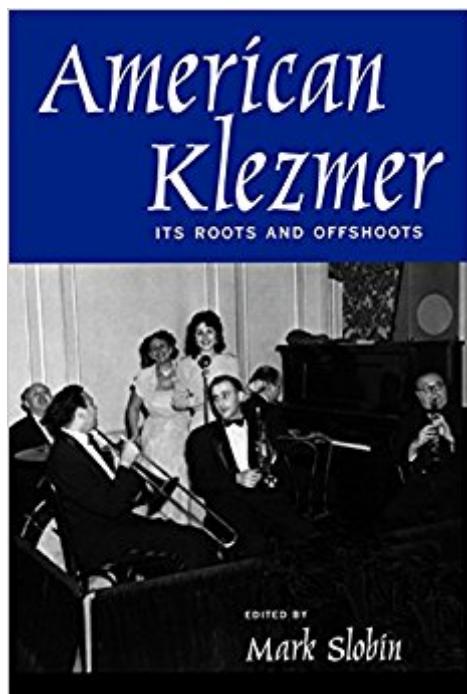


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American Klezmer: Its Roots And Offshoots



Synopsis

Klezmer, the Yiddish word for a folk instrumental musician, has come to mean a person, a style, and a scene. This musical subculture came to the United States with the late-nineteenth-century Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Although it had declined in popularity by the middle of the twentieth century, this lively music is now enjoying recognition among music fans of all stripes. Today, klezmer flourishes in the United States and abroad in the world music and accompany Jewish celebrations. The outstanding essays collected in this volume investigate American klezmer: its roots, its evolution, and its spirited revitalization. The contributors to American Klezmer include every kind of authority on the subject--from academics to leading musicians--and they offer a wide range of perspectives on the musical, social, and cultural history of klezmer in American life. The first half of this volume concentrates on the early history of klezmer, using folkloric sources, records of early musicians unions, and interviews with the last of the immigrant musicians. The second part of the collection examines the klezmer "revival" that began in the 1970s. Several of these essays were written by the leaders of this movement, or draw on interviews with them, and give firsthand accounts of how klezmer is transmitted and how its practitioners maintain a balance between preservation and innovation.

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Customer Reviews

"Those who still maintain that the subject of klezmer music and klezmorim is too slight to merit serious scholarly inquiry should take a good look at this fine collection of essays. This book debunks

certain misconceptions about klezmer. One is the long-held belief that practitioners of klezmer were quaint but musical illiterates. The other is that this is an effort to take a musical art form off the shelf to be preserved as a museum piece with little contemporary life of its own. I am also delighted by those sections that deal with the Yiddish verbal expression of the klezmer idiom. Klezmer is not just an avenue of maintaining cultural roots without the necessity of learning a language, as portions of this book so well illustrate."—Theodore Bikel, recording artist and actor

Mark Slobin is Professor of Music at Wesleyan University and author of several books on Jewish and Central European music, including *Tenement Songs: Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants* (1992) and *Exploring the Klezmer World* (2000).

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