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MIKHAIL (MOSHE) MILNER - THE JEWISH COMPOSER IN  
RUSSIA AS BRIDGE BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION  
BRIAN FARREL MILLER

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
School of Sacred Music  
New York, New York

1996

Advisor: Rabbi Carole B. Balin

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## INTRODUCTION.

This project seeks to investigate the life and work of the Jewish composer Mikhail(Moshe) Milner who lived in Russia from 1886 to 1953. The first section of the project not only chronicles Milner's artistic development but examines the historical, political and cultural trends which shaped his activities and music.

His earliest influences were a thorough familiarity with the religious and musical traditions of *heder* and synagogue, as well as training in piano and Western forms of harmony and composition. Milner moved to St.Petersburg as a young man and completed his musical studies at the Conservatory. The early decades of the twentieth century were a time of emerging Jewish nationalism and this project also examines factors which contributed to this nascent self-assertiveness. A discussion of Russian musical nationalism will show that the aims and ideals of Russian composers in this field, particularly the members of the so-called "group of five," greatly stimulated the formation of the St.Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music, of which Milner was a prominent member. The aims and activities of the Society as well as Milner's work are examined.

The project examines the impact of the 1917 Revolution and subsequent establishment of the Soviet regime on Jewish artists in general and on Milner in particular. Milner largely abandoned music with Jewish subject matter and

content during the Soviet era in favor of works which would find ideological favor with the authorities. It is my belief that Milner was not ideologically committed to the regime but was merely attempting to survive by compromising as best he could.

The second section of the project contains analyses of selected musical works of Milner under the categories Art Songs, Music for the Theater and Liturgical Music, three spheres of composition in which he was active.

These analyses will demonstrate first that Milner was influenced by the compositions of the "group of five," especially by Mussorgsky, with whom he has been most often compared. Secondly, they reveal that Milner's important achievement as one of the founders of the new school of Jewish art music was that he was often able to combine successfully traditional Jewish folk and liturgical melodies with contemporary Western harmonies to create works of great imagination and daring.

Another of Milner's achievements was to compose the first Yiddish opera to be performed in the Soviet Union. A detailed discussion of the opera *Asmodai* and reactions to it are included. Finally, because so many details of Milner's life and music have hitherto been shrouded in mystery, the project concludes with an examination of reasons for this neglect, as well as an assessment of Milner's importance as a composer of Jewish music.

With the aid of documents, letters and manuscripts from the Milner archive in the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts in St.Petersburg, I hope this project sheds light on a highly innovative and creative Jewish composer who certainly deserves to be better-known.

SECTION ONE-CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH-KIEV 1886-1907.

*Gedenk mein kind, a yid darf lernen Toire  
Azoy zagt undz der heylicher boyre.*

Remember my child, A Jew must learn Torah,  
Our Holy Creator tells us so.

Moshe Milner from the song *In Heder*.

Mikhail (Moshe) Arnoldovich Melnikoff Milner was born in 1886 in Rokitna in the Province of Kiev. The city of Kiev, with its thriving Jewish population of merchants, intellectuals, doctors and students numbering approximately 32,000, was located within the Pale of Settlement. Empress Catherine the Great created this vast area in 1791 to accommodate the great numbers of Jews which came to be under Russian rule at the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the Partitions of Poland.

There had been several devastating pogroms in the Kiev area in the 1880's and the so-called "May Laws" of May 1882 forbade Jews from settling outside towns and hamlets and from conducting business on Sundays. The May Laws also imposed a number of restrictions on Jews regarding education including a "numerus clausus" for secondary schools and places of higher learning.

In his Lexicon fun Yiddishen Theater, Zalman Zilberblatt gives us important biographical details of Milner's early

years.<sup>1</sup> He attended a heder, while his earliest musical experience included singing in a male choir under Cantors Zeidel Rovner (Jacob Samuel Morogowsky) and Moshe Koretsky. Milner was orphaned at an early age but because of his reputedly excellent alto voice, he travelled with Cantor Rovner for approximately two years. Later, he was taken to the famous Brody Synagogue in Kiev where he sang as a boy chorister under Abram Dzimitrovsky. The choir which numbered forty boys and ten men rehearsed daily, and the boys became as well the official choristers of the Kiev Opera appearing in such productions as "Carmen," "Boris Godunov," "The Queen of Spades" and "Mephistopheles." Milner was also put in charge of the Synagogue music library and began studying piano and sight singing with Dzimitrovsky. As well, he became acquainted with Olga Vecher, a prominent local musician who not only continued to teach him piano but also prepared him for entry into the Royal Academy of Music in Kiev, where for two years he studied piano with the renowned Professor Puchalsky. As a student he was enamored of the piano music of Chopin, and, according to Weisser<sup>2</sup> he wrote a concerto for two pianos in the style of Chopin. Rumor has it that Puchalsky did not receive the concerto favorably, telling Milner to "play better games." It was during this early period that Milner

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<sup>1</sup>Zalman Zilberblatt Lexicon fun Yiddish Theater. (Warsaw: Alishve Press, 1934), p.1321.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Weisser, The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1954), p. 94.

wrote his most famous songs " *In Heder* " (In the classroom) and " *Unter die Grininke Bamelach*" (Under the green trees) to a text by Bialik. In 1907 with the aid of Baron Vladimir Ginzburg, a member of the most prominent and wealthy Jewish family in Russia, Milner moved to St. Petersburg where he was admitted to the Conservatory as a student of piano, theory and composition.

In his brief, handwritten autobiography, Milner reminisces about his childhood, family and formative musical experiences:

I was born in the village of Rokitna in the province of Kiev in 1886. My father was very poor and he played the violin for his own pleasure. My mother was a tender woman who worked very hard raising eight children and she lived with the dream of seeing me, her firstborn, becoming a famous cantor, like her brother in America. Her brother was born with a beautiful natural voice and great musicality which he inherited from his grandfather. When I was ten years old, I began to study Talmud in heder. The rabbi made us study very hard and with great effort he tried to drum into my head the first chapter of *Gittin* where I learned all the most minute details of how to get divorced from your wife.<sup>3</sup> When I was a child, I had a beautiful voice and cantors were fighting to have me in their choirs. Soon I was singing in the choir of the most famous cantors of the time, Zeidel Rovner and Moshe Koretsky. From the first one I learned how to read music and from the second I learned how to sing solo with correct technique. I sang with Zeidel Rovner for two and a half years, travelling from town to town. Later, I came to Kiev and joined the choir of Abram Dzimitrovsky. I sang the Mozart Requiem under his direction and I knew by memory all the choral parts of the *Rex Tremendae* and *Lachrymosa*. When my voice broke, I did not have enough money to travel back to my parents in Rokitna. My parents died at this time and I decided to pursue a trade and was apprenticed to a

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<sup>3</sup>Gittin is the Hebrew word for divorces and in this case refers to the sixth tractate of the order Nashim(Women) in the Mishna, Tosefta and Jerusalem Talmuds.



draughtsman for two months. But Dzimitrovsky summoned me and I returned to his choir and also began studying piano with him. Very soon, he sent me to the renowned teacher Olga Davidovna Vecher who with great care and affection prepared me for entry into the Conservatory. Being a Jew, it was difficult to enroll but Professor Puchalsky, the famous piano teacher helped me. I also began studying scientific subjects at this time and was soon a virtuoso on the piano. After the infamous Jewish pogroms in Kiev in 1905, I experienced terrible things. I got a foreign passport so that I would be able to travel abroad but because of a lack of funds, I had to remain in Kiev. I began giving piano lessons myself and very soon I had enough money to travel to St. Petersburg.<sup>4</sup>

Milner's early years in Kiev were extremely important to his musical development as he was exposed to two distinctive musical worlds: a more traditionally Jewish one of heder and synagogue choir on the one hand, and a more "Western" one of Conservatory and opera house, on the other. These two worlds would further reveal themselves and successfully merge in much of his later work as a prominent member of the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music.

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<sup>4</sup>Encyclopedia Judaica notes under the entry "Kiev" that these pogroms took place on October 18, 1905 as a result of Jewish revolutionary activity. Neither army nor police controlled the rioters who caused havoc for three days.

<sup>5</sup>Milner's handwritten autobiography of ten pages dates from 1933. It is item number 50 in the Milner archive (Font no.42) at the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts, St.Petersburg.

SECTION 2-ST.PETERSBURG 1907-1920.

All the elegant mirage of St.Petersburg was merely a dream, a brilliant covering thrown over the abyss while all around there sprawled the chaos of Judaism-without a home, without a hearth.

Osip Mandelstam.<sup>6</sup>

By the time Milner came to St. Petersburg in 1907, it had become firmly established as the Russian capital and center of government. The city is believed to have had a Jewish population since its founding by Peter the Great in 1703 but the fortunes of the Petersburg Jews fluctuated greatly according to the attitude of the particular Tsar in power. Jews could not legally live in the city, with very few exceptions, until the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Tsar Nicholas I expelled large numbers of Jews from the city and restricted Jewish visitors to a maximum stay of six weeks, whereas the more tolerant Alexander II relaxed restrictions slightly and legal residence was granted to merchants of the first guild, intellectuals and craftsmen. Subsequently many Jewish financiers, scientists and lawyers were attracted to the city, and many students registered at the University and higher institutes of learning. In 1886 there were 326 Jewish students in St.Petersburg and 848 in the first decade of the twentieth century, the period when Milner

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<sup>6</sup>From the Autobiography of Osip Mandelstam as quoted in the Introduction of Selected Poems of Osip Mandelstam(Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973).

began his studies at the Conservatory.<sup>7</sup>

Jews played an important role in the life of the city. Some of the wealthier members of the community, such as the Ginzburg family had access to the Royal Court and were considered spokesmen for Russian Jewry as a whole. In 1893 a splendid Moorish-style synagogue seating almost 1,200 was completed, largely financed by members of the Ginzburg family. The early decades of the century were years of great flourishing in the cultural life of the St. Petersburg Jewish Community, which numbered almost 35,000. The Hebrew, Russian and Yiddish presses were centered in the city as were many prominent artists, journalists and writers. A sixteen-volume Jewish Encyclopedia or *Yevreiskaya Entsiklopedia* in the Russian language was published in conjunction with the Society for Learned Publications between 1908 and 1913. Many prominent Jewish organizations' headquarters were located in the city, including the Society for the Promotion of Culture among the Jews in Russia which was founded in 1865 to revitalize religious, social and cultural life and promote the aims of the Haskalah.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Encyclopedia Judaica "Leningrad". (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1972.) Volume 11, pp.14-21.

<sup>8</sup>Haskalah is the Hebrew word for the Enlightenment movement and ideology which began as part of the general enlightenment movement in Europe in the eighteenth century and spread into Eastern Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. The Haskalah movement encouraged acculturation and loyalty to the modern centralized state. It regarded this assimilation as a precondition to and integral element in emancipation, which Haskalah upheld as an objective.

Milner entered the St.Petersburg Conservatory in 1907 and graduated in 1915. His studies included piano with Professor Michlashefsky, harmony with Professor Kalafaty, counterpoint with Professors Lyadov and Vithol and instrumentation with Professor Steinberg (son-in-law of the composer Rimsky-Korsakov). In his autobiography, Milner recalls his years at the Conservatory:

I enrolled at the St.Petersburg Conservatory in 1907 and was immediately admitted to the more senior piano class of Professor Michlachevsky. I took private lessons with M.N.Burinova at my house. Even though I had composed some fragments when I was still a boy in Zeidel Rovner's choir, I began to think seriously about composition at that time. In 1908, my dream of becoming a composer was realized when I took two courses in the fundamentals of harmony with Professor Kalafaty and counterpoint with Professor Lyadov. I also studied orchestration with Maximilan Steinberg. In 1914, I completed the course at the Conservatory and on December 21, 1915, I was given my diploma as well as being granted the honor of becoming a "Free Artist."<sup>9</sup>

Anton Rubenstein founded the Conservatory or Imperial School of Music in 1861 as part of his efforts to move away from domination of the St.Petersburg musical scene by foreigners. Rubenstein wanted to promote Russian music by providing the first advanced school for Russian musicians, regardless of their social status. According to the original charter, the Conservatory would:

Offer a broad curriculum of music courses, including singing, performance on the piano and all musical

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<sup>9</sup>The rights and privileges of citizens of the Russian empire varied according to their *chin* or rank. This in turn depended on their social class, education and profession. The title of "free artist" gave its holder exemption from poll tax and military recruitment as well as the right to live anywhere in the country.

instruments, composition and orchestration, music history, aesthetics and declamation. In addition, courses were offered in Russian language, Russian history, geography and literature.<sup>10</sup>

It offered a six-year course of study and it is interesting to note that even at its founding, there were already eight Jewish students out of a total of 299. In 1871, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was invited to become Professor of Composition and subsequently director of the Conservatory. He was one of the members of the so-called "Group of Five" formed by the composer Mily Balakirev to promote the ideals of Russian musical nationalism in St.Petersburg. Rimsky-Korsakov was particularly well-disposed towards his Jewish students and was later to play a crucial part in the formation of the Society for Jewish Folk Music.

#### SECTION 2a-NATIONALISM IN RUSSIA.

It is important to examine the rise of Russian nationalism through music as a prelude to the formation of a Jewish National School. How did foreigners come to dominate almost completely the St.Petersburg musical scene? Peter the Great(1672-1725) founded the city as part of his attempt to create a new, more European-oriented Russia. He also introduced many Western customs and institutions to the city, often, in the opinion of some, at the expense of time-honored

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<sup>10</sup>Robert Ridenour Nationalism, Modernism and Personal Rivalry in 19th century Russian Music. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1977), p.38.

traditions. Similarly, Empress Catherine II (1762-1796) admired everything French and soon French thought began to permeate the Russian court and intelligentsia. European music and Italian opera in particular became immensely popular with the Petersburg aristocracy who imported more and more musicians from Western Europe. Soon these foreign musicians dominated the musical life of the city, and this domination was to continue well into the late-nineteenth century. Most music teachers were foreign, and there was no Russian institute of higher musical training. Thus, Russian musicians earned considerably less than their European counterparts, enjoying very little social or cultural recognition. As Ridenour comments, "As long as these conditions prevailed, Russia could never be more than a musical colony of Western Europe."<sup>11</sup>

In response to this Euro-centered culture, Russian musical nationalism began to take shape. This nationalism was not so much a political movement as a deliberate attempt by a group of composers to free Russian music from its dependence on and domination by foreign music and musicians. Russian composers wanted their music to be accessible to all Russians, not only to the aristocracy, as was the case with Italian opera. In order to do this, they turned to Russian history and folklore as subjects for their works and to Russian folk songs and melodies as inspiration for their music.

