

JUMPIN' NIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN TRANSCRIPT

Opening Titles

NOT LONG AGO, SOME YOUNG MUSICIANS DISCOVERED THE MUSIC OF THEIR
GRANDFATHERS.

THEY CALL IT KLEZMER MUSIC.

A JUMPIN' NIGHT

IN THE

GARDEN OF EDEN

KAPELYE plays in a NYC street to an enthusiastic crowd.

Supertitle:
KAPELYE PLAYS
ON FIFTH AVENUE

*HENRY SAPOZNIK walks down the street with guitar case over his shoulder. NYC Street scenes,
Jewish neighborhood.*

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

It was 1976 and I was playing old-time country music. I had a group called the Delaware Water Gap and everyone in the group, of course, was Jewish, and here we were playing country music. And I was studying with an old-timer named Tommy Jarrell and Tommy says 'Hank, I want to ask you something. How come you people don't play your own music?' So you know, I was kind of startled for a second 'cause I didn't really think about...do our own music? Well, I could sing cantorial stuff, you know? *Ha Tikvah* [Israel's national Anthem] and I had never really thought about that as such.

Lower Thirds:
Henry Sapoznik
Kapelye

HENRY SAPOZNIK

For me, I grew up with the music. I mean, I was a Borscht Belt brat. My father's a cantor and I grew up coming to the hotels every Passover and hearing this music, but it bounced off me because it's not what I wanted to hear. It didn't fit in with my desire to be Beaver Cleaver, to pass. I wanted to be an American. I didn't want to have parents who had accents.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND performs on stage.

Supertitles:
THE KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND
Boston

JUDY BRESSLER scats, HANKUS NETSKY plays piano.

JUDY BRESSLER
That's the band leader on the keyboard. That's Hankus Netsky!

Lower Thirds:
Hankus Netsky
The Klezmer Conservatory Band

HANKUS NETSKY

It was obvious that I was going to pursue some kind of musical career from very early on. My mother encouraged me in that direction, but really was definitely plugging for something more to do with Broadway. I remember, every year, we'd be watching the Academy Awards and she'd point to Elliot Lawrence, you know, conducting the orchestra and say 'I want you to be doing that!'

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND on stage.
JUDY scattng.

JUDY BRESSLER
That's Judy Bressler – that's me.

DON BYRON on clarinet.

JUDY BRESSLER
That's Don Byron on the clarinet!

HANKUS NETSKY and HENRY SAPOZNIK walk down the street.

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)
I began to question, you know, why is it that Irish music and this great country music – where is the equivalent Jewish music? And the only place I could think to go and find out about that was the YIVO. And they connected me to the folklorist at the YIVO.

Record plays inside the YIVO, records scattered on table

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

So she takes me downstairs to the sub-basement and there's these huge filing cabinets. And she opens up the filing cabinets and for the first time in my life, I knew what Howard Carter felt when he opened up the tomb of Tutankhamen. He opened up it up and there was this stuff there – thousands of 78s. And here they were, the Jewish records.

HENRY SAPOZNIK and HANKUS NETSKY look through music at the YIVO

HENRY SAPOZNIK

The thing is, I don't really know, this is like a real potpourri of some of this stuff. It just needs to be...how about this? You ever see this picture?

HANKUS NETSKY

I don't think so, no.

HENRY SAPOZNIK (laughing)

Can you name that Jew?

HANKUS NETSKY

What is this little balalaika player...

Old Jewish music plays over still images.

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

When you look at your average tuxedo-clad Jewish musician, it's hard to imagine that they're carrying on a tradition that dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe. The word 'klezmer' comes from the Hebrew root *klei zemer* which means 'instruments of song.' The early *klezmerim* [klezmer musicians] seldom used printed music but learned the music by ear and they passed it down from one generation to another. Although some *klezmerim* were virtuosic players, anti-Semitic laws barred Jewish musicians from many of the great conservatories until the 20th century. *Klezmerim* were often itinerants, who went from town to town. They were very versatile and they played for all kinds of celebrations – Jewish and non-Jewish.

Supertitle:

PHILLIP AND MOLLY GET MARRIED

Wedding ceremony

Phillip leads Molly joyously down the aisle

Wedding reception

HANKUS NETSKY

We're going to hear a fiddle, a fiddle piece. If everyone could be quiet, please.

PHILLIP plays fiddle. The musicians pick up the tune. People dance

*Images of Klezmer Conservatory Band
HANKUS NETSKY sitting and writing*

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

When I started the band back in 1980, I was already teaching at the New England Conservatory where there was a very creative musical environment. The students there were fair game for just about any kind of exciting music although actually very few of them had heard or played any Jewish music. I played very little of it myself. My own connection to klezmer comes from my family, in Philadelphia. I was down in my grandmother's basement, poking around for old relics and I chanced upon my grandfather's band. My uncle Sam was one of the cornet players in that photo. And it turned out that he had played lots of klezmer music in the 20s and 30s.

