

# **Jewish Music**

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## **A Concise Study**

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June 2, 2009



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## Abstract

The very wide subject of Jewish music will be examined in this study from the point of view of the contemporary composer.

I will try here to spotlight some key musical elements like modes, rhythms, *maqams*, timbre etc., show their usage in actual compositions by Jewish and non-Jewish composers like in Prokofieff's *Overture sur des Thèmes Juifs*<sup>1</sup> or in the 13th. Symphony by Dmitri Shostakovich "Babi Yar".

Musical form, prosody, timbre and other aspects of the traditional Jewish religious music types *Piyyut*, *Zemirot*, *Nigun*, *Pizmonim*, *Baqashot* will be shortly examined from a composer's point of view because the author believes they possess a high "inspirational potential".

This essay will first briefly present known archaeological information about the Jewish music in pre-Biblical and Biblical times. It will attempt to collect the most reliable information on the music as it was performed in the Temple of Solomon.

Medieval Judaic musical practices will be searched in the *Mishna* and the *Talmud*, those together with the musical score data collected by various researchers like Idelsohn<sup>2</sup>[4] or the *Russian Society for Jewish Music*<sup>3</sup> and presently available in ethno-musicological archives in Israel<sup>4</sup> and elsewhere will be used in an attempt to describe a "generic Jewish music vocabulary" with its most characteristic rhythms, modes and musical timbres.

Some contemporary Jewish composers and their music, musical language and backgrounds will be presented.

It is hoped that this material can be of interest to composers, presenting them with resources crystallized from joy, sorrow, despair, horror, dream and faith.

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<sup>1</sup>Overture on Hebrew Themes, for Clarinet, Piano and String Quartet, Op 34. Composed in 1919

<sup>2</sup>Abraham Zevi Idelsohn, "Jewish Music: Its Historical Development"

<sup>3</sup>see Appendix:, page:64

<sup>4</sup>The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, see Appendix:, page:66

# Introduction: What Is Jewish Music?

There is two kind of general approaches to the subject. One is a very precise and sharp definition of the Jewish music as:

“Music composed by Jews for the Jews as Jews”<sup>1</sup>

and the other is a composer’s point of view:

It is not my purpose, nor my desire, to attempt a *reconstitution* of Jewish music, or to base my work on melodies more or less authentic. I am not an archaeologist. . .

It is the Jewish soul that interests me...the freshness and naiveté of the Patriarchs; the violence of the Prophetic books; the Jewish savage love of justice. . .<sup>2</sup>

The first definition, though somewhat limiting, can be sharply defining the frighteningly vast subject matter of this research.

But, as a composer, I will bend here towards the composer Ernest Bloch’s approach.

Jewish music can and is studied from the points of view of historical, liturgical and non-liturgical music of the Hebrews dating from the pre-Biblical times (Pharaonic Egypt); religious music at the first and second Solomon’s Temples; musical activities immediately following the *Exodus*<sup>3</sup>; the (seemingly?) impoverished religious musical activities during the early middle ages; the emergence of the concept of *Jewish Music* in the mid-19th century; in its nation-oriented sense as coined by the landmark book *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (1929) by A. Z. Idelsohn (1882-1938)[?] and finally as the art and popular music of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup>Curt Sachs in his address to the First World Congress of Jewish Music in Paris, 1957[1]

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Bloch (1880-1959). Quoted in Mary Tibaldi Chiesa, “Ernest Bloch - The Jewish Composer” in *Musica Hebraica*, Volume 1-2 (Jerusalem, 1938)

<sup>3</sup>Following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE



More specific focusing areas can be spotted as the influences of the Hebraic liturgical music at the Talmudic times to the Gregorian chants, the usage and their differentiation of a common *maqam* melodic vocabulary shared by people inhabiting the Israel-Palestine region.

Early emergences of Jewish musical themes and of what may be called “the idea of being Jew” in European music can be examined in the works of Salamone Rossi (1570-1630), in the works of the famous Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn’s (1729-1786) grandson: Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). Fromental Halévy’s (1799-1862) opera *La Juive* and its occasional use of some Jewish themes can be an auxiliary research subject as compared to the lack of “anything Jew” in his almost contemporary fellow composer Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) who was actually Jew and grew up in straight Jewish tradition.

The seemingly endless subject can include the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Music led by the composer-critic Joel Engel (1868-1927) on how they discovered their Jewish roots, inspired by the Nationalistic movement in the Russian music as exemplified by Rimsky-Korsakov, César Cui and others, and how set out to the *Shtetls*<sup>1</sup> and meticulously recorded and transcribed thousands of Yiddish folksongs.

Ernst Bloch’s (1880-1959) *Schelomo* for cello and orchestra and specially *Sacred Service* for orchestra, choir and soloists seems to be an attempt to create a “Jewish Requiem”.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968)’s Sephardic<sup>2</sup> upbringings and their influences on his music as they appear in his *Second Violin Concerto* and in many of his songs and choral works; cantatas *Naomi and Ruth*, *Queen of Shiba* and in the oratorio *The Book of Jonah* among others are worth noting as well.

Many scholars did not missed the borrowed Synagogue motives in George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*. Gershwin biographer Edward Jablonski has claimed that the melody to “It Ain’t Necessarily So” was taken from the *Haftarah* blessing<sup>3</sup> and others have attributed it to the *Torah* blessing<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The Jewish villages of Russia

<sup>2</sup>One of the main Jewish ethnic groups (such as the Ashkenazi, the Oriental and the Ethiopian) based on geographical and cultural identity, Sephardics are originally from the Iberian peninsula and settled from 1492 in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa and western Europe

<sup>3</sup>Jablonski, Edward. Gershwin. New York: Doubleday, (1987). Cited in Benaroya, Adam (May 2000). “The Jewish Roots in George Gershwin’s Music”. I.L. Peretz Community Jewish School.

<sup>4</sup>Pareles, Jon (January 29, 1997). “History of a Nation in Its Song to Itself” . New York Times.

In Gershwin's some 800 songs allusions to Jewish music have been detected by other observers as well. One musicologist detected "an uncanny resemblance" between the folk tune "Havenu Shalom Aleichem" and the spiritual "It Take a Long Pull to Get There"<sup>1</sup>.

One can also dig into the works of contemporary Israeli composers such as Chaya Czernowin, Betty Olivera, Tsippi Fleisher, Mark Kopytman, Yitzhak Yedid.

There are also very important non-Jew contributors to the Jewish music, Maurice Ravel with his *Kaddish* for violin and piano based on a traditional liturgical melody; Max Bruch's famous arrangement of the *Yom Kippur* prayer *Kol Nidrei* for cello and orchestra<sup>2</sup>.

Sergei Prokofieff's *Overture sur des Thèmes Juives* for string quartet, piano and clarinet clearly display its inspirational sources in non-religious Jewish music. The melodic, modal, rhythmical materials and the use of the clarinet as a leading melodic instrument is a very typical sound in folk and non-religious Jewish music.

Dmitri Shostakovich was deeply influenced by Jewish music as well. This can be seen in many of his compositions, most notably in the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, and in the *Second Piano Trio*. However his most outstanding contribution to the Jewish culture is without doubt the 13th. Symphony *Babi Yar*.

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<sup>1</sup>Whitfield, Stephen J. (September 1999).

<sup>2</sup>Many versions of that piece exists. It is often performed with viola and piano as well as with clarinet and piano

# How Many Jewish Musics?

To grasp the variety of Jewish music one must first look at the world-wide dispersion of the Jews following the *Exodus* and the three main communities who formed. Those branches in their geographical dispersion covering all continents and with their unique relations with local communities have given birth to various kinds of music as well as languages and customs.

## The Three Main Streams

Following the exile, according to geographical settlements, Jews formed three main branches: Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi.

Roughly they are located as follows: Ashkenazi in Eastern and Western Europe, the Balkans, (to a lesser extend) in Turkey and Greece; Sephardi in Spain, Maroc, North Africa and later in the Ottoman Empire (Turkey); Mizrahi in Lebanon, Syria, East Asia, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt.

The music of those communities naturally entered into contact with local ones and evolved accordingly.

## Ashkenazi and the Klezmer

“Ashkenazi” refers to Jews who in the 9.th century started to settle on the banks of the Rhine.

Today the term “Ashkenazi” designate most of the European and Western Jews.

Besides the Hebrew, Yiddish<sup>1</sup> is commonly used in speech and songs.

The traditional Ashkenazi music originated in Eastern Europe and moved to all directions from there and also to North America. It includes the famous *Klezmer* music. *Klezmer* means “instruments of song”, from the Hebrew word

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<sup>1</sup>Derived from Medieval German in the 10th. century, Yiddish evolved as a unique hybrid of German, Hebrew and other dialects which were in use in that time by those Jews.

*klei zemer*<sup>1</sup>. The word come to designate the musician himself and it is not unlike the European *troubadour*.

Klezmer is a very popular genre which can be seen in Hasidic<sup>2</sup> and Ashkenazi Judaism it is however deeply connected with the Ashkenazi tradition.

Around the 15th century, a tradition of secular Jewish music was developed by musicians called *kleyzmerim* or *kleyzmerim*. They draw on devotional traditions extending back into Biblical times, and their musical legacy of klezmer continues to evolve today. The repertoire is largely dance songs for weddings and other celebrations. Due to the Ashkenazi lineage of this music, the lyrics, terminology and song titles are typically in Yiddish.

Originally naming the musicians themselves in mid-20th Century the word started to identify a musical genre, it is also sometimes referred to as “Yiddish” music.

## Sephardi

“Sephardi” literally means Spanish, and designate Jews from mainly Spain but also North Africa, Greece and Egypt.

Following the expulsion of all non-Christians, forced to convert to Christianity or to the exile in 1492, the very rich, cultivated and fruitful Jewish culture existing in Spain has migrated massively into the Ottoman Empire and thus constitute the main brach of Jews living currently in Turkey.

Their language besides the Hebrew is called *Ladino*. *Ladino* is a 15th. century of Spanish. Much of their musical repertoire is in that language. The Sephardi music mixes many elements from traditional Arab, North African, Turkish idioms.

In medieval Spain, “canciones” being performed at the royal courts constituted the basis of the Sephardic music.

Spiritual, ceremonial and entertainment songs all coexists in Sephardic music. Lyrics are generally Hebrew for religious songs and Ladino for othersf Sephardic songs – topical and

The genre in its spread to North Africa, Turkey, Greece, the Balkans and Egypt assimilated many musical elements. Including the North African high-

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<sup>1</sup>Jewish Virtual Library: <http://jewishvirtuallibrary.com>

<sup>2</sup>Hasidism is a religious movement which arose among the Polish Jews in the eighteenth century, and which won over nearly half of the Jewish masses. In its literal meaning the word “asidism” is identical with *pietism*. The asidic teachings assign the first place in religion not to religious dogma and ritual, but to the sentiment and the emotion of faith. Presenting in its inner motives one of the most peculiar phenomena of religious psychology in general, asidism should in Jewish history be classed among the most momentous spiritual revolutions that have influenced the social life of the Jews, particularly those of eastern Europe. Source: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

pitched, extended ululations; Balkan rhythms, for instance in 9/8 time; and the Turkish maqam modes.

Woman voice is often preferred while the instruments included the “oud” and “qanun” which are not traditionally Jewish instruments.

Some popular Sephardic music has been released as commercial recordings in the early 20th Century. Among the first popular singers of the genre were men and included the Turks Jack Mayesh, Haim Efendi and Yitzhak Algazi. Later, a new generation of singers arose, many of whom were not themselves Sephardic. Gloria Levy, Pasharos Sefardíes and Flory Jagoda.

## **Mizrahi**

“Mizrahi” means Eastern and refers to Jews of Eastern Mediterranean and further to the East.

The music also mixes local traditions. Actually a very “eastern flavored” musical tradition which encompasses Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and as east as India.

Middle Eastern percussion instruments share an important part with the violin in typical Mizrahi songs. The music is usually high pitched in general.

In Israel today Mizrahi music is very popular.

A “Muzika Mizrahit” movement emerged in the 1950s. Mostly with with performers from the ethnic neighborhoods of Israel: the Yemenite “Kerem HaTemanim” neighborhood of Tel Aviv, Moroccan, Iranian and Iraqi immigrants - who played at weddings and other events.

Songs were performed in Hebrew but with a clear Arabic style on traditional Arabic instruments: the “Oud”, the “Kanun”, and the “darbuka”.

Classic Hebrew literature, including liturgical texts and poems by medieval Hebrew poets constituted the main source of lyrics.

## **Sephardi or Mizrahi?**

For many the division is simply East and West. West being known as “Ashkenazi”, the Eastern Sephardi and Mizrahi get often mixed in current parlance.

Adding to this, today in Israel there are two major religious delineations each with their own Rabbinat and Liturgy: Ashkenazi and Sephardi. It is true that over the centuries the Sephardi and Mizrahi Rabbinates were much more closely connected than each other with the Ashkenazi one.

While studying Jewish music, distinction must be made between those two Eastern branches since their music shows important differences. The

Mizrahi music is much more close to Eastern musical traditions while the Sephardi music is something like a bridge between East and West.

# Genres of Liturgical Music

## Music in Jewish Liturgy

There are a wide collection of, sometimes conflicting, writings on all aspects of using music in the Judaic liturgy. The most agreed-upon facts are that the women voice should be excluded from religious ceremony<sup>1</sup> and the usage of musical instruments should be banned in Synagogue service<sup>2</sup>.

However some other Rav's dictums soften those positions but not regarding the female voice. In weddings, for instance, the Talmudic statement "to gladden the groom and bride with music" can be seen as a way to allow making instrumental and non-religious music at the weddings but this was probably to be done outside the Synagogue.

The very influential writings of the Spanish Rabbi, also a physician and philosopher, Maimonides (1135-1204) on one hand opposed harshly against all form of music not totally at the service of religious worship and on the other hand recommended instrumental music for its healing powers[1].

Healing powers and mysterious formulæ hidden inside musical scores was commonly sought after in music scores during middle-ages, renaissance and pre-Baroque epochs. Interestingly, in a recently published fiction novel *Imprimatur*<sup>3</sup> by the musicologist Rita Monaldi and co-author Francesco Solti the whole plot is built-up around a composition of Salamone Rossi (1570-1630), an important Jewish composer.

Jewish mystical treatises, like the Kabbala, particularly since the 13th.

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<sup>1</sup>Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 24a[1]

<sup>2</sup>Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 48a[1]

<sup>3</sup>The novel, an historical thriller set in Rome in the XVII century, translated in 20 languages and 45 countries, is the most successful Italian historical novel after *The name of the Rose* and one of the most extraordinary literary cases of the last years. It is the September 11th 1683. The Muslims are mustering on Western borders and Vienna is withstanding the siege. The alliance which joins or divides the Pope and the kings or several European countries and the terror by which every citizen of Christianity is gripped are the important factors which trigger the plot of the novel. Source: <http://www.attomelani.net/index.php/english/imprimatur-synopsis/>

century often deal with ethical, magical and therapeutic powers of music. The enhancement of the religious experience with music, particularly with singing is expressed in many places.

Even though there is no unified positions concerning music in the Jewish thought two main ideas seem to emerge. First is that the music is the authentic expression of human feelings in religious life.

In this idea of “feelings” in the religious experience the Hassidic tradition of *Nigunim* singing should have a very special place. In this form of musical expression there is no words, not even religious words. A *Nigun* (plural: *nigunim*) is a homophonic choral music sung on “vocalises” like “plum, plum. . .” or “ai ,ai. . .”. There is a controversy on the matter of: are *nigunim* improvised or composed. Even though some authors claim that *nigunim* are improvised the information I got from observant Jews who have actually sung the *nigunim* is that they are actually composed and learned. Even as they are not polyphonic but homophonic, it would have been still very difficult for gifted but not professionally trained singers to improvise a three or fourth part choral without learning the harmonies, So at least a raw harmonic frame and melodic structure must have been preset and practiced before thus it can not be said to be a real improvisation.

This particular form of musical expression can be seen as a way of communion with God through only feelings. Not “learned” nor practiced phrases and words. In this sense it is the actual opposite of Torah cantillations who are codified, studied and practiced.

The other main idea of music in Judaic observance is that the human voice overrules that of instrumental music[1].

## Genres, Instruments and Performers

### Generalities

Traditionally twelve male singers, representing the twelve tribes of Israel alongside with a dominant male (solo) singer which will be referred to later on as *cantor* constitute the most non-equivocal constituents of the traditional Jewish liturgical music.

### Bible Cantillation

Synagogue chanting, more precisely Torah cantillation is the oldest surviving Jewish religious music genre It have been always present throughout



the history and the importance of the *cantor* in Synagogue service dates back to the First Temple Period.

This is a highly specialized task. Some sort of “notation” was supposed to be set probably during the middle-ages.

Cantillation is rendered according to special sign which can be seen as a pre-musical-notation form. A special scripting of the Tanakh<sup>1</sup> with accents and signs to complement the letters and vowel points is used. These marks are known in English as accents and in Hebrew as “ta‘amei ha-mikra” or just “te‘amim”. This notation is of Medieval origins. For more details on the cantillations signs see section:, page: 20 and <http://www.musicofthebible.com/>



**Figure 1:** “te‘amim” Passage of the *Tanach* with accentuation and markings for the cantillation.

Some medieval manuscripts of the Mishnah also wear similar signs. This example demonstrate the “codified” and specialized nature of the cantillation. Even though this was set probably in the European communities during the middle-ages it can be safely supposed that cantillation has been codified very early in synagogue service.

Three functions are commonly attributed to the cantillation signs:

**Syntax** The Torah is written without punctuation marks nor chapter, verses divisions. This function is a convenient syntactic subdivision marker.

**Phonetics** The pronunciation is clearly indicated by marking the syllable where the accent falls

**Music** Those marks also indicate, to some extent comparable to the earliest plain-chant notation, high-low pitch settings.

It must be kept in mind however that this tradition of cantillation, just like the Muslim Qur’an reading is not considered as “music” but as a form of religious service.

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<sup>1</sup>The Tanakh (also Tanach, Tenakh or Tenak) is the Hebrew name of the Bible used in Judaism. It is an acronym formed from the initial Hebrew letters of the Tanakh’s three traditional subdivisions: Torah, Nevi’im and Ketuvim - hence TaNaKh. It is incorporated in the Christian Bibles, where, with some variations, it is called the Old Testament.

Not unlike Gregorian neumes, Masorite editions of the Hebrew text have different symbols attached to the Hebrew letters. One of them is the vowel pointings, as the Hebrew originally does not contain vowels, and the second is the cantillation marks.

Here is a comparative example of the markings:

<b>Psalm 136:2</b>	
<p>Hebrew texts read right-to-left WITHOUT the <i>vowel pointings</i> and <i>cantillation marks</i></p> <p>כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ</p>	<p>הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים</p>
<p>WITH the <i>vowel pointings</i></p> <p>כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ</p>	<p>הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים</p>
<p>WITH the <i>vowel pointings</i> AND <i>cantillation marks</i></p> <p>כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ׃</p>	<p>הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים׃</p>
<p>WITH only the <i>cantillation marks</i> and basic Hebrew letters</p> <p>כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ׃</p>	<p>הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים׃</p>
<p><b>English Transliteration</b> - read left-to-right <i>ho-du' la-lo-ha' hä-ë-lo-hem'</i></p>	<p><i>ke la-o-läm' chäs-do'</i></p>
<p><b>English Translation</b> Give thanks to God [of] the gods:</p>	<p>For His loving kindness is everlasting</p>

**Figure 2:** Comparative markings for vowels and cantillations

Vowel pointings are a great help in the correct pronunciation and understanding of the original Hebrew. The meaning of the words can drastically change with the pronunciation.

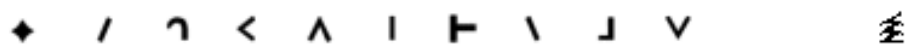
plain Hebrew script	Psalm 119:161	Psalm 68:25 (68:26 JPS)
שָׂרִים	שָׂרִים׃	שָׂרִים׃
	<i>sā-rem'</i>	<i>shā-rem'</i>
	princes	singers

**Figure 3:** Pronunciation changes according to the vowels pointings

*Te'amim*, the cantillation marks have two purposes. One is the correct accentuation of the syllables and the second is to provide a ground for proper cantillation.

Usually the vowel pointings and the cantillation marks go together but for the purposes of this short study the examples are given with te'amim only.

There are ten symbols used in the book of Psalms and one sign for the vocal “shake” shown far right in the example below:



**Figure 4:** All ten te'amim and the vocal shake symbol (far right)

## The Cantor

The *cantor*, hazzan, chazzan or khazn, is a central figure in all traditional religious Jewish Music. He's a jewish musician-synagogue official, trained in vocal arts and his duty includes but sometimes extends beyond leading the community in songful prayer.

This male singer is supposed to lead the congregation in its psalmody of the *Torah*, he was probably “giving the tone” by singing first the verse and his voice ought to be impressive in its beauty and eloquence.

However it is interesting to note that this tradition of a *cantor* has gone underground during several centuries following the *diaspora*. It only re-emerged in the late 19th. century in Germany and organized (or re-organized) in music schools and formal training.

I believe this is a (the?) reason for Dmitri Shostakovich choosing for his 13th. Symphony *Babi Yar* bass vocal solo and male choir.

Only Jewish males can have the role in Traditional Jewish law, other non-orthodox movements do allow women, over the age of 12 to be a “hazzan”.Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and Reconstructionist Judaism invest both men and women cantors as full clergy.

In the present day, a “hazzan”s are more likely to have musical degrees, formal training in both music and religious matters. Yet in the more orthodox synagogues the prominent position of the “hazzan” seems to have gradually diminished.