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<sup>11</sup>Ridenour, p.18.

Mikhail Glinka's opera "A Life for the Tsar" with a libretto by Pushkin (1836) is considered the first work to embody the nascent musical nationalism. Glinka used Russian history as subject matter for his opera, and made great use of folk songs to represent the "authentic", popular musical language of the Russian people. As Ridenour suggests, "Glinka attempted to create an original musical language from authentic folk music using the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic idiosyncracies of Russian song."<sup>12</sup>

In 1859, the composer Anton Rubenstein founded the Russian Music Society which had as its principal aim the education of Russians for an appreciation of Russian music as well as the encouragement of native talent. The Society also formed its own orchestra and chorus and offered a regular concert season each year, each concert highlighting a new work by a Russian composer. However, in 1862, the composer Mily Balakirev, strongly criticizing Rubenstein's society for not being nationalistic enough, formed a new group. In addition to Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Cesar-Cui, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov joined the group which soon became known as "the group of five" or "the mighty handful" (*moguchaia kuchk*)<sup>13</sup>. This group advocated a new Russian style of music which would not simply be written by Russians or utilize Russian folk themes but would achieve a level of high

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.76.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.103.



musical sophistication through its use of innovative harmonies, dynamic and flexible rhythms and interesting variations of color. Some Russian composers were also greatly interested in Jewish music and made use of Jewish themes and motifs in their compositions. Rubenstein himself wrote a group of Biblical operas including "The Tower of Babel"(1870)," The Maccabees" (1875),"Shulamit"(1883)and "Moses"(1887). Rubenstein used several Jewish melodies in these operas. Mussorgsky was also fascinated with Jewish topics and composed the songs "King Saul"(1863) and "Hebrew Song"(1867), with a text from the Song of Songs and a melody which he claimed to have overheard when his Jewish neighbors celebrated the festival of Sukkot.<sup>14</sup>

The Russian composers inspired Jews to infuse their music with nationalism, and there are many similarities between the Russian composers who comprised the "group of five" and Milner and the other Jewish members of the St.Petersburg Society for Jewish Music. Like the Russians, Milner and his circle turned to Jewish folklore and folk melodies for authenticity, thereby establishing a link with the people. Also, as Russian composers used choral music and liturgical chants from Orthodox Church music to enhance feelings of national pride, so did Jewish composers (Milner included) use elements of

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<sup>14</sup>Joachim Braun "The Jewish National School in Russia" in Judith Cohen, Proceedings of World Congress on Jewish Music-Jerusalem, 1978. (Tel Aviv: Institute for the translation of Hebrew Literature, 1982), pp.205-6.



traditional synagogue modes and chants in their works. Just as Russian composers abandoned the use of French and Italian texts so did Milner and other Jewish composers turn to Yiddish as the "true" linguistic representative of the Jewish people. Composers of both the Russian school and the St. Petersburg Society did not try to create or alter existing musical forms or conventions such as song, opera or symphony but they did attempt to infuse them with a strong sense of national spirit. Further similarities between the Russian composers and their Jewish counterparts emerged as well. In 1886, for instance, Balakirev collected and published an important collection of Russian folksongs which he regarded as indispensable to the promotion of Russian music. Likewise, Jewish composers would later be encouraged and stimulated by the important folksong collection of Marek and Ginsburg. The Russian School of Music and particularly the composers of the "group of five" profoundly influenced the formation of a Jewish school of Music. Specifically, Rimsky-Korsakov in his capacity as director of the St. Petersburg conservatory would profoundly inspire his Jewish students to form a national school of music.

SECTION 2b):THE RISE OF JEWISH NATIONALISM IN RUSSIA.

The true musical life of a nation begins only when it becomes conscious of itself as a self-sufficing individuality amongst other nations, with its own type of sentiments and emotions and its own music.

Leonid Sabaneev.

Since the time of Catherine the Great, one of the fundamental problems facing the Tsars was how to deal with the Jewish minority in their territory: namely whether to grant them autonomy, thereby effectively isolating them from other Russian subjects, or whether to attempt to integrate them into Russian life. As we have seen, tsarist policies towards Jews became more and more restrictive in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Rather than causing defeat or despair, these restrictions only seemed to increase Jewish self-assertiveness and political consciousness. As Baron writes, "More and more Jews believed their ultimate future lay with political action which would force the government to grant full equality of rights to its citizens."<sup>15</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by a rise in nationalism in Western Europe with new nations like Germany and Italy coming into being. It was in the late-nineteenth century that new ideologies and political parties proliferated, greatly influencing the rise of Jewish

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<sup>15</sup>Salo Baron. The Russian Jew under the Tsars and Soviets.(New York: Mc.Millan, 1964), p. 54.

nationalism in Russia.

In 1897 both the Jewish Socialist Bund (The General Jewish Workers Union in Russia, Lithuania and Poland) and the World Zionist Organization were founded. Both these organizations strongly advocated Jewish nationalism, though in different ways. The Bund was an all-embracing collection of Jewish socialist organizations which reacted against intensified oppression and powerlessness of Jews in Russia by advocating socialism as a means of creating national-cultural autonomy for all minorities in Russia, including Jews. At its sixth congress in 1905, the Bund adopted a program demanding not only full civil and political emancipation for Russian Jewry but also national-cultural autonomy. As Baron writes, "The Bund began advocating Jewish national autonomy and increasingly began to stress the cultural foundations of Jewish nationalism."<sup>16</sup> The Zionists, on the other hand, were convinced that Jews would never enjoy full rights in Russia and advocated a return to Palestine as the only possible normalization of Jewish existence. Both these movements became powerful forces in encouraging Russian Jews to express their national spirit.

Another form of Jewish nationalism being championed at that time sought to create an autonomous Jewish community within the Russian Empire. With Simon Dubnov as its chief advocate, it had a profound influence on the Jewish

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p.34.

intelligentsia of a cosmopolitan city such as St. Petersburg. Dubnov used the term "Autonomism" to describe his conception of Jewish nationalism in the diaspora based on his conception of history. He maintained:

As a natural compensation for being in the diaspora, the Jewish people was able to exist in foreign countries in a state of judicial autonomy and spiritual independence. In every age, there had been a Jewish community which had been more successful than others in maintaining self rule and creativity.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, according to Dubnov, the essence of Autonomism was that Jews in every country would take an active part in the civic and political life and enjoy all the rights given to citizens, not merely as individuals but as members of national groups. Dubnov advocated the use of Yiddish as a manifestation of national identity, an idea which was embraced by Milner and many of his literary and musical contemporaries. Dubnov stated:

Among the forces which are the basis of our autonomy in the diaspora, I set aside a place for the powerful force of folk language used by seven million Jews in Russia and Galicia namely Yiddish. Insofar as we recognize the merit of national existence in the diaspora, we must recognize the merit of Yiddish as one of the instruments of autonomy.<sup>18</sup>

All these political and cultural ideas greatly influenced the rise of Jewish nationalism in Russia and contributed to a flourishing of Yiddish culture in the first decades of the

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<sup>17</sup>Simon Dubnov History of the Jews in Russia and Poland. (Philadelphia: J.P.S. 1918), Volume 2, p.56.

<sup>18</sup>"Dubnov", Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1972). Volume 6, pp.251-258.

twentieth century. It was in this cultural and political ambience that the Society for Jewish Music was formed.

SECTION 2c): THE SOCIETY FOR JEWISH FOLK MUSIC.

In creating a Jewish National School of Music, the Jewish melos was mastered and understood and a way was opened whereby the Jewish melodic and rhythmical element might be inserted within the framework of an art developed on European lines.

Leonid Sabaanev.

Prior to the formal establishment of the Society for Jewish folk music, there had already been several attempts at creating a Jewish national school of music. Joel Engel is considered a pioneer in this endeavor. Born in the Crimea in 1868, he moved to Kharkov where he studied law and music at the University. In "The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music," musicologist Albert Weisser recounts how a momentous meeting with the composer Tchaikovsky influenced him to move to Moscow, where he continued his studies at the Conservatory, graduating in 1897.<sup>19</sup> He was soon appointed editor in charge of music for the famed Moscow Journal *Russkaya Vedomosti*. An encounter with the renowned Russian intellectual Vladimir

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<sup>19</sup>Weisser, pp. 71-2.

Vasilievitch Stasov is said to have inspired Engel to turn his energy and attention to Jewish national art. In 1897 he undertook a journey to the Jewish Pale of Settlement to collect and study as many examples of Jewish folklore as he could find. After three years of study and research, Engel presented his famous evening of Jewish music at the Moscow Polytechnic. The event, which was sponsored by the music division of the Imperial society for natural science, anthropology and ethnography, included a lecture on the literary aspects of the Jewish folksong by Jewish historian Pesach Marek; a lecture on the musical characteristics of the Jewish folksong by Engel himself; and the performance of a selection of folksongs by Fanny S.Vachman, a singing teacher at the Conservatory accompanied on the piano by Engel's wife. The concert had a huge impact on Jews and non-Jews alike. As Weisser writes:

One cannot overestimate the importance of this concert on Jews and non-Jews alike. First, it gave a dignity and semi-official approbation to the Jewish folksong. Of no little import also was the fact that the concert hall was filled by both Jews and non-Jews. The event gave Engel, by then a widely read and influential critic the incentive to further pursue his findings in the Jewish folksong and propagate its importance.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, musicologist Israel Rabinovich writes of the concert:

The evening was a colossal success. Since scholarly Russians set the seal of approval on the Jewish folksong, declaring it to be an interesting phenomenon, Jewish intellectuals who had previously scorned such matters

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.31.

also began to esteem and vaunt their heritage."<sup>21</sup>

The Jewish historians Saul Ginsburg (1866-1940) and Pesach Marek (1862-1920) engendered further interest in the Jewish folksong when they used the prominent Jewish publications *Hamelits*, *Hatsefirah* and *Voskhod* to announce their intention to bring out a definitive edition of Jewish folksongs and asked for contributions from all over Russia. They believed that Jewish folksongs were an integral part of Russian Jewish history. Thus in 1901, they published a collection of such songs containing the lyrics of over three hundred and twenty folksongs in both Hebrew and Latin characters. In 1901 Engel repeated his lecture on the Jewish folksong at the small hall of the St. Petersburg Conservatory with Ginsburg as his co-lecturer and the bass-baritone Joachim Tartakov performing a selection of songs. Once again this lecture was to have a profound effect, for present were not only members of the Jewish intelligentsia but also a group of Jewish students from the Conservatory, among them a gifted student of Rimsky-Korsakov named Ephraim Skliar. In 1902, Skliar formed a group called *Kinor Zion* whose aim it was to encourage composition and performance of Jewish music. But it was ultimately Rimsky-Korsakov who was to provide the final impetus for the creation of the Society for Jewish Folk Music.

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<sup>21</sup>Israel Rabinovich. Of Jewish Music. (Montreal: Eagle, 1952), p.159.

In 1902 Skliar composed a Yiddish song for Rimsky-Korsakov's composition class called *Farn Obshayd* (Before the Parting), as well as a romance on Jewish themes. Rimsky-Korsakov was so impressed that he urged his Jewish students to turn their attention to the music of their own people. As Weisser records:

Rimsky-Korsakov turned to Skliar and said, "Well, write another thirty such things and you will found a new school." Then turning to his Jewish students he said: "Why do you imitate European and Russian composers? The Jews possess tremendous folk treasures. I, myself have heard your religious songs and they have made a deep impression on me. Yes, Jewish music awaits her Glinka."<sup>22</sup>

Rimsky-Korsakov's statement had an electrifying effect upon his Jewish students. Solomon Rosowsky, one of these students reminisced:

Then all of a sudden a group of students at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, most of them students of one of the Russian masters awoke as if from an enchanted sleep. They said to themselves in the words of Ahad Ha-am *lo ze haderech*, this is not the way. The imitation of Russian composers cannot be the aim of Jewish composers. Resolutely they abandoned the broad highway upon which Russian music continued its triumphant march and turned into a narrow and modest bypath, a bypath which was to lead Jewish composers home to their own people.<sup>23</sup>

Rimsky-Korsakov's comments struck Skliar in particular and he began to envision a society or group which would exclusively promote the interests of Jewish music. Upon

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<sup>22</sup>Weisser, p.44.

<sup>23</sup>Solomon Rosowsky, "The Society for Jewish Folk Music: Personal Reminiscences", Jewish Music Forum Bulletin (No.9, December 1948), p.9.



graduating in 1903, Skliar worked as choral director at the St. Petersburg Choral Synagogue and began assembling a talented group of Jewish musicians, including the composers Solomon Rosowsky and Lazar Saminsky, the pianist Leo Nesviski-Abileah, and the singer Tomars.

The group soon attracted talented students of Rimsky-Korsakov including Michael Gniessen, Pesach Lvov, Alexander Zhitomirski and Moshe Shalit. The composer Susman Kisselgoff soon joined the group, while administrative matters were handled by Israel Okun. In 1908 the group asked for official permission from General Drachevsky, the governor of the city, to create a society for Jewish music. The authorities had viewed the creation of any new Jewish organizations with suspicion, as they feared it would foster revolutionary sentiments. Rosowsky pleaded his case eloquently before Drachevsky. The Governor replied that he had once heard some Jewish music at a wedding in Odessa but that was folk music. In his opinion no other form of Jewish music actually existed. Thus, he would grant permission so long as the society was called "The Society for Jewish Folk Music." The petitioners agreed and as Rabinovich observes wryly: "Thus it was that Russians, pure Slavs such as Rimsky-Korsakov and Drachevsky, played an important part in the early stages of the Jewish musical renaissance."<sup>24</sup>

Once established, the Society issued a formal constitution

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<sup>24</sup>Rabinovich, p. 156.

which had as its aims and rights the following:

1.) It is the aim of the Society to work in the field of research and development of Jewish music (sacred and secular) by collecting folksongs, harmonizing them and by promoting and supporting Jewish composers and workers in the field of Jewish music. (By taking existing folksongs and applying experimental harmonies to them, the composers of the Society were trying to establish the suitability of the Jewish folksong as a starting point for the Jewish art song, much in the same way as their Russian counterparts had done. If the blend of Jewish folksong and Western-style harmony was successful, this could be a starting point for the creation of original Jewish art songs).