Old photo of Hankus's grandfather's klezmer band

HANKUS NETSKY

I think I didn't really hear anything that sounded like the music that I ended up being excited about until I was at my Uncle Sam's house and he put on that first Naftule Brandwine record and that's it. That was really it.

HANKUS NETSKY listens to old klezmer music and writes on music notes

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

It really takes a tremendous amount of effort to try to hear instruments, but in fact, it's very much worth it because I didn't grow up hearing music played this way so much, and every ornament and every trill is for me something that I have to study. *(he hums.)*

HANKUS NETSKY rehearses with Klezmer Conservatory Band

Band members sing

HANKUS NETSKY

It's an arpeggio. Umm, it might be worth it to listen for a second. Basically, you know, what I want to do is have parts that are flexible. I mean Dave played something different the second time. *(He hums.)* He plays a little... you know gets more wild. Just get more into it and you'll play a few more notes. OK. First chorus! *(Laughter.)*

BAND MEMBERS

Shut up guys – first chorus.

First chorus!

Now this is the B-section, right?

HANKUS NETSKY

This is the A section.

BAND listens to old recording

HANKUS NETSKY

The kind of stuff I'm talking about is right there. Bo do bo bum. I heard 'ba ba ba.' But this is where you're going... 'ya ya ya yum.'

BAND practices with full instruments, HANKUS NETSKY leading at the piano

HANKUS NETSKY

I just think it should be a little more expressive. [sings melody] Right there, at the very beginning.

HANKUS NETSKY plays bit of old recording again

BAND MEMBER

The pick-ups are ya ta da da

HANKUS NETSKY

It's one of these things [sings] It's got a lot... yeah. Second section – one, two – one, two, three, four.

BAND keeps practicing

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

When you hear this music on old recordings, it's really obvious that these people come from the Eastern European world that was influenced by Romanian music and Hungarian music and also obvious that when they played jazz, this was something they had to learn. Now we don't have to learn the American influences anymore. We can't really go back sixty years and become members of our grandparents' generation. We have to bring our own backgrounds and experiences to the music, and these influence the way we play it.

BAND continues practicing

HANKUS NETSKY (on accordion)

It's getting there. That's a little slow for that tune though.

HANKUS NETSKY plays opening phrase up-tempo on accordion

Supertitles:

“A FREYLEKHE NAKHT IN GAN EYDN”

“A JUMPIN' NIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN”

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND performs on stage

Lower third:

Don Byron

DON BYRON, clarinetist

I personally play too many styles of music to really consider klezmer the definition of my whole musical thing. Along with that goes the fact that I'm always aware that I'm visiting.

KAPELYE performs outside in NYC.

MICHAEL ALPERT sings in Yiddish

Subtitles:

The matchmaker came to Grandpa
To match up Father and Mother.
They talked and talked for nothing
Until the glass of whiskey
butted in.
Because of whiskey
the match was made
Father became Mother's groom.

Crowd, band vocalizes melody

MICHAEL ALPERT sings in Yiddish

Subtitles:

I still remember my circumcision
The whiskey never left the table.
Everyone toasted 'mazel tov'!
May he become a great Rabbi!

MICHAEL ALPERT continues singing, band plays

MICHAEL ALPERT

This is an entire world, you know? Linguistically, musically, a way of thinking, a way of living, a way of dealing with life. In Yiddish we say a *velteleh* – 'a little world'. The Yiddish world is an entire world which has been in large parts, other than in the immigrant communities here, was destroyed – was wiped off the face of the Earth. That's what makes Jews – Ashkenazi Jews – in the rest of the world, in America in particular, say, different than Irish or Italian immigrants is they have an old country to go back to. Our old country is gone.

*Klezmer music plays over images of record jackets, old photographs of European klezmer bands.
Dissolve to archival footage of performers in a town square*

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

If this was only based on people learning music from 78 records, the depth of the understanding of the music would be of the record. That's useless. This is a music of people and I thought it

was really important that we know who these people were, that we could interact with them, hear them talk about the music, and we would learn a lot more than just melodies.

MICHAEL ALPERT meets with LEON SCHWARTZ

Lower third:
Leon Schwartz

LEON SCHWARTZ (voice over)
I was born in 1902.

MICHAEL ALPERT (voice over)
I was born in 1954. When I first met Leon, it was hard to get him to talk a lot about, maybe to be specific about names and places and people and tunes. He used to say 'what difference does it make?' Why do you need to know their names? Why does it matter? I said, 'I wanted to get a picture in my mind of who these people were as much as I could and what the whole environment was like.'