## Prayer-Chant

Many prayers from the usual prayer books the *Amidah* and the *Psalms* are usually sung rather than read. Modes, scales (Ashkenazi) and *maqams*(Sephardi

and Mizrahi) are used. Often, scales and *maqams* are fixed for given prayers at given times and Holidays. Some melodies are also set while other prayers are more often improvised.

## ***Piyyutim***

A *Piyyut* (plural: *piyyutim*) is a Jewish liturgical poem to be chanted or recited during religious services. They date back to the Temple times and are mostly in Hebrew or Aramaic. *Piyyutim* often has traditional melodies but they vary greatly among different communities. Often there are several melodies for one well-known *piyyut*.

## ***Zemirot***

With lyrics taken from rabbis and sages of the middle ages, *zemirot* (singular: *zemer*) are Jewish hymns most often sung around the table on *Shabbat* and Holidays. Mostly in Hebrew or Aramaic they may be occasionally in Ladino or Yiddish as well.

## ***Nigunim***

*Nigun* “humming tune” in Hebrew. They are sung in groups, mostly as *homophonic* chorals. Songs are without any lyrics or words, syllables like “bim-bim-bam” or “Ai-ai-ai!” are often used. Rarely some biblical verses or quotes from other classical Jewish texts are sung in the form of a *nigun* as well.

*Hasidism* seemed to re-launch an interest in Jewish music. This (rather conservative) Jewish movement is emphasizing “emotional devotion” more than the common “erudical” devotion. Hasidic groups often have their own *nigunim*, composed by their *Rebbe* or leader. It is customary to gather around in holidays to sing in groups. There are also *nigunim* for individual meditation, called *devekus* or *devekut* (connecting with God) *nigunim*. These are usually much slower than around-the-table *nigunim*, and are almost always sung without lyrics.

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism, spoke of *devekus* *nigunim* as “songs that transcend syllables and sound.” Several tunes attributed to him are still used today.

*Iyyun*, an Jewish spiritual center located in New York who presents its mission as:

Iyyun: (ee-YUN) (hebrew) mindful examination; deep exploration; introspection



**Figure 5:** Nigun by Walter Spitzer

IYYUN, an organization dedicated to the study and experience of Jewish spirituality, explores the three dimensions of human reality: The Mind, The Heart and The Body.

IYYUN creates opportunities for people of all backgrounds to deeply examine and understand the intellectual, emotional and physical within themselves in the light of Jewish spiritual teachings and the wisdom of the Torah.

IYYUN seeks to unify the disparate intellectual, emotional and physical dimensions of the human experience into a complete whole, empowering men and women to realize their full potential and together, build a global spiritual community.

nicely comments in its web-site on this “emotional” prayer-form:

Wherein Nietzsche suggested that the “fire magic of music” is to be found in its anti-rationality, and what he sought in music was its “ecstatic irrationality,” the Jewish mystic looks to unveil within music its transcendence. Perhaps not the transcendence within the music itself, as some would argue that music is nothing more than “sonorous air” or, as Leibniz had it, “unconscious arithmetic”; rather the reaction to the music, the transcendence reached as one reacts to the music.

A wordless tune-as is much of Jewish mystical song, particularly Chassidic<sup>1</sup>-is the way two individuals can communicate on a soul-ular[sic] transcendent level. Any breakdown in the verbal communicated mode can be repaired by creating a conduit that transcends words. When a person feels alienated from his Source, or for that manner, from his fellow man, a wordless tune which exists on a realm that defies distinctions, separations, and disharmony, is the most fitting remedy, causing a unity of souls.

## Biblical Instrumentarium

Biblical data abounds in the way of how music was performed at those times, however this seems to conflict with the more than meagre archaeological findings[6]. However some instruments are known to be used in the Temple of Salomon.



**Figure 6:** Coins from the *Bar-Kochba* revolt period.

**Shofar** The Biblical “horn”. It is played in a very specific and religiously meaningful way. It may be considered the instrument who was always present in the Jewish liturgy. Its role was symbolical more than “musical” in the sense that the patterns performed by the *shofar* have very precise meanings and they are always to be played as such, this is no “musical performance” but a religious act. Music as it is commonly understood is made actually by vocals.

**Other instruments** There are conflicting reports on the use of instruments in the traditional Synagogue services. Some reliable sources ...cite... indicate that some “orchestra” was in use in the Temple of Salomon and the usage of instruments has been banned only later, around middle-ages. Some instruments, specially percussion, worth mentioning[6]<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>1</sup>Chassidic another spelling for “Hassidic”

<sup>2</sup>all images in this section are from: <http://www.musicofthebible.com/harp.htm>

- *Ási beroshim*: Wood clappers. Modern studies interpret it as a cypress-wood clapper. Evidence exists for the use of bone clappers in the shape of the head of the goddess Hathor in Canaan in the late Bronze Age, and it is probable that clappers made of the widespread local cypress were used for ritual and paraitual mass events during the period of the Kings (10th-8th centuries bce).
- *Halil*: It is commonly translated as “flute” but it may also be a double or single-reed instrument. This view is closer to the talmudic literature (Mishnah, Arakhin ii.3), and to the modern musicology (Sachs, 1940; Bayer, 1968; Marcuse, 1975). However some scholars, following the Jerusalem Talmud (Sukkah 55b), use it as a collective term for wind instruments (Gerson-Kiwi, 1957; Sendrey, 1969).

The instrument is mentioned to be used for rejoicings as well as lamentations. Talmudic texts indicate that the *halil* was made of reed (Mishnah, Arakhin ii.3) or bone (Mishnah, Kelim iii.6). Some archaeological findings show that it may be sometimes plated with copper or bronze.

- *Hassrah*: A kind of trumpet. Unlike the shofar the *hassrah* had an everyday use as attested by the post-biblical literature (Mishnah, Rosh ha-shanah iii.3) and the apocalyptic Qumran scroll “The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness” (1QM ii.15iii.11 and vii.lix.9), it had also a war-like function. (Seidel, 1956/7). For those occasions the player was depicted as “long, drawn-out tone”, a “sharp, blaring tone”, and a “great warlike noise”. The *shofar* and *hassrah* should not be confused in the interpretation of their significance and symbolism. While the *hassrah* was primarily both a ritual instrument and a symbol of sanctioned and institutionalized secular autocratic power, the *shofar*, have always been considered, from ancient times, an instrument with magic and mystical theophanic connotations.
- *Kinnor*: A lyre as confirmed by archaeological evidence. There are numerous descriptions of lyres dating from the biblical epochs in ancient Israel/Palestine. The lyres of ancient Israel/Palestine constitute a distinct group within southern Levantine musical culture (Dever, 1997) with regard to both social context and performing practice. This instrument was used in both secular and liturgical functions.
- *Menánem*: A pottery rattle. Archaeological finds have provided over 70 intact specimens of such percussion instruments of Is-



**Figure 7:** Lyres on coins from the *bar Kochba* revolt.

raelite/Palestinian origin. Most have been found in tombs and can be regarded as ritual instruments.

- Meslayim and sylim: Cymbals and related instruments. The *sylim* (plural), is possibly a metal rattling instrument, appearing in the Old Testament long before *meslayim* in a scene imbued with pagan frenzy and describing the carrying of the Ark in procession (2 Samuel vi.5); it is then replaced by the *meslayim* in the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles xiii.8. The instruments are also called *sleyi-shama* (sounding *sylim*) and *sleyi teruah* (clashing *sylim*) (Psalm cl.5).

Various cymbals constitute a large set of archaeological findings: at least 28 finds, with diameters of 712 and 36 cm, have been discovered in 14 cities of ancient Israel/Palestine. They are slightly vaulted discs with a small metal loop at the centre and give a loud and resonant sound.



**Figure 8:** “Praise Him with melodic cymbals, praise Him with clanging cymbals” - Psalm 150:5

- Nebel: Similar to the *kinnor* As the *nebel* seems to have had 12 strings and was played with the fingers (Josephus, vii.12.3) rather than a plectrum, one may suppose it has more bass. Interestingly the Mishnah limits the numbers of nebel instruments used in divine worship (two to six) by comparison with the numbers of kinnor instruments (no less than nine, and with no upward



limit; Mishnah, Arakhin ii.5). The strings of the nebel were made of thick gut and those of the kinnor of thin gut (Mishnah, Qinnim iii.6); the sound of the nebel could be loud and noisy (Isaiah xiv.11). This supports my assumption that the *nebel* could be a bass, plucked string instrument.



**Figure 9:** Biblical Harp: *Nebel* reproduced on coins from the *bar Kochba* revolt period

- Paámon: Jingles and bells which are mentioned in connection with the high priest's purple robe. This sound "shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord, and when he comes out, lest he die" (Exodus xxviii.35). It is confirmed by archeological findings that bells were attached to cloth (see Braun, MGG2, Biblische Musikinstrumente, Abb.8b), and recently a depiction of bells on the robe of Aaron was discovered in a mosaic from the Sepphoris synagogue (5th century ce; Weiss and Netzer, 1996, p.20).
- Qeren ha-yovel: The Hebrew term qeren ( ) occurs only once in the sense of a musical instrument: In the mythical tale of the destruction of the Wall of Jericho at the blowing of the qeren ha-yovel (ram's horn) the term "animal's horn" appears only once as a musical instrument. Can be considered as a synonym for *shofar ha-yovel* its sense is amplified by the term yovel: "jubilee", "leader".
- Tof : Turkish: *tef* or *def*; tambourine. Often played by women this is non-liturgical instrument sometimes found in orgiastic depictions
- Uǵav: Its origins come from a term denoting a musical instrument like a pipe, bagpipe, lute or harp... However there is no archeological evidence to better describe it. The only plausible interpretation seems to be the onomatopoeic effect of the word (u-u), typical of flutes and pipes. The connotations of love attached to the instrument suggest that it was a long end-blown flute of the kind found in neighbouring cultures. The *ney* can be a close approximation of it.

**The instruments of “Daniel”** Written around 167164 BCE, The Book of Daniel cites in several places a group of musical instruments, sometimes called the *Nebuchadnezzar Orchestra*, names of the musical instruments are given in a mixture of Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. The instruments cited are among the ones above.

The phrase “ve-khol zenei zemara”, can be strictly translated as “the whole ensemble, and other kinds of singing-songs of praise with instrumental music”.

## Usage of Musical Terms in Hebrew

An attempt to correctly decipher the music of the Psalm manuscripts must first deal with the Hebrew texts handling of dome musical terms.

There are subtle differentiations in Hebrew, when describing things related to the vocal and instrumental aspects of the music.

**Vocal Aspects** : The Hebrew word *sher* (basically: song) is the root for words relating to the vocal aspects of music.

English	Reference	Transliteration	Hebrew
SONG - <i>n., sing., m</i>	Psalm 96:1	<i>sher</i>	שִׁיר
SING - <i>v., imperative</i>	Psalm 96:1	<i>she'-ru</i>	שִׁירוּ
SINGERS - <i>n., pl., m.</i>	Psalm 68:25	<i>shā-rem'</i>	שָׂרִים
Example prefixed with the particle preposition <i>min</i>			
One of the SONGS	Psalm 137:3	<i>me-she'r'</i>	מִשִּׁיר

**Figure 10:** Words related to the root “song”. For more information see: <http://www.musicofthebible.com/ssmm.htm>

**Instrumental Aspects** : Words relating to the instrumental aspects of music like “melody”, “playing” etc. are derived from the Hebrew roots *zmr*, basically meaning melody and the root *ngn* meaning string player, to play specifically a string instrument.

This terminology may explain various translations regarding the music making activities cited in the Bible.

English	Reference	Transliteration	Hebrew
MELODY - <i>n., sing., f.</i>	Psalm 98:5	<i>zem-rä'</i>	זְמִרָה
MELODY - <i>v., imperative</i>	Psalm 98:5	<i>zä-ma-ru'</i>	זְמְרוּ
MELODYISTS	Ezra 7:24	<i>zä-mä-rä-yä'</i>	זְמָרִיאַ
Example prefixed with the particle preposition <i>min</i>			
One of the MELODIES	Psalm 4:1	<i>mez-mor'</i>	מְזִמֹּר

**Figure 11:** Words derived from the root “zmr”. For more information see: <http://www.musicofthebible.com/zmr.htm>

## The Biblical *soggetto cavato*

The technique of transcribing letters into musical notes, whose most famous example is B.A.C.H., used by Johann Sebastian Bach, in the Art of Fugue BWV1042 but also by Ferenc Liszt up to A. Schoenberg, has been widely used by such different composers like Robert Schumann (*Carnival* op.9 ca. 1834) or Alban Berg (*Lyric Suite* and other works).

It has its roots in the book of Psalms: Psalm 66:4 “all the earth will worship you and they will play-to You, they will *play your Name* (ya-zä-ma-ru’ shem-hä’).”

Psalm 9:2 (9:3 JPS) - of David “I will be glad and rejoice in you: I will *play your Name* (ä-zä-ma-rä’ shem-hä’) Most High.”

Psalm 61:8 (61:9 JPS) - of David “so I will *play your Name* (ä-zä-ma-rä’ shem-hä’) forever, that I may fulfill my vows day-after-day.”

Psalm 7:17 (7:18 JPS) - of David “I will thank Yahveh according to His righteousness and I will *play the Name of Yahveh* (vä-ä-zä-ma-rä’ shēm Yäh-vah’) Most High”

Psalm 68:4 (68:5 JPS) - of David “Sing to God, *3play His Name* (zä-ma-ru’ shē-mo’), raise Him up who rides upon the desert plains by Yah, His Name, and be joyful before Him.”

The Hebrew texts attribute to David the usage of this technique. This long lost secret provided to be the basis upon which Synagogue singers were able to “sing the Name of God” or “to play the Name of God”

The seemingly “unrelated” aspects of a name and its musical notes is actually in accordance with the Semitic believing that the *name* of a thing is actually *the* thing itself. This believing is still perpetuated today in many occasions. Among traditional and Orthodox Jews, it is considered sacrilege to throw away a piece of paper (or a book) containing the Name of God.

Similarly it is believed that naming a child will somehow act on his destiny.

The mapping of the letters to the musical scale must be undertaken with care and some special considerations. The Hebrew *alphabet* contains 22 letters. Our musical scale has 12 notes. . . The point here is that the Hebrew system of music, like all other Eastern traditional musics, is using quarter tones and do not fit with the recent (invented ca. 1640) Western well-tempered scale.

It is most likely that the octave interval is divided into 22 more or less equal intervals which were forming the basis of the mapping of letters into musical notes.

## Summary of the Archaeological Aspects of Jewish Music

Summarizing the known fact on the music of Bible the most salient points, to be of interest to present day composers can be itemized as follow:

- Vocal is the most predominant element in Jewish music
- Man voice *the Cantor* and male chorus have been used since the Early Temple of Solomon times
- There is a vast instrumentarium cited in many places in the Bible. Pipes, percussion (metals and skins), lyres and “harps” were in use. The *shofar* more than an “instrument of music” has and still have a highly symbolic role and is considered more a “religious instrument” rather than a “musical instrument”
- During the Medieval period, instruments were banned from Synagogue service but there is strong evidence that they were used before that.
- A “notational” system exists in the Book of Psalms. This system is highly codified and structured. It served as the basis of the education of cantors for the religious services.

# Some Jewish Composers

Jewish music, unlike most Eastern musical cultures, is not a tightly codified system.

Many Eastern musical cultures like Indian, Japanese or Turkish display a “stiff” set of musical rules. Not only the modes *maqams* are set but also the couplings of rhythm “modes” and pitch modes are definitely set. A given *maqam* “can only go with” that rhythm mode and so on. . . This “over-structuring” is perhaps mostly evident in Indian music.

In Jewish music, except may be for the cantillation marks and the traditional cantor singing, we witness a sort of “open-system”. This musical tradition has been permeable to surrounding cultures for thousands of years and was influenced and has influenced them.

As the result of the planet-wide dispersion of the Jews, their music is best seen as a “global” cultural music. This makes particularly difficult, if not impossible and futile, to isolate the “Jewish” in the “Jewish music”.

For this matter it seemed to me that focusing on specific composers and works will be more revealing than trying to extract generalities on such a wide and varied domain.

## Salomone Rossi (1570-1630)

Rossi who was a Rabbi as well, worked as a talented violinist in the court of Mantua by request of the duchess Isabella d’Este Gonzaga, from 1587 to 1628 where he entertained the royal family and their highly esteemed guests

A collection of 19 “canzonettes” (released in 1589) was his first published work. Rossi also flourished in his composition of more serious madrigals, combining the poetry of the greatest poets of the day (e.g. Guarini, Marino, Rinaldi, and Celiano) with his melodies.

As a very innovative musician he was one of the first composers to apply to instrumental music the principles of monodic song. His trio sonatas, among the first in the literature, provided for the development of an idiomatic

and virtuoso violin technique. They are mid-way between the homogeneous textures of the instrumental *canzona* of the late Renaissance and the trio sonata of the mature Baroque periods.

Rossi also published a collection of Jewish liturgical music, *Ha-shirim asher l'Shlomo*, (The Songs of Solomon) in 1623.

Even though this was written in the early Baroque tradition and is almost entirely unconnected to traditional Jewish cantorial music, it was still an unprecedented development in synagogal music.

A reproduction of the title page of the alto part-book is given below. In accordance with the practice of Hebrew printing, each part-book opens from right to left. The entire prefatory text is in Hebrew, with the exception of the name of the publisher which appears in Italian. The translation of the title page is as follows<sup>1</sup>:

*Alto*  
*The Songs*  
*of Solomon*  
*Psalms, songs and hymns of praise*  
*which have been composed according to the science of music*  
*for three, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 voices*  
*by the honored master Salamone Rossi, may his Rock*  
*keep him and save him,*  
*a resident of the holy congregation of Mantua,*  
*to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing His most*  
*exalted name on all*  
*sacred occasions. A new thing*  
*in the land.*  
*Here in Venice, 1622*  
*at the command of their Lordships*  
*Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadini*  
*in the house of Giovanni Calleoni.*  
*By the distinguished Lords*  
*Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadini*

Rossi used many standardized devices of text expression, to elucidate the meaning of some words. For example, a startling chromatic progression depicts the word “wept”, a flowing melisma suggests the word “river”, and an abrupt change to lively rhythms is used for the word “rejoice”.

Rossi found that his musical innovation caused a great deal of controversy. From the correspondence of Rabbi Leone of Modena, we gather the following

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.zamir.org/composers/rossi/rossi-mon.html>

incident which took place in a synagogue in Ferrara in the first decade of the seventeenth century.

Musically elaborate singing, following a “score” was actually quite an innovation.

Music in the Synagogue was a very controversial subject. The composing of a book of motets for the use in a Synagogue was such a audacious thing that Rossi’s friend, the liberal Rabbi Leone, himself an amateur musician, supplied as a preface to the collection a lengthy and learned responsum on the subject of music in the synagogue.

I do not see how anyone with a brain in his skull could cast any doubt on the propriety of praising God in song in the synagogue on special Sabbaths and on festivals. . . No intelligent person, no scholar ever thought of forbidding the use of the greatest possible beauty of voice in praising the Lord, blessed be He, nor the use of musical art which awakens the soul to His glory.

Also interesting is that this preface to Rossi’s collection concludes with a copyright notice that is the first of its kind in protecting the rights of a composer. Its warning was couched in no uncertain terms:

We have agreed to the reasonable and proper request of the worthy and honored Master Salamone Rossi of Mantua. . . who has become by his painstaking labors the first man to print Hebrew music. He has laid out a large disbursement which has not been provided for, and it is not proper that anyone should harm him by reprinting similar copies or purchasing them from a source other than himself. Therefore. . . we the undersigned decree by the authority of the angels and the word of the holy ones, invoking the curse of the serpent’s bite, that no Israelite, wherever he may be, may print the music contained in this work in any manner, in whole or in part, without the permission of the abovementioned author. . . Let every Israelite hearken and stand in fear of being entrapped by this ban and curse. And those who hearken will dwell in confidence and ease, abiding in blessing under the shelter of the Almighty.

Salamone Rossi probably died either in the invasion of Austrian troops, who destroyed the Jewish ghettos in Mantua, or in the subsequent plague which ravaged the area.

## Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, born and generally known as Felix Mendelssohn is a German composer, pianist and conductor of the early Romantic period.



**Figure 12:** Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

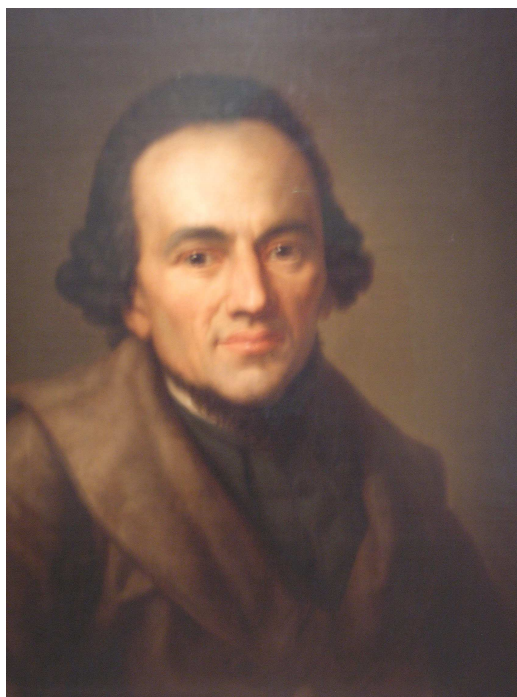
He was born to a notable Jewish family, the grandson of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn.

Moses Mendelssohn, for some the “third” Moses (the first being the Biblical lawgiver and the second Moses Maimonides), was the key figure behind the *Haskalah*, enlightenment.

