



BY [TARANEH](#) OCTOBER 19, 2018 IN [INTERVIEWS](#), [MUSIC](#)

## 5 Fun Facts with Eve Sicular of Isle of Klezbos



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Eve Sicular is the drummer/leader of a swinging all-women's klezmer sextet called Isle of Klezbos. This rollicking ensemble is celebrating their 20th anniversary with a [show at Joe's Pub](#). So, Eve was able to give us a few fun tidbits about herself and the band. Check it out:

#### **1. The band's first show was at the folk gallery of CBGB's.**

Isle of Klezbos debuted in Summer 1998, playing CB's 313 Gallery, the mellower East Village venue next door to legendary punk club CBGB's. Both stages were run by owner Hilly [Hillel] Kristal. We were thrilled that he was a fan of our band, but I had no idea until years later that he had grown up with Yiddish music—his uncle Sidor Belarsky is heard on the soundtrack of the Coen Brothers' *A Serious Man*. Our Klezbos premiere was on a Monday night in early August, and we packed the house for a double bill with our friend folk/blues icon Nedra Johnson (her father Howard had played tuba & low brass in the original SNL band). We flew out later that week to play our first festival, and then became regulars at CB's Gallery, where we also presented our first KlezBiGay Pride show the following June. That space on the Bowery is where Patagonia has now opened their surf shop, with some of the old floors and stairs preserved. When I go in I can picture us set up for the band's first photo shoot.

## **2. Eve has been playing drums since age 8.**

I grew up around a lot of classical music and Broadway cast albums. My father was a terrific pianist and baritone singer, I'd lie under the Steinway with our dog to hear him rhapsodize on Bach, Chopin and Brahms, but my piano chops are just rudimentary. I found my destined instrument the summer before fourth grade. My parents sent me to day camp where Mrs. Sieh the music instructor offered beginner instruction on either ukulele (little kids' guitar starter) or drumsticks, so for me the choice was clear. During elementary school, I had one great year of weekly lessons with a percussion teacher at Mannes School of Music when it was still on East 74<sup>th</sup> St—my favorite assignment was 'the Motown Beat'—but then my family moved to the suburbs. Mostly I'm self-taught. Early on I played rock, marching band, school band, blues, cabaret, cocktail jazz, whatever gigs and groups I could find, along with lots of musical theater shows, all before I ever heard klezmer music my last year in college.

## **3. Isle of Klezbos has played studio sessions for Scissor Sisters.**

My bandmates and I have been brought on for a huge range of projects as backing band, often doing our own arrangements for the artists who invite us onto their recordings. We've also had our own recordings discovered by film and TV producers, so the band's music has been re-purposed for many soundtracks. The commissioned work for Scissor Sisters came about after I handed a copy of our first album, "Greetings to the Isle of Klezbos," to Jason ['Jake Shears'] who at the time lived on my block in the East Village. A couple of years later, his management got in touch with a demo for a new song he was writing, to see what we could come up with in backing his vocal. My bandmates brainstormed together, eventually our reedplayer Debra came up with a great hook and bassist Saskia tweaked the rhythm for a catchier final chorus. They liked our scratch arrangement and brought us in with the engineers the afternoon before Thanksgiving. We finished a little early, and took a stroll around freezing cold Battery Park as the sun set. In the last few years we've also collaborated with Jill Sobule for her *Music from Yentl* project at Lincoln Center etc, and with Natalia Zukerman for a really moving song on her upcoming new album, she'll also perform this with us as our special guest at Joe's Pub for our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary show this month.

## **4. *The L Word* featured Isle of Klezbos.**

For *The L Word*, the music producers from the band BETTY knew us from years of playing the same festival stages. They were looking for dozens of variations on the show's theme song, and we were their chosen gals for the Yiddish take. The timeline was tight to submit our arrangement, so Klezbos trumpeter Pam & I wrote a sketch which she then played into my cellphone from the basement of the Puck Building on a gig break. They scheduled our session particularly so the show's producer Eileen Chaiken, who was in NYC from the West Coast, could come hear us put it together in the studio. They wouldn't disclose what was happening in the Season 2 scenes where our cues would be heard, but she loved it all and we were glad to meet her.

## **5. Eve's college major was Russian History & Literature at Harvard.**

I started studying Russian at Mamaroneck High School, and in college I wrote my thesis "*Ideology & Montage*" on Soviet documentary film pioneer Esther Shub for my honors degree in the History & Literature of Russia. While I was always playing in bands and shows while at Harvard-Radcliffe (as they called the degree for women in my graduating class), my only formal connection to the Music Department was for one course taught by the delightful iconoclast Professor Luise Vosgerchian on the art of listening to string quartets, for which she brought in live musicians as often as possible. I also studied film animation, and my musical cartoon short *Vegetable Rags* screened at festivals and aired on a very early version of HBO.