

Vessels of Song

A Collection of Klezmer Suites
for Mallet Ensemble

**WITH A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION AND
A GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE PRACTICE**



Nicholas Papador

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Julie Ferland

Music Engraving

Nicholas Papador

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PART I: A Brief History of Klezmer with an Emphasis on Percussion

Introduction

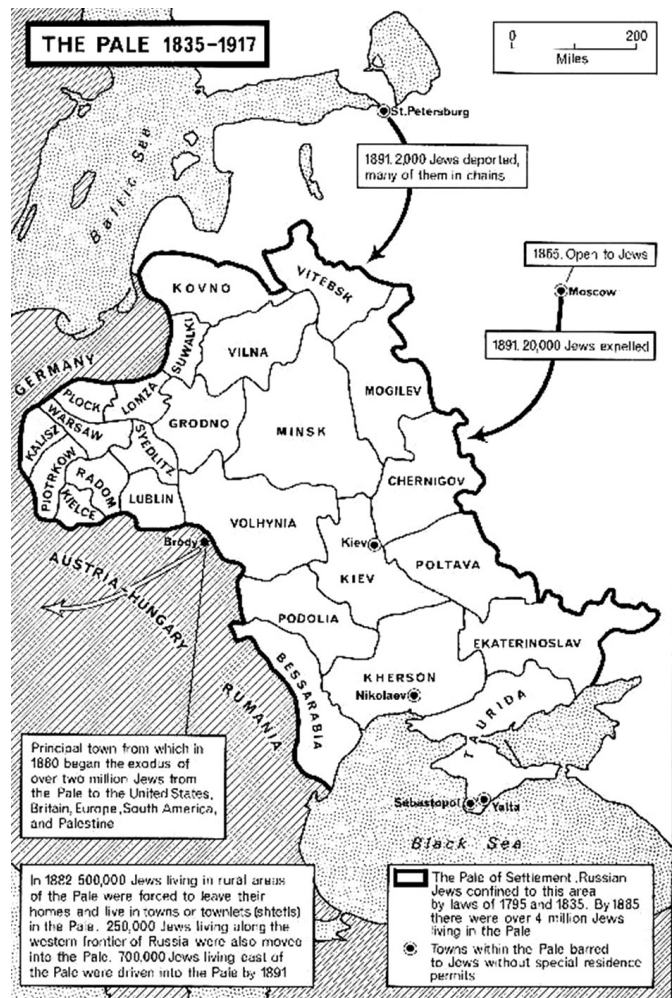
Klezmer is the name of a musical genre applied to a broad range of Jewish folk music dating back to at least the sixteenth century in central and eastern Europe. Klezmer (pl. *klezmerim*) is a Yiddish word that translates as “vessel(s) of song” (*Kley* = vessel, *zemer* = song). Early use of the word denoted musical instruments and not the musical genre or the performers. Jewish street musicians in Germany were called *sphilmann*, and many of these musicians provided other types of entertainment in their acts, such as magic tricks, clowning, dancing, stories, and jokes. These entertainers were called *lets* (pl. *letsim*) or *nar*, meaning clown, fool, or jester.¹

Moshe Beregovski, a Soviet-Jewish ethnomusicologist writing in the 1930s, is believed to be the first to use klezmer as the name of a musical genre. Beregovski collected data on this music and its people from 1892 until 1961. He applied the name klezmer to this music in a similar manner that the word Celtic is applied to Irish music. Up until the late 1970s, the term klezmer was sometimes used sarcastically as a term for musicians who could not read music, so klezmer as a genre name was initially met with resistance. However, the name klezmer seemed to stick after prominent revival ensembles in the 1970s used the term in their ensemble names or recording titles.² Prior to the klezmer revival, the repertoire was described in general terms such as “playing Jewish” or “playing the bulgars.” Repertoire included in this text is generally defined as a secular eastern European folk music originated by Ashkenazi Jewish musicians, although elements of its phrasing and modal language are derived from synagogue music.

Eastern European Klezmerim

Klezmer music originates in a region of eastern Europe that was known as the Pale of Settlement from 1791 to 1917. Russian tsars confined Jewish living to this area that included portions of present-day Belarus, Moldova,

Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Romania, Latvia, and Lithuania. While life in the Pale of Settlement for Jews was a compromise of freedom and social standing under Russian and Polish nobles, it was a period of relative stability after many years of expulsions, inquisitions, and pogroms. Jewish activities were largely confined to trade, money lending, and music, so the *kapelye* (Yiddish for band) became a fixture in every *shtetl* (village), performing for Jews and non-Jews alike. Some of these ensembles were employed by nobles for both courtly and Christian church work, as well as Jewish events.



The Pale of Settlement

Image from the Jewish Virtual Library

1 Yale Strom, *The Book of Klezmer* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2002), 18.

2 Seth Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2000), 8-9.

The early European klezmerim played weddings and other functional events like the dedication of a new Torah scroll. Not as much is known about the actual sound of the music apart from prose descriptions in nineteenth century Yiddish literature.³ From these writings, we learn that musicians of stature, most of whom were male, possessed a certain rakish and even sexual charisma. Despite the religious presence at events, the musicians were not affiliated with the synagogue and could be irreligious or irreverent. Employers who wanted music at an event did not necessarily trust that certain musicians would show up when needed, fearing that the musician would shirk their contract for a better playing engagement or simply not turn up due to laziness or vagrancy. For weddings, strong musicians with a reputation for being unreliable were sometimes asked to leave collateral (such as a piece of jewelry) with the employer to ensure they would keep their commitment.

The primary functional purpose of klezmer was dance music for weddings. In small villages during the 1800s, a family wedding would have been one of the most significant civic gatherings of any given year. The entire community would attend and take part in a wedding in the Jewish shtetls. The music of the klezmerim was an essential part of the wedding, with specific repertoire expected for all stages of the day. In the late morning of the wedding day, the klezmerim and *badkhn* (a wedding emcee and entertainer) escorted families to where the bride was waiting. In some villages, for eight days prior to the wedding, the bride and groom were confined to their homes, where they were visited and entertained by friends and family. The planning of the wedding—keeping in mind that some marriages were arranged—could last a number of years, so the sense of anticipation for an actual wedding day cannot be overstated. The music for walking families to the bride's home likely consisted of a *zhok* (a moderate tempo dance or processional piece in 3/8 time) and perhaps changing to a livelier march as the family neared their destination.

