names listed in the New York City Musicians Directory. Ethnic belonging tells us nothing about the kind of music they performed, however, as some of the best players of *klezmer* music were not Jewish at all (cf. Mishka Tsiganoff).<sup>16</sup>

We encounter a delicious enigma at this point: it would seem as if in

the 1930s the accordion was used by leading *klezmer* orchestras specifically to give an ethnic sound to their ensembles when playing the music of any culture other than *klezmer*. The 1935 Russian, Polish and Lithuanian recordings of the Abe Schwartz Orchestra (one of the leading *klezmer* groups of all time) uses the accordion on most of the sessions, whereas it is not present on his *klezmer* recordings of the same period. Perhaps this tendency was merely the result of engaging available players who knew the repertoire. For, although Matusewitch used the concertina for Russian and Hungarian music in the 1922 ensemble recordings, it does not seem to have been a gesture intended to project the image of the instrument onto another ethnic group, as his solo *klezmer* recordings clearly would disprove such a claim.

On the other hand, we know that great Yiddish singers, such as the prolific David Medoff (1888–1972), used the accordion throughout their entire recording careers. Medoff recorded mostly Ukrainian and Russian, but also Yiddish music, from 1917 to 1938. His orchestras and duo recordings were graced with the accordion playing of Mario Perry, Basil Fomeen and Tsiganoff (1926). It is not officially accepted historical practice, however, to consider vocal music as belonging to the realm of “*klezmer* music”, even when the instrumentalists backing up Yiddish vocal music often play in a *klezmer* style. This explains why, when the *klezmer* accordion accompanies the Yiddish voice, it has still not been considered a “*klezmer* accordion” by historians intent on excluding it (cf. Rubin and Ottens, quoted above).

### The Ensemble Enlightenment Era (1937–1942)

Two years after the Abe Schwartz Orchestra’s Russian, Polish and Lithuanian discs came out, non-Jewish musicians began increasingly to record *klezmer* tunes in their ensembles with the accordion. In June 1937, the Greek clarinetist Kostas Gadinis formed his Jewish Orchestra and recorded the *klezmer* tune, “Lechayim”, with himself on clarinet, a guitar or Lauto and an unknown accordionist. Alongside Greek, Turkish and Romanian tunes, Gadinis went on to record the *klezmer* titles, *In Vain Keller* [In the wine cellar] and *Zol Zein Freilach* [May It Be Joyful] in 1939. In 1940 his Greek accordionist was listed as John K. Gianaros.

The accordion on these recordings is used for chordal accompaniment. The playing is as brash as the clarinet, driving and unadorned yet showing little evidence of an integration of the instrument with the melody. Since this seems to be the first appearance of the accordion in listings of *klezmer* ensemble recordings, are we to conclude that innovations in *klezmer* instrumentation were initiated by non-Jews? After all, Gadinis was Greek. Perhaps it would be more accurate to consider the question in the light of differences in cataloguing practices as regards

precision, some satisfied to use the term "orchestra" with no indication as to instrumentation or personnel, while others detailed both.

The misleading information about the treatment of the accordion in ensembles has more to do with the development of arranging techniques than it does with the acceptance or rejection of the instrument as such. Prior to its transplantation to the New World, arrangements for *klezmer* ensemble reflected the given hierarchic positions of the ensemble members. The roles of soloist and director were usually performed by one and the same person; in the nineteenth century this was usually the violinist, later on, more often the clarinetist. It was a position that meant being heard and seen at all times and being able to play and direct at the same time. Even in the early recordings of Brandwein, Beckerman, Schwartz, Kandel, and others, one almost always hears the soloist/ensemble constellation, with only momentary breaks given to other instruments. And of course even the concertina players and accordionists were earlier presented as soloists when the recording featured them. Yet their position in the later ensemble recordings was not as soloist, probably for the simple reason that none of them led their own ensembles.

The Abe Ellstein (b. 1907) Orchestra was the first *klezmer* ensemble to catalogue an unnamed *klezmer* accordionist as early as October 1939 on the six sides which the orchestra recorded with Dave Tarras on clarinet. The anonymous accordion which backs up Dave Tarras's clarinet playing in the Abe Ellstein Orchestra is featured as an equal, moving freely between rhythmic playing in the right hand and extensive melody doublings and thirds as clearly audible as the clarinet itself, swiftly departing at times to execute a fill in the spaces where the clarinet breathes and at the end of phrases. Here we hear the accordion in a variety of functions, as both a true orchestral, and sometimes a solo, instrument. In the ten Ellstein recordings made on the 1940s session, however, the accordion and its player managed, in a typical moment of cataloguing oversight, to escape entry in the label listings, a singular omission the likes of which have contributed to obscuring the "true" history of the accordion and its heroes.<sup>17</sup>

The beginning of the 1940s witnessed a new wave of recording activity in the Jewish scene, centering on the most popular clarinetist of the period, Dave Tarras. Although not listed in the recordings of Al Glaser's Bucovina Kapelle with Dave Tarras in June 1939, the accordion was later included in his band, as can be seen on photos of the period. Later, the Dave Tarras Instrumental Trio, with Sammy Beckerman on accordion and Irving Gratz on drums, recorded over forty-three tracks between October 1940 (as the Kwartet D. Tarasiego playing Polish music) and March 1942. Beside the accordionist E. Schlein, who played many of the Polish gigs with Tarras, his other *klezmer* (piano) accordionist was Jack

