

## Levis JCC's concert series to feature klezmer orchestra

By Sergio Carmona  
Florida Jewish Journal

The Adolph & Rose Levis Jewish Community Center in Boca Raton welcomes accordionist and musical director Aaron Kula and his nine-member Klezmer Company Jazz Orchestra as they co-host the Kultur Festival during the 2019-2020 cultural arts season. This series is comprised of four signature concerts filled with entertaining songs, stories and jazzed-up arrangements.

The series' first concert, "American Jewish New Year in JazzTime," is scheduled for 3 p.m. on Sept. 22 at the Levis JCC's Zinman Hall, 9801 Donna Klein Blvd. in Boca Raton. For this annual concert, Kula will be joined by guest vocalists Kunya Rowley and Mya Bodnick. Also performing will be award-winning storyteller Caren Schnur Neile. The performance will include a mix of High Holiday congregational and cantorial melodies set to spirited harmonies influenced by American jazz, African-American spirituals, swing and old-world Klezmer. All arrangements are written by Kula specifically for the band and singers. Songs will include "Avinu Malkeynu," "Rosh Hashana Stomp," "Tango Kaddish," "Kol Nidrei Blues," "Oseh Shalom Salsa" and "Rebbe's Boogie Woogie" based on a *nigun* composed by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

Kula, who lives in Boca Raton, is the son of the late Cantor Morton Kula. He and his five brothers grew up hearing their father sing cantorial and congregational melodies to thousands of people in the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This upcoming concert is intended to appeal to the entire community regardless of race, religion or denomination.

"My goal is to basically connect to a universal audience," Kula said. "It's



JEFFREY THOLL/COURTESY

**Aaron Kula and his Klezmer Company Jazz Orchestra will perform in a concert series at the Levis JCC.**

very easy to narrowly define your audience, and this is a concert that's part concert, part theatrical show. It's a spiritual musical. What I'm really doing is taking common themes that connect to all human beings such as love, forgiveness, family, tradition. These are themes that are common to all cultures, and I'm using the Jewish New Year melodies as my vehicle to connect these themes, and the overarching theme is American jazz because we live in America."

Other concerts in the series include "A Very Jewish Concert on Christmas Day" scheduled for 3 p.m. on Dec. 25, "Miami Beach Rhumba" scheduled for 2 p.m. on Feb. 23 and "Jewish Chamber Music Concert" scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on March 28.

Kula said, regarding this concert series at the JCC, "It's really exciting because neither of us [Kula and the JCC] have entered into a situation like this."

"For them, it gives them a musical experience that they don't have right now in their organization. For me, it opens up a door to a whole new membership of the JCC. We worked really hard and we've talked about this for about a year."

Stephanie Owitz, director of the Levis JCC's Phyllis & Harvey Sandler Center, said, "We are so proud to welcome Aaron Kula and the Klezmer Company Jazz Orchestra as the ensemble in residence at the Levis JCC."

"We strive to continuously elevate our arts, culture and learning offerings and are excited for a robust 2019-2020 season filled with unique and relevant programming in film, theater, music, literature, art and lifelong learning."

Call the Sandler Center at 561-558-2520 or visit [levisjcc.org/boxoffice](http://levisjcc.org/boxoffice) for tickets and more information.