Jascha Nemtsov

"The Scandal Was Perfect"

Jewish Music in the Works of European Composers

Well into the 19th century, Jewish music went largely unnoticed in European culture or was treated dismissively. Russian composers wrote the first chapter of musical Judaica. At the start of the 20th century, a Jewish national school of music was established in Russia; this school later influenced the work of many composers in Western Europe. Since the Holocaust, Jewish music is understood less as folk music, it has become a political and moral symbol.

> *The parties of the Hasidim where they merrily discourse on talmudic problems. If the entertainment runs down or if someone does not take part, they make up for it by singing. Melodies are invented ... a wonder-rabbi ... suddenly laid his face on his arms, which were resting on the table, and remained in that position for three hours while everyone was silent. When he awoke he wept and sang an entirely new, gay, military march.*
>
> Franz Kafka, 29 November 1911[1]

What particularly impressed Kafka at a gathering of a Hasidic community at their rabbi's home is typical for traditional Judaism: Religion and music are so tightly intertwined that reading and praying are conducted only in song.

The first Hebrew grammar, *De accentibus et orthographia linguae Hebraicae*, by the Stuttgart humanist Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), was published in Alsatian Hagenau in 1518. Reuchlin focused on the Hebrew Bible and included as well the motifs – Biblical cantillations – with which it was chanted by the European (Ashkenazi) Jews. This marked the first appearance of these motifs outside the Jewish community as well as the first time that they were transcribed into European musical notation.[2] Music that had hitherto fulfilled only a ritual purpose thus became the subject of academic discourse. However, Reuchlin did not confine himself to providing exact reproductions of the motifs. He had them arranged as four-part chorale pieces. In accordance with the madrigal style common at the time, the melody was located in the part of the tenor. Reuchlin sought to encourage his readership to study and to perform the cantillations. Adapted to contemporary style, the motifs were to appear more ac-

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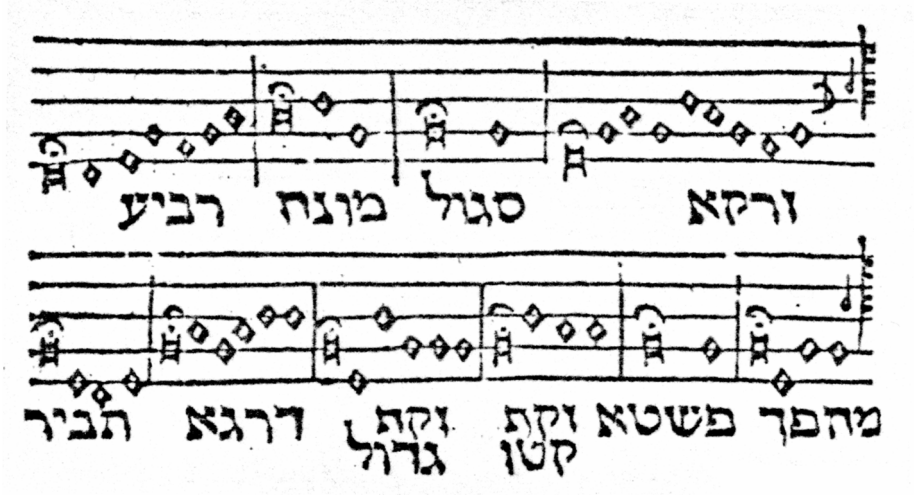
1 *Diaries of Franz Kafka*, Joseph Kresh, trans. (New York 1949).

2 The transcriptions were provided by Johannes Böschenstein (1472–1540).

OSTEUROPA 2008, Impulses for Europe, pp. 117–142

cessible to a cultivated readership.[3] As a result, these arrangements, which were created by Reuchlin's pupil Christoph Schilling together with a musician called Glareanus, also became an aesthetic phenomenon. Thus, Jewish music found its way into European cultural awareness.



Motifs from the Bible cantillations in Reuchlin's
De accentibus et orthographia linguae Hebraicae

Some time would pass, however, before Jewish traditional music was accepted and taken seriously by European composers. The interest shown by humanists and church reformers in the Hebrew Bible as a primary source for the renewal of the Christian faith during the 16th- and 17th-century was followed by the Enlightenment in the 18th century. At this time, more than ever before, the Jewish religion was considered an assortment of uncivilised mystic beliefs, while the Jews themselves, with their separate way of life, seemed to be the epitome of dark "obscurantism" and backwardness. The idea of universal, natural human rights, which were supposed to be valid for Jews as well, was therefore accompanied by a contemptuous and hostile attitude towards all forms of genuine Jewish culture, including Jewish music. Adherents of the Enlightenment, non-Jewish and Jewish alike, called on the Jews to "improve" themselves, in order to become more "acceptable" to society at large. This was the basic prerequisite for overcoming the isolation of the Jews and for integrating them into society. Accordingly, efforts were directed not only at researching traditional Jewish culture, but to a far greater extent, at adapting it to the Christian environment and abolishing it as an independent phenomenon. Thus, the musical works that accompanied the religious reforms during the Jewish Enlightenment in Western Europe leaned to a large extent on church music.

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[3] Hanoch Avenary, *The Ashkenazi Tradition of Biblical Chant between 1500 and 1900* (Tel Aviv 1978), pp. 11–13.

During the 19th century, Jewish music in Western Europe was generally treated with disdain. It was regarded as being completely alien and inferior to European culture. In the words of Richard Wagner:

> Who has not had occasion to convince himself of the travesty of a divine service of song, presented in a real Folk-synagogue? Who has not been seized with a feeling of the greatest revulsion, of horror mingled with the absurd, at hearing that sense-and-sound-confounding gurgle, jodel and cackle, which no intentional caricature can make more repugnant than as offered here in full, in naïve seriousness?[4]

In addition, Jewish music was considered as a whole to be devoid of originality. Well into the 20th century, Jewish folk music was generally regarded as a patchwork of musical fragments from songs by other peoples. It goes without saying that such prejudices did not exactly help promote the serious study of Jewish traditional music.
Only a few remarks of important musicians who encountered Jewish music without prejudice have been handed down to posterity. One of them is Franz Liszt. In 1859, his book Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie appeared in Paris.[5] Oddly enough, Liszt promptly dedicated the second chapter to another topic, calling it “The Opposite of the Gypsy: The Israelite”. This chapter contains remarkable passages that bear witness to Liszt’s sympathy for and interest in the Jews, their history, and their culture:

> We had one single opportunity to get an impression what Judaic art could be like if the Israelites would reveal all the intensity of the feeling alive in their being in the form of their own soul. We became acquainted with Cantor Sulzer[6] in Vienna ... In order to hear him, we went to the synagogue where he was the musical director and cantor. We have seldom experienced such an overwhelming vibration of all strings of the worship of God and human sympathy as on this evening. In the glow of candlelight resembling stars in the ceiling, a bizarre choir of somber, guttural voices – as though every breast was a dungeon from whose depths the voice rang in order to praise the God of the Ark of the Covenant from misery and confinement, to call him with an enduring faith, full of certainty of redemption from endless slavery ... It was impossible not to join in with all sympathy of the soul in the great call of this choir, which carried the weight of so many thousands of years of tradition and divine blessings, so much indignation and castigation and such unshakable hope, as if on huge shoulders.[7]

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[4] Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Berlin 1934), p. 21. Available in English in *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, William Ashton Ellis, trans. (Lincoln 1995), a compilation of works translated in the early 1900s. This translation of Wagner’s essay is also on-line at <http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagjuda.htm>.

[5] In English as Franz Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music. The Result of the Author’s Life-long Experiences and Investigations of the Gipsies and Their Music*, Edwin Evans, trans. (London 1926).

