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| **Jewish Art Music** |
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| Modern Jewish art music denotes the study of Jewish musical markers and extra-musical topoi in the twentieth-century by Jews and non-Jews alike. Transcending genres, aesthetics, compositional techniques, and national schools, modern Jewish art music emerged as a short-lived but important movement in Russia (*The Society for Jewish Folk Music*, 1908-1919), and later gained traction across Central and Western Europe through the works of individual composers (including Ernest Bloch, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Darius Milhaud, and Arnold Schoenberg). These composers all attested to varying understandings of musical Judaism, and to subjective relations to their host cultures. Occasionally, non-Jewish composers would assume the voice of the Jewish minority in apparent homage to Jewish music (Maurice Ravel’s *Deux mélodies hébraïques*, 1914; Dmitri Shostakovich’s *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, 1948) or, in other cases, as critiques of the perceived ‘noise’ of Jewish presence in music (The “Jewish Quintet” in Richard Strauss’ *Salome*, 1905). With the Nazis ascent to power, however, Modern Jewish art music gradually came to a halt; many Jews emigrated to the Eastern and Western seaboards of North America, while a minority emigrated to the then emerging Jewish community of Palestine (later to become Israel). During this period Jewish music was labelled as ‘degenerate music’ [*Entartete Musik*]by the Third Reich, and was culturally ghettoized along with other forms of ‘degenerate art’ during the 1930s. Following World War II and the subsequent founding of the state of Israel in 1948, however, Jews could write music as a majority and on their national soil. While the narrative and symbols of the Zionist project affected the music of emigrant composers and the first cohort of native Israelian composers, modernist importations during interwar years as well as post-World War II compositional devices gradually diluted national musical markers in Israeli art music. Beginning in the late 1960s, this dilution paved the road toward composers’ dialectical return to Jewish music (Tzvi Avni’s *Epitaph*, 1974-1979), and to composers’ adaptation of nationally indifferent styles (Josef Tal’s *Concerto for Piano and Electronic Music*, 1970). Both approaches were a testament to composers’ need to transcend national discourse. In America, Jewish composers incorporated influences from a wide range of cultural environments ranging from New York to Hollywood, along with new liturgical settings for traditional liturgies. As the United States was the home of many émigrés and native Israeli composers, styles and genres ranged from modest arrangements of liturgical music, to modern approaches that filtered and harmonically recontextualized Jewish folk music (Aaron Copland’s *Vitebsk*, 1929) and symphonic arrangements of Biblical tropes (Leonard Bernstein’s *Jeremiah*, 1942), or diluted allusions to Eastern European Jewish folk music (Mark Osvaldo Golichov’s, *Yiddishbbuk*, 1992). Whether composed by or for Jews, Jewish art music in the twentieth century depicted the modern Jewish condition as seen from both Jewish and non-Jewish perspectives.  Jewish art music during this period appeared in many forms, including arrangements of folk tunes or liturgical music (Joesph Achron, *Hebrew Melody*, 1911), the employment of specific melody-types or modes prevalent in Jewish musical traditions (Ernest Bloch’s *Schelomo*, 1916; Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *I Profeti*, 1931), the use of monophonic or heterophonic musical textures modelled after oral Jewish musical traditions (Alexander Uriah Boskovich’s, *Ornaments*, 1964), works written after or inspired by Jewish texts, from the Bible to modern Hebrew poetry (Arnold Schonebrg’s *Moses and Aron*, 1932; Darius Milhaud, *Poems Juifs*, 1916), or a combination of these elements. While there have been many attempts to define Jewish art music, few have qualified their Jewishness — one of the most critically important factors of Jewish art music in the twentieth century is the fact that most of its proponents were outsiders with no real connection to or contact with Jewish communities, or any command of Hebrew or other Jewish vernaculars. With almost no knowledge of the liturgy or vernacular traditions and a limited exposure to home rituals, composers’ impressions were often filtered through a musical literacy that simply charted their geocultural background and, as such, remained pertinent to the non-Jewish majority. Styles and approaches were, then, were as varied as the number of individuals who composed the distance between their European or American present and their perceived Jewish or Hebraic pasts. Furthermore, being typically familiar with foreign orientalist portrayals of Jewishness in art music, Jewish composers often relied on transcriptions and anthologies of liturgical or Jewish folk music that composed their native mask or identity. In many ways this artistic point of departure affirmed the way the non-Jew signified the very presence of Jews in Western art music; the primary identification of the Jew via a foreign viewpoint resulted in an adaptation of orientalist clichés and musical stereotypes attributed to Jews’ otherness, but concomitantly led Jewish composers to reassemble, reconfigure, and recontextualized these very same sonic stereotypes and exotic musical markers to repatriate and reorder these problematic elements of exoticized cultural fantasy.  The mutuality of citation and Jewish identity impeded composers as much as it affected scholarly musicological literature on the topic. If any non-Jewish utilization of a Jewish melody could be considered Jewish art music, regardless of the way it is filtered semantically, then the very act of defining the field becomes counterproductive. Equally, any attempt to pin-down the meaning of Jewish identities using particular musical characteristics (intervals, chords, scales, modes, etc) runs the risk of excluding Jewish music from the larger canvas of Western art music and denying its symbiotic, hybrid nature. Composers who felt this tension have gradually moved from an articulation of Jewish identity utilizing folk or liturgical musical elements in compositions to a mode of intellectual resistance, resulting in the disarticulation of signs associated with Jewishness. Replacing traditional citations with reassemblages of Jewish musical markers compositions denied the mutuality of citation and identity in favour of musical commentaries that reconfigured rather than preserved the past. Surveying the Jewish cycle in Bloch’s Jewish cycle written in Europe between 1912 and 1916, for instance, there is a distinct dialectical move from exotic clichés and occasional citations founded by the composer in the 1905 *Jewish Encyclopedia* (*Jezebel*, 1911-18; *Schelomo* 1916) to deconstructed and reharmonized Eastern European melody types (*First String Quartet*, 1916). Unlike Bloch, Schoenberg did not conceive of any Jewish idiom worth identifying with, nor was he bothered by aesthetic or anti-aesthetic categorizations of Jews. Instead, he grappled with representation and mimesis, verisimilitude and veracity, all while never allowing his music an exemption from the second commandment (‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image’). Schoenberg eschewed Jewish musical markers overtly recognizable to non-Jews and replaced them with rebuses and ciphers enabled by his twelve-tone music (“Du Solls nicht mußt,” 1925; *Moses and Aron*, 1930-32; *Modern Psalm*, 1950). The gradual abandonment of representation and self-signifying aesthetics was also evident in the United States and Israel. Whereas modern American composers grafted their Jewish importations on modern musical syntax imbibed from both the Jazz age and The New Deal Era, Israeli composers gradually abandoned the use of liturgical and folk tunes in favour of non-western Jewish musical properties of non-western Jewish musical traditions that freed composers from the need to portray the Zionist project through a Eurocentric compositional toolbox. Despite the stylistic proliferation of modern Jewish art music at the close of the twentieth century, many composers seem to gravitate to commentaries on the history and migration of Jewish music rather than framing transcribed relics as artifacts behind glass cases (Betty Oliver, *Neharot Neharot*, 2007). Thus, more than the study of composers’ articulation of Jewish Identity, modern Jewish art music has become the study of the disarticulation of Jewish markers and musical commentaries indelibly converting past tense into present. |
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