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THE INCORPORATION OF THE YEMENITE TRADITION IN CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI MUSIC

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

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Summary Statement

As a first generation immigrant, I was always interested in experiences of other people who went through a similar road of adjustment to the new life. Growing up in the former Soviet Union, where for many generations Jews had been deprived of their heritage, I was interested in learning about Jewish communities which had enjoyed a relatively peaceful experience in the Diaspora and were therefore able to remain true to their beliefs and tradition. My first encounter with Yemenite music occurred in Israel, when I heard the singing of Ofra Haza. There was something native, authentic, primitive and true about the sound of her voice and the melody of the Love Song she sang *a capella*. I was galvanized by the recognition that here was an artist who was able to preserve an age-old tradition and at the same time to build on it for relevance and resonance in contemporary life.

Musical traditions always reflect the life of a society and its culture. Israeli society, being multicultural and indeed multitraditional and therefore a true melting pot, is the heir of a variety of different musical traditions, which, by the very nature of its melting pot, it would seek to blend into a composite national culture. In this mix the Jewish music of Yemen plays a seminal role.

The goal of this thesis is to gain an understanding of the role of the Yemenite Jewish musical tradition in the development of the Israeli musical culture as a whole. While many different musical traditions influenced Israeli music and its development, the one that influenced the so-called Mediterranean or Oriental school came mostly from the music of Yemen. In this connection I aimed throughout my research to understand the significance of the relationship between Eastern and Western Jewish musical traditions: the western music with its interest in harmony and elaborate forms and styles and the eastern, committed to the use of melody, often without any accompaniment, with the exception of the tattoo of a drum. Unlike the rest of the so-called oriental music Yemenite music became a part and parcel of the music of Israel, as both a model for certain styles, and as an integral element in other works for the concert stage and popular musical scene. From the very early history of the new Jewish state composers of the *Yishuv,* educated in the musical traditions of Western Europe, were influenced by their encounter with the music of Yemenite Jews and skillfully incorporated its elements into their compositions. Later, when ethnic music was widely popularized in Israel and even abroad by the acclaimed stars of Israel popular musical scene, by singers of the caliber of Shoshana Damari, Ofra Haza and Ahinoam Nini, the Yemenite musical heritage assumed its place as a foundation stone of contemporary Israeli music.

Can we say that all classical and popular music of Israel is based on Yemenite musical tradition? Of course not. But when we look for a distinctive Middle Eastern flavor in the music of Israel, we will often hear the unmistakable sound and rhythmical pattern of Yemen as an important ingredient in its musical melting pot.

Preface

To Rabbi Martin A. Cohen, go my gratitude for his willingness to share his time and knowledge, for support and guidance throughout this process. It has been a blessing to be challenged by and learn from him over past two years. I am also grateful, for the many insights he has patiently offered me about the study of Jewish history and Jewish tradition.

To Joyce Rosenzweig I give special thanks for her expertise, wisdom, continuing encouragement and enthusiasm, and for her generosity in providing invaluable resources related to the Jewish Yemenite musical heritage.

To my husband, Cantor Sergei Schwartz, who encouraged me to achieve this dream, thank you. He provided endless reserves of love and patience through the years. I could never have accomplished this without him.

I. The History of Yemenite Jewry

Yemen is a country located in the Southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula. The boundaries of Yemen have changed many times and in recent years its borders have become unstable. Yemen borders on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea. It should be noted however, that like most other borders in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen's borders with its neighbors are not well defined and are open to dispute.

Yemen covers an area of 527,970 sq km (203,849 sq mi) and controls the strategic strait of Bah al-Mandeb, connecting the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. Yemen's population was estimated at 18.7 million in 2002, most of whom belong to various tribes. It is believed that about two million Yemeni nationals live outside the country, working as laborers in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

According to the tradition, the Yemenite Jews first reached Yemen just before the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians. However, no historic evidence is available concerning the beginning of the Jewish settlement in Yemen. Some scholars happen to believe that Jewish merchants who traded with Saba and Kush established a temporary settlement in Yemen. Later this settlement became permanent and Jewish started to develop in South Arabia.