Female family and friends would gather to prepare the bride for the wedding, which involved the seating of the bride (*kale bazetsn*), the veiling of the bride (*kale badekn*), singing to the bride (*kale bazingn*), and finally, bringing the bride to tears (*kale beveynen*). Music played during these rituals was reflective in nature, with vocal parts delivered by the *badkhn* in a recitative-like manner. The

kale bazetsn melodies, like the Romanian-based *doina*, are improvisatory-sounding pieces over a drone that display influences of both rabbinical chant and Middle Eastern *taqsim* improvisation. There was also a gathering of the men where the klezmerim would sing to the bridegroom (*khosn bazingn*). The ritual was similar to that of the bride's but with a serious mood, utilizing more Hebrew verse from the Torah and lectures on the groom's responsibility in marriage.

Once the bride and groom were prepared for the wedding ceremony, there was music to accompany the bridal parties to the *khupe* (the canopy under which the wedding takes place). The music would be a march or a lively *zhok*. The rabbi handled the religious rituals of the ceremony: the reading of the wedding contract (the *ketubah*); having the bride circle the groom three times; and the breaking of a glass to symbolize the fall of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem (the breaking of the glass also symbolizes other things, such as the fragility of life or the shattering of the personal soul in favor of the joint soul in a marital union). Sometimes the klezmerim performed during the ceremony, playing music in remembrance of a deceased family member, for example. The musicians played a celebratory and/or raucous march while leading the wedding party away from the *khupe* and always played happier music than what preceded the ceremony.

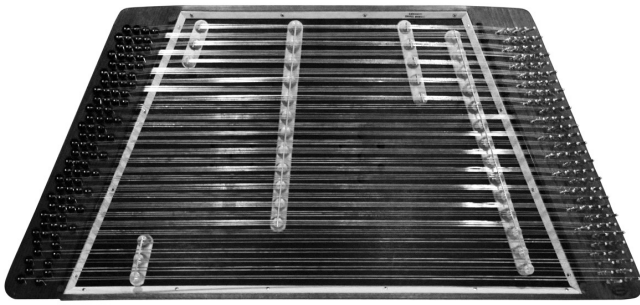
After weddings in an Ashkenazi shtetl, there was usually a break so the community could rest before the wedding



A turn of the century klezmer kapelye featuring Yankev Tsimbler (1852-1938)

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

3 Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 17.



Santouri - Greek version of tsimbl/European dulcimer built and photographed by Spiros Mamais.

Courtesy of Spiros Mamais

banquet. The event took place at a local inn or the home of a wealthier village resident. Like modern weddings, the meal was served in multiple courses, and the badkhn was the master of ceremonies in entertaining and introducing attendees for toasts. The badkhn worked closely with the klezmer musicians to time the music with customary dances. One of these activities might include a *broyges tantz*, a playacted dance of anger and reconciliation between the two sets of new in-laws. Disagreements or feelings of ambivalence between the two families were not uncommon, particularly if the wedding was arranged. In a *mazeltov tants*, the badkhn would invite female guests to the dance floor one at a time, and then the women would participate in a circle dance around the bride. A *mitzvah tants* was a significant dance piece in which men and women could dance with one another (in

Orthodox Jewish functions, men and women were separated for most portions of the event). Touching was forbidden, however, so a man and woman would each hold onto opposite ends of a large handkerchief. The bride was the featured dancer, so she would take turns dancing with family and guests.

While the meal was being served, music such as *tish niginum* (table songs) would be played: these pieces were slow to moderate in tempo and associated with prayers. Other pieces such as *doinas* and other improvisatory-sounding works also fit in well during the meal. Additional music and dancing would continue well into the night. When it was time to end the event, the musicians would play a slower *gut morgn*, *dobriden*, or *dob-ranotsh* that signaled to the guests that it was time to go home. The klezmerim would escort the guests to their homes with a *fihren du mekhutonin aheyem* (walking the in-laws home) piece, which was usually a *zhok* in a limping 3/8 time.

Early klezmer *kapelye* instrumentation combinations consisted of violins (*fidls*), flutes, accordions, clarinets (from the mid-nineteenth century onward), trumpets, trombones, and the *tsimbl*. The *tsimbl*, a chordophone instrument, was the primary percussion instrument of the klezmer ensemble. Outside of klezmer music, this instrument is known by a number of names depending on regionality, such as *hackbrett*, *tsymbaly*, *santoor*, or *santouri*. It is a trapezoidal-shaped hammered dulcimer instrument that is smaller than a concert cimbalom but with a similar timbre. It dates back to the Middle Ages in central Europe and became popular in the seventeenth century. Some believe that the first dulcimer instruments originated in China, were brought westward through India, and eventually appeared in the Middle East and Europe. Tsimblists performing today sometimes play Persian santours or Greek santouris. It is a versatile instrument that can be played in a solo, continuo-styled accompaniment, or duo context. The percussive drone-like tremolo produced by the *tsimbl* made it well-suited for musical forms such as the *doina* and *taqsim*: Romanian and Arabic idioms that, over time, found their way into klezmer repertoire.⁴ While considered an accompaniment instrument, several nineteenth-century *tsimbl*ists became regionally respected, such as Yankl Liebermann. Yankl was the inspiration for a main character in Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*. Mortko Fajerman was another a soloist of note in Poland.



A turn of the century klezmer kapelye in Ostrowiec (modern day Poland)

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

4 Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 72-73.

Violins were the first lead instrument of klezmer music, although they would later share that role with the clarinet. Along with the *tsimbl* and flute, these were the most common instruments among Jewish musicians due to unusual local laws that defined musical events in terms of soft or loud. Under certain political conditions, Jewish musicians were only permitted to play in soft settings.⁵ Under Tsar Nicholas II and the political relaxations that followed, klezmer ensembles began using brass and drums such as the *poyk* (small bass drum with attached cymbal), which came out of the Tsarist military band tradition.⁶

Although the origin of klezmer is a product of life in the Pale, Jewish music ensembles date back further and in other regions of Europe. Ensembles toured in Prague during the 1500s, playing in saloons, markets, and inns. These groups had musicians' guild requirements to meet rabbis and attend synagogue. Taxing and social limitations continued in the seventeenth century, leading to the eastward migration of Jews to the Pale, which constituted the largest Jewish settlement in history. Still a cultural minority, Jews were restricted from entering other regions outside the Pale or prohibitively taxed for crossing regional borders.

