

Yiddish Fest Draws Klezmer Stars

By [Emily Ferris](#)

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Yiddish Fest started in 2005 and will play for thousands at Arena Moscow.

A few years ago, a festival of Jewish music in Moscow was a niche event, but this Thursday thousands are expected at Arena Moscow for Yiddish Fest, with some of the world's best klezmer musicians coming to town.

If you go to the festival's website, you can listen to Frank London's song "In the Marketplace All Is Subterfuge" and get a feel for the energy of traditional Jewish music. London is a veteran of previous Yiddish Fests in Moscow and said "[it is] less about a specific style or genre, but more about one's approach to it" in a telephone interview from Illinois. He called it a "learning symposium" that teaches the "joy of our world's particular traditions."

The festival was started by Anatoly Pinsky in 2005 and after his death continued by his two daughters, Anna and Zoya.

"When we first started out, we had only two or three bands and the audience was mainly older people," said Anna Pinskaya, who said that since the festival's popularity has boomed. "Now,

we have more than 40 artists booked to play at one of Moscow's biggest venues."

This year, the festival date coincides with the Jewish festival of Purim, which celebrates the strength of the Jewish people and the conquering of good over evil. Purim is traditionally celebrated in a raucous, rambunctious manner, and this is the aim of the Yiddish Fest.

The all-star lineup features celebrated bands such as The Kletzmatics, a New York-based group famed for neo-klezmer music, where they blend traditional Yiddish folk tunes with contemporary sounds.

The concert itself will feature a wide range of styles, from Balkan gypsy to ska to ethno-punk and folksy balalaika tunes. Canadian musician Josh Dolgin sings, plays the piano, makes puppets and throws as many styles as you can think of into his act, including disco.

Others playing include David Krakauer, an American clarinetist whose style mixes klezmer, jazz, funk and hip-hop. The New York Times described him as a master of "soulfulness and electrifying showiness."

Violinist Mark Kohnatsky, one of the festival's organizers and founder of the Hamburg Klezmer Festival, is another guest and the winner of the Klezmer Star, a competition held before the festival to find new musical talent.

Local artist and musician Psoi Korolenko will compete at the festival.

The festival's website calls the festival "the main cultural event of the year 5772," a reference to the date according to the Hebrew calendar. Ten percent of ticket sales will go to children's charity Pomogi.org.

Yiddish Fest is on Thursday at Arena Moscow, 31/4 Leningradsky Prospekt. Metro Dinamo. Tel. 970-3197. Ticket prices start at 740 rubles (\$25). www.yiddish-fest.ru

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