Beyond *Shalom/Salaam/*Peace:
Use of Music in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there*." *~Rumi*

"It's been so long since I've sung *Qawwali*!", Irfana cried gleefully as we danced together in a circle, holding hands and chanting. Earlier in the day I had asked the Muslim participants in our June 2011 Retreat for Emerging Jewish and Muslim Leaders in Cornwall, Connecticut whether any of them would like to share music from their own background or to sing with us as a group. I received varying responses. From some: "Muslims don't really sing unless it is chanting for Allah." From others: "I'm not sure if we have anything to share." And yet, there we were, a mere few hours later, singing and laughing and sharing our musical traditions with one another. We began with the Sufi chant "*Allah Hu*" to which the words of Psalm 150, with the chorus *Hallelu*, have been set. After teaching both the Hebrew and the Arabic refrain we began chanting together--slowly at first until naturally members in the circle began to improvise. Suddenly everyone was standing up and dancing! One man grabbed his iphone and searched for a recording of the *Qawwali* solo which accompanied the refrain "*Allah Hu*". Others were busy experimenting with alternating parts of the refrain, testing out how "*Allah Hu*" or "*Hallelu*" felt in their mouths. At the end of our five-minute jam session one Jewish participant spontaneously taught the words to a song "*Yonah*" and we continued to sing together. As the singing reached its natural ending point the group burst into cheers and applause. In the warmth and joy of the shared space that followed there were hugs and expressions of surprise and joy. At that moment Professor Nargis Virani, who until that moment had remained in her chair due to a leg injury, propped herself up on her cane and

exclaimed that she wanted to teach us a Pakistani wedding song and accompanying dance. We all shouted our approval and another round of singing and dancing began. Many of us retired very late to bed that evening. Deep in conversation for hours after the music session had ended, our bonds of friendship and colleagueship deepened.

This description was one of those pure moments where music truly was the unifying and uplifting force that led to a culminating experience of our relationship-building efforts over the course of a four-day Jewish-Muslim engagement workshop. The experience supports a prevailing notion that music and the arts can lift us up beyond the ordinary and, in doing so, can succeed in uniting us beyond boundaries. It is a common platitude that music is a powerful source for good and peace. Kofi Annan, the former secretary-general for the United Nations himself stated the common assumption that "music leaps across language barriers and unites people of quite different cultural backgrounds. And so, through music, all peoples can come together to make the world a more harmonious place."[1] It is undeniable that music has the *potential* to bring people together—sometimes in the most spontaneous and surprising of ways. And yet, music alone cannot build community or bridge gaps between communities.

As Olivier Urbain asserts in *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, music can be a powerful influence toward escalating or resolving conflict—setting the stage for alienating communities or uniting communities depending on the way in which the music is used.[2] Similarly, scholar Felicity Laurence claims that music's main use throughout history has arguably concerned power

[1] Kofi Annan quoted in George Kent, "Unpeaceful Music," in *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, ed. Olivier Urbain (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 104.
[2] Oliver Urbain, "Introduction," in *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, ed. Olivier Urbain (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 2.

relationships, whether by establishing them, maintaining them, or resisting them. The sounds and patterns constituting the music encode cultural and societal patterns, which often are hierarchical, however 'hidden' they may be.[3] Examples of music and violence are, actually, numerous and have been present in many horrific displays of power throughout history such as music performed under the Third Reich.[4] The documentary "Great Conductors of the Third Reich: Art in the Service of Evil" explains how the use of music and its meaning can take on the message of its context. In the case of Nazi Germany, those in power control the message. Great orchestras were conducted before a backdrop of swastikas and German composers were used as examples as the superiority of the pure Aryan race.[5]

Johan Galtung articulates in descriptive language the commonly-held hypothesis that music necessarily uplifts, unifies, and leads to peace. He writes that in interfaith dialogue and the arts it is assumed that music is conducive to peace by making us "forget the ordinary, catapulting us for some time to a virtual, more spiritual level where we meet a pure, more detached reality, a form in space and/or time detached from empirical reality…thereby unifying us across boundaries."[6] This description is by no means incorrect. Music not only has the power to uplift, unify, and cross boundaries—it so often does precisely that. It was this statement that led me to pursue a thesis on the topic of music and interfaith dialogue. I was under the same impression that of course music has a role to play in interfaith dialogue. And, indeed it does. However, during the course of my

[3] Felicity Laurence, "Music and Empathy," in *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, ed. Olivier Urbain (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 23.
[4] Kent, "Unpeaceful Music," 106.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Johan Galtung, "Peace, Music, and the Arts: In Search of Interconnections" in *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics,* ed. Olivier Urbain (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 54.

research I became increasingly aware that it is not music alone, but the strategic use of music in tandem with other key skills of dialogue, peacebuilding, education, and community-organizing that leads to real impact. Even when music is used as a tool for dialogue with the best of intentions it does not always succeed in fostering the learning, shared understanding, and community-building that it intends. Research into and deep understanding of the way in which music can create bridges between groups of different faiths is thus vitally important to the success of the use of music as a tool for interfaith dialogue.

With this is mind, my thesis aims to explore the ways in which the cantor, through knowledge and understanding of interfaith dialogue and how music can function as a tool in interfaith dialogue, can contribute to and further Jewish-Muslim dialogue and understanding. Why the focus on Jewish-Muslim relations? It was during my first year of cantorial school in Israel that Cantor Eli Schleiffer introduced me to Judeo-Arabic music. Despite the fact that I had already lived in Israel for over a year and was well-aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds that comprised the Isreali demographic I was, perhaps naively, shocked by this seeming oxymoron. I can imagine our congregants would feel the same way. Intoxicated by the current narrative hegemony of Jews and Muslims as mortal enemies, or at the very least, estranged siblings, I found listening to Jewish music sung in Arabic to be a contradiction in terms.[7] As I learned more about the history of Jewish-Muslim relations and its cultural expression throughout history I began to ponder the possibilities for the cantor's understanding of this history to enhance the potential for

[7] I am aware that Arabic does not necessarily denote Muslim. In the academic research end of things I have a clear understanding of the vast diversity in the Muslim world and that the Muslim world and the Arab world are overlapping communities but not in any way equivalent. I am still working through how to address musical choices in order to ensure that my thesis and recital invite nuance rather than enforce stereotypes.

Jewish-Muslim dialogue.

My desire to develop my ideas only increased while working in synagogues in the United States. I observed that rabbis have spearheaded Jewish-Muslim dialogue projects and may give sermons that address political events such as the controversy over Ground Zero or nuance for their congregation current events in Israel that speak to the nature of Israeli-Palestinian relations. These synagogues are reflecting the broader stance of our movement. Both Rabbi Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism and Rabbi Ellenson, President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion have spoken out against islamaphobia and urged the Jewish community to follow suit. Beyond fighting prejudice, Rabbi Reuven Firestone notes one significant aspect to ongoing Jewish-Muslim engagement and relationship-building is that it creates a buffer against the natural setbacks that occur in Jewish-Muslim relations in America whenever there is a flare-up in the Middle East.[8]

For me, the involvement of key Jewish leaders in the discourse of Jewish-Muslim engagement raised the question: Where is the cantorial voice in advancing Jewish-Muslim relations? As cantors are we effectively partnering with rabbis on these critical concerns? I believe that there is a significant and unique role for the cantor to play in the conversation. As cantors we know instinctively that music has a power beyond words to create connections and build bridges if we use it well. And yet, music that is not used in conjunction with relationship-building and strategic peacebuilding may have little to no impact on otherwise goodwill interfaith encounters. The exciting news of course is that the many skills required to use music successfully in interfaith dialogue—teaching,

[8] Salam Al-Marayati, "Challenges and Opportunities for Muslim-Jewish Peacemaking in America," in *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities* (United States: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 151.

community-organizing, compassionate listening, and storytelling among them--are entirely within the realm of our skill-set as cantors.

This thesis claims that it is through the strategic use of music in conjunction with the key components of compassionate listening, relationship-building, and community organizing work that ties between local Jewish and Muslim communities can be strengthened. This contemporary dialogue is rooted in a history of shared culture, shared musical aesthetic, and shared ideas from which current participants in interfaith dialogue can draw. The following thesis is designed to broadly answer the question of how the cantor can contribute to Jewish-Muslim engagement within the community where s/he works. In my mind, this requires a three-fold investigation. First, a working knowledge of both faith traditions and the history of their relationship and cultural interaction. Second, an understanding of the music that represents either cultural exchange or desire for bridge-crossing and collaboration. And, lastly, an exploration of best practices for interfaith engagement and how the use of music fits within the context of these findings. While the chapters may read as separate essays, it is my assertion that each is a vital component for the cantor working towards Jewish-Muslim engagement.

Chapter one aims to provide a brief history of Jewish-Muslim relations, focusing particularly on the history of Jews in Muslim lands and points of creative symbiosis or conflict. It warns against creating a blanket reading on the time period prior to the establishment of Israel for the purpose of telling a rosy story of the relationship between Muslims and Jews.

Chapter two will offer the ways in which select music and poetry illustrate Jewish-Muslim cultural exchange. In this section I will focus primarily on *piyyutim*,

pizmonim, and current musical collaborations across Jewish/Muslim, Israeli/Palestinian identity boundaries. I aim to provide a musical, textual, or historical analysis of select pieces. The intention behind the inclusion of chapter one and two is the belief that in order to strategically use music as a tool in Jewish-Muslim dialogue it is vital to understand some basic history and context, both of Islam as a religion and the Judeo-Muslim interaction.

However, in many Jewish-Muslim dialogue settings today it is not necessarily Judeo-Arabic music that best fosters connection, understanding, and opening for dialogue. Use of music that reflects our contemporary American musical culture and communities, as well as how we *music* together is equally important to the discussion. Therefore, chapter three diverges from the Jewish-Muslim encounter in history and music to outline current practices in interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding work. In this section I aim to provide a theoretical framework on music and the arts in dialogue and peacebuilding. The purpose of this section is to provide a basis of information from which to then determine the ways in which music can be used to enrich and further Jewish-Muslim dialogue. The chapter moves from theory to praxis and ends with two case studies on the divergent ways in which music was used in two interfaith dialogue retreats—Building Abrahamic Partnerships and Retreat for Emerging Jewish and Muslim Leaders.

Chapter four continues to build on the theory of music and interfaith dialogue that chapter three began by evaluating the use of music in two concerts—Sounds of Faith and Middle Eastern Harmonies. Through interviews with participants and attendees at both of these events I attempt to glean best practices for the use of a central musical event in

promoting dialogue. Finally, in chapter five I will attempt to put forth some initial recommendations for how the cantor might be instrumental in furthering Jewish-Muslim dialogue within his/her local community.

Chapter One:

Jewish-Muslim Relations in Historical Context

Interfaith organizations and advocates today like to refer easily to a "Golden Age" where Jewish-Muslim relations were one of peacefulness and mutual respect. The impulse here is clear. Given that relations today between Muslims and Jews are portrayed so regularly as strained (a matter that simultaneously reflects reality and exaggeration) the desire to refer to a precedent that represents an alternate course for Jewish-Muslim relations and a baseline of friendship is tempting. The question emerges whether or not this is a misread of the past to serve the needs of the present or whether the presentation of a positive relationship is accurate. An overview of the historiographic material on Jewish-Muslim relations provides a helpful guide as to how one can avoid hyperbole and approach this period through a realistic lens. This assumes the position that neither the myth of coexistence nor the countermyth of hatred should be propagated. Jewish-Muslim relations have always been more complex than either one of those two narratives. The following chapter serves merely as a cursory overview to the vast topic that is Jewish-Muslim relations. However, it reflects my belief that the cantor be grounded in an understanding of history before embarking on any interfaith project. Therefore it is a general history distilled from a variety of sources that will aid me in my interfaith relations work.

In his book *Under Crescent And Cross* Mark Cohen discusses the idea of myth and counter-myth in Jewish-Muslim relations. The premise of the myth-countermyth historiographic pattern is the notion that Jewish-Muslim history has always been written in extremes and often in reaction to other historians.[9] Steven Wasserstrom also

[9] Mark R Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, New Jersey:

acknowledges this bipolarity saying that historians categorized Jewish-Muslim relations either as "creative symbiosis" or as a "vale of tears".[10] Wasserstrom notes that S.D. Goiten's and Bernard Lewis's characterization of the Jewish-Muslim relationship which prevailed in scholarship for decades is principally responsible for promoting the myth of creative symbiosis.[11] What does creative symbiosis suggest? It suggests that there was some degree of mutual benefit that ensued between the interactions between Muslim and Jew. It is not that there was not a degree of mutual sharing that occurred wherever Muslims and Jews came into contact prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. Indeed, it is vitally important to bring this history of coexistence to light, but not at the expense of painting a full picture that acknowledges a multi-tenored relationship.

In his essay "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy" Ismar Schorsch questions the impulse to read the Golden Age of Spain as a mythic epoch of Jewish cultural and intellectual ascendancy due to Judaism's free interaction with outside cultures during that era. Schorsch argues that this biased historiography of the Golden Age became entrenched during the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement in nineteenth-century Germany. During this time Ashkenazic intellectuals were drawn to the Sephardic image because they read it as a "religious posture marked by cultural openness, philosophic thinking, and an appreciation for the aesthetic".[12] The dissemination of the Spanish mystique and the use of historical justification for a more worldly conception of Judaism supported the assimilationist approach that German Jewry desired to champion. As

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Princeton University Press, 1994), 10.
[10]Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, edited by Ismar Schorsch. (New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 87.

Schorsch writes:

> Islamic civilization had fertilized Judaism with the philosophy and science of the Hellenic world and that link was vital to the process of westernizing Judaism in the nineteenth century. The Sephardic mystique not only provided emancipated Jews with a source of pride and an instrument of rebellion, but also enabled them to recover a classical heritage in common with German culture.[13]

Here, Schorsch's major contribution to the field is his reminder that it is important to recognize the impulse behind the historian's reading of history and acknowledging the difficulty for Jewish historians in particular, but others as well, to challenge the concept of a Golden Age. This bias remains evident for example in Maria Rose Menocal's approach to the history of interreligious relations in Medieval Spain in her book *The Ornament of the World* which will be mentioned further in chapter two.

Nevertheless, there have been historians who arose to counter the mythic claim of creative symbiosis, Nemoy and Brinner for example, urge that "any approach to the question of what has been called the symbiosis, or mutual influence…must make its way with extreme caution".[14] While this statement is important, it yielded a "vale of tears" counter-history that brings the student of history no closer to the truth.[15]

While neither extreme characterization is profitable there is some truth to the claim of relative coexistence between Jews and Muslims. Marc Cohen asks the question directly:

> Why were Islamic-Jewish relations during the classical centuries less tense, less marked by intolerance and violence, than Christian-Jewish relations during the early and High Middle Ages? What factors account for the constraints on persecution and intolerance of Jews in the Islamic

[13] Schorsch, 87.
[14] Leon Nemoy, "Review of *Jews of Islam*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 75 (1984): 186-188; William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, eds. *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions.* xi. Vol.1 Atlanta, 1986. Quoted in Wasserstrom, 5.
[15] Mark Cohen, xvi.

world?.[16]

The comparative perspective is important in that it turns on its head assumptions we make based on our present day context. The improvements made in Christian-Jewish relations in the last fifty years, in large part initiated by the Catholic Church's document *Nostra Aetate* in 1965, appear in marked contrast to the deterioration of Jewish-Muslim understanding since the establishment of the state of Israel belies the history. As such, historical comparisons are helpful to put our current paradigm into context. Steven Wasserstrom takes a slightly different approach than Cohen in examining Jewish-Muslim relations without refracting it through the comparative lens of Christianity. Wasserstrom notes that it has been helpful instead to "sketch the modes of accommodation that both Jews and Muslims developed in response to one another".[17] In this way he attempts "to develop a model according to which Jews and Muslims operated as necessary components in the respective self-definitions of the other".[18] Wasserstrom continues:

> Jews…served as an essential and necessary catalyst in the self-definition of Islam; and Muslim, likewise, operated in synergy with a Jewish effort at self-legitimation. The other—whether as myth or as history, image or enemy, precursor or opponent—had its uses. The uses of the other, in the end, produced a kind of symbiotic interdefinition.[19]

Such interdefinition was especially significant in the formative years of Islam. In Pre-Islamic Arabia Jewish tribes lived among the tribal, nomadic, and settled populations of the region in a way that was almost indistinguishable from the communities around them. In recounting this early history in Jewish-Muslim encounters Reuven Firestone shares Wasserstrom's approach to Jewish-Muslim relations. In his essay "Jewish Culture in the

[16] Cohen, xvii.
[17] Wasserstrom, 10
[18] Ibid.
[19] Wasserstrom, 11.

Formative Period of Islam" Firestone writes that

> the ambiguous cultural and religious boundaries between Arabian Jews and other Arabs in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia…established a series of tensions that would epitomize the foundational relationship between Jews and Muslims. These tensions are the center point around which the cultural history of the Jews in Islamic lands must be written[20]

Thus the history of Jewish-Muslim relations actually begins with the relationship of the Jewish community in Arabia to their pre-Islamic Arab neighbors. In 7th century Arabia it was not easy to define the boundaries of separation between Jews and other Arabian tribes at the time of the emergence of Islam. In fact, the Jews of sixth-and seventh-century Arabia were highly integrated economically, ethnically, and geographically into the local culture and were considered culturally and ethnically Arab.[21] Religiously, the Jewish community at this time was already considered monotheists despite still being a community in religious formation and establishment.

It was into this context that the Prophet Muhammad arrived when he journeyed from Mecca to Medina in 622 to escape persecution and to herald the message of his prophecy. Here Islam took hold and the Jewish-Muslim encounter began. According to Reuven Firestone "Medina would serve as the crucible wherein the complex relations between Jews and Muslims and between Judaism and Islam would be forged".[22] The Quran portrays Medina as a town in which Muhammad's "ideas about God, man, this world and the next, would evolve and sharpen, in part because he came into contact with the town's Jews."[23] The Jewish community of Medina did not respond to Muhammad nor

[20] Reuven Firestone, "Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam," in David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 270.
[21] Firestone, "Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam," 269.
[22] Firestone. "Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam," 267.
[23] Chase F. Robinson,ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173.

accept his prophecy as he had anticipated. Not only did the Jewish community disagree with Muhammad's interpretation of scripture, but his rise to dominance was also politically threatening to them. As a result, this initial phase of contact was fraught with political intrigue.

Despite the degree of conflict, as Islam began to take hold it incorporated both religious and cultural features of the Jewish community. Reuven Firestone's work outlines in great detail how Jewish *midrash* became part of Islamic thought. In pre-Islamic Arabia many stories from the Hebrew Bible such as the story of Ishmael and Abraham became woven into the storytelling and cultural sharing of the time. Firestone notes that as Islam absorbed relevant Arabian lore into its own canon stories such as Abraham and Ishmael became part of the legacy that would shape Islam.[24] Such borrowing is reflective of a broader pattern in the religious history of Antiquity and Late Antiquity during which monotheist communities defined and organized themselves in relation to other monotheist communities.[25] During the first two centuries after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 Islam continued to take shape. During this time the directional flow of cultural borrowing was largely from Judaism to Islam. However, after this initial formative period it was the developing culture of Islam that would have a large impact on Judaism and Jewish culture.[26]

In the eighth century Arab conquests seized control of the Persian Empire and the Asian and North African territories of the Byzantine Empire making their way West to the Iberian Peninsula. The Abbasid dynasty rose to power in 750, displacing the Umayyad Caliphate. It was under the Abbasids and their expansion of Empire that Islam

[24] Firestone, "Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam," 275.
[25] Robinson, 689.
[26] Firestone, "Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam," 271.

and Islamic culture flourished.[27] The impact of Islam on unifying the Arab world in the centuries following its initial embrace contributed to a flowering of Arabic intellectual and artistic activity. During this time period from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries the Muslim world was a leader in the areas of medicine, philosophy, mathematics, and artistry as compared to Medieval Europe which was a relative backwater prior to the Renaissance. The Jews living under Islam during this time period comprised about ninety percent of the world's Jews and members of all classes during this time period benefited from the prosperity of the Islamic world. During this time leaders of the Jewish community were impacted by the same intellectual trends in theology, philosophy and literature that were Muslims and resembled their Muslim neighbors in name, dress, language, and most other features of culture apart from religion.[28] Professor of Medieval Hebrew literature Raymond Scheindlin refers to all aspects of this culture as Judeo-Arabic culture, not solely the language as others have done. Of the term Judeo-Arabic Scheindlin writes: " [Judeo-Arabic] is useful far beyond the domain of language, for the Arabic character of Jewish culture we are describing is evident not only in the Jews' use of the Arabic language but also in every aspect of their culture during the heyday of premodern Islam—even in their practice of religion".[29]

In the centuries following the expansion of Islam the relationship of the Muslim host culture to Jewish communities throughout the Muslim world was in large part a benevolent, or at least a benign one, particularly in contrast to the persecution medieval

[27] Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals, Rabbis and Poets" in David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 312.
[28] Scheindlin, 315.
[29] Scheindlin 318.