The importance of the Jewish communities increased in the fifth century. This was a time of bitter conflict between Christianity and Judaism over religious dominance

in Yemen. According to the inscriptions at Bet She'arim the entire Himyarite kingdom converted to Judaism. In the first stage the Jews gained the advantage. There is even evidence of some connection between the Jewish Himyari King and a descendant of the Davidian family in Babylon and Tiberias. Later, however, the Byzantine emperor appealed to the Christian king of Abyssinia to intervene in Yemen. Starting in 525 C.E. was ruled by Christian governor from Abyssinia. Information about this period of the history of Yemen derives from Christian and Arabic sources.

The Muslim era of Yemen started about one hundred years later. In 629 Muhammad's army conquered the country. We are unable to learn anything definite about the spiritual, social and economic conditions of the Jewish community during this time from either Jewish or Muslim sources. Jews were not mentioned. Up until the year 897 Jewish history in Yemen is obscure. We learn from a Muslim source that turmoil prevailed in Yemen. In 897 C.E. the main city Sada was conquered by a Zaydi imam. The Zaydi dynasty extended its rule over the whole country and ruled until the 1962 revolution. In 897, a pact signed between the founder on Zayidi kingdom and the Jewish and Christian communities in Najran, provided for the Jews to retain the land they owned before Muslims and even to purchase additional land.

The first documents we have of Yemenite Jews bear witness that the Jews had settled in Yemen from pre-Islamic times. We also learn that Yemenite Jews had connections with the centre of the Jewish people in Baghdad. We learn this from the letters found in the Cairo *Geniza* that were sent by the *geonim* to Jewish Yemenite dignitaries. Yemenite Jews supported the Babylonian academies. The Jewish community

of Sana had a regional center for the collection of money for the academies in Iraq. From the documents of the *Geniza* we learn about the role of the city of Aden, the main transit stop for the trade with India. We also learn that Yemenite Jewry was drawn to the spheres of both major political and spiritual Jewish centers in the East, Baghdad and Cairo. We know about the confrontation within Yemenite Jewish community over the issue, such as which academy should benefit from the financial support and which of the Jewish leaders- from Baghdad or Cairo- should be mentioned in the daily prayer in the synagogues. These questions were settled with the help of Maimonides.

During the turbulent times accompanying the fall of Fatimides and the rise to power of Ayyubids (1174) the fanaticism of the Shiites was aroused and all the Jews of Yemen were forced to convert to Islam. Only the death of the Ayyubi pretender in San'a six month after the decree was promulgated enabled them to return to the overt practice of Judaism. Maimonides was in steady contact with the Yemenite Jews. Unstable situations and prosecutions kindled a messianic movement among the Jews, one of them even claimed to be a messiah. In their confusion the Yemenite Jews looked for guidance from Maimonides, whose immense influence on Yemenite Jews up to present times cannot be exaggerated. In response to the issue and the belief in the advent of the messiah Maimonides wrote his *Epistle to Yemen*.

From the *Geniza* documents we can conclude that the economic conditions of Yemenite Jewry up to the middle of the thirteen century were fairly good. The rise of the *Bani Tahir* dynasty in southern Yemen in 1454 marked a turning point towards the grave political, social, and economic conditions of the Jews in modern times. They ousted

almost all Jews from the areas they inhabited on the allegation reason that the territory is sacred and forbidden to non-Muslims. Muslims also wished to punish the Jews on account of their Messianic movements.