Fiedel.<sup>18</sup> But Tarras was to continue playing with Sammy Beckerman beyond their memorable reunion concert in 1978 at the Balkan Arts Centre. Beckerman's style gave the earlier Tarras smoothness a tinny edge, which the snare drum of Gratz underlined. He rarely comes to the foreground, except for a few generously granted solos to add timbral relief, and therefore remains the classic background accordionist kept in his place by the front man. He used the right hand to play rhythmic chords with an occasional doubling of a line to accent a phrase of the clarinet. His accompaniment patterns are light (probably so as not to overshadow the clarinet) and asymmetric, harking back to the *secunda* violin style<sup>19</sup> whose challenge it was to play rhythm solidly, flexibly, but never mechanically. Beckerman's occasional doublings with the clarinet also show a familiarity with the earlier *klezmer* ensemble style, which used the high instruments to weave in and out of the melody, playing fragments of it, then dropping out.

### The Hasidic and Israeli Years (1943–1975)

In New York in the late 1940s, the main jobs for *klezmer* musicians were to be found playing for various Hasidic communities in Brooklyn owing to the large wave of immigrants who came over the ocean after the destruction of their hometowns in Eastern Europe. The *klezmer* jobs changed almost overnight into marathon sessions, which required immense physical stamina. Describing Dave Tarras's feelings about the new wave of Hasidic music, Henry Sapoznik wrote:

despite having been approached by the Hasidic community in the 1940s to play jobs for them, he had a great disdain for the music and the ecstatic responses of the community to it. (Sapoznik 1991: 22)

Summing up the role of the accordion in the period which saw the transition from a somewhat traditional style of *klezmer* music to the new Israeli trend in the late 1940s, the American *klezmer* clarinetist, Sid Beckerman explained:

all the good piano players, you know, who couldn't convert . . . played lousy accordion because none of them actually played. . . . So the bands did suffer. All of a sudden [it] became a style.<sup>20</sup>

In Philadelphia – the next largest *klezmer* scene in the USA outside of New York – the situation was different. The standard repertoire, while showing overlap with the New York strains, was distinct and traceable to the areas of Iasi, Kiev and West Ukraine. It remained somewhat conservative up to the mid-1920s, changing more slowly than its New York counterpart. The 1940s brought to Philadelphia an influx of “exotic” repertoire (Latin American tunes and mummies' reels), and while

Palestinian<sup>21</sup> and Israeli tunes were also brought in, the older *klezmer* style remained intact for a longer period of time than it did in New York for Jewish music (Netsky, unpublished).

However, a new ensemble sound was emerging at that time. In New York, Sam Musiker (clarinet, saxophone, 1916–1964), the son-in-law and student of Dave Tarras, emerged as one of the main catalysts for integrating the accordion organically into that new sound world. Musiker was a classically trained musician who had gained notoriety, mainly as the sax, and occasionally clarinet, player in Gene Krupa's Swing Orchestra. He brought his extensive arranging experience, as well as the virtuoso accordionist, Harry Harden, into his orchestra in the 1950s. Musiker's arrangements show an ingenious use of the accordion as an "orchestral" instrument, voiced downward from the violins' melody note, or peppering the arrangements with broad, full chords like the brass section padding of a classical symphony. Harden's hard-driving, clearly phrased accordion style was ideal for the brassy sound of the Musiker orchestra. One fine example of his playing is found on the Abe Ellstein tune, "A Heimisher Bulgar" recorded in 1952 and rereleased in 1993 (Sapoznik 1993). The tune provides a break<sup>22</sup> for his brilliant solo playing, which in the ensemble featured plenty of connecting phrases, endings, and supporting harmonies. Both Sam and his younger brother Ray (clarinet, sax) also played throughout the 1950s with the accordionist Seymour Megenheimer.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1950s, the pianist and accordionist Joe King was the bandleader who supplied most of the jobs to the working *klezmerim*, while at the same time responding to the new Israeli style, a new departure from earlier *klezmer* repertoire and style. Howie Leess, who played saxophone for the King band described his playing as

very poor. But a gentleman, and a very nice man, very nice to work for. But I didn't want to spend the rest of my musical life working for him. (Sapoznik 1999: 161)

One of King's musicians, Rudy Tepel (clarinet), split off to make his own orchestra, using the talents of Peter Begelman and eventually "Sleepy" Walter Weinberg on accordion, whose style became the source of various and sundry stories regarding his questionable choice of chords. Although the Rudy Tepel Orchestra repertoire in the 1950s and 60s still retained many of the older strains of Jewish dances, his music underwent the same process that King's style underwent, embracing the Israeli music of its time as well as earlier "Palestinian" music. Tepel's style, like King's, met with sometimes harsh comment from some of his sidemen as being too far removed from the "klezmer style". Sy Kushner, founder and accordionist of Mark 3, which later developed into one of the most popular Hasidic bands of the 1960s, developed a more inclusive

perspective of the period. Regarding the style they were trying to create, Kushner remarked:

We were not at all involved in backbeats or rock in the 1960s, but rather in an ensemble sound that *included* the clarinet (Chi Epstein on Vol. 1, Danny Rubinstein on Vol. 2 with Sam Kutsher on trombone) but did not *feature* the clarinet. We sought an ensemble blend of clarinet, alto, trombone, tenor, accordion, bass and drums. The driving drumbeat was a bulgar beat<sup>24</sup> as used in *klezmer*. We were rather unique in that respect. Other bands that followed used a 2/4 beat. (Kushner 2000, emphasis added)

Kushner has remained a permanent fixture of the Hasidic scene since the inception of Mark 3. He later went on to found the Sy Kushner Jewish Music Ensemble, which looks back to the older style of *klezmer* music, but integrates the accordion as a lead instrument while still using it for “harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment” (Kushner 1999).