Europe was enacting on its Jewish brethren.[30] While Jews under Muslim rule were encouraged to convert to Islam, they, generally speaking, were not threatened with death as a consequence of retaining their belief in Judaism.[31] In fact, due to the regard the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad afforded Jewish patriarchs and Jews themselves for their devout monotheism as People of the Book and highly developed intellectual life, Jews retained many of their freedoms as well as a degree of respect. Jews were able to hold positions as financiers, traders, merchants, and even courtiers which in some cases gave them access to the same money and riches as Muslims. All of these factors led to a flourishing in Jewish culture. Despite this, there were still areas in which Jews were relegated to second-class citizenry. Jews (as well as Christians) were accorded the status of "protected minority" or *dhimmi* in Arabic, a status articulated by a set of rules outlined by the Pact of Umar in 637. In exchange for protection of their life and property the state required that they pay a special tax. In addition, *sharia*, or Muslim law, enacted a number of humiliating codes*:* among other rules *dhimmi* were not allowed to ride horses or build buildings larger than the local mosque, they were required to dress more plainly than their Muslim neighbors and often ordered to perform such unpleasant tasks as garbage removal. In her books on *dhimmi* status and *dhimmitude* the historian Bat Ye'or paints a picture of *dhimmi* status as one of humiliation and far more negative than other historians would suggest.[32] While her view is controversial, it is important to acknowledge that the status of Jews under Islam and its ramifications can not be boiled down so simply. Whether or not the laws of *dhimmi* status served to suppress or enable the Jewish

[30] Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 11.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Yeor, Bat. *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam* (Virginia: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 1985), 12.

population there is substantial evidence to claim that the Jewish community under Islam were free to participate in enough aspects of Muslim society that the two communities were able to engage freely in an exchange of culture.

This degree of cultural sharing reached its peak in Andalusian Spain. There in particular Jews were not kept on the margins but rather part and parcel of Muslim society in Al-Andalus in the ninth and tenth centuries. From a cultural perspective the Jew living in Andalusia was largely indistinguishable from his Muslim brethren. Most likely his vernacular tongue was Arabic as well as his dress—he even would write in Arabic though often using the Hebrew alphabet. Similarly, the poetry written by Jews during this time owed much to Arabic influence. Although Hebrew is the older language, Arabic was so rich in texture that Jews felt they could learn a great deal from using the language—so much so that Maimonides used it in writing *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Their admiration of Arabic actually enabled Jews to study Hebrew more closely. In addition to their admiration of Arabic, Jews especially envied the impressiveness of Arabic poetry. The quantitative meters that marked Arabic poetry were based on long and short syllables. Beginning in the tenth and eleventh centuries, particularly in Iberia, Hebrew poets were greatly influenced by this structure. Poets such as Hasdai ibn Shaprut and Dunash ben Labrat discovered that the *shva* in Hebrew mimicked the sound needed in a stanza for a short syllable. Thus, they discovered how to mimic Arabic poetry using the Hebrew language. This led to the development of a vast literature of *piyyutim*, the details of which will be explored further in chapter two.

The Golden Age of Spain as it has become known ended abruptly in 1492 with the expulsion of the Jews. While Christian takeover of Spain occurred over a period of

eight hundred years it was not until the Granada War in 1492 and the Alhambra Decree under Ferdinand and Isabella in this same year that the age of religious freedom and exchange in Spain was truly complete. The history of Jewish-Muslim relations in the period following this rupture is usually relegated to local histories. Sweeping histories of Jewish-Muslim relations often skip over this period because there is no one characterizing feature of Jewish-Muslim relations under the centuries of Ottoman rule the dates of which are roughly 1299 through World War I. The Sephardic exiles who left Spain in 1492 dispersed throughout the Ottoman world, extending across North Africa and the Mediterranean basin to Palestine. Ottoman imperial policy both welcomed Jews and even sought to increase their presence in specific areas throughout the empire by requiring them to move. This intentional dispersion of the Jewish community was intended to populate commercial centers with Jews who could expedite trade and commerce with their skills in this area.[33]

Under Ottoman rule Jews and Muslims continued to have ample opportunity for interaction with one another in the spheres of daily life even if the cultural sharing may not have produced a richness of intellectual life akin to Andalusian Spain. In many ways this sustained interaction was made possible by the fact that Jewish status under Ottoman rule changed little. Jews were already accustomed to their status as *dhimmi* and little changed in this regard in the first centuries of Ottoman reign. While the Ottomans imposed some controls they left the Jewish community to administer its own religious affairs, court system, education, hospitals, and internal social structure.[34] Within these

[33] Jane S. Gerber, "History of the Jews in the Middle East and North Africa from the Rise of Islam Until 1700," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 14-15.
[34] Michael Menachem Laskier, Sara Reguer, and Haim Saadoun. "Community Leadership and Structure" in

systems little interaction between Muslim and Jew took place. Where exchange did continue to ensue was in the economic, material, and intellectual lives of the two communities. In addition to religious-based occupations such as *shohet* and *sofer* Jews often fulfilled the roles from which Muslims were prohibited—such as leather-tanners, metal-workers, and moneylenders. In addition to these jobs other common professions for the Jewish community included work in the textile industry and commercial trading. These contexts yielded multiple levels of interaction. For example, Jewish women were often purveyors of clothing and accessories for Muslim women.[35] Musician was another profession that yielded increased interaction between Jews and Muslims for the same reason that it was frowned upon work. As a result, Jews became particularly skilled in the music of the region and performed for Muslim audiences at lifecycle and cultural events as well as concerts.

The Ottoman Empire began a steady decline in the 17th century and with it the Jewish communities that populated that land. As Jane S. Gerber observes of this time period for Sephardic Jewry: "The Jews remained a minority of diminishing importance in the world of Islam after the seventeenth century. Travelers to the region were struck by the abject poverty and disease rampant in the teeming Jewish quarters".[36] And yet, it is not to the broad historical narrative of the time period but to an investigation of local social history that a picture of Jewish-Muslim cultural interaction emerges. In her article "Material Culture" Esther Juhasz writes that "the material culture of Jewish

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The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 49.

[35] Michael Menachem Laskier, Michael Menachem and Reeva Spector Simon, "Economic Life" in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 29-33.

[36] Gerber, 18.

communities—their manufactured objects, from day-to-day utensils and ritual objects to architecture—provides ample evidence that they had an ongoing dialogue with the larger gentile community and various degrees of symbiosis with it".[37] A helpful visual distinction is that outwardly and at first glance Jews largely appeared as their Muslim neighbors in all manners of culture-- which is to say dress, food, housing, furniture, life-cycle celebration and music. For example, while the Pact of Umar originally mandated that non-Muslims be easily distinguishable from Muslims in dress, over time this distinction relaxed. As Middle Eastern societies modernized in the eighteenth century Muslims and non-Muslims began to resemble one another more closely in dress. This equivalence became mandate through the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-nineteenth century which in its desire to modernize eliminated the need to distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims through clothing.[38]

Multiple factors around the turn of the twentieth century would begin to break down the relatively stable relationship between Muslims and Jews during the Ottoman period. Some of these include the impact of World War I, the rise in Jewish political parties, particularly Zionist parties, the rise of nationalism, and the colonization of North Africa and the Middle East. But it was the events preceding Israeli statehood that truly caused a rupture in Jewish-Muslim relations. It is no secret that conditions between Jews and Muslims have deteriorated significantly since the establishment of Israel in 1948. As Taji-Farouki writes, it is undeniable that "the defining context for any discussion of Muslim thinking on the Jews in the twentieth century, and on Muslim perceptions of the Muslim-Jewish relationship, is the Zionist project and the creation of the Jewish state in

[37] Esther Juhasz, "Material Culture" in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 205.
[38] Juhasz, 212.

Palestine."[39] The same can be said for Jewish perceptions of Muslims which increasingly have been based on fear and prejudice largely stemming from the biased association of all Muslims with terrorist attacks. As the world watches from afar and takes sides, Jews and Muslims in America find themselves on opposite sides of an intractable issue that while remote geographically causes passions to soar.[40] How did this hatred become so entrenched over such a short period?

The years accompanying Jewish settlement in Palestine marked the end of Ottoman rule and the beginning of the British Mandate beginning in 1922. The history of this time period, what Jewish historians refer to as the *Yishuv*, is a complex one, punctuated variously by coexistence and conflagrations between Jewish settlers from Eastern Europe and Palestinian inhabitants of the land. One is hard pressed to find an unbiased account of this fraught period. Its history is recounted differently by different historians.[41] Briefly stated and far too simplified, tension for control over the Palestinian state reached fever pitch in the aftermath of World War II with Britain wanting to vacate its colonial role and the culmination of tension between Jews and Arabs vying for political control of Palestine. On November 29th, 1947 the UN voted in favor of a partition plan that would divide Palestine into territories of Jewish sovereignty and Arab sovereignty, a political transition that would also officially end the British Mandate period. This event marked the beginning of the first Arab-Israeli war, also known as the

[39] Suha Taji-Farouki. "Thinking on the Jews," in Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi, *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tourus & Co Ltd., 2004), 318.
[40] Amy Eilberg, "Children of Abraham in Dialogue" in Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, And Complexities,* (United States: Palgrave Macmillon, 2011), 35.
[41] Ilan Pappe, Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Shabtai Teveth, Norman Finkelstein, Alan Dershowitz, Nur Masalha, and Edward Said to name a few.

Palestine War or, in Jewish circles, the War for Independence.[42] The war would last twenty months and involve all of the newly independent countries bordering Palestine—Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan. Since 1948 two contradictory explanations have dominated the historical debate about the causes of the Palestinian-Arab exodus. The traditional Arab explanation was that the *yishuv* had mounted a pre-planned, systematic campaign of expulsion already unleashed in the first months of the first Israel-Arab war. The official Jewish explanation was that the exodus had ben part of a plot in which Arab leaders had asked or ordered Palestinians to flee their homes in Jewish-controlled territory in order to embarrass the emergent Jewish state and to justify Arab invasion on May 15, 1948 following David Ben-Gurion's declaration of independence.[43] The competing narratives of the war and subsequent history of the region continue to be a divisive force in Jewish-Muslim relations today.

The roughly sixty years that have passed since the date in 1948 that Jews refer to as Israeli Independence and that Palestinians refer to as the *Naqba* (catastrophe), the loss of their homeland, has seen a steady decline in Jewish-Muslim relations.[44] On the political stage this was played out through the history of war in the region—the Sinai campaign of 1956, the Six Day War in 1967, the first Lebanon war in 1982 which led to an extended occupation of Southern Lebanon, the first Palestinian uprising in 1989 followed by a second in 2002 and the second Lebanon war in 2006 and the Gaza war of 2008.[45] While certain achievements towards interrelations have been made—markedly

[42] Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim "Introduction" in *The War For Palestine,* ed. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.
[43] Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 83.
[44] This decline is generalized and recognizable on the macro, geo-political, and sociological level. It does not account for the many small-scale, local initiatives and efforts for peace that continue between Jewish and Muslim individuals and non-profit organizations.
[45] The titles used here are those given to the conflicts by the Jewish narrative.

the establishment of peace with Egypt in 1979 followed by Jordan in 1995—the region has been defined in these six decades primarily by strife, trauma, and disappointment at failed peace attempts.

This period also shows a seismic shift in the Jewish demographics of the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to the establishment of a Jewish State in 1948, the decolonization of Africa and the Middle East region led to new political realities for Jewish communities throughout the region. The changing status of Jews under Muslim rule for the first time in centuries led to mass migration to Israel.[46] With the relative absence of the Jewish population from Muslim countries, Jews became an abstraction that led to decreased interaction and increased prejudice.[47] Unfortunately anti-Zionist sentiment and anti-Jewish sentiment often get conflated in this complicated tale. The factors that enter into Muslim hostility towards Israel and the straining of the Jewish-Muslim relationship are far more complex than the Palestinian-Israeli conflict encompasses.

The situation that exists in America is undoubtedly a separate space, and yet Jewish and Muslim communities are profoundly influenced by Middle Eastern politics. Today both minority populations in the United States hover roughly around 2%, with the Muslim community increasing and the Jewish community remaining at current levels or in slight decline.[48] As religious minority groups in America, albeit at different stages of their establishment in the United States community, Muslims and Jews have a strong

[46] Reeva Spector Simon, "Europe in the Middle East" in Laskier, Requer, and Simon, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 27.
[47] Suha Taji-Farouki, "Thinking on the Jews" in Basheer M. Nafi and Suha Taji-Farouki, *Islamic Thought in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2004), 321.
[48] Roozen, David A. "Sociological Report on Religious Demographics in America" (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2008).

basis for commonality of experience and potential for connection.[49] And yet, this connection has only been cultivated in small communities of organizations attempting to engage in dialogue work. In America today there still exists only a tenuous trust between America's Jews and Muslims on the basis of their shared minority status. This was put more in jeopardy in the aftermath of 9/11 with the increased Islamaphobia both in America and world-wide. Such a context of persisting suspicion presents significant hurdles. Yet the rewards of understanding, friendship, and building alliances for when times are difficult are worth the tremendous work that Jewish-Muslim engagement involves.

For any degree of creative symbiosis between communities to take effect there needs to be at least an initial level of engagement and interaction. A look at the history of Muslim-Jewish interaction raises some important questions for today. First, what does the debate over creative symbiosis suggest to us moving forward in the field of Jewish-Muslim relations? Would it be important to create a mutual benefit for our communities? Is it enough to say today that the mutual benefit is increased understanding between our communities and a shared desire for peace? What type of interdefinition can be alive today? On one hand it can be argued today that, as opposed to in history, the idea of the symbiotic interdefinition is no longer necessary or valid. Judaism and Islam have both developed over centuries far beyond the tenuous monotheism of their youth. In many ways they are entrenched religious systems and communities no longer open to outside influence. And yet, particularly in America, one can argue that both Judaism and Islam

[49] Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, "Evolving from Muslims in America to American Muslims: A Shared Trajectory with the American Jewish Community" in Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, And Complexities* (United States: Palgrave Macmillon, 2011), 59.

are experiencing a renaissance and continuing to adapt and shape themselves according to their cultural surroundings. Young people and women in particular are seeking new ways for Judaism and Islam to be relevant for today's generation. Further, in progressive Jewish and Muslim circles there exists a great desire to learn from the "other" and to create opportunities for learning and bridging the gap between our communities. In this changing landscape we can continue to be in process as to how we define our interrelationship and learn from one another's community processes. Music, as we shall see in the following chapters, is one potential way in which the Muslim and Jewish communities can initiate conversation and continue to deeply engage with one another.

Chapter Two:

Jewish-Muslim Musical Encounters, Past and Present

The previous chapter focused on a broad overview of Jewish-Muslim relations through history, highlighting the historiographic tension between the dichotomous viewpoints of harmonious neighbors and warring brothers. While treading a middle ground is important, it remains the examples of cultural and intellectual sharing between Jews and Muslims that provide us today with inspiration for current dialogue work. This is not to obscure the areas of conflict, but rather to acknowledge that there is great beauty in the texts, poetry, and music that represent Judeo-Arabic cultural hybridity. The historical relationship between Muslims and Jews that these texts and music represent, in addition to contemporary musical collaborations between Jewish and Muslim artists, can foster learning opportunities and discussion in the Jewish-Muslim dialogue space. The following chapter offers a closer examination of the ways in which Jewish-Muslim dialogue has and continues to occur through poetry and music.

In his article "Encounters between Jewish and Muslim Musicians Throughout the Ages" Amnon Shiloah defines the historical relationship between Muslim and Jewish musicians in the following manner:

> they have a strong feeling of belongingness to a community. Here community means artists who share the same emotional experience, consider music to be a lifestyle, draw on the same theoretical and expressive norms for their music, and adhere to the values championed by both ancient and modern authors[50]

Shiloah purports that from the pre-Islamic period through the twentieth century there has been a long-lasting collaboration between famous Jewish musicians and their Muslim colleagues which is reflected in a diverse array of Hebrew and Arabic sources, European

[50] Amnon Shiloah, "Encounters between Jewish and Muslim Musicians Throughout the Ages" in Michael M. Laskier and Yaacov Lev *The Convergence of Judaism and Islam: Religious, Scientific, and Cultural Dimensions* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2011), 272.

scholarly studies, and oral folk traditions.[51] These primary texts such as al-Isfahani's *Kitab al-Aghani* (Book of Songs) and Sa'id al-Mahghribi's *al-Mughrib fi hula al-Maghrib* among many others detail the involvement of Jewish musicians in the life of the Islamic courts of Cordoba. Jewish musicians were also featured extensively in the courts of Baghdad during the 9th and 10th centuries and there is documentation of the Jewish musicians and their interaction with Muslim musicians.[52] The music that was shared during this court time is more obscure. While we have documentation of the Jewish musicians and their interaction with Muslim musicians, less clear is the exact way that it was shared and cultivated. More research in this area is needed, but what Shiloah's initial research brings to the conversation is that interaction and collaboration between Jewish and Muslim musicians, as well as music itself as a source for bringing Jews and Muslims into contact with one another, has a long and notable history.

Development of *Piyyutim*

The medieval poetic form that best symbolizes a coming-together of Muslim and Jewish cultures in Andalusian Spain was the *piyyut*, or, liturgical poem. While the first *piyyutim* were written around the sixth century in Palestine and continued to develop in their classical form throughout Palestine and Babylon, it was in medieval Spain that the *piyyut* blossomed as a result of direct contact with Arabic poetry.[53] Scholars refer to this as the Spanish school of *piyyutim*. As Amnon Shiloah notes, *piyyutim* began as an attempt to innovate the synagogue service and were always meant to be sung.[54] Many of the

[51] Shiloah, "Encounters between Jewish and Muslim Musicians," 273.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 111.
[54] Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions*, 113.

melodies that were set to the *piyyutim* in the Mediterranean world also represented a Judeo-Arabic confluence. By the tenth-century, poetry in Arabic meter together with Arabic melodies could be found in the synagogue service in Babylonia, Syria, Morocco, and Spain.[55]

The poetic meter of Hebrew poetry at this time was modeled after Arabic poetry, which was much admired by Jewish scholars and *paytanim* (Jewish poets). Arabic poetry falls into two main types, rhymed or measured. The rhymed poetry fell into at least sixteen different meters that a poet had to subscribe to throughout the construction of the poem. One of these meters, quantitative meter, became a defining feature of Arabic poetry and was based on long and short syllables. It was this structure which greatly influenced Hebrew poets in Spain beginning in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Quantitative meter consisted of a pattern of long and short syllables. Long syllables in this case may stand on their own but they are dependent on others. The poet had to learn the meter and usually the idea was to embellish the last stressed syllable. Arabic meter in poetry sprang from the rhythm of bodily motions—the pendular beating of the blacksmith or the trot of a horse/camel. Examples of Arabic meters include *Hazag*, *Ragaz*, *Ramal*, and *Tawil*—all of which were developed into Hebrew poetry.[56] *Hazag* meter, defined by one short syllable followed by three long syllables, became one of the most popular in Hebrew Poetry. The renowned Hebrew poet Dunash Ben Labrat is known as the first to introduce this Arabic meter into Hebrew poetry. Prior to the tenth century, Hebrew poets

[55] Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Dover Edition, 1992), 112.
[56] John H. Baron and Emanuel Rubin, *Music in Jewish History and Culture* (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 2006), 89-90.

were more concerned with distinguishing between the quality of the vowels in constructing a verse. Dunash ben Labrat discovered that the shva could be equated with the Arabic short vowels and that the long vowels in Hebrew could be substituted for the long vowels in Arabic meter to create a similar metrical feel.[57] Ben Labrat's innovation created a basis for subsequent medieval Hebrew poetry and also encouraged the common use of the stanza. One of ben Labrat's most famous poems that well-represents the quantitative meter style is the 10th century "*D'ror Yikra*", a piyyut that is still sung throughout the Jewish world today at the Friday night Shabbat table. In an examination of the *piyyut* D'ror Yikra it is clear that the text follows the metric style of one short vowel, the *shva*, in the first syllable, followed by three long vowels.

Shared Musical Language

In addition to quantitative meter, the other major element to Arabic poetry was the uniform rhyme. These qualities of medieval poetry, both Arabic and Hebrew, lent itself well to the development of a new musical style, *muwashshah,* a style common to both Jews and Muslims throughout medieval Spain. This musical form is a strophic style of song that usually contained many stanzas, varied in complexity, and often contained a variety of linguistic permutations, including Arabic and Hebrew within one song.[58] It is divided into multiple strophes in accordance with the range and number determined by the *paytan.* While the rhymes

[57] Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions*, 115.
[58] Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), *76*.

may change from line to line, they must be metrically equal.[59] Examples of *muwashshah* include the *piyyutim "Yah Ribon"* and "*Adon Olam".*

While Arabic meter opened the way to rhythmical music in the synagogue it did not remain the only creative force in rhythmical song. Arabic musical modes also were influential and began to be adopted for Hebrew poems based on Arabic meters. The Arabic mode is knows as a *maqam*—a word in Arabic meaning place, location, or rank.[60] The *maqam* scale is a set of seven notes that repeat at the octave. Additionally, they are based on dividing the octave into 24 tones rather than the Western traditional 12-tone scale. This produces a series half-flats and half-sharps within a scale that creates the interval of a microtone. In his book *Music of the Arabs* Habib Touma describes the "*maqam* phenomenon" as a technique of improvisation unique to Arabian art music that is at the root of all genres of improvised vocal and instrumental music of the Arabs and is a technique of improvisation found throughout the entire Arabian world, in secular as well as in sacred music and across religious divides.[61] Touma writes that despite some "differences in their musical and aesthetic forms, people of Near East and North Africa, with a common history spanning over two thousand years, can be said to have a homogeneous musical culture".[62] According to Touma there are five major musical components that define this musical culture. They include the following:

1. A tone system with specific interval structures (*maqam*).
2. Rhythmic-temporal structures that produce a variety of rhythmic patterns, used to accompany the metered vocal and instrumental genres and give them form.

[59] Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions*, 120.
[60] For a more comprehensive introduction to *maqam*, including soundfiles, visit www.maqamworld.com.
[61] Habib Hassan Touma, *The Music of the Arabs* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), 38.
[62] Touma, xvii.

