

Klezmer 101

by Seth Austen

For this issue of Mandolin Sessions Klezmer 101, I'll show you one of my original klezmer tunes. I composed this melody while attempting to learn yet another instrument, the tsimbl. The Tsimbl is an Eastern European hammered dulcimer used in klezmer music, and was an integral part of klezmer ensembles in the late 19th century along with the violin. Listening to the tsimbl has been inspirational in helping me to figure out ways to approach using mandolin family instruments in klezmer, so a few years ago I started learning to play tsimbl to gain some hands on experience. One day while playing the tsimbl, I started composing this tune. I then tried it on mandola, and it fit perfectly. I most often use mandola for playing this tune.

The Tsimbl Khusidl uses the D freygish scale; **D Eb F# G A Bb C D**. For more in depth discussion of this mode, check out the April 2005 Klezmer 101 article. Try playing this scale starting on the open D string, once you've tried it you're ready to play the tune. Make sure to notice that there are both two flats and one sharp in the key signature. While this might appear to be an unusual key signature, it best represents the scale that we're using.

The image shows a musical score for a mandolin. It consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats and one sharp (D Eb F# G A Bb C D). The melody is written in a 4/4 time signature. Below the staff, there are four measures of fret numbers corresponding to the notes in the melody. The fret numbers are: 0 1 4 5 | 0 1 3 5 | 3 1 0 5 | 4 1 0.

A Khusidl is a type of dance tune, played at a moderate tempo. This tune can be played entirely using just D and A strings so it will fit nicely on mandola or mandocello as well as mandolin. You can add tremolo on held notes, and experiment with adding it other places as well. I never play a tune exactly the same way twice. Once you've learned the melody, for variation it can also be played transposed an octave higher on mandolin or an octave lower if you're playing mandola or mandocello. You'll have to leave out the low B natural in the B part on the lower octave of those, just hold the C for a quarter note and it'll work fine. Enjoy!

Tsimbl Khusidl

Seth Austen

The musical score for "Tsimbl Khusidl" is written for guitar in the key of B-flat major (one flat) and 6/8 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The tablature uses numbers 0-5 to indicate fret positions and includes chord diagrams for D, Cmin, and D. The piece begins with a D chord and a melodic line of eighth notes. The second system introduces a Cmin chord and a D chord, with a repeat sign and a second ending. The third system continues the D chord and melodic line. The fourth system features a Cmin chord and a D chord, ending with a repeat sign and a final chord.

System 1: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, 6/8 time. Chord: D. Melody: quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, quarter notes D5, C5, Bb4, A4, quarter notes G4, F4, E4, D4. Tablature: 0 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 | 0 4 4 4 4 4 1 1 0 | 0 5 0 1 0 5 4 5 | 0 5

System 2: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, 6/8 time. Chords: Cmin, D. Melody: quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, quarter notes D5, C5, Bb4, A4, quarter notes G4, F4, E4, D4. Tablature: 0 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 | 0 4 4 4 4 4 1 1 0 | 0 1 0 5 4 5 1 4 | 0 2 0 2

System 3: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, 6/8 time. Chord: D. Melody: quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, quarter notes D5, C5, Bb4, A4, quarter notes G4, F4, E4, D4. Tablature: 0 1 1 0 0 5 5 4 | 4 5 5 4 4 4 1 1 0 | 0 1 1 0 3 1 0 5 | 0 5

System 4: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, 6/8 time. Chords: Cmin, D. Melody: quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, quarter notes D5, C5, Bb4, A4, quarter notes G4, F4, E4, D4. Tablature: 3 6 6 0 0 3 3 4 | 4 0 0 1 1 4 4 0 | 5 4 5 0 1 5 4 1 | 0