Private cantorial collection donated to FAU library

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Florida Atlantic University's Wimberly Library has received a private collection of cantorial music that dates back over 100 years.

The collection is housed in over 50 boxes and contains original musical anthologies, sheet music, print music and numerous one-of-a-kind manuscripts.

Aaron Kula, director of music performance and education at Florida Atlantic University Libraries, along with his family, has donated his father Cantor Morton Kula's entire cantorial collection amassed over his career to the FAU library located on the Boca Raton campus. One of the manuscripts is an original from the 19th century that was written on onion skin titled "Eli, Eli" or "My God, My God."

"A little more than a year ago my father [Morton Kula] passed away. My father spoke with myself and my four brothers, and we decided that the best thing for the world to be able to access this incredibly rich collection is to donate it to the FAU libraries' cantorial collection. His collection is incredibly valuable — it dates back a couple hundred years. A lot of it was manuscripts that are hand written and it was what my father used for his entire 50 year career."

The Morton Kula Collection is currently available to be viewed by appointment only in the archives of the FAU library.

"Aaron will go through every piece hand by hand to break down the series and sub-series and make it available," Victoria Thur, special collections librarian and university archivist, said.

"We discussed what to do with his collection to make sure that it survives him. Our decision was based on how his music could continue to live on and enrich other peoples' lives," Aaron Kula said. "This library is very much devoted and dedicated to the preservation of Jewish and cantorial music, including organizing the collection based on traditional library standards and entering it into a database which can be accessed on the Internet by the general public."

In addition to his duties as director of music performance and education, Kula is also the "Maestro" of the Klezmer Company Orchestra, which is the professional ensemble residence at the FAU libraries. The orchestra will be performing "The 2nd Avenue Jazz 'N Jive" as part of the 2012 Kultur Festival at FAU in the Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium on Sunday March 3 at 3 p.m.

"Our job is strictly to perform music from the print music collection and to showcase the diversity of music. We play Klezmer music; we play all sorts of Jewish music as well as American music and Jazz."

Mark Kula, cantor of Bet Shira in Miami and son of Morton Kula, commented on the donation of his father's cantorial collection to the FAU library.

"I am honored and proud that all my father accomplished is being shared with the greater Jewish family and the general population. Anyone who wishes to can access the wisdom of my father — the collection of his entire life's work."