Klezmer Percussion Profile: Michal Józef Guzikow (1806-1837)

Musicians of notoriety in the Pale that earned the admiration of noble sponsors had better opportunities for performances or moving their families to more stable environments. One such performer of interest to percussionists was Michal Józef Guzikow. Extant writings use a variety of spellings for each of his names (Yecheiel-Michl, Mikhl, Michael, Joseph, Guzikov, Gusikow, Gusikov, Gusikoff, etc.). Guzikow was born in Shklow, a town in modern-day Belarus. His year of birth is not precisely known; most sources state that he was born in 1806, but some sources say 1809 or 1802. Multiple generations of his family were professional musicians, including his father, who played flute and violin. Guzikow was strongly drawn to music, and his father taught him how to play flute.⁷ Guzikow is said to have learned a comprehensive amount of Hebraic, Polish, and Russian melodies by rote in an impressively short amount of time. A contributing factor was that Guzikow continued to practice through



Portrait of Michal Józef Guzikow by Josef Kriehuber that appeared in an 1836 edition of August Lewald's journal, *Europa, chronik der gebildeten welt*

Public domain

the Sabbath, which sometimes upset those observing the day of rest. Along with his older brother on violin, Guzikow began accompanying his father on performance tours. Events included Jewish weddings and holiday performances, but also recitals for noble audiences. The Guzikows' regional fame yielded invitations to perform in Moscow, including a performance for Emperor Nikolai I.⁸

In 1831, he contracted a lung disease, likely tuberculosis, which left him with chronic shortness of breath. His inability to continue performing on wind instruments was devastating personally and professionally, since he was losing income needed to support his family. By this time, he was married and had two children. Unwilling to abandon music as a profession, he chose to specialize in dulcimer instruments, namely the "*Jerova i Salamo*," a xylophone-like instrument. This folk instrument was a dulcimer that used wood bars instead of strings. The instrument was played with curved spoon-shaped wood mallets similar to dulcimers. The *Jerova i Salamo* instruments

5 Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer*, 24.

6 Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer*, 21-23.

7 John Stephen Beckford, "Michal Józef Guzikow: Nineteenth-Century Xylophonist, Part I," *Percussive Notes* 30, no. 3 (June 1995): 74.

8 Beckford, "Guzikow, Part I," 74.



1836 lithograph of Guzikow and his stroyfidl by Josef Kreihuber

Public domain. Courtesy of Joel Rubin

had either no resonator or a single trough/box-like resonator. The instrument was associated with people living in the Carpathian and Ural Mountains, as well as Russians, Cossacks, Tartars, Poles, and Lithuanians. The Jerova i Salamo was played in social gatherings where players would exchange melodies as well as play in unison to fortify the sound of the instrument. Guzikow was a participant at such gatherings, but until he was no longer able to play wind instruments, he had not taken this instrument seriously due to its lack of refinements in tuning, range, tone, and volume.⁹ While he sometimes played the Jerova i Salamo for Purim celebrations or his own enjoyment, he was hesitant to spend too much time on this instrument while focusing on the flute, which he felt had more professional potential.

Guzikow's period of developing and mastering the Jerova i Salamo took place between 1831 and 1834. He is credited with expanding the range of the instrument to two and a half octaves.¹⁰ Various sources describe his instrument as having twenty-eight bars; this would exceed two and half octaves, but it's also possible that some notes were duplicated to facilitate particular musical passages.¹¹ He altered the bars by tapering the ends to elicit more resonance from the keys. The bars themselves were cut into half cylinders (like "round-top" glockenspiel bars with a more pronounced circular radius) and graduated from four to twelve inches in length. He rearranged the layout of the bars in a systematic order and used ribbon to secure the bars in place. The straw bundles on which the bars rested helped to amplify the instrument, allowing the sound to reflect off of the surface on which the instrument was placed. The straw was affixed to five thin pieces of wood; these bundles acted as the frame on which the bars rested. The straw was tied to the wood frame pieces with cord, and gold tassels were added to the ends of the frame pieces for decorative effect. Ribbons were then used to loosely secure the bars to the frame pieces.¹²

These innovations improved the concert potential for the instrument and also added notoriety to Guzikow's musical reputation. The updated version of the instrument was called the *stroyfidl* (The Yiddish spelling is used in this text; alternate spellings appear in other sources), the "straw fiddle" or "wood and straw instrument." The stroyfidl did not have horizontal manuals of notes (keyboard orientation) like the modern xylophone. The configuration was similar to a dulcimer, where the pitches ascended vertically, away from the body. The bars were arranged in four rows across the five straw frame pieces. The exact pitch layout of Guzikow's instrument, and whether it was similar to the four-row xylophones that followed, is not known. Guzikow's instrument was not preserved and there is no evidence of how it sounded, but interest in Guzikow's career inspired some to attempt to create replicas of the stroyfidl.

Once fluent on the stroyfidl, Guzikow formed an ensemble and began concertizing throughout the Mogilev province in 1834. Guzikow traveled with four others; accounts differ, but at least one member of the quartet was a brother, and all of the traveling companions may have been family members. It is possible that not all of his traveling

9 Beckford, "Guzikow, Part I," 74.

10 Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 13.

11 Gordon Peters, *The Drummer: Man. A Treatise on Percussion* (Wilmette, IL: Kemper-Peters Publications, 1975), 133.

12 John Stephen Beckford, "Michal Józef Guzikow: Nineteenth-Century Xylophonist, Part II," *Percussive Notes* 30, no. 4 (August 1995): 73.

companions were musical accompanists; some accounts describe concerts featuring Guzikow accompanied by two violins and a cello. By this time, Guzikow had remarried after his first wife passed away. His second wife had encouraged him to seek out performances in larger cities. His performances were in demand from various members of the aristocracy due to his virtuosity combined with his curious instrument and humble appearance.

