

## Jewish Cultural Society Hosts Reception to Observe KCO's 17th Season



By Carol Lewis

The Jewish Cultural Society at Florida Atlantic University recently entertained 80 guests during a Latin-themed reception to celebrate 17<sup>th</sup> season and to honor 23-year-old Eric Benaim, the first place winner in KCO's inaugural Composition

Competition, at FAU's Live Oak Pavilion, Boca Raton campus.

JCS President Evelyn Solomon presented Benaim, a pianist and music composition major at Florida International University, with a plaque and a \$1,000 competition prize.

Prior to the reception, KCO, conducted by Aaron Kula, presented the "iJubanoJazz!" concert to a sold-out audience of 2,200 patrons. The concert featured a fusion of Klezmer melodies and Latin Jazz. The 27-piece KCO and returning guest vocalist Graham Fandrei performed 23 Latin Klezmer arrangements by Kula, veteran trumpeter Chaim Rubinov, Benaim and Diego Medeiros, the second place winner.

"After 17 years, I am redefining the concert experience for the orchestra and our audience," said Kula, director of KCO and music performance and education at FAU Libraries.

"KCO continues to evolve by inviting voices from within the ensemble and of talented young composers. We must stretch our imagination and embrace change to inspire the next generation."

Benaim's piece, "Klezmer Carnival," featured a fusion of musical styles and influences from his native Venezuela.

"We tend to hear our own compositions by playing them on our instruments, imagining the sounds in our heads or playing them back from our computers," said Benaim, whose composition includes jazz, Latin and classical characteristics mixed with Jewish folk tunes. "It is a different sensation when great performers include their years of experience and energy as part of the performance."

"iJubanoJazz!" was the main event for Kultur Festival 2014, FAU Libraries' sixth annual celebration of Jewish music and arts. JCS was also the lead sponsor for the festival as well, since Kula's efforts to preserve and perform music from FAU Libraries' Print Music Collection fit into the JCS' mission to advance Jewish cultural traditions and education.

In addition to Solomon and Benaim, Kula and KCO members were joined at the reception by William Miller, Ph.D., dean of Libraries at FAU; JCS board members Stanley and Dottie Pierce, Bea Samit, Barbara Mandel and Nora Siegel; JCS former board members Howard and Roz Hoffer; Dr. Edgardo Santos and Maria Santos; Dr. Howard Weiner, and Mike Brewer and Alene Brewer, University Club president.