3. Musical instruments that are found throughout the Arabian world—the Arab music ensemble.
4. Specific social contexts for the making of the music.
5. A specific musical mentality that includes:
   Maqam phenomenon—a single-voiced melody line improvised conceptualization of a particular modal structure.
   Predominance of a vocal singer
   Small instrumental ensembles that allows for improvisation
   Mosaic-like stringing together of musical form elements
   Absence of polyphony, polyrhthm, and motivic development.
   Alternation between free rhythmic-temporal and fixed tonal-spatial organization on the one hand and fixed rhythmic-temporal organization on the other…[63]

The *maqam* system and its accompanying rhythmic styles became a central aspect to the unifying musical style that defined musical life for the peoples of medieval Spain. Within this oral music tradition there also developed a style of *maqam* performance. This included an ensemble that, in the Andalusian tradition, usually included the *oud* (low-necked), *nay* (flute), *qanun* (box zither), *tar* (tambourine), *darabukkah* (drum), and *rabab* (bow-necked lute).[64] These instruments have remained the central ones to an Arabic music ensemble through the present with some regional variations. At the center of the ensemble is the singer who showcases his/her vocal prowess through vocal improvisation and facility of the *maqam*. The clear priority given to the singer in this style of music may stem from a deep-seated regard in Islamic culture for the chanting of the Quran as the prototypical musical sound. This also resonated well with Jews for whom the unaccompanied prayer leader was a central component to the synagogue service.[65] The beginning of a piece is the primary vehicle for this improvisation and is called the *tahrir* or *mawwal*. This section presents the nucleus of the *maqam* and establishes its emotional

[63] Touma, 38.
[64] Touma, 70.
[65] Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance Among Syrian Jews* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998), 130.

content. Following the introductory passages, the singer and instrumentalists alternately improvise rhythmically free melodic passages through increasingly higher tone levels.[66] Jewish musicians adapted this ensemble style and similarly became experts at it, often performing for court and for Muslim audiences. After the expulsion from Spain in 1492 the Andalusian musical tradition spread throughout the region, and specifically the Maghrib, the area of Northwest Africa which includes Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia.[67] In all of these areas Jewish performers became proficient in the Arabic musical style, leading to musical collaborations and performances between Jews and Muslims for generations prior to the mid-twentieth century.[68]

Musical Hybridity in the Syrian Jewish Tradition

Kay Kaufman Shelemay and Mark Kligman both study how the hybrid of Jewish and Arabic culture is expressed in the musical process of the Syrian-Jewish community in Brooklyn. The paraliturgical tradition of the Syrian-Jewish community serves as a prime example of Judeo-Arabic confluence. This is evident both through close study of the musical texts as well as observance of the community's social gatherings. Shelemay recounts how Arabic culture is evident both in the language and cultural tastes that are displayed at community events. For instance, Shelemay describes how at the celebration of a wedding anniversary the older generation of the Syrian Jewish community spoke in Arabic, while others at the gathering spoke in a mixture of Arabic, Hebrew, and

[66] Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions*, 125.
[67] Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 83.
[68] Jewish Musicians such as Line Monty, Esther Elfassy, Cheik Mwijo and Saleh and Daud al-Kuwaity to name just a few were heralded in the 20th century for their expertise in Arabic music. Saleh and Daud al-Kuwaity in particular were beloved all over Iraq for their talents and it is said that Uum Kalthoum herself visited the Kuwaity Brothers in Iraq to learn from them.

English.[69] The professional Arab orchestra and singer performed famous popular songs from the Middle East, notably by the beloved Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum. Umm Kulthum is only one of the many well-known Muslim/Arab singers who was (and remains) universally loved throughout the Arab world and whose music was adapted to Syrian-Jewish paraliturgical poetry known as *pizmonim.* The term *pizmon,* meaning "praise" or "adoration" in Hebrew, was first applied to the refrains of *piyyutim*. Later, the designation became used to refer to all *piyyutim* with a rhymed structure arranged in strophic form with a refrain for congregational response.[70] The Syrian-Jewish community has a collection of hundreds of *pizmonim* which primarily consist of Hebrew texts set to melodies borrowed from Middle Eastern music. This process of borrowing a melody from one text and fitting it to another, even across language boundaries, is known as "contrafacta". The practice of setting sacred Hebrew texts to pre-existing melodies dates to medieval Spain.[71] Shelemay explains the following about the *pizmon* tradition:

> The song texts provide insight into a world of explicitly Jewish experience, while the melodies relate primarily to extra-Jewish sources and frames of reference. The *pizmon* is therefore a hybrid, emerging from the bifurcated historical experience of this Judeo-Arab community. On the more specific level of the case study, understanding the different channels through which memories are transmitted helps explain a remarkable Judeo-Islamic symbiosis maintained more than seventy years after Syrian Jews left the Middle East.[72]

Therefore, close study of *pizmon* texts yields a myriad of discoveries both specific to the Jewish community from which they emerged as well as its cultural context. For the Syrian Jews of Brooklyn, this cultural context and collective memory largely hails from Aleppo, a city renowned for its musical excellence. All of the best musicians from

[69] Shelemay, 92-94.
[70] Shelemay, 1.
[71] Shelemay, 27.
[72] Shelemay, 11.

throughout the Arab world visited Aleppo and Jewish inhabitants of the city during the nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century had the opportunity to attend concerts of these famous musicians. Shelemay documents the love and admiration with which members of the Brooklyn community still recall memories of these concerts.[73] Particularly, Syrian Jews spoke at length about their love and admiration of Umm Kulthum and Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab, two singers equally admired throughout the Muslim world.[74] As a result of their exposure to musicians throughout the Arab world, the Syrian *pizmon* tradition did not only lead to the transmission of popular Syrian melodies, but it also drew from Egyptian and Turkish repertories.[75] The *pizmon* performed in the Syrian-Jewish community today reflect both famous melodies from this older generation as well as contemporary popular music coming our of the Middle East.

An examination of the *pizmon "Ani Ashir Lakh"* reveals the extent to which Jewish and Arab identity are intertwined and captured in the composition and performance of the song. *"Ani Ashir Lakh"* features a melody from the song *"Ahibb Ashufak"*, likely composed in the late 1920s by Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, with an Arabic text by Hasan Anwar. In the Syrian Jewish community, the *pizmon* is performed in Arabic or Hebrew depending on the occasion, Arabic being reserved more for parties and social occasions, Hebrew for the more religious context of Shabbat afternoon.[76] When the Arabic and the Hebrew text of the piece are compared next to one another they show a great degree of comparison due to the fact that the Hebrew text was composed to match the rhyme and meter of the Arabic original. A look at the first two lines of the

[73] Shelemay, 105.
[74] Shelemay 114-115.
[75] Shelemay, 49.
[76] Shelemay, 95.

piece reveal their similarity in structure:

Arabic: A-hibb a- shu- fak ku-l yawm yir-tah fu- ‘a- di
Hebrew: A-ni a-shir lakh be khol yom be-toch ke- ha-li

Arabic: Wa- al- qalb dab min al- bi- ‘ad ya kul ‘a- dha bi
Hebrew: Lib- bi yit- av le- vet va- ad be-khol ze- man- ni[77]

While the language demonstrates a clear poetic parallel, the themes of the piece diverge. The Arabic song is clearly a popular one in the secular genre, its themes focusing on love, lust, and longing for the singer’s lover who is no longer with her. Meanwhile, the Hebrew text is a sacred poem addressed to God. The lyrics in *“Ani Ashir Lakh”* form a song of praise to the creator, ascribing God with the characteristics of grace and mercy. However, while one song is secular, the other sacred, there are nevertheless parallels in the imagery and language used for the object of desire. It is common in Hebrew poetry to use the subject of a lover to refer to the relationship between an individual and God. In this case, while the Hebrew poem is speaking directly to God, the manner of speaking and the emotions are reflections of the original Arabic text. The opening stanza begins with the following lines:

Arabic: “I love to see you every day”
Hebrew: “I shall sing to you every day”.

Both poems then continue by referring to the longings of the heart:

Arabic: “My heart wore out from the distance between us…”
Hebrew: “My heart desires your meeting place at all times”.

Both narrators are speaking directly to the beloved in the second person, both yearning for a connection that is just beyond reach. Both ask their beloved for mercy, and for a relief from suffering that would come with a return. The following lines showcase this

[77] Shelemay, 95.

parallel:

Arabic: “Have mercy on my love”
Hebrew: “and be merciful, Lord, God…”

Arabic: “For the sake of your eyes, keep your promise to me” (which, in the context of the poem would be to return)
Hebrew: “Return, be gracious to me; rise for me Lord…”.

Thus, while at first look the subject of the poems appear to be opposite, in fact it seems that the composer of the Hebrew purposely tried to reflect the concepts of love, longing, mercy, and return that the original Arabic contains.

But it is in the musical structure of the *pizmon* that Arabic culture is truly present. The structure of the original song, *“Ahibb Ashufak”* is a *dawr*, a classical Egyptian vocal form divided into two sections. The first section, known as the *madhab,* presents the principal melodic theme and is punctuated with instrumentation. The second part of the piece, the *dawr,* includes solo improvisations on the original melodic theme and vocalization that moves towards the upper registers of the mode. This section also includes improvisation on the syllable “ah”, a portion of the song known as the *ahang* or *hank.* While the *dawr* allows for more improvisational form than the *madhab* it is nevertheless an Arabic song form that lends itself more to rhythmic and melodic regularity than it does to improvisation.[78] Following this section the piece returns to the main theme of the original *madhab* and concludes on the tonic.[79] “*Ani Ashir Lakh”* is sung in *maqam nahawand* with little deviation. In the *pizmon* tradition the focus is primarily on the melody of the song which is evident in “*Ani Ashir Lakh”*.[80]

[78] Mark Kligman, *Maqam and Liturgy: Ritual, Music, and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 102.
[79] Shelemay, 96-97.
[80] Shelemay, 119.

A recording that Shelemay includes in her book for "*Ani Ashir Lakh*" reveals the interaction between lead singer, Moses Tawil, his musicians, and his audience. This particular *pizmon* is frequently sung by cantors and while this recording is from a secular event the intricate ornamentations that accompany the *pizmon* are evocative of prayer.[81] The recording begins with forty seconds of *oud taqsim* coupled with the rhythmic component of the *doumbek or tabla* (drum), a customary opening for a *pizmon.* The drum keeps a regular, steady rhythm throughout even during the instrumental solo sections that punctuate the piece. This is in keeping with the style of the Arabic song form *madhab* and *dawr* that encourage steady rhythm.

When the soloist enters he begins immediately to sing the melody starting with the first line of the song "*ani ashir lakh b'chol yom b'toch k'hali"*. The soloist repeats the phrase "*ani ashir lakh*" (I will sing to you) three times in an ascending sequence evocative of the singer's desire to reach God with his voice and song. The following two phrases "*b'chol yom*" and "*b'toch k'hali*" are also each repeated three times prior to a short instrumental solo. Following the instrumental solo the soloist repeats the entire first line again using the same format of repetition with increased intensity. In addition to emphasizing the import of the words and underlying the singer's desire to sing praises to God each day the function of the repetition in this section is to establish the melodic pattern and the mode of the piece. This serves a function both for the performers and the audience. The ensemble is able to center themselves within the melodic structure of the piece. Once centered the players, and the singer in particular, are better able to deviate from the melody in improvisation but still maintain a melodic center to which to return. Similarly, the repetition establishes this tonal center for the audience's ear. In

[81] Shelemay, 94.

performance of Arabic music the audience is actively involved in the choices made by the soloist—the intricacies of the improvisation, sudden change of rhythm, tempi, or mode, and return to an identifiable melody.[82] The repetition and establishment of the melody at the beginning of a piece further ensures audience involvement through understanding of the song.

The second and third line of the *pizmon*, "*libi yitav l'veit va'ad b'chol z'mani; yah el shuv chon li, z'rach li yah el kaor yomam v'rachem yah el chai v'kayam*", deviates from the initial melody. While the phrase also speaks of God there is less repetition, and the singer remains in the lower notes of the scale. This allows the piece to build in intensity when it returns to the melody in the following line and then builds to the more improvised section of the *dawr*. Following a second musical interlude the soloist returns to the melody, repeating the phrase *"shelach goali ne'eman yiv'neh va'adi"* and the ascending sequence of the melody which ascends with the word *goali* (my redeemer) highlighting a central concept in Jewish theology and using the melodic phrasing to honor God. Throughout this section there is very little actual improvisation as the soloist again establishes the melody line for the ensemble and audience. The theological concept of God as redeemer is further highlighted as the soloist enters into conversation with the instrumentalists in a call and response section:

Instrumental interlude
"*shelach goali*" (send my redeemer)
Instrumenal interlude
"*ne'eman*" (faithful one)
Instrumental interlude
"*yiv'neh va'adi*" (rebuild my sanctuary)
Instrumental interlude
"*yiv'neh va'adi*" (rebuild my sanctuary)
Instrumental interlude

[82] Kligman, 103.

"*yiv'neh va'adi*" (rebuild my sanctuary)
Instrumental interlude

Each instrumental interlude is only a few measures and yet here it serves the function of responding to the soloist's plea. This section takes the form of a petitionary prayer both in text and in its execution by the singer. At the conclusion of the interplay between the soloist singing a short phrase and the instruments responding the soloist sings the entire phrase "*shelach goali ne'eman yiv'neh va'adi*" in an embellished form, emphasizing the words "*goali*" and "*va'adi*" by moving through multiple notes and melismatic patterns and repeating the word "*ne'eman*" three times. The phrasing is evocative of a cantorial style and serves as the exciting culmination of the first part of the *pizmon.*

The ensemble allows this thematic idea to sink in by taking a break from the text and moving into the improvisational part of the *dawr* that is sung on "ah". This section includes many embellishments that emphasize both the original musical theme as well as allowing the singer to highlight his improvisational skills, building the audience's anticipation toward the return of the text. When the soloist does finally return to the text he returns again to the phrase "*shelach goali neeman yiv'neh va'adi*", further emphasizing its central import to Jewish thought and the singer himself. In this section, the soloist serves as song leader (in a sacred context it would be prayer leader) summoning the audience to repeat the phrase after him. The audience responds. This section builds on the call and response that preceded it in the form of the duet between soloist and instruments. Here, the audience also participates in the conversation with God and the petitionary aspect of the prayer and, in so doing, performs the function of a congregation. The audience never sings a piece of text before the soloist leads them into

response as is evident in the *pizmon "Ani Ashir Lakh"*. This is a reflection of Syrian Jewish liturgical practices in which the hazzan plays the role of signaling the changes in liturgical sections to the congregation.[83] This concept is repeated in the next section in which the soloist switches to the line "*libi yitav, l'veit va'ad. B'chol z'mani yah ruchi*" (my heart desires your meeting place at all times, God of my life. Here, the return to the soloist after the audience's participation is a particularly vulnerable and exposed moment, perfectly highlighting the yearning and the intimacy of the text. When the audience then joins the singer the text is strengthened by this intensified echo of longing. The singer and audience continue to interact until the end of the piece when the audience drops out and the singer alternates improvisational lines of the text and the word "ah".

As is evident from an analysis of the text, while the musical aesthetic of the piece is distinctly Arab the text and the manner in which the soloist emphasizes certain aspects is grounded in Jewish thought, theology, and praise of God. The *pizmon "Ani Ashir Lakh"* is only one text and musical composition of many that provide a rich opportunity for study in hybridity and cultural borrowing.

Mark Kligman's book *Maqam and Liturgy: Ritual, Music, and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn* offers a second critical lens through which to examine the synthesis of Arab aesthetics within a Jewish context. While Shelemay's focus is more on migration, memory, and identity and how it is expressed paraliturgically in the *pizmon*, Kligman focuses on how the Judeo-Arabic cultural hybrid is expressed through liturgy, music, and ritual. Kligman writes that

> Syrian prayers provide an opportunity to investigate popular Arab music refashioned into a sacred context. In Syrian liturgy, paraphrasing and borrowing occurs with Arab melodies. The simulating and modeling of

[83] Kligman, 94.

> Arab performance practices aesthetics, and musical genres are evidence of the reuse of other Arab musical elements.[84]

Kligman demonstrates throughout his book how Arab musical aesthetics function within the different sections of the Shabbat morning service and the weekly Torah reading. Each of the musical examples in Kligman's book could be used with a Jewish-Muslim dialogue group to discuss the common use of *maqam* in musical and ritual practice. The recitation of scripture in particular serves as a rich basis for dialogue and comparison. Use of the *maqam* system is common to the recitation of the Quran and the recitation of Torah in Syrian-Jewish tradition, as well as to Jewish communities throughout the Arab world. Recitation of the Quran most often begins in *maqam bayyati*, modulates during the course of the reading, and returns to *maqam bayyati* by the end. Syrian Jews, as well as other Jews from the Levant, begin in *maqam seyga*, may modulate to emphasize a word, and then return to *maqam seyga.*[85] This return to the original *maqam*, common to both recitations, is one way to demarcate and punctuate passages in the text. Common to recitation of both the Quran and the Torah is that the musical mode is only the conduit through which to best emphasize and evoke the text. Melodic embellishments and cadences within the *maqam* further this aim.[86] While Arabic music is a common link here, as well as in other aspects of the liturgy, it is the religious texts that remain distinct.

It is this feature of Syrian-Jewish ritual and liturgy that makes it such a compelling study for cultural synthesis because it extends beyond mere cultural contact. A distinction important to Kligman's study is that Syrian liturgy illustrates

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[84] Mark Kligman, *Maqam and Liturgy: Ritual, Music, and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 17.
[85] Kligman, 167 & 188.
[86] Kligman, 189.

> the adaptive capacity of a Jewish musical tradition, namely, the acceptance in Jewish ritual practices of Arab music. For many Syrian Jews, singing the melodies, as a cantor or congregant, allows the individual to maintain his identity by being Jewish and Arab in his own way. Since they are great devotees of Arab culture, it is not unexpected to find the Jewish ritual practices of Syrian Jews laced with Arab music. It is not simple borrowing.[87]

In the complex synthesis of Arabic musical practices with Jewish religious tradition the result is the creation of a composite tradition that is neither Jewish nor Arab and which goes beyond synthesis.[88] Such a fluid system of identity and complex cultural contact is difficult for words to capture and it is therefore only immersion in the musical and ritual framework that "allows one to experience what thought cannot frame".[89]

While the Syrian Jewish community in New York of which Shelemay and Kligman write have closely preserved their *pizmon/piyyut* tradition this has not been the case with secular Jewish-Israelis of Mizrahi descent in Israel until recently. In her article "The *Piyyut* Craze: Popularization of Mizrahi Religious Songs in the Israeli Public Sphere" Galeet Dardashti notes that between the 1950s when waves of Mizrahi immigrants arrived in Israel and the early 1990s the younger generation of Mizrahi Jews had all-but forgotten the tradition.[90] However, the amnesia of those decades have been countered by a recent *piyyut* revival encouraged by projects such as the ambitious *Kehillot Sharot* which brings together Israelis of all ages and backgrounds. The gatherings in which participants learn to sing in the Judeo-Arabic tradition are filled with stories about Jewish musical life in Arab countries prior to immigration to Israel

[87] Kligman, 216.
[88] Kligman, 20-21.
[89] Kligman, 14.
[90] Galeet Dardashti, "The *Piyyu*t Craze: Popularization of Mizrahi Religious Songs In the Israeli Public Sphere," *Journal of Synagogue Music* Vol. 32 (Fall 2007): 142-163, 145.

including how relatives used to correct the *muezzin* when he didn't sing the *maqam* correctly.[91] Dardashti outlines in detail how the popular revival of *piyyut* in Israel today continues to represent the cultural sharing that existed for previous generations. However unless intentionally sought, the musical cultural sharing and musical collaboration between Jews and Muslims is mostly present for these communities in the form of nostalgia.

Musical Collaborations Across Boundaries of Religion and Culture

Today, musical collaborations between Jews and Muslims take a different form. The shared environment that led to the development of *piyyutim* in the Middle Ages, the musical hybridity of *pizmonim,* and Muslim audiences attending Jewish performances throughout the Arab world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries no longer exists as it once did. Since the Jewish exodus from Arab lands in the 1950s musical interaction between Jews and Muslims, if it takes place at all, has by necessity been a more intentional endeavor. Sometimes these collaborations between Jewish and Muslim musicians emerge out of a joint and explicit vision of social change, other times they emerge out of a musical interest to create a new sound, and sometimes they are engineered by a third party hoping to use music to forward a political message of peace, and perhaps achieve commercial success while doing it.[92] Whatever the impetus, these collaborations often result in a hybrid of musical traditions and the endeavor to create a new aesthetic.

This musical aesthetic in Israel that emphasizes hybridity is relatively new to the

[91] Dardashti, "The Piyyut Craze," 147.
[92] Dardashti, Galeet, classroom conversation, 5 April, 2011.

music scene but has quickly become a sought-after sound. Israeli ethnic music (*musika etnit yisraelit*) emerged in Israel in the late 1980s out of a conscious effort to bring non-Ashkenazic sound into the mainstream of the music industry. The movement had been initiated in the 1970s by the long struggle of Mizrahi musicians, long maligned by the Ashkenazic establishment who controlled the national airwaves, to legitimize their music as an authentic Israeli sound. However, by the 1990s cultural and national discourse had shifted to honor notions of cultural integration and representing hybridity was becoming a valued commodity in the celebration of multiculturalism in Israel. In the early years of the ethnic music scene ethnic bands primarily fused traditional Eastern styles with Western classical music and jazz.[93] However, the 1990s marked a period when many Israelis opened up to Middle Eastern and Arab music. This coincided with the optimism that pervaded Israel at that time as the country seemed on a positive trajectory towards peace with her Palestinian neighbors.[94] During this time the ethnic music scene flourished and many young Israelis of all types—the largest percentage Mizrahim and Palestinian-Israelis—became students of Middle Eastern music and formed bands. Reflecting the above developments, in 1996 the Zionist Confederation House in Jerusalem shifted its focus to concerts of ethnic music and became "The Center for Ethnic Music," and, following this trend, the Inbal Dance Theater in Tel Aviv expanded into the Inbal Ethnic Arts Center in order to "showcase the rich heritage and exquisite arts of each ethnic community".[95] This reclamation of cultural identity for Jewish-Israelis led the way to musical collaborations between Israelis and Palestinians. However, both Benjamin

[93] Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 211; Galeet Dardashti, "Music of Peace At A Time of War", unpublished draft manuscript, January 2012, 7.
[94] Dardashti, "Music of Peace at a Time of War", 7.
[95] Dardashti, "Music of Peace at a Time of War", 11-12.