The Jewish Enlightenment, was a movement among European Jews in the late 18th century that advocated adopting enlightenment values. Among them pressing for better integration into European society, and increasing education in secular studies as well as Hebrew, and Jewish history.

*Haskalah* in this sense marked the beginning of the wider engagement of European Jews with the secular world, ultimately resulting in the first Jewish political movements and the struggle for Jewish emancipation.





**Figure 13:** Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786)

In a more restricted sense, *haskalah* can also denote the study of Biblical Hebrew and of the poetical, scientific, and critical parts of Hebrew literature. The term is sometimes used to describe modern critical study of Jewish religious books, such as the Mishnah and Talmud, when used to differentiate these modern modes of study from the methods used by Orthodox Jews.

Felix Mendelssohn's work includes symphonies, concerti, oratorios, piano and chamber music. After a long period of relative denigration due to changing musical tastes and antisemitism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, his creative originality is now being recognized and re-evaluated. He is now among the more popular composers of the Romantic era.

He grew up in an environment of intense intellectual ferment. The greatest minds of Germany were frequent visitors to his family's home in Berlin, including Wilhelm von Humboldt and Alexander von Humboldt. His sister Rebecka married the great German mathematician Lejeune Dirichlet.

His father, Abraham, sought to renounce the Jewish religion; his children were first brought up without religious education, and were baptised as Lutherans in 1816 (at which time Felix took the additional names Jakob Ludwig). The name Bartholdy was assumed at the suggestion of Lea's brother,

Jakob, who had purchased a property of this name and adopted it as his own surname.

Abraham was later to explain this decision in a letter to Felix as a means of showing a decisive break with the traditions of his father Moses: "There can no more be a Christian Mendelssohn than there can be a Jewish Confucius".

The family moved to Berlin in 1812. Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn sought to give Felix, his brother Paul, and sisters Fanny and Rebecka, the best education possible. His sister Fanny Mendelssohn (later Fanny Hensel), became a well-known pianist and amateur composer; originally Abraham had thought that she, rather than her brother, might be the more musical. However, at that time, it was not considered proper (by either Abraham or Felix) for a woman to have a career in music, so Fanny remained an amateur musician. Six of her early songs were later published (with her consent) under Felix's name.

Mendelssohn is often regarded as the greatest musical child prodigy after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and before Camille Saint-Saens.

As a true intellectual of the enlightenment period, besides music, Mendelssohn's education included art, literature, languages, and philosophy. He was a skilled artist in pencil and watercolour, he could speak (besides his native German) English, Italian, and Latin, and he had an interest in classical literature.

Mendelssohn's own works show his study of Baroque and early classical music. His fugues and chorales especially reflect a tonal clarity and a masterly use of counterpoint.

His great-aunt, Sarah Levy (née Itzig) was a pupil of Bach's son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, and had supported the widow of another son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. She had collected a number of Bach manuscripts. J.S. Bach's music, which had fallen into relative obscurity by the turn of the 19th century, was also deeply respected by Mendelssohn's teacher Zelter.

In 1829, with the backing of Zelter and the assistance of a friend, the actor Eduard Devrient, Mendelssohn arranged and conducted a performance in Berlin of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. The orchestra and choir were provided by the Berlin Singakademie of which Zelter was the principal conductor.

The success of this performance (the first since Bach's death in 1750) was an important element in the revival of J.S. Bach's music in Germany and, eventually, throughout Europe. It earned Mendelssohn widespread acclaim at the age of twenty. It also led to one of the very few references which Mendelssohn ever made to his origins: "To think that it took an actor and a Jew's son (Judensohn) to revive the greatest Christian music for the world!"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cited by Devrient in his memoirs of the composer

Mendelssohn also revived interest in the work of Franz Schubert. Schumann discovered the manuscript of Schubert's Ninth Symphony and sent it to Mendelssohn who promptly premiered it in Leipzig on 21 March 1839, more than a decade after the composer's death.

The oratorio *Elijah* was composed in homage Bach and Handel, whose music Mendelssohn deeply loved.

In contrast to Bach, Handel's oratorios never went out of fashion. *Elijah* is modeled on the oratorios by these two Baroque masters; however, the style clearly reflects Mendelssohn's own natural tendencies as an early Romantic composer.

The work is scored for four vocal soloists (bass/baritone, tenor, alto, soprano), a full symphony orchestra (including trombones, *ophicleide*, and an organ), and a large chorus singing usually in four, but occasionally eight or three (women only) parts. The part of *Elijah* is sung by the bass/baritone and is a major role. Can this be a reference to cantoral singing which is usually in bass tone as well?

Mendelssohn originally composed the work to a German text, but upon being commissioned by the Birmingham Festival to write an oratorio, he had the libretto translated into English, and the oratorio was premiered in the English version.

Given the importance of Elijah in Jewish and Christian tradition, the story of his career occupies remarkably little space. The details are largely contained in 1st and 2nd Kings, with smaller references in 2nd Chronicles and Malachi.

Elijah is introduced in 1 Kings 17:1 as Elijah "The Tishbite". He gives a warning to Ahab, king of Israel, that there will be years of drought, a drought so severe that not even dew will fall. This catastrophe will come because Ahab and his queen—Jezebel—stand at the end of a line of kings of Israel who are said to have "done evil in the sight of the Lord". In particular, Ahab and Jezebel had encouraged the worship of Baal and killed the prophets of the Lord.

Elijah appears on the scene with no fanfare. Nothing is known of his origins or background. His name, Elijah, "My god is Jehovah (Yahweh)", may be a name applied to him because of his challenge to Baal worship. Even the title of "the Tishbite" is problematic, as there is no reference from the period to a town or village of Tishbe.

In what is a characteristic of Elijah, his challenge is bold and direct. Baal was the local nature deity responsible for rain, thunder, lightning, and dew. Elijah not only challenges Baal on behalf of the Yahweh (Jehovah) the God of Israel, he challenges Jezebel, her priests, Ahab, and the people of Israel.

Mendelssohn uses the Biblical episodes, which in the original are narrated in rather laconic form, to produce intensely almost luridly dramatic scenes.

Among the episodes are the resurrection of a dead youth, the bringing of rain to parched Israel through Elijah's prayers, and the bodily assumption of Elijah on a fiery chariot into heaven. Perhaps the most dramatic episode is the "contest of the gods", in which Jehovah consumes an offered sacrifice in a column of fire, after a failed sequence of frantic prayers by the Hebrew people to their favored god Baal. Mendelssohn did not shrink from portraying the episode in its full Old Testament harshness, as the prophets of Baal are afterward taken away and slaughtered.

It is not known if Mendelssohn's own position as a converted Jew, he became a Lutheran at age seven, have had an influence on the libretto; though certainly many scholars have speculated on this issue.

The final section of the oratorio draws parallels between the lives of Elijah and Jesus.

*Elijah* was popular at its premiere and has been frequently performed, particularly in English-speaking countries, ever since.

A number of critics, however, including Bernard Shaw and Richard Wagner, have treated the work harshly, emphasizing its conventional outlook and undaring musical style. Wagner's opinion, however, may be interpreted in light of that composer's extreme anti-semitism. . .

Charles Rosen praises the work in general "Mendelssohn's craft easily surmounted most of the demands of the oratorio, and [his oratorios, which also include St. Paul] are the most impressive examples of that form in the nineteenth century." However, Rosen additionally has characterized Mendelssohn as "the inventor of religious kitsch in music". In Rosen's view, Mendelssohn's religious music "is designed to make us feel that the concert hall has been transformed into a church. The music expresses not religion but piety. . . This is kitsch insofar as it substitutes for religion itself the emotional shell of religion." <sup>1</sup>

## Fromental Halévy (1799-1862)

Halévy was born in Paris, the son of a cantor, Elie Halfon Halévy, who was the secretary of the Jewish community of Paris, also writer and a teacher of Hebrew, and a French Jewish mother.

He entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of nine or ten (accounts differ), in 1809, becoming a pupil and later protégé of Cherubini. After two

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (1995), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, ISBN 0-674-77933-9.



**Figure 14:** Jacques-François-Fromental-Élie Halévy (May 27, 1799 - March 17, 1862)

second-place attempts, he won the Prix de Rome in 1819: his cantata subject was Herminie.

As he had to delay his departure to Rome because of the death of his mother, he was able to accept the first commission that brought him to public attention - a “Marche Funebre et De Profundis en Hebreu” for three part choir, tenor and orchestra, which was commissioned by the Consistoire Israélite du Département de la Seine, for a public service in memory of the assassinated duc de Berry, performed on March 24, 1820. Later, his brother Léon recalled that the *De Profundis*, “infused with religious fervor, created a sensation, and attracted interest to the young laureate of the institute.”

Halévy was chorus master at the Théâtre Italien, while he struggled to get an opera performed. Despite the mediocre reception of *L’artisan*, at the Opéra-Comique in 1827, Halévy moved on to be chorus master at the Opéra.

The same year he became professor of harmony and accompaniment at the Conservatoire, where he was professor of counterpoint and fugue in 1833

and of composition in 1840. He was elected to the Institut de France in 1836.

With his opera *La Juive*, in 1835, Halévy attained not only his first major triumph, but gave the world a work that was to be one of the cornerstones of the French repertory for a century, with the role of Eléazar one of the great favorites of tenors such as Enrico Caruso.

The opera's most famous aria is Eléazar's "Rachel, quand du Seigneur". Its orchestral ritornello is the one quotation from Halévy that Berlioz included in his *Treatise on Orchestration*, for its unusual duet for two cor anglais.

Another specialty from the orchestration of *La Juive* is this passage scored for four french horns, two "natural" horns (named "cors ordinaires") and two with pistons ("cors a pistons").



The image shows a musical score for two horns. The first staff is labeled "Cors ordinaire en Mi b." and the second staff is labeled "Cors à pistons en Mi b.". Both staves are in treble clef and contain a duet of notes. The music is written in a style typical of 19th-century orchestration, with various dynamics and articulations. The score consists of five systems of staves, each with two parts.

**Figure 15:** Orchestration sample from *La Juive* with the use of two different kind of horns in parallel

*La Juive* is one of the grandest of grand operas, with major choruses, a spectacular procession in Act I, and impressive celebrations in Act III. It culminates with the heroine plunging into a vat of boiling water in Act V. Mahler admired it greatly, stating: "I am absolutely overwhelmed by this wonderful, majestic work. I regard it as one of the greatest operas ever created". Other

admirers included Richard Wagner who wrote an enthusiastic review of its premiere for the German press. Interestingly Wagner never showed towards Halévy the anti-Jewish animus that was so notorious a feature of his writings on Meyerbeer.

The libretto was the work of Eugène Scribe, one of the most prolific dramatic authors of the time. Scribe was writing to the tastes of the Opéra de Paris, where the work was first performed - a work in five acts presenting spectacular situations (here the Council of Constance of 1414), which would allow a remarkable staging, a setting which brought out a dramatic situation which was also underlined by a powerful historical subject. In addition to this, there was also the possibility of choral interludes, ballet and scenic effects which took advantage of the entire range of possibilities available at the Paris Opera.

Through the story of an impossible love between a Christian man and a Jewish woman, the work may be seen as a plea for religious tolerance, in much the same spirit as Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* which premiered in 1835, a year before *La Juive*, as well as the 1819 novel *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott which deals with the same theme.

At the time of composition, the July monarchy<sup>1</sup> had liberalized religious practices in France.

Meyerbeer and Halévy were both Jewish and storylines dealing with topics of tolerance were common in their operas. The reviews of the initial performances show that journalists of the period responded to the liberalism and to the perceived anti-clericalism of Scribe's text, rather than to any specifically Jewish theme.

## **Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)**

Meyerbeer was born to a Jewish family in Tasdorf, near Berlin, Germany with the name Jacob Liebmann Beer. His father was the enormously wealthy financier Jacob Judah Herz Beer (1769-1825) and his mother, Amalia Liebmann Meyer Wulff (1767-1854) also came from the wealthy elite. Their other children included the astronomer Wilhelm Beer and the poet Michael Beer.

Meyerbeer made his debut as a nine-year old playing a Mozart concerto in Berlin. Throughout his youth, although he was determined to become a musician, he found it difficult to decide between playing and composition.

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<sup>1</sup>The July Monarchy (1830-1848) was a period of liberal monarchy rule of France under Louis-Philippe. The new regime's ideal was explicated by Louis-Philippe's famous statement in January 1831: "We will attempt to remain in a *juste milieu* (the just middle), in an equal distance from the excesses of popular power and the abuses of royal power."



**Figure 16:** Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)

Certainly other professionals in the decade 1810-1820, including Moscheles, considered him amongst the greatest virtuosi of his period.

In his youth Beer studied with Antonio Salieri and the German master and friend of Goethe, Carl Friedrich Zelter. Realizing, however, that a full understanding of Italian opera was essential for his musical development, he went to study in Italy for some years, during which time he adopted the first name Giacomo.

He also adopted the “Meyer” in his surname after the death of his great-grandfather. It was during this time that he became acquainted with, and impressed by, the works of his contemporary Gioacchino Rossini.

Meyerbeer’s name first became known internationally with his opera *Il crociato in Egitto* this is also the last opera ever to feature a castrato.

He became virtually a superstar with *Robert le Diable* (Robert the Devil), produced in Paris in 1831 and regarded by some as the first grand opera, although this honor rightly belongs to Auber’s *La muette de Portici*.

The fusion of dramatic music, melodramatic plot and, as customary at this time, sumptuous staging proved a sure-fire formula which Meyerbeer repeated in *Les Huguenots* (1836), *Le prophète* (1849), and *L’Africaine*, (produced posthumously in 1865).

All of these operas held the international stage throughout the 19th century, as did the more pastoral *Dinorah* (1859).



However, because they were expensive to stage, requiring large casts of leading singers, and subject to consistent attack from the prevalent Wagnerian schools, they gradually fell into desuetude.

Meyerbeer's immense wealth (increased by the success of his operas) and his continuing adherence to his Jewish religion set him apart somewhat from many of his musical contemporaries. That also gave rise to malicious rumours that his success was due to his bribing musical critics. . .

Richard Wagner accused him of being only interested in money, not music. Meyerbeer was, however, a deeply serious musician and a sensitive personality. He philosophically resigned himself to being a victim of his own success.

The abrasive campaign of Richard Wagner against Meyerbeer was to a great extent responsible for the decline of Meyerbeer's popularity after his death in 1864.

This campaign was as much a matter of personal spite as of racism - Wagner had learnt a great deal from Meyerbeer and indeed Wagner's early opera *Rienzi* (1842) has, facetiously, been called "Meyerbeer's most successful work" . . .

Meyerbeer supported the young Wagner, both financially and in obtaining a production of *Rienzi* at Dresden.

However, Wagner resented Meyerbeer's continuing success at a time when his own vision of German opera had little chance of prospering.

After the May Uprising in Dresden of 1849<sup>1</sup>, Wagner was for some years a political refugee facing a prison sentence or worse in Saxony. During this period when he was gestating his *Ring* cycle he had few sources of income apart from journalism and benefactors, and little opportunity of getting his own works performed.

The success of *Le Prophète* sent Wagner over the edge, and he was also deeply envious of Meyerbeer's wealth. After Meyerbeer's death Wagner reissued his 1850 essay "Das Judentum in der Musik" (Jewry in Music)<sup>2</sup>, in 1868, in an extended form, with a far more explicit attack on Meyerbeer. This ver-

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<sup>1</sup>In Germany, revolution had begun in March 1848, starting in Berlin and spreading across the other states which now make up Germany, calling for a constitutional monarchy to rule a new, united German nation. On March 28, 1849 the Assembly passed the first *Reichsverfassung* (constitution) for Germany, and in April 1849, Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia was offered the crown.

<sup>2</sup>"Das Judentum in der Musik" ("Jewishness in Music", but normally translated "Judaism in Music"), spelled after its first publication "Judentum", is an essay by Richard Wagner, attacking Jews in general and the composers Giacomo Meyerbeer and Felix Mendelssohn in particular, which was published under a pseudonym in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (NZM) of Leipzig in September 1850. It was reissued in a greatly expanded version under Wagners own name in 1869. It is regarded by many as an important landmark in the history of German antisemitism.

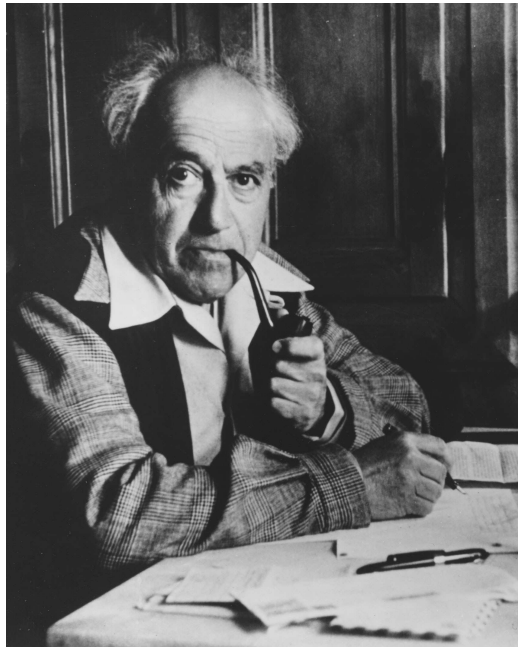
sion was under Wagner's own name - for the first version he had sheltered behind a pseudonym - and as Wagner had by now a far greater reputation, his views obtained far wider publicity.

These attacks on Meyerbeer (which also included a swipe at Felix Mendelssohn) are regarded by Paul Lawrence Rose as a significant milestone in the growth of German anti-Semitism.

## Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

The composer of what may be called a Jewish Requiem in the usual concert music sense of the word, Ernest Bloch was born in Geneva. He started studied violin and soon started composing as well.

He had the chance to study with the celebrated Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe in the Brussels Conservatory. After some moves in Europe he settled in the United States in 1916 and took American citizenship in 1924.



**Figure 17:** Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

As a teacher he had some illustrious students, among them: George Antheil, Frederick Jacobi, Bernard Rogers, and Roger Sessions.

He was the first Musical Director of the newly formed Cleveland Institute of Music, and later he was director of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music until 1950.

In 1941 Bloch moved to the small coastal community of Agate Beach, Oregon and lived there the rest of his life.

He died in 1959 in Portland, Oregon, of cancer at the age of 78. The Bloch Memorial has been moved from near his house in Agate Beach to a more prominent location at the Newport Performing Arts Center in Newport, Oregon.

He has managed to mix the French impressionism with the Germanic school of Richard Strauss in his early works, including his opera *Macbeth*, 1910.

His best known pieces of his mature period draw on Jewish liturgical and folk music as well as Jewish culture in general. These works include *Schelomo* (1916) for cello and orchestra, which he dedicated to the cellist Alexandre Barjansky, the *Israel Symphony* (1916), *Baal Shem* for violin and piano (1923, he later arranged it for violin and orchestra), *The Jewish Life Suite* for Cello and Piano and *Avodath Hakodesh* (Sacred Service, 1933) for baritone, choir and orchestra which can be considered a “Jewish Requiem” in the tradition of Mozart and Brahms even though the Judaism does not have anything like a Christian Requiem as a religious music or service.

Other pieces from this period include a violin concerto written for Joseph Szigeti and the rhapsody *America* for chorus and orchestra.

His composition of the last period, after World War II, are a little more varied in style, though Bloch’s essentially Romantic idiom remains, somewhat like a mixture of Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy. The Jewish theme remains such as in the *Suite hébraïque* (1950), some other works, like the *Second Concerto Grosso* (1952), display an interest in neo-classicism (though here too the harmonic language is basically Romantic, even though the form is Baroque). The late string quartets include elements of atonality.

He was and educated and prolific photographer as well. The Western Jewish History Center, of the Judah L. Magnes Museum, in Berkeley, California has a small collection of photographs of Ernest Bloch which document his interest in photography.

Many of the photographs Bloch took, over 6,000 negatives and 2,000 prints, are in the Ernest Bloch Archive at the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona in Tucson along with photographs by the likes of Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and Richard Avedon.

## Schelomo

This “Rhapsodie hébraïque pour violoncelle et grand orchestre” was completed during Bloch’s “Jewish Cycle,” which lasted from 1912-1926.

In the composition, the Jewish heritage and culture seem to be more influential than specific Jewish melodies. Bloch

Bloch wrote,

It was this entire Jewish heritage that moved me deeply, and was reborn in my music. To what extent it is Jewish, to what extent it is just Ernest Bloch, of that I know nothing. The future alone will decide.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is reported to be the main source of inspiration for the piece. First drafted for voice and a meeting with the cellist Alexandre Barjansky inspired him to give the solo voice to the cello, which Bloch wrote was “vaster and deeper than any spoken language.” In program notes that Bloch wrote for a performance of *Schelomo* in 1933, he established that the solo cello is the voice of King Solomon while the orchestra represents the world surrounding him.

A wide-scale lamentation in the solo cello at the beginning leads into a cadenza in the low range of the instrument. The orchestration is thick and uses many out-of-common orchestral colors and effects. many unusual chord progressions, *col legno* in the strings, and bold brass statements makes the work out of commonly followed paths. The first section ends with a powerful orchestral climax leading into the central section of the work.

The second theme is a rhythmic figure stated first by the bassoon and soon after by the oboe. The cello repeats the cadenza of the first theme while the second theme continues as a counter melody in the woodwinds and brass. The solo cello continues to reiterate the first theme but is overwhelmed by the swelling and increasingly frenzied orchestra.

The third section begins with material first presented in the first and second sections. A forceful orchestral climax gives way to a hushed, tense mood where the cello makes its final statement, ending on a resigned low D.