2.) In order to achieve these aims the Society has (a) to help print musical compositions and papers on research of Jewish Music; (b) to organize musical meetings, concerts, operatic performances and lectures; (c) to organize a choir and orchestra of its own; (d) to establish a library of Jewish music; (e) to issue a periodical dedicated to Jewish music; (f) to establish contests and give prizes for musical compositions of a Jewish character. Furthermore, the Society has the right to form chapters in different cities of the country in accordance with local laws and the work of the Society was to be spread all over Russia.<sup>25</sup>

Although Milner was not a founding member of the Society,

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<sup>25</sup>Weisser, pp. 45-6.

Kisselgoff recruited him in 1908 while he was still a student. Milner immediately began to make an important contribution to the activities of the Society. Kisselgoff arranged for Milner's early compositions to be performed at the Society's concerts. For example, the printed program of a concert given under the auspices of the Society at the theater of Music and Drama in St. Petersburg on Sunday April 14, 1915 shows that the compositions "*El Hatzipor*" (To a bird), a setting of a poem by Bialik for voice and piano, "*Khavertes*" (Female friends) and "*Shadois Bor*" by Milner were performed. Similarly, the program of a concert of vocal music on December 30, 1917 shows that the following Milner songs were performed: "*Der Schifer*" (The sailor,) "*El Hatzipor*" (To a bird), "*Iber die Hoyfen*" (Over the courtyards) and "*Tanz, Meidele, Tanz*" (Dance, little girl, dance). The soloists included the singers Anna Meicher, Slobodskaya and the renowned bass Levitan.

According to Weisser, there were also complete concerts of Milner's works in October, 1917 in the small hall of the Petersburg Conservatory and also on November 12, 1921 featuring the singers Kerner, Miklachevsky, Levitan and the choir of the Proletariat Cultura. On June 6, 1922 there was an all-Milner concert by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra with Joseph Achron as soloist in Milner's violin sonata, and on 14 June, 1922, there was a concert of Milner's compositions in Moscow. Milner's work was not confined to composing. His biography in the Russian State Library shows that he worked as

chorus master of the Society and he also conducted the choir of the St.Petersburg Choral Synagogue from 1912 to 1919, working with such renowned cantors as Pierre Pinchik and David Roitman. Milner's biography further reveals that from 1918 to 1920 he was director of an unspecified music school in Leningrad and from 1921 to 1924, vocal coach and choirmaster of the Jewish choral group, *Proletcult*, the Jewish Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organization which existed from 1917 until 1932. The Society for Jewish Folk Music published the following compositions by Milner:

- 1) *Beim Reben Zu M'lave Malka* (At the Rabbi's house on Saturday evening) for piano (1914).
- 2) *In Heder* for voice and piano (1914).
- 3) *Untane Tokef* for solo tenor and chorus (1913).
- 4) *Iber den Hoyfen* (Over the courtyards), duet for tenor and baritone and piano (1914).
- 5) *Unter die grininke Beimelach* (Under the green trees) for voice and piano (1914).

When the 1917 Revolution threatened to curtail many of the activities of the Society, Milner's old teacher from Kiev, Abram Dzimitrovsky, organized a musical section of the Yiddish Culture League. In 1921, the League published one of Milner's most famous compositions *Mutter und kind* (Mother and Child), a cycle of ten songs for voice and piano with texts by the writer I.L.Peretz, reflecting the world as seen through the eyes of a child.

Milner's contribution to the Society for Jewish Folk Music was considerable. Unlike some of the other members of the Society, Milner was not so much concerned with researching and collecting existing Jewish folksongs but rather in writing original works incorporating many elements of folksong. The second part of this project will examine Milner's music in greater detail, but by all accounts, he brought to the Society a fresh and individual approach to Jewish music. As Saleski comments, " Unlike other members of the society, Milner did not have to search for the forgotten paths of his people. He never lost contact with his people and his work is full of folklore and Jewish folk music."<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Rabinovich writes, "Milner was an extraordinarily original and profoundly Jewish talent."<sup>27</sup>

Milner's compositions for the Society undoubtedly contributed to raising the Jewish folksong to a higher level of beauty and sophistication.

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<sup>26</sup>Gdal Saleski, Famous Musicians of Jewish origin. (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1949), p.122.

<sup>27</sup>Rabinovich, p.159.

### SECTION 3 :REVOLUTION AND THE SOVIET ERA.

Every artist, everyone who considers himself an artist has the right to create freely, according to his ideal, independently of everything. However, we are Communists and we must not stand with folded hands and let chaos develop as it pleases. We must systematically guide this process and form its result.

V.I.Lenin<sup>28</sup>

The Russian Revolution of 1917 had a profound effect on the life and work of Russian and Jewish artists alike. In fact, the Revolution would eventually halt the growth and development of the work of the Society for Jewish Folk Music. Initially, the Revolution was greeted with hope and optimism by Jews who saw it as a freedom from all previous restrictions. As Nora Levin writes:

An important commitment of the new government, given the ethnic diversity of Russia was to promise to grant national-cultural autonomy to all national minorities including Jews. One of the first acts of the new government was to lift all restrictive laws on Jews who were now accepted as equal citizens of Russia. This resulted in a fever of political and cultural life by Jews newly released from tsarist oppression.<sup>29</sup>

It was shortly after the revolution that the Society for Jewish Folk Music ceased to exist, primarily because many of its member musicians and composers decided to leave Russia in

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<sup>28</sup>V.I.Lenin, *O Kulture Iskusstve* (About Culture and Art), (Moscow, 1957), p.59.

<sup>29</sup>Nora Levin. The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917. (New York: New York University Press, 1988), p3.

the face of what they considered to be great upheaval and uncertainty. A Society for Jewish Music was established in 1923 and was generally regarded as a continuation of the St. Petersburg Society. The final concert of the Society took place on April 29, 1926 in Moscow, the last event of its kind in the Soviet Union. Although Jewish musicians were not altogether silenced, they ultimately had to make the choice between composing works advocating Soviet ideology or not composing at all. Milner continued to work and compose in the first decades of the Soviet era. He was chorus master of the newly-designated opera House of the People in Petrograd from 1921 to 1924. During this period, on May 6, 1923 to be precise, Milner's first opera and indeed the first opera in Yiddish to be performed in the Soviet Union, was given its premiere at the Opera House. Entitled *Asmodai* (the name of one of the principal characters) or *Die Himlen Brennen* (The Heavens are aflame), it was based on Ansky's poem *Asmodai* which dealt with the conflict between Hasidim and Maskilim, the followers of the Haskalah in nineteenth-century Russia. Milner wrote the libretto himself and it was revised by Mordechai Rivesman. Among the artists participating were Aframeva, Tserulinkova, A.M. Levick, Levitan and Talmazyn. The sets were by V.A. Shirka and the direction by Rappaport. Milner himself conducted the soloists, choir and orchestra of the opera house. Only two performances of the opera were given before the censors of *Politrosviet* branded it as "too

mystical" and prohibited it from being performed, even in concert form.

Meanwhile news of the first performance of the opera reached America. The noted musicologist Mendel Elkin contributed the following report for the Yiddish Journal *Thealit* under the title "*Di ershte yiddishe opera in St.Petersburg*" (The first Yiddish Opera in St.Petersburg):

The first Yiddish opera entitled *Asmodai* or *The Heavens are Aflame* by M.Milner was performed in St.Petersburg. The text to the opera was written in Yiddish by the composer and revised by Mordecai Rivesman. Milner worked on this opera for some years. In Russian musical circles there has been great interest in Milner's work and because of this interest, the production was undertaken. A good deal of time was spent on the preparation and finally on the sixteenth of May the premiere took place. The finest musicians and artists took part in this production such as Leivick, Levitan, Talmazan, Janowsky and Press. The composer himself conducted and Milner is, by the way, the conductor of the People's Opera House in Petrograd. The opera was directed by Rappaport and the subject deals with Hasidism and the Enlightenment. The Russian musician and critic Vaslav Karatygen praised the music of Milner highly, although he is not acquainted with the Yiddish language. Karatygen was heard to exclaim: "Really! singing an opera in Yiddish in Petersburg where Yiddish was once forbidden!" In general, this production stands out as an important cultural and artistic event.<sup>30</sup>

From 1924 to 1925, Milner worked at the Jewish National Theater and wrote incidental music for the productions of Leivick's *Golem*, Richard Beer Hoffman's "Jacob's Dream" and Hennig Berger's "The Flood". In his book on the history of the Habimah, Raikin Ben-Ari recalls the creative excitement

<sup>30</sup>Mendel Elkin, "*Die Ershte Yiddishe Opera in St. Petersburg*," *Thealit* no.1,p.30. ( New York November, 1923).



surrounding the production and the effectiveness of Milner's music:

The music of Milner helped to make the production a symphony of sound and movement. During that period, the theater bustled like a factory and Milner was more excited than anyone else. He went about pale and nervous and refused to talk to anyone. He would gesture impatiently with his hands and asked to be left alone. His music was highly original and impressive, full of folk feeling and perfectly suited for each episode, but there were scenes and music which had to be cut and each time this happened, Milner became despondent and would threaten to return to Leningrad. It was, however, a pleasure to have Milner with us. He kept careful guard over every note and nuance and taught us the value of seriousness and truth. He revealed to us the attitude of the really great artist toward his creation.<sup>31</sup>

Milner's music for "Jacob's Dream" was also well received. Ben-Ari writes, "There were problems with the production and had it not been for Milner's wonderful music, the results would have been sad indeed."<sup>32</sup> In writing incidental music to these productions, Milner contributed to what has been described as the first golden age of the Habimah Theater.

Despite the initial euphoria following the Revolution, Soviet policy towards Jews became more and more repressive and the earlier policies acknowledging the rights of minorities to self-determination were replaced by those of Lenin and Stalin, which would strike at the very heart of Jewish nationalistic aspirations. Lenin's policies towards Jews seem at best ambiguous, on the one hand denouncing all forms of anti-

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<sup>31</sup>Raiken Ben-Ari Habima. (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1957), pp.128-9.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p.137.

Semitism, and on the other, rejecting all forms of Jewish nationalism as being reactionary. In Lenin's opinion, Jewish nationalism would detract from revolutionary solidarity with non-Jewish comrades and from the struggle to create a true socialist state with complete uniformity of class and culture. As Lenin wrote:

Whoever, directly or indirectly presents the slogan of a Jewish national culture is, whatever his good intentions may be, an enemy of the proletariat, a supporter of the old and of the caste among the Jews, an accomplice of the rabbis and the bourgeois.<sup>33</sup>

Lenin also attacked the promotion of national autonomy by the Bund by criticizing the Bundists as fostering bourgeois nationalism among workers. In fact he went so far as to say that it was impossible to regard Jews in the civilized world as a nation and he promised that the Marxist program would "continue to promote the principle of internationalism and struggle against the contamination of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism."<sup>34</sup> Stalin, who was Commissar of Nationalities at the time, elaborated on these policies, which clearly struck at the heart of Jewish nationalistic aspirations. He strongly denied that the Jews constituted a nation and proposed the abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions. In his famous essay "Marxism and the Jewish Question", Stalin stated that

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<sup>33</sup> Excerpt from V.I. Lenin's speech "Critical Remarks on the National Question" of 1913 in Mendes Flohr, ed. The Jew in the Modern World. ( New York: Schocken Books, 1973), p.428.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.429.

Russian Jewry did not meet the requirements for nationhood.

He argued:

The fact of the matter is primarily that among the Jews there is no large and stable stratum connected with the land which would naturally rivet the land together, serving not only as its framework but also as its national market. Moreover, Jews are spread all over Russia and do not constitute a majority in any single gubernia. Autonomy is being proposed for a nation whose future is denied and whose existence still has to be proved<sup>35</sup>

Stalin's views on national culture similarly affected Jewish creative artists like Milner. In a famous speech to the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, Stalin expressed his support for national cultures but only in order that they might eventually fuse into a single common culture with a single common language. This culture would advance the aims of socialism rather than nationalism. "Socialist in content and Nationalist in form" became the slogan of the Communists. After 1918, the government started liquidating communal Jewish organizations such as EKOPO, the Jewish Committee to provide help to the victims of war, and ORT, The Society for Craft and Agricultural Labor among the Jews of Russia. These organizations were thought to foster anti-proletarian spirit among their members. Simultaneously, because Lenin had long opposed theistic faith in favor of total atheism and secularization of the state, communist policy would also profoundly affect Jews, whose religion had

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<sup>35</sup> Excerpt from Joseph Stalin's essay "The Jews are not a Nation) as quoted in Mendes-Flohr, *ibid*, p.431.

for so long been the structuring component of their lives and an integral part of their culture as well. As Nora Levin writes:

The assault on Jewish religious life was particularly harsh and pervasive because a Jew's religious beliefs and observances infused every aspect of his daily life and were invested with national values that the Bolsheviks were bent on destroying. All of the traditional Jewish institutions which clashed with or encumbered the Bolshevik drive had to be re-formed, Sovietized or destroyed, according to party doctrine and for party purposes.<sup>36</sup>

Anatoly Lunacharsky, Commissar of Education and party spokesman on culture formulated the new policy of proletarian music which included nationalization of all theaters and conservatories, reforms in music education and the closure of institutions such as the Russian Musical Society and the Society for Jewish Folk Music. The mounting dilemma for Jewish artists in the Soviet era was whether to attempt to retain some traditional Jewish elements in their work or to abandon them completely in favor of conformity with Soviet ideology.