During the period of Ottoman rule (1536-1635) the Jews enjoyed a measure of protection. However, due to the tensions between Turks and the Zaydi population, Jews were wholly dependent on the goodwill of the current ruler. In the year 1586 Jews were accused by the Zaydis of treachery in aiding the Turks. As the result the regulations about special Jewish garments and headgear were renewed. In 1618 in South Yemen after bloody prosecution Jews were forced to convert to Islam by the Turkish governor of the province Taizz. In the 1660's, when a group of San'a Jews expressed their messianic aspirations in connection with the Sabbatean movement, the Imam decided to deny their rights us a protected religious minority. That decree was promulgated in 1679. The Muslims confiscated Jewish property, destroyed synagogues and forced Jews to convert to Islam. Those who did not convert were expelled to Mawza, the Red Sea Port in West Yemen. The exile of the Jews only lasted one year, but they were decimated famine and illness. Uprooted from their ancient dwelling locations Yemenite Jews were cut off from their traditions. Their spiritual leadership was not respected by the members of the community, and as a consequence, Jews suffered a social and moral crisis. Upon their return Jews were obliged to build new neighborhoods outside the city walls and at a distance from the houses of Muslims. The community of Sana suffered more than others. The times of "exile" remained in its memory. The grim aftermath of the event of 1667-1680 was followed by a brief period of renewed prosperity in the years 1740-1800 under

the leadership of Shalom Iraqi, who served as the treasurer under three Imams, and spiritual mentor of Rabbi Yihie Salih.

Due to the collapse of the central authority and on account of external and internal factors in the first half of the nineteenth century the Yemenite Jews witnessed continual prosecution. In 1848 the Ottoman Empire reinstituted its shaky authority over Yemen and in 1872 conquered the entire country. The Ottomans restricted the powers of the imam to religious matters and as a result Jews felt themselves more secure. In general, the Ottomans abrogated all discriminatory regulations, including the status of the Jews as a protected minority obliged to pay the poll tax.

When in the 1911 Ottomans left the country, the change of the authority brought new disasters for the Jews. The rebellious Imam Yahya (1904-1948) renewed all laws concerning the Jews, including the poll tax. The Jews were not allowed to leave the country and even new synagogues built in San'a during the Ottoman rule were destroyed. Organized *aliyyot* of Yemenite Jews to *Eretz* Israel began around this time. When in the 1948 the new Jewish state was established, Yemenite Jews took the advantage of the suggestion made by the leaders of the new state to absorb them, and soon permission to leave the country was obtained from the Imam Ahmad.

II. Social Status & Jewish-Muslim Relations

How did an ancient, strictly Jewish community, survive in Yemen in the midst of a strictly Muslim nation? It is held that Muhammad explicitly forbade forcing Islam upon the Arabian/Yemenite Jews while, on the other hand, he enjoined that "there shall not be two religions in Arabia" and in all countries within the peninsula. Because of this ambivalent command, the very survival of the Jewish community in Yemen came into serious question after the conquest of Yemen by the Muslim army in 629, just three years before Muhammad's death. Caliph Omar (634-644) initiated a policy of expelling Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula, including northern Yemen. In spite of that policy, and the disappearance of Christians from Yemen after the 11th century, Jews succeeded in assuring themselves a place in Yemeni society, albeit as second-class citizens. Their survival was finally secured under the Shi'ite Zaydi dynasty, whose founder signed an accord with the Jewish communities in 897, recognizing their right to exist with dignity as long as they paid the *jizya*, an exaction for protection.

There are two opposing ways to view historic Jewish-Muslim relations in Yemen. The pessimistic view holds that Jews were subjected to harsh treatment by the repressive religious state, controlled by fanatical Zaydi imams whose sway extended from the environs of the capital city of Sana' a to the central highlands. Throughout the Islamic world, the Qur'an (9:29) and the early Caliphs, specifically Omar I, imposed restrictions upon non-Muslims labeled *dhimmis*: "Until they pay tribute ...[they must] be humbled." The restrictions involved dress and public behavior, house and synagogue/ church construction, and many other facets of life. Although *dhimmis* were not allowed to own land, they were often subject to the *kharaj* or "property" tax. More significant, the

dhimmis were systematically forced to pay a poll tax, the *jizya,* the price of being "a protected minority."

