



**Michael Winograd and the Honorable Mentshn and Leah Koenig**  
**Artist Information Sheet**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Grades**

**Artist Biography:**

**Michael Winograd and the Honorable Mentshn and Leah Koenig**

Brooklyn clarinet player **Michael Winograd** is a master of Klezmer music, a style of music created by Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. Michael grew up in a religious Jewish household in Long Island, New York and began to study the clarinet at an early age. When he was 14, he was invited by a friend to attend a summer camp where Klezmer musicians of different ages came together. He was immediately hooked! He found old recordings and sought out older living Klezmer musicians who brought this music from Europe to the United States. These musicians helped him find his sound. Quickly, he was tapped as a leader of the new generation of this style. He now lives in Brooklyn, NY where he leads the Honorable Mentshn, a group of the strongest Klezmer musicians in the New York region.

Michael regularly sits in with the band Vulfpeck, adding his klezmer sound to their funky energy, including guest spots at Madison Square Garden and the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, where he and Vulfpeck created a Klezmer wedding band on stage in front of tens of thousands of amazed (and confused) audience members.

**Leah Koenig** is one of the brightest young voices in Jewish cooking. She explores the food and connected cultural traditions (sometimes called foodways) from around the world. She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband and children and has authored-based author of seven cookbooks. Leah is self-taught, which means she didn't go to school to learn how to cook. But she has learned from family and friends and through trial and error.

**Tradition:**

**Klezmer Music + Ashkenazi Food**

Klezmer is the traditional celebration music of the Eastern European Jewish people. Klezmer incorporates religious melodies and folk songs, poetry, and Greek, Romani and Ottoman influences. Klezmer is a secular (non-religious) music. A wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe in the early to mid 1900s' brought this music to the U.S.

Ashkenazi Food is the cuisine of the Jewish people who came to the U.S. from Eastern Europe and utilizes ingredients influenced by the food traditionally grown there, as well as Jewish dietary rules which forbid the eating of pork or shellfish or mixing of dairy (milk and cheese) with meat.



The music and food of Eastern European Jews here in the U.S. is influenced by both America and other places; it is rooted in Eastern European Jewish life, but it changed significantly after their arrival to America. Just as the Jewish instruments fused with different styles of music, Jewish food went through similar changes: the classic Jewish home-cooked dishes of today is likely different from the food made three or four generations ago—just like the Klezmer music of today is very different than what might have been heard at a village wedding in 1860s Ukraine.

**Place:**

**Eastern European Jewish Diaspora**

What is a diaspora? A diaspora is the spread of a people from their original homeland.

There are Jewish communities all over the world, each with their own traditions and customs. In the United States, you can find Jews whose roots go back to communities from around the Globe. Much of the Jewish community in the United States has its roots in Eastern Europe. Jews from Central and Eastern Europe are called Ashkenazi Jews. Ashkenazi cuisine uses many ingredients that were affordable to the historically poor Jewish communities of Europe and thus found a place at their tables. Some ingredients they used were considered less desirable to their non-Jewish neighbors in Europe, such as a tough cut of beef called the brisket, chicken liver, and artichokes. Due to anti-Jewish laws, many Jewish communities were forbidden from owning land in which crops were grown, so their cuisine includes fewer fresh vegetable dishes.

Anti-Jewish riots at the turn of the 20th century across Europe led many Jews to immigrate to the United States and other places. The Holocaust, where over 6 million Jews were killed, decimated the remaining communities. Eastern Europe was once home to flourishing Jewish communities of over 9 million people. Today, there are just 1.4 million Jewish people scattered throughout Europe with most Jews with roots in Eastern Europe living in the United States and Israel.