

Guest Editor's Introduction

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Jewish music as an area of study is a young discipline. Although chanting texts and liturgical prayers have been part of the Jewish tradition for thousands of years, discussion of musical practices in rabbinic literature is not systematic—as music has always had the challenge of overcoming the rabbinic concern for serving the text and not being an end within itself. With new opportunities for music during the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), occasions developed for Jews to study and create music. The creation of new music for the synagogue and the concert hall brought additional opportunities from the 19th to the 20th centuries.

A.Z. Idelsohn, one of the first Jewish musicologists, saw the various 20th century practices of cantillation and chant as remnants of an ancient tradition. He documented the practices of Jews in Israel, then Palestine, in the early 1900s. Idelsohn saw the traditions of Yemenite Jews as a perpetuation of ancient practices. In his seminal publication *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* (1929), Idelsohn asserted that the cantillation practices of Jewish communities that he documented from traditions in Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Germany, Italy, and many other communities all shared a common core set of melodies. He acknowledged some variation in the melodies, but he believed the melodic contours stemmed from proto Palestinian folk songs (1929, see chapter 3). Modern scholars do acknowledge the similarities among modern practices but are doubtful that 20th century practices faithfully maintain traditions 2000 years old. One critique of Idelsohn's theory is found in Amnon Shiloah's *Jewish Musical Traditions* (1992, pp. 21-33, pp. 96-109; for another see Bohlman 2008, chapter 2). The differences among Jewish traditions

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spread over thousands of miles illustrate that local influence is a significant factor. Idelsohn was driven by a poetic notion that Jews who were settling in Palestine in the early 1900s had a common origin and that the music they sang demonstrated this fact. Idelsohn's pioneering work to document traditions, similar to efforts of other scholars to document folk traditions (such as Bartok and Densmore), is certainly noteworthy. He transcribed field recordings, gathered, organized, and tried to understand the music of Jews through time and geography. His *Thesaurus of Hebrew and Oriental Melodies* (1914-1932) is a 10-volume compendium of melodies from both Sephardic (volumes 1-5) and Ashkenazic (volumes 6-10) communities. While his common origin theory is not accepted as a fact, he did offer a comprehensive approach to the study of Jewish music. With over 80 years since its publication, *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* remains the only single volume covering a vast area of Jewish music.¹

As scholarly approaches changed, so did the focus of study. Idelsohn worked at Hebrew Union College from 1922-1934, followed by Eric Werner (1901-1988) who joined the faculty in 1939. Werner's goal was to show the connection of music of the ancient synagogue to the church. His publication *The Sacred Bridge* (1959, 1970) in two volumes was accepted initially with accolades but later significantly critiqued for a lack of documentary precision (Jeffrey 1987). Similarly, Werner's *A Voice Still Heard* (1976) viewed the German Ashkenazic tradition as the dominant tradition of Jewish liturgy and clearly represented an ethnocentric bias. Judah Cohen (2008) remarks that these *Wissenschaft* approaches of Jewish music, born from a European approach, have an essentialist view of music and represent inherent aspects of their seminary experiences. Cohen discusses how Jewish music repositioned itself from the seminary approach to fields of musicology and ethnomusicology in American universities.² While these fields have different emphases in approach and methodology, since the 1980s the boundaries between the two disciplines have blurred. Jewish music has increasingly become the subject of study, and new sources and approaches emerge, resulting in significant growth in the number of studies. At present there is a more delimited focus of study looking at particular contexts in a region or period of time. This approach of greater focus follows trends in scholarship of both musicology and ethnomusicology where the unit of analysis is contextualized, delimited, and considered in detail. Larger comprehensive and comparative studies are part of past scholarship.

Surveying notable musicological studies shows new consideration of 19th and 20th century European musicians and their work in America. David Schiller's study of Bloch, Schoenberg, and Bernstein examines one major work of each composer and focuses on the Jewish message and content of the work that is contextualized within their lives (2003). Klára Móricz looks at Russian Jewish composers Bloch and Schoenberg through the lens of Jewish identity in a richly detailed investigation

¹ A significant study of Jewish music viewed broadly is the long essay in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, see Seroussi and others 2001.

² For a larger view of the *Wissenschaft* tradition and Jewish music historiography see Bohlman 2008. For the purposes of this group of essays in this volume, I am focusing on American approaches. A fuller view of the subject would need to include prominent Israeli scholars of the second half of the 20th century: Israel Adler, Amnon Shiloah, Hanoch Avenary, Batja Bayer, Ruth Katz, and Dalia Cohen.

of the composers' approaches to the music and analytic details of the music itself (2008). James Loeffler similarly looks at Jewish composers in the late Russian empire through a desired cultural identity rather than politics or religion (2010). Philip Bohlman's study *Jewish Music and Modernity* (2008) investigates the confrontation between modern Jews and the world around them in Europe over the last 200 years, juxtaposing sacred and secular, folk and popular in an effort to provide a larger view of contexts for Jews and music. Ruth HaCohen looks at anti-Semitism in *The Music Libel Against the Jews* (2012) based upon long-standing Christian efforts to silence Jews with mounting political and theological effort. These musicological studies have opened new arenas of inquiry beyond the questions of the origins of Jewish music into a highly contextualized realm of musical and cultural activity in Europe.