LEON SCHWARTZ and MICHAEL ALPERT walk over a swastika on the pavement.

MICHAEL ALPERT
Did you ever try to have that removed?

LEON SCHWARTZ
No.

LEON SCHWARTZ (voice over)
Klezmer music? What's klezmer music? Klezmer music is music like every other music. Music is music. And when you start working with it, you break it up.

LEON SCHWARTZ and MICHAEL ALPERT play fiddle and then have a conversation

LEON SCHWARTZ
I heard this particular *nign* [melody] from a rabbi who moved from the Baal Shem Tov ...if you ever heard of the Baal Shem Tov?

MICHAEL ALPERT
He was the founder of Hasidism.

LEON SCHWARTZ
The founder of Hasidism. It would be usual for a rabbi to come to certain towns, spend some time with the people and at the meal, sing certain songs. That was our type of entertainment, that was before radio. Can you imagine? So, you could almost hear, almost everyone was always humming, singing, humming, to make it nice for a little bit because that was the only thing that people had. Nothing else.

MICHAEL ALPERT

Were there gypsies who played in Karapchu or in the Bukovina?

LEON SCHWARTZ

We took them for Jewish weddings.

MICHAEL ALPERT

Oh you did.

LEON SCHWARTZ

Yes, and sometimes when I needed re-enforcement for my orchestra I took from them because we didn't have microphones, there was nothing to amplify. So you had to have -- an orchestra of twelve meant like nothing.

MICHAEL ALPERT

Did you like the way the Gypsies played?

LEON SCHWARTZ

I did. They could take any piece and make it sound gypsy-like.

MICHAEL ALPERT

What was gypsy-like?

LEON S HWARTZ

For instance, I think like that...

LEON SCHWARTZ demonstrates gypsy music on the fiddle

KAPELYE performs on Fifth Avenue, NYC

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over, old Columbia Records images)

Some of the best-known *klezmerim* [klezmer musicians] are those who had foresight or luck to actually make it into a recording studio. Abe Schwartz, who was a violinist, was born in Romania. He became band leader for Columbia Records in 1915, and he recorded a whole slew of Polish, Romanian, Russian, Greek among others – very, very prolific.

KAPELYE performs. Archival photo of Naftule Brandwine. Photo of his gravestone.

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

Naftule Brandwine is the clarinetist born in Galitzia in 1889 whose playing was so colorful and so remarkable that the old timers are still talking about him today. He died in the Bronx in 1963.

Old recording of KLEZMER music plays over late 19th century, early 20th century photos of DAVE TARRAS.

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

If anyone can be said to be the father of a specific Jewish-American sound, it is Dave Tarras.

From his background of being a descendant of many generations of *klezmerim* [klezmer musicians], Dave's playing has influenced his generation and the generations that came after him, including ours.

DAVE TARRAS reading to HENRY SAPOZNIK

DAVE TARRAS

To those who will come across the book, please remember, I wrote this on my 89th year. If there is missing a bar or two. Also I wrote this all depending on my memory without instruments. Depending on my own ears. When I write the tune, I hear the tune in my ears.

Old photo of Dave Tarras as a child with a woman

Lower third:
Dave Tarras

HENRY SAPOZNIK

[referring to old photo] was this taken in Ternovke?

DAVE TARRAS

Yes. That's me, I don't believe it.

HENRY SAPOZNIK

And how old were you in this picture?

DAVE TARRAS

About 9 years.

HENRY SAPOZNIK

Now did you play in your father's band, did you play from music?

DAVE TARRAS

We played Jewish weddings, we didn't need no music. By ear. Then we played for the peasants, for rich peasants. I didn't need - mostly polkas, polkas. But in the neighbors were a lot of nobility. The town we lived, there was a *Graf* [Count] Pototsky, you know what a *Graf* is?

HENRY SAPOZNIK

Like a Count.

DAVE TARRAS

Count, yeah. And he was the owner of a hundred villages. So they had very often weddings, they had, people came from Kiev, from Petrograd, even from France to their weddings.

HENRY SAPOZNIK

Did you have to play like classical music? You played overtures, yeah?

DAVE TARRAS

Overtures, we played waltzes for them, different dances like *pas de quatre*,

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND performs

JUDY BRESSLER (sings in Yiddish)
Ay ay ba dee ra die die, Wissotsky's Tay
Ay ay ba dee ra day day, Wissotsky's Tay

Subtitles:
They call me Gitl 'Purishkevitch –
the Jew-hater!'
That's how they mock
a Jewish woman.
I earn my poor living
Peddling Wissotzky's Tea
to wealthy housewives.