[6] Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890) was cantor of the synagogue in Vienna.

[7] Franz Liszt, “Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn”, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, III (Leipzig 1910), pp. 18–19. The translation here is taken from the liner notes of Jascha Nemtsov, *Klavierwerke, OehmsClassics 2008*. As a young musician, Sulzer was during the 1820s also

Despite such individual expressions of sympathy, it was at this time still completely unthinkable to quote authentic Jewish music in classical works or to imitate its stylistic features in a similar manner, as Liszt did with Gypsy music in his "Hungarian Rhapsodies".[8] Even in those works that explicitly drew on Jewish themes, no hints of Jewish music were to be heard. A poignant example is Jacques François Élie Fromental Halévy's opera "La juive" (1835) based on a libretto by Eugène Scribe. Halévy, a French Jew born as Elias Lévy, dedicated a large part of his opera to depicting Jewish life and Jewish personalities, but these are characterised in a conventional European style.

Jewish Elements in the Music of Russian Composers

The first chapter of Judaica in classical music was written by Russian composers in the mid-19th century. At the time, the perception of Jewish culture in Russia was very different to that of Western Europe. Until the end of the 18th century, when large areas of Poland and Lithuania were incorporated into the Russian Empire, there had hardly been any Jews in Russia. The lack of any real-life experience with Jewish people helped fuel the wildest prejudices, which were encouraged by popular Christian beliefs. Russian antisemitism was given an additional boost in the second half of the 15th century during the long struggle against the sects known as "Judaisers". Whereas the emancipation and assimilation of the Jews continued in Western Europe, the legal segregation of Russia's Jews from the rest of the population lasted well into the 20th century.

On the other hand, a pronounced idealisation of Biblical Jewish culture had become established in Russian literature. The semi-legendary Hebrews of antiquity and the very real, yet extremely alien and "repulsive" Jews of the Polish and Lithuanian shtetls represented two extremes, which were to influence the way the Russians dealt with Jewish culture for a long time. In the Russian perception of the Jews, a clear discrepancy can therefore be observed during the 19th century: On the one hand, the Jews were regarded as being a great and important people, bearers of prophetic ideals of justice, fear of God, and freedom, while on the other hand, they were a wretched, homeless, and above all despised people that was being punished for the sins of their forefathers, while at the same time adhering to their errant ways.

Accordingly, two names were established for Jews: "evrei" for the "noble", antique Hebrews and "zhid" for the ugly contemporary Jews.[9] In this context, Russian com-

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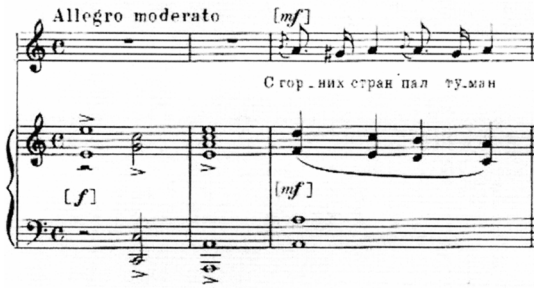
friends with Franz Schubert, who set to music Psalms 92 for Sulzer's collection of synagogue music Schir Zion. This work – like the works of all of the other composers Sulzer commissioned – contains no elements of traditional Jewish music.

8 In popular literature on music, it is repeatedly told that Beethoven quoted the well-known melody of "Kol nidre" in the sixth movement of his String Quartet, op. 131. This "quote" is connected to a work allegedly commissioned by Sulzer – but never carried out – for his collection Schir Zion. Because Beethoven uses only the melody's first three notes, this can hardly be called a quote. A similar combination of tones is to be found in many works by classical composers.

9 The word "zhid" came to Russia from Poland, where it is a neutral term to describe Jews. During the second half of the 19th century, the word was generally used in a neutral manner in Russian literature. Later, it increasingly gained a pejorative connotation. In modern Russian, it is used solely as an insult. Since the end of the 19th century, the word "evrei", which

posers produced numerous works that focused on Jewry and were generally given titles such as “Hebrew Song” (Evreiskaia pesnia) or “Hebrew Melody” (Evreiskaia melodia). Unlike their colleagues in the West, however, Russian composers tried from the start to employ special musical means in order to express the “Hebrew” element.

The “father” of Russian music, Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), created the first of these works. His “Hebrew Song” (Evreiskaia pesnia) was written in 1840 as part of the stage music for the tragedy “Count Kholmski” (Kniaz’ Kholmski) by Nestor Kukol’nik (1809–1868). In the play, the song was linked to a Jewish woman by the name of Rachel, in whom the protagonist initially falls in love before abandoning her. This was probably the first work of classical music that consciously integrated elements of the Jewish musical tradition. Here, the “Jewish” element is indicated by the insistent appoggiatura in the vocal part, which imitates the glissandi (also known as krekhts or “sobbing”) of singing in synagogues and Klezmer music, a detail that was certainly based on the composer’s personal listening experience:



The text, an imitation of the “Hebrew Melodies” by Lord Byron, looks at first sight like a Zionist agenda, as it is about the return to the “old homeland, Palestine”. However, on closer inspection, it can be seen that Kukol’nik was also very familiar with the messianic strains of the Jewish faith: “The bones of our fathers await the time of renewal; night will be redeemed by the day of return.”

Kukol’nik’s tragedy was dropped as a failure after just three performances in 1840, but Glinka incorporated the “Hebrew Song” into his song cycle “Farewell to Petersburg” (Proshchanie s Peterburgom). Glinka’s piece became a model for several vocal works by other composers. These included the famous members of the Mighty Handful, especially Modest Musorgskii (1839–1881) and Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov (1844–1908), as well as other lesser-known composers, such as Sergei Vasilenko (1872–1956) or Gennadii Korganov (1858–1890). Many of these “Hebrew” works are also linked to Byron’s “Hebrew Melodies” in arrangements by Russian writers.

Another important source of inspiration was the Song of Solomon. Thus, Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov and Korganov each set to music the same text by poet Lev Mei (Vstan’, soidi! Davno dennitsa...), an arrangement of the Song of Solomon. Lev Mei (1822–1862) tackled the themes of the Old Testament in a different way than almost all of the other 19th-century Russian poets. These themes included primarily the verses of love in the Song of Solomon and the struggle for liberation waged by the

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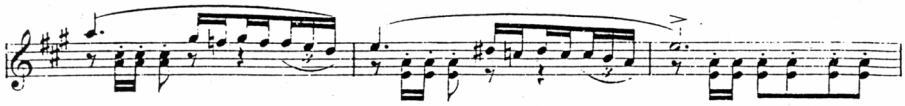
was originally comparable to Hebrew and referred to the Judaism of antiquity, has been used in Russian as the standard term for “Jew”.

Israelites. His cycle “Biblical Motifs – Hebrew Songs” (Bibelskie motivy – Evreiskie pesni) contains 27 poems alone. Unlike other Russian poets who handled similar subjects, Mei was the only one to make a connection between the noble “Hebrews”, evrei, and Russia’s oppressed Jews, zhidy, and to express this with extraordinary poetic force in his poem Zhidy (1860):

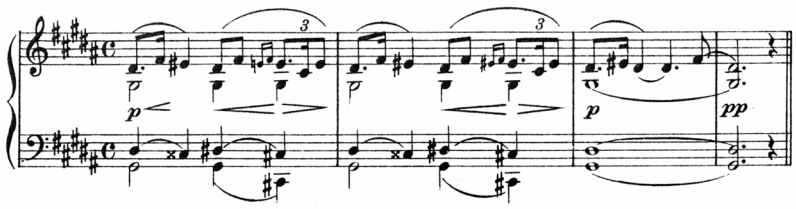
Жиды, жиды! Как дико это слово!
Какой народ! ... Что шаг, то чудеса ...
Послушать их врагов — ревниво и сурово
С высот жидам грозят святые небеса ...
Быть-может — и грозят, но разве только ныне.
Где вера в небеса, там и небесный гром,
А прежде без грозы народ Свой вёл в пустыне
Сам Бог, то облаком, то огненным столпом.
Теперь презренней нет, проклятей нет народа,
Нет ни к кому такой, как к ним, жидам, вражды,
Но там, где понят Бог и понята природа,
Везде они — жиды, жиды, жиды!