Brinner and Galeet Dardashti argue that while the 1990s fostered many collaborations between musicians, the second *intifada* halted a number of these grassroots efforts and it became funding from third parties and international actors that pushed collaborations forward in the 2000s.[96]

In *Playing Across A Divide* Benjamin Brinner studies three groups of musicians in Israel/Palestine (Bustan Abraham, Alei Hazayit, and Yair Dalal and his network of musicians) who "operate within existing cultural configurations and build new bridges between these configurations".[97] Brinner describes the process that these musicians engage in when they form groups comprised of Jews, Muslims, and Christians; Israelis and Palestinians. Brinner writes that in this case one of the significant challenges for musicians given the political and sociocultural backdrop of Israel/Palestine is that they are "forced to figure out how to communicate and collaborate across gaping social, political, and cultural divides and how to create an exchange that is rewarding for all the participants".[98] Other aspects to the divide include differences in musical training, professional opportunities, aesthetic values, and musical competence. In relation to the music produced by these groups, Brinner rejects the negative connotations to terms like cultural appropriation or cultural authority. Instead, in these specific partnerships Brinner finds the terms "hybridity" and "culture as action" (as opposed to "culture as commodity" and "culture as text") and the notion of a musical "scene" as more useful. A musical "scene" is a "cultural space in which a range of musical practices exist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely

[96] Benjamin Brinner, *Playing Across A Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12; Dardashti, "Music of Peace at a Time of War", 2.
[97] Benjamin Brinner, *Playing Across A Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12.
[98] Ibid.

varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization".[99] Hybridity, both of the players' multiple identities, the musical groups they inhabit, and the music they create—combining multiple notions of homeland, Eastern and Western musical styles, and mixed audiences for whom they perform remains at the heart of music that crosses borders.[100]

Yair Dalal is a Jewish-Israeli musician who represents the desire to "play across the divide". He achieves this through his choice of musical style, musical collaborations, and activism. Born in Israel in 1955 to Iraqi parents, Dalal reconnected with his Iraqi musical heritage in the early 1990s and soon become a master on the o*ud.* Dalal is one of the principle players in the ethnic music scene in Israel and in forwarding the impetus for Israeli-Palestinian musical collaboration around a joint love for Arab music. Interestingly, it was Dalal's immersion in Iraqi musical performance that led him both to promote the revitalization of Judeo-Arabic music in Israel as well as a message of coexistence and social change. Dalal himself promotes the identity label of Jewish-Arab as an identity choice. In the last fifty years the majority of Jews from Muslim lands have consciously tried to distance themselves from the label "Arab". While other Mizrahi musicians showed pride for their cultural heritage the use of the term "Arab" remained one reserved for non-Jews. Dalal's labeling of himself then is making a political statement and a conscious connection to Jews' long-term presence in Arab lands, as well as the cultural sharing that took place between Jews, Muslims, and Christians during those centuries.[101]

The song that is most symbolic both of Dalal's emphasis on cultural symbiosis, musical collaboration across boundaries, and political message is "*Zaman el Salam*", co-

[99] Will Straw qtd. in Brinner, 29.
[100] Brinner, 31.
[101] Brinner, 17.

written by Amnon Abutbol, Fathi Kasam, and Yair Dalal. Arguably Dalal's most famous song due to its exposure and multiple iterations, the different versions of the song showcase the move from ethnic-Arabic music to a pop-inspired sound that reflects the desire to appeal to a broader, international audience. "*Zaman el Salam*" is composed in both Arabic and Hebrew, reflecting Dalal's explicit message with the piece both to complicate one's understanding of identity and symbolize bridging across a divide. The lyrics in translation read as follows:

Peace is like the sea, my love,
its soul embracing and wide open.
There are times of high and low tide,
days are difficult and sad.
Between the storms and the thundering I collect my feelings, my love.
Time for Peace, with God's help.

And there is a time - I know - a yearning from far away
Like a lonely star in the rain
Up there in the sky
There are times of pride and times of depression,
difficult days and sad days.
Between the lightning a rainbow will appear
and I will know that this is the time.
Time for Peace, with God's help.[102]

The lyrics consciously attempt to hold back from the promise of peace, instead choosing to dampen the enthusiasm with reminders that the road to peace includes "*yamim kashim v'atzuvim*" (difficult and sad days). However, the darker lyrics are only part of the verses, while the chorus "*zaman el salam, inshallah*" is a heralding call to peace, a call echoed in the music. Yet the degree to which the music mirrors a hopeful call to peace is dependent on the version. On Dalal's album *Inshallah Shalom* the song is represented in its laid-bare, original version.[103] In this version the instruments are the core

[102] Yair Dalal and Friends, "Zaman el-Salam" *Inshallah Shalom.* Najema Records, 2005. Compact disc.
[103] Ibid.

of the song and the lyrics and vocal line are secondary. The song begins with an *oud taqsim* that lasts 2:15. Dalal himself is playing the *oud* and it is clear from the piece that the *oud* serves as Dalal's primary mode of emotional expression, not his voice. When Dalal's voice does enter the piece he uses it in a breathy and sparse manner, at times completely a cappella during this first verse. [104] The absence of instrumentation here When Dalal moves into the chorus "*Zaman el Salam*" he does so in a manner that is purposefully tentative while the flute, breathily but urgently, accompanies him.
As Dalal enters the second verse, a violin, flute, and qanun join in improvisatory fashion. The instruments are each doing their own thing with little regard to one another.

At minute five, halfway through the recording, this opening improvisation ends and the instruments move into the rhythmic section of the piece. Here a violin solo enters for the next two minutes in which it charts its own mournful melody separate from verse or chorus for the next minute and a half. Dalal then enters again as a vocal soloist, this time singing in Hebrew with greater conviction, both rhythmically and emotionally. The multiple instruments now playing behind him—oud, violin, qanun, drum, and flute alternate between providing the melody with harmonic and dissonant accompaniment. The melodic line is so simple that it is the instrumentation that provides the bulk of the commentary on the lyrics in this version of "*Zaman el Salam*". While the simplicity of the melody and the lyrics seem to belie the difficulty of achieving peace, the instrumentation reminds the listener that peace is no easy task and continuously prompts questions without end through its multivocality and complex commentary. The piece ends with the wandering improvisation of the flute, seemingly breathlessly seeking a

[104] When sung by a gifted soloist, the simple melodic line could lead to improvisation within a maqam, however Dalal himself does not use the scale to improvise, nor is its arrangement for choir conducive to this.

path. While the lyrics of the chorus "*Zaman el Salam*" are definitive, the musical approach in this version seems to purposely argue and contradict the message.

A comparison of this version from Dalal's album *Inshallah Shalom* and the version that Dalal famously performed with the Moran choir, comprised of Israeli, Norwegian, and Palestinian children, for the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony honoring Yitzchak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yasser Arafat demonstrates a number of differences.[105] First, while the piece begins with an *oud taqsim* it is purposely truncated to forty-five seconds at which point Dalal begins to sing the first verse in Arabic. This is reflective of a conscious effort to appeal to a western audience whose ears are not attuned to the Arabic *maqam* system. The remainder of this version of the "*Zaman el Salam*" similarly showcases an attempt to appeal to an international, predominantly western demographic by limiting the instrumental improvisatory component elsewhere in the song and developing more of a pop style. In contrast to the *Inshallah Shalom* version the tempo in the Nobel Prize version is significantly faster and there is a steadiness to the melody line that was not present in the original version. Instrumentation accompanies the first verse with a guitar arpeggio in the background that lends a harmonic fluidity and uplift to the melody. The children's choir enters in unison at the start of the second verse, immediately uplifting the hopefulness of the text both musically and symbolically.

The piece continues to build from here, layering orchestration through every verse and chorus. As the choir responds to Dalal's first verse with a series of descending "ahs" in unison, a chorus of violins and oboes join with lyrical ascending arpeggio, a very different use of the violin than the mournful sound it lent to the original version. Dalal

[105] Youtube, "Moran Choir Zaman a-Salam in Oslo" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umkKuuR6ECE (accessed January 29, 2012).

moves into the chorus "*Zaman el Salam*" with conviction and the children's choir echoes with their own call "*Zaman el Salam*". Symbols crash in the background. A violin solo interrupts, improvising around the melody line with a darker tone for a moment of questioning. Quickly though this solo is interrupted by the Dalal and the choir singing verse two together with a driving rhythm section to back them. Following this powerful iteration of the verse and chorus the full orchestra enters, including an electric guitar soloing on top. The choir and Dalal continue to repeat "*Zaman el Salam, Inshallah*" from minute 4:20 of the piece until it ends at minute 5:50. The emphasis here on the chorus far exceeds the time and attention it received in the original version. Naturally, it was an enormous hit at the Nobel ceremony as can be evidenced by the cheering on the recording. Brinner writes about the performance that it was singular both as a public relations feat as well as ushering in an era of similar musical collaborations replete with children's choirs.[106] This version of "*Zaman el Salam*" ushered in a new era of commercial success for Dalal and elevated him to an international performer.[107] However, in doing so it also encouraged the watering-down of the more "authentically ethnic" elements in Middle Eastern and Arabic music to appeal to a broader audience. This may bring the music and the musicians who perform it more international appeal, but it does not necessarily bring them more respect within the boundaries of Israel/Palestine nor succeed further in bridging the divide on the ground. For instance, when I played the song for my Arabic music teacher she immediately made a disgusted face, commenting on how much she hated collaborations that had nothing to do with the

[106] Brinner, 6.
Also, see Ahinoam Nini & Mira Awad, David Broza, and Shlomo Gronich as other musicians who have initiated joint projects of peace songs, usually with simple melodies in a pop style, often arranged for duet or choir.
[107] Dardashti, "Music of Peace at a Time of War", 10.

"real" musical style and instead selling fake ethnicity to an ignorant audience that didn't know any better.[108] While it is important to question whether commercialized songs and efforts toward peace have integrity and produce a lasting impact, both musically and otherwise, there is no doubt that they get more widespread exposure. Most significant about "*Zaman El Salam*" is its enduring power to promote further musical collaborations. For example, a quick youtube search yields a variety of the piece's subsequent incarnations including a performance by the Zamir Chorale of Boston and the Voices of Peace choir in Brussels. It is clear that musical collaborations between Jews and Muslims/Israelis and Palestinians has an appeal because the world wants to believe that music can bridge the divide where politics fails. Whether or not this is true in the long term remains to be seen.[109]

The hip-hop duo Mazzi and Sneakas similarly represents musical collaboration with the explicit intention of initiating social change, albeit through a very different musical approach. The duo's musical medium is hip-hop and as such they have more freedom to voice the darker side of Jewish-Muslim dialogue and relationship. Hip-hop as a genre lends itself incredibly well to the expression of anger and frustration inherent to Jewish-Muslim relations today. Mazzi, an Iranian Muslim, and Sneakas, a Jewish Israeli, both now residents of New Yorker, sought one another out in 2008 with the express purpose of forming a musical partnership and, in doing so, serving both as a model for coexistence alongside their political message of breaking down boundaries and halting hatred. Hip-hop has become an outlet for the non-violent expression of a message of social change and hip-hop activism is now pervasive throughout the world as a way to

[108]Hussein, Samiyah. Conversation, February 17th, 2012.
[109] Dardashti, "Music of Peace at a Time of War", 24.

raise awareness vis-à-vis issues of oppression, prejudice, and political change.[110]

The genre lends itself to dialogue, discourse, and consciousness-raising as its history in America is rooted in the expression of oppression and identity-reclamation. Rap music began in African-American and Latino neighborhoods of the Bronx in the early 1970s. Rap's roots are in the dance music produced and performed by DJs at parties and street gatherings. As the crowds at these gatherings grew, DJs could not control the number of people on their own and so they began to have MCs who interacted with the crowd in rhymes over the DJ beats.[111] While rap began as a medium through which to encourage people to dance it quickly evolved and by the late 1980s "gangsta rap" and "conscious rap" took over as the central to the genre. Conscious MCs and crews drew inspiration from black nationalism, pan-Africanism, political empowerment and other social causes, among them social inequality and racism to construct their narratives. As such, hip-hop became an iteration of black language, black music, black style, and black youth culture drawing from a deep tradition of black music forms, in particular blues and jazz.[112]

Ideologically hip-hop allows for a more open discourse than other forms of music. Anything can be said and more direct expression of rage and psychological pain, including interpersonal conflicts, is a central feature of the music.[113] As an art form rap combines poetry, prose, song, music, and theater (either on stage or in video). It may come in the form of narrative autobiography, science fiction, debate often with the rapper

[110] Michael Shank and Lisa Schirch, “Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding,” *Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research* Volume 33, Issue 2 (April 2008): 223.
[111] Felicia M. Miyakawa *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission* Indiana university press, Bloomington, 2005.
[112] Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood : Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* North Carolina: duke university press, 2004.
[113] Perry, 2.

constituting a major part of the experience as self-proclaimed representative of a community or group.[114] These components that are central to hip-hop are evident in Mazzi and Sneakas's compositions. The goal of Mazzi and Sneakas's music is explicit and expressed in songs such as "Most Hated", "Tug of War", "*%$k You", and "Shalom/Salaam". In an interview with Mazzi, the rapper explains the goals of the collaboration with Sneakas which began as part of a project called "Peace in the Middle East" but spun into an album collaboration solely of Mazzi and Sneakas tracks. Mazzi states that "the mission of the album was to hear different points of view from all sides with respect for each other, bring understanding through music, create dialogue, educate the masses, [and] uncover masked media".[115] The music that Mazzi and Sneakas write addresses the Palestinian-Israeli conflict but, even more than this, seeks to address the Jewish-Muslim divide and the stereotypes the two groups regularly hurl against one another. The hip-hop idiom provides the artists with a forum for promoting their message of coexistence without downplaying anger and raw feeling. In an article for the *Jerusalem Post* Sneakas commented that "it would be far easier to mirror that idealism (of peace music), but the aim is to get down in the mud, and express our clashing viewpoints, because that's where it gets interesting".[116] Here, Mazzi and Sneakas are heeding the call of fellow hip-hop artists who want to "keep it real".[117] While in African-American hip-hop this appeal to conscience is largely in response to rap that focuses on money, fame, and women rather than social issues, for Mazzi and Sneakas it is in response to prior

[114] Perry, 38.
[115] Existence in Resistance, "Mazzi (S.O.U.L Purpose) Speaks On Breaking Zionist Ties" http://www.existenceisresistance.org/archives/330 (accessed February 12, 2012).
[116] *The Jerusalem Post*, "Israeli and Iranian Rap About Life," http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=168594 (accessed February 12, 2012.
[117] Perry, 87.

musical collaborations between Israelis and Palestinians or Muslims and Jews that have obscured anger.

Both Mazzi and Sneakas express their personal identities and narratives, fully taking on the character of "Jew" and "Muslim" in their songs in order to embrace the role and better forward the political message. This tactic is what Imani Perry refers to as the MC serving as Prophet and is common to the hip-hop genre.[118] The song "Most Hated" serves as example.[119] Before the rap begins Sneakas shouts: "We hate each other but we have to work together." This opening coincides with a common tactic of Mazzi and Sneaka's which is to bookend the battle that comprises the body of the song by an explicit message of peaceful coexistence. The verses that comprise the body of the rap address stereotypes against both Jews and Muslims. Mazzi and Sneakas utilize a variety of signifiers common in rap music to make their message known.[120] Among these are metaphorical-imagistic language, humor, and irony along with other narrative forms such as exhortation and proclamation, description, and battle language.[121] The song begins with two examples of posturing on how great each rapper, as representative of his faith is:

Sneakas:

I walk like Megadeath
To make it seem effortless
Get the crowd moving
Like Moses did to Exodus

[118] Perry, 3.
[119] Youtube, "Mazzi and Sneakas (feat M.C. Serch) 'Most Hated'" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEFXhn8sajg (accessed February 12, 2012).
[120] Here the use of the term "signifier" refers to Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s concept of "signifying" in African-American literature which Imani Perry applies to the rap genre. Signifying is "a way of saying one thing and meaning another, it is reinterpretation, a metaphor for the revision of previous texts and figures, it is tropological thought, repetition with difference, obscuring of meaning, all to achieve the reverse of power and to improve situations, and achieve pleasing results for the signifier". Perry, 67.
[121] Perry, 80.

Mazzi:

Sunglass low
F*&% cashflow
I do this for the students
And the young bros
I'm still Most Hated
many 'aint related
I'm talented, Persian, Shiite, and educated mother*&%#![122]

In contrast to their own thoughts about how great they are, in the next stanzas both Mazzi and Sneakas acknowledge in their rap the stereotypes against Jews and Muslims. According to the lyrics Jews are all nebbishes, rich, and stingy. Muslims are hoodlums, terrorists, worse than Russians, stupid, and definitely not American. After listing these stereotypes, Mazzi and Sneakas take turns on the chorus to explain the reasons why both Jews and Muslims together are "most hated".

Chorus #1:

We are most hated because people do not understand
That we follow one God, one law, one belief, one system
We are most hated because we do not bow down to idols
We will not eat the flesh of an animal that has not been properly cleaned
We are most hated because you do not understand us

Chorus #2:

We are most hated because we built the genesis of mathematics, science, and technology
We roamed the desert
We lived without water
We live without fear
We live without promise
We made it through
Under one God
Under one set of eyes

[122] Youtube, "Mazzi and Sneakas (feat M.C. Serch) 'Most Hated'" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEFXhn8sajg (accessed February 12, 2012).

That's why we are most hated

Chorus #3:

The most hated duo in the world, man, believe me.
A Jew and a Muslim, no matter where you put 'em,
Some people see a saint, and the others see a hoodlum.
We are the most hated because we are the least understood."[123]

The rap concludes with the duo saying together: "We are most hated because we believe in love even during war".[124] While in "Most Hated" Mazzi and Sneakas approach the topic of stereotypes in an indirect narrative, their rap "*$%k You" is an all-out spitting battle with Mazzi and Sneakas hurling racist stereotypes at one another and chanting *$%k You.[125] Battle is a common narrative form that has its origins in the early days of hip-hop. Rap MCs and DJs went up against one another in talent shows or battles and the best of the two was decided by the crowd. This phenomenon later moved from the live party to records and studios.[126] Mazzi and Sneakas transfer the quintessential rap form of the battle which is evident in the following lyrics:

Verse #1

F&*% You Israel
Denial, war-crime committing
Acting like innocent kids
But innocent children you killin' willingly
Your position of venom and ancient doctrine
The way you talk it sounds like you want the Holocaust again
F&*% You

Verse #2

[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Roi Word, "Talkbacks Set to a Hip-Hop Beat," http://roiword.wordpress.com/tag/mazzi-sneakas/ (accessed February 12, 2012).
[126] Perry, 83.

Maybe I do
You be lyin' too
That's what you're doing to us now
With a hit footprint, with a pistol bitch
No fist to fist, you foul
Illegal UN weaponry
Espionage
And a recipe of matzah balls full of deception
That s*&% just smells to me

Throughout the song the battle gets more intense with each rapper spitting and rhyming faster as well as changing the rhyming pattern throughout. Interestingly, Mazzi and Sneakas switch sides throughout the song. For example, the opening verse against Israel quoted above is sung by Sneakas (Jew) whereas halfway through the song he takes on the other side. This is clearly done intentionally, almost as a challenge for themselves to intelligently vocalize the grievances of each side. The chorus of the song consists only of the phrase "F&*% You" being repeated by both Mazzi and Sneakas in a sing-song manner which seems to mimic the immature taunts of a nursery school playground. In this way the chorus emphasizes both extreme anger as well as the childishness that hatred often carries.

