

The Flute in Klezmer Music: An Interview with Adrienne Greenbaum

by Dr. Kathleen Joyce-Grendahl

Central to the vision and goals of the World Flute Society is the focus upon indigenous and folk flutes. However, in that same spirit, the society is also inclusive of folk, traditional, and indigenous *styles* of flute music. Regardless of the type of flute used in the performance of a music genre, it is central to our focus to recognize and celebrate all styles and types of flute music.

Flutist Adrienne Greenbaum's career as an orchestral and chamber musician, teacher,/professor/mentor, and published composer and arranger spans nearly 5 decades. Professor of Music at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, Adrienne is sought after as a performer and teacher for diverse audiences and enjoys teaching children as well as adults. Most recently, she joined the faculty at New Horizons in Chhattauqua, New York, and the adult session at the New England Music Camp in Maine.

Adrienne is the leading pioneer revivalist of the klezmer flute tradition, performing on vintage European and American wood flutes from the late 19th century. She enjoys touring with her klezmer ensemble, "FleytMuzik," having recently completed a seven-concert tour of Scotland. She is looking forward to presenting her klezmer and early music blend at the prestigious Pittsburgh Renaissance and Baroque series in 2016.

In addition to many universities and colleges throughout the United States, Adrienne has performed and given master classes in Dusseldorf, Paris, Vienna, and Krakow. Her albums, *FleytMuzik* and *Family Portrait*, have won awards and acclaim for her entertaining and historically-informed performances. As well, for many years running, Adrienne has been invited to perform and give workshops for both the National Flute Association and the British Flute Society, focusing on baroque and klezmer ornamentation and the exploration of the commonalities between these two music genres.

Since receiving her Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin and a Master of Music degree from Yale, Adrienne has involved herself with teaching at all levels, from the day-one experience of flute playing to coaching professionals on the fine distinctions of making music come alive. Beyond her private studio, she has taught at many adult programs, including KlezKamp, KlezKanada, KlezmerQuerque, Boxwood Festival (Nova Scotia), and Santa Fe Flute Immersion. She has led master classes and workshops in England, France, Austria, and across the United States. This summer marked the third annual hosting of her popular World Music and Improv Camp in Connecticut. Additionally, she has created a new concert series on period instruments, connecting klezmer and baroque music. Adrienne Greenbaum is solo flutist of the Wall Street Chamber Players, principal flute Emeritus of Orchestra New England and the New Haven Symphony.



Kathleen: What is klezmer music? In what context is it used?

Adrienne: There are good and correct definitions on the Internet, so let me briefly say that klezmer only became a genre of *music* during the 1970s. A klezmer is a musician from Eastern Europe who played celebratory music, including for sad occasions, weddings, braiding of hair, and escorting families to and from the wedding. When he was hired, he was to play appropriate music for the occasion. Now, we hear this music that was played, with its special modes, and call it klezmer music. (An article by Josh Horowitz will inform best on this topic.) Some of this music genre is for listening only, but most is functional. It is also always instrumental. You do not *sing* klezmer music, although much of the repertoire began as a song, so that can get quite confusing for the novice reader.

Kathleen: When and how did you become interested in klezmer music?

Adrienne: Nearly 20 years ago, I heard the music for the very first time in an informal setting, and I asked straight away where I could learn more about it. I was sent off to KlezKamp in the Catskills in New York to learn the details. I was totally bitten by the bug. I loved the spirit, the sounds, the modes, and the fact that it was functional music for the most part, meaning that there is a tune for anything and everything. The KlezKamp staff noticed that I was advanced on the flute and therefore encouraged me to go totally historical in my approach, including

using vintage, conical-bore flutes. I attended for a few years, learned from every instrumentalist and vocalist, except for the missing flutist. I was off and running fast. After 2 years, I was teaching at KlezKamp, until it finished its 30-year run.

I started a band that first year I attended KlezKamp. Our first engagement was playing for my son's Bar Mitzvah. Now, I lead that ensemble from the piano bench; FleytMuzik is my flute-based ensemble, which is now really thriving. Our newest CD, just released in early August of this year, will garner the attention needed to propel klezmer and flute forward, because of both the repertoire and the use of piccolo, another instrument "forgotten."

Kathleen: What attracts you to klezmer music?

Adrienne: The spirit, both soulful and uplifting. The modes make all the difference to me. Why do people love "Hava Nagilla" so much? It is that infectious mode, the *freygish*. I personally love the *mishaberach* mode even more. If using G as your starting point, the notes for the *mishaberach* mode are: G, A, Bb, C#, D, E, F, G.

Kathleen: What flute do you use to play klezmer music?

Adrienne: I have an old Boehm system flute, a Haynes made in 1904, and many simple system flutes of between 8 and 13 keys. The flute that I have performed on most is a Hungarian flute made between 1890 and 1910 with an ivory headjoint and made by Pleveric. I have a house full of flutes and have certainly switched on and off. One performance this summer was actually partially performed on a six-key boxwood flute because the piece, found in a klezmer folio and known and beloved by most Jews and virtually all Poles, was written in 1794; it was perfect for that flute. Earlier klezmer really goes back to the baroque period and before, so some of the baroque dances would have been considered klezmer, as well.

Kathleen: How does the flute play a role in this music?