Jews, Jews! The very word is unusual!
What a people! ... Wonders at every turn ...
To listen to their enemies - the sacred heavens
From on high torment the Jews jealously, harshly ...
Perhaps – they torment them, but really only today.
Those who speak to the heavens also feel their wrath.
Yet it was God himself, first as a pillar of fire,
Then a cloud, who led his people through the desert.
Now they are despised, cursed by all the other nations
Wherever they turn, enmity always follows
But where God is pondered and nature also studied,
They will be found close at hand – Jews, Jews, Jews!

This poem with its admiration for the Jewish people from a decidedly Christian perspective is just as rare in 19th-century Russian poetry as Mei’s efforts to find a particularly oriental style in his arrangement of the Song of Solomon. Similar efforts were made by composers who put his texts to music. While the lavish ornaments in Rimskii-Korsakov’s song (op. 8, no. 4) create a rather unspecific “oriental” impression and recalls his symphonic suite “Scheherazade”, the song of the same name by Korganov is in musical terms more precise. The “Jewish” elements include not only a mode with two augmented seconds but also the characteristically falling, oft repeated second intervals in the melody. By contrast, the ornaments are inserted more subtly:



Other splendid examples of musical “Judaica” inspired by Mei’s poetry are Rimskii-Korsakov’s “Hebrew Song” (Spliu, no serdtse moe ... / I sleep, but my heart ...) op. 7, no. 2, and another work by the same name written by Modest Musorgskii, who was inspired by another poem by Mei (Ia tsvetok polevoi / I am a small wild flower). Here, both composers were able to incorporate essential features of Jewish music without having to draw on authentic melodic material: Rimskii-Korsakov begins the song with a long, unaccompanied vocal passage, which sounds like improvisation. Musorgskii’s finely harmonised song makes systematic use of modal progressions (moving, in the example below, from E to E sharp, C to C sharp):



Perhaps even more noteworthy is the melodic structure in the piano introduction to Musorgskii's song, which consists of brief, related motifs restricted to a narrow scope. The example given is actually nothing more than the sixfold repetition of the same motif in different variations. A melodic structure of this type is very typical of Jewish synagogue music and folk songs. That Musorgskii was well acquainted with the content of synagogue music is also shown by the fact that the song's vocal part for the most part uses set pentatonic phrases in the melody.

In recent years, the view that Musorgskii was a fervent antisemite – encouraged primarily by the work of Richard Taruskin – has become established in the literature. Taruskin even refers to him as "Russia's most conspicuously anti-Semitic composer".[10] Taruskin's verdict is based essentially on quotes from Musorgskii's letters to his mentor Milii Balakirev. There, Musorgskii called Jews, including musicians of Jewish origin, zhidy. Naturally, Musorgskii also shared many of the antisemitic prejudices of his times and the environment in which he lived (until 1858 he was a member of the officer corps). This was particularly true for his youth, when he was under the strong influence of Balakirev, whose reactionary, antisemitic stance was generally known.[11]

However, if one disregards the use of the word zhid, Musorgskii's letters not only reveal prejudices and antisemitic clichés, but also a long-standing, deep interest Jewish culture and music. Thus, Musorgskii wrote in a letter dated 26 January 1867 that the Jews had been more successful in preserving their native culture than the Czechs and were sincere in their enthusiasm for the sounds of their own folk music, which "has been handed down from generation to generation ... I have seen this several times". In 1879, during his final concert tour as accompanist for singer Daria Leonova, Musorgskii reported on

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[10] Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky. Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton 1993), p. 383.

[11] Balakirev's antisemitism had its limits, as an episode provided by composer Mikhail Gnesin shows. In 1884, during a visit to Poland, Balakirev met by chance a 13-year-old musically gifted Jewish boy by the name of Efraim Shkliar: "Balakirev asked the boy whether he could go to Petersburg to study. He answered that he would have to ask the rabbi first. 'Then go and ask your rabbi.' However, the boy wanted to know whether could eat kosher in Petersburg, etc. Balakirev answered: 'If the rabbi allows you to go, you can live in my apartment, and I will give you kosher food.' The boy spoke with the rabbi, and he blessed him for the trip. He then in fact lived with Balakirev and received kosher food." Shkliar was later accepted into Rismkii-Korsakov's composition class. According to Gnesin, "Shkliar continued to listen to Blakirev's suggestions and maintained good relations with him. Shkliar composed many choral and solo works, among them several of high quality. These include his song 'Yerushalaim', which passed through Balakirev's censorship office for the arts." See Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 2,954, pt. 1, delo 884, folio 4, "Mikhail Gnesin, presentation at the founding meeting of the Society for Jewish Music in Moscow" (October 8, 1923).

his visits to the synagogues in Odessa, where he listened to liturgical singing.[12] His letters to Balakirev in particular often convey the impression that Musorgskii felt almost forced to use antisemitic remarks in order to conceal the interest in Jews that he repeatedly expressed. His later letters to respected Russian critic Vladimir Stasov (1824–1906) are largely free of this "salon antisemitism".

As early as 1863, a young Musorgskii had criticised the opera "Judith" by the "zhid" Aleksandr Serov, whose mother was of Jewish origin, because he failed to use any authentic stylistic elements to characterise the Biblical Jews.

> It ["Judith"] has many shortcomings that I would call musical anachronisms. For example, the Jews there (I hear it repeatedly) utter without ado Catholic organ seconds ... It is time to stop converting the Jews to Christendom [in musical terms].

Musorgskii's highest principle, as he never tired of saying, was truth in art. This truth did not mean superficial naturalism, but instead a deep penetration into the essence of different manifestations of life by studying them intently before "translating" them into his wilful musical language.

Jews were at the centre of his artistic interest several times, not only as the evrei of antiquity (in the opera "Salambo", the choral works "The Destruction of Sennacherib" and "Jesus Navinus", or the "Hebrew Song"), but also as modern zhidy, whom he attempted to portray as authentically as possible. A masterpiece of this interest is "'Samuel' Goldenberg and 'Shmuyle'" from "Pictures at an Exhibition". Musorgskii was inspired by two paintings by Victor Hartmann. As Stasov reported, the paintings were done "during a journey made by Hartmann with real figures as their subject... Musorgskii was so delighted by the expressiveness of these miniatures that Hartmann immediately gave them to his friend as a present."[13]

For Taruskin and other authors, this piece is a prime example of musical antisemitism. The title alone is said to express antisemitic views:

> The use of quotation marks points up the fact that the two zhidy have the same first name: one Germanized, the other in the original Yiddish. They are in fact one zhid, not two. The portrait is a brazen insult: no matter how dignified or sophisticated or Europeanized a zhid's exterior, on the inside he is a jabbering, pestering little "Shmuyle".[14]

However, Taruskin's "brazen insult" is just as brazenly construed as is his theory of "one zhid, not two". Furthermore, the Hebrew name Shmuel is not necessarily Yiddish, nor is Samuel an exclusively "Germanised" or "Europeanised" form. It was also used in Poland. Incidentally, Hartmann's paintings of the two Jews were produced in Sandomierz, at that time in Russian Poland. The title merely indicates that the wealthy Goldenberg has arrived in non-Jewish circles, while the poor Jew still uses the traditional Yiddish form of his name. The piece "'Samuel' Goldenberg and 'Shmuyle'" is neither antisemitic nor philosemitic, but rather an astonishingly realistic portrait of both Jewish types.