Mazzi and Sneakas's use of the music video as a medium is incredibly effective in both videos. In "Most Hated" the backdrop of the video is New York—emphasizing the factor that provides common ground, the prevailing theme of the music video. The video for "F*&% You" is a bit more complex. The images throughout the music video are of Jewish and Muslim children in traditional dress with angry expressions. At the end of the video though, in the middle of an insult somebody yells from the audience to cut it out! Mazzi and Sneakas stop in the middle of their insults, smile at one another, and walk off. The next scene shows all of the kids from the video laughing and joking with one another

and Mazzi in traditional Jewish dress with Sneakas beside him dressed as a traditional Muslim, smiling at one another.[127]

Any musical collaboration "across a divide" is subject to the challenges of sustained communication that confront every relationship. The ups and downs of relationship become an integral part of the artistic process. In interviews both Mazzi and Sneakas express that the artistic chemistry between the two was instant. Both had heard about the project "Peace in the Middle East" and wanted to be involved. In an interview Sneakas expressed "I had read about what M.C. Serch, and the dope Dj Waleed Coyote were doing [the project Peace in the Middle East], and I wanted to be involved. I reached out to Waleed and he introduced me to Mazzi. The rest as they say is history, me and Mazzi vibed really well and made dope music together".[128] Similarly Mazzi explains that the duo collaborated so well that they embarked on a project called the "Tug of War Tour" in which they brought together other Jewish, Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian artists to bring their message of listening to the other to a broader audience. Despite this initial period of collaboration, shared vision, and the publication of music that received press and had a resonant impact, Mazzi expresses the difficulty of political differences that divided the two saying that "although Sneakas and I did not agree on a number of issues, things seemed to be on the up & up".[129] Despite this claim, following their album project Mazzi traveled more extensively in Israel/Palestine and decided to take a break from collaborating with Jewish performers, preferring instead to focus his efforts on Palestinian resistance by working "closely with Arab & Muslim artists and further focus

[127] Ibid.
[128] Sherwood: La Migliore Alternativa, "Interview with Sneakas, English Version," http://www.sherwood.it/articolo/432/interview-with-sneakas-english-version (accessed February 12, 2012).
[129] http://www.existenceisresistance.org/archives/330

on the Peace In The Middle East documentary/project. The truth [about Zionist oppression and conditions for Palestinians] must be shown! We as artists can reflect the struggle through our music…we must strengthen & empower the oppressed".[130] While Mazzi concludes this same interview with the words: "Love, peace, & blessings to Jews, Christians, Muslims, & all other faiths of the world… "Love is love"…[131] and makes it clear that he would be open to working with Sneakas in the future, it is clear that not all musical collaborations can transcend political differences. Brinner supports this notion in *Playing Across the Divide* where he notes that while musical collaborations across the Israeli-Palestinian divide flourished in the 1990s, many of these bands had disbanded after the second intifada.[132]

Conclusion: A Personal Experience of Jewish-Muslim Musical Collaboration

Knowledge of the ways in which Jews and Muslims have interacted musically, whether it be through shared language, shared musical style, or collaborative performance can serve as an opening for Jewish-Muslim dialogue. More specifically, joint study of *piyyut* texts paired with Arabic poetry, music-listening sessions to *pizmonim* and their original popular Arabic sources, and discussion around contemporary song lyrics and/or the stories of the musical collaborations (and subsequent disbanding in some cases) that yielded messages of coexistence, present exciting possibilities for a Jewish-Muslim dialogue program. The historical examples that represent cultural hybridity are not meant to water-down the complex narrative that is Jewish-Muslim relations, rather they are meant to represent small windows into a historic partnership that

[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Brinner, 6.

the current political landscape often obscures. Maria Rosa Menocal puts forth a similar approach in her book *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created A Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain.* She writes that specific examples and anecdotes of cultural tolerance

> highlight stories that in and of themselves seem to me worth knowing and retelling as a part of our common history…together they point to some of the unknown depths of cultural tolerance and symbiosis in our heritage, and they may begin to suggest a very different portrait of this "middle age"…it would be foolish to try to replace all the older clichés with another equally simplistic new one…but how many among us know the stories that also make the Middle Ages a golden age, in fact, a series of golden ages?[133]

Menocal's argument is not to obscure the realities of religious violence and rupture in history, but that highlighting the events and cultural contributions that emerged out of the Judeo-Arabic hybrid is more relevant today than ever. While the events of September 11, 2001 "make us read and hear everything somewhat differently, most of all anything to do with Islam," understanding the history of what once was the "ornament of the world" offers lessons for religious tolerance, understanding, and the creative impulse that arises through collaboration.[134] So to, with any other examples of cultural sharing that occurred after the conclusion of the Golden Age of al-Andalus.

I have personally experienced the possibility for these topics to open up conversation through my studies with Syrian-Muslim folk singer Samiyah Hussein.[135] In June 2011 I began taking lessons with Samiyah, at first learning a few *maqamat* through Syrian folk songs and then moving to Moroccan and Algerian Jewish music sung in

[133] Maria Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created A Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2002), 6.
[134] Menocal, 283.
[135] Samiya Hussein is an alias.

Arabic. Samiyah and I have spent a lot of time together—in large part because she never pays attention to the time of our lesson! Sometimes we meet at my home in Brooklyn, other times at HUC-JIR in Manhattan, and more recently at her home in Yonkers, making it possible for the lesson to begin with wine, coffee, or tea and half an hour talking about boyfriends and what dress Samiyah should wear to her next performance. The amiable nature of the lesson has made many of the lessons feel more like a social call than a learning exchange, creating a basis for friendship. Further, over the course of our time together, the music on which we have been working has stirred conversations on the topic of cultural exchange, the merits and limitations of contrafacta and borrowing, the history of Jewish-Muslim relations, and the status of Jerusalem. For example, in one of our sessions I brought a recording of the song "*Elwahid Houwa Allah*" by Esther Elfassy, a Morrocan Jewish singer. I was hoping for Samiyah to help me with the Arabic pronunciation and translation. However, Moroccan Arabic is very different from Syrian dialect so she called in her Moroccan friend Tariq to help out. Tariq had equal difficulty deciphering the lyrics, recognizing the Arabic as particular to Northern Morocco. The three of us sat together for an hour laughing at the difficulty of the lyrics for two native Arabic speakers. Further, the song was a very religious song. While the singer is speaking to God as a Jew, because the lyrics were in Arabic the song reminded Samiyah and Tariq of the hardline Muslim religion that they both reject. Esther Elfassy's music is a reminder to the listener that Moroccan Jews have historically expressed even Jewish religious concepts in Arabic. When I raised this observation Tariq and Samiyah were nonplussed. Tariq, a native of Morocco exclaimed:

> But you realize don't you that Jews in Morocco were basically the same as us. Of course they sang and performed the same music, of course they

> were experts in that style and of course they sound like they could be Muslim! There are so many examples of this![136]

It is important to note here that what was seemingly a given for Tariq and Samiyah is usually new learning for Jewish-American or Muslim-American audiences. It has been enjoyable to see these topics arise organically and as a result of the time we spend together and the music we share. Samiyah and I truly have been engaged in a dialogue through a shared love of music.

And yet, the dialogue between Samiyah and me has had a limit. While Samiyah is very progressive (for example, she is currently dating a Jewish man) she dislikes conscious interfaith dialogue, a fact that she has mentioned to me on more than one occasion. Statements like these and the resulting ambiguity around whether or not she approves of my own interfaith thesis and recital topic has at times made the space feel like an unsafe one for full expression.[137] Because Samiyah has not bought into the concept of conscious interfaith dialogue she also does not practice the use of empathy and compassionate listening that is so central to the dialogue space. While we have a dialogue and a relationship, our discussions of deeper issues of religious and political difference are often one-sided and have not led to the deepening of our relationship. For me, this has starkly highlighted the need for empathy practice to accompany musical collaboration for any level of deeper understanding and exchange to be a part of the relationship. With this information as background, the following two chapters aim to explore the role of

[136] Tariq. Conversation. 9 November, 2011.
[137] Update: As of our last lesson on February 9, 2012 Samiya said to me the following—"I'm starting to see great things for the two of us! Once you learn this Arabic music a bit better maybe we can perform together, you know, like on the themes of unity and peace and stuff. I'm liking it!" This statement was the first indication that Samiya was buying-in to the concept of musical collaboration with the intention of promoting dialogue across boundaries.

empathy in dialogue and the practical ways in which music can enhance or undermine interfaith relationship.

Chapter Three:

Music and Dialogue in Theory and Practice

In November 2010 I attended a FaithHouse Manhattan participatory worship experience entitled "Interbeing: Experience the Heart of Islam" with the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi Order. The event was an example of one of author of *Interactive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook* Rori Picker Neiss's four types of interfaith dialogue: "dialogue through observation and participation".[138] This particular event was comprised of an interfaith cohort of about thirty individuals and it began with a brief explanation of Sufism and the prayer experience known as a *dhikr*. A *dhikr* is a Muslim devotional ceremony in which participants chant and repeat the names of God aloud. In some Muslim communities this practice is done individually, however in many Sufi orders it has been instituted as a communal ritual ceremony. The head of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi community expressed a desire to create a safe space in which during the prayer experience one was to take note of one's feelings and observations and to save those thoughts that bubbled up during the *dhikr* for follow-up conversation. The *dhikr*

[138] Rev. Bud Hickman and Rori Picker Neiss eds., *Interactive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook* (Vermont: Skylights Paths Publishing, 2008), 18.

lasted for forty-five minutes, during which time we participated in Sufi chants of remembrance in both Arabic and English. The communal chanting was encouraged through the use of songsheets distributed to all participants and which included chants from the Sufi tradition as well as more contemporary chants composed by the Nur Ashki Jerrahi community. The chants included repeated use of the Muslim word for God, Allah, the Prophet Mohammad, the prophets of the *Tanakh*, and Jesus. During the final two chants of the *dhikr* ceremony we all rose, joined hands, and walked together in a circle while chanting, simulating the sacred, winged-heart of Sufism. While some non-Muslim participants feel at ease as participant observers "trying on" their neighbors faith, clearly the chanting of these names in an interfaith setting is potentially uncomfortable to many non-Muslims, or, in some cases, considered anathema.

FaithHouse Manhattan is a non-profit community that describes itself as "an experiential inter-religious community that comes together to deepen our personal and communal journeys, share ritual life and devotional space, and foster a commitment to social justice and healing the world."[139] Thus, in the case of the Sufi experience, participants had self-selected, creating a group that had intentionally opted to participate in rituals for the sake of learning and building relationship that might actively conflict with their personal theologies or religious beliefs. As a result, for the group gathered at FaithHouse for the Sufi ritual that December evening the approach of "dialogue through participation and observation" was pre-selected as the best dialogue tool for that community. However, full participation, not just observation, in ritual would not work to foster interfaith dialogue and understanding in every setting or for any community. How

[139] *FaithHouse Manhattan.* http://www.faithhousemanhattan.org/about-us/mission/ (accessed January 18, 2012).

does one determine best practices for interfaith dialogue? What are the best practices for using music in interfaith engagement? This chapter demonstrates that it is not music alone, but rather the strategic use of music coupled with the practice of empathy and elicitive peacebuilding that can have the deepest impact on the interfaith dialogue process.

Defining Dialogue

There are many examples of dialogue approaches, some more effective than others. Before going into these approaches it is important to define some of the buzzwords so often used in the interfaith dialogue community. These terms include dialogue, empathy, and peacebuilding. It is important to define dialogue as it is used in the field of dialogue and peacebuilding as opposed to its quotidian usage. The "Dialogue Decalogue" written in 1983 by Leonard Swidler is one of the most quoted in an intentional interfaith dialogue context. Swidler defines dialogue as "a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other so that he or she can change and grow."[140] Swidler and other authors in the field make the important distinction that dialogue is *not* debate. The purpose of dialogue is that each partner listen to the other "as openly and sympathetically as s/he can in an attempt to understand the other's position as precisely and, as it were, as much from within, as possible".[141] In their book *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East* Mohammad Abu-Nimer, Amal Khoury, and Emily Welty add to this definition in stating that

[140] Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20:1 (1983): 1-3.
[141] Ibid.

> dialogue is a safe process of interaction to verbally or nonverbally exchange ideas, thoughts, questions, information, and impressions between people from different backgrounds…it requires not only mutual sharing and exchange, but also mutual listening and consideration of the other's view.[142]

Abu-Nimer, Khoury, and Welty go on to explain that "engagement with the 'other' is the heart and soul of dialogue; it seeks to know the other, not only or even primarily by exchanging official political or doctrinal pronouncements, but by listening and attending to the 'meaning beyond the words'".[143] In their use of the phrases "attempt to understand…from within" and "listening to the meaning beyond the words" Swidler and Abu-Nimer et.al. refer to one of the most important concepts in dialogue practice--the practice of empathy.

Empathy is an ability that has been defined in numerous ways in psychological literature. The definitions cover a broad spectrum, ranging from caring for other people and having a desire to help them, to experiencing emotions that match another person's emotions, to knowing what the other person is thinking or feeling, to blurring the line between self and other. Many theorists have explored the concept of empathy beginning with noted psychologist Edward Titchener who coined the English term "empathy" as a translation of the German "einfühlung" in 1909.[144] Psychologist Carl Rogers and his successor Marshall Rosenberg are the psychologists that have had a significant impact on the field and its widespread entry into communication and dialogue practices. Carl Rogers defined empathy as the ability to

> perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with

[142] Mohammad Abu-Nimer, Amal Khoury, and Emily Welty, *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 8
[143] Ibid, xxi.
[144] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Empathy," http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/empathy/ (accessed January 15, 2012).

> the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the "as if" condition. Thus, it means to sense the hurt or the pleasure of another as he senses it and to perceive the causes thereof as he perceives them, but without ever losing the recognition that it is as if I were hurt or pleased and so forth.[145]

His student, Marshall Rosenberg, expanded on Rogers's definition of empathy and developed it into an approach which he terms nonviolent communication. Rosenberg states that

> Empathy is a respectful understanding of what others are experiencing. Instead of offering empathy, we often have a strong urge to give advice or reassurance and to explain our own position or feeling. Empathy, however, calls upon us to empty our mind and listen to others with our whole being.[146]

Empathy is thus central to the dialogue process. Currently the concept of empathy and Marshall Rosenberg's nonviolent communication are central to many programs in interfaith dialogue and the resolution of conflicts worldwide including meetings between Israelis and Palestinians.[147]

In her article "Music and Empathy" Felicity Laurence upholds this view and encourages the development of the empathic relationship in dialogue work. She echoes Rosenberg's statements in writing that

> the empathic relationship, in direct contrast to the power relationship, is non-manipulative, cooperative, engenders interpersonal harmony and personal knowing of the other, enhances the other, and fosters acceptance and tolerance of difference…to empathize well we need to engage in a 'joint project' and above all, actively to strive for an empathic knowing of

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[145] Carl R. Rogers, "A Theory of Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships, As Developed in the Client-centered Framework" in P*sychology: A study of Science* ed. S. Koch (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1959), 210-211.
[146]*Teach Empathy* http://teachempathy.com/empathy-quotes/empathy-quote-marshall-rosenberg/ (accessed January 19, 2012).
[147] Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* (California: Puddledancer Press, 2003), 15.

the other.[148]

The purpose of dialogue therefore is not to change one's viewpoint but rather to listen and attempt to understand the other. Scholars and practitioners critical of the use and function of empathy warn that empathy can lead to losing one's center, one's own voice when practicing empathy. This critique is valid, however it may be a misreading of empathy in its truest form.[149] Empathy and the process of compassionate listening as it is described in nonviolent communication in no way encourages that one relinquish one's authentic beliefs. Rather, empathy practice is one that creates a safe space for each dialogue partner to fully and authentically express his/her needs and feelings—standing firmly grounded in one's own experience while listening in a non-judgmental mindset to the needs of the other. This approach acknowledges that dialogue is actually most effective when one stands firmly in one's faith while remaining open to new perspectives.[150]

Of course, this ideal is not always the case with interfaith dialogue. Typically, four types of dialogue emerge from any intentional dialogue and it is helpful to look at these attitudes and approaches in four categories: exclusivism, syncretism, pluralism, and transformation.[151] In exclusivist dialogue the participant believes that only his or her religion is fundamentally and universally true. While this attitude is among the least conducive to dialogue it also contributes to the conversation because there exists a strong grounding in a faith tradition. In syncretic dialogue participants, often unconsciously,

[148] Laurence, "Music and Empathy," 23.
[149] From fall 2010-Fall 2011 I participated in two Marshall Rosenberg nonviolent communication 3-day workshops and two ten-week (once-a-week) nonviolent communication practice sessions. I corroborate the readings in this section with the understanding I have of empathy and nonviolent communication from a year of engaging with the work.
[150] Laurence, 38.
[151] Ibid, 11.

move towards emphasizing sameness and unity. Scholars of interfaith dialogue critique the syncretic impulse in claiming that the goal of dialogue is not a movement toward syncretism or religious uniformity, but rather a building of relationships that includes acknowledgment of differences. Pluralistic dialogue is a dialogue in which there is recognition of the validity of the other's faith while maintaining one's own beliefs. The pluralist model however often becomes a celebration of difference without deep inquiry into the depth of this difference. Transformative dialogue on the other hand is a dialectical model in which both difference and similarity are engaged on a deep level.

Effective transformative dialogue centers on building relationships and concentrates on participants sharing stories. A final term important to this discussion is "peacebuilding," a concept and field that has yielded the most literature on music as a tool in the dialogue process. Peacebuilding, which includes the field of dialogue, is about social change, transforming people's perception of the world around them, their own identity, and their relationships with others.[152] As Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Amal Khoury, and Emily Welty write in *Unity and Diversity*, "recognition of interfaith dialogue as an integral part of peacebuilding work is based on the assumption that fostering deeper relationships between people on opposite sides of a conflict is a critical part of the resolution of conflict".[153] Some of the processes central to peacebuilding include many of the goals and strategies already outlined in the definition of dialogue and empathy work. They include:

- Appreciating each other's humanity and respecting each other's culture

[152] Michael Shank and Lisa Schirch, "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding," *Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research* Volume 33, Issue 2 (April 2008): 237.
[153] Olivier Urbain, "Introduction," 8.

- Telling our own and listening to each other's stories, and developing more complex narratives and nuanced understandings of identity
- Acknowledging harms, telling truths, and mourning losses
- Empathizing with each other's suffering
- Acknowledging and addressing injustices
- Expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing, letting go of bitterness, forgiving
- Imagining and substantiating a new future including agreements about how future conflicts will be engaged constructively[154]

In *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding* Linda Schirch writes that peacebuilding is a process not only important to communities actively engaged in conflict, rather it is a process that supports the building of relationships at all levels of society beginning with the individual and family through community and all the way up to political actors. Schirch asserts that at core, like the interfaith dialogue process, peacebuilding is essentially any intentional process wherein people connect to form relationships in an attempt to constructively address conflict.[155]

The introduction of the concept of peacebuilding is important to this conversation because most of the scholarship on music and dialogue has been published in the field of peacebuilding. The field is a relatively new one and therefore the body of literature on music, or more broadly, the arts and peacebuilding is small and in process.[156] However, in order to derive best practices for the use of music in interfaith dialogue it is important

[154] Cynthia Cohen, "Music: A Universal Language?" in Oliver Urbain, *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 31.
[155] Linda Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding* (United States: Good Books, 2005), 9.
[156] Shank and Schirch, 218.

to understand some theory of the use of arts in dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives.

Dialogue Through the Arts

Arts-based peacebuilding recognizes the limitations of verbal communication and suggests practitioners use the arts to elicit information and convey meaning difficult to communicate as well as to deepen relationship building. In *Interactive Faith* Rori Picker Neiss acknowledges that "dialogue through conversation," as he calls it, is only one form, or tool, for dialogue. The other categories he uses are "dialogue through the arts", "dialogue through participation and observation", and "dialogue through action".[157] One reason behind these four categories of dialogue is the acknowledgement that multiple tools, strategically used in the correct context, can enhance the dialogue process.

In their essay "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding" Michael Shank and Lisa Schirch argue that the use of the arts simply as a feel-good attempt to promote relationship-building is not enough on its own to make a lasting impact.[158] In order for the arts, and music as a subset of this larger category, to be effective in dialogue it is necessary to know **what** the arts contribute to peacebuilding, **when** different art forms are appropriate, and **how** the arts are so effective in their contribution to peacebuilding. John Paul Lederach calls this analytical process the "strategic what," the "strategic when," and the "strategic how" of peacebuilding.[159] This initial planning phase is central to the success of the use of arts in peacebuilding. Shank and Schirch assert the importance of participants deeply engaging in conversation about their hopes, visions, and goals for the artistic process. Some questions might include: "What is the problem, transition, relationship, emotion, or need that requires this artistic process?" "What is the artist's

[157] Neiss, 3.
[158] Shank and Schirch, 218.
[159] Ibid, 219.

peacebuilding methodology trying to communicate?" "Who is the audience for the project?" and "How will success be evaluated?"[160]

The initial phase of planning is only the beginning of using the arts successfully in dialogue and peacebuilding. To truly build successful relationships the project requires long-term thinking and planning; constructive relationship patterns between people and their environment; and the human resources and abilities to oversee these processes. Capacity building includes training and education programs, development, and transformation.[161] In this way, in order to be most effective, interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding work would resemble community-organizing work—which is the labor-intensive work of forming and maintaining relationships over time. While one-time dialogue projects can have a feel-good and educative effect, they don't produce the same degree and depth of relationship that strategic long-term partnerships can yield. Similarly, sustainable relationships benefit from democratic, grassroots partnership as opposed to a top-down model.[162] Often, a dialogue project is begun by an individual actor with a vision. The absence of widespread buy-in and shared leadership in this case can be detrimental to the success of the project if one leader maintains responsibility for the project overtime. In contrast, the best model is the "elicitive peacebuilding" model. According to Shank and Schirch the mark of an elicitive peacebuilder is that s/he is a catalyst and a facilitator rather than an expert or leader in a particular field. In this case, the central role of the initiator of the project is to provide a highly participatory democratic process for relationship-building and decision-making. In an elicitive approach to peacebuilding leadership is shared, there is a high level of interactive

[160] Ibid, 238.
[161] Shank and Schirch, 235.
[162] See Industrial Areas Foundation community organizing

participation, people co-create ideas and engage in critical reflection, and there is the potential for connection made between the local and the global. In other words, it is a fully collaborative and democratic process of people working together for change.[163]

Music in Interfaith Dialogue

There are many possibilities for the use of music as a tool in interfaith dialogue. These methods for the use of music are not separate from other successful dialogue and peacebuilding processes. The use of music in dialogue is most effective when it encourages empathy and elicitive peacebuilding—the essential elements of any dialogue practice. Among these methods may include music listening and lyric study to promote dialogue through conversation, music sharing and storytelling through music (which may include songs that are meaningful on a personal, collective, or cultural level), individual or collaborative songwriting, improvisation, community singing or choir, and the collaborative creation of a performance. All of these musical interactions have the potential to engage empathy and an elicitive peacebuilding process.