In Israel itself, the new style evolved from the popular music movements that arose following the establishment of the State in 1948, a national music that expressed the aspirations of the varied immigrant culture. Like the Yiddish language, with its accompanying associations of the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, *klezmer* music as it existed in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust took on a role as just one more element within the rich tapestry of influences. Yet, significantly, it was the accordion that, transplanted from its *klezmer* role, emerged as the pan-national, generic, symbolic folk instrument representative of the kibbutz and Zionist movements. After 1948, there was hardly a kibbutz that didn’t feature an accordion playing *Hatikvah*<sup>25</sup> or the Israeli *Hora* as well as any number of officially conglomerated dances for use in the schools and clubs abounding in Israel, a vast topic which would require a further article. One wonders how the boatloads of forgotten Russian, Polish and Romanian *klezmerim* with accordion laments at their fingertips adapted to Israel’s new musical culture, some of their music perhaps never to be heard again.<sup>26</sup>

### Continuity: *Klezmer* Accordion in “The Old World”

It is notable that *klezmer* music has continued and renewed its expression in those regions where it had flourished decades earlier, though in a new cultural context. Whereas it is possible to trace accordion activity in the USA, albeit only a fraction, through the assistance of recording catalogues and first- and second-hand accounts, the methods for constructing a history in the old world must rely on documenting scattered players who themselves, or whose predecessors, played *klezmer* music. Another source of information is the production and distribution of accordions in the relevant regions.

The Ukrainian Brass Band of Vinnitsa is an ensemble led by the bayan

player Sergei Goncharuk. The ensemble's members include non-Jewish men who were born and raised in Studionoye in the Peshanskii district between 1949 and 1965, and learned Jewish repertoire and style from their fathers who had played in *klezmer kapelyes* (ensembles) before the war.<sup>27</sup> The style of the ensemble, which consists of two trumpets, trombone, bayan and drum, is reminiscent of the *fanfara* brass bands found throughout Romania, Moldova and West Ukraine, which are made up of semi-professionals who play for weddings on Saturdays till the early hours of the morning, returning to work on Monday. Whereas the *fanfara* bands tend to play almost exclusively at breakneck speeds, the Vinnitsa ensemble plays Jewish dance repertoire at a more moderate pace. The accordion in this ensemble supplies the bass and accompaniment with the left hand, while accentuating the rhythm with right hand chords, but also playing additional subsidiary lines, parallel thirds for short phrases and doubling the melody as well. In short, theirs is a very colourful and multifunctional accordionistic orchestral style; solo breaks are also not uncommon. In the area of Czernovitz there is a non-Jewish father-and-son duo that still plays Jewish music. The son, who was born in the Ukrainian town of Sokirjany, plays a piano accordion and the father plays a bayan. The father had played with Jewish *kapelyes* before the war and taught his son the repertoire. The style is very close in sound and aesthetic to the early Tsiganoff recordings.<sup>28</sup>

Up until 1939, in the Southern Boikiv region of Lolyn (in the Dolyna district near Ivano-Frankivsk)<sup>29</sup> and Domashiv, Ukraine there was a Jewish ensemble with 1–2 violins, clarinet, saxophone, contrabass, bayan and percussion. Sometimes the Ukrainian fiddler Kuzîma Vorobetsî played dances with one of the ensembles, among them a *Polka-Sabashivka*, a *Polka-Zhydivka* (Jewish Polka) and a foxtrot version of the Russian-Jewish standard, *Bublitski*, as well as many European dances, which they helped to popularize in their region. The Jewish saxophonist Grinshliak also played with Ukrainian ensembles. According to local musicians, the Jewish musicians charged 20 *zlotykh* for a month of music lessons – about one-third of the price of a cow; for a full year of lessons, the price was one horse and a small cow. They only occasionally taught their students how to read music. Strangers were not admitted to the Jewish weddings, only to the dances, for which they invited Ukrainian musicians to participate (Iryna 1996: 11).<sup>30</sup>

Isaak Loberan (b. 1947, Kishenev) began his *klezmer* and Yiddish music career as a piano accordionist and bassist. He first played in a guitar and accordion duo in Moldavia and eventually led a Romanian music group in the town of Kalarash. Loberan now leads the Viennese Jewish music group, Scholem Alejchem.