Although no evidence regarding Milner's ideological convictions during the Soviet era has come to light, an examination of his work during this period shows that he, too, must have encountered the aforementioned challenge. Some musicologists, such as Joachim Braun, claim that Milner did

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<sup>36</sup>Levin, pp. 70-1.

not forsake Jewish music until the last days of his life. <sup>37</sup>  
Weisser, on the other hand, claims that Milner continued to  
be in favor with Soviet officialdom, at least until 1948,  
judging by an article of that date in the now-defunct Soviet  
Yiddish newspaper *Eynikayt*.<sup>38</sup>

I believe that Milner attempted to reconcile Jewish  
elements and Soviet ideology in some of his works, thereby  
satisfying Stalin's demands for art which was nationalistic in  
form and Soviet in content. No work of Milner's exemplifies  
this more than his second opera "The New Way" which was  
commissioned by the Soviet theater agency and first performed  
in February, 1932. The opera describes the return of Jews  
from Russian cities to rural areas, where they became farmers  
and workers on the soil. While attempting to reconcile Jewish  
and Soviet elements, a document from the Milner archive  
reveals that the work was severely criticized by the Soviet  
censors:

Excerpt from document number 13 from the meeting of  
the Leningrad Union of People's Composers held on 16  
February, 1933.

Among those present were the composers Yochilsona,  
Ashkenazi, Weissberg, Petitor, Masalov from the Moscow  
Union, Vluch, Milner, Zhevotov, Valashinov, Shostakovich,  
Chulaki and Steinberg.

The following was discussed:

The opera of the composer Milner "The New Way".  
Information given by Comrade Yachilsona about the  
performance of the opera performed for representatives of  
the Composer's union at the Maly Theater on February 5th,

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<sup>37</sup>Joachim Braun, Jews and Jewish Elements in Soviet Music.  
(Tel Aviv: Israeli Music Publications, 1978), p.62.

<sup>38</sup>Weisser p.96.

1933. In Comrade Yachilsona's opinion, the opera is of great interest to Soviet Musical Culture because of its political content. The music is fresh and full of distinction and several characters in the opera were portrayed with great mastery. However, the character of the *kulak* is problematic and is too one-sided and not sympathetic enough to Soviet ideology. The composer appears to be too liberal in depicting this character and the libretto needs some changes. Some of those present admitted the incorrect attitude of the theater in allowing this character to be presented as such.

Resolution.

It is important for the direction of the theater to issue a written report within ten days informing us of their ideological point of view towards Milner's opera.

Meeting Chairman: Comrade Yachilsona.

Secretary: Comrade Karasova.

Technical Secretary: Comrade Karasova.

Other compositions similarly suggest that Milner was trying to appease the ideological demands of the new era, at least outwardly. These include a funeral ode entitled "Lenin the Great" to a text by Kubanski for mixed choir and solo baritone of 1924, the year of Lenin's death. The text contains typically inflated Soviet rhetoric:

Red happiness has now become red sadness,  
Grief burns in the hearts of the workers,  
Unhappiness in the collective breast.

Likewise, Milner composed a song of praise to Stalin with Yiddish text entitled *Stalin hot Befielen* (Stalin has commanded us). Milner contributed as well to a collection of Soviet songs under the categories collective farm songs, industrial songs, anti-religious songs and Red Army songs in the volume *Naye Lieder, Muzikalisher zamlbuch, tekstn gezamlt fun I. Bakst* (New songs, a musical anthology to texts collected by I. Bakst, edited by Michael Gniessen) published by the

Central Peoples Society of the Federation of Soviet Republics in Moscow in 1927. Milner contributed the following compositions to this volume of Socialist songs for use by young people:

1) *Poyker* (*Poyker, poyker, poyk in paykl*), (Drummer, drum on the drum) to words by I. Bakst.

2) *A Shterndl a royts* (A red star), with words by L. Rosenblum.

3) *Kling klang* (*Iz geven a mol a tsvang*), (Kling, klang, once there were a tongs), to a text by David Hoffstein.

4) *Serp un hamer* (Hammer and anvil).

5) *Vol Vol* (*A futerl fun vol*), (Wool, wool, a fur coat of wool).

6) *Ruft di kinder oyfn snlyakh May* (Call the children to the unpaved road), to a text by I. Feffer.

7) *Ikh klap* (I clap).

8) *Viglied* (*S'iz keyn broyt in shtub nito nokh*), (Lullaby, there is no bread in the house), to a text by I. Charik.

9) *Oyf oysgeleytzer erd, Rusland* (On earth that has been redeemed, Russia), to words by S. Rossin.

10) *Protsesye* (*Es vaklt zich di alte velt* (Procession: the old world is shaking), to a text by David Hoffstein.

11) *Ilitsh/Troyer ode* (*baym frishen keyver shteyen mir vi kinder*), (Ilitch (Lenin), a funeral ode: At the freshly-dug grave we stand like children), to a text by I. Feffer.

12) *Die Shuve* (*Briders und shvester fun arbet un noyt*), (The oath: brothers and sisters of work and poverty), to a text by Ansky.

He also composed a cycle of piano pieces entitled "Silhouettes from the Great Patriotic War" as well as a song cycle for voice, piano and choir to texts by proletariat poets, including Byesiminsky, Isakovsky, Mayakovsky, Surkov and Yashin. The music of these compositions contains no Jewish elements whatsoever and many of the texts are typical outpourings of praise for the Soviet system. It is difficult to associate the composer of these works with the composer who selected texts by the finest Jewish poets of his day such as Bialik and Peretz and set them to music which incorporated Jewish elements in such an integral and original way. Apart from the Song of Praise to Stalin in Yiddish, many of Milner's compositions in the Soviet era were set to Russian texts. It is similarly hard to imagine that Milner, who was thoroughly immersed and involved in Jewish religious and musical life since a very early age, would completely abandon them in favor of the new ideology. Perhaps the music from the Soviet era should be viewed as his attempt to survive as a composer in the new artistic and political climate. He attempted to strike a compromise between two sharply conflicting worlds: the Jewish one, which had hitherto been such an integral part of his life and work, and the new, Soviet one, whose ideology would inevitably affect the work of all artists in the Soviet Union.

From 1926 to 1931, Milner was conductor of the Jewish State Theater in Kharkov where he wrote incidental music for many



productions, including the following:

- " Stalwarts" by A.Fininberg (1927-8).
- " American Gods" by David Hoffstein based on a work by Upton Sinclair.
- " The Better Man" by Hanskveller.
- " Hirsch Leckert" by Kushnirov.
- " The Lost Ones " by L.Reznick (1929).
- " Blood " by Orshanski (1930).
- " Don't Worry" by Peretz Markish (1930).
- " Cadres " by Mikitenko.
- " Julius " by Daniel.

Milner also worked at the Jewish National Theater (Habimah) and wrote incidental music for the productions of Leivick's "Golem" and Richard Beer Hoffman's "Jacob's Dream."

Milner composed another opera entitled "Josephus Flavius" or Bar Kochba in 1935. This opera was based on the historical novels comprising the Josephus trilogy by the German historical novelist Lion Feuchtwanger. Braun states that the opera was attacked by the authorities and declared "reactionary"<sup>39</sup> but no other details of performance or music have come to light.

According to the biography of Milner in the Russian State Library, he was also working on an opera entitled "Ovod" based on a novel by the writer Lilian Voinich.

Milner conducted the Jewish Vocal Ensemble of Leningrad between 1931 and 1941, and it is believed that he remained in Leningrad throughout the terrible Nazi siege of the city, probably surviving by teaching and working as a vocal coach at the Leningrad Bolshoi Theater. Letters to Milner from this

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<sup>39</sup>Braun, p.63.

period provide some information about his activities. For example, a letter from the noted ethnomusicologist and scholar of Jewish music, Moisey Beregovsky, suggests that Milner was still involved in setting folk material to music. Beregovsky wrote to Milner from Kiev on October 23, 1939:

Dear Mikhail Arnoldovich,

I am sending you a pile of texts of folk authors and you may choose whatever you wish to set to music. The music should be in the folk style and a few of the settings should also be for choir. Our choirs have almost no repertory nowadays and every composition of yours will certainly be a valuable treasure. Remember, the melodies should be able to be sung without accompaniment and if you do wish to write a piano part, it should not be too difficult. This is what we ask of you and promise to write this music in a short time. I hope to come to Leningrad in a month's time if I am granted permission, to consult the archive of Kisselgoff which has been neglected for too long.

I send you my warmest regards,

Beregovsky.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, a letter from the noted dramatist Leivick of July, 1940 makes many suggestions to Milner on how the libretto of the opera *Asmodai* might be reworked and improved upon.

Another letter to Milner from the theater director Golavshiner in Minsk dated May 22, 1941 gives us a rare glimpse into Milner's character. He writes:

Dear Moshe Arnoldovich,

How suddenly you disappeared from Minsk and didn't say goodbye to me. What happened? I don't understand your not wanting to say goodbye. I have the impression that all of a sudden you changed. Perhaps you just wanted to rest or wanted to free yourself from work. After you left, I thought about you such a lot. You are such a temperamental man and although you often

<sup>40</sup>This letter is number 54 of the Milner archive in the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts.

complain that I am uneven of character, you are not like one man. It is as if different people inhabit you and I long to be able to spend time again with the Milner, my Milner with whom I was very close. There are some planets that only face the sun on one side. Let us once again face each other and warm each other again like these planets. Soon I will leave for Odessa for a month with the Belorussian theater. I will write you more details when I get there but only if I receive a reply from you to this letter. Write your news to me soon. I shake your hand,  
Yours, Golavshiner.<sup>41</sup>

Although Milner never immigrated to America his music was known here and on August 20, 1938, Mendel Elkin organized a lecture/concert in New York, entitled "On Milner." Proceeds from this evening went towards helping refugees from Nazi Germany. Elkin recognizes Milner as an important Jewish composer as in his lecture:

The composer Moshe Milner occupies an important place in using trop, tefillot and piyutim to enhance Jewish life. Milner has been influenced in his compositions by composers such as Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Scriabin as well as the French composers Debussy and Ravel. The composer Rimsky-Korsakov was Milner's teacher and he made the important declaration that Jewish music was awaiting her Glinka. Glinka was the first Russian composer to use folk melodies in his compositions. Perhaps Milner is our Glinka; he is certainly an exponent of Modern Yiddish culture. Just as Mussorgsky used folk motifs from the earliest times in his creations, so did Milner revive folk melodies by using modern harmonies and musical motifs. It must be said however that Milner does not need to imitate either Glinka or Mussorgsky. He seems to be a composer who is struggling with himself. On one hand, he composes as if he wants to take his compositions as far away from Jewish life as possible, you can hear this in the song *Der Eyzl un der Solovey* (The donkey and the nightingale) and also in the Children's Suite. This attempt to run away

<sup>41</sup>This letter is document no.59 in the Milner archive in the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts in St.Petersburg.

from the Jewish world evaporates completely because Milner's music has such a Jewish flavor that we are all inspired by it. Another thing to note is that in Milner's music, the accompaniment is organically connected with the melody and one cannot be separated from the other. Secularism is so closely intertwined with "Yiddishkeit" in Milner's music that his work becomes a new and interesting creation. We must also stress the difference between the music of Joel Engel and that of Milner, two pillars of the Society for Jewish Folk Music. In Engel's music, the melody can easily be separated from the accompaniment and nothing will be lost. With Milner, it is not so because his instrumental accompaniments play an integral part in his music. We know very little about Milner, except that he is known as a modest and sensitive man who is reclusive.<sup>42</sup>

The lecture was followed by a grand concert of Milner's music. Among the works performed were The Children's suite and settings of songs by Bialik. Ester Elkin, daughter of Mendel Elkin, accompanied the singers Moshe Rudinow and Ruth Leviak.

In his chapter on Milner in his book The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music, the musicologist Albert Weissner notes that the Jewish musicologist Gdal Saleski met Milner in Leningrad in 1936 and observed that he was working on a large oratorio for chorus, soli and orchestra although the title was unspecified. A notice which appeared in the defunct Soviet Yiddish newspaper *Emes* in April, 1936 relates that Milner had written incidental music for the play "Goldgreber" by Shalom Aleichem for the Birobidzhan State theater. He also wrote incidental music to I. Feffer's play "The Sun does not Go Down" which was mounted at the Moscow State Theater as late as February, 1947.

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<sup>42</sup>The manuscript of this lecture is in the archives of YIVO, New York.

As Stalin's power became more absolute, life became more and more difficult for Jews, and Jewish culture became increasingly threatened. The communist party continued to suppress Jewish Nationalist creativity in favor of the "common" purpose of upbuilding socialism, and Stalin's purges destroyed increasing numbers of Jewish leaders and intellectuals.

The details of Milner's last years remain shrouded in mystery. Because so little is known, it is nearly impossible to determine what became of him. In a sleeve note to a recent recording of Milner's works, musicologist Barry Serota writes that Milner was removed from the limelight by the official State musical establishment and died in complete poverty. Braun echoes this view when he writes, "Milner's fate was most tragic. Under the Soviet regime, his music was rarely performed and he was totally expunged from Soviet historiography."<sup>43</sup> Rabinovich agrees that Milner's final years are enigmatic. The biography of Milner in the Russian State Library suggests that he was working on an opera entitled "Danko" based on a story by Maxim Gorky during the final years of his life. According to some biographies of Milner, such as that in the Encyclopedia Judaica as well as the catalogue of Milner's archive from the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts, he is believed to have died in 1953, the very same year in which Stalin died, though this has not been substantiated by any documentary evidence. All

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<sup>43</sup>Braun, p. 63.

attempts at locating his burial place or surviving family members and relatives have thus far proved fruitless.<sup>44</sup>

Milner's life coincides almost exactly with some of the momentous periods in Russian history, from the pogroms in Kiev in 1905, to the collapse of Tsarism, the October 1917 Revolution and the creation of the Soviet State. His work shows various influences, most important, a complete immersion in Jewish liturgical and folk music and subject matter. He was also influenced by the nationalist-orientated art music of the "Group of five" which in turn influenced the creation of a Jewish school which promoted nationalism through music. Milner became one of the most prominent members of the St.Petersburg Society for Jewish Music. He was also influenced by the more harmonically-adventurous music of the great Western European composers with whom he must have been acquainted as a student in the St.Petersburg Conservatory. An analysis of selected musical works of Milner will not only reveal these influences but show how he was both

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<sup>44</sup>None of the biographical material on Milner covers the last years of his life. Whilst I was in St.Petersburg in June, I attempted to track down anyone by the name of Milner through the local telephone company. All such attempts proved fruitless. I was given a telephone number for Milner's son but was told that nobody by that name had lived at that address for at least the last ten years. None of the archivists at the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts could provide me with this information and neither could Dr.Alper, the head of the newly re-constituted Society for Jewish Music. Furthermore, burials of Jewish rite were not permitted in Leningrad at the time when Milner is believed to have died. It is even possible that he was buried in one of the towns surrounding Leningrad where such burials might have been allowed.

traditionalist and innovator often creating Jewish music of striking originality and sophistication.