Song listening, analysis, and discussion can be a rich component to interfaith dialogue. Research in music therapy demonstrates that listening to music can serve as a catalyst for the surfacing of cognitions and emotions that, when then explored verbally, can produce meaningful insights and connections in interpersonal relationships.[164] In song discussion, the choice of song is extremely important. The choice to use familiar or unfamiliar melodies, songs with a charged connotation or a benign connotation is a strategic choice. Does the facilitator of the song discussion aim to elicit well-established

[163] Shank and Schirch, 232.
[164] Susan C. Gardstrom and James Hiller, "Song Discussion as Music Psychotherapy," *Music Therapy Perspectives Vol. 28:2* (2010): 153.

memories and emotions of the participants or rather to introduce a new concept that the listeners may not have previously explored? In song discussion, the possibility for identification with a character, specific lyric, or experience occurring in the song can open participants up to telling his/her own story or experience. In this way, music listening and song discussion can lead to the development of empathy in the dialogue space. This may occur either through empathizing with the character or narrative context of the song or empathizing with listener's responses to the song.[165] An example of song discussion within the context of interfaith dialogue is a comparative analysis of Lebanese singer Fairuz's song "*Al-Quds*" and Israeli singer Naomi Shemer's "*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*". Both songs exemplify a love of and longing for Jerusalem while representing a divergent political opinion and cultural/religious context. This particular song discussion has the potential to lead to fiery emotions, and yet could also yield the possibility of listening to one another's narrative with empathy and understanding. Song sharing can similarly enable empathy in the dialogue space, the main difference being that it is usually participant-led rather than facilitated by one leader choosing the songs and dictating the topics for dialogue. In both cases, what participants bring to the musical encounter—the sensibilities, relationships, attitudes, and historical resonances, contributes a large measure of the music's meaning and contributes volumes to the dialogue process."[166]

The other possibilities for the use of music, including songwriting, music improvisation, community singing, choir, and performance, all have substantial possibility for the employment of an elicitive peacebuilding approach and the practice of

[165] Ibid.
[166] Cynthia Cohen, "Music: A Universal Language?," 28.

empathy. Each of the above activities involve music not just as object, but music as verb—an active process that involves the creation and collaborative process of music-making. Understanding the word "music" as verb in addition to noun explains much of how music can contribute to the dialogue process. "To music" is "to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance, or by dancing".[167] It is in the process of musicking that the *potential* for creating empathic relationships exists. As in any set of relationships, when individuals music together there is the potential for the process to be hierarchical or democratic. In a hierarchical set of relationships ego, competition, and top-down leadership play a significant role. Such an environment may lead to beautiful music, but will not necessarily yield the development of positive relationships or the mutual understanding, respect, and listening practice central to empathy in interfaith dialogue. However, when musicking is based on cooperation, democratic participation, and respectful listening it can move towards the development of an empathic relationship. Thus, it is *the way* in which we music, not music or musicking in and of itself—as Felicity Laurence argues—that contributes to "whether or not we can take advantage of any inherent property within the music itself, its patterns and dynamics, to move us and affect our responses and behaviors".[168] Therefore, what remains true across the board, regardless of method of music use, is that it is the combination of empathy within musicking in addition to conscientious and strategic planning that can contribute a lasting impact to the interfaith dialogue process.

Theory into Praxis: A Comparison of Building Abrahamic Partnerships Retreat and Retreat for Jewish Muslim Emerging Leaders

[167] Small qtd. in "Music and Empathy", 24.
[168] Laurence, "Music and Empathy," 24.

So, how does music and dialogue work in practice? A comparison of two interfaith dialogue programs, Building Abrahamic Partnerships, an eight-day course sponsored by Hartford Seminary, and the Retreat for Jewish Muslim Emerging Leaders, a four-day residency retreat sponsored by Reconstructionist Rabbinical College provides some answers. While these programs are not directly comparable given that one is a dialogue, the other a trialogue, I believe the specific lessons from the use of music and the arts in each case are noteworthy and relevant. In this case, the elicitive peacebuilding approach and strategic use of dialogue through the arts as employed by the RJMEL allowed participants to create connections and touch one another on a personal level that exceeded the superficial use of music as employed by BAP.

Building Abrahamic Partnerships

Building Abrahamic Partnerships is an eight-day course that meets for twelve hours a day in an intensive atmosphere at Hartford Seminary. The program strives to have a balance of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim students. In January 2010, the year I participated in BAP, there were twenty-one participants in the course, each religious tradition equally represented. The days were very tightly-scheduled and long and, for the first half of the course, largely followed a frontal format. The program primarily utilized the forms of "dialogue through conversation" and "dialogue through participation and observation". Professor Yehezkal Landau, head of the BAP program, outlines the two-pronged approach of BAP as both academic and experiential.[169] The first three days of BAP are spent in frontal academic learning sessions about the three faith traditions, the fourth in text study led by a faculty member, and the final three days observing one

[169] Yehezkal Landau, "Lessons From the Building Abrahamic Partnership Program at Hartford Seminary" http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/LandauRevised.pdf (accessed January 24, 2012).

another's faith practices through visits to a local synagogue, church, and mosque. One of the main complaints of the program was that due to the amount of scheduled time there was little time to formally debrief the interfaith experience of participation and observation with one another.[170] While the hour-and-a-half for lunch gave students plenty of time to socialize and extend conversations that began in the group session, the fact that most of the "dialogue through conversation" was frontal both limited interpersonal interaction as well as kept what interaction there was on the realm of the academic rather than the personal. While the lunch conversations that took place were extremely rich, they nevertheless lacked the element of relationship-building that occurs through the collaboration of a project and musicking together. Finally, there was a distinctive hierarchy to the process in the structure of the program rendering participants more passive in the relationship-building process.

The only time that "dialogue through the arts" entered the room was in the prayer moments before each study session. Participants were asked to sign up for one slot during the week to share either a prayer, poem, or music with the group. Many people chose to share a song or a prayer for peace. Most of the music presented was in English and in the folk-song or singer-songwriter vein. The songs included "Rainforest Chant", "Let the Life I Lead", and "Snowflakes Are Falling". A sample of the lyrics of "Snowflakes Are Falling" is representative of the simple message presented in all the songs:

Snowflakes are falling,
Snowflakes are falling,
each one special, each one unique.
Snowflakes are falling, watch the snow fall,
Unique like you and me.[171]

[170] (Retreat Notes, January 12, 2010).
[171] "Snowflakes are Falling," author unknown.

In the above case, while the expressions of music shared with participants did nothing to harm the relationship-building process, little was gained from the experience other than a brief "kumbaya" moment. The music came without context or education and did not emerge as part of any collaboration. Further, the message of the music was predictable. Without any element of learning, shock, or surprise the music did little to deepen understanding of the other or personal relationships in the room. Finally, there was no "musicking" involved, only observation of another's music. While the experience was pleasant, no participant remarked on the music as a central part of his/her experience during the BAP retreat. In contrast, the REJML retreat demonstrates what can happen when more time is given during a dialogue retreat for participants to music and to art in a collaborative manner.

Retreat for Emerging Jewish and Muslim Leaders

The Retreat for Emerging Jewish and Muslim Leaders combined "dialogue through conversation" and "dialogue through the arts". The most striking feature of the REJML in contrast to BAP is the amount of time that the retreat devoted to unstructured community time, meaning time built into the schedule in addition to meal-times intended for students to work together on projects and/or co-lead activity sessions for other group members. Unlike BAP, the organizers of REJML made a conscious decision not to focus too much of the time giving background about Judaism and Islam. Instead, they chose to construct a curriculum based on the assumption to trust the prior knowledge with which the participants arrived and instead to devote more time to group projects and

collaborative work.[172] While there was a central academic theme to the retreat—the Joseph/Yusuf narrative in Judaism and Islam—there were only two two-and-a-half hour frontal learning sessions on this topic during the whole retreat. The rest of the activities were either participant-led or facilitated conversations in large-group, small-group, or diads. A central component to the retreat was participant-led, arts-based projects. On the first day of the retreat, participants were broken into four groups and given the following assignments: create a coffeehouse event, create a storytelling program, create a closing ceremony, and create a program on dialogue for difficult subjects. Music, as it turns out, became a major portion of three out of the four collaborative projects. While formal time for the projects was only allotted the first day, the fact that the events were scheduled for each of the four days meant that groups continued to meet and plan over meals, after formal sessions ended, and even late into the night. The investment that each group placed both into the planning process as well as the project itself was enormous. One participant noted her surprise in saying that

> at first I thought my project (the coffee house) was a little bit cheesy and didn't have much interest. But as soon as our group began planning together I saw the sparks just erupt. The energy that we had—the excitement working together, the creativity, the ideas for music…our group got so invested![173]

The group planning processes contributed to building a safe space in which participants felt comfortable expressing themselves in artistic forms and being vulnerable in front of new people. The first event, presented by the storytelling group, was a combination of playback theater, music, and storytelling. The storytelling and musicking that evening was based around participants' personal experiences. The main story

[172] Heller, Melissa. Personal Interview. 12 June, 2011.
[173] Rizvi, Sakina. Personal Interview. 11 June, 2011.

dramatized that evening was an incredibly personal story shared by one of the Muslim participants. The story was about a moment of salvation and life change, the death of a mentor, the ritual around death in Islam, and the quest for healing. Participants in the group dramatized the very personal tale in music, narration, mime, and acting. Participants chose instruments and music to evoke different moods and sensitively add to the painful aspects of the story while highlighting its triumphs. In some respects it was shocking to see a story so personal brought to life after only a day and a half of knowing one another. On the other hand, the level of personal expression, empathy, and listening that the arts and music collaboration process brought to this sharing was one of the most powerful moments of the retreat. Participants remarked on that moment consistently as a highlight of the retreat and the experience was brought up again at a reunion retreat in November 2011. The moment was a watershed moment for the group and led to an environment of safety and personal sharing.

I was a participant in the group planning the closing ceremony. For four days the four of us met to discuss liturgy and ritual in our respective traditions and build a ceremony that would speak to the powerful experience participants had over the four days. One of the central features of our planning process became writing a song for the group and weaving together to central musical motifs—one from “Hineni”, a Jewish prayer from the High Holiday liturgy, the other from “Labeq”, the Muslim prayer recited before the Hajj. The work put into the creation of a song and creative approach to sharing liturgy was profound.

While there were many moments of musicking both in the planning and the presentation of group projects one other significant moment occurred during an optional

session during scheduled free time. Participants who had brought musical instruments (cello, drums, two guitars, flute) gathered in a room with a piano. We shared chants from both religious traditions and created a jam session through singing harmonies and instrumental improvisation. This musical encounter went on for two hours in which a number of pieces were shared and co-created. The newly-formed ensemble presented one of the pieces at the café event that evening.

While I have participated in many interfaith dialogue workshops in which "dialogue through conversation" and "dialogue through participation and observation" were utilized, the personal sharing and trust that accompanied "dialogue through the arts" created an entirely new level of conversation. This was true for all participants regardless of their background in the arts. For instance, in a follow-up conversation to plan the reunion retreat, Sakina Rizvi, a lawyer with no background in the arts suggested that music be a key component to the reunion given that it added so much to the retreat.[174] This sentiment was also reflected in the summary evaluations that participants handed in at the end of the retreat. One participant remarked: "we discovered the power of singing and dancing in an impromptu way. It would have been great to do even more of this!".[175] Many of the survey respondents mentioned the musicking sessions as well as the storytelling evening as being among the most powerful moments of the retreat.[176] Finally, in response to the question "Use three words to describe what you take away from the retreat" the word used eight times more than any other was "relationships".[177]

[174] Rizvi, Sakina. Phone conversation. 6 November, 2011.
[175] Nancy Kreimer "RRC's Retreat for Emerging Jewish and Muslim Leaders: Summary of Evaluations/Feedback" Document attached to private e-mail message to Elana Rosen-Brown. 9 January, 2012.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

Conclusion

Given that there is no documented summary information for participants of BAP it is impossible to offer a concrete statistical comparison of the effectiveness of both retreats. However, it is possible to draw a direct correlation between the arts-based dialogue and elicitive peacebuilding process utilized by REJML and the community-building and relationships that resulted from the retreat. Six months later participants are still posting articles and ideas on the Google groups website and there are plans for future projects. The degree of good will fostered in experiencing each other's stories and vulnerabilities through the arts extended to trusting one another in difficult conversations around Israel/Palestine and the sharing of core beliefs. For instance, three members of the group have agreed to participate in my senior cantorial recital before even asking questions about the recital's content. Three separate members expressed interest in helping to build an interfaith choir. The same degree of follow-up did not occur in the aftermath of BAP. While there are many other factors that may have contributed to this, including the difference in many of the pedagogical methods and goals employed by BAP in comparison to REJML, it is clear that, when used strategically, deep relationships of empathy and trust can be built through the strategic incorporation of music and the arts in the dialogue process.

More common than integrating music into an interfaith dialogue course, program, or retreat is the use of the concert venue to express a yearning for interfaith dialogue. The following chapter highlights how two concerts, "Sounds of Faith" and "Middle East Harmonies" attempted to promote dialogue through music.

Chapter Four:

Dialogue Through Music Performance

It's 3:00 in the afternoon on Thursday, March 10th and I am late, running in the rain, without an umbrella down Broadway having just exited the station at 125th street to find myself greeted by a sudden downpour. "There goes all efforts at looking professional!", I complain to myself.. I'm on my way to the rehearsal for the Sounds of Faith concert at Riverside Church. Dr. Shakeela Hassan, founder and executive director of Harran Productions and Michael Levitt, the concert organizer have invited me last minute to the rehearsal for the concert which is to take place on Sunday. I have already watched the video for the Sounds of Faith concert that took place in Chicago in 2010. The event was huge and hailed as a big success by those involved.[178] Filled with excitement and anticipation I imagine that a wall of musical sound will greet me when I enter the church on 121st street and West End. I picture Jewish, Christian, and Muslim performers talking and making music together. However, the scene with which I am greeted upon entering the church could not have been more different. The stained-glass hall, glorious and magnificent, is completely empty save Michael Levitt, one Muslim cleric, and Courtney, a confused documentarian with little to document. I hope that the scene will change, that the dialogue I am expecting in rehearsal will materialize, but it does not. I am left only with the questions.

In the last twenty years since multiculturalism came into the pantheon as a

[178] Hassan, Shakeela. Phone interview. 19 April, 2011; Manzoor, Romana. Phone Interview. 16 April, 2011; Vidan, Yael. Personal Interview. 9 April, 2011.

cultural buzzword interfaith and intercultural events have brought with them a lot of cache. Funders are interested in supporting projects that are geared towards cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue. There are multiple examples of concerts devoted to peace or musical collaborations and projects with a political message to end violence.[179] This cultural phenomenon begs a number of different questions. Can concerts aimed at promoting interfaith/intercultural dialogue impact audience members and build relationships beyond the concert hall? Is it possible for empathy and the elicitive peacebuilding approach to be present in the concert venue? The following chapter aims to answer these questions.

Research Methods

For purposes of this ethnography I have chosen to highlight two recent concerts, "Sounds of Faith" and "Middle Eastern Harmonies". While concerts today that meld musics of different cultures are not uncommon, it is less common that the concert have as its express purpose the goal of promoting dialogue and bringing alienated groups together. Both "Sounds of Faith" and "Middle Eastern Harmonies" met my own criteria that the goal be explicit in the pre-concert organizing and not merely result as a byproduct of the type of music being performed. The three main questions with which I attempted to evaluate the two concerts are the following:

> 1) What intention did the organizers bring to the concert and how did they organize the concert accordingly?
> 2) What level of pre-concert interaction did performers have and to what extent did this impact their experience of the concert?
> 3) To what degree and in what way did the performance represent the message of the concert?

At both concerts I attempted to achieve a good representative sample of interviewees. In this regard I was more successful with the "Middle Eastern Harmonies" concert than I was with "Sounds of Faith". For "Sounds of Faith" I interviewed five audience members, four performers, and four organizers of the event. For "Middle Eastern Harmonies" I interviewed or received surveys from eight audience members, four performers, and, at the time of this writing, I am still waiting for my interview with Joshua Jacobson, the conductor and concert organizer. While I am satisfied with the qualitative interviews that I have and the perspective that these interviews bring to this chapter, I do wish that I had been able to achieve a broader group of respondents. Without having interviewed a good percentage of the concert attendees it is impossible to measure the success of each concert. Instead, this chapter merely aims to glean some perspective of the impact of these concerts on those individuals who did respond and draw preliminary conclusions from these interviews. Mainly, do their responses support the thesis that it is not music alone, but the strategic use of music in partnership with empathy practice and elicitive peacebuilding principles that produces the lasting impact on relationships.

It is important for me to openly acknowledge my own biases up front. I bring to my research the great hope and expectation that music and music performance can and should be able to bring people together across cultures, faiths, and political divides. As a cantor and musician I believe that music has a power beyond words to cross boundaries and increase good feeling and communication between peoples who in other contexts would not venture to come together. I bring this hope with me to each event that I attend and, while I try to remain unbiased and critical, I recognize that as an interviewer I bring

with me the hope that the interviewees will answer in the affirmative. That yes, understanding and connection was achieved. As a Jewish musician, I am able to understand certain aspects of performance and the background to musical choices to which many members of the audience are not privy. My understanding of and training in Jewish music leads me to feel greater connection to some of the pieces and aspects of performance even when the performer or the structure of the concert has not done an adequate job at reaching members of the audience without this background. In this sense, the evaluation of a concert's impact or lack thereof is difficult because the reaction of the listener, as always with music, is incredibly subjective—reliant on level of musical exposure and understanding, cultural/religious context, varying expectations brought to the performance. With this important caveat in mind I nevertheless endeavor to understand the aspects of "Sounds of Faith" and "Middle Eastern Harmonies" that impacted their listeners and those aspects which detracted from creating the connection for which both performers and audience members were hoping.

"Sounds of Faith" in New York City: March 20, 2011

The following is a direct quote from the website of "Sounds of Faith" that explains a core feature of its mission:

> The Sounds of Faith Concert Series begins with a celebration of the commonalities and differences inherent in the three Abrahamic faiths. Promoting interfaith understanding, respect, connection and harmony, the concerts offer a unique and powerful bridge-building experience where attendees become part of a greater community.[180]

Given this mission statement the question remains whether "Sounds of Faith" achieved

[180]*Sounds of Faith.* http://soundsoffaith.org/. (accessed April 26, 2011).

its goal. The most noticeable aspect of the "Sounds of Faith" concert in New York, unfortunately, was the lack of attendance. The space at Riverside church is magnificent and has a seating capacity of twenty-one hundred. However, there could not have been more than two hundred and fifty people in attendance. As the concert began, it was hard not to notice this distraction. I believe it was the elephant in the room that was on everyone's mind.

One of the central features of communication at concerts that aim to promote a message is the way in which the concert promotes its message. Does it choose to do so verbally or is the message conveyed primarily through music? The introduction to the concert as well as the program notes are the key areas in which this communication can take place and the concert experience is either added to or detracted from depending on the successful execution of these areas.

At the "Sounds of Faith" concert there was no question about Harran Production's goal in producing the concert. Their purpose was made clear both in the introductory notes in the program as well as the introductory remarks that opened the concert long before any note was played or sung. Dr. Shakeela Hassan, executive director of "Sounds of Faith" wrote the letter that opens the program notes. In it she describes her background and what inspires her to do the work of "Sounds of Faith". She writes:

> Sound is a profound medium for encountering the divine. It plays a key role in the physical and spiritual journey of the individual as it moves from the sounds of the body—from our own breathing, and our heartbeats even before we are born—to the natural world, and into the worship practices of our religious traditions. As sound provides a channel to us individual for perceiving the beauty and power of the world, so too can it provide a medium for connecting to and respecting our human neighbors.[181]

Dr. Hassan continued this line of thinking in her opening remarks with which the concert

[181] Hassan, Shakeela. Program Notes. 20 March, 2011.

began. Dr. Hassan was only one of eight speakers who opened the concert. In her opening remarks she more explicitly linked the goal of the concert and making music in community to politics and peace. Passionately she urged us to "hope and pray that this afternoon will become a part of the tradition of peace". She continued by remarking that she did "not wish to dwell on the negatives of our faith traditions [rather] there are so many starting points for conversation. Often listening is the first way".[182]

The eight presenters who followed her were predominantly clergy—two Muslim clerics, one rabbi, one priest, and two ministers gave remarks in addition to Dr. Hassan and Congressman Rangle. Aside from one of the Imams whose remarks exceeded five minutes and verged dangerously on the supercessionist despite his clear intention to give a message of unity, all of the comments were decidedly on message. Each was succinct and specific about the possibilities for music to bring about peace and justice. The first imam exhorted that "tonight, the Jew, the Christian, and the Muslim have come together with our hearts to say no more fighting, quarreling, hunger."[183] Rabbi Michael Zedek continued this message by exclaiming that "when we act on behalf of the human family there is no religious or ethnic divide."[184] And, finally, in one of the most poignant examples of interfaith sensitivity, Reverend Phelps acknowledged the Jewish foundation of the dictum that has become known as the Golden Rule in Christian Circles. He referenced its origin in the Torah and spoke strongly: "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself. Only by loving those who God created can we truly love the creator God."[185]

Although this lengthy homiletical introduction made the message of the concert

[182] Hassan, Shakeela. Opening Remarks at Sounds of Faith Concert. 13 March, 2011.
[183] Senghur, Mustapha. Opening Remarks at Sounds of Faith Concert. 13 March, 2011.
[184] Zedek, Michael. Opening Remarks at Sounds of Faith Concert. 13 March, 2011.
[185] Phelps, Stephen. Opening Remarks at Sounds of Faith Concert. 13 March, 2011.

very clear, it did not necessarily help the performers or the audience members to connect given that it exceeded a desired length.[186] Despite this, or perhaps because of this, both audience members and performers had a very clear sense of the goal of Sounds of Faith. Cantor Bob Abelson remarked that the

> goal of the concert is that music is an equalizer. Generally, with the exception of neo-Nazi groups and there so-called rock music. Music generally reflects the positive aspect of cultures. Mere speech doesn't do this. It is the poetic striving of excellence in communication. If this could be done there would be very little war. It gave us a chance to see aspects of the other cultures that are beautiful and admirable. I think this concert was very effective.[187]

Venessa Wong, an audience member and journalist for Business Week responded similarly. She stated:

> I understood the goal to be: music as a uniting thread between people from different religions (namely Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). In her introductory speech Dr. Hassan mentioned that we all hear the same sound in our mothers' wombs and are born into the world with the same cry.[188]

All of the people interviewed for this paper responded with similar answers. But, while the goal of the concert was clear, respondents felt that the concert fell short of fully achieving its goal. All felt the goal of the project to be an honorable one. However, everyone interviewed expressed great regret that the PR of the concert was handled so poorly. All respondents cited this as a source of great disappointment for them. Unfortunately, the emptiness of the space was so noticeable that it was a great distraction from the performance and was first and foremost on everyone's minds.