Sasha Luminsky (b. 1959, Ukraine) studied at the Music Academy in Moldavia and the Leningrad Conservatory. His method of learning

*klezmer* style is typical of the modern generation of East Europeans who have contact with the West, as opposed to the more seldom examples of younger players whose parents learned *klezmer* style through contact with pre-war *klezmer* ensembles. He related how:

After the conservatory I played accordion in Moldavian weddings, but not too much. Most of the time I played keyboard and piano. Before 1992 (that's when I came to Canada) I didn't play *klezmer* music at all but I was very familiar with this kind of music. It reminds me of one story when my family moved to Moldavia from the Ukraine (where I was born) and my grandmother, the first time she heard Moldavian folk music, said: "These people are playing Jewish music" and I said: "No, they're playing *Moldavian* music," She said: "You don't know, they're playing *real* Jewish music." So in 1993 I joined the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band and started seriously to study *klezmer* music – especially the accordion in *klezmer* music. I got a very old record of Misha Tsiganoff playing the *klezmer* accordion style. That basically was my only source for studying this style. (Sacha Luminsky, personal communication)

Still playing today, from Píkov, Ukraine, is the 2-row bayan player, Rakhmiel Bilinson, who learned *klezmer* music from his father, a flautist in a *klezmer* ensemble. Bilinson emigrated to Brooklyn in 1994 and plays in a duo with the violinist, Yurik Aslavinsky (born in Zablówtow, Poland). The duo first played together in Chérnevtsy after the Second World War.

Iasi, Romania was an important city for *klezmerim* from the eighteenth century or earlier. It was not only the original backdrop for the first Yiddish Theatre of Abraham Goldfaden in the 1880s, but continued to be a centre for *klezmerim* till the Holocaust.<sup>31</sup> Among the most illustrious of the *klezmer* family dynasties from Iasi was the Bughici family. The last great violinist of Iasi, Avram Bughici, led a *kapelye* which featured his sons, among whom was the accordionist, violinist, pianist and composer Dumitru Bughici (b. 1921, Iasi, Romania), who now resides in Jerusalem and is still active as a composer. Some of the Bughici family repertoire has been passed on to the present generation (see Bughici 1997, 2000). In the 1970s, the last director of the Yiddish Theatre of Iasi, Itzik Schwartz, made a collection of home recordings on which Abram Bughici and the accordionist Izu Gott play.

Leopold (Poldek) Kosłowski was born in 1923 in Przemyślany, Ukraine. His grandfather, Pesakh Brandwine, came from Przemyślany, Ukraine and had four daughters and twelve sons. With his sons he formed a *klezmer kapelye* which served the area of eastern Galitsia and at its highpoint even performed for the Austro-Hungarian Kaiser, Franz Joseph. Among the sons of Pesakh who immigrated to America was the legendary clarinetist Naftule Brandwine. Leopold's father, Tsvi Hirsch, had a *kapelye* in which Leopold played in the late 1920s to the mid-1930s. Leopold graduated in piano performance at the Lvov Conservatory and in conducting at the Academy of Music in Cracow. During his studies he



Figure 4

Photo of a Bayan player at a Jewish wedding, Birobidjan, 1980s. Photo, Mariusz Forecki

played accordion in the Lvov area (currently L'viv in Poland) in his father's *klezmer* group at the weddings of both Jews and Gentiles, and also in the Gymnasium Orchestra, which he directed. His repertoire included *klezmer*, classical and swing music. Following the war, he continued his studies at the Cracow Conservatory and later formed the Polish Army Symphony Orchestra, Choir and Ballet, which he conducted till 1968. He later began the Roma Gypsy Orchestra and became musical director of the Warsaw Yiddish Theatre. He has appeared in the films, *Schindler's List* and *The Last Klezmer, Leopold Kosłowski: His Life and Music*.

Ben Bayzler (Warsaw 1922 – L.A. 1990) who played drums in the Kalushiner Klezmurim in Poland and throughout the former Soviet Union, often played with piano accordionists Dodik Bass and Peyse Petya Izraelevich in the 1940s (see Alpert 1996).

### The Accordion in the “Klezmer Revival” (1975–2001)

In spite of the quixotic efforts of some of the best musicians of the *klezmer* scene, the Hasidic pop and disco style that eventually developed in the early 1970s in the USA seemingly edged the once self-evident East European *klezmer* style onto the periphery.<sup>32</sup> But just at a time when it



Figure 5

Poldek Kosłowski with accordion, ca 1940. Poldek's younger brother, Dolko Kleinman Brandwein is seated to Poldek's right. Dolko was a *klezmer* violin virtuoso who was murdered by Ukrainian nationalists

seemed that the entire *klezmer* culture – its repertoire, styles, instrumental functions and even musical language had disappeared altogether, three groups emerged that were to define the stylistic parameters of what was to be termed the “*klezmer* revival”. On the East Coast, Andy Statman and Walter Zev Feldman formed an “Old World” duo with clarinet and *tsimbl*; Henry Sapoznik founded and led the ensemble, *Kapelye*; and on the West Coast, Lev Liberman and David Skuse began the group, *The Klezmerim*. Only the Statman and Feldman duo remained stoically loyal to their version of a reconstructed classical *klezmer* style without the resources of the accordion.

