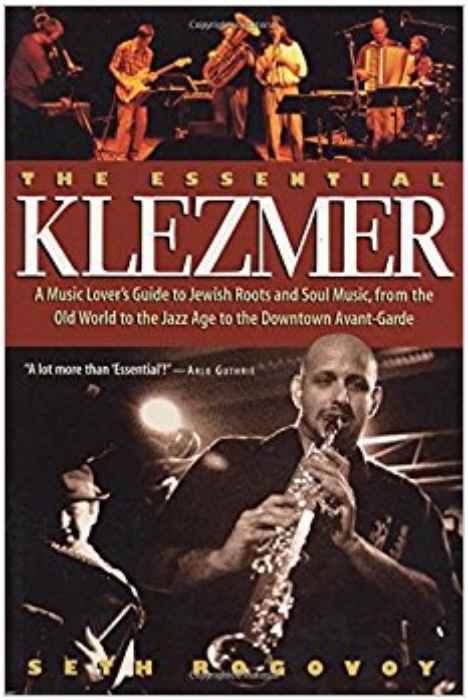
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The Essential Klezmer



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Synopsis

You can hear it in the hottest clubs in New York, the hippest rooms in New Orleans, Chicago, and San Francisco, and in top concert halls around the world. It’s a joyous sound that echoes the past. It’s Old World meets New World. It’s secular and sacred. It’s traditional and experimental. It’s played by classical violinist Itzhak Perlman (his all-klezmer album in his all-time best-seller!), the hypno-pop band Yo La Tengo, and avant-gardist John Zorn. It made the late great Benny Goodman’s clarinet wail. It’s klezmer and it’s hot!The Essential Klezmer is the definitive introduction to a musical form in the midst of a renaissance. It documents the history of klezmer from its roots in the Jewish communities of medieval Eastern Europe to its current revival in Europe and America. It includes detailed information about the music’s social, cultural, and political roots as well as vivid descriptions of the instruments, their unique sounds, and the players who’ve kept those sounds alive through the ages. Music journalist Seth Rogovoy skillfully conveys the emotional intensity and uplifting power of klezmer and the reasons for its ever widening popularity among Jews and Gentiles, Hasidim and club kids, grandparents and their grandkids. A comprehensive discography presents the "Essential Klezmer Library," extensive lists of recordings, artists, and styles, as well as an up-to-the-minute resource of music retailers, festivals, workshops, and klezmer Web sites.The Essential Klezmer is as entertaining as it is enlightening.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Rogovoy, a music journalist and passionate aficionado of klezmer music, carefully and lovingly

chronicles klezmer with a journalist’s eye for detail. (The term klezmer is a Yiddish contraction of two Hebrew words: kley, or "vessel," and "zemer," or song. Thus, klezmer originally referred to a Jewish folk or street musicianDa vessel of songDand not to a specific style.) Once in America, the genre absorbed influences of Broadway, jazz, blues, funk, and, most recently, a hard-driving rock beat (leading to the recent incarnation of shtetl-metal music). The five chapters deal with chronology, from "Old World Klezmer" through "Revival" and "Renaissance" (the latter looks at the phenomenon of klezmer music in the 1990s). The author is thorough and up-to-the-minute: the last appendixD"Klezmer on the Internet"Dlists websites of the major artists and organizations that perform and promote klezmer music. His discography, as well, is a valuable tool for both novices and seasoned listeners. Highly recommended for all collections.DLarry Lipkis, Moravian Coll., Bethlehem, PA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Engagingly fresh." -- Publisher’s Weekly

An excellent introduction to the music and the people who make it.

I’m not entirely unbiased -- Seth has generously praised my most recent book -- but as someone who writes on Jewish music regularly for several papers, I can honestly say that this is the book on klezmer to start with. Seth’s ecumenical, eclectic taste and balanced view of the current scene make him a superb tour guide for either a first-time visitor or an old klezmer hand. As a working music journalist, he has interviewed all the key figures in this music -- even the notoriously reclusive John Zorn -- and clearly he has asked the right questions, because his chapters on recent music are insightful and zesty. And the book’s lengthy critical discography makes it an indispensable guide for the listener and record buyer.

If you are new to klezmer music like myself this book is very interesting and helpful. A friend took me to a Klezmatics concert and I loved the soulfulness and the jazz-like energy of the music. But I’m not Jewish and needed to know more about what I was hearing. The Essential Klezmer is so clearly written and well organized that you can start anywhere in the book and find out whatever you want to know, whether it’s about particular musicians, the history of the music, klezmer in movies and on the internet, or avant-garde groups. The 80 plus page discography is especially helpful.

Seth Rogovoy has written a rich history of Klezmer music that should prove to be an important

contribution to the field of Jewish music. He has captured the spirit and meaning of this most wonderful and expressive musical traditon that is currently in the midst of a significant rebirth. This is an intelligent and loving tribute both to the musical tradition, and to the men and women who have performed Klezmer from generation to generation.

Having helped kick-start the klezmer revival, I'm delighted to see for the first time a book that gets the story right. Seth Rogovoy's readable account brings to life the personalities, bands, and stylistic experiments that shaped -- and continue to shape -- this hip, passionate, influential genre. Rich in detail yet down to earth, "The Essential Klezmer" will appeal, I think, to both the novice and the aficionado. The discography alone makes this slim volume indispensible; it should be required reading in any college course about klezmer music. (Disclosure: I was interviewed for the book, but didn't see the manuscript until publication.)

The author does a great job of putting the technical and artistic components of Klezmer music into an historical and cultural context and following its evolution within that context, as well as independent of it. He does it in a way that is both entertaining and scholarly without being ponderous. The discography is an invaluable resource.

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