The Italian critic Guido Gatti wrote of *Schelomo*,

The violoncello, with its ample breadth of phrasing, now melodic and with moments of superb lyricism, now declamatory and with robustly dramatic lights and shades, lends itself to a reincarnation of Solomon in all his glory. The violoncello part is of so remarkably convincing and emotional power that it may be set down as a veritable masterpiece; not one passage, not a single beat, is inexpressive; the entire discourse of the soloist, vocal rather than instrumental, seems like musical expression intimately conjoined with the Talmudic prose.

## Georges Gershwin (1898-1937)

The solo clarinets *glissando* at the very beginning of the *Rhapsody in Blue* is looked on by some observers as a Ashkenazic-Yiddish-Klezmer(ish) musical effect.

Actually a *glissando* is a high “klezmer-sounding” string of notes, ending on a high “screeching” note. For the anecdote; it was done accidentally at a practice by the soloist. Gershwin told the soloist that he liked it and should play it like that.



**Figure 18:** Georges Gershwin (1898-1937)

While researching Gershwin’s life one is struck with the fact that his music was deeply influenced by him being Jewish. His interest in the Yiddish theatre is known. He has even planned writing a Jewish opera. He actually wrote some sketches for the work which was to be called *Dybbuk*. He gave up the project when he heard that the rights for the original play was owned by the Italian composer, Lodovico Rocca.

Borrowings from the traditional Synagogue music into the most famous songs of Gershwin has been noted by many scholars.

Examples are numerous, among them: is the famous tune *S Wonderful*. It shows many similarities to Goldfadens Jewish tune, *Noachs Teive*. Both songs have almost exact copies of the same tune, and partly even the same

notes. Another of Gershwin's songs that has resemblance to Yiddish music was *My One and Only* from the 1927 show of *Funny Face*. *Seventeen and Twenty-One* from *Strike Up The Band* has a similar melody to *Der Pach Tanz* and *Schuster and Schneider Tanz*.

The predominance of the melody over other components, which can be thought as “normal and usual” in songs, when combined with his favoring the minor keys added with the uncanny resemblances to commonly known Synagogues chants, and downright borrowing many of them in *Porgy and Bess* and other most important works makes Gershwin a “Jewish” composer.

Some of George Gershwin's songs even resemble Biblical prayer chants. An example of this is *It Aint Necessarily So* from *Porgy and Bess*. This song is similar to the prayer that one chants after one reads the Torah in *bar (or bat) mitzvah* and at every Sabbath.

Musical plays are also an important facet of the Jewish musical culture. See *Musical Plays on the Hebrew Stage*, an excellent article by Dan Almagor<sup>1</sup>

## Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

*Moses und Aron* and *Jacobsleiter* are the best known Jewish-inspired music by Arnold Schoenberg. We should not forget to mention *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Op. 46.

However there is also a much lesser known work: *Kol nidre* for Chorus and Orchestra, op. 39 (1938). That famous prayer-chant of *Kol nidre* is surely a source of inspiration for many Jewish and non-Jewish composers.

*Moses und Aron* (Moses and Aaron) is a two-act opera by Arnold Schoenberg with a third act unfinished. The German libretto was by the composer after the Book of Exodus.

The opera has its roots in Schoenberg's earlier play, *Der Biblische Weg* (The Biblical Way, 1926-27), which represents a response in dramatic form to the growing anti-Jewish movements in the German-speaking world after 1848 and a deeply personal expression of his own “Jewish identity” crisis.

This began with a face-to-face encounter with anti-Semitic agitation at Mattsee, near Salzburg, during the summer of 1921, when he was forced to leave the resort because he was a Jew, although he actually converted to Protestantism in 1898.

It was a traumatic experience to which Schoenberg would frequently refer, and of which a first mention appears in a letter addressed to Kandinsky (April 1923):

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article\\_display.aspx?articleID=342](http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=342)

I have at last learnt the lesson that has been forced upon me this year, and I shall never forget it. It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being (at least, the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but that I am a Jew<sup>1</sup>.

Schoenberg's statement echoed that of Mahler, a convert to Catholicism, some years earlier:

I am thrice homeless: as a Bohemian among Austrians, as an Austrian among the Germans, and as a Jew throughout the entire world. I am an intruder everywhere, welcome nowhere.



**Figure 19:** Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

It is generally accepted that this event prepared for his return to Judaism in 1933 for the rest of his work and life.

This is considered one of his works he held very close to his heart. The biblical aspects and facing the Jewish “problems” in the modern world is the subject of an excellent article by Aaron Tugendhaft available at <http://>

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<sup>1</sup>Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, (London, 1964), p. 88.

humanities.uchicago.edu/journals/jsjournal/tugendhaft.html and reproduced *in extenso* at Appendice , page: 78

Schoenberg always intended to finish the work, and the two acts were not performed until after his death. There was a concert performance in Hamburg on 12 March 1954 with Hans Herbert Fiedler as Moses and Helmut Krebs as Aron, conducted by Hans Rosbaud. The first staging was in Zurich at the Stadttheater on 6 June 1957, again with Hans Herbert Fiedler as Moses and conducted by Hans Rosbaud, but with Helmut Melchert as Aron.

Georg Solti conducted the first performance at the Royal Opera House, London on 28 June 1965. The singers were Forbes Robinson (Moses) and Richard Lewis (Aron). The American premiere was produced by Sarah Caldwell's company in Boston Back Bay on 30 November 1966 with Donald Gramm and Richard Lewis, conducted by Osbourne McConathy. (The Metropolitan Opera did not stage it until 1999.)

In 1973, the work was also made into a film by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet (although not released in the US until 1975).

The oratorio *Die Jakobsleiter* (Jacob's Ladder) marks his transition from a contextual or free atonality to the twelve-tone technique anticipated in the oratorio's use of hexachords<sup>1</sup>. Though ultimately unfinished by Schoenberg the piece was prepared for performance by Schoenberg student Winfried Zillig at the request of Gertrude Schoenberg.

The piece is also notable for its use of developing variation. Developing variation is a formal technique in which the concepts of development and variation are united in that variations are produced through the development of existing material.

Though the term was coined by Schoenberg, he felt it was one of the most important compositional principles since around 1750<sup>2</sup>:

Music of the homophonic-melodic style of composition, that is, music with a main theme, accompanied by and based on harmony, produces its material by, as I call it, developing variation. This means that variation of the features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic and unity, on the one hand, and character, mood, expression, and every needed differentiation, on the other hand—thus elaborating the idea of the piece.

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<sup>1</sup>A six-note segment of a scale or tone row. The term was adopted in the Middle Ages and adapted in the twentieth-century in Milton Babbitt's serial theory.

<sup>2</sup>Haimo, Ethan. 1990. Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-Tone Method, 1914-1928, p.73n8. Oxford [England] : Clarendon Press ; New York : Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-3152-60-6.



Similarly, as in the case of *Die Jakobsleiter*, here also all main themes had to be transformations of the first phrase. Already here the basic motif was not only productive in furnishing new motifs through developing variations, but also in producing more remote formulations based on the unifying effect of one common factor: the repetition of tonal and intervallic relationship.

Haimo applies the concept to vertical (pitch) as well as horizontal (rhythm and permutation) transformations in twelve-tone music on the premise of “the unity of musical space” after suggesting that Schoenberg reconciled serial organization and developing variation in the twelve tone technique.

*A Survivor from Warsaw*, Op. 46 is a work for narrator, men’s chorus<sup>1</sup>, and orchestra written in 1947.

The initial inspiration for the work was a suggestion from the Russian emigrée dancer Corinne Chochem for a work to pay tribute to the Jewish victims of the German Third Reich. While the collaboration between Chochem and Schönberg did not come to fruition, Schönberg continued to develop the idea for such a work independently. He then received a letter from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation for a commission for an orchestral work. Schönberg then decided to fulfill this commission with this tribute work. He wrote the work from 11 August 1947 to 23 August 1947<sup>2</sup>.

Kurt Frederick, conductor of the Albuquerque Civic Symphony Orchestra, had heard about this new work, and wrote to Schönberg to ask for permission to give the premiere. Schönberg agreed, and stipulated that in lieu of a performance fee, he asked that the New Mexico musicians prepare a full set of orchestral and choral parts and send those to him.

The work lasts a little more than 6 minutes. Richard S. Hill published a contemporary analysis of Schoenberg’s use of twelve-tone rows in this composition<sup>3</sup>.

Jacques-Louis Monod prepared a definitive edition of the score, which was published in 1979<sup>4</sup>. Beat A. Föllmi has published a detailed analysis of the narrative of *A Survivor from Warsaw*<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>it is interesting to note here as well as in Shostakovich’s 13th. Symphony the usage of man’s voice

<sup>2</sup>Michael Strasser, “A Survivor from Warsaw as Personal Parable” (February 1995). *Music & Letters*, 76 (1): pp. 52-63.

<sup>3</sup>Richard S. Hill, “Music Reviews: A Survivor from Warsaw, for Narrator, Men’s Chorus, and Orchestra by Arnold Schoenberg” (December 1949). *Notes* (2nd Ser.), 7 (1): pp. 133-135.

<sup>4</sup>Richard G. Swift, Review of newly revised edition of Arnold Schoenberg, *A Survivor from Warsaw* (September 1980). *MLA Notes*, 37 (1): p. 154.

<sup>5</sup>Beat A. Föllmi, “I Cannot Remember Ev’rything”. *Eine narratologische Analyse von*

This is the story of a survivor from the Warsaw ghetto during the Second World War, from his time in a concentration camp. The narrator does not remember how he ended up living in the Warsaw sewers. One day, in the camp, the Nazi authorities held a roll call of a group of Jews. The group tried to assemble, but there was confusion, and the guards beat the old and ailing Jews who could not line up quickly enough. Those Jews left on the ground were presumed to be dead, and the guards asked for another count, to see how many would be deported to the death camps. The guards ask for a faster and faster head count, and the work culminates as the Jews begin to sing the prayer *Shema Yisroel*<sup>1</sup>. The creed ends with Deuteronomy 6,7 “and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.”

## Conclusion on Jewish Composers

Even though some of them (Mahler, Bernstein and others) were omitted in this review one may wonder “what those (all great) composers do have in common?” They are from different epochs, cultures and styles and they are all Jew. Can we point on some “trademark” of being a Jewish composer?

Actually there are than a few common points among them. They are adventurous, sometime straight revolutionary although they never claimed to be so. Schoenberg was always claiming that he is the “natural continuation” of the German romantic tradition, Gershwin never advertised he is a “revolutionary” composer, yet he was. . . in his own way. Rossi has innovated many of his epoch’s musical forms and norms.

Mendelssohn, even if he has not “innovated” the musical language of his epoch, a language he knew like few other musicians, still “re-created” J. S. Bach and doing so influenced many of the most important composers of his time.

Composers of the “Opera de Paris” style, Meyerbeer, Halevy, did used very effective and unusual orchestration and staging procedures were none was required for being successful in a rather “conservatively looking for things new” period of “Gaité Française”.

Bloch, even not a revolutionary composer have also created some extremely interesting and varied instrumental and sonic textures in his best

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Arnold Schönbergs Kantate ”A Survivor from Warsaw” op. 46” (1998). Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, Jahrgang LV (Heft 1): pp. 28-56 (article in German).

<sup>1</sup>Shema Yisrael (or Sh’ma Yisroel or just Shema) are the first two words of a section of the Torah (Hebrew Bible) that is used as a centerpiece of all morning and evening Jewish prayer services and closely echoes the monotheistic message of Judaism. It is considered the most important prayer in Judaism, and its twice-daily recitation is a mitzvah (religious commandment).

works.

Another aspect I find striking is the high intellectual range of those composers. From Rossi to Mendelssohn and from Meyerbeer to Schoenberg, descendants from a culture who sets the education as an activity as high as serving God this is no surprise.

# Jewish Music by non-Jewish Composers

Some Jewish music has been composed by non-Jewish composers as well. The richness of this culture spanning a period of more than 3000 years has inspired many great composers with among them Max Bruch, Maurice Ravel, Sergei Prokofieff, Dmitri Shostakovich.

## Max Bruch and *Kol Nidrei*

Max Christian Friedrich Bruch (1838-1920) also known as Max Karl August Bruch, was a German Romantic composer and conductor who wrote over 200 works, including three violin concertos, one of which is a staple of the violin repertoire. His *Kol Nidrei*, Op. 47, is a popular work for cello and orchestra transcribed for many instruments including viola and clarinet, its subtitle is “Adagio on Hebrew Melodies for Violoncello and Orchestra”. This piece was based on Hebrew melodies, principally the melody of the *Kol Nidre* prayer, which gives the piece its name. The success of this work has made many assume that Bruch himself had Jewish ancestry, but there is no evidence for this.

## Kol Nidrei

The evening service on the Eve of Yom Kippur is preceded by the chanting of Kol Nidrei (“All vows”), a formal annulment of vows.

The worshipers proclaim that all personal vows and oaths made between themselves and God during the year that not have not been fulfilled should be considered null and void. In Jewish tradition, the nullification of vows can only be performed by a religious court, which always consists of at least three judges and is convened only on weekdays. The recitation of Kol Nidrei is therefore begun before sunset; two distinguished congregants, holding Torah scrolls, stand next to the Cantor in order to constitute a court.



**Figure 20:** Max Bruch (1838-1920)

Translation<sup>1</sup>:

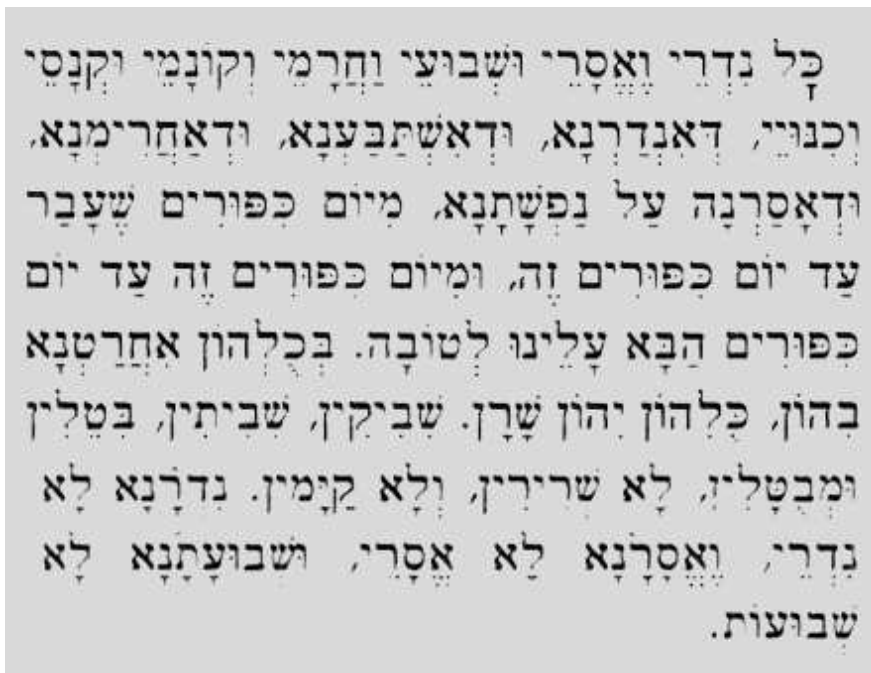
All vows, prohibitions, oaths, consecrations, vows, vows, or equivalent terms that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves – from the last Yom Kippur until this Yom Kippur, and from this Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur, may it come upon us for good - regarding them all, we regret them henceforth. They all will be permitted, abandoned, cancelled, null and void, without power and without standing. Our vows shall not be valid vows; our prohibitions shall not be valid prohibitions; and our oaths shall not be valid oaths.

The origins of the ritual and the text of Kol Nidrei remain obscure[7]. The first references to Kol Nidrei as a collective declaration-prayer are found in the *responsa* of the Babylonian *geonim* (8-10th century scholars)<sup>2</sup>; the *geonim* vigorously opposed the practice of chanting the declamation, which they claimed originated in unspecified “other lands.” For those “other lands”

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.jhom.com/calendar/tishrei/kolnidrei.html>

<sup>2</sup>Jewish Online Heritage Magazine, <http://www.jhom.com>



**Figure 21:** Kol Nidrei prayer

Palestine is an obvious candidate, none of the surviving ancient Palestinian prayer texts include Kol Nidrei[8].

Around ca.1000 C.E., Kol Nidrei was totally integrated in the liturgy, mostly by popular demand.

*Geonic* texts of Kol Nidrei speak of annulling vows made “from the previous Day of Atonement until this Day of Atonement.” Authorities in early medieval Europe (12th century) did not accept this version and amended the text to refer to future vows made “from this Day of Atonement until the next Day of Atonement.” Different communities adopted different versions and some have incorporated both.

Although all Jewish sources and interpretations of Kol Nidrei agree that the formula covers only vows between the individual and God, many anti-Semites have taken Kol Nidrei as evidence that a Jew’s oath is worthless<sup>1</sup>.

The standard Ashkenazi melody for Kol Nidrei is an example par excellence of the Jewish musical tradition[9]. It is not a melody in the usual sense, but rather a collection of motifs in the general musical style of the High Holy Days.

Figure ?? is a piano arrangement by Sam Englander (1896-1943) from

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.jhom.com>

**Adagio ma non troppo**

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of Kol Nidrei by Max Bruch. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is for Cello and Piano. The Cello part is in the bass clef, and the Piano part is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'Adagio ma non troppo'. The piano part begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The second system starts at measure 7 and features a 'solo' for the Cello, marked *p espressivo* (piano espressivo). The piano part continues with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The score is in 3/4 time and the key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

**Figure 22:** Introduction from Kol Nidrei by Max Bruch

<http://www.chazzanut.com/englander/englander-14.html>.

They include both solemn syllabic “proclamations” and virtuoso vocal runs. Many cantors and communities developed their particular variations of the basic musical material and many synagogue composers have made their own arrangements.[3] It remains an open question whether the solemnity and importance of the text shaped the musical rendition of Kol Nidrei, or whether the stature of the text was heightened by the extraordinary effect of the music. The source of the melody is still a subject of research, and the frequent attempts to relate it to the Sephardi traditions have not been successful.

The Sephardi and Oriental Jewish communities each have their own Kol Nidrei traditions: Sephardi, Moroccan and Yemenite.

Example *RealMedia*<sup>TM</sup> files can be listened to at: <http://www.jhom.com/calendar/tishrei/kolnidrei.html>.

Abraham Zevi Idelsohn, author of the first and landmark book on Jewish music: “Jewish Music: Its Historical Development”[4] wrote:

There is hardly any other traditional Jewish tune that attracted so much attention from the composers of the last century. Innumerable are the arrangements for voice with piano, organ or

## KOL NIDRÈ

(Op Avond voor Groote Verzoendag)

Traditioneele Melodie

*Andante con moto* *pp*

Kol nid - rè - wee e. so - rè - wa.cha.ro -

PIANO

*p* *pp*

mè - we.kó.no me - we.chi.nu - jè - w'.ki.nu ssè - - u - she.

**Figure 23:** Kol Nidrei, piano arrangement  
labelpiano-kol-nidrei

violin accompaniment and violoncello obligato. We have the exalted melody prepared for choir and small orchestra. And last but not least is the concerto by Max Bruch. In the first bars of Beethoven's C# minor quartet, the opening theme of Kol Nidrei is recognizable. Thus has the music world come to consider this the most characteristic tune of the synagogue.[5]

Max Bruch himself wrote the following on Kol Nidrei<sup>1</sup>:

“ [...] I became acquainted with Kol Nidre and a few other songs (among others, *Arabian Camel*) in Berlin through the Lichtenstein<sup>2</sup> family, who befriended me. Even though I am a Protestant, as an artist I deeply felt the outstanding beauty of these melodies and therefore I gladly spread them through my arrangement. [...] As a young man I had already [...] studied folksongs of all nations with great enthusiasm, because the folksong is the source of all true melodic(sic) - a wellspring, at which one must repeatedly renew and refresh oneself - if one doesn't admit to

<sup>1</sup>in a letter to cantor and musicologist Eduard Birnbaum (4 December 1889)

<sup>2</sup>The cantor-in-chief of Berlin, who was known to have friendly relations with many Christian musicians of that time. Max Bruch was introduced to several Jewish melodies by Lichtenstein.



the absurd belief of a certain party: “The melody is an outdated view.” So lay the study of Jewish ethnic music on my path<sup>1</sup>”

Bruch’s arrangement of Kol Nidrei is actually an “arrangement” not a transcription, unsurprisingly it did not made to the taste of Idelsohn:

[Bruch’s] melody was an interesting theme for a brilliant secular concerto. In his presentation, the melody entirely lost its original character. Bruch displayed a fine art, masterly technique and fantasy, but not Jewish sentiments. It is not a Jewish Kol-Nidre which Bruch composed[4].

As Bruch indicated in his letter, quoted above, he himself did not consider his Kol Nidrei to be a Jewish composition, but just an artistic arrangement of a folk tune. So, to Bruch, his Kol Nidrei was just one of the many arrangements he made of European folk songs.

Idelshon in a letter dated January 31, 1882, to Emil Kamphausen (translation by Fifield<sup>2</sup>), comments as follows:

The two melodies [in Bruch’s Kol Nidrei] are first-class. The first is an age-old Hebrew song of atonement, the second (D major) is the middle section of a moving and truly magnificent song “O weep for those that wept on Babel’s stream” (Byron), equally very old. I got to know both melodies in Berlin, where I had much to do with the children of Israel in the Choral Society. The success of “Kol Nidrei” is assured, because all the Jews in the world are for it eo ipso.