JUDY BRESSLER walks out of house

Lower third:
Judy Bressler

JUDY BRESSLER (voice over)
I didn't grow up speaking Yiddish. I learned it because I wanted to perform the music. I work up new material like "Wissotzky's Tea" with my Yiddish teacher, a young scholar named David Fishman.

JUDY BRESSLER and DAVID FISHMAN work out lyrics in Yiddish

DAVID FISHMAN
Right. If there's one word to swallow, it's 'mich.' That's the word, if you've gotta blur or swallow in that long sentence. Not 'Got [God] but' 'Mich' is the word you can almost blur over, OK.

JUDY BRESSLER sings in Yiddish

DAVID FISHMAN (voice over)
"Wissotsky's Tay" [Tea] was written by Joshua Waletzky, a founding member of the New York band *Kapelye*. It's a new song, set in the old country -

DAVID FISHMAN continues on-camera
about the plight of poor Jews, of a poor old Jewish woman who sells tea, Wissotsky's tea on the street to the rich women, and the tensions between rich and poor in Jewish life. Her son, the story that the songs tells is about how her son was chosen and drafted into the Russian army, her

only son, as opposed to all the rich people, all the rich Jews who had lots of children and whose sons weren't drafted.

In

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND in rehearsal

MIMI RABSON

This isn't like anything else you do. This is like a Kurt Weil tune, and we're just playing it like it was yet another *fraylakh* [happy dance] and it's not. It's a real sarcastic sort of snide remark...

JUDY BRESSLER

I think the accompaniment should set off the vocal and I think that there's a lot of subtle things in here. I think you're right Mimi, I don't think we should just approach it as another *freilakh* [happy dance], I mean it's not a *freilakh*, or as another klezmer tune.

MIMI RABSON

If anything, I think we should be playing a little softer because you can be a lot more sarcastic when you're just nudging a little bit. Like it would be nice for us to be soft, real subtle sarcastic.

BAND MEMBER butts in
Do you give lessons in that?

MIMI RABSON

Huh, Do I give lessons in that? I give lessons in anything now, man, I don't have any students.

BAND laughs together
Sarcasm lessons!

MIMI RABSON

\$300 an hour! No – just kidding!

BAND laughs
Let's raise it to 400!

MIMI RABSON

But, umm, I wanted to say something also about this, the last cry when you say - finally when she comes out and she says "if I were rich, my son would be free" it seems to me that that's the first time that she's really saying what she's really thinking. The first time to me it seems like you get an open sense of her pain 'cause like all of a sudden you have all these *forte pianos* and *sforzandos* and *tremolos* and it's like all of a sudden, it's a totally different thing from saying 'the Czar gave me a great gift. He did this wonderful thing,' because she's saying 'If I were rich' – this is a straight out no subtleties – 'If I were rich, my son would be free!!' That's like a whole different thing.

Two BAND members sing,
"If I was a rich man," ya ta da da da....
Sorry." Laughter

*JUDY BRESSLER sings WISSOTSKY'S TAY in Yiddish in concert with KLEZMER
CONSERVATORY BAND*

Subtitles:

Our rich neighbor
had three grandsons
Strong boys without a blemish
But with money you can fix anything
So they say
'Unfit, unfit, unfit –
Yes! You! Moishe!
And they take him away from me.
Ay ay ba dee ra diy diy, Wissotsky's Tay
Ay ay ba dee ra diy diy, Wissotsky's Tay

[sings in Yiddish, no subtitles]

Ay ay ba dee ra diy diy, Wissotsky's Tay

CHARLIE BERG drums

CHARLIE BERG (voice over)

The history of klezmer drumming follows the history of Western drumming. Side drums played by the Jews in the Czar's army gave way to the contemporary drum set in America. New drums opened up new ways to play the music. The underlying rhythm didn't change.

Lower third:
Charlie Berg

CHARLIE BERG

Klezmer music is based on an underlying rhythm and there's a lot of ethnic music that's based on an underlying rhythm. When I was younger, I used to play in *Salsa* [Latin music] bands. The first thing all drummers learn in *Salsa* bands is that there's an underlying rhythm and this rhythm is called 'clave.' It goes like this [demonstrates]. And that runs all the way through a Latin tune.

Klezmer has a similar kind of underlying rhythm. Some wag in the band who was also a salsa player for many years decided to name this rhythm the 'oy vey.' And the 'oy vey' sounds like this. [demonstrates] And, like in Latin, that rhythm runs all the way through a tune. Now it's not actually played, it's implied.

CHARLIE BERG plays the rhythm

MIMI RABSON plays the fiddle

Lower third:
Mimi Rabson

Supertitle:
A RUMANIAN DOINA

MIMI RABSON (voice over)

The '*doina*' was originally a shepherd's lament, this sort of *rubato*, out-of-time, this lilting melody.