Inconsistently applied to Jews everywhere in Muslim lands, the so-called *Covenant of Omar* and the prescribed restrictions were imposed with excessive zeal and cruel severity on Yemenite Jews by the Zaydi religious and legal authorities. Ironically, the rise of a fundamental Shi'a belief, and indeed the rise of the Shi'a movement, is attributed by an early Muslim writer, Saif Ibn Omar, to the teaching of a certain Yemenite Jew called Abdallah Ibn Sabah, who preached that Ali was not really dead but hidden and would reveal himself again to establish God's kingdom on earth! In any case political and religious feuds among the Islamic leaders always resulted in an instability of Jewish life. This instability and the prejudices that limited personal and social freedom officially deprived Jews of equality. The Jews were at the very bottom on the social ladder in Yemen. They did not have any rights in Muslim court without a Muslim patron, a sayyid, who for a fee took upon himself the responsibility to protect the life and prosperity of his clients' family.

The ideological alliance between the imam, Yemen's political ruler, and the Shi'a theologians and jurists created an oppressive atmosphere of religious fanaticism that impacted the Jewish minority. Jews, the skilled smiths of Yemen, were not permitted to carry arms or the very *jambiya (*daggers) they crafted and which every Yemeni Muslim wears as a sign of dignity. They were forbidden to build houses more than two stories high; to ride a horse or a mule in the street; to walk on the same side of the street as the

Muslims; to touch food to be used by Muslims; to wear shoes or brightly colored clothes; or to have lights on the streets in the Jewish quarter; and so forth.

According to the pessimistic view of Yemenite Jewish history, from the fifteenth century onwards, intolerance worsened. Despised by many Muslims, Jews were the victims of occasional mob violence. At times, the religious and political authorities themselves violated the mandate to protect the Jews, as when in 1618, the Jews of Sharab were ordered to convert. They were ordered to perform particularly degrading tasks, such as the obligation of the Jewish community of Sana'a to clean the city latrines. Jewish orphans, even if their mothers were still alive, were seized and converted. In 1725 and 1762, there were renewed attempts, though unsuccessful, at converting or expelling the Jews instigated by the religious authorities.

The alternative, more optimistic, view of Yemenite Jewish history does not deny discrimination but paints a more nuanced, less bleak, picture. The Jews ranked relatively high within the tribal system of Yemen. Many studies of traditional highland Yemen suggest a rigid order of social hierarchy. The term "caste" is used to apply to endogamous units defined by occupational trades and attendant prejudices. Within this system, the Jews were generally not ranked as low caste or "untouchable." Aside from being subject to paying a particularly higher *jizya* or "poll tax," Jews in Yemen were usually well treated, with soldiers protecting their synagogues and their quarters. Muslims even made donations to encourage Jewish piety. Rural Jews, removed from the main centers of Zaydi control, generally fared even better within the various social groupings. The orphan decrees, restrictions on camel and donkey riding, forced removal of wastes by Jews from

alleyways and Muslim home areas, and other similar restrictions were unknown in many rural regions. Yemenite Jews, who spoke Arabic and sang even religious songs in both Hebrew and Arabic, especially the songs of the famous poet Shalom Shabbazi (16th century), felt at home in Yemen and adapted well to their environment.

Both the pessimists and the optimists agree that, in spite of the pressure of the Yemeni religious leaders to expel the Jews and the inclination of the imams to accede to their demands, the government in the main refrained from drastic actions on account of economic considerations. Despite everything, Yemenite Jewry flourished economically as professional goldsmiths and silversmiths and managers of the royal mint. With respect to this critical function, the rulers put greater trust in Jews than in Muslims. In other words, the hostile dictates of the religious leaders were implemented only so long as they did not conflict with political, social, and powerful economic interests. Recent history perhaps dramatizes the traditional economic importance of the Jews. The mass emigration of Yemenite Jews to Israel in 1948 may well have accelerated Yemen's economic decline and the resulting political instability that culminated in the successful revolution of 1967.