Another interesting historical arrangement<sup>3</sup> for male chorus is worth looking at<sup>4</sup>:

## Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) and *Kaddish-Deux Mélodies Hébraïques*

Maurice Ravel has composed one of the most beautiful Jewish music of all times. The mourning songs *Kaddish* (Two Hebrew melodies) with their minimal piano accompaniment, declamatory (often close to a *recitativo*) style

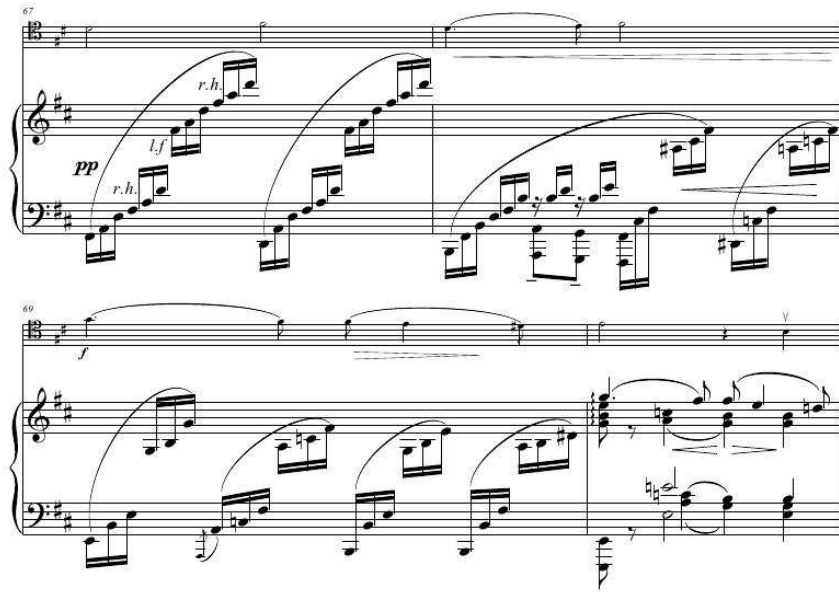
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<sup>1</sup>Translation kindly provided by Richard Schoeller. Source: <http://www.chazzanut.com/bruch.html>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.chazzanut.com/bruch.html>

<sup>3</sup>Made available by courtesy of the Shelf to Shul Project-1998

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.shulmusic.org/sulzer/sulz\\_494.htm](http://www.shulmusic.org/sulzer/sulz_494.htm)



**Figure 24:** The second theme of Max Bruch's Kol Nidrei

and long melismas bringing the climax there is no doubt that Ravel has listened to some Synagogue music and cantors.

Actually the name “Kaddish” is the title of the first of those two songs which form a cycle named *Deux Mélodies Hébraïques*. The lyrics of the first song *Kaddish* are in Aramaic and come from a Jewish prayer book. The second of those songs, called *L'Énigme éternelle* is based on a Yiddish verse.

They were first performed in June 1914 by Alvina Alvi (who commissioned them) with Ravel at the piano. Ravel orchestrated the songs in 1919-1920.

The main idea behind the very important and central prayer in Jewish liturgy which is *Kaddish* (Aramaic: “holy”) is the magnification and sanctification of God’s name. It is very often said in mourning.

In the liturgy, several variations of the Kaddish are used functionally as separators between various sections of the service. The term “Kaddish” is often used to refer specifically to “The Mourners’ Kaddish,” said as part of the mourning rituals in Judaism in all prayer services as well as at funerals and memorials. When mention is made of “saying Kaddish”, this unambiguously denotes the rituals of mourning.

The opening words of this prayer are inspired by Ezekiel 38:23, a vision of God becoming great in the eyes of all the nations. The central line of the kaddish in Jewish tradition is the congregation’s response “May His great

כל נדרי

Sch. Z.I. \*)  
 №. 344\*)  
 Tr. Adagio non troppo.

Cantor.  
 (Bariton.)  
 kol ni - dre we - s - so - re u - sch - wu - e wa - cha - ro -

Tenor.  
 kol ni - dre wa - cha - ro

Bass.  
 kol ni - dre wa - cha - ro

me w'ko - no - me u - k'no - se w'chin - nu - je

me w'ko - no - me u - k'no - se w'chin - nu - je

din - dar - no u - d' - isch te - wa - a - no u - d' - a - cha - rim - no

din - dar - no u - d' - isch te - wa - a - no u - d' - a - cha - rim - no

al naf - scho - so - no mij - jôm kip - pu - rim seh ad

sar - no naf - scho - so - no

\*) Für Tenor in B moll.  
 \*\*) Der hier der Einteilung des Textes wegen übersprungene Theil der Melodie befindet sich in №. 394, S. 308.

Figure 25: Male chorus arrangement of Kol Nidrei

name be blessed forever and to all eternity”, a public declaration of God’s greatness and eternity.[1] This response is a paraphrase of part of Daniel 2:20.

The Mourners’, Rabbis’ and Complete Kaddish end with a supplication for peace, which is in Hebrew, and comes from the Bible.

Along with the Shema and Amidah, the Kaddish is one of the most im-



**Figure 26:** Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

portant and central prayers in the Jewish liturgy.

Written in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic the Kaddish is about a half-page long text, primarily magnifying and glorifying God, as well as expressing a wish for a speedy coming of the Messianic era. It is recited primarily in the synagogue service after principal sections of the liturgy or at the beginning of such sections. In most occasions the service leader sings the Kaddish, with some congregational responses[10]<sup>1</sup>.

Dr. Tarsi (op.cit.) gives the following approximate translation of the text of the *Kaddish* as used by Ravel:

Magnified and sanctified be the name of God throughout the world which He has created according to His will.  
May He establish His kingdom during the days of our life and the life of all speedily and soon and let us say Amen.  
(*Here normally comes a congregational response, which is missing from Ravel's setting*).

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<sup>1</sup>A complete translation and the original Aramaic-Hebrew text can be seen at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaddish>

Exalted and glorified, lauded and praised, acclaimed and honored  
 be the name of the Holy One blessed be He,  
 praised beyond all blessings and hymns,  
 beyond all tributes that mortals can express and let us say Amen.

## Sergei Prokofieff and *Overture sur des Thèmes Juifs*

This chamber music piece by Prokofieff deserves much more wider recognition. It is scored for a string quartet, clarinet solo and piano; the usage of the clarinet is typical in a Klezmer tradition.

Typical in a Ashkenazi-Klezmer style the piece begins on a V-I alternating bass: The choice of C minor, a minor tonality as it was noted above for

CO4. 34

Un poco allegro

Clarinetto (C)

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

Piano

Un poco allegro

Figure 27: S. Prokofieff, *Overture sur des Thèmes Juifs*, beginning

most of Gershwin's songs is worth noting. Unlike Western cultures, the minor tonality in most Middle-East cultures actually serves a "happy" role! The clarinet solo<sup>1</sup> is also very typical "klezmerish" sounding, the augmented second intervals should be noted as well. The interplay of several descending augmented seconds in the piano part with the E $\flat$  and C $\sharp$  clashes at the third bar, violins 1 and 2 with the viola added to the pedal tone C on the bass, sparingly and masterfully creates the desired rejoicings atmosphere in a Klezmer style.

<sup>1</sup>notated in C



**Figure 28:** Main theme on clarinet, a typical Klezmer setting accentuated with the violins



**Figure 29:** A very middle-eastern sounding passage

## Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) and Babi Yar

Babi Yar is a ravine in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine.

In September 29 and 30, 1941, a special team of German Nazi SS supported by other German units and Ukrainian police murdered 33,771 Jewish civilians<sup>1</sup>.

The Babi Yar massacre is considered to be “the largest single massacre in the history of the Holocaust”<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>A Community of Violence: The SiPo/SD and Its Role in the Nazi Terror System in Generalbezirk Kiev by Alexander V. Prusin. *Holocaust Genocide Studies*, Spring 2007; 21: 1 - 30.

<sup>2</sup>From Berlin to Babi Yar. *The Nazi War Against the Jews, 1941-1944* by Wendy



**Figure 30:** The Babi Yar monument and its Menorah

In the months that followed, thousands more were seized and taken to Babi Yar where they were shot. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people, mostly civilians, of whom a significant number were Jews<sup>1</sup>, were executed by the Nazis there during World War II.

In today's Kiev, Babi Yar is located at the juncture of Kurenivka, Lukianivka and Syrets raions, between Frunze, Melnykov and Olena Teliha streets and St. Cyril's Monastery.

On September 28, leaflets in Russian, Ukrainian and German languages were posted in Kiev. The Russian announcement read (From the Russian translation):

All Jews of the city of Kiev and its environs must appear on Monday, September 29, 1941, by 8:00 AM on the corner of cemetery). You are to take your documents, money, valuables, warm clothes, linen etc. Whoever of the Jews does not fulfill this order and is found in another place, shall be shot. Any citizen who enters the apartments that have been left and takes ownership of items will be shot.

More than thirty thousand of Kievan Jews gathered by the cemetery, expecting to be loaded onto trains for deportation. The commander of the *Einsatzkommando*<sup>2</sup> reported two days later:

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Morgan Lower, Towson University. Journal of Religion and Society, Volume 9 (2007). The Kripke Center IS.S.N 1522-5658

<sup>1</sup>Babi Yar. Extracts from the Article by Shmuel Spector, Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Israel Gutman, editor in Chief, Yad Vashem, Sifriat Hapoalim, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1990

<sup>2</sup>*Einsatzkommando* is a German military term with the literal translation of "mission commando", roughly equivalent to the English term "task force".



Figure 31: Public announcement

Because of “our special talent of organization”, the Jews still believed to the very last moment before being executed that indeed all that was happening was that they were being resettled<sup>1</sup>

According to the testimony of truck driver Hofer:

I watched what happened when the Jews - men, women, and children - arrived. The Ukrainians led them past a number of different places where one after the other they had to remove their luggage, then their coats, shoes and over-garments and also underwear. They also had to leave their valuables in a designated place. There was a special pile for each article of clothing. It all happened very quickly and anyone who hesitated was kicked or pushed by the Ukrainians to keep them moving<sup>2</sup>.

The estimated total number of dead at Babi Yar during the Nazi occupation vary. The Soviet estimation stated that there were approximately 100,000 corpses lying in Babi Yar[11].

In 1946, the Soviet prosecutor L. N. Smirnov cited this number during the Nuremberg Trials, using materials of the Extraordinary State Commission set out by the Soviets to investigate Nazi crimes after the liberation of Kiev in 1943.

According to testimonies of workers forced to burn the bodies, the numbers range from 70,000 to 120,000.

<sup>1</sup>Martin Gilbert (1985): The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. ISBN 0030624169 p.202

<sup>2</sup>Statement of Truck-Driver Hofer describing the murder of Jews at Babi Yar cited in Berenbaum, Michael: Witness to the Holocaust. New York: Harper-Collins. 1997. pp. 138-139



Many artists created on this massacre. The poem written by the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko; was set to music by Dmitri Shostakovich in his Symphony No. 13.

An oratorio was composed by the Ukrainian composer Yevhen Stankovych to the text of Dmytro Pavlychko (2006). A number of films and television productions have also marked the tragic events at Babi Yar, and D. M. Thomas's novel *The White Hotel* uses the massacre's anonymity and violence as a counterpoint to the intimate and complex nature of the human psyche.

In a recently published letter to the Israeli journalist, writer, and translator Shlomo Even-Shoshan dated May 17, 1965, Anatoli Kuznetsov commented on the Babi Yar tragedy:

In the two years that followed, Russians, Ukrainians, Gypsies, and people of all nationalities were executed in Babyn[sic] Yar. The belief that Babyn Yar is an exclusively Jewish grave is wrong. [...] It is an international grave. Nobody will ever determine how many and what nationalities are buried there, because 90 percent of the corpses were burned, their ashes scattered in ravines and fields<sup>1</sup>.

This symphony, no. 13, in B flat minor, Op. 113 was first performed in Moscow on December 18, 1962 by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and the basses of the Republican State and Gnessin Institute Choirs, under Kirill Kondrashin (after Yevgeny Mravinsky refused to conduct the work). The soloist was Vitali Gromadsky.

The Soviet authorities refused to admit the existing but hidden anti-semitism and the lyrics were considered heretic by politicians.

The work has five movements:

1. Adagio (Babi Yar) A criticism of Soviet anti-Semitism and official indifference to the Holocaust.
2. Allegretto (Humour) Humour is personified as a mischievous rascal who constantly eludes official attempts at censorship and silencing.
3. Adagio (In The Store) An ode to the hard-working women of the Soviet Union, always tired from standing in long lines at the store, often in bitter cold.
4. Largo (Fears) This movement recalls the pervasive atmosphere of dread during the Stalin era.

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<sup>1</sup>The Defection of Anatoly Kuznetsov by Prof. Yury Shapoval, Ph.D.



**Figure 32:** Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

5. Allegretto (A Career) A celebration of Galileo's refusal to recant his discoveries about the nature of the heavens, even in the face of censorship and threats from the authorities.

For an English translation of the poems see: Appendice, page:90.

# In The Twenty-first Century

## Diversification

The 1930s saw an influx of Jewish composers to Palestine, among them musicians of stature in Europe.

These composers included Paul Ben-Haim, Erich Walter Sternberg, Marc Lavri, Oeden Partos, and Alexander Boskovitch. They were all concerned with creating a new Jewish identity in music, an identity which would suit the new, emerging identity of the Zionist state.

While the response of each of these composers to this Nationalist challenge was intensely personal, there was one distinct trend to which many of them adhered: many of these and other composers sought to distance themselves from the musical style of the Klezmer, of eastern European Jewry, which they viewed as weak and unsuitable for the new national ethos. Many of the stylistic features of Klezmer were abhorrent to them. “Its character is depressing and sentimental,” wrote music critic and composer Menashe Ravina in 1943. “The healthy desire to free ourselves of this sentimentalism causes many to avoid this . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most radical in his search for a new Jewish identity was Alexander Boskovitch. His *Semitic Suite* for piano, written in 1945, draws much from Arabic music: it is non-polyphonic, almost homophonic. He uses repeated notes to imitate the sound of a Kanun.

From these early experiments has grown a large corpus of original Israeli art music, much of it specifically seeking roots in Jewish musical tradition. Notable among modern Israeli composers are:

- Betty Olivera, composer in residence at Bar Ilan University. Olivera takes traditional Jewish melodies both Ashkenazic and Sephardic and sets them in complex, profoundly dissonant contexts. The result, surprisingly, is not something sounding ultramodern, but rather a natural

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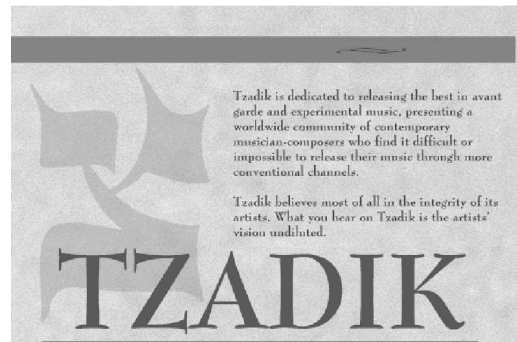
<sup>1</sup>Menashe Ravina, *The Songs of the Land of Israel*, monograph published by the Intitute for Music, Ltd., Jerusalem, 1943

extension of the folk traditions she draws on. Her work *Serafim* for soprano, clarinet, violin, cello and piano is a good example of this.

- Tsippi Fleischer, who has composed vocal works that merge contemporary Western compositional techniques with the modal, quartertone scales of Arabic music.
- Mark Kopytman, whose compositions draw heavily on both Eastern European Klezmer and Oriental Jewish sources.
- Yitzhak Yedid, who has composed mostly for chamber groups, strives to combine classical genres with improvisation and Eastern and Jewish styles.
- Chaya Czernowin Chaya Czernowin (1957) is currently residing in Austria. She is the lead composer at the Schloß Solitude Sommerakademie, a biannual international academy of composers and resident musicians at the landmark Schloß Solitude, in Stuttgart, Germany.

# Appendices

## Radical Jewish Culture by John Zorn



**Figure 33:** Tzadik: those form the “other” side.

There is a life of tradition that does not merely consist of conservative preservation, the constant continuation of the spiritual and cultural possessions of a community. There is such a thing as a treasure hunt within tradition, which creates a living relationship to tradition and to which much of what is best in current jewish consciousness is indebted, even where it was and is expressed outside the framework of orthodoxy.” Gershom Scholem

As the jewish people continue to grow into the 21st century, they carry their culture along with them. Tradition, history and the past have always played a strong role in the life of the jews but it is also important to think about the future. As we grow as a people, it seems natural that our culture should grow along with us. Just as jazz music has progressed from dixieland to free jazz and beyond in a few short decades, and classical music went from tonality to chromaticism, noise and back again, it has occurred

to me that the same kind of growth should be possible and is perhaps essential for Jewish music. Questions arose, as did the need to address them. The CDs on the Radical Jewish Culture series is a first attempt at addressing some of these issues.

The series is an ongoing project. A challenge posed to adventurous musical thinkers. What is Jewish music? What is its future? If asked to make a contribution to Jewish culture, what would you do? Can Jewish music exist without a connection to klezmer, cantorial or Yiddish theatre? All of the CDs on the Tzadik RJC series address these issues through the vision and imagination of individual musical minds.

I do not and have never espoused the idea that any music a Jew makes is Jewish music, nor do I pretend to be the sole arbiter of what is Jewish or what is not. There have been occasions when the Jewish content of the music delivered has been unclear, or even non-existent. My role as executive producer in these instances has been to question the artist. If the answer is simply "I'm Jewish this is what I'm doing that makes it Jewish music" the project is rejected, returned to the artist to do with as they wish. If they can articulate a well thought out response and their sincerity and honesty is clear and unquestionable I go with it even if I don't entirely go with the program. Arguably, some projects have been more successful than others, but in retrospect all have been interesting, honest and worth repeated listening.

Sometimes the bone of contention is not the Jewish content at all. This is, after all, the Radical Jewish Culture series. My commitment has always been to the experimental and the avant-garde. Tzadik does not release "all things Jewish", and often I have had to reject projects on this basis as well, much to the consternation of the artist, who is told, perhaps for the first time in their life that the music is not out enough.

Much controversy and discussion has arisen over the Great Jewish Music series and on several occasions this has taken the form of a personal attack on me, my work, my sincerity and my integrity. Clearly the inclusion of music with no overt Jewish content may seem out of place in a series dedicated to Jewish music and it is very gratifying to experience the power the word (or the image) continues to exert on the human spirit. The operational word here is "music" if I had titled the series Great Jewish Composers perhaps there would have been no further discussion.

It seems important to mention that the name Radical Jewish

Culture was chosen with serious deliberation. There is little question that the contributions of Franz Kafka, Mark Rothko, Albert Einstein, Walter Benjamin, Lenny Bruce and Steven Spielberg have all been embraced as central to Jewish culture in the 20th century. The logical question that arises is: is there Jewish content in their work? Well, at times yes, at times no and in using the term "great Jewish music" I am raising that question albeit a bit tongue-in-cheek, and not without a small tip of the hat to the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

The Great Jewish Music series is as much about Jewish contribution to world culture: Serge Gainsbourg in France, Jacob do Bandolim in Brazil, Sasha Argov in Israel as about any exposition of Jewish culture. If I had titled the series accordingly perhaps we all would have been spared much of the polemical discussions and arguments and I might have been spared a few vituperative attacks. But as several good friends have said "if people are still arguing over these issues after 15 years, you must be doing something right" and I am content with that.

shalom. john zorn nyc 2006

## Russian Society for Jewish Music

The<sup>1</sup> history of the New Jewish School started in the first decade of the 20th century. In 1908 the Society for Jewish folk music was founded in St. Petersburg - the first Jewish musical institution in Russia. Important composers, such as Joseph Achron, Michail Gnesin, Alexander Krejn, Moshe Milner, Solomon Rosowsky, Lazare Saminsky and others joined it. In contrast to Jewish composers from Western Europe these young artists did not lose their connection to the Jewish community. The more than five million Jews in Russia (at that time about half of the Jews in the world) lived in old traditions, which remained a nurturing soil and a source of inspiration for musicians.

Initially, the activities of the Society concentrated on the collection, processing, publication and presentation of Jewish folklore. At the same time more and more original compositions were created, which were published in its own publishing company. Additionally, concerts, lectures and ethnologic expeditions were organized.

By 1913, the Society already had more than one thousand members; subsidiaries were opened in seven cities. For young composers (about twenty

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.musica-judaica.com/history.htm>

five of them) the Society was a union of kindred spirits, where discussions could be held and a familiar atmosphere prevailed.

As a result of the political and economic collapse in the years 1918 to 1921, the Petersburg Society and its subsidiaries in other cities had to discontinue their work. Most of the leading members from Petersburg emigrated during this time, while the members in Moscow had smaller losses. This is why the center of Jewish music re-located from Petersburg to Moscow in the 1920s. In Moscow the Society could be revived.

David Schor, the first president of the newly formed Society for Jewish music, stressed in a lecture, that in contrast to the previous Society for Jewish folk music, performances, expenses and spreading of Jewish art music would be the center of attention.

It was clear from the beginning that the activity of the Society would not attain the same dimensions as its predecessor. Its activities concentrated predominantly on concerts. These concerts played a crucial role for the new Jewish music, as they offered the composers a platform which they normally would not have had. This was especially an important incentive for young composers to devote themselves to Jewish music. In the years 1923 to 1929 hundreds of works (for the most part chamber music), some of which were exclusively composed for the concerts of the Society, were created in this way. The programs were worked out by a music commission, which included, among others, the composers Michail Gnesin, the brothers Grigori and Alexander Krejn and Alexander Weprik.