Kapelye plays, MICHAEL ALPERT SINGS a wedding doina. Kapelye performance intercut with old photo and drawings of Jewish weddings

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

Before the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, the *badkh'n* [master of ceremonies] there was a kind of rhyming poet who would sing to the bride all kind of ironic verses, usually about the terrible mistake she was making, and the musicians would chime in with their own kinds of poignant lines. The '*doina*' gives the same sense of irony and sadness, and it's a form that really lives on.

KALPEYE plays in NYC

HENRY SAPOZNIK plays a 'doina' on the banjo

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

It's the context of being able to make your instrument capture the vocal quality of the music. When you hear a '*doina*,' it really sounds like there's a voice.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND on stage

DON BYRON plays a clarinet doina

DON BYRON

In a piece like the Musiker '*doina*', these are places kind of where whatever persona that I'm trying to present really come out. I want to really present an air of unpredictability and the best way to do that is to pick places where people in the band have to look to me for what happens next. Now in the Musiker '*doina*' there's a chord change or not really a chord change but a voicing change. And I just make them wait. I just make them wait and I put in more stuff until I feel that there's some tension there. Maybe the other people are kind of tired or, you know, the next thing – maybe I'll wait until that.

HENRY SAPOZNIK interviews DAVE TARRAS

HENRY SAPOZNIK

Why did you right a piece called "*Pastikhl's Kholem*"", a "Shepherd's Dream?" I mean, why "Shepherd's Dream?"

DAVE TARRAS

Look, I didn't have trouble writing a number. I sat down. Give me just two bars of song start and I'll write you right now a song. But I had trouble to name it. To name each number.

HENRY SAPOZNIK

In Ternovke, would these tunes that you have here, would they have had names?

DAVE TARRAS

No.

HENRY SAPOZNIK

How would musicians know what to play, if... what would you say?

DAVE TARRAS

“*Pastikhl's Kholem*” [Shepherd's Dream] is always played by one man. Because you have to give out your feelings. I have one way feeling and you have another one. But when it came to play...

Music changes from Shepherd's Dream to up-tempo freylach dance tune. DAVE TARRAS taps the rhythm on the table top

DAVE TARRAS

...two quarters, *hora* [line or circle dance] *serba*, *freylakhs* [happy dances] so well all - everybody played.

HENRY SAPOZNIK

But the idea of naming a tune is something that happened in America.

DAVE TARRAS

Yeah.

Montage: old records; old freylach continues

HENRY SAPOZNIK

(voice over)

The music was no longer the music, it was now turned into a commodity, tunes were chopped up into little segments and given these abstract names because the record companies, in order to have titles in their record catalogues suddenly forced the music to fit into these little packages that they could now put into their monthly catalogs and updates. The music was no longer a context within the society. It was now something to be sold by Columbia and Victor.

Open field outside Synagogue Beth El in Acton, Massachusetts

HANKUS NETSKY [Voice over]

The klezmer revival has really created an atmosphere where people use the music for their own celebrations once again. Many congregations use us at *Simchas Torah* [“Joy of Torah”: Jewish holiday] time and we help them out in their singing and celebrating the fact that they're completing the Torah and starting over again with the story of creation.

Klezmer band preparing backstage

HANKUS NETSKY voice over

We play seven different dances, each faster than the last one and when we start a *Simchas Torah* party, we never know when it's going to end.

SIMCHAT TORAH PARTY AT CONGREGATION BETH EL

Band plays dances at increasing tempo as people dance, celebrate, then move outside to dance with the Torah in the Sukka [ritual open air booth for the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot]

Fall foliage

Music: KCB song intercut with old recording of it

JUDY BRESSLER gathers old documents

JUDY BRESSLER (voice over)

When I told my grandfather that I was interested in pursuing a professional career, I'll never forget it, he looked at me. He gave me a long, long stare and he said, 'a life in the theater is very hard.' My grandfather lived on 2nd avenue in New York for years and years and years. He worked with many people. I know for instance that he played with Michael Michalesko. There's a picture taken of them in Lublin, Poland. My grandfather was a tiny man. He had a very very big voice. My grandmother's two sisters were Salke – she married Menasha Skulnik. One of my grandmother's other sisters was named Losha, married she Misha Gherman. They worked in the theater both in Europe and in America extensively. I think it was a theater that allowed people to really come in and forget their troubles and be very raucous and somewhat participatory. Klezmer music and Yiddish theater music particularly I think are so closely related, it's really just brother and sister.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND on stage

JUDY BRESSLER to DON BYRON

'Life is tough, Donzo.' And while you're figuring it out..."*Noch a mol*", 'oy *gevalt!*'

MIMI RABSON plays fiddle

JUDY BRESSLER sings
Rumania, Rumania, Rumania, Rumania!
[Yiddish]

DON BYRON plays clarinet

Old recording of "Rumania" plays over old still images

Subtitles:
Rumania!