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[12] Musorgskii to Vladimir Stasov, 10 September 1879.
[13] First published in the magazine *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik*, (Petrograd, October 1916), p. 20.
[14] Taruskin, *Musorgsky*, p. 382.

The St. Petersburg musicologist Evgeniia Khazdan recently reported the discovery of a previously unknown handwritten document by Musorgskii in the archive of the Institute of Russian Literature. This document contains the transcription of a melody labelled “Jewish”, which is strikingly similar to the theme of Samuel Goldenberg. According to Musorgskii’s handwritten notes, this melody had been passed on him by the sculptor Il’ia Gintsburg (1859–1939). The melody is in the traditional Jewish mode *Mi sheberakh* (May he who blessed), which is widely used in the synagogue and folk songs.[15] Shmuyle’s theme, right down to the last detail, also represents an imitation of the Jewish singing style, which is rich in glissandi and ornamentation. Musorgskii’s realism, however, is far more than simply a realistic representation. He includes a symbolic level: It is no coincidence that the music that characterises the poor (and possibly begging) Jew evokes associations with the musical image of the character Iurodivyi (God’s fool) in the opera “Boris Godunov”, while the forceful theme of Goldenberg seems an expression of power and violence.

By studying authentic Jewish music and incorporating elements of it into their works, Musorgskii and other Russian composers in the 19th century were acting as a counterforce to widespread Russian antisemitism, which stigmatised and despised Jewish culture as a whole. Musorgskii’s choral work “Jesus Navinus” used for a Biblical subject an authentic Hasidic melody, which the composer had apparently heard from his hosts in a Jewish shtetl while billeted there as an officer.[16] With that, Musorgskii also overcame the traditional divide between the “evrei” and the “zhid” in Russian art. The “Jewish” compositions of the Russian classics thus paved the way for the establishment of a separate Jewish national school of music: the New Jewish School.

The New Jewish School

In 1908, a Society for Jewish Folk Music was founded in St. Petersburg. Its members included important composers such as Mikhail Gnesin (1883–1957), Solomon Rosowsky (1878–1962), and Lazare Saminsky (1883–1959), among others. This group of composers developed for the first time ever a national Jewish style, which integrated elements of Jewish folk and synagogue music into European classical music. This direction became known as the New Jewish School. Although the society was founded just 100 years ago, its activities were generally treated in the literature as a type of mythological phenomenon. It was known that the society achieved something new and important in its few years of existence, but hardly anybody knew exactly what this was. Only recently has it been possible to reconstruct the history of the society using a broader foundation of source material.[17]

It was a piano student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory who first had the idea of founding such a society. His name was Leo Nesvizhskii (later Ephraim Abileah, 1881–1953), known to his peers as “little Herzl” (a shtikl Herzl), for he was already a

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[15] Evgenia Chazdan, “Evreiskaia muzyka v vospriatii russkogo kompozitora (po pis’mam i avtografam M.P. Musorgskogo)”, in Pamiati Etingera: *Sbornik stat’ei* (Astrakhan 2007), pp. 154–166.

[16] *Evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, 11 (St. Petersburg 1908–1913), col. 415.

[17] Jascha Nemtsov, *Die Neue Jüdische Schule in der Musik* (Wiesbaden 2004).

convinced Zionist at a time when most young Jewish intellectuals still showed little interest in national issues. Even so, he succeeded in finding like-minded people. Lazare Saminsky later recalled:

> A senior schoolmate in [Rimsky-]Korsakov's class Efraim Shkliar, an odd provincial full of inhibitions and fanatically Jewish, the indolent, verbose Rosovsky and Nesvishsky, a gifted pianist, all of them, ardent Zionists ... formed a group aiming to foster Hebrew music. Only faintly interested then in things Jewish ... I joined the group.[18]

The initial phase was difficult. There was at first a lack of clear ideas regarding the content of the work, but also a shortage of people able to implement them. The "ardent Zionists" were not necessarily predestined to lead the society they had called into being. As Mikhail Gnesin wrote at the time:

> The attitude of the society towards the national element in music and its tasks in this context only gradually took shape during numerous meetings, at which the ultimate goal of the society became clear ...
> Initially, the aim was simply to honour the achievements of the Jews in music, and to propagate everything they produced. Gradually, it was understood that only music containing artistically rendered national elements should be sponsored and circulated.[19]

From today's perspective, the interest in folk songs, which was to define the activities of the society for the next two years, took on unusual forms. Folk melodies were collected and adapted, but the society was far from able to record, analyse, or publish them according to academic and ethnographic criteria. The sole task was to preserve the collected melodies according to the rules of classical harmony theory, in order to propagate them. To this end, they were "cultivated", i.e. furnished with simple chords and, in some cases, accompanying parts, and arranged in simple forms for the different kinds of instrumentation that were then customary among amateur musicians. This way of arranging folk songs was first used by the Moscow music critic and composer Joel Engel (1868–1927) and then adopted by the young composers in the society. This resulted in a genre that cannot be classified as folk or as classical music. Its academic value is minimal, as in many cases its artistic merit.
It was extremely difficult to create an artistically convincing product with limited means. Usually, what resulted was simply a type of "musical preserve". However, it was precisely these banalities that suddenly became popular among the Jewish public in St. Petersburg and the provinces: Memorable, often well-known melodies, a conventional musical language, and above all the feeling of being able to hear Jewish national music in a concert for the first time made them hugely popular within a short period of time.

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[18] Lazare Saminsky, "Autobiography", in *Musica Judaica*, II (New York 1977–1978), pp. 11–12.
[19] Mikhail Gnesin, "Vpechatlenia muzykanta. Koncert evreiskoi duchovnoi i narodnoi muzyki", *Evreiski mir*, 3 (21 January 1910), p. 55.

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Moisei Maimon, cover page of the third series of publications by the Society for Jewish Folk Music in St. Petersburg (1913–1914)

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El Lissitzky, cover page of the sheet music editions of the Moscow department of the Society for Jewish Folk Music (1918–1919)

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Leonid Pasternak, cover page of the sheet music editions of the Moscow department of the Society for Jewish Folk Music

Some composers in the group soon became dissatisfied with this approach. A turning point was the society's annual concert on 10 March 1912. Before an audience of over 1,500 people, only new works that had been written in 1911 and early 1912 were performed. For the first time, compositions were presented that went far beyond the limits of an arrangement. On the one hand, these were pieces in which folk songs had provided the starting point for large, demanding concerto forms, while on the other hand, compositions were included that contained no quotes at all, but instead transformed the national Jewish musical idiom into a distinct, personal language. These included primarily the works of the highly talented Moshe Milner (1886–1953) and Joseph Achron (1886–1943), who had both only recently joined the society, but had already made a huge contribution due to their artistic potential. Milner's song "In kheyder" ("In religious school") and his chorus "Unsane toykef" ("Let us affirm the holiness of the day") were the first successful attempts to create Jewish classical music without quoting authentic folk material.[20]

Achron's "Hebrew Melody" and "Ballad" were based on folk melodies, but instead of being "arranged", they were sublimated in a free fantasy form on a level of artistic merit previously unknown in Jewish music, without the national Jewish character getting lost. In the accompanying text to this concert, there surfaced a new and revolutionary thought that characterised this breakthrough in artistic achievement:

> The task of the Society for Jewish Folk Music is to discover the treasures of the folk song and, where possible, to combine them with all of the achievements of modern musical culture. During its first phase, it collected folk melodies and rendered them in a simple fashion. However, this task soon seemed to the composers ... inadequate. They therefore began to render the Jewish song in an artistic manner, and now the first efforts at free creation in the national spirit have been made.[21]

Here, the core principle of the New Jewish School was formulated for the first time: Jewish classical music as a synthesis of Jewish traditional music with European musical culture. This was not invented by any particular person, but was the result of a living creative musical process that took place in the Society for Jewish Folk Music.