One can judge the high standard of the Society by looking at the names of the performers. First-class Jewish and Russian artists, like the pianist Maria Judina or the members of the famous Beethoven quartet remained linked with the Society throughout the entire time of its existence.

Starting in 1925 the Society for Jewish music was attacked by music officials for its repertoire. Serious signs of a crisis became evident at the end of 1927. The Society was increasingly steered by communists. They demanded a complete re-orientation, especially a repertoire that met the requirements of Jewish working people. The days of most Jewish cultural institutions were already numbered - the last event of the society is dated December 22nd, 1929. Jewish artists had to adapt to the reigning cultural doctrine of socialist realism and had to deny their Judaism.

But at that time the New Jewish School was no longer confined to Russia. It also had a considerable influence on international Jewish musical life. Just as its activities in Russia had almost come to a standstill, this music spread throughout Europe, with Vienna as the most outstanding center. In 1928 a Society for the Promotion of Jewish Music was founded in Vienna. Its most important composers were Israel Brandmann, Joachim Stutschewsky



and Juliusz Wolfsohn.

Not only was the New Jewish School a victim of Stalinist antisemitic politics in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, but in other countries too its development was thwarted more and more by antisemitism. The final end came with NS-domination over West- and Central Europe, leading to the expulsion and murder of Jewish musicians.

## Jewish Music Research Centre

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### History and Goals of the JMRC:<sup>1</sup>

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The JMRC is an academic institution fully dedicated to the documentation, research and publication of scholarly materials about Jewish music. Founded in 1964 by Prof. Israel Adler, the JMRC functions as one of the research centers of the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Located in the building of the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL, at the Edmond J. Safra Campus, Givat Ram), and in the Itzhak Rabin Building for the World Center of Jewish Studies (Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies), the staff of the JMRC works in close cooperation with the Music Department and the National Sound Archives of JNUL, and with the Hebrew University's Institute of Jewish Studies and Department of Musicology.

The main task of the JMRC consists of collecting and studying oral and written documents pertaining to the musical traditions and the musical life of Jewish communities. The work of the JMRC encompasses ethnographical research of extent oral traditions, as well as historically-oriented research focusing on the interpretation of Jewish musical cultures in the past and the present. All the recorded and written documents gathered by the JMRC staff are deposited for conservation at the Music Department of JNUL. Research at the JMRC is carried on with the understanding that a full appreciation of the Jewish musical traditions is impossible without reference to the musical cultures of the non-Jewish societies with whom the Jews were in close contact for the past two millennia. Thus many projects are carried on in conjunction with colleagues and institutions from around the world who expand the vistas of JMRC researchers on co-territorial musical cultures.

The results of the JMRC Projects are published in four series of publications: Yuval - Studies of the JMRC; Yuval Monograph Series; Yuval Music

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/about.asp?cat=2&in=0>

Series (mainly scores and source materials); and the Anthology of Music Traditions in Israel (CDs).

## Wagner and the “Jewness” in Music

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“Das Judenthum in der Musik” (German, “Jewishness in Music”, but normally translated: Judaism in Music), (in German spelled after its first publication “Judentum”) is an essay by Richard Wagner, attacking Jews in general and the composers Giacomo Meyerbeer and Felix Mendelssohn in particular, which was published under a pseudonym in the “*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*” (NZM) of Leipzig in September 1850. It was reissued in a greatly expanded version under Wagners name in 1869. It is regarded by many as an important landmark in the history of German antisemitism.

### The original article of 1850

The first version of the article appeared in the NZM under the pseudonym of K. Freigedank (“K. Freethought”). In an April 1851 letter to Franz Liszt, Wagner gave the excuse that he used a pseudonym “to prevent the question being dragged down by the Jews to a purely personal level”.

At the time Wagner was living in exile in Zurich, on the run after his role in the 1849 revolution in Dresden. His article followed a series of essays in the NZM by his disciple Uhlig, attacking the music of Meyerbeers opera *Le prophète*. Wagner was particularly enraged by the success of *Le prophète* in Paris, all the more so because he had earlier been a slavish admirer of Meyerbeer, who had given him financial support and used his influence to get Wagners early opera *Rienzi*, his first real success, staged in Dresden in 1841.

Wagner was also emboldened by the death of Mendelssohn in 1847, the popularity of whose conservative style he felt was cramping the potential of German music. Although Wagner had shown virtually no sign of anti-Jewish prejudice previously (despite the claims of Rose in his book “Wagner, Race and Revolution” (1992), and others) , he was determined to build on Uhligs articles and prepare a broadside that would attack his artistic enemies, embedded in what he took to be a populist Judaeophobic context.

Translations from the work given below are from W. Ashton Elliss 1894 version, which gives some idea of the authors verbosity.

Wagner claims that the work was written to:

explain to ourselves the involuntary repulsion possessed for us by the nature and personality of the Jews, so as to vindicate that instinctive dislike which we plainly recognise as stronger and more overpowering than our conscious zeal to rid ourselves thereof.

Wagner holds that Jews are unable to speak European languages properly and that Jewish speech took the character of an “intolerably jumbled blabber”, a “creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle”, incapable of expressing true passion. This, he says, debars them from any possibility of creating song or music. He also states:

Although the peculiarities of the Jewish mode of speaking and singing come out the most glaringly in the commoner class of Jew, who has remained faithful to his fathers’ stock, and though the cultured son of Jewry takes untold pains to strip them off, nevertheless they shew an impertinent obstinacy in cleaving to him.

There is little novelty in these ideas, which are largely lifted from the theories of language and speech of the French Philosophes of the 18th century.

The music produced by composers such as Mendelssohn, whom Wagner damns with faint praise, is “sweet and tinkling without depth”. Meyerbeer, who was still alive at the time of publication, is attacked savagely for his music (and for the fact that audiences enjoy it) but without being expressly named.

The essay is riddled with the aggressiveness typical of many Judaeophobic publications of the previous few centuries. However Wagner did introduce one striking new image, which was to be taken up after him by many later anti-Semitic authors:

So long as the separate art of music had a real organic life-need in it [] there was nowhere to be found a Jewish composer. . . Only when a bodys inner death is manifest, do outside elements win the power of lodgement in it yet merely to destroy it. Then, indeed, that bodys flesh dissolves into a swarming colony of insect life: but who in looking on that bodys self, would hold it still for living?

“Only those artists who abandoned their Jewish roots were that possible—could at all express themselves artistically,” claims Wagner. In this context, he gives some convoluted near-endorsements of Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne, stating that the former became a poet only because German culture

had become inauthentic. It could thus be represented by a Jew, who understood from his very nature its cultural inauthenticity, but who also excoriated its corruption. In this, he was the “conscience of Judaism”, just as Judaism is “the evil conscience of our modern civilisation”. Wagner then goes on to refer to Börne, a Jewish writer and journalist who converted to Christianity. He tells Jews to follow his example, recommending that they follow Börne by helping to “redeem” German culture by abandoning Judaism.

Without once looking back, take ye your part in this regenerative work of deliverance through self-annulment; then are we one and un-dissevered! But bethink ye, that only one thing can redeem you from your curse; the redemption of Ahasuerus Going under!

In the original version of 1850, instead of the word “self-annulment”, Wagner used the words “the bloody struggle of self-annihilation” - displaying a rather more aggressive approach which was perhaps too blatant for the more widely-known figure he had become by 1868.

## **Reception of the 1850 article**

It should be borne in mind that NZM had a very small circulation and no more, in J-M Fischers estimate, than approximately 1,200. Virtually the only response was a letter of complaint to the editor of NZM from Mendelssohns old colleague Ignaz Moscheles and other professors at the Leipzig Conservatory.

Fischer has found virtually no other substantial response. The article, which Wagner had hoped would be a sensation, and bring him in some money as a journalist, sank like a stone. Nearly all of Wagners associates, including Liszt, were embarrassed by the article and thought it was a passing phase (which it was not) or a mere fit of pique (which, in part, it was).

## **1850-1869**

In his major theoretical statement, “Oper und Drama” (1852), Wagner made similar objections about Meyerbeer. But otherwise, although Wagners personal letters contain occasional jibes about Jews and Judaism there was no suggestion over future years that he was likely to return to the attack or revive his earlier anonymous article.

However in his notebook for 1868 (known as the “Brown Book”) there appear the ominous words “Consider Judentum.” It is not clear what provoked this. Amongst the contributing factors may be the death of his “enemy”

Meyerbeer in 1864, Wagners own relative security under the patronage of the King of Bavaria, and increase in his personal confidence now that his *Ring* cycle was under way and he had completed his operas *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

An intriguing possibility is that, having received his mothers correspondence (which he subsequently burnt) from his sister in 1868, he discovered that his biological father was the actor and musician Ludwig Geyer, and feared that Geyer was Jewish (which he was not) and that he himself might be Jewish as well. He may therefore also have been influenced by thoughts of his wife Cosima, who was if anything more stridently anti-Semitic than he.

## The 1869 version and after

For reasons which remain unclear, in 1869 Wagner republished the essay with an addendum as long as the original, and under his own name.

The first part was reprinted as in 1850, with some references toned down, as in the example already given. With a confidence lacking in the original frenetic effort, the second (new) part seeks to contextualise Wagners anti-Jewish feelings in the setting of later nineteenth-century German politics, whilst continuing to snipe at the dead Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer and bringing in other dead musicians, including Schumann, on Wagners side.

Once again many of Wagners supporters were in despair at the provocation. Even Cosima doubted that it was wise. By this time of course Wagner was a well-known figure and the reprint brought many counter-attacks, amongst which may be mentioned: Joseph Engel, "Richard Wagner, Jewishness in Music, a Defense" (*Richard Wagner, das Judentum in Musik, ein Abwehr*); E. M. Oettinger, "An Open Love-Letter to Richard Wagner" (*Offenes Billetdoux an Richard Wagner*, Dresden, 1869); and A. Truhart, "Open Letter to Richard Wagner" (*Offener Brief an Richard Wagner* St. Petersburg, 1869).

However the fuss about the reprint was little more than a storm in a teacup. Far more important, in terms of publicizing Wagner's anti-Jewish feelings, was his stream of essays and newspaper articles over following years, up to and including that of his death in 1883, which directly or indirectly criticised Jewish individuals or the Jews as a whole.

These coincided with the growth of anti-Semitism in the sense of a movement to withdraw the civic rights extended to Jews during the 19th century, and particularly on the unification of Germany in 1870 as a significant force in German and Austrian politics. Anti-Semitic leaders indeed made approaches to Wagner requesting his support: although he never offered such support officially, nor did he dissociate himself from their policies.

## The title in English

The article's first translator into English, W.Ashton Ellis, gave it the title "Judaism in Music". This translation has seemed unsatisfactory to some Wagner scholars. For example, Barry Millington refers to it as "Jewishness in Music".

There are two principal reasons for concern about Ashton's translation of the title. Firstly, "Judaism" in English carries the meaning of "the profession or practice of the Jewish religion; the religious system or the polity of the Jews", a topic on which Wagner does not touch. "Judentum" however in 19th-century Germany carried a much broader meaning - roughly analogous to the nonce English word "Jewdom" (cf. Christendom) and including the concept of the social practices of the Jews. In particular it carried the pejorative sense of "haggling" or "marketeering" - it was used in this sense for example by Karl Marx.

Undoubtedly Wagner wished to refer to this sense, in effect using the word as a pun, as it forms the topic of the essay as a whole. It is therefore important to bear in mind the full range of implications of the title-word "Judentum" in considering the essay as a whole. "Jewishness", whilst not ideal, is perhaps a closer English approximation to "Judentum".

## Wagner and the Jews

Notwithstanding his public utterances against Jewish influence in music, and even his utterances against specific Jews, Wagner had numerous Jewish friends and supporters even in his later period.

Included amongst these were his favourite conductor Hermann Levi, the pianists Carl Tausig and Joseph Rubinstein, the writer Heinrich Porges and very many others.

In his autobiography, written between 1865 and 1870, he declared that his acquaintance with the Jew Samuel Lehrs whom he knew in Paris in the early 1840s was "one of the most beautiful friendships of my life". There remain, therefore, elements of the enigmatic, and of the opportunist, in Wagner's personal attitude towards Jews.

## Recent reception

"Das Judentum" was an embarrassment to the early Wagnerites and was rarely reprinted in the early 20th century, except as part of his collected works.

Fischer has found no significant critical comment on the essay. Before the Nazi period there was just one reprint of the essay itself, in Weimar in 1914. It is therefore very unlikely that it was read by Hitler or any of the Nazi hierarchy during the development of the Nazi movement (or later) and there is no evidence of this. During the Nazi period there were just two publications: in Berlin in 1934 and in Leipzig in 1939. Neither of these seem to have been large editions.

“Das Judentum” is not quoted or mentioned by early writers on Nazism in the 1950s such as Hannah Arendt.

Interest in the work seems to have revived in the 1960s with new awareness of the Holocaust following the Eichmann trial. In this context some have suggested that Wagner’s advice for Jews to “go under” “like Ahasuerus” was intended as a call for their extermination, as planned by the Nazi regime, but there is no justification for this.

In fact the “Ahasuerus” Wagner seems to have had in mind was a character from a play ( *Halle und Jerusalem* ) by Achim von Arnim, a “good” Jew who voluntarily sacrifices himself saving other characters from a fire.

Wagner may have meant no more than “Jews must sacrifice their separate identity for the common good”; the interpretation that he intended murder was never attributed to him before the Nazi policy of physical extermination.

Because the Nazis deliberately took “ownership” of Wagner for their own propaganda purposes, it does not follow logically that one should interpret the composer’s writings only in the context of Nazi policies. Wagner died five years before Hitler was born in 1889.

The essay was omitted from the “complete” edition of Wagner’s prose works issued in 1983 on the centenary of his death , because of its perceived link with Nazi anti-Semitism. A scholarly critical edition, with background material and contemporary comments, was prepared by Jens-Malte Fischer in 2000.

Some writers (for example, Bryan Magee) have sought to make a qualified defence of Wagner’s originality of thought in “Das Judentum”, despite its acknowledged malevolence. A full consideration of “Das Judentum’s” contents however renders this defence otiose.

Although therefore it is perhaps inappropriate to bring forward “Das Judentum” in itself as a major milestone in German anti-Semitism, the same cannot be said for Wagners attitudes to the Jews in general.

His later writings, published when he was a well-known and influential figure, frequently contain aggressive anti-Jewish comments, although at the same time he maintained a circle of Jewish-born colleagues and admirers.

Adolf Hitler presented himself as an admirer of Wagner’s music, and is said to have claimed that “there is only one legitimate predecessor to National

Socialism: Wagner". Wagner's music was frequently played during Nazi rallies (as was the music of Beethoven, also "appropriated" by the Nazis).

Wagner's daughter-in-law, Winifred Wagner, was an admirer of Adolf Hitler and ran the Bayreuth Festival of Wagner's music from the death of her husband, Siegfried, in 1930 until the end of World War II, when she was ousted.

During the Nazi regime, the Nazi hierarchy was frequently required to attend performances of Wagner operas. Thus Germans of the Nazi era, even if they knew nothing about music, and knew nothing of Wagner's writings, were told clearly that Wagner was a great German, and had his anti-Semitic views clearly spelled out to them.

Because of these factors, performances of Wagner's works in the modern state of Israel did not occur during the twentieth century, by consensus.

In recent years many Israelis have argued that it is possible to appreciate his musical talents, without implying acceptance of his political or social beliefs. A public performance in Tel Aviv in 2001 of Wagner's prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, conducted as an unprogrammed encore by Daniel Barenboim, left its audience partly delighted, partly enraged.

## R. Wagner in Israel-BBC News

Thursday, 3 May, 2001, 19:10 GMT 20:10 UK<sup>1</sup>

Wagner concert sparks Israel row Conductor and pianist[sic] Daniel Barenboim has defended his decision to perform an opera by Richard Wagner at a Jerusalem festival, despite opposition from the Israeli Parliament.

Israeli performances of works by the German composer are often accompanied by protest from Holocaust survivors and others who say he promoted anti-Semitism.

At a debate in the Knesset on Wednesday, some deputies called for the performance to be cancelled, saying it would be an "insult" to the memories of Jewish victims of the Nazis.

Barenboim - who is Argentinean-born but brought up in Israel - said he will go ahead with a performance of *Die Walkuere* at the Festival of Israel in July.

The Knesset, Israel's parliament, will debate the issue next week "It is a fact that Wagner was an anti-Semite," he said on Israeli radio. "Just as many great men of his time were, but what's causing problems in Israel is that he's associated with Nazism, and that came later."

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<sup>1</sup><http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/1311347.stm>



Israel is home to some 300,000 survivors of the Nazi Holocaust.

Wilhelm Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig on 22 May 1813 and died in Venice of a heart attack in 1883.

Although he had been dead for some time when German National Socialism evolved, he did provide anti-Semitic inspiration for the Nazis, for whom he was a cultural icon.

Adolf Hitler was a great admirer of Wagner, and the composer's music was played at Nazi rallies.

Wagner is best known for his grand-scale operas - The Ring Cycle, Tristan and Isolde and Lohengrin.

Barenboim said he could understand the feelings of those who felt uncomfortable with Wagner's music, but that he was "outraged" at the attempt to stop other people hearing the music.

"I think the whole issue of Wagner is irrational," he said. "You can say many things about Wagner but he is not responsible for the Holocaust."

Last year the Israel Symphony Orchestra played its first performance of Wagner.

That concert was conducted by Mendi Rodan, himself a Holocaust survivor, but was disturbed by a noisy protest from a man whose family died in concentration camps. Previous attempts to perform Wagner in Israel have failed.

Festival organisers plan to go ahead with the performance and almost half the available tickets have been sold. The matter will be debated in a plenary session of the parliament next week.

## **Barenboim on Wagner and Anti-Semitism**

### **Wagner and Ideology<sup>1</sup>**

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Daniel Barenboim & Edward Said in Conversation

The following is an edited conversation about Wagner that took place between my friend, Edward Saïd, and myself, at Columbia University, where Mr. Saïd is Professor of Comparative Literature and English. The conversation appears in full in the Spring 1998 issue of *Raritan*, a quarterly publication of Rutgers University.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.danielbarenboim.com/journal\\_wagner.htm](http://www.danielbarenboim.com/journal_wagner.htm)

Edward Saïd: What did you think about his views on the Jews and music, for example, that really are quite central to a lot of what he wrote? And subsequently, what did you think about the modern musicological and cultural interpretations of Wagner that stress or try to stress the extent to which some of those ideas that he discusses in the prose works are carried over into the operas? Interestingly, anti-Semitism and Wagner was not really a big topic until fairly recently, although Adorno pioneered it in his early book on Wagner. One of the things that he says there is of course that Mime and Beckmesser, to name two characters, are in fact caricatures of Jews, and that if you pay close attention to that strand in the work - I mean in the prose work - you can find it. Given the history of association between Wagner and National Socialism - and the horrendous results of that association, perhaps, in the Holocaust - there is a massive weight there that one has to deal with somehow, in looking at the work. You're a Jew, and I don't need to add that I'm a Palestinian, so it's an interesting...

Daniel Barenboim: We are both Semitic. So he was against both of us!

ES: Wagner and the Jews. It's a question that, in a certain sense, can't be avoided. If I might just add one other thing and that is that in his operas Wagner uses Jewish caricatures to represent characters who themselves are not Jewish. For example, Mime is not Jewish in the work - he's not identified that way - and the same is true about Beckmesser - whereas in his prose works, Wagner does speak directly about Jews.

DB: Well, I think it's obvious that Wagner's anti-Semitic views and writings are monstrous. There is no way around that. And I must say that if I, in a naïvely sentimental way, try to think which of the great composers of the past I would love to spend twenty-four hours with, if I could, Wagner doesn't come to mind. I'd love to follow Mozart around for twenty-four hours; I'm sure it would be very entertaining, amusing, edifying, but Wagner...

ES: You wouldn't invite him to dinner.

DB: Wagner? I might invite him to dinner for study purposes, but not for enjoyment. Wagner, the person, is absolutely appalling, despicable, and, in a way, very difficult to put together with the music he wrote, which so often has exactly the opposite kind of feelings. It is noble, generous, etc. But now we are entering into the whole discussion of whether it is moral or not and this becomes too involved in a discussion. But suffice it to say for now that Wagner's anti-Semitism was monstrous. That he used a lot of, at the time, common terminology for what could be described as salon anti-Semitism, and that he had all sorts of rationalizations about it, does not make it any less monstrous. He also used some abominable phrases which can be, at best, interpreted as being said in the heat of the moment - that Jews should be burned, etc. Whether he meant these things figuratively or

not can be discussed. The fact remains that he was a monstrous anti-Semite. How we would look at the monstrous anti-Semitism without the Nazis, I don't know. One thing I do know is that they, the Nazis, used, misused, and abused Wagner's ideas or thoughts - I think this has to be said - beyond what he might have had in mind. Anti-Semitism was not invented by Adolf Hitler and it was certainly not invented by Richard Wagner. It existed for generations and generations and centuries before. The difference between National Socialism and the earlier forms of anti-Semitism is that the Nazis were the first, to my knowledge, to evolve a systematic plan to exterminate the Jews, the whole people. And I don't think, although Wagner's anti-Semitism is monstrous, that he can be made responsible for that, even though a lot of the Nazi thinkers, if you want to call them that, often quoted Wagner as their precursor. It also needs to be said for clarity's sake that, in the operas themselves, there is not one Jewish character. There is not one anti-Semitic remark. There is nothing in any one of the ten great operas of Wagner even remotely approaching a character like Shylock. That you can interpret Mime or Beckmesser in a certain anti-Semitic way (in the same way, you can also interpret *The Flying Dutchman* as the errant Jew), this is a question that speaks not about Wagner, but about our imagination and how our imagination is developed, coming into contact with those works.