It was a sweet, beautiful land.
To live there was a pleasure.
Whatever your heart desired
you could get –
A porridge, a pastrami, a sausage
And a glass of wine.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND plays "Rumania" on stage
JUDY BRESSLER sings in Yiddish

Old recording of "Rumania" plays over still images

Subtitles:
Rumanians drink wine
and eat porridge
And anyone who kisses his own wife
is crazy.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND plays "Rumania" on stage

JUDY BRESSLER sings in Yiddish and scats

Old recording of "Rumania" plays over old video of couple dancing

Subtitles:
Kiss her when she's sixteen –
When she's old she'll make a fuss.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND finishes playing "Rumania" on stage

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)
When I got to the point where I really needed to find out more about Yiddish theater, everyone
told me I had to go see –

Exterior radio station

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)
Ben Gailing because he had performed for many years in Yiddish theater in New York and
elsewhere.

BEN GALLING in radio station
Ah, the late Percy Brand, may his soul rest in peace. His violin talks even now to the hearts of
people. And of course his violin saved his life from going into the gas chambers in a
concentration camp in Germany. And when an uncle of his living in Boston brought him and his
wife, who was also in a concentration camp, to Boston – the uncle called me right away and
brought him over to me. And I had him at that time on the air. I began interviewing him. He

Jumpin' Night in the Garden of Eden 75 minute version

Script

cried and cried and I said 'well, let your fiddle talk.' And it spoke to the hearts of people then and even now after his death. Percy Brand, his name will never be forgotten as long as Ben Gailing is still alive and be on the air and play for you songs, including his. May his soul rest in peace. Now again, back to our sponsors.

BEN GAILING (sings)

If you wish to fill up your belly,
with gourmet food and the best of deli
So be wise, take my advice
And come to the
Potterham Deli!

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

In 1926, Ben played Moishe the Fiddler in a play called "Mendel Spivak" starring Maurice Schwartz and Celia Adler. For the scene where he played the fiddle, in fact, they wanted it very dramatic. And he jumped up on the table and played his tune.

NETSKY speaking with GAILING

Do you remember what you played? What tune did you play?

BEN GAILING

The melody? *SINGS melody*

HANKUS NETSKY and BEN GAILING finish melody together

Old cartoon of Jewish immigration

Old newspaper images; old recordings of Yiddish theatre music on sound track

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

The large wave of Eastern European immigration ended in the 1920s when our government established immigration quotas, but it didn't mean that the music was less popular, in fact it became popular here and created a style that many people in my parents' generation grew up with. When I go back to Philadelphia, it's a real test – the people there grew up with all the Yiddish theater tunes that we play and I always wondered if they would approve of our versions.

Tracking shots of streets in Philadelphia

HANKUS NETSKY,

speaking to an audience of senior citizens in Philadelphia

I want to mention, members of my family, some musicians who are in the audience who helped me get started in this music and I think it's really to them that I owe in fact knowing about this music at all so I'm going to embarrass them and ask them to stand up because I noticed that they're here. First of all, my uncle Sam, Dr. Samuel Katz. Fine cornet player and also a wonderful dentist. And Jerry Adler, fixture on the music scene for all these years.

HANKUS NETSKY to the drummer CHARLIE BERG

Go talk to him, come on!

HANKUS NETSKY leads CHARLIE BERG to SAMUEL KATZ

HANKUS NETSKY to SAMUEL KATZ

So you have a bone to pick?

SAMUEL KATZ

I'll tell you what it is. If you want to play drums really. There's a guy sitting near me, I said 'what's the Jewish beat?' because I've been criticizing the band on that and he said 'the Jewish drumbeat is da da da da da [demonstrates on his knee] and if you played that, it would be so much greater. And I tell you something, they may not like me for saying this, but I told them, I'm very earnest about it - that last record you made - I didn't like at all - because in the first place, it was monopolized by singing, which shouldn't be!

CHARLIE BERG

Hey, Hankus, come here! Now it's your turn! Did you hear what he said? He didn't like the last record because it's all singer!

HANKUS NETSKY

I know! He told me that. And he said the same thing!

SAM KATZ

It's like you guys are peasants!

CHARLIE BERG!

That's right! That's exactly how we're treated - like peasants!
But we are. We're sidemen. That's the way it always is with musicians.

SAM KATZ

No, you guys are great and you don't know it.

CHARLIE BERG

There's a craft in being a backup musician too.