The other most frequent finding was that performers had little to no interaction with one another in rehearsal before the performance. Concertgoers noted that the concert

[186] Goldstein, Israel. Personal Interview. 16 March, 2011.
[187] Abelson, Bob. Personal Interview. 16 March, 2011.
[188] Wong, Venessa. Survey Interview. 20 March, 2011.

itself showed little interaction between the different faith traditions. Jews performed their music, Christians theirs, and Muslims theirs, again with little to no interaction other than the final number which was “We Shall Overcome”. Finally, while there were texts and translations in the program, little explanation existed about the meaning of the pieces selected. Venessa Wong responded that:

> the program was a bit difficult for me to understand. Perhaps it is because I have no background in religion, and thus did not understand all the songs. I expected to hear how the different religions portray similar themes in music. However, there was no explanation about the song selection, what the songs were about, or how they could speak to all people. Maybe the organizers thought that kind of exposition would be too heavy handed? The medley by the Riverside choir, which combined sounds from around the world, was the one example where I picked up on the cross-borders theme in song. I would have also enjoyed if the performers from the different religions had sang a few songs together too.[189]

Another interviewee responded that she felt the experience for the performers might have been more meaningful than it was to the audience:

> I would say that I think it is an interesting exercise for the performers (perhaps more so than for the audience). I don't know under what other circumstances these religious leaders would have met, so perhaps an interfaith concert provided a friendly and neutral platform for them to convene and open dialogue--behind the scenes.[190]

Performers admitted however that while they were engaged by the message and considered interfaith work important they would not have necessarily made the time commitment required for more rehearsals even if it had brought about more interaction.[191] This admission on the part of the performers is telling. It also supports Dr. Hassan’s assessment that the Sounds of Faith concert lacked performers with heart who

[189] Ibid.
[190] Barrack, Ula. Personal Interview. 13 March, 2011.
[191] Abelson, Bob, Martha Novick and Israel Goldstein. Personal Interviews. 16 March, 2011.

were firmly committed to the message.[192] What I believe she meant by this statement is that the performers were not interested in putting in the time for relationship-building that would have added a soul to the concert which was lacking. In Dr. Hassan's view, and my own, the lack of energy and this degree of passion in the space was apparent. While it did not detract from the concert's message, the performers did not succeed in touching the audience in the way they may have hoped.

Middle Eastern Harmonies, Boston: April 10. 2011

The Middle Eastern Harmonies concert showed an entirely different approach to the concept of bridging a divide between peoples with music. In this case the focus was not on interfaith but rather intercultural communication. Although there was no explicit mention of the Palestinian-Israeli political quagmire, the harmonies that the concert attempted to produce referred to Israeli and Arab relations. In contrast to Sounds of Faith, the verbal introduction at the beginning of the concert was extremely brief, merely thanking donors and introducing the group Bustan Abraham who played the first half of the concert. Bustan Abraham too made no political statement about peace, as is their wont, and rather let their music speak for itself. Despite the terseness of any introduction, audience members understood the purpose of the concert. In a survey response Jeff Tieger wrote that "the goal is to bring greater understanding of each other's culture. Shared appreciation of music should hopefully lessen any perceived cultural divide."[193] Other respondents gave similar answers. Again however, the audience members' hopes for what the concert might do exceeded their own experience of the concert. Ryan

[192] Hassan, Shakeela. Phone Interview. 19 April, 2011.
[193] Tieger, Jeff. Interview Survey. 13 April, 2011.

Kessler responded that “if the goal was to share cool music, then yes. If the goal was to spark intercultural dialogue on a large scale, then I think that remains to be seen, but I would be inclined to say no.”[194] Elisheva Weinberg was struck by the lack of diversity she perceived in the audience, writing that she I didn't “see many "different" communities in the audience--I think it was mostly Jews--but I don't know. The audience seemed to love the concert--lots of applause and noise. It did not move my heart however”.[195] Elizabeth’s response was more in the affirmative, but she could not put her finger on whether the concert had any impact or not. She wrote:

> Any joint project which encourages dialogue is good in my opinion. I do think it’s important for the public to see collaborative efforts and to know that people of good will are doing something to engage in positive ways with people who are different. So whether this event succeeded musically is perhaps incidental to whether people’s minds and hearts were opened, both by the process and the final concert.[196]

Helaine Alon, an Israeli, was struck by the musical complexity of the concert and was one of the only audience members who responded that this musical complexity helped her to grasp the message. She wrote: “I think the concert achieved its goal musically--I was interested in the musical arrangements and appreciated the creativity that was needed to bring it together. However, I did not think that integrating two Israeli songs that spoke about love and the need for peace was helpful in achieving this goal.”[197]

On the whole, audience members reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the music but were unsure what impact the concert might have. In stark contrast to the experience of audience members, performers who participated in the concert spoke and wrote

[194] Kichler, Ryan. Interview Survey. 12 April, 2011.
[195] Weinberg, Elisheva. Interview Survey. 15 April, 2011.
[196] Kim, Elizabeth. Interview Survey. 13 April, 2011.
[197] Alon, Helaine. Interview Survey. 28 April, 2011.

passionately across the board of their deep respect for this concert, their commitment to its message, and how moved they were emotionally by the experience. While the "Sounds of Faith" concert brought together performers who prepared nothing specifically for the concert and therefore needed no rehearsal time, the pieces performed at the "Middle Eastern Harmonies" concert required three months of preparation. Zamir Chorale members met weekly for three months to work on the music. Guest performers like Mireille Thomas a Lebanese Christian and Mehmet Ali Sanlikol a Turkish Muslim attended between two and six rehearsals with the Zamir Chorale. Mireille Thomas reported that she definitely felt there was camaraderie amongst the performers and that she loved the process of preparation and making connection as much as participating in the concert. Mireille reported that she experienced the members of Zamir Chorale as

> wonderful, welcoming, encouraging. They kept coming up to me and telling me how great it was to sing with me. I felt at home, I would love to visit them at rehearsal and pop in to say hello. Some of them added me on facebook…I left with a really great feeling. One of them wanted to have dinner with me. She asked me…and we'll be in touch one of these days. It was an honor and a privilege to join them. I hope it won't be the last time. I would love to participate again with them in one of their concerts.[198]

Abba Caspi, a member of the Zamir Chorale could not hide his enthusiasm for the concert and his passionate belief in the message. He felt that participants in the concert "had a great spiritual feeling" and expressed that "we did our part for understanding and harmony".[199] He expressed that the concert "did feel different to me than other concerts. Maybe more so than in an ordinary concert there was a message here that was both implicit and explicit. There was a bringing together of Arabic and Hebrew and a top

[198] Thomas, Mireille. Phone interview. 20 April, 2011.
[199] Caspi, Abba. Phone Interview. 27 April, 2011.

Jewish group undertook this."[200]

In his commentary Caspi touches upon three of the key differences between "Sounds of Faith" and "Middle Eastern Harmonies". The most evident is the passion with which performers spoke about their involvement with the concert. Second is the extent to which collaborators met before the concert. Caspi mentioned that Thomas, Sanlikol, and the Muslim composer Andre de Quadros all attended multiple rehearsals.[201] Finally, Caspi talked at length about the musical arrangements and thought that went into showing the fusion of musical traditions. Naturally this was exemplified expertly in the first half of the concert by Bustan Abraham, a musical group that based their career around creating their own brand of Middle Eastern harmony through disparate musical styles and backgrounds. But Joshua Jacobson, the conductor of Zamir, attempted to mirror this example through his own selection of pieces which clearly showed a dialogue. For instance, Jacobson paired two settings of Psalm 121, one an Israeli art song in Hebrew by Paul Ben-Chaim, the other in Arabic by Arab-Israeli composer Akram Haddad. A number of pieces had both Hebrew and Arabic or Turkish components interwoven. These included "There Must Be Another Way" by Ahinoam Nini, Mira Awad, and Gil Dor, and "Lama Bada Yathathana", a traditional Andalusian song arranged by Bustan Abraham. Most striking here is that choir members, none of whom speak Arabic, worked hard to learn Arabic pronunciation for each musical setting sung in Arabic. Both de Quadros and Sanlikol assisted choir members with pronunciation.[202]

The most successful musical tapestry however was "Adinu Bi-din Il Hubbi", a composition for choir of a Sufi chant arranged by Shireen Abu-Khader and Andre de

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.

Quadros. This setting featured the Zamir Chorale accompanying Mehmet Ali Sanlikol, Louise Treitman, Kate Judd, and Rick Lawrence as soloists weaving Arabic, Hebrew, and Spanish solo lines over the choral part. It also included an excerpt from a central prayer in the Jewish tradition, the Kedushah. This degree of creativity in the musical arrangement of pieces to illustrate cultural overlap is in marked contrast to the very separate nature of the music performed in Sounds of Faith. While not all audience members recognized the representation of the concert's goal in these musical motifs there were those who did appreciate the effort. Most evident though is the degree to which performers were moved by the musical collaboration and the learning and sharing that accompanied the musical selections.

Conclusions

It is difficult to speak critically about such good faith efforts to bridge the divides that exist between people of different faiths and cultures that, in the case of Israelis and Palestinians, may even be at war with one another. I find it necessary to say that in no way did either concert detract from interfaith/intercultural understanding or reinforce walls. Far from it. Even in those cases where respondents were unmoved by the music, confused by its musical and/or religious significance, or felt that the concert did little to promote real dialogue they all acknowledged appreciation for the stated goal of the event and were happy and encouraged that such events were taking place even if for them the event fell short. With this appreciation for the good will and intention of the concerts' organizers I move forward with some initial conclusions.

In both cases the concert experience was by far more meaningful and

comprehensible to the performers than it was to the audience members. This was the result of one or both of two principle factors. The intricacies of musical and religious dialogue that took place on the stage was by and large lost to audience members with little musical knowledge. These audience members focused far more on the demographic makeup of the audience, the interaction of the performers on stage, and the (perceived) emotional quality of the music to formulate their opinion of the success of the event. The other factor at play for audience members was the lack of relationship-building opportunity they had with other audience members or with the performers. While this set-up is typical of the relationship between performer and listener in a concert setting, it nevertheless impacted the ability for the listener to access and understand music as dialogue.

In contrast, audience members with a background in music, and specifically liturgical music tended to understand the context much more and be more forgiving of the concert and the performance even if the organizational aspects of the concert did not meet their expectations. However, these audience members similarly felt a lack of connection and were skeptical of the concerts' success in promoting interfaith/intercultural dialogue.

It was evident that the concert held the most meaning for performers. However, there was an enormous difference in the manner with which performers in the "Sounds of Faith" concert spoke of the event and the way in which "Middle Eastern Harmonies" performers spoke of their concert. The performers that I interviewed spoke with passion about interfaith dialogue and creating a peaceful world, but none of them spoke passionately about the "Sounds of Faith" project or their experience in the concert. In fact, most expressed a lack of engagement in the concert despite their professed

investment in the goals of the concert. This response was in marked contrast to the impassioned way in which participants in the "Middle Eastern Harmonies" concert spoke about their experience. I attribute this entirely to the planning, rehearsal-time, and investment both in the performance and in each other that participants in the "Middle Eastern Harmonies" put in prior to the concert.

Romana Manzoor summed up her feelings about interreligious dialogue in an astute manner that is helpful to further understanding a reason behind these findings. She expressed the following in an interview:

> I think interreligious dialogue is just friendship really. It is all about building friendship. You really have to build that trust. You just look at your friends and you learn from each other. When you build these friendships you can work together on everything. Music is a great way to bridge that and build that. Everyone can relate and can connect. You can hear and feel what the person is doing. How are they praising God. When you can sense that emotion coming from the prayer it really touches you.[203]

Elisheva Weinberg echoed this sentiment in her description of events that can produce an experience of interfaith/intercultural dialogue. To the question "In your experience what are the most effective strategies for promoting interfaith/intercultural dialogue?" she responded "small friendship circles that can be organized around projects--educational opportunities where peoples can learn about each other. Eating together, celebrating together, working together, reading together".[204] Like Manzoor, Weinberg suggests that it is through activities that build relationship where bridge-building can truly take place.

In a concert environment, none of that friendship has been built between performer and audience member or between audience members with one another. Thus,

[203] Manzoor, Romana. Phone interview. 16 April, 2011.
[204] Weinberg, Elisheva. Survey interview. 15 April, 2011.

while the music can potentially foster good faith and feeling, without a forum for exchange little dialogue will take place beyond that which audience members push themselves to have with family or friends post the event. If we are to take Manzoor's words as a roadmap to successful interfaith dialogue and interaction, it follows that the musicians participating in the concert be the ones to reap the most benefit from the concert experience, and here only if they have spent ample time in rehearsal and musical partnership with one another prior to the performance.

This principle is best exemplified of course by Bustan Abraham themselves who have been in relationship with one another for over twenty years. While I did not interview them myself, Benjamin Brinner's book *Playing Across A Divide* is stock-full of quotes from band members asserting that their music making is above politics. The following quote exemplifies the ways in which collaboration and friendship can obscure even the most divisive identities:

> Arabs and Jews? I only remember it when people ask us. Personally I don't think about it at all. When I'm performing or rehearsing I don't think about who is with me. I'm not trying to slough it off or apologize. They're my friends, really. I see myself there as very dominantly at home. I don't think that anyone in the group now thinks…Taiseer's an Arab or Zohar's a Jew. I think of him as an amazing drummer who I love as a person. I know how to get along with him better than x in the group because x is a little crazier—it has nothing to do with Jews and Arabs.[205]

This quote supports Manzoor's and Weinberg's statements that it is through sustained collaboration, dialogue, and partnership, whether that be musical or otherwise, that crossing the divide can truly take place.

Naturally the question that follows is what implications should these findings

[205] Taiseer Elias, qtd. in Benjamin Brinner, *Playing Across A Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 130.

have on future attempts at interfaith/intercultural concerts? In this case it should be noted again that the "Middle Eastern Harmonies" concert made a valiant attempt at broadening the conversation to include a symposium the following day specifically on the topic of music and empathy.[206] While coupling the symposium with the concert was a wonderful attempt at increasing the concert's relevance, most of the attendees of the concert were not able to attend the symposium given the fact that it was on a different day. As a result, information and conversation that may have enhanced their experience of the concert was not really available to them. I think the more efficacious model would have been to host the symposium on the same day as the concert, either before or following. Further, a reception with food, either before or following the event can increase opportunity for discussion, shared experience, and camaraderie. The concert without space for conversation, interaction, or even just pleasant social mingling runs the risk of being recalled merely as a "nice event" or a "good attempt". For, it is not music alone, but music coupled with these aspects of relationship-building that can truly have a lasting impact on both performers and audience members alike. As Johan Galtung writes, the question is not only "were we uplifted?". Rather the understanding that

> the potential for peace is not necessarily in the music or in any accompanying text, but in the structure of the performance. Of course that structure of peace needs to be something both cooperative and creative.[207]

Attending the concerts "Sounds of Faith" and "Middle Eastern Harmonies" proved invaluable to my understanding of the use of music for interfaith dialogue. It challenged my preconceived notions and reaffirmed that relationship-building, as so

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[207] Johan Galtung, "Peace, Music, and the Arts: In Search of Interconnections" in Oliver Urbain, *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 58.

many things in synagogue life, is also at the basis of any sustainable interfaith project. The learning from these concerts, in addition to the learning from my involvement in Building Abrahamic Partnerships and the Retreat for Emerging Jewish-Muslim Leaders forms the basis for my ideas on the cantor's role in Jewish-Muslim dialogue.

Conclusion

Cantorial Participation in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

Music holds great possibility for bringing people together across boundaries.

However, as this thesis has demonstrated, it remains just a *possibility* and not a foregone conclusion without the principle components of compassionate listening, relationship-building, and community organizing work so necessary to interfaith relationships. When accompanied by these processes music can be a dynamic force in fostering dialogue. The role of the reform cantor, as one today that involves pastoral care, education, and community work in addition to music and prayer, lends itself well to successful involvement in interfaith dialogue.

More specifically, this thesis has attempted to provide an overview of the areas in which the cantor, through an understanding of the history of Jewish-Muslim cultural sharing, whether it be through language, shared musical style, or collaborative performance, can be instrumental in Jewish-Muslim dialogue. Based on the findings of the previous chapters, in the following conclusion I will attempt to put forth some initial recommendations for how the cantor might participate in deepening Jewish-Muslim dialogue within his/her local community. These recommendations bear in mind that participants who choose to be involved in Jewish-Muslim dialogue are already a self-selecting population and usually tend to the more liberal end of the spectrum. Therefore, the recommendations are meant to be tailored to the specific dialogue group and certainly would not be effective in all settings.

Music in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

In their article "Challenges in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue: The American Context" Reuven Firestone and Brie Loskota write that many projects between Jews and Muslims

are often planned as unique events. Guests are invited by the host to participate in a Passover *seder* or a Ramadan *iftar*, or to observe one another's prayer services. In these cases the dialogue usually occurs informally and is rarely a catalyst for in-depth and continual relationship.[208] Instead, in pioneering programs such as the "Muslim-Jewish Text Study Program" at the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement and NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change, Reuven Firestone and other program organizers contend that it is through long-term programming and ongoing study that true partnerships can form.[209] The programs offered at these organizations take shape over time and utilize concepts of empathy, relationship-building, community organizing, and strategic peacebuilding as necessary components to interfaith dialogue.[210] Both organizations are headed by rabbis. Yet neither program involves music or the arts in any sustainable manner, if at all. In an article on the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement's text study program Firestone cites his primary goal as being to demonstrate "how religious texts could become the basis for members of two religious traditions to learn about each other's beliefs while simultaneously developing friendships".[211] As this thesis has shown, dialogue through conversation, in this case in the form of sacred text study, while effective in relationship-building, remains only one method for achieving this aim. The history of music in Jewish-Muslim dialogue is incredibly rich and its use in Jewish-Muslim dialogue has the potential to achieve the same goals that Firestone mentions.

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[208] Reuven Firestone and Brie Loskota, "Challenges in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue: The American Context" in Humayan Ansari and David Cesarani, *Muslim-Jewish Dialogue in a Twenty-First Century World: Papers From a Workshop on Jewish-Muslim Dialogue in London* (April 2006), 22.
[209] Firestone, 189.
[210] See New Ground: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change http://www.muslimjewishnewground.org/index.html and Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement http://cmje.org/.
[211] Firestone, & Hebah H. Farag "Sacred Text Study as Dialogue Between Muslims and Jews" in *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities* (United States: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 179.

Cantorial expertise in understanding the musical hybridity that developed out of the long history of Jewish-Muslim interaction could be a huge asset to these organizations and others. Cantors who are passionate about this area of Jewish music and Jewish history can contribute by developing music curricula and programs for NewGround and the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement and other organizations such as Abraham's Vision and Seeds of Peace to name a few. Cantors can also partner through developing musical addenda to curricula already in use. For example, the Union for Reform Judaism's and Islamic Society of North America's joint curriculum entitled "Children of Abraham: Jews and Muslims in Conversation" is intended as an eleven-session learning partnership between a synagogue and a mosque. The curriculum is a wonderful publication, but again, music is absent.[212] What would adding music to such a curriculum look like? Or, in the congregational arena specifically, what could the use of music in a synagogue-mosque twinning partnership entail? Some initial suggestions for implementing a sustainable dialogue program either for a non-profit organization or between a synagogue and a mosque that involves use of music include:

Lyrics and Poetry as Comparative Text Study

There is great possibility for pairing "dialogue through conversation" with "dialogue through the arts". Text study is often a key component to Jewish-Muslim dialogue but rarely is the text study on music and poetry. Centering a dialogue session around the cultural sharing of Andalusian Spain with Jewish and Muslim poetry at the

[212] Islamic Society of North American and Union for Reform Judaism, "Children of Abraham: Jews and Muslims in Conversation" http://urj.org/kd/_temp/CF2C4A67-D3B3-1F26-E5E860CA948CBA0C/Children%20of%20Abraham.pdf, 2009. (Accessed 11 Feb 2012).

center of text study has great potential to enhance the discussion. Participants can study two poems, one Arabic, the other Hebrew, from the Middle Ages that represent the intellectual, linguistic, and poetic cultural hybridity that is discussed in chapter two. The corpus of poetry from both Judaism and Islam is vast. Cantors can easily be responsible for leading the study of texts written by Dunash ben Labrat, Yehudah HaLevi, Shlomo ibn Gabirol, and Israel ben Moshe Najara to name a few. Cantors should partner with a Muslim leader who is able to highlight parallel themes and styles in well-known Islamic/Arabic poetry from the same time period.

