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*“Metropolitan Klezmer takes a scholarly approach to the genre’s history, yet never skimps on the exuberance at its core.” – Time Out New York*

# METROPOLITAN KLEZMER

CELEBRATES THEIR 20th ANNIVERSARY

WITH NEW CD “MAZEL MEANS GOOD  
LUCK”

SPECIAL RELEASE CONCERT AT

THE MUSEUM AT ELDRIDGE  
STREET

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15 AT 7:00 PM

**METROPOLITAN KLEZMER** – hailed as “one of the finest American Klezmer Bands” by *Songlines Magazine* – will bring a musical jolt of joy to the Jewish holiday with the release of their fifth CD **MAZEL MEANS GOOD LUCK**. The digital release is **November 25**, with the physical CD online and in stores **December 9**. To celebrate their 20th Anniversary, the acclaimed octet will perform selections from the new recording with a special concert at **The Museum at Eldridge Street** on **Monday, December 15**. The new disc – available through **Rhythm Media Records** – was recorded live at **The Emelin Theatre**. It also includes live bonus tracks: a rare Yiddish ballad of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire,

performed in centenary commemoration at Cooper Union Great Hall; and an excerpt from **Eve Sicular**'s musical documentary theater piece *J. Edgar Klezmer: Songs from My Grandmother's FBI Files*.

**METROPOLITAN KLEZMER** is a collaborative adventure of exceptional New York musicians combining the best of the downtown, classical and World Music scenes to create inspired neo-traditional interpretations and compositions around a panoply of eclectic Yiddish repertoire: ethereal trance, rollicking dance, imaginatively-arranged retro swing and tango, plus genre-expanding originals such as klezmer cumbia. The group tours coast-to-coast and has appeared on broadcasts worldwide on HBO, CNN "WorldBeat" and NPR among many others. *The Jewish Week* gave the band five stars, lauding their "wildly variegated flavors" and "clever, spirited and smart musicianship." *The Village Voice* described this "outstanding group" as "delightfully rambunctious" and *Flavorpill* called them "exuberantly eclectic but also very danceable" and "modern-day purveyors of time-honored traditions."

**MAZEL MEANS GOOD LUCK** begins with an enchanting medley of "Nokh a Gleyzl Vayn (Another Glass of Wine)" segueing into the raucous "C Minor Bulgar" and "Ken O'Hara Freylekhs." The opening processional music is followed by a lively piece heard in repertoire of Klezmer icons Dave Tarras and the Epstein Brothers, which the group learned from their first reed player, Howie Leess (1920-2003). The second track blends "Bonia's Nigun" – a traditional Hasidic chant melody adapted from a classic arrangement by Bonia Shur – and "Cartagena Chosidl," an original klezmer/cumbia tune by composer Rick Faulkner. His mélange of Latin and Hasidic musical influences fuses Colombian rhythm and Eastern European scale and harmony.

The swinging title track, a pop standard by Artie Lane, Jack Beekman and Leo Fuld, was first introduced in 1947 by its co-writer Artie Lane. It was

recorded that year by Louis Prima, Benny Goodman, and even doo wop group The Ravens. It gained full Yiddish verse and chorus when sung in 1954 by multi-lingual star Fuld. In 2006, Robert Smigel of “Saturday Night Live” fame created his own wild takeoff. This Metropolitan Klezmer version features horn section shout chorus by **Debra Kreisberg** and powerful vocal performance by **Melissa Fogarty**.

The sweeping and melodic arrangement of “Yankele” here is adapted from the version by Soviet Yiddish singer and theater star Anna Guzik (who recorded it as *Kolybelnaia* during Khrushchev’s cultural thaw), based in turn on the original *Yankele* by Mordechai Gebirtig, the Polish Yiddish carpenter and master songsmith.

The lullaby, the story of a mother dreaming of her little boy growing into adulthood, has a particular poignancy given that Gebirtig was killed in his native Krakow during the Holocaust. The track is given an added resonance considering this live recording came two days after the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

“Baltic Blue” – a jazz-inflected original by the group’s reed player **Debra Kreisberg** – is accentuated by majestically-ornamented modal accordion and an arresting brass arrangement. The song was written as a musical meditation to her native borough of Brooklyn. A special highlight features “Di Fire Korbunes (The Fire’s Sacrifices),” the heart-wrenching 1911 Yiddish ballad chronicling the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. The piece, written immediately after the disaster, was nearly lost to performance history until it was brought to Metropolitan Klezmer by a researcher from Remember the Triangle Coalition who located the sheet music in the Library of Congress. This new arrangement was performed on March 24, 2011 at the centenary commemoration concert in the Great Hall at Cooper Union, NYC. This audio is now also in the permanent collection in the “Activist New York” exhibition at The Museum of the City of New York.