III. Yemenite Jews in Israel

Jews had begun to leave Yemen in the 1880s, when 2,500 had made their way to Jerusalem and Jaffa. But it was after World War I, when Yemen became independent that anti-Jewish feeling in that country made immigration imperative. As a result immigration of Jews from Yemen to Palestine increased during the early twentieth century. The Yemenites came to escape economic and political persecution under Turkish rule, which

lasted in Yemen until after World War I, as well as persecution by local Moslems. They were particularly influenced by Jewish emissaries notably Shmuel Yavni'eli in 1911, who came to Yemen on behalf of the Zionist Federation. They were influenced as well by religious impulse of *Shival Zion,* and by the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The first wave of immigration (1881-1904) came from the capital city, Sana'a, and its environs, and the majority of the new arrivals settled in cities. In 1908 In Jerusalem their numbers reached 2,500. On the other hand, most of those who came in the second wave (1904-1914), came from rural areas in the north and south of Yemen. They established agricultural communities near the big cities, where they worked as hired farm hands under poor conditions, for low pay.

After World War I, immigrants continued to arrive and to settle in the towns, especially Tel-Aviv, and in neighborhoods near the old and new agricultural settlements. Despite the continuous increase in the number of Yemenite immigrants and their contribution to the establishment of Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine, the institutions of the Zionist settlement —the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund (JNF)—made no attempt to establish independent agricultural settlements for them, even when requests were put to them by representatives of the Yemenite community. As a result the integration of the immigrants into the local society was difficult. However, the Yemenite Jewish immigrants, using all their strength, slowly established themselves on the land and managed to secure a firm position in the society. "They purchased land from their savings and erected separate quarters for themselves near the agricultural *mochavot*

in Judea and Galilee. By the end of the World War II there were about 28,000 Yemenite Jews in Palestine."[1]

The Yemenite Diaspora was nearly totally eliminated with the establishment of the State of Israel. In contrast to the early pioneers, who had come to Israel with socialist principles to "work the land," Yemenite Jews made *aliyah* for purely religious reasons. They believed in the biblical prophecy according to the Book of Isaiah (40:31), that God promised to return the children of Israel to Zion on the wings of eagles:

But they who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength

As eagles grow new plumes:

They shall run and not grow weary,

They shall marc and not grow faint.

In May 1949, when the Imam of Yemen agreed to let 45,000 of the 46,000 Jews leave the country. Israeli transport planes flew them "home." Yemenite Jews were brought to Israel on 380 flights. This was one of the most complex immigration operations the State of Israel has ever known. The operation "Magic Carpet" was secret and information was released to the media only several months after its completion.

Upon the arrival to Israel most of the Yemenite immigrants were unable to pursue their native professions as craftsmen. They faced a severe employment crisis and had to change their professions for new ones. The majority of the Yemenite Jews had to earn

[1] *Encyclopedia Judaica* [electronic version]. CD- ROM. Ed., version 1.0. Shaker Heights: Judaica Multimedia, 1997

their livelihood from manual labor; they were employed in agriculture and farming in *moshavim* and in construction and clerical work in the towns. Most of the women dedicated themselves to their large families and did not pursue a career.

The transition from a lifestyle rooted in a centuries old tradition to a new and unfamiliar standard of living was complex. Only one generation later, following a period of severe suffering and struggles, Yemenite Jews could finally regard themselves as full-fledged Israeli citizens. The tendency of the young immigrants to follow current social patterns and abandon religious and traditional values aroused conflicts in numerous families.

In spite of the confusion in many families, by the early 1970s the majority of the Yemenite Jews remained devoted to family sentiments and family clans were still an important factor. The synagogue continued to be their social center and most families strove to give their children a religious education.