It has always struck me as symbolic that a group such as The Klezmorim, whose first LP (1977), so consciously traditional in its first attempts, would include the accordion (played by David Skuse) as one of its illustrative images. Yet even Kapelye placed the accordion (played by Lauren Brody) in its centre. Speaking about this decision, Sapoznik commented:

The first *Kapelye* record was "Future and Past" (1981) . . . Lauren was the first accordionist and I hired her despite the fact I hated the accordion (I wanted a cello). Shortly after, however, I found out how wrong I was as she single-handedly (okay, she used both hands to play) made me change my mind about the instrument and I was glad she was in the band . . . as she is a marvellous and nimble player full of musical integrity and taste. After she left, we had other part-time accordionists, including Hankus Netsky, Lorin Sklamberg, Sy Kushner, Alan Bern. We ran out of accordionists after that and went to piano including Zalmen Mlotek and Pete Sokolow. (Henry Sapoznik, personal communication 8 January 2000)

The next group to come along, The Klezmer Conservatory Band, also accepted the accordion without reservation. Had the *klezmer* accordion silently reconstituted itself within one century from an unclassifiable solo or duo experiment into an inseparable icon of the *klezmer* revival?

While the accordion is now more present than it ever was in *klezmer* ensembles worldwide, having established its place within both modern (cf. Lorin Sklamberg of The Klezmatics) and traditionally oriented *klezmer* groups, this is not the main area in which its highest profile is to be found. Notable exceptions, however, are to be found in the work of Alan Bern in *Brave Old World* (USA), the Sy Kushner Ensemble (USA), Emuk Kungl in *Fialke* (Germany), Kathrin Pfeifer in *Ahava Raba* (Germany) and perhaps my own attempts in *Rubin & Horowitz* and *Budowitz*.

The large number of duos that have emerged in the past thirty years alone, a selection of which is listed below, shows not only the continuance of a constellation which existed at the very beginning of the accordion's *klezmer* history, but also an appreciation of the developments yet to follow.

#### *Some accordion duos*

##### 1913–1929

Grigori Matusewitch/J. Samos; USA (concertina/ piano)

Max Yankowitz/Goldberg; USA (accordion/ tsimbl)

Max Yankowitz/ Abe Schwartz; USA (accordion/piano)

Mishka Tsiganoff/Nathaniel Shilkrets; USA (accordion/organ or clarinet)

##### 1940s

Dave Tarras/Samuel Beckerman; USA (clarinet/ accordion)

Aslavinsky/Bilinson; Ukraine/USA (violin/bayan)

Avram Bughici/Dumitru Bughici; Romania (violin/accordion)

1975–2001

Joel Rubin / Alan Bern; USA (clarinet/accordion)

Rubin & Horowitz, USA/Europe (clarinet/accordion)

Horowitz and Lässer, Austria (accordion/accordion; accordion/tsimbl)

Andy Statman/Alan Bern; USA (clarinet/accordion)

Salomon/Van Tol; Salomon Klezmer, Holland (clarinet/accordion)

Sanne Möricke/Christian Dawid; Khupe, Germany (clarinet/accordion)

Len Feldman/Rob Goldberg; Khazerayim, USA (concertina/guitar; concertina/tsimbl)

Aslavinsky/Bilinson; Ukraine/U.S. (violin/bayan)

Czernovitzer Duo father/son duo; Ukraine (bayan/bayan)

One significant new suffragist development of the new era of *klezmer* music is the increasingly important role of women accordionists on the scene. Back in the 1930s, the Pincus Sisters sang as one of the several harmonizing sister acts that popped up around the time of the Andrews and Barry Sisters (eventually called the Bagelman Sisters). Two of the *Pincus Sisters* played accordion. An unpublished photo of a nameless young woman standing in an angelic white dress next to Dave Tarras on a 1940s bandstand and one or two female names in the accordion listings of the New York City Musicians Directory also exist, but aside from that there is woefully little evidence of female presence among the early players. However, might Eddie Cantor's lyrics to an Original Dixieland Jazz Band rendition of Jewish tunes from 1920 be read as a reflection of a new trend in changing gender roles?

Leena is the queen of Palesteen,  
 Just because she plays her concertina.  
 She plays it day and night,  
 She plays with all her might,  
 But how they love her, want more of her. . . .

The growing presence of female accordionists today could appear to entrench even more the instrument's image as a minority within a minority, were it not for their substantial musical contribution. It is significant that the first accordionist of the early years of the "*klezmer* revival" was none other than Lauren Brody, leading a discipleless crusade at that time, armed only with a Bell piano model and an impressive background of experience in Bulgarian music. Since then, many other women have enriched the *klezmer* accordion scene with exceptional musicality, among them Christina Crowder, Franka Lampe, Kathrin Pfeifer, Sanne Möricke and Wendy Morrison, to mention but a few. Yet, in spite of the virtuosity and omnipresence of the accordion in

contemporary *klezmer* ensembles, both female and male, it seems that the accordion has yet to establish itself as a solo *klezmer* instrument in its own right.

## Epilogue

The pattern whereby new instruments “replace” older instruments in the world of classical music often results from composers working closely with instrument makers to solve technical problems. Ironically, the term *clarino* (Italian for little trumpet) denoted those high trumpet passages of Baroque church music which would later become the preserve of the new reed instrument, the clarinet. But in the case of the *klezmer* accordion, the process is somewhat more complex. This is well illustrated by the case of the Jewish *secunda* (chord violin or viola) player, a member of practically every Jewish trio, quartet or quintet, whose function was to play the “*um-cha, um-cha, um-chata cha-chas*”. It’s a well-known fact that the *secunda* players all but disappeared during the widespread immigration of *klezmer* musicians from Eastern Europe and Russia to the USA already beginning in the 1880s.<sup>33</sup> Ben Bayzler, when talking about the Polish *secunda* violins (which he called *fturkes*), spoke with respect and awe about their art:

They were regular violins, but held down low, at the shoulder. They provided such rhythm that even if my uncle sent me off somewhere and there was no drum, people would keep dancing. (Alpert 1996: 17–21)

Bayzler later played with accordionists, but there is no mention of these accordionists putting the *secunda* players out of business.

