AARON KULA
FAU DIRECTOR OF MUSIC COLLECTIONS AND PERFORMANCE

 Were you always musically inclined? Was it emphasized in your youth?
Yes, music was part of my family’s culture and played a significant role in my everyday life. I began piano lessons in second grade and continued to study guitar, recorder and accordion in New York City. My parents took my older brother and me to the opera and Broadway, and each week I would listen to my father sing with his choir in the synagogue. I think my inclination towards music was a combination of nurture and nature.

Can you speak a bit about your experiences in Boston?
Boston really set the tone and standard for my professional career. The performance and educational level was incredibly high, and as graduate students we worked with the best musicians in the world attending world-class master classes. I was fortunate to work with artists such as Yo-Yo Ma and Richard Stoltzman, conduct orchestras for New England Conservatory and Boston Ballet, and take master classes with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

How long have you been at FAU?
I began in 1997 conducting the FAU Symphony and teaching music theory and Klezmer music. Then in 2003, the dean of the FAU Library asked if I would join the library as director of music collections and performance and begin processing music in the archives. The library had been collecting music for over 15 years and had hundreds of boxes filled with precious music that needed to be reviewed and processed.

How did you come to found the Klezmer Orchestra?
KCO was my brainchild and grew out of my desire to revitalize archived music with performance. I proposed that my work include both preservation and performance since music is a creative art that needs to be heard. And the library should take advantage of having a professional ensemble in residence. We use the phrase “from shelf to stage” to explain our activities.

You have received several awards and recognition. Do any stand out as being particularly special?
The most recent award we received was on Aug. 29 in Nashville, Tenn., for our latest CD called “Beyond the Tribes.” The competition was amazing with 42,000 albums and 560,000 songs. We won 2009 Best Klezmer Album and 2009 Best Klezmer Song for Second Avenue Hoedown. The awards show was held by Just Plain Folks Music organization, the largest grassroots international music organization in the world.

Visit www.fau.edu/library.