ES: Yes, but it's more than that, Daniel. You can say that it's our imagination, but it's also known, I think, that Wagner drew on things available to him in his culture, images, which came from the standard language, ideas, and images, of anti-Semitic thought.

DB: Judaism was a subject of parody, there is no question about that. It was a subject of parody, and I'm sure that in the privacy of Wagner's house in Wahnfried, he and Cosima very often imitated Mime with a Jewish accent and with Jewish mannerisms, etc.; I don't deny that for one moment. On the other hand, you have to say that Wagner was in that respect artistically very open and, I would say, courageous, too. If he'd really wanted to make the operas an artistic expression of his anti-Semitism, he would have called a spade a spade, and he didn't. In other words, that he ridiculed the Jews is absolutely clear, but I don't think that this is an inherent part of the works.

I think that Wagner's anti-Semitism is one thing, and the things that we have been forced to associate with his music are another. I would like to speak about the whole problem of Wagner in Israel, because I think it's linked to that. In 1936, Toscanini, who had been in Bayreuth, as you know, in 1930 and I think 31, refused to go back to Bayreuth because of the Nazis and I think because of Hitler's prisons in Bayreuth. He went instead to Tel Aviv where the then Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra was founded by Bronislaw Huberman and conducted the first opening concerts of the orchestra. In the

program, there was Brahms's Second Symphony, there were some Rossini overtures, and also the prelude to Act 1 and Act 3 of Lohengrin. Nobody had a word to say about it; nobody criticized him; the orchestra was very happy to play it. Wagner's anti-Semitism was as well known then as it is now, so therefore the whole problem of playing Wagner in Israel has nothing to do with his anti-Semitism. What actually happened after that was that, after Kristallnacht in November 1938, the orchestra, which is a collective group of musicians who govern themselves and run themselves to this day, decided that because of the association with the Nazi's use of Wagner's music and how it led to the burning of the books - they refused to play any more Wagner. This is all there is to it. Everything that has come since then has been the reaction of people from outside the orchestra, some in favor, some absolutely against.

Why am I telling you this? Because I think this shows very clearly that one has to distinguish between Wagner's anti-Semitism, which is monstrous and despicable and worse than the sort of normal, shall we say, accepted-unacceptable level of anti-Semitism, and the use the Nazis made of it. I have met people who absolutely cannot listen to Wagner. A lady who came to see me in Tel Aviv when the whole Wagner debate was taking place said, "How can you want to play that? I saw my family taken to the gas chambers to the sound of the Meistersinger overture. Why should I listen to that?" Simple answer: there is no reason why she should listen to it. I don't think that Wagner should be forced on anybody, and the fact that he has inspired such extreme feelings, both pro and con, since his death, doesn't mean to say that we don't have some civic obligations. Therefore, my suggestion at the time was that the orchestra, which was willing to play - and they were the musicians or rather the descendants of the musicians who had voted in 1938 to boycott, in other words they were redoing the vote and closing the circle - should not play it in a subscription concert where anybody who has been a loyal subscriber to the Israel Philharmonic for so many years would be forced to listen to something that they didn't want to listen to. But if somebody does not make these associations, especially since these associations do not stem from Wagner himself, he should be able to hear it. Therefore, my suggestion was that it should be played in a non-subscription concert of the Israel Philharmonic where anybody who didn't want to hear it didn't have to do, and anybody who wanted to go had to go and buy a ticket for that specific concert. And the fact that this was not allowed to happen is a reflection of a kind of political abuse and of all sorts of ideas that again have nothing to do with Wagner's music. And this is really the chapter of Wagner and

# Schoenberg's Moses und Aron by Aaron Tugendhaft

Schoenbergs Moses und Aron

by Aaron Tugendhaft

[...]

## I. The Biblical Story and the Libretto as Commentary

Schoenberg's main source for the libretto of *Moses und Aron*, which he wrote himself, was, of course, the Bible. Originally, the text was filled with direct quotes from Luther's Bible, a copy of which Schoenberg always had at his bedside. These, however, were later deleted; he explains this decision in a letter he wrote to Alban Berg on 5 August, 1930: "I am now, among other revisions, removing these Biblical echoes...because I am of the opinion that the language of the Bible is mediaeval German."<sup>10</sup> Schoenberg wanted the libretto to reflect his own voice, and his own approach to the original biblical text. In a letter to Walter Eidlitz, 15 March 1933, Schoenberg summarized this approach: "The elements...that I myself have placed in the foreground are: the idea of the inconceivable God, of the Chosen People, and of the leader of the people." And he continues: "My Moses...resembles...Michelangelos. He is not human at all."<sup>11</sup> It is from his characterization of Moses, the leader, that we get the title of the work. Schoenberg achieves this characterization by establishing Aaron as a foil to Moses. By showing us the faults in Aaron, Schoenberg highlights the greatness, and the inhumanity, of Moses.

Broadly outlined, the opera can be summarized as follows. Act I, Scene 1, opens with Moses standing before the Burning Bush, where God explains to him his mission: to reveal to the Children of Israel the "one, infinite, omnipresent, unperceived and inconceivable God," who will take them out of Egypt. God tells Moses that his brother, Aaron, will serve as his tongue, for Moses, though he knows the idea, has not been granted the gift of eloquence to convey it. Scene 2 shows the meeting of the two brothers in the wilderness, and Scene 3, their arrival among the people. Scene 4, which makes up half the Act, shows the great difficulty the people have in accepting an invisible and nonmaterial God. Since they are unconvinced by Moses' abstract words, Aaron gives the people tangible proof in the form of miracles. The Act closes with the Children of Israel marching triumphantly to freedom.

Act II takes place in the wilderness. For forty days, Moses has been on the mountain where God is revealing to him the law. The people are growing restless and mutinous, and the Elders beg Aaron for his help (Scene 1). A raging crowd surrounds the Elders and Aaron, demanding the return of their old gods. Pressed by the Elders, Aaron yields and sets up the Golden Calf

(Scene 2). Scene 3, the most spectacular in the opera, shows the orgy around the Golden Calf. In Scene 4, Moses descends from the mountain bearing the Tablets of the Law. The Golden Calf vanishes at his cry of furious scorn; intimidated, the people creep away, lamenting their idol. Left alone with Aaron (Scene 5), Moses gives rein to his terrible anger. Aaron, however, using a subtle and plausible argument, justifies his actions to his brother. He affirms his love for the people and for the divine idea, which he feels, however, cannot be made comprehensible without some form of interpretation which will necessarily limit it. Moses remains adamant about the superiority of abstract thought, to which Aaron quickly replies that the Tablets that Moses holds are themselves images. In a fit of despair, Moses shatters the Tablets of the Law and utters a final "O word, thou word, that I lack!"

Act III, for which Schoenberg wrote the text but never completed the music, is comprised of one scene. Aaron is brought to Moses in chains, and Moses accuses him of enslaving the people in the worship of images and material symbols of the existence of God. Moses then orders the soldiers who have asked, "Should we kill him?" to set Aaron free. As soon as he is released, Aaron falls dead, for he is chained to material things that are mortal, unlike the idea that guides Moses.

Unlike the text of Exodus 3, which begins with God calling out to Moses, Schoenbergs text begins with Moses calling out to God. "Only one, infinite one, omnipresent one, unperceived and inconceivable God!"<sup>12</sup> These words which begin the opera will remain central to the entire work, as will this original characterization of Moses as the one man who holds this belief entirely. Schoenbergs Moses is unlike the biblical Moses in that he knows entirely where he stands. The biblical Moses, born a Jew, raised an Egyptian, and having lived his adult life as a Midyanite, cannot attest to such surety of place. Five lines before the scene of the Burning Bush in Exodus, Moses says about himself, "I have been a stranger in a strange land."<sup>13</sup> For this reason, we find in Exodus God having to introduce himself to Moses: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."<sup>14</sup> Not so in Schoenbergs adaptation. In order to portray Moses as steadfast in his knowledge of the true God, Schoenberg has Moses open the opera with an acknowledgment of God. Schoenbergs text continues to emphasize Moses connection with God: "Joined with the only God, with you united, from Pharaoh separated!" The closest equivalent to this in the original text is Gods guaranteeing Moses that He will help him in his task in Egypt. "I will be with thee,"<sup>15</sup> is the practical assurance that Schoenberg transforms into a spiritual doctrine of unity with God.

It is at the end of this scene that we first encounter the relationship between Moses and Aaron. In order to distinguish Moses role from that of

Aaron, not only does Schoenberg's Moses tell God that he is not eloquent, as his counterpart in Exodus does, but mentions as well that "thought is easy." This addition breaks with the traditional Jewish characterization of Moses as the most modest of men. Instead, in Schoenberg's reworking, Moses knows his strengths and is not too modest to mention them. He is the one who thinks; he needs Aaron as the one who speaks.<sup>16</sup>

Schoenberg ends this scene with a monologue for God which does not appear in the original. Where the original sends Moses off to meet Aaron directly after God's revealing Aaron as the one who will be Moses's mouth, Schoenberg has God speak on the chosenness of the Jewish people and their special role in the world:

This people is chosen, before all peoples, To be the people of the only God, So that they know him and dedicate themselves to him alone. Also they will undergo all trials that have in millennia ever come to be conceived. And this I promise you: I shall conduct you forward to where you will be with the infinite one and to all the peoples you will be a model.

Schoenberg includes these ideas here because he wants us to keep them in mind as we watch the remainder of the opera. These are some of the key ideas in Judaism, ones that have influenced biblical commentary throughout the ages. By mentioning them here, Schoenberg establishes a link between his work and the traditions of biblical commentary and Jewish philosophy.

The text of Scene 2 is entirely a product of Schoenberg's imagination and his understanding of the characters of Moses and Aaron. The meeting of the brothers takes up only two sentences of the original text, none of which is dialogue: "And the Lord said to Aaron, Go to the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had commanded him."<sup>17</sup> From these two lines Schoenberg creates a conversation between the brothers that lasts seven and a half minutes.<sup>18</sup> No traditional Jewish biblical commentators hint at any similar exchange between the brothers, nor are there any stories in the Midrash that I am aware of that tell of such a conversation.<sup>19</sup> Instead it seems that this conversation is entirely a product of Schoenberg's own understanding of the text, and is inserted in order to build on the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Understanding the relationship between the brothers in the way he does, however, is not entirely original. Throughout Jewish thought, Moses is associated with the Law or the idea, while Aaron is associated with peace and compromise. This is most clearly represented in two commonly known Jewish maxims: "Moses is Truth, and his Law is Truth,"<sup>20</sup> and "Aaron loves peace and pursues peace."<sup>21</sup> Schoenberg's characterization of the principles is not new; what is unprecedented is the emphasis that his work places on the relationship between the two.

The third scene of Act I is entitled "Moses and Aaron Bring Gods Message to the People." This title would seem to apply to the fourth scene as well, since the third is a preparation for the fourth and is musically continuous with it. Like the previous scene, the third is a creation of Schoenbergs with no similar scene in the text of Exodus. Its importance is mainly dramatic, portraying the anticipation of the people for the arrival of the brothers and the new god. In ways its function is similar to the opening scene of Verdis *Otello*. More important to the plot than the suspense it creates, though, is how the act supplies us with a characterization of the fourth protagonist of the opera: the people.

Since the opening of Scene 2 when Moses met Aaron in the wilderness, what has taken place on stage has not had a parallel in the text of Exodus. Schoenberg returns to the original text for Scene 4, which takes place in Exodus in the sentences directly following the reunion of the brothers. Exodus 4:29-30 states: "And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the Children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people." This is roughly what takes place in Schoenbergs version, yet he uses the opportunity to build further the conflict between the brothers. Moses is first to present the new god, and does so with the line: "The only one, infinite one, all-powerful one, omnipresent one, invisible one, inconceivable one..." But this idea is not something the people are able to comprehend, as was expected by Moses in the first scene. To Moses, the people reply with: "Worship? Whom? Where is he? I see him not! Where is he?" Since Moses is unsuccessful, Aaron steps in to speak to the people and show them signs, as is stated in Exodus. Schoenberg has the scene staged in such a way, though, that as Aaron fulfills his role, Moses recedes into the background, finally calling out to God: "Almighty one, now my strength is exhausted, and my thought becomes powerless in Aarons word!" The closest to such a cry that can be found in Exodus is where Moses, after hearing of the increased labor Pharaoh has put on the Israelites, calls out to God: "Lord, why hast thou dealt ill with this people?"<sup>22</sup> This is important, because the Moses who said this is not Schoenbergs Moses. The Moses of Exodus loves the people and calls out to God in their favor. On the other hand, as David Lewin writes, Schoenbergs Moses "knows and loves God; he does not love the people..."<sup>23</sup> Seen in this way, the cry of Schoenbergs Moses who is estranged from the people is diametrically opposed to the cry of his counterpart in the original text. The scene ends with Aaron convincing the people with miracles, as is the case in Exodus, where it is stated that "the people believed."<sup>24</sup> The people then sing a triumphal march reminiscent of the Song of Victory that appears in Exodus 15, but differing in emphasis. Schoenbergs lyrics stress the



chosenness: "We are his chosen people before all peoples." Since the plagues and the dealings with Pharaoh are not important for the relationships with which he is concerned, Schoenberg leaves these items out of the libretto, expecting us to know the biblical story and fill them in ourselves.

The second act takes place at the foot of Mount Sinai, and is based roughly on Chapter 32 of Exodus. The first three scenes of this act are derived from the first six lines of this chapter. Schoenberg takes these six lines and develops them into an intricate interchange between Aaron, the people, and, though they don't appear in Exodus, the Seventy Elders. Scene 1 works in much the same way as Act I, Scene 3 did. Schoenberg builds tension in the first scene by having the anarchy of the people described first by the Elders before the people enter in Scene 2, where it is seen on stage. This is the main purpose of Scene 1, since no interchange between Aaron and the Elders appears in the original text.

Unlike the biblical text which has the people questioning the existence of Moses only, Schoenberg's text at the start of Scene 2 has the people ask not only "Where is Moses?" but "Where is the great omnipresent one?" as well. Exodus has the people saying to Aaron: "[M]ake us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this man Moses, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him."<sup>25</sup> The text seems to be saying that the people wanted another leader, another Moses, and not another god. This is made clear by Nachmanides, where he writes:

[The people] wanted another Moses, saying: "Moses, the man who showed us the way from Egypt until now, being in charge of the journeyings at the commandment of the Eternal by the hand of Moses, he is now lost to us; let us make ourselves another Moses who will show us the way at the commandment of the Eternal by his hand." This is the reason for their mentioning, "Moses, the man that brought us up," rather than saying "the God who brought them up," for they needed a man of God.<sup>26</sup>

Instead of following this more literal interpretation, Schoenberg chooses to view the statement of the people in Exodus as a rejection of God, and a request for gods to replace Him. Schoenberg's belief that the people wanted to return to polytheism is supported by Rashi, who writes: "The people asked for a god who shall go before us. The Hebrew *yelkhu* ("go") is in the plural, indicating that the people desired several gods."<sup>27</sup>

By not taking the more literal understanding, Schoenberg increases the tension between a people who don't want to follow an unseen God, Moses who can only see value in the uncorrupted idea, and Aaron who is willing to dilute the idea in order to get the people to make the jump from polytheism to monotheism.

Aaron is finally swayed by a combination of the Elders' pressure ("Aaron,

help us...Theyll murder us!"), his own insecurity about the new god ("He is a severe God; maybe he has killed [Moses]!") and the peoples conclusion that "[t]he gods have killed [Moses]!" He relents:

People of Israel, I return your gods to you, and also give you to them, just as you have demanded.... You shall provide the stuff; I shall give it such form: ordinary, visible, easy to understand in gold forever. Bring out your gold! Yield it! Call him forth! You then shall be happy!

This speech Schoenberg derives from one line in Exodus: "And Aaron said to them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me."<sup>28</sup> The emphasis that Schoenbergs Aaron places on the image, "ordinary and visible," is clearly an addition that Schoenberg has made. Aaron does not only pursue peace; he is willing to corrupt the word and give form to an image in order to obtain it.

It is important to notice the lack of sympathy Schoenberg holds for Aaron. Where the majority of traditional biblical commentators have spent their space on these few lines in Exodus attempting to defend Aarons actions, Schoenberg makes no such attempts. Commentating on Exodus 32:2, Rashi writes: "Aaron said to himself: The womenfolk and the children prize their jewelry dearly. So the whole matter may be delayed on account of my demand. Meanwhile, Moses might return."<sup>29</sup> Schoenberg, on the other hand, does not allow for such an explanation, since his Aaron asks for the peoples gold, and not that of their wives and their children. Likewise, though Verse 5 has Aaron proclaim, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord," any similar proclamation is conspicuously missing from Schoenbergs text. Nachmanides comments on this verse, saying: "It is for this reason that Aaron said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Eternal, meaning that the services and the sacrifices would be to the Proper Name of God in order to obtain His favor upon the power [symbolized by] this image..."<sup>30</sup> Schoenberg, on the other hand, does not portray Aaron as seeing the Calf as a symbol of the True God. Instead, Schoenbergs Aaron proclaims: "This gold image attests that in all things that are, a god lives." This claim is fundamentally opposed to the foundation of Judaism, a religion whose birth can be seen in the allegorical story of the child Abraham smashing the idols of his father.

A third defense of Aaron that Schoenberg makes impossible, since he has not included Aarons proclamation regarding the festivities beginning in the morning, is that he attempts to delay until tomorrow. This defense can also be found in the writings of Nachmanides on Verse 5. He writes: "It is possible that Aaron said, Tomorrow [shall be a feast], in order to delay them, thinking that perhaps Moses would come in the meantime and they would abandon the calf."<sup>31</sup> That Schoenberg goes so far as to not include the principal line

for Aarons defense shows the utter lack of sympathy Schoenberg holds for Aaron, a man willing to corrupt the idea.

About Act II, Scene 3, entitled "The Golden Calf and the Altar," Schoenberg writes: "In the treatment of this scene...I went pretty much to the limit, and this too is probably where my piece is most operatic; as indeed it must be."<sup>32</sup> In this scene, the grandest of the opera, Schoenberg chooses to show explicitly what the text in Exodus merely suggests. Exodus tells us that "the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to disport themselves."<sup>33</sup> God is also quoted as saying to Moses that the people "have turned aside quickly out of the way which [God] commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed to it."<sup>34</sup> A further hint into what was taking place comes from Gods command to Moses: "Let me alone, that my wrath may burn against them, and that I may consume them."<sup>35</sup> The text does not supply us with details to what the people were doing; all we know is that their actions were bad enough to cause God to desire to destroy them, after having saved them from slavery and giving them the Law. Schoenberg calls up his artistry in order to supply us with an image of what took place around the Golden Calf, a pagan orgy for the stage whose grandiosity is such that this scene becomes the most "operatic" of the entire opera.

Scene 4 has Moses descend with the Tablets of the Law. When he sees the calf he exclaims: "Begone, you image of powerlessness, you enclose the boundless in an image!" At this, the Golden Calf vanishes; the people lament its loss as they exit the stage: "The golden rays are extinguished; our god is again invisible. Every joy, every pleasure, every prospect is gone! All is again gloom and darkness!" There is a striking difference between how Schoenberg represents how the people deal with the destruction of the calf and how Nachmanides interprets the text. Nachmanides writes: "As soon as the people saw Moses, they immediately left the calf and rejected it, and they allowed him to burn it and scatter its powder upon the water, and no one quarreled with him at all."<sup>36</sup> Schoenberg does not show as much faith in the Children of Israel; in his interpretation there is only one person who does the correct thing: Moses.

Scene 5 is the final scene for which Schoenberg completed the music. Like Act I, Scene 2, this scene is a dialogue between the brothers, but unlike its predecessor in Act I, a source for this conversation can be found in the original text. However, unlike its counterpart in Exodus, which is practical, the conversation that takes place in the opera has philosophical dimensions. In Exodus we find Aaron defending his actions in a pragmatic way; "Thou knowest the people, that they are bent on mischief,"<sup>37</sup> Aaron replies to Moses charge. In contrast, Schoenbergs Aaron, in reply to Moses question, "O

what have you done?" answers:

Naught different, just my task as it ever has been: When your idea gave forth no word, my word gave forth no image for them, I worked marvels for eyes and ears to witness.

Aaron sees his behavior as nothing more than continuing his role of bringing the people closer to God by supplying them with wonders for their senses. Instead of placing blame on the mischievous nature of the people as the biblical Aaron does, Schoenberg's Aaron takes this opportunity to confront Moses about his conception of God. "And yet was the marvel an image, not more, when your word destroyed my image." Aaron accuses Moses of partaking in imagery himself, calling the destruction of the calf and the Tablets of the Law images similar to those used by Aaron. At this Moses smashes the Tablets, not wanting anything to do with imagery. Although Schoenberg has altered the placement of the smashing of the Tablets (in Exodus it occurs in front of the people, before Moses is left alone with Aaron,) his interpretation that Moses smashes the Tablets not out of anger but to prove a point is not unprecedented. In the original text, the smashing of the Tablets is followed in the next verse with the destruction of the Golden Calf. Many commentators agree that Moses is making a point; neither the calf nor the Tablets have any value in themselves; only the idea contains value. In Schoenberg's rendition, however, Aaron takes Moses' point and turns it on itself. By showing that even Moses' breaking of the Tablets is an image, Aaron leads Moses to utter despair. Aaron claims his victory, a victory not present in Exodus, by restating his purpose:

Image of your idea; they are one, as all is that emerges from it. I simply yield before necessity; for it is certain this folk will be sustained to give proof of the eternal idea. This is my mission: to speak it more simply than I understand it. Yet, the knowing ones surely will ever again discover it!

