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Courtesy photo

Oomph!, a band that features "Jewish party music gone haywire," will add its touch to the folk festival.

Folk festival has added Oomph!

Need a little Oomph! added to your daily routine? This year's Willamette Valley Folk Festival will be offering just that in its annual program returning to campus May 21, 22 and 23.

Oomph! has delighted and enticed audiences in Oregon and around the world since its founding in 1988. With its unique mix of traditional Jewish wedding music, lusty renditions of Yiddish theater tunes, improvisational jazz, Chicago blues, Caribbean and Balkan rhythms, this band keeps audiences listening, laughing and dancing for hours on end.

The band describes itself as, "Jewish party music gone haywire," its intercontinental klezmer takes the traditional Yiddish jazz genre as a jumping-off point for excursions to Chicago, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Lower Manhattan.

Klezmer music, sometimes called "Yiddish jazz," is the traditional music of European Jewish people. The style was derived at

least 400 years back and is the root of the Yiddish-American theater, which at one point shaped the glory days of Broadway and Tin Pan Alley.

The five members include Jack "Yankl" Falk, who has enticed audiences with his effervescent interpretations of traditional Yiddish melodies, Chicago blues and everything in between; Mike Curtis on the reeds, who is equally at home within the classical, ethnic and jazz traditions; Dave Leslie, the talented keyboard man who has performed and recorded in an extraordinarily broad range of musical settings; Dave Storrs on percussion, who is widely known throughout the Northwest as a highly inventive jazz composer and drummer; and Leroy Critcher, who frequently plays the guitar in versatile styles with Oomph!

"Nobody knows how this music sounded 200 years ago," Falk said. "I'd always thought, what if we take this music out a little bit — stretch the definition of Jewish

music far enough to experiment with it?"

And voila! For three years he has had the band Oomph! Falk wants people to dance to the music of Oomph! at the festival. All kinds of dancing is necessary and appropriate when joining this band in the festivities next week-end.

In June 1992, Oomph! was featured at the 1992 Festiwal Kultury Zydowskiej (Jewish Culture Festival) in Krakow, Poland. The band's summer tour also included stops in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In October 1991, Oomph! visited the Soviet Far East cities of Khabarovsk and Birobidjan, including a three-night engagement at the International Festival of Jewish Music, and was featured on Moscow television.

And students at the University will be lucky enough to listen to and view this worldly band in person at the EMU Friday, May 21.

— Calley Anderson

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