JUDY BRESSLER sings Yiddish theater song "Papirosn" ["Cigarettes"] on stage in Philly with band

Subtitles:

I had a little sister
She tagged around with me all year.
When I looked at her
my hunger was eased.
Suddenly she got weak and very sick
She died in my arms
on a street bench.
Let death come to me as well.
Buy - buy cigarettes
Dry, not wet from rain
Buy them, they're cheap
Buy, and have pity on me

BAND plays upbeat music

AUDIENCE MEMBERS dance

CHARLIE BERG
(packing up his drums)
Klezmer Conservatory who?

SAM KATZ to HANKUS NETSKY
Even though you're playing old tunes, you're klezmer, you want to stay there – there are a couple of good Israeli – if you're going to entertain, this is a great entertainment.

HANKUS NETSKY
Well, we like these tunes. We could play '*Hava Nagila*.' ["Let Us Rejoice" –Israeli folk tune cliché.]

SAMUEL KATZ
No, but you've got something here that's international.

HANKUS NETSKY
Exactly! This is what we want to do.

CHARLIE BERG
Respect your elders!

CHARLIE BERG
This was my last concert today and it's because I just started a new day-time job. And the band is doing a lot of traveling in the spring and I can't get the time off to do the traveling. So, on the one hand, I'm very unhappy about it because I won't be able to hang out with everybody anymore, I won't see them much anymore. But on the other hand, it's kind of the start of something new for me to playing the other music.

Interior, Recording studio. New drummer playing, other musicians joining in

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)
In 1933, Sholom Secunda and Jacob Jacobs wrote "*Bei Mir Bist Du Sheyn*" ["To Me You're Beautiful"] for the Yiddish Theatre. The American songwriter Sammie Kahn remembered hearing the song a few years later up in Harlem in an all-black review. It was being sung in Yiddish and the crowd was going wild. He decided to bring the song to the Andrews Sisters who had only recently broken into show business. The record company didn't want the Andrews Sisters making what they used to call 'a race record' so they stopped right in the middle of the session.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND records in studio

JUDY BRESSLER scats

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

Finally, after much persuasion, Sammie Kahn wrote English lyrics to the song. “*Bei Mir Mist Du Sheyn*” pretty much put the Andrews Sisters on the map. In fact, in 1938, it was the biggest hit that had ever been recorded in this country. There were many other versions of the song afterwards and we do ours based on one by Ella Fitzgerald.

BAND in studio

JUDY BRESSLER (sings)

Bei Mir Mist Du Sheyn

Please let me explain

Bei Mir Mist Du Sheyn means you're grand

Bei Mir Mist Du Sheyn

And it means you're the fairest in the land

I could say “bella,” even say “wunderbar”

Each language only helps to tell me how grand you are

Don't try to explain *Bei Mir Mist Du Sheyn*

So kiss me and say you understand

Bei Mir Mist Du Sheyn

[scats]

*DAVE TARRAS plays clarinet and kisses his wife
Still photos of Jewish hotels in the Catskills*

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

When I was a kid growing up, I remember I would go to the hotels with my father who was a cantor and I would sing in the choirs and invariably we'd be there at big hotels with people like Dave Tarras and it was just like a standard thing, no one thought twice about it.

Outside in the Catskills

Supertitles:

THE YIDDISH FOLK ARTS INSTITUTE

Parkville, New York

HENRY SAPOZNIK

I decided that the first klezmer music camp had to be in the Catskills because, it's the Catskills! This is where the guys played. This is where they went in the off season when they weren't busy playing weddings in Brooklyn or in Philadelphia, they were up here playing in the Catskills, in the hotels. And it was really important to not only have the people who made up the communities but also the setting that really in some ways would enable us to like feel a continuity.

GROUP explores the Catskills in the woods

GUIDE

“Bark” is “*koreh*”. Now this is a birch tree. A white birch tree. In Yiddish, a birch tree is a *breza*. But it’s also called a *Shavuos-boym* [*Shavuos*-tree: *Shavuot* is the Jewish holiday that celebrates the first fruits and the giving of the Torah.]

Older man whispers in guide’s ear

GUIDE

Okay he says it’s a poplar!

Group laughs

GUIDE

It’s not a poplar! It’s a *ereza*.

OLDER GROUP walks away, singing in Yiddish

GROUP OF MUSICIANS sits in circle, singing, clapping

HANKUS NETSKY, instructing

What I hear sounds not really like what you’re going to need in your heads to really play this on your instrument the way that it’s been played here. There’s so many goals in this thing. And even when you get to the end, it’s like, there’s no tomorrow and you’re wondering ‘Are you going to make that downbeat - Yes! At it comes and it’s exciting and it’s even more exciting when you hit the next one. And it’s that kind of intensity. Let’s try that again. Hit those downbeats. Let’s do the first section a few times here.