Since the 1950s, ethnomusicology has been a discipline that has produced scholarship in Jewish music in both the Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions. European scholars saw ethnomusicology as a way to investigate non-Western music through a methodology using a systematic approach of music rather than an historical approach. See the works by Edith Gerson-Kiwi (1980) for a collection of her essays on various Jewish communities, Amnon Shiloah on the Iraqi community (1983), and the ongoing publication of Armistead, Silverman, and Katz (1986) on the oral tradition of the Judeo-Spanish ballad.³ American ethnomusicologists, since the 1970s, have been influenced by cultural anthropology and align the field with cultural studies and social theory through fieldwork and participant observation. The works of Kay Kaufman Shelemay on the Beta Israel in Ethiopia (1989), Mark Slobin on the American Cantorate (1989), and Ellen Koskoff (2001) on music in Lubavitch Hasidic life are all based on fieldwork and situate music as a way to view culture. Other recent studies following this approach include: Slobin (2000) on the Klezmer revival, Summit (2000) on five prayer groups in Boston showing the multiplicity of voices of the practitioners and worshippers, Kligman (2009) on the role of Arab musical culture on Syrian Jewish liturgy, Cohen (2009) on the development of Reform cantors, Rapport (2014) on Bukharin Jews, and Barzel (2015) on the negations of Jewish identity through music of the Downtown avant-garde jazz scene in New York. Each unit of analysis is contextualized and investigated in these studies to view the culture of Jewish life in specified settings.

These new studies in musicology and ethnomusicology are part of recent efforts by myself and others to develop more conversations in Jewish music through the creation of special interest groups that are a part of larger academic societies. The Jewish Music Forum in New York, started in 2004 with the aim to have ongoing discussions of Jewish music, has as its base for its activities the Center for Jewish History in New York under the support of the American Society for Jewish Music. The Society for American Music in 2006 established a Jewish music section, and a Jewish Music Special Interest Group began at the Society of Ethnomusicology in 2009. The American Musicology Society started a Jewish Studies and Music Study Group in 2010 and published a series of papers from their initial discussion,

³ Other works include the studies by Edwin Seroussi (1990, 1991, 1993, 2005) on the Turkish, Moroccan and Spanish and Portuguese Sephardic traditions.

“Colloquy: Jewish Studies and Music” (see Mórcoiz and Seter 2012).⁴ All of these efforts and initiatives have developed a network of scholars who share and develop their work with one another. Within the last 10 years the number of publications on Jewish music has increased.

My approach with the group of essays in this journal is ethnographic. I asked each author to share recent work highlighting the connection of music and Jewish culture in a fashion that is not musically technical. All five ethnographic essays are grounded in a particular context and deal with cultural, social, and Jewish issues and the engagement of music. The aim is to show how music in Jewish life can be part of the conversation of contemporary Jewry. These essays deal with a range of contexts and issues: Judah Cohen investigates the life of a prominent Jewish musician, Debbie Friedman, at the beginning of her career; Gordon Dale documents the issues of gender in Modern Orthodox partnership *minyanim*; Abigail Wood situates the Western Wall in Jerusalem as a sonic space showing diversity and porous boundaries between religious cultures; Jessica Roda focuses on representation of Sephardic culture and music in the Sephardic music festivals in Montreal over a 40-year period; and Maureen Jackson views the creation of a new siddur by Turkish Jews in Seattle as an expression of the establishment of their identity as Sephardic Jews in America. These essays range from looking at the contributions of an individual, a group, a community and the specifics of location and identity. As Jewish Studies has grown to look at a variety of contributions of Jewish life, these essays also look within the Jewish community and beyond, nuancing the negotiation of Jewish participation and blurring boundaries. Below is a summary of each of the five essays.

Judah Cohen’s focus on a landmark singer/songwriter/liturgist Debbie Friedman opens the discussion of newly created music during the formative period of Jewish musical and liturgical expression in the 1970s. His focus is on the beginning of her career and professional life. “Sing Unto God” is the title track of her initial album in 1972 and serves as a metaphor for her performance of new music for ritual life. As Cohen discusses, there were other precedents prior to 1972, but Debbie Friedman’s recording and ongoing work made her contributions enduring and seminal. Friedman, as Cohen shows, worked against the system of the Reform movement. She was not a cantor but led services and created new Jewish music that challenged the cantor, choir, and organ format of Reform Judaism. She was not a schooled musician or learned Jew but made an impact nonetheless. Cohen richly provides a biographical discussion of Friedman’s background prior to 1972 and places her life and work into an American liberal Jewish context. He provides an ethnographic account of her efforts, and those who worked closely with her, to establish a new paradigm for modern liberal synagogue music. Cohen asserts that new paradigm to be not one of musical accomplishment in a traditional fashion but a way to empower the congregation and community to redefine worship through music. This study continues Judah Cohen’s work to document the life and impact of Debbie Friedman.