IV. Yemenite Musical Traditions

The life of Yemenite Jews revolved around two cycles: the yearly cycle and the life cycle. Within these two cycles all forms of musical expression of the Yemenite Jewish community developed in three different social frameworks: the synagogue, the family, and the educational system. Yemenite Jews divide their music into three distinctive parts based on differences in musical styles and on different social functions:

- liturgical music;

- men's para-liturgical song;
- women's non-liturgical song.

Yemenite liturgical tradition, unique in its character has preserved some of the particularly ancient features, especially regarding the musical performance of the liturgy. Despite the fact that in its texts Yemenite liturgy is almost identical to the most other Orthodox traditions, its uniqueness is shown in three principal areas:

- the pronunciation of Hebrew and Aramaic texts clearly differentiates almost all consonants and vowels;
- the cantor assumes a much broader role as *shaliah tzibbur*;
- the structure of the musical selections and their performance during the service has a different character from other traditions.

1. Men's Song

The para-liturgical tradition of men's singing is based on the text of Diwan, the traditional collection of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic poems by Shalom Shabbazi (1619-1690). The Diwan is divided into separate sections according to the literary form and function of the poetry: *shirim, shirot,* and *halleloth.*

The first type of poems, the shirim, is identical in both metrical and rhyme. They are constructed on the principle of a quantative meter. Each line is built on two elements: *delet* (first element) and *soger (*second element) – which are identical in metrical type and

in most cases also in their number of metrical patterns.[2] All lines of the shir are also identical in the rhyme of the closing lines of the poem –*soger. Shirim* are written in Hebrew and Arabic in Yemenite dialect, and sometimes parts of stanzas also appear in Aramaic.

The men sit around the table and one of the members of the group assumes the role of leader. He holds the *Diwan* and decides which poem to perform and in which tune to sing it. The leader also decides when to stop in order to insert embellishments or con tenuous improvisations. He also decides when to change the tune or tempo. The recitative is based on an antiphonal type of performance: the leader begins and after first or second line some members of the group join in, while others sing the responses. In order to make a smooth transition from one poem to another, the leader adds a verse from Psalms that is performed to a fixed melody. This verse serves as a bridge to the melody of the next poem.

The second type of poem, *shirah*, is also is quantative in meter. The form of its stanzas is fixed and organized into larger textual units. Each textual unit is composed of three stanzas. The first stanza contains three or four two part lines, the second includes three or four short lines, and the third has one or two lines identical in form, meter and rhyme to the lines of the first stanza.[3] This complex form is the most common for *shirot* included in *Diwan.* There are two different performing styles of *shirah.* The first type is

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[2] Adaqi, Yehiel and Uri Sharvit. *A Treasury of Jewish Yemenite Chants. Yehiel Adaqi's Collection.* Israel: The Israeli Institute for Sacred Music, 1981. p. XXXII

[3] *Encyclopedia Judaica* [electronic version]. CD- ROM. Ed., version 1.0. Shaker Heights: Judaica Multimedia, 1997

exemplified by a group of men singing to the accompaniment of a drum, or an empty metal tin. Dancing usually takes place when *shira* is performed on weekdays. The second type is exemplified by the group is singing without any drum accompaniment or dancing.

The musical style of *shirah* is different from the style of the *shir*. *Shirah* has fixed metrical and rhythmical patterns. The distinctive feature of the first stanza is that the musical phrase covers the entire textual unit. The melody of the second stanza differs from the melody of the first one. It has a repetitive nature and parallels a complete line.

When dancing, the performers reflect the differences in the melody by changing step patterns. The melody of the third stanza differs from the two previous ones or sometimes can sound the same as the first one. As in the performance of the *shir*, the leader begins singing and the rest of the group joins in after two-three lines. Those who seat close join him in singing the *delet*, and those who stay further away reply with *soger*. With the heightening of the excitement during the performance of the *shira*, the leader displays his talent in leading the group. The soloist ornaments his singing with trills, inserts long improvisations between each line and interludes between the stanzas, makes changes in tempo, and switches the tunes. The last line of *shirah* is performed on a new tune in a recitative style in a slow tempo. It serves as a bridge to the singing of the next part of *Diwan- hallelot.*