Another possibility for lyric study is to look to modern-day poets and songwriters who speak to the contemporary experience. Even if the lyrics are emotionally charged it is often easier to listen to a secondary source than it is to hear a difference of opinion directly. In this way, comparative text study of contemporary lyrics can serve the purpose of developing compassionate listening. One possible example would be a comparison of Lebanese singer Fairuz's "*Zahrat al-Madayn*" (Flower of the Cities) and Naomi Shemer's "*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*" (Jerusalem of Gold). Both pieces are beloved by their own communities and carry huge symbolism as representative of their community's deepest longing for Jerusalem and collective memories of loss and hope. "*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*", was written in 1967 by Naomi Shemer, a singer who has long symbolized the national voice of Jewish-Israelis. The song captures both the love and longing for Jerusalem as well as the joy at reunification of Jerusalem that happened after the Six Day War in 1967. Like "*Zahrat al-Madayn*", the song is a love song to Jerusalem and takes the listener on a tour of the sights of the city that carry great symbolic meaning. "*Zahrat al-Madayn*" written by Farouz, is similarly laden with

imagery of the Old City and its great beauty. The text is also deeply connected to 1967 because, as the song comparison demonstrates, what was a reunification for Jewish-Israelis was experienced as an ejection and exile for Palestinians. A comparison of the second verse of each song is representative of this conflict:

"*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*"

The wells are filled again with water,
The square with joyous crowd,
On the Temple Mount within the City,
The shofar rings out loud.

Within the caverns in the mountains
A thousand suns will glow,
We'll take the Dead Sea road together,
That runs through Jericho.[213]

"*Zahrat al-Madayn*"

The child is in the cave and his mother, Myriam, is crying
For those who roamed
For the children without a house
For those who resisted and were martyred at the gates
And the peace was martyred in the homeland of peace
And the law tumbled at the gates of the city
When Jerusalem fell
Love left and in the heart of the world the war was settled
The child is in the cave and his mother, Myriam, is crying
and I pray.[214]

It is impossible to deny the deep human yearning for home, the deep love, and the deep pain that both songs represent. Even as both texts represent for their respective communities this deep communal longing, they take on a different significance when listened to by an interfaith audience. The lyrics take on new meaning in the realization

[213] Naomi Shemer, "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JH8gtdDA5x0 (accessed 15 Feb 2012).
[214] Fairouz, "Zahrat al-Madayn" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrNaPFgyNkE (accessed 15 February 2012).

that the yearnings expressed by each singer are deeply in conflict with one another and representative of the intractable nature of the conflict. Using this comparative musical text study as a component to a discussion on Jerusalem can add to the level of the conversation. Further, I see possibilities for peace activism around this project. A quick search for these songs on youtube reveals that both songs are accompanied by nationalistic, hate-filled video montages. Similarly, the comment sections that accompany the videos are often filled with hate speech. After engaging with the texts together one possibility for a joint project could be to create an online forum in which songs are presented in dialogue with one another but absent of hate imagery. The group can work together overtime to create an online music forum for interfaith dialogue where music expressive of conflict can be listened to with an appeal to peace and respect for other traditions rather than encouraging the perpetuation of enmity.

Music Sharing & Song Discussion: Music and Understanding the Narrative of the Other

To rephrase a point from chapter three, one of the most important aspects to elicitive peacebuilding is that the dialogue environment be a highly participatory democratic process in which leadership is shared, there is a high level of interactive participation, and people co-create ideas and engage in critical reflection.[215] Music sharing and song discussion can fulfill this description. In music sharing and song discussion, participants determine for themselves the music that gives voice to their personal narratives. This can be accomplished to deepen the dialogue space in a variety of ways. If the program is getting to know one another as individuals the prompt might be

[215] Shank and Schirch, 232.

for each participant to share three songs that highlight his/her experience of the sacred or personal life journey. Telling stories is at the heart of relationship-building and when one tells one's story through song the connection can be all the more powerful.

Another way of using song sharing to deepen one's learning about the other might be through the sharing of liturgy or lifecycle music. Each participant might bring in three important musical examples that highlight lifecycle events from the Jewish or Muslim tradition. Through the sharing and discussion of music and liturgy participants can deepen their knowledge of the other's faith.

Song Composition Workshops:

Song composition is one medium through which participants in a dialogue program can give voice to their narratives as well as collaborate on an arts project that deepens relationship and understanding. Naturally this approach would not work in every dialogue group and needs to be specifically tailored to the age group as with all programs. Songwriting is particularly powerful for children, teenagers, and college students. But with proper planning and attention to the audience it is an arts-based dialogue approach that can yield powerful results. The dialogue takes place both through the creation of the lyrics and music as well as in the discussion that ensues once the music is shared.

An example of song composition that resulted from collaboration across borders with the purpose of promoting dialogue is "Two Kids" by Anais Mitchell.[216] Mitchell wrote the song while traveling in Syria with a Syrian man she met in the lobby of a hotel.[217] After discussing the cycle of violence and the walls between human beings that

[216] Anais Mitchell, "Two Kids", *Hymns for the Exiled*. Righteous Babe Records, 2004. Compact disc.
[217] Unfortunately I have been unable to locate the name of Mitchell's cowriter. I heard Anais tell the story

contribute to stereotyping, Anais and her writing partner composed the song with a guitar in singer-songwriter folk style. The lyrics are written from the perspective of children, gazing at one another from across a divide and wondering why they are expected to hate one another. Verse one is written in English, verse two in Arabic, and the third verse in English as an attempt to represent the perspectives of both children. Some of the most provocative lyrics read: "And my daddy told me that some people hate us/ They even hate me, and i'm just a kid/ I asked how come, but he didn't answer/ So I started thinking it was something i did". And "sometimes i can't fall asleep when i'm supposed to/ I'm thinking about something i saw on tv/ There was this house in a field full of houses/ It was the bad guys living in there/ But i saw this kid looking out from the window/ And he didn't look bad, he only looked scared".[218] These lyrics demonstrate that the song is designed to evoke the innocence of children and the concept that prejudices and hatred are usually the result of received learnings, not representative of inherent divisions between human beings. "Two Kids" is a great song to accompany a session on stereotypes and perspectives of the other which are often a component of dialogue curricula. Lesson ten and lesson eleven for example of the URJ/ISNA curriculum are entitled "Religious Tolerance" and "Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism" respectively. "Two Kids" is one possibility of an emotionally evocative song that can speak to the topic by engaging participants' hearts as well as minds around the subject of prejudice and cycles of violence.

One aspect of creative textual expression common to both Muslim and Jewish tradition is the body of exegetical literatures known as *midrash* and *hadith*. The stories

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of the song's joint composition during a performance at the Living Room in New York City, Fall 2009. It is unclear why the writing partner is uncredited in reproductions of her lyrics.

[218] Mitchell, "Two Kids".

that the *midrash* and *hadith* express can inspire new lyrical description and writing. At REJML the cohort spent a significant amount of time studying the Joseph/Yusuf story common to both the Tanakh and the Quran. We then studied *midrash, hadith,* and *poetry* related to the Joseph/Yusuf story and the character of Potiphar's wife. One Jewish participant mentioned an album project entitled "Half-You/Half-Me" by the group Girls in Trouble, fronted by Alicia Jo Rabins, a SixPoints fellow who looks to religious texts for inspiration for her songwriting. This Jewish participant at REJML then sang for us one of Rabins's songs, entitled "Lemons", an interwoven tale about the Joseph/Yusuf narrative.[219] In the song "Lemons" Rabins uses Sufi poems and Quranic texts to craft a song about Zuleikha (the name given to Potiphar's wife in Persian sources) who tries to seduce Joseph. Zuleikha's friends mock her for loving Joseph. Her payback, in this musical *midrash*, involves citrus and knives. The song, a creative reading of the texts, is an example of how contemporary writers can continue to creatively respond to our textual traditions. Jewish and Muslim participants at REJML responded to the song presentation by reflecting on Rabins's interpretation, a discussion that deepened our personal understanding of the Joseph/Yusuf narrative.

Taking the Hebrew concept of *shir* as both poetry and song can widen our understanding of the use of music in interfaith dialogue, particularly in the case where more traditional Muslims feel uncomfortable with music. Poetry remains today a powerful medium for cultural expression, sharing, and collaboration and young Jews and Muslims are using the medium for candid explorations of identity.[220] As an example, at the REJML one young woman performed a searing poem about the pain that Jerusalem

[219] Alicia Jo Rabins, "Lemons", *Half You/Half Me*. JDub Records, 2011. Compact disc.
[220] http://www.muslimwomenpoets.com/, http://hebrewmamita.com/about (15 February 2012).

symbolizes in the world. She had been inspired to write this poem while listening to the song *Eili, Eili.* Coming from a traditional family this woman did not feel comfortable singing, and yet she expressed herself radically in free verse. She had developed many of her artistic ideas while serving as president of the Islamic Association at Brandeis University in regular engagement with Hillel and other Jewish organizations on campus. After she presented her poetry to the group we discussed creating an arrangement where phrases from *Eili Eili* would be sampled and interspersed throughout the poem. The result was a powerful reminder that the options for dialogue through musical collaboration are immense.

Interfaith Choir:

Forming an interfaith choir with joint leadership, whether it be a Jewish-Muslim or Jewish-Christian-Muslim collaboration is a community project ripe with possibility depending on the demographics of the local community. The "musicking together" that occurs within a choir context actively engages an elicitive peacebuilding model. An example of a song that could produce both rich "dialogue through conversation" in addition to embodying the spirit of dialogue in the music is *"Adinu: A Sufi Song"*. "*Adinu: Sufi Song*" is a choral arrangement written by Andre de Quadros, a Muslim composer and Shireen Abu-Khader, a Christian-Palestinian composer, as part of a series entitled *Salamu Aleikum: Choral Music of the Muslim World.* The text is attributed to the Andalusian Moorish Sufi mystic Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Arabi. In it's English translation from the Arabic original it reads:

Verse #1 (Also chorus)
I follow the religion of love
Wherever love is found
For love is my religion and my faith

Verse #2
Holy, Holy, Holy
You are the Lord God
Heaven and earth
Are full of your great glory

Verse #3
Almighty God, of great dignity
Our Creator, I ask you to be merciful on all
I come to You, the revealer of all obstacles
Hoping for Your approval as I have none but you

Before even engaging in singing together the text of "*Adinu*" itself can prompt a rich discussion. First, questions about Sufi theology and Sufi practice arise from this text. There is ample opportunity not only for a teaching on Sufism but for Muslim participants to explain any personal feelings about the difference between Sufism and their own practice. Possibilities also exist for Jewish participants to speak about Jewish mysticism. Verse two of "*Adinu*", begins "*Quduus, Quduus, Quduus*" and is evocative of the *Kedushah* prayer in Judaism. A Jewish and a Muslim participant might be pre-assigned to lead a discussion on holiness and a comparative look at these two prayers in order for participants to bring greater understanding to their singing of the piece.

The composition *"Adinu"* is evocative of both harmony and dissonance in dialogue. The composers purposely wrote the piece with a basic structure that they left open to improvisation and interpretation by the singers involved. In the "performance commentary" the composers write that the piece, consisting of the "Adinu" section (mm 1-16) and solos, is structured like a sacred reponsory, in which the chorus alternates with a soloist or cantor. Experimentation is encouraged. The basic structure however begins with the choir singing a cappella in unison (mm 1-16). The piece remains a cappella throughout. While the text is in Arabic the music has a distinctly western sound—the

piece is composed in E flat Major and remains in this key without modulation. After the first verse is sung in unison the same verse is then repeated in unison with an E flat vocal drone underneath. The choir has the autonomy to choose how many times the unison part of the song should be repeated and those singing the vocal drone on E flat may choose to split into a chord underneath to expand the sound if the choir continues to repeat. During the soloists' improvisations the choir remains on the E flat drone. While the composers have written the three verses listed above into the piece as solo suggestions, the soloist is entitled to choose any text which is sacred to him/her and improvise a vocal line of his/her choosing. One, two, or more soloists may be singing at the same time, creating a cacophonous effect that may be variously harmonious or dissonant depending on the soloists' choices. In the version that the Zamir Chorale performed at the Middle Eastern Harmonies concert members of the choir chose to improvise around the words to the *Kedushah*: "*nekadesh et shimcha baolam k'shem sh'makdishim oto bishmei marom kakatuv al yad neviyecha*" while a Turkish soloist improvised around the words to *Quduus, Quduus, Quduus.* The parallel meanings of the dialogue here were striking as they were sung next to one another in alternately consonant and dissonant tones. In choosing the solo texts and the structure of the song participants in the choir creatively determine their own musical *midrash* on interfaith dialogue.

Cantor Jill Abramson, who directed a children's choir of Palestinian and Israeli youth as part of the international peace program Building Bridges for Peace, makes the point that often the best music for bringing participants together may not be directly related to the participants' backgrounds. Cantor Abramson mentions that she often used American folk songs with her choir or African choral music and found that this worked

well to unite the group.[221] Use of music that either speaks to a common American heritage or that is unfamiliar to both/all groups is one possible choice in the community-building work of the choir. I contend that a mix of this style of music with music that speaks directly to the faith traditions and that can then be discussed and shared is important to the work of the choir. Further, maintaining an established interfaith choir, even if it only meets once or twice a month, ensures that relationship-building continues over time. Participants can actively be in dialogue about music for an upcoming Thanksgiving interfaith service, Martin Luther King service, or *Yom HaShoah* commemoration for months prior to the performance rather than the scrambled planning that often takes place for a one-time program. The more the group works together, the more they will engage in substantive dialogue and make informed and thought-provoking musical choices, serving both the purpose of relationship-building within the choir as well as more meaningful programming for those in attendance at events where the choir performs.

Musical Partnerships and Performance:

In her article "The *Piyyut* Craze" Galeet Dardashti writes that the study of Judeo-Arabic music has the potential to bring Jewish and Muslim musicians together through a common musical idiom.[222] Dardashti has experienced this herself. As she continues to delve into the Jewish music of her Persian background she collaborates with a number of Muslim and/or Palestinian musicians by virtue of the musical aesthetic within which she works. Similarly, I have noticed that as my own interest in Middle Eastern Jewish music grows so too does the network of Muslim musicians with whom I come into contact. This

[221] Abramson, Cantor Jill. Conversation. 4 February 2011.
[222] Dardashti, "The *Piyyut* Craze", 13.

contact is born out of a shared interest in a particular musical aesthetic. Through seeking out musicians to contact for lessons as well as meetup groups for Arabic and Turkish music I have found myself being invited to take part in two Arabic-folk and Sufi choirs where choir leaders have shown interest in the possibility of my sharing Jewish music with the group.[223] I am not suggesting that all cantors need develop an interest in this area of Jewish music. However, cantorial training currently provides little opportunity for performance and repertoire study of non-Ashkenazic music. With such limited exposure, students don't have the opportunity to explore the vast field of Jewish music that emerged out of the Muslim world nor the chance to discover if it would be an idiom within which they would enjoy performing. For those cantors and cantorial students who are interested in this field of Jewish music the opportunities for musical collaboration and the conversations that these partnerships can yield are significant. And, as chapter four demonstrated, musical partnerships that foster relationships over time are more likely to have a positive impact on audiences in performance.

Teaching Music that Reflects Judeo-Arabic Hybridity in the Synagogue

Jewish congregants often have very little background about the long history of Jewish-Muslim interaction and the impact that it had on Jewish culture. Prior to embarking on Jewish-Muslim partnership the cantor can run programs within his/her synagogue to raise awareness about this history and the great musical tradition that emerged as a result. In particular a lecture series, musical evening, or a sermon in song could be a wonderful vehicle to highlight *piyyutim, pizmonim,* or any other musical form

[223] I was unable to participate in these groups due to time constraints but will begin work with the Arabic folk choir in March.

that reflects Jewish-Muslim cultural exchange. The work of raising awareness about the historical relationship that Jews and Muslims shared has the potential to significantly impact congregants' current associations with Islam.

Personal Reflection and Lessons Learned:

It has been a year since I began to attend interfaith and Jewish-Muslim events in earnest. Over the course of this time I have met and been inspired by many individuals who are deeply committed both to the expression of their own faith as well as to engagement with the "other" in order to bring about greater understanding in our world. I remain inspired by interfaith work and am further convinced that the Jewish community has partners in the Muslim community with whom to engage in deep and meaningful work. This has been proven to me again and again. I'm recalling the warm invitations I have received from the Progressive Muslim Alliance and the Nur Ashki Jerrahi community where members regularly asked me to attend their events after hearing of my project, the steady stream of articles about triumphs in Muslim-Jewish relations that I see my Muslim colleagues posting on their facebook pages, and the e-mail I received just this week from a Muslim colleague who excitedly reported that he is taking a course on Modern Jewish Literature taught by Professor Wendy Zierler at NYU and "loving it!".[224] These exchanges and others are immensely encouraging.

Alongside these hopeful discoveries has also come the reality that sustained interfaith dialogue and relationship building is hard work, and not due only to the pitfalls of miscommunication and discord. Rather, it is in the more mundane aspects related to planning programs and sustaining communication that can make interfaith dialogue

[224] Rahman, Ebad. E-mail correspondence.

painstaking and pose roadblocks to further work. Like any community organizing project, discrepancies in participants' level of motivation, lack of financial resources, difficulty with scheduling, and poor organization can curtail success. In planning my recital and helping to organize a reunion retreat for REJML I have already experienced the small frustrations that accompany some of the work. A few examples of the mundane setbacks I have experienced include:

- The Muslim woman who agreed to partner with me in building a Jewish-Muslim choir decided to study abroad in Indonesia for the year.
- Individuals who initially showed interest in project participation find that their schedule is actually too busy to allow for it
- Unreturned e-mails and phone calls
- Difficulty coordinating schedules was so great in some cases that the partnership/relationship lost momentum
- The space we booked for the REJML reunion retreat at Park51 was so cold and uncomfortable that it was difficult to stay present for connection

These discoveries are in no way specific to interfaith dialogue and yet they highlight the supreme importance of details in any interfaith encounter related to place and space and having a network of committed leaders who are equally invested in the project. Even with those factors in place, building sustainable relationships between communities takes patience and persistence. Leaders need to be aware of this mundane aspect of the work so that when they encounter it they do so with resilience.

It has been in the area of music and interfaith dialogue that I have been the most surprised. As I mentioned in the introduction, at the beginning of my research I anticipated, naively, that participants in an interfaith dialogue setting would be automatically moved by music, no matter the use. I am now more conscious of the dynamic collaboration and planning that must accompany the use of music in order for its use to be significant. Similarly, I am aware that music and musical performances that

attempt to water-down differences and points of conflict often fall flat in a post-9/11 world that sees no end to violence in sight. While it is tempting to search for easy answers to peace through music the truth remains that there are none. Individuals involved in interfaith dialogue seek to bring their full selves to the conversation and give voice and equal weight to both the issues that divide and unite. The music and musicking process of dialogue must respond to these needs by opening the space for discourse and expanding the opportunities to deepen relationships through conflict as well as agreement.

Another discovery was in the area of Islam and music. When I first began this project I encountered a lot of resistance to the initial question that Muslims would want to partner in the creation of music given the traditional claim that music in the Islamic tradition is *haram.* During the course of my research though I have discovered that while this may be the case in more traditional communities, the Muslim community in America is increasingly diversifying and there are many secular as well as observant Muslims who are actively engaging with the use of music in their tradition and the idea that the definition of sacred music is broader than chanting of the Quran.[225] Particularly with the growth of the African-American Muslim community there is even more potential for musical collaboration than ever as their community brings a deep tradition of music to the table. In his twinning programs for example Rabbi Joshua Davidson has put on concerts comprised of an interfaith Jewish-Muslim choir with the Muslims hailing from a neighboring African-American mosque. In this case, it is American music that is the medium for dialogue. This is just one example in support of the argument that Andalusian Spain was not the last chance we as Jews and Muslims had for inspiring and

[225] Conversations with Progressive Muslim Alliance members.

influencing one another. Using the backdrop of America as our common cultural context can and does lead to new artistic expressions and partnerships that uniquely reflect the complexities, opportunities, and unique freedoms of today's world.

In his book *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* Rabbi Jonathan Magonet quotes from Psalm 34:15: "*bikkesh shalom v'rod'fehu",* "seek peace and pursue it". Magonet goes on to remind the reader that for most commandments we are instructed only to fulfill them when they come our way, but when it comes to peace we must actively seek it out.[226] Interfaith dialogue is one of the ways in which we as clergy can exemplify the imperative to seek peace and pursue it. This thesis is only a first foray into the field of music and interfaith dialogue. I encourage and welcome further contribution to this rich area of our work. It is my sincere hope that we as cantors will continue to strive for thoughtful and meaningful ways in which to use music in the service of deepening interfaith dialogue within our synagogues and broader communities.

[226] Jonathan Magonet, *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* (London: GBR: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 10.

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[1]*Teach Empathy* http://teachempathy.com/empathy-quotes/empathy-quote-marshall-rosenberg/ (accessed January 19, 2012).

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