⁴ This publication includes contributions from Judah Cohen, Alexander Knapp, Steven Cahn, Rebecca Cypess, and Edwin Seroussi.

Gordon Dale documents a new phenomenon in Modern Orthodox religious life, the partnership *minyanim*. These settings allow women to participate in certain aspects of Jewish rituals. Dale shows how new gender roles are negotiated through music in this ritual context. Situated at a complex intersection of highly educated and professional women whose knowledge of Jewish sources and traditions are at a high level, combined with a desire to participate and contribute to Jewish life, make for a new arena of activity. Participation through music is at the core of this liturgical context that not only negotiates the role of women's participation in an Orthodox context but men's participation as well. In this richly contextualized ethnography, Dale shows the ongoing dialogue of this issue among women and men and the generational implications as younger women see partnership *minyanim* as new avenues of opportunity. This innovation is controversial since new roles for women are not equally valued in the Orthodox community. Dale shows amid this controversy that it is not a new musical repertoire, but a new sonic space for women and a role for men to listen and enable this new activity.

The Western Wall in Jerusalem is seen as the mostly holy site in the Jewish tradition. In the Old City of Jerusalem the Western Wall not only occupies a visual representation of the outer wall of the Second Temple, but is also an environment of ongoing religious worship and activity. Abigail Wood uses the sounds heard at the Western Wall as an arena of inquiry in a politically tense context. The historic symbol of the Western Wall marks antiquity of Jewish sovereignty from ancient times and the capture of Jerusalem in 1967, hearing religious prayers is a fitting sonic marker to the physical space. Wood shows how the space is used by various religious groups and those that challenge tradition, such as the Women of the Wall, as well as nationalistic events (IDF oath ceremonies, Yom Yerushalayim). Given this diversity within the Jewish and Israeli landscape is the sound of the *muezzin*, the Muslim call to prayer. Using the sound of the cantor and the *muezzin*, Wood shows how sonic space is more permeable than physical space. One's personal journey at a particular time and location at the Western Wall creates a unique sonic experience.

With the rise of ethnic heritage in the 1960s and 1970s, a developing Jewish generation found a deep connection with klezmer music. Sephardic music was also "rediscovered" and "invented" or "reinterpreted" by groups such as *Al Hambra* and *Voice of the Turtle*. Jessica Roda investigates the *Festival Sefarad*, held in Montreal from 1973-2013, that started as a community event and then developed into a large public festival and included performances by international artists. Roda looks at issues of Sephardi identity, marketing, tourism, and representation. As the geographical landscape of Jews of Middle Eastern heritage shifted from North Africa to France, Israel, and North America so did labels such as "Sephardi" and "Mizrahi." The linguistic world of these Jews is also dynamic: Ladino Arabic French Hebrew. Roda demonstrates how the music in the recent *Festival Sefarad* performances negotiates cultural and religious identity, geography, and artistry. Ultimately the choice of performers and repertoire is a self-conscious representation that changes over time.

Studying Sephardic Jewry in the United States, Maureen Jackson investigates *hazzanim* and the liturgical developments in Seattle. Jackson asserts the formation of a Sephardic-American identity through the creation of a siddur. Contextualizing

the Seattle *hazzanim* and their Turkish tradition within a larger Ottoman Jewish context Jackson focuses on liturgical musical practices from the 19th century to the present. Most discussion of Sephardic Jewry in the United States centers on the New York Spanish and Portuguese community. Jackson shows how the development and maintenance of tradition of Turkish synagogues in Seattle arose out of a desire to concretize local practice, providing a new center for Sephardic Jews outside of New York. The differences of liturgical practice necessitated a new local siddur for Seattle at Ezra Bessaroth, *Siddur Zehut Yosef* in 2002 (for a similar phenomenon of Syrian Jews in NY see Kligman 2009, chapter 3). Jackson shows the growth of Sephardic Ottoman heritage outside of New York and the desire to assert identity through music and liturgical practice.

A note of thanks to the five authors of these articles: Judah Cohen, Gordon Dale, Abigail Wood, Jessica Roda, and Maureen Jackson. They have all written these articles based on their current research, and this will provide the readers new and interesting contexts of music in Jewish life. Finally, a special thanks goes to Samuel Heilman for asking me to serve as guest editor. I am grateful that a meaningful discussion of music can appear in this journal for a wide group of readers.

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