

BAND PUTS TRADITION THROUGH TIME WARP

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Jack Kessler has seen the future of music and it is klezmer.

Nevermind that klezmer is a musical tradition, dating back 500 years to Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and often associated with celebrations like weddings and bar mitzvahs. Instead, try and wrap your head around the nature of time and how we move through it and the fact that Kessler's band really is called Klingon Klez.

"One way that we conceive of our music is that this is music that is pulling us into the future," said Kessler, the group's vocalist. "The human race is going to go to space; we want the music to be there waiting to greet everybody."

This is not a joke delivered by men dressed as the aggressive warriors of Star Trek lore, from which they take their name. (They talked about wearing costumes, but decided they would get too hot and sweaty.)

This is about taking old, celebratory music and putting a modern stamp on it. It's about musicians who love jazz and science fiction and upbeat music, all of which they promise to bring tomorrow night when Klingon Klez performs at Owens Community College.

"This band is a whole bunch of free-wheeling, creative, gifted guys who play a lot of jazz and who are interested in taking the traditional material that came down to us and hearing it through our contemporary ears," said Kessler, who lives in Philadelphia and also is a Jewish cantor.

This traditional music, often characterized by the sound of a violin and clarinet (though there will not be one at the Toledo-area performance), shows evidence of all kinds of influences: Middle Eastern, Greek, Balkan, and others.

Klingon Klez adds some jazz, funk, and rock to the mix. Oh, and some Klingon, too.

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"Klingons have a way of kind of stomping around," said Kessler. "Truth be told, at the same time that we do some really beautiful, emotional, heart-rending music, we also like to stomp around a while and we hope the audience will stomp around with us."

Those who show up for tomorrow's performance - featuring an instrumental line-up that includes an electric violin, trumpet, flute, keyboard, bass, and drums - may get to stomp around to tunes like "When the Fat Klingon Sings" or "A Hot Date in Zero Gravity."

Sometimes the group plays its own original compositions and at others it takes traditional klezmer songs and then plays with the melodies. In either case, Kessler promises that it will be fun, energizing, and probably something you haven't heard before.

"The idea of taking an ancient Eastern European celebration tradition zooming off at warp speed, zooming into the future, it does take your breath away," he said.

Klingon Klez performs at 8 p.m. tomorrow in the Center for Fine and Performing Arts' Mainstage Theatre at Owens



Klingon Klez

Community College. Tickets are \$20, \$18 for seniors, and \$16 for Owens students and employees. Information: 567-661-2787.

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