Perhaps the most solid *secunda* fiddle tradition still intact in Eastern Europe is in Transylvania, where gypsy musicians played with Jews before the war. I asked Béla, the amputee accordionist of Méra, Transylvania, why *Mezőség* and *Kalotaszeg*<sup>34</sup> music uses so many chords. He answered:

It didn’t always. Before the war the *contra* (i.e. *secunda*)<sup>35</sup> played like this, ‘Jewish style’ [one chord, maybe two]. Then after the war the accordion came. You could play any chord just by pushing a button. So because the new accordion players could play as many chords as they wanted to, they played as many as they could. It changed the *contra* style. Some *contra* players changed over to accordion. Now all *contra* players play like that. But it was the accordion that made them do it.<sup>36</sup>

So in the end, at least near Cluj, Romania, the accordion didn’t replace the *contra* or *secunda*; it simply challenged it and served as a catalyst in changing its style.

In spite of its prevalence prior to the First World War, the *secunda* fiddle in *klezmer* music has remained an oddity while the accordion has

persisted. And in the modern *klezmer* scene, in spite of the recent resurgence of fiddle playing, the accordion has, more often than not, assumed the role of the earlier *secunda*. Yet it would be presumptuous to say that the accordion “replaced” the *secunda* violin simply because both instruments performed the same musical function. Other factors, such as the fashion of ever larger *klezmer* ensembles and the brass instrument craze of Sousa and jazz at the turn of the twentieth century were more decisive in forcing the obsolescence of the violin in *klezmer* music. Is it not possible that the *secunda* violin will in fact return to its original place in the *klezmer* ensemble, thereby freeing the *klezmer* accordion to take centre stage again as a solo instrument in its own right?

The accordion has been present at every stage of *klezmer* music in both the “Old” and “New” worlds for at least the last hundred years. History shows that there has never been a decisive break in the tradition of *klezmer* music or in the use of the accordion since its appearance on the scene, and certainly nothing warranting the retroactive implication of death and resurrection which is implied in the term “revival”. On the contrary, its role changed, evolved and adapted to new styles and contexts, for which it often acted as catalyst. Thus any ideological attempts to exclude the accordion from the *klezmer* tradition cannot be sustained against the *klezmer* accordion’s complex, varied and ubiquitous history. The accordion never “entered” and “left” *klezmer* musical culture. It arrived there and, with the help of its greatest exponents, both male and female, Jewish and non-Jewish, seems determined – in all its guises – to remain.

## References

- Alpert, Michael (1996) Liner notes. *Klezmer Music: A Marriage of Heaven and Earth*. Ellipsis Arts 4090.
- Braun, Joachim (1987) “The unpublished volumes of Moshe Beregovski’s Jewish musical folklore”. In *Israel Studies in Musicology*, vol. 4, ed. Roger Kamien. Jerusalem: Israel Musicological Society.
- Bughici, D. (1997) “Bughici’s Tish Nign”. *Budowitz Mother Tongue*. Koch Records, Munich 3–1261–2HI.
- Bughici, D. (2000) “Bughici’s Freylekhs”. *Wedding Without A Bride*. Buda Musique, Paris 92759–2.
- Horowitz, Joshua (1999) Correspondence with Alan Bern, 28 May.
- Iryna, Fedun (1996) “Boikiv Fiddler Kuzma Vorobets in the Context of His Ethnic Environment”. BA Thesis, The M. Lysenko Higher Music Institute, L’viv.
- Kushner, Sy (1999) Correspondence with Joshua Horowitz, 27 May.
- Kushner, Sy (2000) Correspondence with Joshua Horowitz, 9 January.
- Natsky, Hankus (1998) *Klezmer Music in an American Community: The Philadelphia Example*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Ottens, Rita and Rubin, Joel (n.d.) *Klezmer-Musik*. Kassel/Munich: Bärenreiter-Verlag dtv.
- Rubin, Joel and Ottens, Rita (1991) Notes. *Yikhes, Frühe Klezmer-Aufnahmen von 1907–1939*. Trikont, Munich.

- Saltiel and Horowitz (2001) *The Shephardic Songbook*. Frankfurt: C. F. Peters Verlag.
- Sapoznik, Henry (1991) *Dave Tarras: Yiddish-American Klezmer Music, 1925–1956*. Liner notes. Yazoo 7001.
- Sapoznik, Henry (compiler) (1993) *Klezmer Pioneers: European and American Recordings 1905–1952*. Rounder Records CD1089.
- Sapoznik, Henry (1999) *Klezmer! Jewish Music From Old World to Our World*. New York: Schirmer Books.
- Schwartz, Martin (1997) *Early Instrumental Music, 1908–1927*. Arhoolie CD 7034.
- The Klezmerim (1977) *East Side Wedding*. Arhoolie 3006.
- The Last Klezmer, Leopold Kostowski: His Life and Music* (1994) Dir./Prod. Yale Strom; Exec. prod. Bernie Berkin. New York: New Yorker Films.