CAMP GROUP sings with HANKUS NETSKY

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

The klezmer revival has spawned a new generation, musicians from all over from the U.S. and Canada and Europe are learning klezmer tunes from records just like we did. Problem is, they’re our records. We’ve become the models. It’s kind of like a game of telephone where each player is further from the original source.

CAMP MEMBER (SID BECKERMAN) plays clarinet

HENRY SAPOZNIK (voice over)

The young musicians need to meet the second-generation players, like Sid Beckerman, who learned klezmer music from his father. Pete Sokolow was Dave Tarras’ accompanist for years. These players never stopped playing klezmer dance tunes. Immigrants who grew up in the towns of Eastern Europe carry that whole world in their heads.

GROUP SESSION with panelists and audience

MIMI RABSON from audience

Jumpin' Night in the Garden of Eden 75 minute version

Script

I'm not sure how to phrase this tactfully, but my father's parents come from Vishnyeva and he was born here in Brooklyn. When I told him I was playing klezmer music, he said 'well that's interesting.' He said that he remembers klezmer musicians in Brooklyn as being one step above beggars because they could at least play for a penny.

BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, folklorist

Could be. Let me ask these guys, because they can tell us – what was the status of a klezmer? Would you want your daughter to marry a klezmer? (*Laughter*) So tell us – what was the story of the *Klezmorim* [klezmer musicians] ?

MEYER KIRSHENBLATT (Barbara's father)

Definitely, no. It was a poor, poor living.

HENRY SAPOZNIK'S MOTHER

I agree. Nobody wants their daughter to marry a klezmer. I mean my son's a musician. (*Laughs*)

HENRY SAPOZNIK (laughing)

Almost nobody!

HENRY SAPOZNIK'S MOTHER

Somebody!

MEYER KIRSHENBLATT

In our town, there was no specific klezmer band or klezmer person. He could play klezmer music and he played klezmer music, but he was not exclusively klezmer.

BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT

Listen, what was the nickname you gave to the *badkh'n* [wedding jester]?

MEYER KIRSHENBLATT speaks Yiddish

Oh, well, *deyr man, ts'vishn di khansenes, muz makhn a lebn.*

BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, translating

Between weddings...

MEYER KIRSHENBLATT

... (?) *a klapgepitzer.*

BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT

Alright. There's a guy, the *badkh'n*, he could also be part of a klezmer band.

He could be part of the band, he could be an independent. But to give you a sense of the status, my dad says that between weddings, he had to make a living, so he was a doorknob polisher. What is a doorknob polisher?

MEYER KIRSHENBLATT

A beytlakh. A beggar. He went from door-to-door opening doors, so he was polishing the doors, you see?

AIRPLANE LANDS, country song plays

Song lyrics (Garrison Keillor)
Well, look who's coming through that door
I think we've met somewhere before
Hello, love

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)
In the summer, we toured the Midwest, starting in Minnesota.
Garrison Keillor had invited us to perform on a "Prairie Home Companion," and we knew we
would be heard by a large national audience.

*KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND performs on Prairie Home Companion with Garrison
Keillor*

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)
That day was a real marathon. We rehearsed and played the radio show in the afternoon and then
two hours later, in the same theater, we did a full concert of our own.

GARRISON KEILLOR
Welcome back now to the second half of our live broadcast of a "Prairie Home Companion"
from the World Theater in downtown St. Paul. Celebrating a couple of weddings here, couple of
recent ones, the Parkers who got married in Wilmer at 11 o'clock this morning in Wilmer came
down to see our show today. You have music like that at your wedding in Wilmer? (*Laughter
from the audience*) You are shaking your heads. They did not have that out in Wilmer this
morning.

HANKUS NETSKY
Why not?

GARRISON KEILLOR
I don't believe you could play music like that in the morning. Not in Wilmer. Not in Kandiyohi
County in Minnesota. No sir. In the dark, yes, maybe in certain parts of town.

KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND performs in theater with Garrison Keillor

MIMI RABSON plays violin solo, "Pearl from Warsaw"

HANKUS NETSKY
Mimi Rabson! Music from Bukovina, music from Romania!

Montage: dusk
KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND backstag
AUDIENCE entering theatre for next concert

HANKUS NETSKY (voice over)

This is the way I hear music. It's a kind of screaming music. Music that really blears out its roots. If I hear music in my head it sounds like this, it sound... (*he hums, lai di dudai,*) but those are sounds that I was told for years that I shouldn't make. And somehow, I'm very at home with those sounds and it's really nice to be able to make them.

*KLEZMER CONSERVATORY BAND performs,
HANKUS NETSKY on sax
People dance in the aisles*

END CREDITS