## SECTION TWO: THE MUSIC OF MILNER.

Moshe Milner represented an extraordinarily and profoundly Jewish talent. Milner is known as the Jewish Mussorgsky both because of his Bohemian temperament but also because, like Mussorgsky, his profound creative powers are rooted in the soul of his people.<sup>45</sup>

Israel Rabinovich.

### A):ART SONGS.

Milner's art songs combine traditional Jewish subject matter and musical elements with Western European forms and harmonies. Whereas many members of the Society for Jewish Folk Music sought merely to fulfill the Society's mandate to harmonize existing folk melodies, Milner went much further, creating original works of great beauty and sophistication. Nowhere is this more evident than in his cycle of ten songs entitled *Mutter und Kind* (Mother and Child). This cycle with texts by I.L.Peretz was published in Kiev in 1921.<sup>46</sup> The concept of a cycle of children's songs was not a new one. Mussorgsky had written his cycle *Detskaya* (In the nursery) for voice and piano in 1872. His cycle consists of seven songs with the following titles: *S nyaney* (With nanny), *V uglu* (In

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<sup>45</sup>Rabinovich,p.161.

<sup>46</sup>Isaac Leib Peretz(1852-1915)was a Yiddish and Hebrew poet and author.He lived in Poland, and in the early stages of his career, (between 1870 and 1878), he wrote most of his works in Polish, later writing almost exclusively in Yiddish.



the corner), *Zhuk* (The beetle), *S kukloy* (With the doll), *Na son gryadushchiy* (At bedtime), *Poyekhal na palochka* (The hobby horse) and *Kot matros* (The cat sailor). Claude Debussy had also composed a suite of children's songs "Children's Corner" for solo piano in 1908.

Cradle songs and Yiddish folk songs about childhood were also widely known in Russia in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as Ruth Rubin writes:

During the nineteenth century, there was no dearth of lullabies in a variety of forms, motifs and moods which reflect the patterns of life which were prevalent at that time. Similarly, songs of various forms were integral to the lives of children. The ditty, the counting-out rhyme, the chant, all play an important part in the life of the child. In these songs are mirrored the feelings of the child himself, his temperament, imagination, playfulness, wisdom, humor, and sometimes satire and the views and sentiments of adults.<sup>47</sup>

While incorporating many of the above elements, Milner's creation is highly original in many ways. First, he makes use of the typically Western European form of the song cycle. This genre of music had never been characteristic of Jewish music but rather of the composers of the German Romantic school, such as Schubert and Schumann. Secondly, rather than utilizing existing texts of folk songs, or writing his own texts, Milner turned for his settings to the Yiddish poetry of one of the most renowned writers of the time, I.L.Peretz. As a young man, Peretz had considered Yiddish as a mere jargon.

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<sup>47</sup>Ruth Rubin, Voices of a People: The Story of Yiddish Folksong (Philadelphia: J.P.S. 1979), p.29.

However, after the 1881 pogroms, the main tendency of Peretz' writings became nationalistic and in his publication *Die Yidishe Bibliotek* (The Yiddish Library) of 1891, he maintained that since three million people spoke Yiddish, its status must be raised to that of a literary language. Peretz also served as deputy chairman of the Czernowitz conference in 1908. Mendes-Flohr writes of the conference:

The conference was the first international gathering, embracing virtually all ideological camps in Eastern European Jewry to consider the role of Yiddish in Jewish life. It was held from August 30 to September 4, 1908 in Czernowitz, the principal Yiddish speaking center of Bukovina, a region then under Austrian rule and now divided between Rumania and Ukraine. The major question which was addressed at the conference was the "national status" of Yiddish. After heated debate it was decided to proclaim Yiddish as the national language of the Jewish people. The conference contributed greatly to the prestige of Yiddish.<sup>48</sup>

Like Milner and the other composers of the St. Petersburg school, Peretz used folktales and folk material to create a new aesthetic expression with nationalistic characteristics.

Another distinguishing feature of Milner's song cycle is the intricacy and technically demanding nature of the vocal and piano parts as well as their complete integration and inter-dependence upon one another to create an organic whole. These are songs which require sophisticated performers with considerable technical and interpretative abilities.

The titles of the ten songs are:

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<sup>48</sup>Mendes-Flohr, p. 425.

- 1) *Wiglied* (Cradle song).
- 2) *Kezele, shtil* (Little cat, keep silent) .
- 3) *A gute nacht* (Good night).
- 4) *Der foigl* (The bird).
- 5) *Der schifer* (The sailor).
- 6) *Breitele*, (Little Bread).
- 7) *Tanz, tanz, meidele, tanz* (Dance, little girl, dance).
- 8) *Der Jeger* (The hunter).
- 9) *Bal-shpil* (Ball game).
- 10) *Oyfn grinem bergele* ( Across the green mountains).

An analysis of *Wiglied* and *Der schifer* will reveal their great charm and originality. Musical examples are in Appendix B.

*Viglied* (Cradle song) is the first song in the cycle.

The text of the song is as follows:

*Schtejt in feld a bojmele,  
 hot es grine zwajgelach,  
 sizt der of a fojgele,  
 macht es tzu di ojgelach.  
 Of de grine zwajgelach,  
 Wakst a goldn epele.  
 Di ojgelach mach tzu mein kind  
 a broche of dajn kepele!  
 Of di grine zwajgelach  
 Schlofn schojn di fojgelach  
 di mame singt ah, ah,  
 s'is a schtile nacht a,a.*

In the field is a green tree,  
 It has green branches.  
 a little bird is sitting  
 he closes his eyes.  
 On the green branches,  
 grows a golden apple  
 close your eyes, my child,  
 A blessing on your head.  
 on the green branches  
 the bird is already sleeping  
 the mother sings ah, ah,  
 it is a peaceful night,  
 ah,ah.

The tempo marking of the song is *andante cantabile* and like many of Milner's songs, there is a short five-bar introduction in which the piano introduces a chromatic theme in octaves. Initially, this introduction creates a tender atmosphere and is evocative of the movement of a cradle or a mother holding

her child in her arms and rocking him/her to sleep whilst she sings. Initially, both the text and opening melody might appear to be a typical Yiddish cradle song but a closer examination reveals Milner's lullaby to be a highly distinctive creation. As the song progresses, Milner creates a sense of uneasiness and menace with the predominance of chromatic writing and the ever-shifting harmonic vacillation between E Major and E Minor. Milner seems almost to be experimenting with harmony and color, seeing just how bold and adventurous he can be. The chromaticism of the song is completely atypical of Jewish music, and Milner seems to want to create a new harmonic language in the style of the French impressionists like Debussy or Russian composers like Scriabin. Milner also makes use of juxtaposing major and minor tonalities, often blurring the distinction between them. The sense of uneasiness in the song is further suggested by the fact that the harmonies do not resolve. Also noteworthy is the rhythmic variety in both the piano and vocal parts. The rhythm is constantly being modified by triplets and syncopation and the vocal line sometimes imitates the piano part, as at figure A where the song of the mother mirrors exactly the piano introduction. The song has a circular structure and the opening piano octaves are repeated at the end. In this delicate song, text, vocal line and piano accompaniment are intertwined and merge successfully to create a work of great individuality.

In addition to succeeding as a cycle, each of the ten songs has its own singular musical flavor. None of the songs is particularly lengthy, but within each one, Milner succeeds in creating a uniquely distinctive musical vignette.

Song number five *Der Schifer* (The sailor) is very different in mood from the opening cradle song. The text of the song is as follows:

<i>S'hot der regn oif gehert</i>	The rain has ended now,
<i>Der himl is schojn ojsgeklert</i>	The sky is clear again,
<i>Nor di decher sainen nas,</i>	Now the streets are wet
<i>Rinen taiche lach in gass</i>	There are large puddles of water.
<i>Ch'hob mein schifele gefunnen,</i>	I found my little ship,
<i>oifn wasser es gelost,</i>	I lost it over the waters
<i>Un es kumt der wind und blost</i>	And the wind comes and blows,
<i>Jogt majn schifele geschwind</i>	And drives my ship on quickly
<i>oif di fliglen, fun dem wind</i>	on the wings of the wind,
<i>flih der, flih, majn schifele,</i>	Fly, oh fly away my ship,
<i>un wuhin flihstu mein schifele?</i>	and where are you flying, my little ship?
<i>Zu der frajer welt ahin</i>	to the free world,
<i>wus is lichtig, wus is grin,</i>	where all is light and green,
<i>fojgl singt, blumen bliht</i>	Birds sing, flowers bloom,
<i>Schifele, schifele, nem mich mit.</i>	Little ship, take me with you.

The song can be divided into three sections: An introductory section A which evokes the small boy playing in the puddle-soaked streets. A second section which begins at figure B and describes the boy's fantasies of wild storms and travels to far-off places. Finally, a concluding section at figure C brings the boy back to reality. The music of section A is characterized by simplicity and the opening vocal melody has the flavor of an Eastern European folksong. But once again Milner surprises us with his harmonic boldness and individuality. The music in the second section changes

greatly to become more dramatic and passionate, using the full range of colors of the keyboard. Similarly, this section makes great use of chromaticism, possibly corresponding to the boy's dreams of travelling to faraway places. With an unexpected 5(7)chord, the boy is jolted back to reality as he realizes that all his pleas to sail away to exotic, far-off places have been in vain. The C section reverts back to the somber tone of the opening section.

Rhythmically the entire song is built on a triplet motif which is constantly modified. Both the piano and vocal parts are extremely difficult and require interpreters of considerable skill and sophistication. This is music written for the concert hall and not for lay performers, despite the deceptive fact that the title and subject matter of the cycle refer to children's songs. In the children's cycle, Milner has used his technical resources and imagination to create a work of great inventiveness which raised the Yiddish art song to a high level of beauty and sophistication.

No discussion of Milner's art songs would be complete without mentioning Milner's best-known composition *In Heder* (In the classroom). This song, with a text by Milner himself, evokes a typical classroom scene between an old rabbi and his young pupil. It was published by the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music in 1914.

The text is as follows:

Teacher:

*Kum aher yingele neenter tsu mir* Come closer to me, little

un tu a kuk in di kleyne oyselech	boy, and look at the little letters,
tayere oyselekh, gilderne oyseleh	precious, golden letters,
gikher, gikher, kum aher.	quickly, quickly, come here.
Hob keyn moire nit, shrek zikh nit	Have no fear, do not be afraid,
Ot azoy, zets zikh avek un her ois	Just sit down and listen with
mit kop, zets zikh ot azoy. Her zikh tsu.	intelligence. Sit like this and listen.
Komets alef o, komets beys bo,	Alef with a komets is pronounced "o", bet with a komets "bo",
Komets giml-go, komets dalet do.	Giml with a komets "go" and dalet "do"
Pasekh alef-a, pasach beis ba	Alef with a pasekh is pronounced "a", bet is pronounced "ba",
Pasekh giml ga, pasekh dalet da	Giml is "ga" and dalet is "da".
Ot azoy, yingele,	You must study like this, boy.
Ot a zoy darf men lernen yingele.	
Oy, vey, tayere yingele, tu a kuk in	Oy, my dear boy, look in
sider un zog nokh a mol	the prayer book and repeat it.
<u>Child.</u>	
Komets alef-o, komets beis bo, komets alef o, komets beis bo,	
<u>Teacher.</u>	
Hekher, shtarker	Louder, stronger!
<u>Child.</u>	
O, bo.	Oh, bo.
<u>Teacher.</u>	
Ot azoy darf men lernen yingele.	You must study like that, boy.
Freylikher, lebediker! Genarnik.	Happier, livelier, silly boy.
Ot azoy, yingele, darf men lernen	toyre You must learn Torah like that, boy
Toyre iz die beste skhoyre.	Torah is the best merchandise.
Volst geven a tayer yingele, solst	Be a good boy and not silly.
nit zayn keyn genarnik!	
Ah, bist du a genarnik, yingele.	Oh, you are silly, boy.
Genug shoyn, fermakh dem sider,	Enough now, close your prayerbook, you are free to go.
bist fray.	
Gedenk mein kind, a yid darf lernen	Toire, Just think, my child,
Azoy zagt undz der heylicher boyre	a Jew must learn Torah, our Holy creator tells us



<p>Az men vet dikh fregn vos hos du          Zolst du zogn host gelernt Toyre,          Gedeynkt Toyre, Nikh a mol toyre.          Toyre, toyre, toyre.</p>	<p>so.          geton in heder, when people          ask what you have done          you should tell them you          learned Torah, thought          Torah.          Torah, Torah, Torah.</p>
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Because Milner himself studied in a heder as a child, it is likely that this song is based on personal experience. The genre of *heder* song was not original and songs evoking *heder* scenes were common among Eastern European Jewry. As Ruth Rubin writes:

When the little boys had mastered the alphabet, the rabbi began to teach the boys the Bible by rote, translating word for word from the Hebrew or Aramaic text into Yiddish, and the Yiddish translation, together with the Hebrew and Aramaic would be studied all together, with a traditional tune. The children were then taught the traditional chantings of the cantillations as well as Sabbath and other prayers, all of which had their traditional tunes. These tunes became a means to sharpen wits and improve memory.<sup>49</sup>

Milner's achievement was to create an art song of great inventiveness out of familiar material and subject matter. The song, which may almost be seen as a dramatic dialogue uses the natural inflections of Yiddish speech to create an extended accompanied recitative. Weisser suggests that the song is not entirely original but makes use of the typically Russian elements used by the "Kutchka" or group of five such as the *basso ostinato* but that "Milner has nevertheless fashioned a song of remarkable originality."<sup>50</sup> Milner also

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<sup>49</sup>Rubin, pp. 53-4.