The poems of *hallelot* differ in their style, form and social function from *shir* and *shirah.* All *hallelot* begin and end with the word *wa-hallaluya.* Most are constructed of

four to ten verses that are not composed in quantative meter. Verses are united only by a uniform rhyme. According to Uri Sharvit, there are five musical characteristics that differentiate *hallelot* from *shir* and *shirah:*

1. A melodic course similar to that of several prayer-tunes and common to all *hallelot;*
2. uniform rhythmical values covering syllables, and an unfixed meter;
3. melodic "movements" marking the end of clauses;
4. singing in parallel vocal parts together with a process of modulation;
5. uniform singing of the participants without antiphonal singing.

This musical tradition is also known in the liturgical repertoire of the Yemenite Jews.

Like other poems of *Diwan* these poems are written in three languages: Hebrew, Arabic, or Aramaic. In some cases they contain all three languages. The style of the poetry in Hebrew is mostly biblical or rabbinic in nature.

2. Women's Song

The third group in the musical repertoire of the Jews of Yemen is women's secular song. Women never attended synagogue, they did no receive religious education and they did not know any Hebrew. They sang in the Arabic language about domestic life, birth and death, marriage and love. Similar to the men's singing tradition, here too we observe a leading singer or a duet of singers assuming a leading role. Those leading figures are called poetesses, *meshorerot.* The *meshoreret* is usually versed in improvisation of melody and invaluably remembers numerous texts. One of the most

important qualities for the *meshoreret* is the ability to improvise a text according to the first stanza of a song.

One of the factors that differentiate women's song from men's song, where a group leader usually performs solo, is that the leadership role is split between two women singers. One of them beats on a drum, and the other on a flat metal tin plate called *saham,* while they lead group in singing. This accompaniment emphasizes the meter of the song and aides in the performance of the dance. The tattoo determines the rhythmic structure, which is varied with respect to the length of the rhythmic patterns. The purpose of using *saham* is to stress the meter of the song's tune. *Saham 's* rhythmical pattern always stays the same and establishes the beat of the song.

There are four main types of tunes in the women's repertoire. The first type is performed in a slow tempo and complemented by an accompaniment organized into metrical units. Traditionally, women sing antiphonally and accompany the "leader," who begins the performance by singing a complete musical phrase that usually reflects the first line of the text. Than the group sings the same line twice. There are pauses between the phrases and their length is not fixed. The drum beating continues during the pause. The pauses help to root the rhythmical structure of the song and its musical form. There is no dance accompanying this type of song.

The second type of women's song incorporates the rhythm of the dance-song *da 'ase. Da 'ase* has fixed rhythmic patterns that include seven units. The rhythmic patterns of the tunes can change from song to sons, but both drum and *saham* articulate the same meter. This creates an effect know as *hemoyola:* a fixed metrical unit divided in

different ways of rhythmical patterning among parallel parts.[4] In addition to the steady rhythmical pattern two basic characteristics are typical for the performance of *da 'ase*: an acceleration of the tempo and changes in the dynamics of the accompaniment.
The third type of song is usually performed immediately after *da 'ase.* The drumbeat establishes the fixed rhythmic pattern of the dance-song. As in the previous dynamics, the accompaniment changes, especially between the musical phrases, when the beating on the drum and metal plate heightens.

The fourth and the last type of the Yemenite women's song is performed immediately and without any preparation. The initial tempo of this song is the same as the final tempo of the previous one. The leaders change the rhythmical pattern to a syncopated fixed meter. In this type of song there are three rhythmical patterns performed simultaneously: syncopated rhythmical pattern by the singer and metal plate player and steady and even rhythmical base on the drum.