Aaron's philosophy is to treat things practically, for this is the only way a people can be led. At this point Schoenberg has the people pass in the distance led by the cloud of fire;<sup>38</sup> with this image to assure them, they can now state:

For he has chosen us before all peoples, to be the people of the only God; to serve him alone, no one else's servant!

This does not occur in the original text, but is used here to emphasize the victory of Aaron and his approach to leading the people. In contrast, Moses is left at the end of the act in despair, calling out: "O word, you word, that I lack."

Act III, for which Schoenberg made only some rough musical sketches, represents Moses' final triumph over Aaron. The scene is the death of Aaron, which takes place in the Bible in Numbers 20:22-29. However, Schoenberg's

account is entirely different from the biblical one. While the Bible states that Aaron was to die in the wilderness as a result of his rebellion, with Moses, against the word of God at the water of Meriva, the sin of Schoenberg's Aaron is something completely different. "Aaron, now this must cease," Moses orders Aaron, who is in chains, at the opening of the act. But Aaron doesn't understand what he has done wrong. He says: "I was to speak in images while you spoke in ideas; to the heart, while you spoke to the mind." This defense, however, does not convince Moses, who replies:

You, from whom both word and image flee, you yourself remain, you yourself live in the images that you have provided for the people to witness. Having been alienated from the source, from the idea, then neither word nor image satisfied you...

The sin Moses accuses Aaron of here is clearly different from the one supplied by the bible. Furthermore, unlike the biblical passage that has God accusing Aaron, in Schoenberg's opera it is Moses who does the accusing: "You...expose them to strange gods, to the calf and to the pillars of fire and cloud; for you do as the people do, because you feel and think as they do." In Schoenberg's interpretation, this is why Aaron is bound to fail; it follows that when Aaron is set free, he falls down dead. Moses is left victorious to proclaim the ultimate goal: "Unity with God."

## II. Moses und Aron: Opera for its Time

Clearly Schoenberg does more in this opera than merely retell a well-known biblical story. His account, though often sticking to the text, or at least to accepted interpretations, also often diverges in order to make particular points. Schoenberg's main point lies in the relationship between Moses and Aaron, and the question of which one of these two is better suited to leading the Jewish people to their ultimate goal. Schoenberg is willing to distort the text, and even fabricate, as we have seen, in order to bring this point across. He has more on his mind than just figuring out what took place in the wilderness four-thousand years earlier; he wants to see how the text applies to his own time. Schoenberg has chosen this biblical story to operate as a vehicle for his exploration of the role and the future of the Jewish people in the modern world.

As I mentioned above, Schoenberg returned publicly to Judaism in 1933, almost directly after completing the text of *Moses und Aron*. This public ceremony, however, was only the final step in his return, which we have seen as having begun with the incident at Mattsee and his correspondence with Kandinsky.<sup>39</sup> That Schoenberg had decided to occupy himself with the Jewish Question before even returning to the faith publicly himself is evident in his play *Der biblische Weg*,<sup>40</sup> which he wrote in the summer of 1926, and, of course, in the libretto to *Moses und Aron*, which he completed in 1932. After

formulating his own position in these two works, and returning publicly to Judaism, Schoenberg took up the cause of the Jews with ever more intensity. As of 1933 he had established close contact with Zionist circles and became passionate about the creation of a Jewish state. He determined to fight for the Zionist cause, and did not see himself above using propaganda. "Propaganda for a good cause, he believed, was nothing to be ashamed of..."<sup>41</sup> Ringer writes that "Der biblische Weg was conceived from the outset as a piece of propaganda, and its author insisted that it be regarded as such."<sup>42</sup> Not to discredit it as a work of art, several aspects of *Moses und Aron* can be seen in a similar way, something Schoenberg most probably intended.

One major aspect of Schoenbergs Zionist philosophy that appears in *Moses und Aron* is his belief in the chosenness of Israel. This idea can be most plainly seen in the opera in the Victory Song at the end of Act I, and is then reemphasized by Moses in the last Act, where he says: "To serve, to serve the divine idea, is the freedom for which this folk has been chosen." This idea of chosenness plays a central role in Schoenbergs conception of a unified Jewish people. In pursuit of this latter goal, Jewish unity, Schoenberg circulated a letter dated Paris, Summer 1933. This letter, addressed to Ernst Toch, Joachim Stutchevsky, and other Jewish musicians is an appeal for worldwide Jewish solidarity, and echoes what Schoenberg has already stated in the libretto to his opera. He writes in the letter: "I want to create a movement to make a people of the Jews once more and to unite them in a State...Taking full account...of the duties imposed on the Jewish people by virtue of its special status as Gods Chosen People, a people destined to preserve a thought, the thought of the One, Inconceivable God."<sup>43</sup> Clearly, Mosess statement in Act III was written with a similar purpose to the one in this public call for a Jewish state.

Not only does Schoenberg emphasize that the Jews are the Chosen People, but also stresses for what they are chosen. This is the key to his Zionist theory, which maintained that the only way is the Biblical Way. Schoenberg stresses the connection of the Jewish people to the idea and the Law, not limited by anything material. This is a blatant attack on the secular Zionists of his time, who argued that the Jews must have their own state to behave as all other nations do. In contrast to the religious Zionists who argued that the Jewish people are a people unavoidably linked to the Law, the secularists believed that the modern Jew could throw off the shackles of the Law and still be a unified people. Schoenberg sees this conception as flawed because of his idea of the special purpose of the Jew; to get rid of that special purpose is to destroy the Jewish people. The Jewish peoples strength comes from the idea; to maximize that strength the Jews must return in earnest to the path of the Law (at a time when assimilation in Europe was possibly at the

highest it had ever been in Jewish history.) The secularists are like Aaron, who holds as primary, "their freedom so that they would become a nation." But Moses realizes that no free nation can come out of this people if they deny the purpose of their nationhood. If Aaron's way is to be followed:

Images [would] lead and rule this folk that you have freed, and strange wishes [will be] their gods, leading them back to the slavery of godlessness and earthly pleasures. You have betrayed God to the gods, the idea to images, this chosen folk to others, the extraordinary to the commonplace...

Through these words Schoenberg attacks his opponents, the secular Zionists, by predicting their failure. Left alone to do as they wish, Schoenberg predicts, they will fall down dead as Aaron does, because their way does not allow for life.

Moses und Aron is clearly a complex work. Some may argue that it suffers artistically by being too cerebral. This may be so, but, as I hope has been shown, the intellectual quality of the work is of utmost importance in itself. In this opera Schoenberg manages to combine biblical commentary with timely political propaganda. His rendition of the biblical story, though at times distorted, is not a preposterous one, and is in no way blasphemous. He remains in clear connection to traditional biblical commentators, and sees the characterizations that he is making as additions to biblical interpretation. However, he is at the same time producing a work of propaganda, and is for that reason willing to take more liberties with the text than his counterparts in traditional commentary do. The result, therefore, is an opera in which the characterization of Moses and Aaron, and their conflicting methods of leadership, follows tradition but is emphasized by additions to and manipulations of the original biblical text. The work then, artistic achievement aside, can be seen simultaneously as a brilliant insight into a complex biblical story and as a manifesto for how the Jewish people must live strikingly similar to the book from which it originates.

Notes: 1 Alexander L. Ringer, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew* (Oxford, 1990), p. 3.

2 Jakob Wassermann, "Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude", *Deutscher und Jude: Reden und Schriften 1904-1933*, (Heidelberg, 1984), p. 125.

3 Ringer, pp. 3-4.

4 Wassermann, p. 128.

5 Ringer, pp. 2-3.

6 Wassermann, p. 130.

7 An interesting choice. Had the conversion been for simply social reasons, the natural choice in Vienna would have been Catholicism. Whether the conception of God and man's relation to him that Schoenberg develops in the opera is influenced by Lutheran theology, and is not solely Jewish, is a

complex though possibly fruitful question, but cannot be taken up in this paper.

8 It was ostensibly an unjustified rumor spread by Mahlers widow, Alma Werfel, that led Schoenberg to believe his longtime friend of anti-Semitic tendencies. Regardless, Schoenbergs having heard this news led him to the fateful conclusions that he made at the time.

9 Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, (London, 1964), p. 88.

10 *ibid.*, p. 143.

11 *ibid.*, p. 172.

12 Schoenberg, *Moses und Aron*, trans. my own.

13 Exodus, 2:22. All English translations of the Bible from *The Jerusalem Bible*, (Jerusalem, 1992).

14 Exodus, 3:6.

15 Exodus, 3:12.

16 This is represented musically by Mosess Sprechstimme and Aarons coloratura tenor.

17 Exodus, 4:27-28.

18 Schoenberg, *Moses und Aron*, sound recording, conducted by Sir Georg Solti, (London, 1984), track 2.

19 It should be noted that the chances of Schoenberg consulting traditional biblical sources are high. One source that suggests this is his letter to Walter Eidlitz. Concerning the problem between smiting and speaking to the rock, Schoenberg asks: "You have worked on this material for so long; can you perhaps tell me where I could look up something on this question?" (Schoenberg, *Letters*, p. 172.)

20 "Moshe emet, ViTorahtoh emet."

21 "Aharon ohev shalom, ViRodef shalom."

22 Exodus, 5:22.

23 David Lewin, "Moses and Aaron: Some General Remarks and Analytic Notes for Act I, Scene 1", *Die Wiener Schule* ed. Rudolf Stephan, (Darmstadt, 1989), p. 127.

24 Exodus, 4:31.

25 Exodus, 32:1.

26 Ramban (Nachmanides), *Commentary on the Torah: Exodus*, trans. by Rabbi Dr. Charles B. Chavel, (New York, 1973), p.549.

27 Rashi, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, selected and trans. by Chaim Pearl, (New York, 1970), p. 110.

28 Exodus, 32:2.

29 *ibid.*, p. 110.

30 Ramban, *Exodus*, p. 551.



31 *ibid.*, p. 554.

32 Letters, p. 172.

33 Exodus, 32:6.

34 Exodus, 32:8.

35 Exodus, 32:10.

36 Ramban, Exodus, p. 550.

37 Exodus, 32:22.

38 It is interesting that Schoenberg chooses to bring in the cloud of fire, which is described in the bible in Exodus 40:36-38, here. Aaron is customarily linked with the miracle of the cloud, as Hirsch writes: "To their three leaders, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam the nation had to thank for three benefits which provided for their existence in the wilderness, the well, the cloud and the manna. The well was due to the merit of Miriam, the cloud to Aaron and the manna to Moses." (The Pentateuch: Numbers, trans. and explained by Samson Raphael Hirsch, rendered into English by Isaac Levy, [London, 1960], p. 376.)

39 Clearly, both the fact that the conversion took place in Paris, not Vienna, and that by 1933 Hitler was already in power are crucial for understanding his return to Judaism. Nevertheless, his earlier experiences in Vienna, as has been noted, do seem to indicate a starting point for that return.

40 *Der biblische Weg* (The Biblical Way) is a play that presents the way the Jews must follow if they are to be successful in the creation of their own state. Only if the Jews choose to embrace the Law as the way to live in their newly created state, Schoenberg argues, will they be successful.

41 Ringer, p. 58.

42 *ibid.*, p. 58.

43 Quoted in Harry Halbreich, program notes to Schoenbergs *Moses und Aron*, conducted by Pierre Boulez (1975), p. 5.

## **Translation by Andrew Huth of the Poems of Shostakovich's 13th. Symphony *Babi Yar***

### **I. Babi Yar**

There is no memorial above Babi Yar.  
The steep ravine is like a coarse tombstone.  
I'm frightened,  
I feel as old today  
as the Jewish race itself.

I feel now that I am a Jew.  
Here I wander through ancient Egypt.  
And here I hang on the cross and die,  
and I still bear the mark of the nails.  
I feel that I am Dreyfus.  
The bourgeois rabble denounce and judge me.  
I am behind bars, I am encircled,  
persecuted, spat on, slandered,  
and fine ladies with lace frills  
squeal and poke their parasols into my face.  
I feel that I am a little boy in Bielostok.  
Blood is spattered over the floor.  
The ringleaders in the tavern are getting brutal.  
They smell of vodka and onions.  
I'm kicked to the ground, I'm powerless,  
in vain I beg the persecutors.  
They guffaw: Kill the Yids! Save Russia!  
A grain merchant beats up my mother.  
Oh my Russian people, I know  
that at heart you are internationalists,  
but there have been those with soiled hands  
who abused your good name.  
I know that my land is good.  
How filthy that without the slightest shame  
the anti-Semites proclaimed themselves:  
The Union of the Russian People.  
I feel that I am Anne Frank,  
as tender as a shoot in April,  
I am in love and have no need of words,  
but we need to look at each other.  
How little we can see or smell!  
The leaves and the sky are shut off from us,  
but there is a lot we can do  
we can tenderly embrace each other  
in the darkened room!  
Someone's coming!  
Don't be frightened. These are the sounds of spring,  
spring is coming.  
Come to me,  
give me your lips quickly!  
They're breaking down the door!

No! It's the ice breaking!  
Above Babi Yar the wild grass rustles,  
the trees look threatening, as though in judgment.  
Here everything silently screams,  
and, baring my head,  
I feel as though I am slowly turning grey.  
And I become a long, soundless scream  
above the thousands and thousands buried here,  
I am each old man who was shot here,  
I am each child who was shot here.  
No part of me can ever forget this.  
Let the International thunder out  
when the last anti-Semite on the earth  
has finally been buried.  
There is no Jewish blood in my blood,  
but I feel the loathsome hatred  
of all anti-Semites as though I were a Jew  
and that is why I am a true Russian!

## II. Humor

Tsars, kings, emperors,  
rulers of all the world,  
have commanded parades  
but couldn't command humor.  
In the palaces of the great,  
spending their days sleekly reclining,  
Aesop the vagrant turned up  
and they would all seem like beggars.  
Aesop the vagrant turned up  
and they would all seem like beggars.  
In houses where a hypocrite had left  
his wretched little footprints,  
Mullah Nasredin's jokes would demolish  
trivialities like pieces on a chessboard!  
Mullah Nasredin's jokes would demolish  
trivialities like pieces on a chessboard!  
They've wanted to buy humor,  
but he just wouldn't be bought!  
They've wanted to kill humor,  
but humor gave them the finger.

Fighting him's a tough job.  
They've never stopped executing him.  
His chopped-off head  
was stuck onto a soldier's pike.  
But as soon as the clown's pipes  
struck up their tune,  
he screeched out:  
I'm here!  
and broke into a jaunty dance.  
Wearing a threadbare little overcoat,  
downcast and seemingly repentant,  
caught as a political prisoner,  
he went to his execution.  
Everything about him displayed submission,  
resignation to the life hereafter,  
when he suddenly wriggled out of his coat,  
waved his hand  
and bye-bye!  
They've hidden humor away in dungeons,  
but they hadn't a hope in hell.  
He passed straight through  
bars and stone walls.  
Clearing his throat from a cold,  
like a rank-and-file soldier,  
he was a popular tune marching along  
with a rifle to the Winter Palace.  
He's quite used to dark looks,  
they don't worry him at all,  
and from time to time humor  
looks at himself humorously.  
He's eternal.  
Eternal!  
He's artful.  
Artful!  
And quick,  
And quick!  
he gets through everyone and everything.  
So then, three cheers for humor!  
He's a brave fellow!

### III. In the Store

Some with shawls, some with scarves,  
as though to some heroic enterprise or to work,  
into the store one by one  
the women silently come.  
Oh, the rattling of their cans,  
the clanking of bottles and pans!  
There's a smell of onions, cucumbers,  
a smell of Kabul sauce.  
I'm shivering as I queue up for the cash desk,  
but as I inch forward towards it,  
from the breath of so many women  
a warmth spreads round the store.  
They wait quietly,  
their families' guardian angels,  
and they grasp in their hands  
their hard-earned money.  
They wait quietly  
their families' guardian angels,  
and they grasp in their hands  
their hard-earned money.  
These are the women of Russia.  
They honor us and they judge us.  
They have mixed concrete,  
and ploughed, and harvested . . .  
They have endured everything,  
they will continue to endure everything.  
They have endured everything,  
they will continue to endure everything.  
Nothing in the world is beyond them  
they have been granted such strength!  
It is shameful to short-change them!  
It is sinful to short-weight them!  
As I shove dumplings into my pocket,  
I sternly and quietly observe  
their pious hands  
weary from carrying their shopping bags.

## IV. Fears

Fears are dying out in Russia,  
like the wraiths of bygone years;  
only in church porches, like old women,  
here and there they still beg for bread.  
I remember when they were powerful and mighty  
at the court of the lie triumphant.  
Fears slithered everywhere, like shadows,  
penetrating every floor.  
They stealthily subdued people  
and branded their mark on everyone:  
when we should have kept silent, they taught us  
to scream,  
and to keep silent when we should have screamed.  
All this seems remote today.  
It is even strange to remember now.  
The secret fear of an anonymous denunciation,  
the secret fear of a knock at the door.  
Yes, and the fear of speaking to foreigners?  
Foreigners? even to your own wife!  
Yes, and that unaccountable fear of being left,  
after a march, alone with the silence?  
We weren't afraid of construction work in blizzards,  
or of going into battle under shell-fire,  
but at times we were mortally afraid  
of talking to ourselves.  
We weren't destroyed or corrupted,  
and it is not for nothing that now  
Russia, victorious over her own fears,  
inspires greater fear in her enemies.  
I see new fears dawning:  
the fear of being untrue to one's country,  
the fear of dishonestly debasing ideas,  
which are self-evident truths;  
the fear of boasting oneself into a stupor,  
the fear of parroting someone else's words,  
the fear of humiliating others with distrust  
and of trusting oneself overmuch.  
Fears are dying out in Russia.  
And while I am writing these lines,

at times unintentionally hurrying,  
I write haunted by the single fear  
of not writing with all my strength.

## V. A Career

The priests kept on saying that Galileo  
was dangerous and foolish.  
(That Galileo was foolish . . . )  
But, as time has shown,  
the fool was much wiser!  
(The fool was much wiser! . . . )  
A certain scientist, Galileo's contemporary,  
was no more stupid than Galileo.  
(Was no more stupid than Galileo . . . )  
He knew that the earth revolved,  
but he had a family.  
(But he had a family . . . )  
And as he got into a carriage with his wife  
after accomplishing his betrayal,  
he reckoned he was advancing his career,  
but in fact he'd wrecked it.  
(But in fact he'd wrecked it . . . )  
For his discovery about our planet  
Galileo faced the risk alone,  
and he was a great man.  
(And he was a great man . . . )  
Now that is what I understand by a careerist.  
So then, three cheers for a career  
when it's a career like that of  
Shakespeare or Pasteur,  
Newton or Tolstoy,  
or Tolstoy . . . Lev?  
Lev!  
Why did they have mud slung at them?  
Talent is talent, whatever name you give it.  
They're forgotten, those who hurled curses,  
but we remember the ones who were cursed,  
(but we remember the ones who were cursed . . . )  
All those who strove towards the stratosphere,  
the doctors who died of cholera,

they were following careers!  
I'll take their careers as an example!  
I believe in their sacred belief,  
and their belief gives me courage.  
I'll follow my career in such a way  
that I'm not following it!

## Internet Links

- <http://www.musicofthebible.com>: Excellent and comprehensive explanation of the notational characteristics of the music of the Bible
- <http://phonoarchive.org/grove/Entries/S41322.htm> The entire Grove article publicly available
- [http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/babi\\_yar.htm](http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/babi_yar.htm) About Babi Yar and the Holocaust
- <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-b-yar.htm> Holocaust and Babi Yar
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia\\_of\\_the\\_Holocaust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia_of_the_Holocaust) Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, a very authoritative article
- <http://www.fuguemasters.com/prokofiev.html> On Prokofieff's Overture on Jewish Themes
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_music) The Wikipedia article on Jewish Music
- <http://www.jmwc.org/> Jewish MusicWeb center
- <http://www.haruth.com/JewishMusic.htm> Jewish Musicsamples to listen
- <http://www.nationalfinder.com/jmr/> Contains mainly Jewish-interest music links
- <http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/> Jewish MusicResearch Centre in Israel
- <http://www.chazzanut.com/> Nice resources, out-of-print music editions



- <http://www.jewishmusicforum.org/> Jewish Musicforum
- <http://www.jewishmusicdownloads.com/> Jewish artists, mostly folk and pop
- <http://jewish-music.org/> Also on Jewish culture
- <http://www.olamradio.com/> A internet radio station of Jewish Music
- <http://www.thejewishmusicreview.com/>
- <http://www.kesser.org/> Sample of religious music
- <http://www.jlaw.com/Articles/copyright1.html> The Jewish Law and the Copyright
- [http://www.schoenberg.org/6\\_archiv/music/works/op/compositions\\_op46\\_e.htm](http://www.schoenberg.org/6_archiv/music/works/op/compositions_op46_e.htm) The Schoenberg Centre, this page is about op.46 “A Survivor from Warsaw”

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- [3] <http://en.wikipedia.org>.
- [4] Idelsohn, Abraham Zebi “Jewish Music: Its Historical Development” 1992, Courier Dover Publications, ISBN:0486271471.
- [5] (Idelsohn, Abraham Zebi The Kol Nidrei Tune, in: HUC Annual, Vol VIII-IX, 1931/2, p.493
- [6] Braun, Joachim : “Jewish Music, Ancient Israel-Palestine”, Grove Music Online (Accessed June 2, 2009), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.
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- [8] Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971), Vols. 10, 14.
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