Guzikow and ensemble essentially lived nomadically, touring eastern and western Europe from 1834 to 1837. He first traveled south to Kiev, where upon arrival, he realized that his performances were to follow a run of concerts by violinist Karol Lipinski, whose skills were considered comparable to Paganini. Although Guzikow was intimidated by comparisons to an established concert violinist, Lipinski expressed amazement with the performance and commended Guzikow on creating his own instrument. Kiev audiences also responded positively to Guzikow's performances, and this encouragement inspired him to practice day and night. Unfortunately, this activity contributed to a relapse of his respiratory problems, forcing him to rest for several months.

After recovering, Guzikow traveled to Odessa and played for sizable audiences. Odessa's Count Waranzow allowed Guzikow to stay in his palace for several months and even provided 500 Polish guildens for a concert. Guzikow spent the months in Odessa practicing and advancing his craft, as well as building up his finances through concertizing. During Guzikow's stay in Odessa, he began receiving invitations to appear in western Europe. The poet Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine and the historian Johann Michaud encouraged Guzikow to come to Paris. While visiting the nearby town of Mickalazew, he received an invitation to accompany Captain Charles Gray to London, with promises of fortune should he make the trip.¹³ Guzikow planned to go to England but traveled to Vienna first and unfortunately never made it to London.

Guzikow left Odessa in late 1834 for Poland, playing for audiences as he made his way to Vienna. In Warsaw, he performed on the streets and in courtyards, cafes, and restaurants. In January 1835, he gave multiple concerts at the Redout Hall in Lwów (now a part of western Ukraine). By May 1835, he had given several performances in

Krakow. Guzikow was welcomed as a guest in private residences and treated hospitably.

Guzikow arrived in Vienna in the summer of 1835. His first performances at the Hall for the Society of Music were sparsely attended because much of the nobility was away on summer holidays. However, Guzikow's early concerts were critically successful, so follow-up concerts were well attended. Some of these concerts were high society events, including two performances at the Spa Baden and twelve in the Theatre in der Josefstadt. He gave private performances for Austrian Emperor Franz II, Kaiser Tutichef (Russian ambassador to Vienna), and Prince Klemens von Metternich (chancellor of state). Guzikow received patronage from Metternich, who was among Austria's strongest private supporters of the arts. Metternich provided a letter of reference for Guzikow, a recognized endorsement that would ensure timely engagements when arriving in another city.¹⁴

Encouraged by his successes in Vienna, Guzikow traveled north for appearances in Prague, Leipzig, and Berlin. Felix Mendelssohn saw Guzikow perform in Leipzig in 1836 and wrote the following (English translation) in a letter to Karl Klingemann: "I have heard the phenomenon, and without being ecstatic, like most people, must own that the skill of the man beats everything that I could have imagined, for with his wooden sticks resting on straw, his hammers also being of wood, he produces all that is possible with the most perfect instrument. It is a complete riddle to me how the thin sound the thing gives, like Papageno's flute, can be produced with such materials."¹⁵ Mendelssohn also wrote the following to his mother: "He is quite a phenomenon, a famous fellow, inferior to no virtuoso in the world, both in execution and facility. He, therefore, delights me more with his instrument of wood and straw than many their pianofortes, just because it is such a thankless kind of instrument It is long since I so much enjoyed a concert as this, for the man is a true genius."¹⁶ Guzikow received artistic praises from other major Western composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Meyerbeer.

Viennese reviewers provided colorful accounts of Guzikow's performances: "Out of wood and straw he charms forth tones of deep melancholy, of profound emotion. Out of wood and straw he knows how to produce the

13 Beckford, "Guzikow, Part I," 75.

14 Beckford, "Guzikow, Part I," 75.

15 Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family 1729-1847*, vol. II. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), 4.

16 From *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. III. (London: MacMillan, 1954) s.v. "Mendelssohn," 858.

finest vibrations, sounds of most tender softness. How painful and tender sound his national tunes.”¹⁷ Another Viennese review praised Guzikow’s performance prowess but did not enjoy the timbre of the instrument, which he referred to as “wooden laughter.” He found the instrument to be neither delicate nor beautiful sounding. After Guzikow’s stay in Vienna, the ensemble traveled westward, performing in Frankfurt as well as a number of smaller German cities as they made their way toward Paris. While in Belgium, Guzikow performed for King Leopold I and was presented a diamond ring as payment for the concert.

The apex of Guzikow’s concert touring took place in Paris from late 1836 to early 1837. Guzikow appeared on a number of premier concert stages, including the royal apartments in Tuileries, the Comique Opera, and the Pleyel family salon. He had a long-term contract with the Théâtre Royal de St. Charles à Naples. These are venues where artists such as Chopin, Paganini, and Liszt would have also performed. He shared programs with popular performers such as Frederich Kalkbrenner, Sebastian Lee, and Pierre-Joseph-Guillaume Zimmerman. The *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* published reviews and biographical details about Guzikow at this time.

Guzikow’s health never fully recovered, and audiences eventually took notice of his pale complexion and weak stature. By late 1836, Guzikow decided he needed to return home despite his musical successes, and he began the journey in early 1837. A painful respiratory spell required him to rest in Brussels for four months. Tragically, there were reports that one of Guzikow’s instruments was lost or stolen in June 1837. Guzikow resumed his travel eastward in October 1837 and made it as far as Aachen, Germany. He agreed to perform a concert in Aachen but collapsed on stage, unable to finish the performance.¹⁸ Michal Józef Guzikow died October 12, 1837 at the age of thirty-one. The cause of death was most likely tuberculosis.

In his European concerts, Guzikow performed a variety of repertoire, ranging from eastern European folk music (mazurkas, polonaises, klezmer pieces, and melodies from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) to Western musical selections including arrangements of works by Franz Anton Hoffmeister, Weber, Paganini, Hummel,

Mendelssohn, and Rossini. He also played works by renowned Polish composers such as Karol Kurpinski and Joseph Xaver Elsner. Guzikow did not read music notation, so the melodies likely had personalized interpretations that deviated from notated scores. Guzikow would have had to employ octave displacement for melodies that exceeded the range of the stroyfidl. Some of his repertoire was originally for orchestra, so the arrangement would require reductions and omissions from the original score. Guzikow would have probably added his own embellishments as well. Guzikow’s rendition of Paganini’s La Campanella (movement 3 of the Violin Concerto) was one of his tour de force showpieces. This virtuoso violin work, performed on a modest instrument, impressed audiences and had an element of visual theater as well.