An important role was played by the society's musical committee, which was headed primarily by Lazare Saminsky between 1909 and 1917. For the society's young composers, all of whom belonged to the musical committee, the regular meetings became a unique opportunity to play new pieces for one another, to analyse technical and stylistic problems, and to ask experienced colleagues for advice. An atmosphere of camaraderie prevailed, but criticism was also encouraged. Sometimes, these meetings turned into heated discussions, in which the next direction in Jewish music was de-

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[20] According to Gershon Svet, "Milner's pieces have become the foundation of the style of the so-called 'new Jewish School in music'"; Gershon Svet, "Ervrei v russkoi muzykal'noi kul'ture v sovetskii period", in Gregor Aronson, et al., eds., *Kniga o russkom ervreistve 1917–1967* (New York 1968), p. 264.

[21] Central State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg, Programme of the concert, fond 1,747, delo 285.

bated.[22] The intensive exchange of opinions and the high artistic standards that characterised the music committee contributed to the incredibly rapid development of many of its composers.

By 1914, the society already had over 1,000 members. This number must have later grown: From 1914 to 1916, the society opened branches in Odessa, Rostov, Ekaterinoslav (today Dnipropetrovs'k), and Simferopol', in addition to the main office in St. Petersburg and the departments in Moscow and Kiev. In the first few weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution (7 November 1917), the society was able to continue its activities unhindered. However, at the start of 1918, the situation changed dramatically. The last concert that the Society for Jewish Folk Music was able to organise on its own was held in January 1918. During the months that followed, War Communism, the radical economic and political system in force between 1918 and 1921, led to the society's financial ruin.

In Soviet Russia, the Zionist idea, which had been tolerated under tsarist rule, was now subjected to severe repression. A new Society for Jewish Music, founded in Moscow in 1923, tended to the legacy of the St. Petersburg society during the 1920s, but was forced to adapt to these conditions. Jewish works containing religious or Zionist references were re-named or could not be performed. Even so, during the relatively liberal period of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s, the Moscow society succeeded in making significant progress in promoting the development of Jewish music. Many new works were written by established composers; at the same time, the society was able to recruit young talent. The composers of this second generation of the New Jewish School included Aleksandr Weprik (1899–1958), Grigorii Gamburg (1900–1967) and Zinovii Fel'dman (1893–1942).

However, the days of Jewish music in the Soviet Union were numbered. After the Moscow society was disbanded in 1931, few Jewish composers dared to address Jewish themes openly. Fel'dman, for example, composed military music.

Developments in Western Europe

While Jewish traditional music in Eastern Europe had already to some extent become a significant part of classical musical life at the beginning of the 20th century, in the West, it hardly featured on the concert stage. One exception is linked to the cantor Abraham Jacob Lichtenstein (1806-1880). This outstanding musician, who is not mentioned in any of the standard lexica, came from Friedland (today Pravdinsk) in East Prussia. Already at age nine, he was helping to shape worship services in the synagogue in Königsberg with his "expressive soprano voice and wealth of imagination".[23] At 16, he received his first post in the Jewish community in Glogau. After brief stints in Frank-

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[22] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 2,435, pt. 2, delo 184, Saminsky to Aleksander Krein, 16 April 1915; Rosowsky Archive, 5/15, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, letter from Achron to Rosowsky (Berlin 25 October 1923). "Oh, how we miss our musical committee here", Achron wrote Rosowsky from Berlin on 25 October 1923, Rosowsky Archive, 5/16, Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

[23] Aron Friedmann, *Lebensbilder berühmter Kantoren* (Berlin 1918), p. 69, quoted from Sabine Lichtenstein, "Abraham Jacob Lichtenstein: eine jüdische Quelle für Carl Loewe und Max Bruch", *Die Musikforschung*, 4 (1996), pp. 349–367, here p. 350.

furt an der Oder and in Schwedt, he was asked to be the cantor in Stettin, where he worked from 1833 to 1845. There, he met the composer Carl Loewe (1796-1869), the town's music director and precentor at the Jakobskirche. In the concerts conducted by Loewe, Lichtenstein not only sang as a soloist, but also played first violin in the orchestra. His "immense voice and excellent musical talent" were received enthusiastically by both concert audiences and members of the Jewish community.[24]
Jewish liturgical songs, as performed by Lichtenstein, inspired Loewe's oratorio "The Song of Salomon" (Das Hohe Lied Salomons). In 1845, Lichtenstein was called to Berlin, where he worked until his death as cantor of the reform community. He also provided most of the melodic material for the synagogue compositions by Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894).[25] At the end of the 1870s, Lichtenstein became friends with Max Bruch (1838–1920), whom he also acquainted with synagogue music. Some of the melodies that Bruch heard from Lichtenstein would later form the thematic basis for Bruch's famous "Kol nidre" (1881) and "Three Hebrew Songs for Choir, Orchestra and Organ" (Drei hebräische Gesänge für Chor, Orchester und Orgel, 1888).[26]

It was only in the 20th century, and partly under the influence of the Russian-Jewish group of composers, that West European composers also began to show a greater interest in the Jewish musical tradition. In 1910, Maurice Ravel, encouraged by the outstanding Russian singer and director of the Moscow House of Song, Marie Olenine d'Alheim (1869–1970), composed four arrangements of folk songs by different peoples, including a Chanson hébraïque.[27] The original was the Yiddish folk song (with Hebrew and Aramaic additions) "Mayerke, my son" ("Mayerke mayn zun"). All of these arrangements were written for a composition competition held by the House of Song.
Four years later, Ravel again turned to the Jewish musical idiom for his "Deux mélodies hébraïques". This time, the work was commissioned by the Russian singer Alvina Alvi, a soprano at the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg. The small cycle embraced the kaddish, popularly called the "prayer for the dead", and the Yiddish folk song "Die alte Kasche" (which appears in "L'enigme eternelle"). The fact that a West European composer was working with Jewish music was so unusual at the time that Ravel – as had been the case with Max Bruch – was often mistakenly thought to be Jewish. Unlike Bruch, whose "Jewish" works contained nothing that was Jewish aside from the thematic material, Ravel attempted to find authentic stylistic elements in his arrangements that would match the Jewish musical content. When Alexander Weprik visited him in Paris in 1927, they also discussed this issue. Weprik reported in a letter:

> We then started talking about Jewish music. His two Jewish songs did after all play an important role for us Jewish composers. I told him quite openly how much value we attached to his two songs. But he, charming and pleasant as he was, referred to Rimskii-Korsakov and Musorgskii: "That's where they came from."[28]

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[24] Ibid; Abraham Zwi Idelsohn, *Jewish Music. Its Historical Development* (New York 1992), p. 276
[25] Ibid.
[26] Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, p. 513.
[27] Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York 1995), p. 63.
[28] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 2,444, pt. 2, delo 67, Letter from Alexander Weprik to Nadezhda Briusova (Paris, 18 October 1927).

After 1916, the Swiss-Jewish composer Ernest Bloch (1880–1959) in particular emerged in the West as a composer of Jewish musical works.

