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The Mishebeyrakh Mode In Klezmer Music Article 4

April 2010 3 Comments



by Cookie Segelstein

In our last article we spoke about the one of the most recognizably Jewish modes, *Freygish*. Now I would like to talk about the mode *Mishebeyrakh*, which (like Ahava Rabbah, the alternate name for *Freygish*) is named after a prayer with the musical elements of the mode in the Jewish synagogue liturgy.

Before we start with some musical examples, here is the mishebeyrakh mode. In this example we are using D as the tonic. The motives listed underneath the mode are typical examples of when a note's position (in this case the C) determines if it is a flat or natural.

MI SHEBEYRAKH

Scale

Changing Four

Motives using changing tones

Typical Cadence

A Des

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The first staff is labeled 'MI SHEBEYRAKH Scale' and 'Changing Four'. The second staff is labeled 'Motives using changing tones'. The third staff is labeled 'Typical Cadence' and includes a section marked 'A' and 'Des'.

Mishebeyrakh is often used in *doinas*, one of the rare types of klezmer music that does not have a dance associated with it. The *doina* is an improvisatory free rhythmic form that is used to show off the solo musician's chops, as well as historically to entertain the bride and her family at the wedding. (It's important to remember that *klezmer* music is primarily dance music, and most of the forms have specific dance steps that accompany them.) We will go into more about the *doina* in our next article.

Here is a great example of a "bulgar", a dance tune with a 6 step figure over a 4 beat feel. This is in D mishebeyrakh and in the first sound bite, played by the Harry Kandel Orchestra. The second one is yours truly with my pals Hank Sapoznik on banjo, and Mark Rubin on bass, otherwise known as The Youngers of Zion from our CD, "The Protocols".

Sha! Der Rebe Tantz

Harry Kandel's Orchestra

The image shows six staves of musical notation for the piece 'Sha! Der Rebe Tantz'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Above the staves, there are chord markings: Dm, Gm, Dm, A, Dm, A, Dm, and Dm. There are also some 'V' markings above the notes. The piece is in D minor and 2/4 time.

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I would also like to mention another role for fiddle in klezmer music, the (in Yiddish) *sekund* part. *Sekund* plays a seconding part that consists of rhythmic double stops. In absence of a

bass, the *sekund* player often throws in a bit of a walking line to follow the harmonic changes (measures 9 and 15). It is not unusual for a *sekund* fiddle player to provide all the rhythm for an ensemble. Here is a typical *sekund* for the first section of Sha! Der Rebe Tantz (Quiet! The Rabbi is Dancing) [*Why a dancing Rabbi needs quiet is not explained - The Editor*]

As I said in a previous article, like in most oral (aural) traditions, reading the music off the page only gives a hint of what it sounds like when played in native klezmer style. The ornaments, the timing, the fills, and all the things between the staff lines determine the character of the music.

[*Here are two recordings of Sha! Der Rebe Tantz. The first is the original by the Harry Kandel Orchestra (at one time available on Harry Kandel: Master of Klezmer Music Volume 2 on Global Village. Here is the sound of old time Mishebeyrakh in all its glory - The Editor*]

[*The second features Ms. Segelstein her very self with Youngers of Zion in the album "The Protocols", available at <http://www.livingtraditions.org/docs/store.htm>. It begins with some rocking sekund rhythm. -The Editor*]

[KANDEL Sha! Der Rebe Tantz \(Sh! The Rabbi Is Dancing\).mp3](#) | [YOZ Sha! Der Rebe Tantz \(from Doina Medley\).mp3](#) | [PDF](#)

About the Author

Cookie Segelstein, acknowledged as one of the very top tier of klezmer violinists, received her Masters degree in viola from The Yale School of Music. She has taught klezmer fiddling at KlezKamp and The Festival of American Fiddle Tunes. Her band, Veretski Pass, has two CD's on Golden Horn, the newest titled *Trafik* (www.goldenhorn.com)

For more information visit www.veretskipass.com

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