Guzikow composed, but only one surviving work is attributed to him. The piece is entitled Shir Hamaalos, a setting of Psalm 126. Its first publication was in 1927 in *Musikalischer Pinkas* by the Vilner Hazzan A.M. Bernstein. The printing was arranged for two to four voices in Hebrew, complete with dynamic and articulation markings. It was later printed in *Ha Klezmerim* by Joachim Stutschewsky in 1959 with a single-line melody and text. The melody is currently published in *The Absolutely Complete Klezmer Songbook* edited by Yale Strom. An arrangement of the piece appears in this collection. It is uncertain how these editions surfaced 90 years after Guzikow’s death when chroniclers noted that he did not read or write musical notation.

Guzikow’s successful run in Europe was a turning point for the introduction of the xylophone in an orchestral setting. Camille Saint-Saëns was too young to have seen Guzikow perform, but after Guzikow’s death, xylophone performances became more common in western Europe, and Saint-Saëns likely did hear performances by keyboard percussionists Samson Jakubowsky or Charles de Try in 1866 and 1870.¹⁹ Guzikow’s cultural impact and instrument innovations were most certainly a contributing factor for the adoption of the orchestral xylophone in works such as Saint-Saëns’s *Danse Macabre* (1874) and *Carnival of the Animals* (1886).²⁰ The first orchestral compositions featuring xylophone appeared in France in the late 1800s, but Guzikow’s interactions with Mendelssohn in Leipzig appear to have historical significance for the xylophone as well. Mendelssohn was the kapellmeister for the Gewandhaus

17 Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer*, 30-32.

18 Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 77.

19 Peters, *The Drummer: Man*, 135.

20 James Blades, *Percussion Instruments and Their History* (Connecticut: The Bold Strummer Ltd., 1992), 306-9.



Four-row xylophone designed by Otto Seele

Courtesy of the Germanisches National Museum

Orchestra in Leipzig from 1835 to 1847 and saw Guzikow's performances during that time. Otto Seele was a timpanist and percussionist with the Gewandhaus Orchestra from 1891 to 1918. Like Saint-Saëns, Seele would not have seen Guzikow perform but was likely aware of Guzikow's interactions with Mendelssohn at the Gewandhaus, as well as those who concertized on the xylophone after Guzikow. Seele operated a specialty percussion shop and wrote method books for timpani and xylophone. The cover of Seele's xylophone method features an illustration of a four-row xylophone. Most importantly, Seele manufactured xylophones that are sought after today as instruments that share design similarities with descriptions of Guzikow's *stroyfidl*. The Seele xylophone bars do not have the round tops and tapered edges described on Guzikow's instrument but still utilized straw covered dowels to support the bars. It is likely that by the time these continental xylophones were being built, Seele had sourced improved tone woods for the instrument.

Some published xylophone parts, including Richard Strauss's 1905 opera, *Salome*, ask specifically for a "holz & strohinstrument" (wood and straw instrument) rather

than xylophone. It is surprising to see the instrument referenced sixty-eight years after Guzikow's death when earlier pieces performed on a four-row instrument are listed as "xylophone" in the score. Several passages in *Salome* are notoriously difficult to play accurately on the keyboard-oriented xylophone and are more ergonomically executed on a dulcimer-based layout.²¹

By comparison to historical figures of the nineteenth century, less is known about Guzikow than his Western contemporaries due to his "otherworldly" appearance and social standing. Guzikow's public novelty was partially a product of a Western cultural fascination with primitivism and exoticizing Eastern culture. Alex Jacobowitz, a Berlin-based marimba performer and recording artist, located and visited with descendants of Guzikow in Bonn, Germany and in North America. Relatives in Bonn no longer identified as Jewish, while those in America retained a Jewish as well as musical identity. Four of these American descendants settled in Philadelphia. Coincidentally, one of Guzikow's American descendants would work professionally with the next virtuoso of klezmer xylophone.²²

Klezmer in the North American Immigration Era

The great wave of immigration to North America for people of Jewish heritage took place from 1880 to 1924. The assassination of Tsar Alexander II caused political unrest resulting in anti-Jewish degrees, pogroms, and expulsions. Under these conditions, Ashkenazi Jews came in steady numbers to the United States until 1924, when immigration became restricted.

Salomes Tanz.

Holz & Strohinstrument & Tamburin.

Richard Strauss.

Sehr schnell und lebhaft.

The musical notation shows a single staff in 2/4 time. It begins with a 'Tamb.' marking and a '1' above the first measure. The rhythm consists of a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with '1' markings above every other measure, indicating a specific rhythmic pattern.

Richard Strauss's percussion part for *Salome* specifying a "wood and straw instrument" rather than a xylophone.

21 David Valdés, "Xylophone in Richard Strauss 'Salome,'" Percusize Me! (blog), May 30, 2022, <http://davidvaldespercussion.blogspot.com/search/label/Xylophone>.

22 Hankus Netsky, *Klezmer: Music and Community in Twentieth-Century Jewish Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015), 43.

Many families arrived in New York City and took residence in densely populated Lower East Side tenements. Immigrant musicians in the city began looking for freelance work and jobs in catering houses but found that their services were often unwanted and their presence was mockingly dismissed. Immigrant musicians were referred to as either *muzikantn*, reading or "real" musicians who were hired for theater and pit band work, or "klezmers," non-reading musicians who played only Jewish music. The word klezmer in this case was an insulting term, and its translation, "vessel of song," was sarcastically applied.²³ Muzikantn played music as their profession, while klezmers held down day jobs between performances. Klezmers also had a reputation for having social vices. They performed for events in the community but distanced themselves from employers and people of higher social standing by using *klezmer-loshn*, a slang that was mutually understood among musicians.

The birth of the American recording industry offered opportunities from record labels that were looking to sell records to a variety of ethnic markets. One of the earliest commercial klezmer recordings was a 1913 recording by the Hebrew Bulgarian Orchestra. Its sound was more like marching band music of the day, and its percussion utilized strict "oompah" beats and military style drumming.