<sup>50</sup>Weisser, p. 97.



makes skillful use of typically Jewish musical elements in the song, most notably the study mode. The study mode is a repetitive, singsong motif by which pious students learned their Talmudic lessons and Milner re-creates this mode in the piano accompaniment whenever the teacher teaches and the student repeats his *alef bes*. Another reason for the great success of this song is that the characters of the old teacher and the young student are so vividly drawn. From the opening octaves in the piano introduction, we are transported to another time and place and we almost feel as if we ourselves are sitting in that dusty classroom. The introduction also evokes the entrance of the child into the classroom, waiting nervously to begin his lesson. The *recitativo* style of the vocal writing captures the changing moods of the old teacher and his great love of teaching. Initially, the tone is one of quiet encouragement on the words *Hob kein moire nit shrek sich nit* (do not be afraid or scared) at figure D. The tone becomes more insistent as the teacher encourages the boy more and more to learn. The study mode motif is repeated at figure this time with more urgency and the 4/4 rhythm of the opening section is changed to 2/4. The teacher exhorts the boy more and more to take his studies seriously, culminating at figure E where the words *Ot a soi ingele darf men lernen Toire, Toire is die bestes schoire* (One must learn Torah, my boy. Torah is the best merchandise) are set to a melody in the Ukranian dorian mode which gives the phrase a sense of traditional

hazzanut. The octave motive of the introduction is repeated at figure F to suggest the boy leaving the classroom. Before he does so, the teacher stops him and to the accompaniment of lush *arpeggio* chords, the teacher tenderly imparts his final message: *Gedenk mein kind, a yid darf lernen Toire, a soi sogt uns der heiliger boire*. (Remember, my child, A Jew must study Torah, so says our Holy Creator). The tone is one of wistful tenderness. The song concludes with a final depiction of the study mode as the child repeats the words *Toire, Toire, Toire*.

Many critics and musicologists agree that *In Heder* is a fine example of a new type of Jewish art song, one which utilized traditional subject matter and musical elements in a highly distinctive and imaginative way. Albert Weisser writes: "Milner's song remains the finest and most artistic genre evocation of a corner of Jewish life which we will see no more."<sup>51</sup>

In his sleeve note to a recording of Milner's songs musicologist Barry Serota quotes composer Joel Engel as saying "One page of *In Heder* is enough to establish the existence of Jewish music." In his book Music of the Ghetto and the Bible, composer Lazar Saminsky writes "Milner's great song is saturated with the essence of our ancient temple song."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.97.

<sup>52</sup>Saminsky, p.71.

Gdai Saleski comments of the song "*In Heder* is a masterpiece." To me it is one of the greatest works in Jewish musical literature, not only because of its high musical level, but also because of its meaning as a symbol of all that is important in Jewish life"<sup>53</sup> Israel Rabinovich writes:

Its remarkable spirituality, its dramatic characterization, its tone: the significant dissonance in the accompaniment to the words *Kometz aleph o*, which typifies the heavy monotony of the heder atmosphere, the caressing and delicate humor at the words of address to the little boy, and finally the seriousness and moving conviction at the words "Remember, child, a Jew must study the Torah"-these are the high points in a song which for authenticity and atmosphere has few equals<sup>54</sup>

It is possible that Milner was influenced by Warshawsky's famous song *Oyfn Pripetshik* (In the oven). This song describes a teacher teaching small children the alphabet and, like *In Heder*, stresses the importance of learning Torah. Milner's song captures the Jewish love for learning and the importance of preserving and transmitting the age-old heritage of Torah.

In his art songs, Milner ventured beyond the confines of the traditional Jewish Art Song. In experimenting with chromaticism and harmony and utilizing sophisticated Yiddish texts, he was attempting to create a new musical language-one which blended many traditional Jewish thematic and musical elements with more adventurous, Western-orientated harmonies

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<sup>53</sup>Saleski, p.40.

<sup>54</sup>Rabinovich, p.160.

and forms.

B): MUSIC FOR THE THEATER.

Although Milner wrote three major operas and incidental music for over fifty theatrical productions, much of this music has been lost. However, a complete manuscript score of the opera *Asmodai* is to be found in the Milner archive at the Russian State Library in St. Petersburg. The opera is based on an extended poem of the same name by the poet Solomon Zainwil Rappaport (S. Ansky), and was published in 1905. Ansky wrote folk legends, Hasidic tales and his poem makes use of Jewish folklore to describe the conflict between the Hasidim and the Maskilim in Russia in the late-nineteenth century. Although the first and only performance of the opera took place in Leningrad in 1923, a letter from Ansky to Milner dated 24th June, 1914 shows that their collaboration on the opera matured over a period of time. Ansky's detailed letter, quoted here in its entirety, reveals valuable insights into their collaboration:<sup>55</sup>

My dear friend,

I promised to write to you about the

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<sup>55</sup>No. 53 of section 1 of the Milner archive in the Institute for the History of the Arts in St. Petersburg.

first and second acts of *Asmodai* and now I am keeping my promise to you. First, however, permit me to say a few words about the overture. I hope that my suggestions might be of some use to you. I feel that the overture should begin with loud, devilish laughter which is quickly interrupted. There should be a pause for a moment and then a plaintive melody should begin. Then, crying should be heard. This crying gets louder and louder until it is once again interrupted by laughter. Both laughter and crying should then continue simultaneously and when they reach their highest pitch, they stop suddenly. After a short pause, a melody or *niggun* derived from the study mode is heard. Once again, it is interrupted by laughter and after that, a mystical, Hasidic *niggun* is heard as well as other pious melodies but they too dissolve into laughter. But then there begins a powerful folk melody which is also interrupted by laughter. The two melodies then struggle one against the other but the folk motif gets stronger and stronger.

The laughter gets weaker and weaker until it disappears completely. The overture ends with the folk melody. If you like my suggestions, please feel free to use them. Please also feel free to change them. As you know I am no composer. Concerning the first act, before the curtain rises, a plaintive melody is heard and then *Asmodai* is heard calling out: "Spirits and devils, we have flown here like bows and arrows from the woods and from the deep abyss. From the hills and from the open graves, from the North and from the South." At the end of the act, Lilith and her friends dance and sing to two arias; the first aria is modest and chaste and the second is wanton and lascivious. Perhaps we can combine the two arias into one? The text of that aria would be as follows: "Lower your eyes, daughters, there are men surrounding us. We must not laugh but we must be chaste and pious. Cover your hair and move as far away from the men as possible." The text of the second song is as follows: "We are women born of women, young and beautiful as the roses of Sharon, our bodies burn like fire. We cannot control our passions and our burning lust. There is nothing holy for us and our blood boils like hellish fire. What force is more powerful, the day or the night? Now, the last ray of light has disappeared and night reveals her black source."

Then *Asmodai* and all the devils should be illuminated by a strong, red light. Then the chorus should sing to the text "The rooster is crowing and Jews are going." *Asmodai* enters as the chorus moves to the side of the stage singing softly. He declaims "I sit on the left side of God and does anyone know what that means? There are two Gods, Him and me. He pays his servants with

money and I give mine unhappiness and sorrow. Which of us is right and which one of us is more powerful?" The stage should become darker and darker as the singing of the chorus gets softer and softer to the text: "We are ready. Night is coming, night so blind and full of sin, night so mute. Night stretches out its hands over every house." The devil Beelzebub comes in with a loud noise of thunder. This is everything that I have written up until now. I hope to write the whole libretto in this manner. Write and tell me your impressions of this. Write and tell me how you are and how your work is going. Regards to your wife, I shake your hand, With best wishes,

S.Rappaport.

P.S. Write to me at this address and if I should move, your letter will be forwarded to me.

The opera must have been completely reworked before its premiere in 1923 because an examination of the manuscript in the Russian State Library reveals the following altered information as the title page of the opera reads:

DIE HIMLEN BRENNEN

Opera von M.A.Milner.

Main characters.

Rabbi.....Bass.

Rebbetzin.....Mezzo soprano.

Toyno.....Tenor.

Asmodai.....Bass.

Batsheva.....Soprano.

Lilit.....Soprano.

The opera is divided into three acts. The structure of act one (pages 1-44 of the manuscript) is as follows:

1) Instrumental Introduction.

2) Introduction by rabbi followed by an extended male chorus of first and second tenors and basses to the text "*Unser rebenu-*

*die Himlen brennen. Is vos gesehn. Rabi, sag is vos gesehn*" ("Our dear rabbi, the heavens are aflame, tell us what happened"). This is followed by the aria of Toyno which is a setting of psalm thirteen *Ad Ana Adonai* ("O God, how long?"). The act ends with the Rebetzin intoning the words "*Got fun Avrom, Itzchak und fun Yakov. Za mit dein folk Yisrael fin ales beisen. As der lieber Shabas Koidesch geit aber di voch sol kumen oif uns zu mazel un brochn un zu ales guten za toiro zu iras shamayim uns zu mazel un brocha.*" ("God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, be with your people now and protect her from all evil. Now that the beloved Shabbat is departing, give us a week of luck and blessing and everything good.")

#### ACT TWO.

1) Instrumental Introduction.

2) Aria of Batsheva to the text *Zi hot gesehn in herbst die felder? A soj bin ich far finstert. Foigel frei flih un sing himmeln (or mein) lied.* ("Have you seen how darkened the fields are? All at once I am pale. Birds fly free and sing my song.")

3) Duet of the Rebbetzin and Batsheva to the text *Tochterl mein, schon vider singst du deiner troeriger lieder.* ("My daughter, once again you are singing your sad songs.")

4) Aria of the Rebbetzin to the text *Groisse sind mit a selch reid lestert men gott. Sog, taiere, sai ruhig tochter. Gott vet dir bahitten.* ("Be calm, daughter, God will protect you.")



5)Duet for the Rebbetzin and Batsheva to the following text  
*Volkins vert farfallen. Likvoid den chosen un di kalo mit  
fihl nachos, lieber Gott.* ("The clouds are clearing away.  
Honor the bride and groom with much luck, dear God.")

6)An extended chorus for sopranos, first and second altos and  
first and second tenors to the text *A Gutere voch, a masildige  
woch, Singt freilich und shtarker.* ("A good week, a lucky  
week, sing happily and loudly.")

This is followed by an instrumental interlude in the klezmer  
style and as Asmodai interrupts their merrymaking, the chorus  
exclaims *Hot is der fremde fast.* ("Now the stranger is here.")  
Asmodai replies *Fun vajter lender midboriojs aher, zu eich  
gekomen on zu sogen di bsoro fun geulas Yisrael* ("From far off  
lands and deserts I have come here to tell you the news of the  
redemption of Israel.")

The chorus intervenes again in the klezmer style to the text  
*Klesmer, klesmer, vos schraight ihr gvald.* ("Klezmer, klezmer,  
get ready to reply.")

### ACT THREE.

1)Instrumental interlude.

2)Bass solo and chorus to the text *Die Tajchenfun Bavel  
gesehn, gelokt oben biter fun zijon di gros is geben fun  
zijon* ("By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept.")

3)Extended chorus to the text *Birschus fun almachtigen Gott  
bin ich gekumen aer antpleken aich den keitz.* ("With the  
permission of Almighty God, I have come to inform you of the



imminent coming of the Messiah.")

5)Aria of the Rabbi to the text *Groiseer Got, Almechtiger Gott, almechtiger Gott, die Herr fun ganze welt.* ("Great God, Almighty God, The master of all the world.")

6)Aria of Batsheva to the text *Sonnenshtal licht, geseingen blumen.*("Rays of sunlight, flowers of sadness.")

7)Aria of Asmodai to the text *Scheidim leizim macht reigim bilge klipes un ma si kini schreibet pech un gehenem feier griben ruches mechescheifer's saverocheis.*("Devils and hell, pits of fire, witches and storms of fire and torment.")

8)Duet of Toyno and Lilit to the text *Jesser al oegel. Ih her a bas kol bos ruft zum leben. Dos is a zeichen as hecat is der letzte nacht fun golos. Die Ginoro is basch often geboren nor in golos.*("I hear a voice from heaven which calls as a sign that tonight is the last night of exile.")

9)Final scene for the Rabbi and chorus to the text *Gvald lieber Yidn a farmenl a un schul. Geht avek. Los mir blaiben alein in schul. Groiser Gott, Schtarker Gott.*(" My dear friends, go away! Let me remain here, alone in the synagogue. Great and Almighty God!")

In Toyno's aria *Ad Ana Adonai* based on Psalm thirteen, Milner is at his most adventurous. In this aria he juxtaposes elements of traditional *hazzanut* with the most daring, contemporary harmonies to create a work of great passion and dramatic intensity. Whereas the libretto of the opera is in Yiddish, the text of this aria is in the original

Hebrew. Milner also shows his originality by utilizing a traditional Hebrew text in a completely secular context, namely a large work for the theater.

Milner makes use of the traditional operatic form of *recitativo* and *aria* for his setting. The text of the first, more dramatic section is as follows:

O God, how long? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? <sup>56</sup>

As in many of Milner's other works, there is an instrumental introduction in octaves. This introduction which is marked *con grandezza* (with grandness) creates a sense of both passion and turbulence. The *recitativo* section is marked by a declamatory style and a jaggedness in the vocal line which so accurately reflect the anguish of the text. Harmonically, Milner is at his most adventurous in this section, pushing tonality as far as he was able.

The text of the psalm continues as follows:

How long shall I think thoughts in my soul  
and have sorrow in my heart all day?  
How long will my enemy be lifted above me?  
God, Oh God, see me and answer me.  
brighten my eyes or I shall die and sleep.  
and my enemy will say, I have overcome him:  
and those that trouble me will be glad, because I was  
taken away.  
I have trusted your goodness, let my heart be saved and  
be glad.  
I will sing a song to God, because he has rewarded me.

The mood becomes more introspective in the second section of

<sup>56</sup>The translation of Psalm 13 is taken from The Penguin Edition of the Psalms (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), p.18.

the piece marked *andante cantabile*. The section makes use of many elements of traditional *hazzanut*. First, it is in the *ahava raba* mode, one of the modes associated with traditional cantorial music. Secondly, according to Weisser, Milner makes use of a traditional Hasidic *niggun* as a source for the opening melody. Also noteworthy in this section is the skillful interplay between vocal line and accompaniment. Despite this traditional framework, Milner continues to use the most adventurous chromatic harmonies.

The final section of the aria which is marked *con ardore* (with ardour) modulates to major and is more tonal in quality. It successfully captures the sense of triumphant assertion of the text: " I will sing a song to God because he has rewarded me." After the dark and introspective opening sections of the aria, this section creates a sense of exultation.

