**Jewish Art Music**

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Modern Jewish art music concerns the study of Jewish musical markers and extra-musical Jewish topoi in twentieth-century music penned by both Jews and non-Jews. Transcending genres, aesthetics, compositional techniques, and national schools, modern Jewish art music emerged as a short-lived movement in Russia (The Society for Jewish Folk Music, 1908-19) and soon thereafter through the works of individuals composers in central and western Europe (Ernest Bloch, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Darius Milhaud, Arnold Schoenberg, and more)—all attesting to various perceptions of musical Judaism as well as to composers’ symbiosis with the culture of their host societies. Occasionally, composers from the non-Jewish majority would assume the voice of the Jewish minority in what came to be homages to Jewish music (Maurice Ravel’s *Deux mélodies hébraïques*, 1914; Dmitri Shostakovich’s *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, 1948) or commentaries on Jews’ noisy musical presence (The “Jewish Quintet” in Richard Strauss’ *Salome*, 1905). With the Nazis ascent to power Modern Jewish art music had gradually come into a halt; many had 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 transition Jewish music was labeled “degenerated” (*Entartete Musik*)by the Third Reich which aimed at cultural ghettoization of Jewish music already in the 1930s, prior to the physical separation that followed. With the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Jews could write music as a majority living on their own national soil. While the Zionist project, its narrative, and symbols have affected the music of emigrant composers and the first emerging cohort of native composers, modernist importations of the interwar years as well as post-World War II compositional devices have gradually diluted national musical markers in Israeli art music. Starting from the late 1960s this dilution had paved the road toward composers’ dialectical return to Jewish music (Tzvi Avni’s *Epitaph*, 1974-9) or to composers’ adaptation of nationally indifferent styles (Josef Tal’s *Concerto for Piano and Electronic Music*, 1970). Both approaches testified to composers’ need to transcend the national discourse. In America, Jewish composers have infused many cultural habitats, from New York to Hollywood, including numerous contributions of new liturgical setting for conservative and reform liturgical services. As the united states was the home of many émigrés and native 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 drawing on 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 was mainly music *about* Jews, namely, a recording in sounds of the Jewish modern condition as seen from both Jewish and non-Jewish perspectives.

Jewish art music could appear in many forms: an arrangement of a folk tune or liturgical music (Joesph Achron, *Hebrew Melody*, 1911), employment of specific melody-types or modes drawn on Jewish musical traditions (Ernest Bloch’s *Schelomo*, 1916; Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *I Profeti*, 1931), the use of the monophonic or heterophonic musical textures modeled after oral Jewish musical traditions (Alexander Uriah Boskovich’s, *Ornaments*, 1964), a work 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 any combination of those elements. While there have been many attempts to define Jewish art music, few have qualified their protagonists’ Jewishness. Indeed, one of the most important distinctions concerning Jewish art music in the twentieth century is the fact that most of its proponents were outsiders who had no real contact with a Jewish community nor 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 language that charted their geocultural background and as such remained pertinent to the non-Jewish majority. Styles and approaches were therefore 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 folk Jewish musics that functioned as their native mask. In many ways this artistic point of departure affirmed the way the non-Jew has signified the presence of Jews in western art music. Jews’ primary identification with a foreign view of their culture resulted in an adaptation of orientalist clichés and musical stereotypes attributed to Jews’ foreignness, but concomitantly led composers to reassemble, reconfigure, and recontextualized these very same sonic stereotypes and exotic musical markers that the non-Jew needed in order to mask his national fantasy.

Indeed the mutuality of citation and (Jewish) Identity has impeded composers as much as it has affected scholarly musicological literature on the topic. If any citation 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 nature. Composers who felt this tension have gradually moved from an articulation of Jewish identity by means of introducing folk or liturgical music into their scores, to a mode of intellectual resistance which saw the disarticulation of signs associated with Jewishness. Replacing citations with reassemblages of Jewish musical markers compositions denied the mutuality of citation and identity in favor of musical commentaries that reconfigured rather than preserve the past. Surveying the Jewish cycle Bloch has written Europe between 1912 and 1916, one notices a dialectical move from exotic clichés and occasional citations the composer had found 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 an aesthetic or anti-aesthetic categorizing of Jews; instead, he grappled with representation and mimesis, verisimilitude and veracity, while never allowing his music an exemption from the second commandment. He therefore eschewed musical markers whose associations with musical Judaism would be the equivalent of visual, fixed, or decipherable representations 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 that imbibed from both the Jazz age and the new deal era, Israeli composers gradually abandoned citations of liturgical and folk tunes in favor of the 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 musics rather than frame 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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