

# Klezmer, a short introduction

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## Introduction

Klezmer is the music of the Askenazi Jews of Eastern Europe. It is deeply connected to Yiddish culture and would be played at festive events, especially weddings, which in the old country could go on for days.

## Structure

Most Klezmer tunes are dance tunes and consist of 2 or more sections that are repeated. 3 parts is the most common. Many tunes have a "Shout Chorus" Yai... dai YAI DAI DAI DAI!!!!

## Rhythms

Klezmer has incorporated rhythms from all over Europe and the mid-east. Most Klezmer tunes have a very strong beat on 1

**Doina** Doina is an out-of-time improvisational form that shows off the skills of an individual player.

**Frailach** zayn in Yiddish means to be happy. These are your basic Klezmer dance tune.

A **Chusidl** is a tune played in a processional. Chassidik in origin.



Bulgar

**Bulgars** are fast tunes with a complex background rhythm.

**Hora** These tunes are in a sort of an uneven 3 rhythm, with a strong 1 and 3.



Hora



Terkishe

**Terkishe** Turkish tunes.

**Others** These include Kolemeike from Ukraine, Serbas, Dobridens, Hungas and Skotchnes

## Charts

Charts of all the tunes we will be working on are available at <http://frontiernet.net/~hsweet>  
Do not take them too seriously. They are just a sketch of the tune.

## Modes

One of the things that makes music sound Klezmer is the mode it is played in. Freigish with it's flat 2nd and raised 3rd and Mishebeyrekh with it's raised 4th are the two most common modes. Mishebeyrekh is also the prayer for the ill you hear at Saturday service. You will also see major and other modes.

### Freigish

Note that the B is flat going up, but natural when going below the tonic.



### Mishebryekh



## Ornaments

There are two main ornaments, Dreydlakh, ("vibrato-trill") and the krechts.

The trill is played on the fiddle as though you were playing vibrato, but you glue the next higher finger to the one on the string. This has an effect somewhere between fast vibrato and a trill. Kinda like a cell phone set to vibrate.

The krechts is based on Jewish Chassonot. It's a very short cry. On the fiddle, you can do a strong down bow, and quickly touch your third or 4th finger to the string just as the bow stroke ends. (It might take some practice).

## Sekund

In a lot of Eastern European music, when there are 2 violins one plays melody and the other rhythm. Violin can play 2 note chords. Wind instruments can play rhythmic arpeggios build around the chord. Traditionally, harmonies are very basic, although Jazz oriented groups can expand on this quite a bit.