The combination of recording technology, American popular music, and the immigration from eastern Europe were catalysts for the rise of "classic klezmer" as a diasporic art form, music displaced from its place of origin and undertaking changes in a new locale. As the muzikantn interacted with non-Jewish musicians, American klezmer music took on musical aspects of concert band music and early jazz idioms. Klezmer music is functional, meant to accompany activities during weddings and other family events, so selections could be repeated over a longer period of time and shorter compositions could be organized into larger suites. The appearance of this music on 78-rpm records reduced the length of compositions to roughly three minutes.²⁴ While longer and spontaneously structured performances would have been the genre's normal performance practice, ethnomusicologists and enthusiasts relied on these shorter recorded shellac renditions as their surviving documentation.

Klezmer Percussion Profile: Jacob "Jakie" Hoffman (1899-1974)

A bandleader of note to percussionists during klezmer's immigration era was Harry Kandel (1885-1943). Kandel received musical training in the Ukrainian city of Odessa before immigrating to the United States and settling in Philadelphia. His career flourished in America; he worked with John Philip Sousa, vaudeville productions, and state militia bands. He formed his own Kandel Orchestra for professional performances using pit orchestra musicians from the Arch Street Yiddish Theater. Kandel retained aspects of Sousa's brass-centric instrumentation in his band, creating a diasporic hybrid between European-Jewish and American popular music. To this end, the early Philadelphia klezmer drumming sound was snare drum oriented and did not commonly use a sock cymbal or modern drum set devices. The classic era of Kandel



Jacob Hoffman promotional photo

Photographer unknown, courtesy of Susan Watts

²³ Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer*, 55.

²⁴ Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer*, 55.

recordings, most released on the Victor label, were made from 1917 to 1927 and continued to absorb influences from popular music and early jazz. The change in musical direction was enhanced by the addition of saxophone and banjo to the instrumentation.²⁵ Song titles like "Jakie, Jazz 'em Up" reflected a desire to market the ensemble to a wider music audience.

The "Jakie" of the song title refers to Jacob "Jakie" Hoffman, a percussionist in Kandel's group. Hoffman played drums and percussion on an estimated ninety-three Kandel recordings but is best remembered as a virtuoso on the xylophone. While the xylophone seems an unlikely choice as a lead instrument in klezmer, one must remember that during the early decades of recorded music, the xylophone was a popular instrument whose crisp tonal character recorded accurately on the technology of the day compared to other concert instruments. The practicality and novelty of this instrument were driving factors in the success of ragtime recordings by George Hamilton Green, among others. Hoffman's use of the xylophone on immigration-era klezmer recordings is another strong precedent for the use of mallet percussion in the genre. Incredibly, there is a direct link between Hoffman and Michal Józef Guzikow. A number of Guzikow's descendants emigrated to the United States and settled in Philadelphia. Charles Gusikov (post-immigration surname spelling) was a trombonist in Harry Kandel's Orchestra, playing alongside Hoffman. It is unknown whether their membership in the same ensemble influenced the usage of xylophone on Kandel recordings, but the coincidence seems too significant to ignore. Charles Gusikov would later play in the Philadelphia Orchestra and work as an administrator at the Curtis Institute.²⁶

The Hoffman family was among the most prominent in the Philadelphia Jewish music scene. Jacob's father, Joseph Hoffman, came to Philadelphia with his wife, Rebecca, from Kriovozer, a small village in Ukraine about 200 miles north of Odessa. Joseph, a cornetist, taught all six of his children to play music, so when a family event occurred for people with connections to Kriovozer, the Hoffman

family always had representation in the music ensemble.²⁷ Joseph compiled a songbook of klezmer tunes from Europe as well as popular selections in Philadelphia at the time.²⁸ Jacob's brother Johnny Hoffman also played drums on Kandel Orchestra recordings.²⁹

Jacob Hoffman's 78-rpm recording highlights on xylophone with the Kandel Orchestra include "Der Gasn Nign" (street tune) and "Doina and Hora," recorded in 1923 and 1924 respectively. These recordings have been re-issued multiple times on vinyl and CD compilations as respected and representative examples of immigration-era klezmer. Harry Kandel relied on his musicians to develop repertoire for the ensemble. "Der Gasn Nign" appears in Joseph Hoffman's repertoire collection under the title "Romanian Hora #10."³⁰

In addition to musical instruction from this father, Hoffman studied music at Philadelphia's Settlement Music School. In that time period, gifted Settlement students graduated and went directly into professional performance jobs without the multiple degrees and training orchestra posts required today. Hoffman performed as a concert percussionist with a number of prestigious ensembles, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Pops, D'Oyly Carte Opera, and the Ballets Russe of Monte Carlo. He also accompanied silent films on piano.³¹ Unfortunately, Hoffman felt that his klezmer reputation continually overshadowed his concert music contributions, and at one point he burned his klezmer compositions and materials in an act of frustration.³² Ironically, Hoffman's work would likely be better known in the current concert percussion community had he recorded more klezmer selections on xylophone.

The "Doina and Hora" is notable for its original timbre and virtuosity. Hoffman's recitative-like soliloquy is compositionally solid with memorable introductory phrases, flashy orbital motives, and firmly rooted tonic and dominant cadence points. From a technical standpoint, Hoffman's tremolo to sustain pitches is fast and consistent while keeping a vocal-like quality in a high-pitch

25 Hankus Netsky, "Klezmer in Jewish Philadelphia, 1915 - 70" in *American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots*, ed. Mark Slobin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 56.

26 Susan Watts, *The Hoffman Book: Joseph Hoffman Klezmer Collection (1927)*, ed. Ilana Cravitz, Hankus Netsky, and Hannah Ochner (self-pub., Lulu Press, 2022), iv.

27 Netsky, "Jewish Philadelphia," 56.

28 Netsky, "Jewish Philadelphia," 59.

29 Michael Alpert, Pat Conte, Hankus Netsky, and Doris Kandel Rothman, liner notes for Harry Kandel, *Russian Sher: Master of Klezmer Music*. New York, NY: Global Village CD128, 1991.