The lilting “Cheburashka Wistful Waltz” by film composer Mikhail Ziv is from the 1969 animated short *Krokodil Gena*, which introduced the beloved Soviet TV cartoon character Cheburashka. Ziv is perhaps most famous for his work on the epic war picture *Ballad of a Soldier (Ballada o Soldate)* a decade earlier. The playful “Guys & Dolls & Bagels” is adapted from “Adelaide’s Lament” and “Luck Be a Lady Tonight” from Frank Loesser’s iconic Broadway musical, with the happy addition of the traditional melody “Bublichki, Beygelekh.” “Mainly Rumanian Interludes” features the distinctive work of **Ismail Butera**, the virtuoso accordionist who co-founded the group with drummer and bandleader **Eve Sicular**. The album closes with the track “When Israel Met Jenny” from Sicular’s *J. Edgar Klezmer*.

The album cover’s zodiac wheel represents layers of meaning for “mazel”: Luck (in a word shared from Hebrew to Yiddish) reflects underlying definitions: planet, star, constellation. Mazel tov is a wish for both a lucky star and lucky fate. The band hopes this comes at an auspicious moment, celebrating two decades of making music together.

**MAZEL MEANS GOOD LUCK** features **Debra Kreisberg** on clarinet and alto saxophone; **Pam Fleming** on trumpet and flugelhorn; **Reut Regev** on trombone; **Karen Waltuch** on viola; **Melissa Fogarty** on vocals; **Ismail Butera** on accordion; **Dave Hofstra** on double bass and tuba; and bandleader and founder **Eve Sicular** on drums.

**METROPOLITAN KLEZMER** will debut their new CD **MAZEL MEANS GOOD LUCK** at **The Museum at Eldridge Street** (12 Eldridge Street in Manhattan) on **Monday, December 15 at 7:00 PM**. Tickets are \$20 (\$15 for students and seniors) and are available at [www.eldridgestreet.org](http://www.eldridgestreet.org).

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**METROPOLITAN KLEZMER** brings together stylistic backgrounds from Albanian to zydeco, Latin jazz to funk to reggae, and bebop to baroque, complete with panoramic instrumental array and multi-lingual vocals. Under the leadership of drummer-archivist **Eve Sicular**, the ensemble also explores such lesser-known gems as Soviet Yiddish theater melodies and drinking songs, gorgeous overlooked soundtrack tunes from vintage films set in Eastern Europe and the Lower East Side, unexpected musical angles which transform familiar favorites from the inside out, and genre-expanding original compositions.

Music from Metropolitan Klezmer's four prior CDs can be heard in documentary features such as HBO's *SCHMATTA: Rags to Riches to Rags* and *Grace Paley: Collected Shorts*, plus broadcasts worldwide: Public Radio International, CBC's *Roots & Wings*, Argentina's *Radio Jai*, Polish *Radio Lublin*, Australia's *Hot Club*, UK's *Folkswagon* and WDR's *Funkhaus Europa*. International exposure includes ARD German TV's *Rhythms of New York*, Ebru TV's *Rhythm & Roots*. Soundscapes: Covent Garden / London (Royal Ballet: *First Drafts*), The Jewish Museum (NYC), Contemporary Jewish Museum (SF), SITI Company's *Score* national tour (New York Theatre Workshop; Wexner Center). The band's recordings and special projects have received awards and support from The New York State Council on the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and Sparkplug Foundation. Their debut performance together was for John Zorn's New Jewish Music Festival in 1994. The group's sister sextet **Isle of Klezbos** recently released their second CD, *Live from Brooklyn*, to much acclaim. Media and further information at [www.MetropolitanKlezmer.com](http://www.MetropolitanKlezmer.com).

### **TRACK LISTING**

**1 Nokh a Gleyzl Vayn – C Minor Bulgar – Ken O'Hara Freylekhs**  
(traditional, arr. Metropolitan Klezmer)

2 **Bonia's Nigun – Cartagena Chosidl** (Traditional nigunim, adapted from arrangement by Bonia Shur. Klezmer cumbia by Rick Faulkner)

3 **Mazel [Means Good Luck]** (by Artie Lane, Jack Beekman & Leo Fuld)

4 **Yankele** (Adapted by Anna Guzik: Kolybelnaia (Lullaby), based on *Yankele* by Mordechai Gebirtig)

5 **Baltic Blue** (by Debra Kreisberg)

6 **Cheburashka Wistful Waltz** (by Mikhail Ziv)

7 **Guys & Dolls & Bagels** (adapted from “Adelaide’s Lament” and “Luck Be a Lady Tonight” by Frank Loesser, as well as traditional “Bublichki, Beygelekh”; arranged by Eve Sicular)

8 **Di Fire Korbunes** (Music by David Meyrowitz / Lyric by Louis Gilrod)

9 **Mainly Rumanian Interludes** (traditional)

10 **J. Edgar Klezmer: When Israel Met Jenny** (by Eve Sicular)