This intense and theatrical composition shows Milner at his best: Once again he utilizes a traditional text and traditional musical sources, creating a highly innovative, harmonically daring composition, all the more so considering that it was part of a new and largely unfamiliar genre of Jewish music, the Yiddish opera. It is interesting to note that the Russian composers who comprised the "group of five" were making similar use of Russian Orthodox liturgical chants in their operas. In their attempt to create a new, nationalist-orientated Russian art music, they combined folksong elements and liturgical chants. Mussorgsky's "Boris

Godunov" is a prime example of this use of liturgical chants to evoke the true voice of the Russian people.

Weisser sees *Ana Adonai* as " one of the finest Hebraic musical utterances of the century"<sup>57</sup> and though it was originally set within the framework of a larger work for the theater it was published separately by Jibneh Publishers in Leipzig in 1923. Even taken out of the original context of the opera, and with the orchestral score reduced to piano accompaniment, it reveals Milner's great inventiveness and innate sense of drama and theatricality.<sup>58</sup>

#### C) LITURGICAL MUSIC.

Unlike many of the other members of the Society for Jewish Folk Music, Milner had from an early age been immersed in the music of the synagogue. He also had considerable experience working with choral groups, conducting both the chorus of the Society as well as the choir of the Choral Synagogue in St.Petersburg between 1912 and 1919.

Although a catalogue of Milner's works shows that he composed many choral pieces, his setting of the High Holiday piyut *Untane Tokef* published by the Society in 1913 is the only one in print and readily available. Originally the piece was

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<sup>57</sup>Weisser, p.99.

<sup>58</sup>The only known copy of the score which is in The Russian State Library in St. Petersburg is a vocal score for voice and piano. No information concerning a full orchestral score has thus far come to light.

composed for a *capella* four-part choir, but the printed edition in Volume One of the Ephros Cantorial Anthology has an added organ part.

It is customary for Eastern European settings of this *piyut* to be in the minor mode and Weisser shows that Milner adheres to this tradition.<sup>59</sup>

The opening theme for cantor solo or basses in the chorus marked *andante religioso* is simple and elegant accurately reflecting the sense of awe and dread in the text. On figure B, the four part chorus repeats the opening phrases and Milner's polyphonic choral writing is rich in rhythmic variety and dynamics as in the *maestoso* (majestic) section on the words: *V'yikon b'hesed kisecha, v'teshev alav be-emet*. (Your throne established in steadfast love, there in truth you reign).

The following section is for cantor solo and is written in the free recitative style of Eastern European cantorial music. Another typical feature of traditional cantorial recitative is that the vocal line becomes progressively more elaborate and richly ornamented. Weisser points out that this section also makes use of the traditional cantorial modes of *Magen Avot* and *Ahava Raba* and continues that this is a work of great imaginative strength and control.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Weisser, p.98.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p.98.

### CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it is valuable to consider Milner's importance as a composer as well as possible reasons for his obscurity and neglect. Perhaps the most striking aspect concerning Milner is that he largely remains a mystery both in the personal and professional sense. Even Weisser, whose book The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music was published in 1954 states:

There has never been an official biography (or even a definitive notice on Milner, nor is his name to be found in any of the standard reference books (English, Russian, French or German). This has been due not so much to a concerted effort to ignore him as to the man's seemingly excessive but very genuine modesty.<sup>61</sup>

Although Weisser's book was published a year later than Milner is believed to have died, he still lists Milner's birth date as 1882 (incorrect as Milner himself writes in his autobiography that he was born in 1886) and has Milner as still being alive in 1954. Similarly Rabinovich, whose book Of Jewish Music was published in 1952 writes "In recent years one has heard very little of Milner and it is difficult to establish what has happened to him."<sup>62</sup> I do not believe that the obscurity surrounding Milner's final years can be entirely attributed to his reticent personality. I believe that the control of the Soviet regime over Jewish artists must have contributed greatly to this obscurity. Some have even

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p.93.

<sup>62</sup>Rabinovich, p.161.

questioned whether Milner might have perished in one of Stalin's labor camps, but no evidence to support this theory has come to light thus far. The Russians that I spoke to at the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts, such as Mrs. Galina Kopytova, an expert on the St. Petersburg Society, said that she does not believe that Milner died in a labor camp. Rather she believes he probably succumbed to the severe hardships such as hunger and extreme poverty that Jews in particular were subject to in the final years of the Stalin regime.

Would Milner have been better known if he had left Russia and settled either in America or even in Israel like many other members of the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Music?<sup>63</sup> Even in his autobiography written as a young man, Milner talks about saving up enough money to leave for America in order to join up with his uncle who was a famous cantor. Weisser also mentions that in the early twenties, there were well-founded rumors that Milner was planning to come to the United States but for reasons which are unknown, such a trip never materialized.<sup>64</sup>

I believe that Milner would have been better-known if he had immigrated to America. Jewish music was not prohibited in America, as it became in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, during Milner's lifetime, both liturgical and secular music

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<sup>63</sup>Joel Engel went to live in Palestine where he taught, wrote and composed. Others like Lazar Saminsky and Joseph Achron went to live in the United States where they made significant, noted contributions to the development of Jewish Art Music, both secular and liturgical.

<sup>64</sup>Weisser, p. 95.



(the Yiddish Theater for example) were flourishing in America and with his great experience and expertise in both fields, Milner might have become choral director of a large synagogue or written for the Yiddish Theater. Even if he had not become famous, I think he would have become better known if he had immigrated to America and information about Milner's life and activities would have been more easily available.

What of Milner's music? Although he is generally highly regarded by connoisseurs of Jewish music, only a few of his works are known to have been performed in the West, namely the Children's Cycle, *Untane Tokef* and *Ad Ana Adonai*. Perhaps his neglect is also due to the fact that much of his music was never published and remains in manuscript form. Whatever the reasons for this unfortunate neglect, Milner must be seen as an important composer, and a prominent member of the nascent school of nationalistic Jewish composers who created a new and sophisticated type of Jewish Art Music. As the catalog of Milner's works from the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts reveals, Milner was highly prolific, working in many genres, from art songs, instrumental and choral compositions to incidental music for over fifty theater productions, and three full-scale operas, of which *Asmodai* has the distinction of being the first opera in Yiddish to have been performed in the Soviet Union. In using the texts of some of the most prominent Yiddish writers of his day, such as Peretz, Leivick and Shalom Aleichem, Milner was part of flourishing Yiddish



culture in the first decades of the century.

Whilst acknowledging Milner's importance as a composer, some musicologists have been reluctant to call him great. For example, Weisser writes: "In Milner, we have come to recognize a powerful, but strangely limited musical personality".<sup>65</sup> Others, like Rabinovich see Milner as a "genial composer" and "an extraordinarily original talent".<sup>66</sup>

Whilst some of Milner's compositions such as *In Heder* and the Children's Cycle are considered classics, others may be seen as more experimental and uneven in nature. Undoubtedly however, most of them are works of great sophistication and often difficult to digest immediately. They do not always fall easily on the ear and sometimes, their lyricism is masked by harmonic experimentation. Perhaps final judgment should be reserved for a time when many more of Milner's works are made known to us. An encouraging sign is the re-constitution of a Society for Jewish Music in St.Petersburg, the first such society since the dissolution of the Society for Jewish Folk Music in 1918.

A Festival of Jewish Music was even organized in Odessa in 1993 during which some of Milner's compositions were performed. A second festival was held this summer in St.Petersburg, highlighting the work of the composers of the St.Petersburg Society.

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid,p.100.

<sup>66</sup>Rabinovich,pp.160-1.

During the course of my research, I spoke to Cantor Mischa Alexandrovich, a renowned cantor who now resides in Munich, Germany. Not only did he know Milner and work with him, but Milner also wrote some folksong arrangements for him. I asked Alexandrovich what kind of man Milner was and he replied:

Milner was a wonderful composer, probably the best that we had. He was very shy and very sensitive and this sometimes caused him problems. He was never much in favor with the musical establishment and I remember him always being very, very poor.<sup>67</sup>

Alexandrovich recalls coming across Milner once when the composer was feeling particularly shunned and neglected by the musical establishment. (It is interesting to note that even during his lifetime Milner was largely disregarded and perhaps his sensitive and difficult nature already alluded to in this project might have contributed to this.)

Perhaps there were also political factors especially in the Soviet era when Jewish composers had to walk a particularly fine line of ideological adherence to socialist ideals.

Alexandrovich remembers Milner saying: "The world seems to have forgotten all about me and people seem to have forgotten my music. When you see them, please remind them that in Leningrad there exists a Jewish composer named Milner."

It is my fervid hope that this project will contribute in some

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<sup>67</sup>This is confirmed by Isabel Belarsky, daughter of Cantor Sidor Belarsky. She told me that she remembered visiting Milner's home as a young girl in Petrograd, and that she remembers him being extremely poor.

modest way to shedding light upon Milner who was an important composer and a complex man who in his many works was not only an innovator but raised Jewish music to high levels of beauty and sophistication.

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#### APPENDIX A.

The following is a list of Milner's compositions in the Milner archive of the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts. According to Joachim Braun, Milner's manuscripts and papers were donated to the Institute by Milner's widow, in 1965.

#### Musical Manuscripts of M.A.Milner.

##### 1) Music for dramatic works and operas.

- 1) Music for the dramatic poem by Richard Beer-Hoffmann "Jacob's Dream", 1928, scored for instrumental ensemble, 45 pages.
- 2) Music for the performance of "American Gods" by Upton Sinclair published by the Ukranian State Publisher not later than 1928, 20 pages.
- 3) Introduction to the dramatic performance "Blutt" by B.M.Orshansky, 1929-30. Piano score, 2 pages.
- 4) Music to the play "Der Letzter" by L.B.Reznick, 1931. Piano sketches, 88 pages.
- 5) Music for the play "Ulysses", author unknown, 1931. Piano sketches on individual themes, 22 pages.
- 6) The opera "The New Way" libretto by Y.M.Galitzki, 1932. Piano, choral parts of the first score, the end is missing.
- 7) Music for the play "Storm" by A.N.Ostrovsky, 1934. Fragments, sketches, piano score.
- 8) Music for the play "The Wailing Wall" (literally "The Wall of Weeping." by L.H.Mizandriontzev, 1935. Score for piano

published by Moscow State Publishers, 14 pages.

9) Music for the play "Exorbitant money" by A.N.Ostrovsky, 1936. Score published by the Leningrad State Publishers, 18 pages.

10) Music for the plays of the Great Dramatic Theater, "Mozart and Salieri", "Scenes from a knightly time" and "Rusalka" by Pushkin, 1937. Rough sketches, 54 pages.

11) Music for the play "Wandering stars" from the novel by Shalom Aleichem, staging by I.M.Dobrushin, 1948. Jewish State Theater, BSSR, rough sketches.

12) Music for the play "Bar Kochba" by C.Z.Galkin, 1939. Kiev State Publisher. Sketches for piano, 47 pages.

13) Score of the above, 1939.

14) Music to the production of "Tevye the Milkman" from the novel by Shalom Aleichem, 1939. Assorted musical numbers, plans and sketches, 33 pages.

15) Music for the production of "Sisters" by L.B.Reznick from the novel by I.L.Peretz, 1940. Published by the Kiev State Publisher, 4 pages.

16) Music for the production of "Baba Jochne" from the play "The Witch" by Abraham Goldfaden written for the Byelorussian Theater in 1941. Outlines of musical and production numbers, 70 pages.

17) Music for the Moscow State Theater production of the play "The sun never sets" by I.Fefffer, 1944. Piano sketches of musical numbers, 44 pages.

18) Music for the production of the play "*Mendele Mocher Sofrim*", date unknown. Sketches and rough drafts for piano, 24 pages.

19) Music for the play "*Perfidy and Love*", date unknown. Piano sketches, 9 pages.

Included in this are compositions for piano entitled "*Reflections on Scriabin*" and "*On the Collective Farm*".

20) Music for the Byelorussian State Theater production of "*Der Stroj k fun Schniter*", date and author unknown, 13 pages.

21) Music for the production "*Not a Thing*", Odessa. Date and author unknown. Sketches for piano, 14 pages.

22) Music for the production "*The Gardener's Dog*" by Lope de Vega. Date and place unknown. Selection of musical numbers for piano, 13 pages.

23) Music for the play "*L'Chaim*" by I. Feffer. Date and place unknown. Piano score, 20 pages.

24) Music for the play "*Der Besserer Mensch*". Date, author and place unknown. Score and orchestral parts, 109 pages.

25) Music for the production of the play "*Nit Gedejdet*" by Peretz Markish. Date and place unknown. Score for piano and outline of musical numbers in Russian and Hebrew, 94 pages.

26) Individual musical numbers from the plays "*Intervention*" by L. Slavin, "*The Knave of Peter the Great*" (Author unknown), dance music for the play "*Klein Mentschele*" and an outline of musical numbers of the play "*Halyastre*", 38 pages.



COMPOSITIONS FOR PIANOFORTE.

27a and b) "*Le Reveille*" (The Reawakening) and the small dance suite "*Trois Epoques du Judaisme*" (Three periods of Judaism) for piano solo, 1920, 10 pages.

28) Lullaby in F minor for piano, 1920, 2 pages.

29) Compositions for pianoforte 1922-1937.

"*Silhouettes*", "*Chevre Leitzim*", and piano suite from "*Der Golem*", 62 pages.

30) Variations and fugue for piano, 1925, 8 pages.

31) Cycle of piano pieces:

a) Prelude.

b) March.

c) Frontline soldiers.

d) Young Patriots.

e) Improvisation.

f) The Kobzar (An old Ukrainian instrument resembling the guitar), 1933-1945. 29 pages.

32) Fragments of cycle for piano "*Silhouettes from the patriotic War*", 1940, 2 pages.

33) "*Partizan*" for piano, 1941, 28 pages.

34) Sonata-Ballad for piano, 1941, 28 pages.

35) Theme and variations for piano 1943-1948, 41 pages.

36) Barcarole for piano, 1945, 7 pages.

37) Poem for piano, 1951, 13 pages.

VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSITIONS.

38) Vocal Suite "*Mutter und Kind*", words by I.L.Peretz in Yiddish, 1916, 38 pages.

39) *Shulamit* (Based on Song of Songs). Words by D.Buturlin, for voice and piano, 1917, 4 pages.

40) Vocal and instrumental pieces:

a) "Dream" to words by N.A.Nekrasov.

b) "Enter All" to words by A.Blok.

c) "In the Cave", (Author unknown), 1921-22, 37 pages.