30 Watts, *The Hoffman Book*, 11.

31 Netsky, "Jewish Philadelphia," 57.

32 Susan Hoffman Watts and Hankus Netsky, "Hoffman Philadelphia Klezmer Family" (Yiddish New York Festival 2022, online lecture, December 27, 2022).

register. He prepares sustained pitches with one or more grace notes to ornament the melody. It was his fast execution and these preparatory grace notes (and perhaps live acoustical performance spaces) that led his contemporaries to say he was so good he could “bend the notes” on the xylophone like a clarinetist or violinist. In the percussion community, the invention of the vibraphone and Milt Jackson’s mallet-dampening technique are generally accepted as turning points for mallet instruments developing a legato voice-like quality. Hoffman’s techniques and sound in the doina and “Der Gasn Nign” recordings should be considered a significant contribution not only to klezmer but to the evolution of mallet percussion performance practice. Hoffman’s recordings pre-date the development and manufacture of most vibraphones, as well as Clair Omar Musser’s marimba orchestras.

Klezmer Percussion Profile: Elaine Hoffman Watts (1932–2017)

The Hoffman family legacy and contributions have been kept alive by Jacob’s daughter, Elaine Hoffman Watts, and granddaughter, Susan Watts, as well as klezmer scholars such as Hankus Netsky. As a five-year-old girl, Elaine (affectionately known as Eateleh), would plant herself in the music studio to listen to Jacob’s practice sessions. While Hoffman and his contemporaries did not talk about the old klezmer days, Jacob eventually began teaching Elaine the drum set, with

him playing klezmer tunes on xylophone. As a woman, Elaine was not initially accepted in klezmer circles. She persevered with her studies, becoming the first female percussion graduate from the Curtis Institute in 1954. Elaine married shortly after her schooling and played drums with her own wedding band, which featured Jacob on xylophone. Elaine maintained a busy schedule at this time, participating in auditions and freelance performances, as well as caring for the family household. Elaine’s husband, Ernest, was supportive of her non-traditional career path and helped “schleppe” timpani and change drumheads on her equipment. In the 1980s, Elaine founded her own concert band called Summer Sounds All Year Round, an ensemble that continued into the 2000s for Fourth of July concerts and other events. When klezmer underwent its revival (a term Elaine disputed; in her family, the music was never dormant), Elaine’s playing and historical knowledge were in demand; she became a teaching fixture at Yiddish arts camps like KlezKamp and KlezKanada. She also recorded with members of the Klezmatics and the Klezmer Conservatory Band. She was awarded an NEA Heritage Fellowship in 2007.

With her daughter Susan, Elaine recorded the 2003 CD *I Remember Klezmer*. The recording features four drummers, including klezmer greats Aaron Alexander and David Licht. It features percussion-centered tracks, such as a doina improvisation on drum set, and also reveals more about Jacob Hoffman’s klezmer contributions. The album opener, “I’ll Just Keep Going Rhumba,”



Elaine Hoffman Watts in 2007
Photo: Alan Govonar, courtesy of Susan Watts



Elaine Hoffman Watts’s wedding day in 1955.
Photographer unknown, courtesy of Susan Watts

vocabulary. The klezmer drum set is modeled after concert snare drumming and *poyks*. Even though this is a quiet ensemble, the player should not typically use brushes; the sound of the snare drum roll is a fundamental part of the sound. There may also be a temptation to incorporate early jazz accentuations such as choked splash cymbals, etc. While immigration-era drumming has some “novelty” elements such as woodblock patterns, the drumming should have a joyous or weighty regal character. Avoid early drum set clichés that sound too “cute.” Playing on the rims of the snare drum or tom-toms also accomplishes this texture change. The most tasteful klezmer drummers incorporate tom-toms sparingly, but drum fills will primarily be heard on the snare drum and cymbals. The high hat is often used to splash the cymbals on strong beats, imitating hand cymbals; traditional klezmer drummers do not usually keep time on the high hat. Timekeeping on a ride or even a crash cymbal is utilized by drummers like Aaron Alexander and Richie Barshay, but the snare drum is still the primary timekeeping instrument. The 2015 recording “The Klez Messengers” by Aaron Alexander, Patrick Farrell, and Michael Winograd is an ideal listening resource for modern klezmer playing. Alexander’s drumming on this recording is more intricate than what these mallet arrangements require, but this recording demonstrates virtuoso klezmer drumming in an intimate trio setting. In addition, Irving Graetz’s drumming with Dave Tarras is a quintessential style to emulate in performing these suites. His playing on the 1955 *Tanz!* recording captures the style and attitude of the drumming that propels this music.

In the ensemble suites, one will notice that the Player 3 and Player 4 parts have long slurs, usually four bars in length, to show the phrasing. Though repetitive in nature, the timing and pacing of these critical parts is challenging. The slur will help the performers think in larger rhythmic units, aid in pacing the backbeat accompaniment, and help with anticipating changes in the harmony. The Player 4 bass lines have been kept relatively simple. The player could introduce some passing notes or approach notes if desired. Lead sheets are included for each melody, should Players 3 and 4 wish to experiment with varied accompaniment. The performers should keep in mind that klezmer is as contrapuntal as it is harmonic. Jazz conventions like reharmonized chords can be problematic in klezmer. Diversions outside the written chord symbols are best explored through single-line countermelodies.

The music in this collection is organized in suites so that ensembles can mount a performance “right out of the box” rather than having to develop ornamentation and arrangements from a lead sheet. The suites are also organized by performer, theme, or location. However, the ensemble is welcome to cut or insert melodies at their discretion. The group could perform single tunes removed from the suites and repeat the form of the melodies extra times if the performers are enjoying their own ornamentation and accompaniment textures. The solo parts are ornamented for an advanced player and require intricate sticking combinations. If an ornament is not feasible speed-wise or sounds stylistically inappropriate, the performer may remove or replace ornaments as needed. Unornamented lead sheet melodies are included for reference.

The Forebearers Suite: From the Repertoire of Guzikow, Hoffman, and Moskowitz

The Forebearers Suite collects three pieces from the repertoire of historical figures who serve as a precedent for the use of keyboard percussion in a klezmer setting.