## Notes

1. The term *klezmer* is derived from two Hebrew words: *kle*, meaning “vessel” and *zemer* meaning “song”, the term thus referring both to the music and its player as a “vessel of song”.
2. Commonly spelled *Broyges*, or *Broiges*, this is a traditional East European Jewish wedding dance, which depicts quarrel and reconciliation.
3. Born 15 August 1886, Minsk; died 28 July 1939, New York.
4. Waltz Tel-Aviv, Yidisher Wulach-Jewish Dance, Yidisher Melodien, NY 24 September 1929.
5. Although the popularity of the Wheatstone concertina – first produced in 1829, exactly 100 years before Matusewitch recorded his *Yiddishe Melodien* for Victor – had already waned by the time Matusewitch hit the stage, demoted to the rank of a circus or seafarer’s instrument, in 1870s Russia its appeal was rekindled by Professor Marenitch of the St Petersburg Conservatory. He suggested it be taught to women in secondary schools on account of its portability and accessibility, which eventually led to the formation of a concertina orchestra in 1887 by the St Petersburg Teacher’s Academy.
6. Joachim Braun, referring to Pedotser’s compositional variation techniques, interprets him as belonging to the eighteenth Century Russian classical violin tradition, having “absorbed both the traditions of the Khandoshkin type . . . and the art of the Moldavian violinists” (Braun, 1987: 138).
7. Goizman composed violin solos using the Theme with Variations form, which he called *Yidisher Kontsert* [Yiddish Concerto]. His works, as well as those of Pedotser, represent an organic synthesis of *klezmer* style and 19th Century art music.
8. The Saratov accordion factory created a large selection of accordions ranging from tiny to huge button accordions, which were used all over Russia in accordion orchestras. The small changing-tone Saratov accordions inspired a particular feature, which would become known as the Saratov style, namely, the use of an extremely fast bellows tremolo played on each note. Probably this style was known to Matusewitch and may have inspired his use of the tremolo on his recordings, though they are not present everywhere, only on certain long notes. When asked about Grigori’s connection to Saratov, Eric Matusewitch writes “Gregory’s wife, Manya (who died in 1976), told me that she and Gregory had relatives in Saratov . . . they were unable to visit those relatives because that city – during the cold war – was off limits to westerners”.
9. The Blumenthal Bros. made recordings of Ottoman, Sephardic, Armenian, Greek and Egyptian music, as well as Ashkenazi Klezmer music. See the *Sirba*, recorded by the Orchestra Orfeon, 1912, and the *Kleftico Vlachiko*, recorded by the Orchestra Goldberg 1908 by Odeon. Both of these recordings and more information appear on the second CD of Schwartz (1997).

10. Rubin and Ottens (1991: 20) write: "Typical for the solo accordion playing in the East European music, Yankowitz used only the right hand . . .". Both the basis and the generalized conclusion of Rubin and Ottens are wrong. Not only did Yankowitz in fact use the left hand of his instrument, there is virtually no evidence of anything typical about the lack of the left hand in the broad category of "East European music". Furthermore, other *klezmer* accordionists used the left hand extensively in both the presence and absence of a bass instrument.
11. Yankowitz is listed in the 1937 A.F.M. Local 802 New York City Musicians Directory. At that time there were about two-and-a-half pages of people listed under "accordion" and just under four pages listed separately under "piano accordion". Among the "accordion" listing there appear a lot of Irish names as well, which might indicate that the "accordion" in this context referred to a button construction, whereas the "piano accordion" was specified. Among the "piano accordion" listings there appear many Italian names. I thank Paul Gifford for this information.
12. Doina – a type of characteristic Romanian lament.
13. The various alternative spellings found of Tsiganoff's name are: Mikas Cigonu, Michal Cygan, Mishka Cyganoff, Miska Czigan, M. Tsinganidis, Mishka Tzyganoff, M. Zigan, Mishka Ziganoff. Names on the early 78 rpm discs were typically "ethnicized" to match the type of music being recorded. So, the name Cigonu, for instance would be used when Tsiganoff played Lithuanian music.
14. The recordings are listed under Lieu. J. Frankel in Spottswood's discography as follows: 4819–2 *Der Chosid Tanz*-Pt. 2 Em 13128; 4824–2 *Der Chosid Tanz*-Pt. 1 Em 13128, cl solo, unk acn NY ca. January 1920. The unknown accordionist (unk acn) is fairly certainly Tsiganoff. On most of the many recordings involving another instrument, Shilkret is playing organ, though apparently he also played clarinet on occasion. It is difficult to tell which instrument he is playing on this recording. The sound is thin and in the background.
15. "Signature tunes" can also be attached to performers from outside sources by virtue of their popularity, and thus may not be favoured by the performer at all. Such a case would be *Take the "A" Train* of Duke Ellington. In the case of Yankowitz and Tsiganoff, the signature tunes came about as a result of their reappearance on recent CD reissues. Matusewitch, on the other hand, played his *Yidisher Melodien* often at concerts. The concept of signature tunes was very common in the Middle East, the practice of which can still be found today. A performer will play on the streets, improvising a text that advertises his merits as a wedding performer. The Ladino tune "Alevanta Gaco" is an example of this (Saltiel and Horowitz).
16. Probably most of the accordionists playing *klezmer* music today are not Jewish. Certainly in Germany this is the case. A few examples should suffice: Sam Barnett has been the main accordionist for the Jewish affairs in Detroit (clarinet and violin). This information was provided by Paul Gifford. Both Dominic Cortese in New York and Tony DiJulio in Philadelphia are well-known Italian accordionists who are mainstays of their respective *klezmer* music scenes. I thank Hankus Netsky for this information.
17. One month before the October *klezmer* sessions with Tarras, the Abe Ellstein Orchestra (calling itself the Leon Steiner Orchestra) made a series of recordings of American dance music which also used the accordion. More sessions were made of the same following the *klezmer* recordings as well.
18. A photo also exists from the 1940s of Tarras standing on a bandstand with a very young unidentified woman accordionist in a white dress. He seems to have played with many accordionists, as can be seen from various other unpublished photos of the period.
19. *Secunda* denotes a traditional accompanimental role, as explained in the Epilogue.
20. Sapoznik, Henry, unpublished interview with Sid Beckerman and Pete Sokolow, p. 25.