41) "*Scher*" for voice and accompaniment of symphony orchestra. Orchestral and piano score.

"*Pojker*" for voice and accompaniment of small orchestra, vocal score, 1925, 36 pages.

42) Songs for piano, voice and choir based on verses by proletarian poets, A.I.Bezymenski, M.V.Isaacovski, V.V.Mayakovski, A.A.Surov and A.Y.Yashin. 1931 (revised in 1951), 48 pages.

43) "*El Hatzipor*" to words by Chaim N.Bialik, for voice and piano, 1922, 4 pages.

44) Songs for children's choir with piano accompaniment based on Yiddish texts by I.Feffer, L.B.Reznick and Shustermann. Date unknown, 13 pages.

45) Songs for piano and voice and choir based on Yiddish texts of Peretz, Imber, I.M.Dobrushin. Included here is the Ode of Mourning "Lenin the Great" for mixed choir and baritone to words by N.Kubanski, 1924, 50 pages.

6) Rhapsody for cello and piano and other melodies, date unknown, 40 pages.

47) Music notebook with rough drafts, notes and sketches.

48) Assorted lists of musical notes.

MANUSCRIPTS OF M.A.MILNER.

49) Notes on music for the productions "The New Way", "The Witch", and "Der Letzter" and others. Libretto to the opera "The Heavens are Aflame", 22 pages.

50) Autobiographical notes (not earlier than 1933), 10 pages.

APPENDIX B.

וויגליד.  
(Wiglid.)

*Andantino cantabile.*

Canto. *p*

Schtejt in icld a  
שטעט אין אַלד א -

Piano. *mf* *p*

boj - me - le, hot es gri - ne zwaj - ge - lach, sirt der. ojf a foj - ge - le.  
בוי - מע - לע, האט עס גרי - נע צוויי - גע - לאך, זירט דער. אויף אַ פוי - גע - לע.

macht es zcu di oj - ge - lach. Ojf di gri - ne  
מאַכט עס צו די אוי - גע - לאך? אויף די גרי - נע

swaj - ge - lach wakst a gol - dn e - pe - le... Di oj - ge - lach mach zu majn kind  
 שוואַג - גע - לאַך וואַקסט אַ גאָלדענע - פּע - לע... די אָי - גע - לאַך מאַך צו מאַינ קינד

a bro - che ojf dajn ke - pe - le! Ojf di gri - ne  
 אַ ברו - חע אָפּ דאָינ קע - פּע - לע! אָפּ די גריןע

swaj - ge - lach schlo - fu scheyn di foj - ge - lach, di ma - me singt sei:  
 שוואַג - גע - לאַך שולא - פּו שיינ די פּאָי - גע - לאַך, די מא - מם זינגט זיי:

a di ma - me singt sei: a  
 אַ די מא - מם זינגט זיי: אַ

A musical score for voice and piano. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of five systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line with lyrics in German and Hebrew. The piano accompaniment features arpeggiated chords and flowing sixteenth-note passages. Dynamics include *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. The score concludes with a final piano flourish.

The lyrics in the first system are:
   
 German: *W'is a schti. le nacht*
  
 Hebrew: *לַיְלָה שְׁטִי לֵיל נָחַת*

The score includes various musical notations such as *mp*, *p*, *pp*, *rit.*, and *3* (triplets).

## דער שיפער.

(Der schifer.)

Canto.

*Andantino.*

*p* S'hot der re - gu oif - ge - hert, der  
דער חנוּט - גע - הירט דער רעגל

Piano.

*p*

hi - ml is schojn ojs - geklert, nor di de - cher sai - nen dass ri - nen tai - che.  
הי - מל איז שוין אויס - געקלערט, נאר די דע - כער זאגן - דאס ריי - נען טא - יע.

lach in gans, ri - nen, ri - nen, ri - nen.  
לעך אין גאנץ, ריי - נען, ריי - נען, ריי - נען.



Ch'hob main schi - fe - le ge - fu - nen, oi - fn was - ser es - ge - lost,  
 אהב מין שכי - פה - לע גע - פונען, אוי - פן ווא - סער עס - גע - לויט,  
 לויט - גע - לויט

un en kumt der wint un blost, jogt majn schi - fe - le ge - schwind  
 און עס קומט דער ווינט און ווינט, גיט מײן שכי - פה - לע גע - שווינד  
 שווינד - גע - שווינד

oif di flig - len fun dem wint.  
 ווינט דעם ווינט - פליגט דער ווינט

**B** Animato.

f Flieh dir, flieh, majn schife - le! un wu - hin flieh - stu, majn  
 מײן שפיט - פלייח, פלייח, מײן שפיט - פלייח, וואו - היינ פלייח - שטו, מײן



schi.fe.le?      Zu.der fraj - er welt a.hin,      wus is lich - tik,  
 לעז-עס      זי - פראגט ער - וועלט,      וואס איז ליכטיק,

wus is grin,      foj - gl singt,      blu-men bliht.  
 גריין,      פויגל - זינגט,      בלומען - בלייבט.

*Con anima*  
 Schi.fe.le, schi.fe.le, nem mich mit!  
 מיטלע, מיטלע, נעמ מיך מיט!

*rit.*      *a tempo*

*pp*

# IN CHEIDER

M. MILNER

Andante cantabile

*mf* *rit.*

*p* *Amarevole*

Kum a her, in-ge-le ne hen ter tzu mir, un tu a-kuk in di klei-ne oi-se-lach

*p*

Tei-e-re oi-se-lach gil-der ne oi-se-lach gi-cher gi-cher kum a-her.

*p* *rit.* *p dolce*

Kum a - her in ge le ne hen ter tzu mir un

*rit.* *p*

tu a kuk in di klei-ne oi-se-lach Tei-e re oi se lach gilderne oi se lach gi-cher gi-cher kum a

*pp* \* *And.* \* *And.*

# D

Her Hob kein moi-re nit shrek sich nit.

*L.H.* *p* *rit.*

Ot a-soi setz sich a vek un her ois mit kop setz sich ot a-soi her sich tzu.

*p* *rit.* *pp*

Ko metz a lef o ko metz beis bo ko metz gi mel go

*pp*

*rit.*  
kometz da led do pa sach a lef a pa sach beis ba pa sach gi mel ga

*rit.* *p* *mf* *cresc. di forte*

pa sach da-led da.

*3*

**E**

Ot a-soi in-ge-le ot a-soi darf men ler nen in ge le oi vey tei - er yn ge le

*3*

*p*

**Allegretto**

Tu a kuk in si der un sognuch a mol kp metz a lef o ko metz beis bo

*pp*

*p timidamente*

He-cher shtar-ker o bo ot a soi darf men ler-nen yin ge le a

ba ga - da - He-cher

shtar-ker Ot a soi darf men ler-nen in-ge-le

*f brio*

*p*

a ba ga da.

*f brio*

*f* Ot a soi frei-li-cher le be di ger ge nar nick *MENO MOSSO* ot a soi in ge le

darf men ler - nentoi-re Toi re is di beste schoire

**Burlando**  
Volst ge ven a tei er in ge le solst nit sein keinge nar nik Ai bist du a ge nar-nik in-ge

*rit.* **F** le ge nugshoin farmach dem si der bist frei. **Tempo Primo**



Ge denk mein kind a yid darf ler nen toi re a

*p* *pp*

soi sogt uns der hei li ger boi - re. As men vet dich fre gn vos host du ge ton in

chei-der solst du so gen host ge-le-rent toi-re ge denk toi-re noch a mol toi-re

*p* *pp rit.* (*ad lib*)

toi-re toi-re toi-re toi re toi-re.

*ppp* *rit.* *pp* *ppp*

# „Ad ana Adonaj.“ – עד אנה ה' (תהלי מ"ג)

M. Milner.

(Psalm XIII)

(תהלי מ"ג)

ב. סילנר

Moderato.

First system of the piano introduction. It features a treble and bass staff in B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked 'Moderato.' and the dynamics 'f' (forte) and 'con grandezza' (with grandeur). The music consists of flowing sixteenth-note patterns in both hands.

Second system of the piano introduction. It continues the sixteenth-note patterns from the first system. The dynamics 'mf' (mezzo-forte) are indicated. The system ends with a fermata over a half note.

First system of the vocal entry and piano accompaniment. The vocal line (soprano) enters with the lyrics 'Ad a - na a - do - naj tischka.' The piano accompaniment consists of a simple harmonic accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Con moto.' (with motion) and the dynamics 'sf' (sforzando) are indicated.

Second system of the vocal entry and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'chej - ni - ne - zach ad a - na, tas - tir et - pa.' The piano accompaniment continues with a simple harmonic accompaniment. The dynamics 'mf' (mezzo-forte) are indicated.



NEW YORK  
NYC

ne - cha mi me - ni.

Andantino cantabile.

Ad a - na a - schit ej - zot bnaf - schi ya -

rit. poco rit. tempo

gon bil - va - vi yo - mam. Ad a - na ya -

f n

rum oj - viy a - lay: ha - bi - ta a - nej - ni a - do - nay e - lo.

haj ha.i - ra ej - naj

*f* *n*

pen i - schan ha.ma - ' wet. pen yo.mar oj - vi ye'chol.

tiw Za - raj - ya - gi - lu, - ki e.

Moderato. *mod*

mot.

*p* *pp* *f*

*con ardore* כחם *f*<sup>n</sup>

Va . a . ni b.chas.de.cha va . tach . ti *mf* ח"ב *mf* Ya.gel li.bi bischu.a.

*f*<sup>n</sup> *mf* כהרנסח *f*<sup>n</sup>

te . cha a - schi - ra a.schi - ra la.do - naj

*mf* ח"ב *f*<sup>n</sup>

ki ga . . mal o - lay.

עד אנה יהוה, תשכחני דעח,  
עד אנה תסמיר את עיניך סטני:  
עד אנה אשית עצות בנפשי -  
יגזו כלבבי יוסם:  
עד אנה יהוה אוכי עלי:  
הבישה עיני, יהוה אליה -  
האירה עיני סו אישון העקות:  
סו ואסור אוכי וכלמיו -  
צני תילו כי אסום:  
ואני כחפדך בנפשי -  
וגל לפי בישועתך  
אשירה ליהוה  
כי נסל עלי:

To J. Kaerosowsky  
**\*UN'SANE TOKEF**

M. MILNER  
 Born 1885

*Andante Religioso*

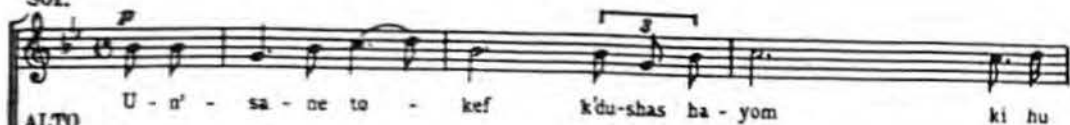
Cantor Solo  
 or  
 Bass

Organ

U - n' - sa - ne.... to - kef k' - du - shas ha - yom u - n' -  
 sa - ne to - kef k' - du - shas..... ha - yom ki hu no - ro vb -  
 yom..... u - vo si - no - se mal - chu - se - cho v' - yi - kon b' -  
 che - sed kis - e - cho v' - se shev o - lov be - e - mes

\*Originally without accompaniment. If organ is used above chords are suggested.

SOP.



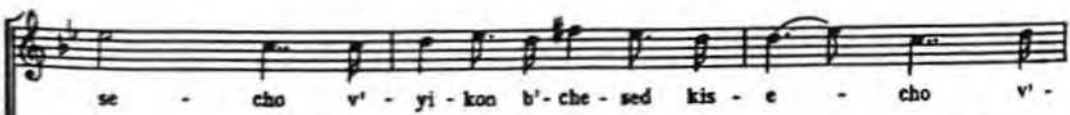
ALTO



TENOR



BASS



*Maestoso*

se-shev o - lov be - e - mes v' - yi-kon b'-che-sed kis - e -

yi - kon b'-che-sed v' - yi-kon b'-che-sed kis - e -

yi - kon b' - che - sed v' - yi-kon b'-che-sed kis - e -

che - sed b' - che - sed v' - yi-kon b'-che-sed kis - e -

cho v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e -

cho v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e -

cho v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e -

cho v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e -

*p* *rit.* *pp*

mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes be - e - mes

*p* *rit.* *pp*

mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes be - e - mes

*p* *rit.* *pp*

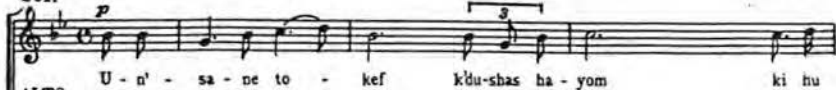
mes v'se-shev o - lov be - e - mes be - e - mes

*p* *rit.* *pp*

mes be - e - mes o - lov be - e - mes be - e - mes



SOP.



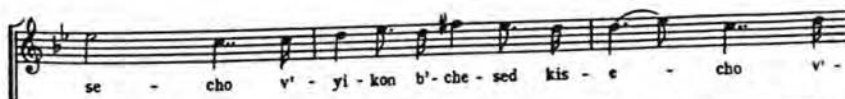
ALTO



TENOR



BASS



CANTOR *Rec. ad lib.*

*p*

E - mes..... e - mes ki a - to..... hu

SOPR. (Humming)

ALTO  
or Organ  
TENOR

bocca chiusa

BASS

*poco a poco cresc.*

da - yon u - mo - chi - ach..... v' - yo - de -

a vo - ed..... v' - yo - de - a vo - ed v' - cho -

sev..... v' - cho - sem..... v' - so - fer..... u - mo -



ne v' - so - fer..... u - mo - ne v' - siz - kor.....

kol ha - nish - ko - chos v - siz - kor.....

kol... ha - nish - ko - chos kol... ha - nish - ko - chos v' -

sif - tach es se - fer ha - zich - ro - nos es

*pp*

se - fer ha - zich - ro - nos v' - sif - tach es se - fer ha - zich - ro - nos

u - me - e - lov. .... yi - ko - re u - me - e -

lov yi - ko - re. .... v' - cho - som yad. .... kol o - dom bo

kol o - dom. .... kol o - dom bo

Choir *\*ossia*

Kol o - dom bo

the Un'sane  
Tokel and  
Uvashofor  
Godol can be  
sung separately  
or as a unit.

*\*Originally without accompaniment*