“Shir Hamaalos” (“A Song of Ascents”) is the only known composition attributed to Michal Józef Guzikow, whose western European concert tours playing the *stroyfidl* contributed to the orchestral adoption of the xylophone in the nineteenth century. This piece is a setting of Psalm 126. A translation of the text is as follows:

A song of ascents: When God returns us to Zion it will seem like a dream. Our mouths filled with laughter and joyful songs will be on our tongues. The other nations will see and say, “God has done great things for them.” It is for us that God is doing great things; we will rejoice. Restore us once again, O God, like sudden flood streams in the desert. Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Those who go forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, will return bearing the sheaves with song and laughter.



Center label of 78rpm record featuring Jacob Hoffman playing the melody on xylophone

It is not known if Guzikow would have played this work on the stroyfidl, as the surviving score is a vocal setting. However, performers have realized this melody on a xylophone and Belarussian percussionist Alexander Zubko presented a video performance of the piece on a four-row xylophone in 2022.⁶⁴ Walter Zev Feldman recorded a beautiful version of the piece on tsimbl (transposed to D Freygish/G minor) that appears on the Khevrisa album *European Klezmer Music* (2000). The song begins in the F Freygish mode and moves to B-flat minor in measure 15. Yale Strom's lead sheet published in *The Absolutely Complete Klezmer Songbook* is interesting in that the harmony cadences in B-flat minor at the end, while the melody returns to the F Freygish mode.

"Der Gasn Nign" ("The Street Tune") is one of klezmer's best-known zhoks. This music would have been used to accompany guests to and from events during a wedding day. The 1923 Harry Kandel recording, featuring Jacob Hoffman's xylophone as the lead voice, remains one of the best-known immigration-era recordings. The Player 1 part in this arrangement is a transcription of Hoffman's playing on the Kandel recording, while the ensemble parts are a reduction of Kandel's Sousa-inspired ensemble accompaniment.⁶⁵ The opening melody is in a D minor/F major mode, but the second half of the phrase and subsequent sections reveal the use of the D Misheberach mode with a number of chromatic alterations based on the melodic range.

Joseph Moskowitz was one of the immigration era's best-known cimbalom artists and "Behuser Khosid" was a staple showpiece of his repertoire. Section A of this piece is in E Freygish, though the melody utilizes a raised sixth scale degree. Sections B and C are in A minor, though section C contains some traits of E Freygish. Sections A, B, and C are then repeated. Sections D and E are in A Freygish. Section F cadences in A Freygish but functions in C major. The piece concludes with a reprise of sections D and E. The ensemble's last note has been left un-rolled in the score, but the ensemble may add rolls to the last note to finish the suite if desired. There is no percussion part provided for this suite, but a poyk or subtle drum set part could be added to the ensemble.

64 "Guzikow: Shir Ha Maalot. Rare XIX-Century Xylophone Solo," performed by Alexander Zubko, accessed December 31, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxHWadkf2BY>.

65 Mark Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 126.

The Forebearers Suite

From the Repertoire of Guzikow, Hoffman, and Moskowitz

Traditional
arr. Nicholas Papador

Shir Hamaalos ♩ = 84

Player 1
Marimba 1
(high range)
or Xylophone



mp rubber mallets
(or soft plastic for xylo)

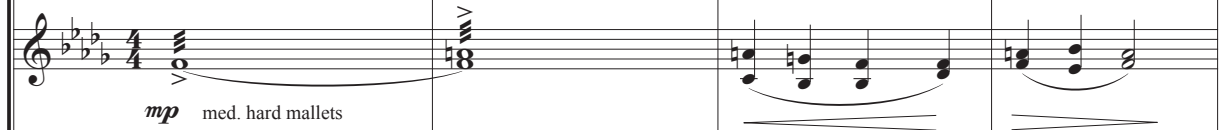
R R R

3

3

3

Player 2
Marimba 2
(high range)



mp med. hard mallets

Player 3
Marimba 1
(low range)



mp med. soft mallets

Player 4
Marimba 2
(low range)



mp soft mallets



5

P. 1

P. 2

P. 3

P. 4

R L L³ R R

3

3

3

About the Author

Dr. Nicholas Papador is a percussionist and composer based in Ontario, Canada who specializes in contemporary music. He is a founding member of the Noiseborder Ensemble and Marassa Duo. Papador has performed/presented at the Transplanted Roots Percussion Research Symposium, Puerto Rico Conservatory International Percussion Festival, International Conference on Music and Minimalism, the Canadian Percussion Network's *The Space Between* conference, the Open Ears Festival of New Music's *Environmental Rhythms* and the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC). Papador can be heard on numerous recordings, including *Marimba Collage* (2022), *Marassa Duo* (2019), and *Points of Departure* (2015), as well as Matthew Barney's 2014 film, *River of Fundament*. An associate composer with the Canadian Music Centre, his compositions and arrangements are published with Heartland Marimba Publications, Keyboard Percussion Publications, Alfred Publications, Studio 4 Music, House Panther Press, and Bachovich Music. Papador has received grants from the Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Social Sciences Humanities Research Council, and Canada Foundation for Innovation. Nicholas Papador is a Yamaha Canada performing artist and an artist endorser for Vic Firth Sticks and Mallets, Sabian Cymbals, and Evans Drumheads. He holds the rank of professor of music at the University of Windsor.

Papador is a graduate of Northwestern University School of Music (DM 2003), Indiana University Jacobs School of Music (MM 1999), and the University of Oregon (BMus 1997).

Papador was a visiting scholar at Cornell University from 2003 to 2005. During this time, he had the good fortune to perform in the Cornell Klezmer Ensemble led by Dr. Joel Rubin. Influenced by the klezmer repertoire and its historical connection to Western keyboard percussion, Papador began research for this collection and attended retreats at KlezKamp and KlezKanada.

Vessels of Song

Vessels of Song contains five suites of klezmer melodies in versions for mallet percussion ensemble and marimba duo. These virtuosic, joyful, and historically significant arrangements will be an excellent addition to any solo or ensemble percussion concert. The book's introduction and guide to performance practice details the use of klezmer's percussion instruments and its significant artists as this musical culture made its way, via immigration, from eastern Europe to North America in the early twentieth century. Vessels of Song also illuminates klezmer percussion's influence in the symphony orchestra and in early American popular music.