> It is not my purpose, nor desire to attempt a reconstruction of Jewish music, or to base my works on melodies more or less authentic. I am not an archeologist. I believe that the most important thing is to write good and sincere music – my own music. It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible.[29]

With these words, Bloch expressed his feelings towards Jewish music, feelings that clearly differed from the ideas of the St. Petersburg society. Bloch did indeed refrain from using any authentic Jewish melodies in his works, believing that he could create Jewish music purely by intuition. However, when one attempts to define what is Jewish about his music, it is above all the characteristic melodic and rhythmic elements of Yiddish folklore and synagogue music: the augmented second, the typical recitative-type melodic set phrases, ornamentations, and so on. In his “Jewish Song” for cello and piano (from the cycle “From Jewish Life”), he even uses in the cello part quarter-tone intervals from the Orient, which are frequently characteristic of traditional Jewish singing. What is also important in Bloch’s Jewish works are their highly expressive, emotionally charged nature and their free, rhapsodic forms – qualities that also came from synagogue music. What Bloch called his “intuition” or “inner voice” was in fact the same source that inspired the composers in St. Petersburg!

Ernest Bloch grew up in a tradition-conscious Jewish family in Switzerland. His grandfather was president of the Jewish community in Lengnau, and his father was trained as a rabbi, but ultimately became a bookseller. From his father and synagogue services, Bloch became familiar with Jewish music as a child. In 1912, when he began to compose in a Jewish style, he would certainly have been aware of the activities of the St. Petersburg society, not least through Leo Nesvizhskii, who like Bloch lived in Geneva and promoted the society’s repertoire. Bloch wrote numerous Jewish orchestral and chamber music works that quickly earned him an international reputation. Unlike most of the main figures of the New Jewish School, who were usually Russian Jews, Bloch kept his distance from Zionism. He concerned himself with the spiritual values of the holy scriptures and not the contemporary national aspirations of the Jewish people. The “Hebrew” direction in Bloch’s work peaked in 1933 with the liturgical composition “Avodath Hakodesh” (Sacred Service).

It has only recently become known that despite his Jewish origins and Jewish compositions, Bloch held markedly antisemitic views, as evidenced by documents published in 2005. Bloch not only shared Richard Wagner’s views in Judaism in Music, but in 1934 even expressed his admiration for Adolf Hitler in an interview for the *New York Times*: “The phenomenon of Germany is bigger than the treatment of the Jews. A movement as profound as the Lutheran Reformation is taking place. I greatly respect Hitler’s sincerity.” After the war, he complained:

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[29] Quoted from Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel. From the Biblical Era to Modern Times* (Portland 1996), p. 287.

> The "12-tone row",[30] for me, is an imposture! ... all Jews, who have used the degeneracy of our time to cultivate it for their profit! After poisoning Europe, they have now come here, to this country [the United States], and poison it! We owe this to Mr. Hitler! A fine heritage. This goes with all the rest, with Atom bombs, and the next coming War ... R. Wagner was right in his "Judenthum" – horribly sad — but true.[31]

Whereas Bloch was interested in the "Jewish soul", but simultaneously hated the Jewish element, Juliusz Wolfsohn (1880–1944), who composed his first Jewish works around the same time, was more consistent. Wolfsohn came from a well-known Zionist family.[32] His uncle, David Wolfsohn (1856–1914) was Theodor Herzl's closest colleague and friend and his successor as the leader of the Zionist Organisation. He had, among other things, designed the white-and-blue flag of the Zionists, which was to become the national flag of the State of Israel. David Wolfsohn, who appears in Herzl's novel *The Old New Land* as David Litvak, also became the guardian of Herzl's children after his death. The Wolfsohn family came from the Pale of Settlement within the Russian Empire. Juliusz Wolfsohn had first studied at the conservatory in his home town Warsaw and at the Moscow conservatory, before perfecting his talent as a pianist under Raoul Pugno (1852–1914) in Paris and Theodor Leschetizky (1830–1915) in Vienna. He then chose to remain in Vienna until he was forced to flee the Nazis in 1939.

Already at the turn of the century, Wolfsohn had taken an interest in Yiddish folklore, independent of the activities of the St. Petersburg society. Ethnographic and academic ambitions were just as alien to him as they were to the Russian Jewish composers. He, too, sought merely to popularise folklore in educated circles. Since Wolfsohn was not only an outstanding pianist, but had also developed a solid composition technique, his arrangements immediately revealed a superior quality. Wolfsohn composed large concertos paraphrasing Jewish folk songs, which were primarily to be used at his own performances. The folk melodies were integrated into a dramatic piano texture that did not even try to hide the fact that Liszt had been used as a role model. By 1920, he had completed twelve of these "Paraphrases on Old Jewish Folk Tunes" and a "Jewish Rhapsody", which was also based on folk themes. As a critic from the magazine *Die Musik* wrote at the time:

> Prof. Wolfsohn has written a gratifying – albeit not easy to conquer – piano work, which is just as distinguished by the depth of its feeling as by the pianistic attractions obtained from the thematic material. Psalm melodies and chorales, wedding dances and dinner table songs mesh like links in a chain, and when the wedding song eventually begins at the end, it is only natural – after the triumphant lifting up that it takes – that it is a joy which one experiences with one laughing and one weeping eye.[33]

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[30] The reference here is to the method of composition developed by Arnold Schönberg, the twelve-tone technique.

[31] Klara Moricz, "Sealed Documents and Open Lives: Ernest Bloch's Private Correspondence", *Notes*, 1 (September 2005), pp. 74–86.

[32] On Wolfsohn's biography, J. Torbé, "Die Schöpfer jüdischer Musik. Juliusz Wolfsohn", *Die Stimme*, 238 (28 July 1932), pp. 7–8.

[33] *Die Musik* (Oktober 1924). The translation here is taken from the liner notes of Jascha Nemtsov, *Klavierwerke*, *OehmsClassics 2008*, which includes the world premiere of works by Juliusz Wolfsohn on compact disc.

While Wolfsohn, with his enthusiasm for Jewish folk music, was at first a curiosity in the West, the situation did change after the outbreak of the First World War. As a result of the refugees pouring out of Eastern Europe, the Jewish community in Western Europe grew enormously within a short period of time, particularly in Germany and Austria. By 1923, an estimated 50,000 Jews from Eastern Europe had settled in Vienna alone, raising the number of Jews living there to over 200,000. Most of the immigrants came from traditional environments and were completely different from the assimilated and established Jewish population. As a result, conditions in the Jewish community also changed, with supporters of the national idea gaining ground. As had been the case in Russia, this growing national consciousness was a prerequisite for a Jewish cultural renaissance that fundamentally changed "life in hitherto stagnant communities".[34]

During the 1920s, numerous Jewish political and cultural organisations, even sports clubs, were established in Central Europe. The Zionists were particularly active in this regard. They gained in influence from the late 1920s onwards, not least of due to the growing antisemitism in Germany and other European countries.

While the New Jewish School and its composers were subject to increasing repression in Russia, the German speaking world of the 1920s and early 1930s became their most important area of activity. Some of the main figures of the New Jewish School came to Berlin from St. Petersburg as early as 1922. There, they founded two Jewish music publishing houses: *Jibneh* (yibneh, meaning "[He] will build up") and *Juwal* (Jubal, the first musician in the Bible). They not only published numerous compositions, but also successfully organised concerts featuring this music in Germany and abroad, thus making themselves a magnet for young Jewish composers searching for an authentically Jewish form of musical expression.