21. The term Palestine in this article refers to the name of Israel prior to gaining its 1948 independence.
22. "Break" here denotes a short solo in jazz terminology.
23. To list the entire roster of bands in the 1940s–60s containing accordionists would take pages. Two other bands, however, merit mention: The Murray Lehrer Orchestra and the Epstein Brothers, both of whom worked steadily with accordionists. The Epstein Brothers were seminal figures in the *klezmer* scene in its early years and still exert an influence on today's *klezmer* revival through their worldwide concerts.
24. Kushner is referring here to the underlying rhythmic accompaniment pattern, which was actually an 8/8 meter divided 3+3+2, as opposed to the straight 2/4 "oom-pah" patterns.
25. *Hatikvah* is the title of the national anthem of Israel.
26. One accordionist I have interviewed, the Israeli accordionist and bassist, Naftali Aharoni (born in Vilna, 1919) composed and arranged pieces strongly rooted in the *klezmer* style of Eastern Europe using sophisticated dance hall harmonies, bassline and counterlines which are reminiscent of the Dave Tarras post-war ensemble arrangements. They are strongly rooted in the "tradition", with plenty of accordion fills and breaks – usable at any function where dancing occurred.
27. I thank the ethnomusicologist Izaly Zemtsovsky for giving me these recordings, which he recorded in 1991 in St Petersburg.
28. Recordings of this duo were made *in situ* by Isaak Loberan, 1999.
29. Coincidentally, my own family came from Ivano Frankivsk, earlier called Stanislav.
30. Fedun's field recordings were made in the Domashiv Sokalī region, in the district of L'viv.
31. The three most famous *klezmer* family dynasties in Iasi since at least the nineteenth century were the Bughici, Lemisch and Segal families. Many of the Bughicis and Lemisches went to Philadelphia. Some of the Segals may have gone to Palestine.
32. One often overlooked musician who returned to the *klezmer* style before the so-called "revival" was the Israeli clarinetist, Moussa Berlin, who was playing older repertoire and style and learning from 78 records of the 1920s in the 1960s.
33. Between 1880 and 1917, the population of New York Jews had grown from 80,000 to 1,250,000, mostly Russian immigrants.
34. The music played in the area around Cluj in Transylvania. Bartók had a special interest in the music of this area.
35. The term *contra* is used by most musicians of Hungarian descent who play throughout Hungary and Romania, to denote the same function as the *secunda violin*, i.e. chord playing.
36. Árus, Béla Berki (b. 1931) interview with Joshua Horowitz, Méra, Transylvania, 28 September 1995.

## Appendix. Discography of Klezmer Accordionists

The first two are single tracks reissued from shellacks onto the CD compilation noted:

- Tsiganoff, Mishka (1920) "Odessa Bulgar". Reissued on *Klezmer Pioneers 1905–1952*. Rounder CD 1089.
- Yankowitz, Max playing with Goldberg, Tsimbler (1913) "Shulems Bulgarish". Reissued on *Klezmer Music 1910–1942*. Global Village CD 104.
- Kushner, Sy (The Sy Kushner Jewish Music Ensemble) (1996) *Klezsqueeze! Bon Air Recordings* (see URL: [www.sykushner.com](http://www.sykushner.com)).
- Möricke, Sanne (1999) *Khupe Live – Mit der Kale Tantsn*. Yellowjacket Music LC 01371.

- Bern, Alan (1994) "Brave Old World". *Beyond The Pale*. Rounder CD 3135, licensed from Pinorrekk Records.
- Van Tol, Theo (1993) "Salomon Klezmorim". *Klezt Best*. Syncoop Produkties Syncoop 5753 CD 158.
- Brody, Lauren (1981) *Kapelye: Future & Past*. Flying Fish/Rounder CD FF 249.
- Horowitz, Joshua and Rubin, Joel (1994) *Rubin & Horowitz Bessarabian Symphony*. Wergo, Mainz, SM 1606-2.
- Budowitz (1997) *Mother Tongue, Music of the 19th Century Klezmorim on Original Instruments*. Koch International Schallplatten, München, 3-1261-2 H1.
- Budowitz (2000) *Wedding Without a Bride*. Buda Musique - Musique Du Monde, Paris 92759-2.