Adrienne: Mostly, the flute was used as a melody instrument. It existed in an ensemble, small and large. I would say, judging from the photos, that it depended upon the wealth of the client whether they could afford the entire band. Many photos show more than one flute, even mixed in with brass and clarinet. Doubtful that the flute contributed a lot with that kind of instrumental competition, but collective sound had to be considered, of course. My latest recording is truly an example of the right size ensemble for the flute, with cimbalom, violin, and bass. This was a very common small, early ensemble.

The one element for which I envy violinists is that they can *comp* or accompany with chords *or* play melody. I also play viola and comping is one of the most joyous kinds of playing! The flute can add a little harmony on occasion. The later we get into the history of klezmer the more that might be something to add to a piece, yet never so structured as to sound like you made a separate part. The flute can also do trills and chirps to interject some life into your own melodic turn or someone else's, just so you get that interaction going. The objective is to participate in the mix. What many musicians often do not realize is that *not* playing gives a performance texture, so a good musician will not wait to be told to back off for a bit; rather, he or she will simply take the instrument out of position. This lets the other melody instrument(s) know that you have let them "take it."

Kathleen: What is the playing style of the flute in klezmer music?

Adrienne: Perhaps you could say it is placing yourself in a gypsy vibe while employing a Western flute. Trills, called *dreydlekb*, and other ornaments such as *boyps* and *krekbts* – snapping of grace notes and "vocalizing" on your instrument like a cantor would sing – are employed as well. To be accurate here, there is more and more a trend toward ornamenting, croaking, *krekbztzing*, *boyping*, trilling, etc. than one hears on early recordings. My first recording was received very well, except for one comment from a critic who wished that I had ornamented more. I simply responded with, "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should." It is the same in baroque music, is it not? It is all about taste, which is very important in balancing how much gunk to put in. It may be impressive, but does it take away from the feeling? From the melody? Yes, just as in baroque or really any other music, too much is, well, too much.

Kathleen: Can you recommend any recordings of klezmer music?

Adrienne: I am not really going to site various recordings, as there are numerous, too numerous to even attempt. The best way to hear what klezmer sounded like in the early days – or as early as we have actual sound recordings – is to listen to those early historic recordings. You might be quite surprised to hear phenomenal playing, especially technique and fast notes. But, you might also be surprised that the early recordings did not sound like the current incarnation of Itzhak Perlman, for instance. The developed sound of the 20th and 21st centuries is not what the folk musician was after. Not that they could not, as they were great players and *not* just folkies. But, the vibe of the folk musician was first heart-and-soul and, as Telemann actually put it to a musician friend who had told him about a tavern klezmer, "it's the barbaric beauty that gets you." I am planning a program this year for Telemann's 250th birthday that will be all about that barbaric beauty!

Kathleen: Is there notated music for the flute in a klezmer ensemble or other instrumental combination?

Adrienne: Historically, it is all learned by ear, and the flute learns the same melody as everyone else. You would not want to learn parts or from different parts; it would not be kosher, so to speak. I teach a college ensemble and they take notes as I tell them various ways to alter or take part, but they do not begin with “parts.” This way, one learns the correct way to interact in an ensemble.

Kathleen: What else should the readers know about you?

Adrienne: Just this month, I completed that earlier-mentioned recording project of music from a klezmer band from a small town of Dubiecko, Poland. It is a live concert recording of fabulous dance music and listening music, much of which would not even be considered true klezmer because it was, and is, considered social repertoire that the klezmer needed to know. Remember, klezmer only became a named music genre around 1970. Before that, it was only defined as the person playing it: a klezmer. I transcribed about 30 tunes from an old folio that reached me because I play klezmer on the flute with an ensemble of strings, the only ensemble of its kind that exists, as far as I know. I hope to tour with the group and this repertoire. I was also recently invited to Germany to join other scholars on the subject of klezmer performance practice. I also perform and coach at Chris Norman’s Boxwood Festival, as well. Each summer, I teach at an adult band camp in Maine. Once fall arrives, I will begin preparations for a nice eclectic recital at the New York Flute Club on November 6, 2016. Joining me on that concert will be the fabulous Dianne Frazer. Having also completed a tour with FleytMuzik performing a newly-developed klezmer/baroque/traditional program, I need to remind myself to feel grateful for being so busy. My classical flute life is also still active, with a wonderful chamber group based in the New Haven area, the Wall Street Chamber Players. And, of course, my teaching at the college more than keeps me off the streets. I am a happy flutist for sure. I am definitely a happy career and family woman.

For further insight into Adrienne Greenbaum and the flute in klezmer music, please read this recent interview:

www.townvibe.com/Fairfield/September-October-2016/Sounds-From-the-Past/

Adrienne explains about the flute in klezmer music in this in-depth YouTube video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5XLY76TDFg

Visit Adrienne Greenbaum on the Internet: www.klezmerflute.com

Shalom Aleichem

Nakai TABlature System

Traditional Klezmer
Dr. Kathleen Joyce-Grendahl, arr.

Flute TAB

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Shalom Aleichem' in 4/4 time, arranged for flute. The score is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is presented in a tablature format, with various chords indicated above the staff. The chords are: b m, F#7, b m, F#7, b m, F#7, D, b m, F#7, em, F#7, em, F#7, b m, F#7, b m. The score is divided into four systems, with measure numbers 5, 10, and 14 indicated at the beginning of each system. The piece concludes with a double bar line.