In 1928, the Society for the Promotion of Jewish Music (Verein zur Förderung jüdischer Musik) was founded in Vienna. This was to become another important centre for Jewish classical music, remaining in existence for ten years. After the National-Socialists came to power in Germany, it became the most important institution for the New Jewish School. The numerous concerts given by the Vienna society also presented new works by Viennese composers Joachim Stutschewsky (1891–1982), Israel Brandmann (1901–1992), and Juliusz Wolfsohn as well as the standard repertoire of the Russian Jewish group. While the earlier works of Jewish classical music drew primarily from Yiddish folklore and synagogue music, its composers now became increasingly interested in Jewish folk songs from Palestine, which seemed to embody a new, free attitude towards life.

The Viennese society and its members organised and coordinated an entire network of Jewish music, which, in addition to Austria, covered Hungary, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Italy, and Switzerland. Concerts, lectures, and seminars were organised; programme material and sheet music were provided to amateur orchestras and choirs. There were also several other music and cultural organisations with which the Vienna Society closely cooperated. Wolfsohn was justifiably proud of the fact that the Viennese Society for the Promotion of Jewish Music had become "to a certain extent the central office" in this field.[35] It is interesting to note that the language of communication was always German.

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[34] "Austria", in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 3 (Jerusalem 1971), col. 896.

[35] Juliusz Wolfsohn, "Wie sieht es mit der neuen jüdischen Musik aus?" *Die Stimme*, 302 (28 September 1933), p. 9.

Hier bitte ganzseitig Abb.: Nemtsov Jibneh1.tif

The first cover page of the publisher Jibneh (1922/23)

Hier bitte ganzseitig Abb. Nemtsov Jibneh2.tif

Schlomo Rubin, the second cover page of the publisher Jibneh (1923)

The Viennese society faced various difficulties from the start. Its events were never part of the general concert circuit, but were instead organised by Jewish institutions and Jewish artists for a Jewish audience. The results of this activity therefore depended directly on the level of interest and taste of the Jewish community in question. The more assimilation had progressed, the less likely it was that Jewish music would be popular. While constant attempts were made to attract the broadest possible spectrum of the Jewish population to the concerts, hardly anything was done to stir the interest of non-Jews. The organisers clearly took it for granted that concerts of Jewish music would only be attended by Jews. It was even noted as a kind of curiosity that several non-Jews once attended a concert.[36] This dependence on the Jewish public carried considerable risks for the development of the New Jewish School. The Jews were far more exposed to the frequent political and economic crises than the rest of the population. Every crisis of this nature therefore had severe consequences for musical institutions as well.

All of these activities came to a cruel end in the late 1930s. Some musicians such as Stutschewsky or Wolfsohn were able to emigrate in time, while others – such as Henrick Apte, director of the Society for Jewish Music in Cracow, or Berlin composer Arno Nadel – were killed in concentration camps.

After the murder of the Jews throughout most of Europe, Jewish musical culture was lost almost without trace. Most of the composers also disappeared from the public's cultural awareness. One example is the fate of Berlin composer Jakob Schönberg (1900–1956), one of the most talented of his generation. Jakob Schönberg, a distant relative of fellow composer Arnold Schönberg, had already shown an interest in the Jewish musical tradition in his early works. In the 1930s, he developed a highly original, personal style based on Jewish folk songs in Palestine. Following his emigration to the United States and his early death, his music fell into obscurity. His papers were only recently discovered in New York. The surviving scores available bear witness to an immense talent. The re-integration of Schönberg's works and those of other highly talented composers of the New Jewish School into today's cultural life would make an invaluable contribution to our musical life.

Jewish Music as a Symbol

It would be impossible to list here all the composers who felt attracted to the Jewish musical tradition during the 1930s. They included such well known composers as Paul Dessau (1894–1979), Darius Milhaud (1892–1974), Stefan Wolpe (1902–1972), and Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951), who are not necessarily associated with Jewish music.

The Jewish compositions of Arnold Schönberg in particular are characteristic of the development that was to follow. Schönberg, who was forced to leave Germany in 1933, and who demonstratively professed his Jewishness by formally reconverting in exile in Paris, then became actively involved in the Zionist movement for several years and even sought to found a Jewish Unity Party. While the composers of the New Jewish School tried to create a Jewish style in classical music by using elements of traditional Jewish music, for Schönberg, these elements were completely irrelevant

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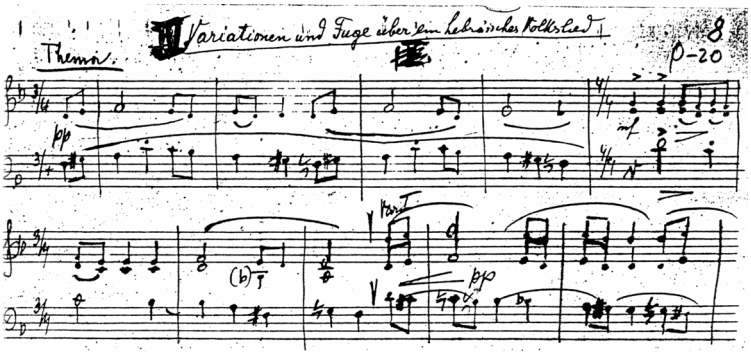
[36] *Die neue Welt* (16 March 1928).

where style was concerned. Schönberg did not seek a Jewish style, rather a moral and political tone. A Jewish melody, such as “Kol nidre”, is inserted into his musical language in a choral piece of the same name, or a prayer text, such as Sh’ma Yisroel, is treated in the cantata “A Survivor from Warsaw”, where they become symbolic quotes delivering an unmistakable and significant message.

Similar importance is accorded a traditional Jewish folk melody in the 7th Piano Sonata composed by Viktor Ullmann (1898–1944) in Theresienstadt ghetto. Ullmann, who came from an assimilated and baptised Jewish family, and who had no contact with Judaism before the war, only began to identify with Jewish culture in Theresienstadt. This newly won identity was for him, and many of his fellow sufferers, part of his moral resistance. Ullmann composed several works on Jewish themes in Theresienstadt and championed Jewish music as a critic and organiser of musical events within the ghetto.

The finale and climax of his 7th Sonata is the 5th movement, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folk Song”. The theme is the folk song “Rachel”, which was written in Palestine in the early 1930s by Yehuda Sharett, who set a poem by the Russian-Jewish poetess Rachel (Rakhel’ Bluvshtein, 1890–1931) to music:

> See, her blood flows in my blood,
> her voice sings in mine,
> Rachel, who tends the herds of Laban,
> Rachel, mother of mothers.



Theme of the variations (from the manuscript of the 7th Piano Sonata)

The theme and the first variations are filled with melancholy and resignation. The 6th variation marks a change in mood. After the theme has almost dissolved, it suddenly sounds again, mirrored in rough bass tones (according to Ullmann’s anthroposophical concept, the mirror was a symbol of a doppelganger, the “antagonist”). The subsequent variations are a mental response to this intrusion of evil; the march-like rhythms already anticipate the apotheosis in the final fugue. In the fugue, the Jewish song is linked to three other symbolic quotes: the Protestant hymn “Now Let Us All Give Thanks to God”, the Czech Hussite song “Ye Who are Warriors of God”, and the B*b*-A-C-B motif (B-A-C-H, in German notation), which is inserted three times at the dramatically most significant points. For Ullmann, this finale was an expression of his affiliation with

different cultural spheres that were important to him and at the same time an attempt to unite them in a world torn apart by hatred and violence. A few months after completing the 7th Sonata, Ullmann was murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Karl Amadeus Hartmann should also be mentioned here, a German composer who was one of the few to choose "inner emigration" during the Nazi era. His works were not performed, and he composed solely "for the bottom drawer". He lived primarily on financial support from his in-laws. In 1933, he wrote his 1st String Quintet, whose most important theme represents a slightly altered quote from the Jewish Sabbath song "Elijah the Prophet" (Elijahu hanavi). He later used this melody again in the opera *Des Simplicius Simplicissimus Jugend*, written in 1934–1935.[37]

In Eastern Europe, it was above all Dmitrii Shostakovich who recognised the symbolic nature of Jewish music at that time and used it in an entire series of works. An extended passage of Shostakovich's memoirs, as compiled by Solomon Volkov, provides insight into the composer's relationship to Jewish music:

> I think, if we speak of musical impressions, that Jewish folk music has made a most powerful impression on me. I never tire of delighting in it, it's multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic. It's almost always laughter through tears. This quality of Jewish folk music is close to my ideas of what music should be. There should always be two layers in music. Jews were tormented for so long that they learned to hide their despair. They express despair in dance music. All folk music is lovely but I can say that Jewish folk music is unique.
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> Many composers listened to it, including Russian composers, Mussorgsky, for instance. He carefully set down Jewish folk songs. Many of my works reflect my impressions of Jewish music. This is not a purely musical issue, it is also a moral issue. I often test a person by his attitude toward Jews. In our day and age, any person with pretensions of decency cannot be anti-Semitic.[38]

Love of Jewish music alone does not explain why Shostakovich made such extensive use of its elements in a certain phase of his work, or why he used these elements at all. In his compositional technique, he was not at all reliant on folk music. It is in fact most untypical for his personal musical language.[39] However, Jewish music was for him not just a "purely musical issue", but above all "a moral issue".

On 13 January 1953, a leading article entitled "Murderers – Doctors" appeared in the Soviet daily Pravda. A group of predominantly Jewish doctors was accused of planning to murder leading Soviet officials. According to Stalin's scenario, the conviction and subsequent public execution of the alleged conspirators was to have provided

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[37] Hanns-Werner Heister, "Das Fremde und das Eigene. Elemente jüdischer Musik bei Karl Amadeus Hartmann", in Dresdner Zentrum für zeitgenössische Musik, ed., *Die Musik des osteuropäischen Judentums – totalitäre Systeme – Nachklänge* (Dresden 1997), pp. 100–102. See also Dorothea Redepenning, "Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz. Musik gegen Gewalt und Krieg", in *Kluften der Erinnerung. Rußland und Deutschland 60 Jahre nach dem Krieg* [= OSTEUROPA 4–6/2005], pp. 281–307.

[38] Dmitri Shostakovich, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, Solomon Volkov, ed. (London 1979), p. 154.

[39] Shostakovich usually decisively inserts folklore elements in an ironic, even sarcastic context.

justification for the mass deportation of the Soviet Union's Jews to Siberia, in order to "protect them from the anger of the people". The death of the dictator several weeks later foiled these plans, however.

The "Doctors Plot" became the climax and symbol of an antisemitic campaign that had already been underway in the Soviet Union for several years. This was the historical context in which Shostakovich's "Jewish" works were composed. The first was the 2nd Piano Trio (1944), which is dedicated to the memory of Ivan Sollertinskii (1904–1944), a musicologist and close friend of Shostakovich. At the same time, this work, which has an unmistakable Jewish feel in its finale, also has another level of meaning as a reaction to antisemitic persecution and foreboding of impending disaster. Personal suffering and mourning is thus identified with universal horror. Just how meaningful this "Jewish" finale was for Shostakovich is evidenced by the fact that he used its main theme many years later in his autobiographical 8th String Quartet (1960).

Most of the "Jewish" works by Shostakovich were written in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when antisemitism assumed openly macabre traits in the Soviet Union. However, the antisemitic campaign was simply channelling tendencies that had been developing in Soviet society over many years:

> But even before the war, the attitude toward Jews had changed drastically ... The Jews became the most persecuted and defenceless people of Europe. It was a return to the Middle Ages. Jews became a symbol for me. All of man's defencelessness was concentrated in them. After the war, I tried to convey that feeling in my music. It was a bad time for the Jews then. In fact, it's always a bad time for them ... That's when I wrote the Violin Concerto, the Jewish Cycle, and the Fourth Quartet.[40]

It is worth tracing how considerable the changes were in how Jewish music was received over just a few decades during the 20th Century. When Maurice Ravel wrote his arrangements of folk songs, he chose seven in all: a French one, a Flemish one, a Scottish one, a Russian one, a Spanish one, an Italian one, and a Jewish one – the aforementioned *Mayerke, mayn zun*. This last song did not attract a great deal of attention in the competition and was performed alongside the others without anyone regarding it as a particularly courageous or politically explosive act (for example, as a demonstration of support for the rights of Russia's oppressed Jews). In 1945, the Ukrainian-Jewish composer Dmitrii Klebanov (1907–1987) wrote his First Symphony, which – many years before Shostakovich dedicated his 13th Symphony to the same topic – he called "Babi Yar". The symphony was initially accepted by the authorities, but after the first rehearsals, it became clear that this work had no chance of being performed in a concert hall.[41] The cultural functionaries responsible were outraged, because the composer had included elements of Jewish music in the work. According to the official version of events at Babi Yar, the Nazis had not murdered Jews at this Kiev ravine, but "Soviet people":

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[40] Shostakovich, *Testimony*, p. 156. See also Ernst Kuhn, *Dmitri Schostakowitsch und das jüdische musikalische Erbe* (Berlin 2001).

[41] The symphony was first performed during Perestroika.

> What they [the functionaries] heard left them speechless at his impudence: the entire thematic material of the symphony was pervaded by markedly Jewish intonations. For the mournful apotheosis in the finale, the soprano sang a vocal passage in the synagogue style, which very strongly recalled the Jewish prayer for the dead (kaddish). The scandal was perfect.[42]

In the 1930s, the composers of the Jewish national school were still at pains to create a Jewish music that would be treated equally in the "concert of nations", a music that "from its own essence and shapes [would] resonate among the other peoples, a place in musical literature around the world".[43]

This aim was clearly not achieved, not only because the creators of this music and their audience were murdered in the Holocaust or were uprooted and scattered to the winds as a result of Nazi persecution. A new style of music composed against the backdrop of Jewish tradition was almost certainly doomed in the cosmopolitan music business of the postwar years anyway. Above all, however, after the Holocaust, the Jewish element lost its naturalness. Jewish music is no longer simply a folk style like all the others. It is charged with many additional connotations that go far beyond its original semantics. In the wake of the Holocaust, the Jewish element in music is not only first and foremost a symbol for the indescribable suffering and tragic fate of the Jews, it is also a symbol for victims of violence and for suffering per se. The folk elements have been displaced by moral and political overtones. The Jewish element in music – be it characteristic elements of works by composers of classical music or the modern Klezmer revival – no longer solely relates to Jews, but is open to the broadest possibilities of identification.

Just as it is difficult to foresee when "normality" will prevail in the way Jews and non-Jews in Europe associate with one another, it is also hard to imagine contemporary composers ever again being able to use elements of Jewish traditional music in an unselfconscious way, as was the case in Ravel's time. However, the fact that Jewish music – as with national colour in general – has in recent years once again been acknowledged by composers of New Music is certainly a positive development.

Translated by Anna Güttel, Berlin

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[42] Irma Zolotovitsky, "Zufälliges und Nicht-Zufälliges in Šostakovičs 'Jüdischen' Kompositionen", in Kuhn, *Schostakowitsch*, p. 110.

[43] Joachim Stutschewsky, *Mein Weg zur jüdischen Musik* (Vienna 1935), p. 34.