In conclusion it should be pointed that a *successful* performance depends on the creativity of the leaders and their ability to improvise the text as well as the preservation of the three main types of the dance-song. Another important indicator of the celebratory musical event is the use of *higer*, is performed in the high register in *"falsetto"* by a vibration of the tongue on the upper lip. *Higer* is usually performed in the pauses between the phrases or songs. The use of *higer* "contributes to the raising of happiness, and also it expresses an uplifting of the spirit."[5]

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[4] Adaqi, Yehiel and Uri Sharvit. *A Treasury of Jewish Yemenite Chants. Yehiel Adaqi's Collection.* Israel: The Israeli Institute for Sacred Music, 1981. p. XXXVII

[5] *Ibid,* p. XLII

In brief it should be pointed out that women's song shows no similarity to men's song. Their tunes and rhythmical patterns are much simpler. The modes used in women's compositions are *makamat* – like, but are not part of any known mode system.

V. East and West. Influence of the Yemenite Musical Tradition upon the music of the Jewish composers of the *Yishuv*.

Jewish composers of the *Yishuv*, educated in the music traditions of Western Europe, were influenced by their encounter with Middle Eastern communities and the Arabic music of the region. Zionists in their beliefs, these European émigré composers dedicated themselves to the fostering of a new Jewish national identity and musical culture. Affected by their new surroundings they undertook to incorporate the musical ideas of the Middle Eastern and North African communities from Morocco to Yemen, from Iraq to Bukhara. The composers of the *Yishuv* believed that the oral traditions of the different *edot* could have retained a kernel of the ancient music of Israel. "They rejected the Austro-German heritage in favor of French post-Impressionist methods: their melodies reflected modality of prevailing folk idiom, harmonic style relied an a good deal of parallel motion of perfect intervals, rhythm inspired also by Arabic dance and modern Palestinian *Hora*, and text drawn on the lyrical poetry of Psalms."[6]

1. Max Brod and the Idea of Mediterranean Style

Max Brod, who arrived in Palestine in 1939, became the spokesman for this new style of music, which he called "Mediterranean." He was born on May 27, 1884 in

[6] Miller, Malcolm. Paul Ben-Haim and the Mediterranean School: A Reassessment. *Jewish Music Institute –International Centre for Suppressed Music, Online Journal* , 2005.

Prague in Bohemia. A prolific writer and German-language novelist and essayist, Max Brod is known primarily as the friend of Franz Kafka. Brod edited Kafka's major works, which were published after Kafka's death.

Max Brod studied law at the Charles University of Prague, where in 1902 he met and befriended Kafka. Upon his graduation in 1907 he went to work in the civil service. Influenced by Martin Buber, Brod became an active Zionist in 1912. When Czechoslovakia achieved independence in 1918 he briefly served as vice-president of the *Jüdischer Nationalrat* and in 1924, already an established writer he was invited to work as a critic for the *Prager Tagblatt*.

In 1939, when the Nazis took over Prague, Max Brod was fortunate enough to acquire one of only ten family immigration permits for Palestine that the Chamberlain government so "generously" bestowed upon the entire Jewish population of Prague. In March 1939, Brod and his wife Elsa Taussig emigrated to what was then Palestine, where he lived until his death on December 20, 1968 in Tel Aviv, Israel. But Max Brod did not leave Prague alone. With him he transported a whole world of European culture to Tel Aviv. Apart from his own creative output, he introduced the world to the work of many other geniuses, including Franz Kafka and Leos Janacek. He was an outstandingly eloquent spokesmen, an author and composer. In Tel Aviv he continued to write and works as a drama advisor for *Habimah*, later the Israeli national theatre.

Brod and Kafka were lifelong friends. The latter had instructed Brod to destroy his unpublished manuscripts after his death, but Brod defied the wishes of his late friend and instead edited and published the materials in the 1930s. Brod's own numerous novels

a blend of fantasy, mysticism, and eroticism, are written in a direct style. His most famous work is a historical novel, *Tycho Brahes Weg zu Gott* (1916; *The Redemption of Tycho Brahe*). Other novels, such as *Die Frau, nach der man sich sehnt* (1927; *Three Loves*) and *Zauberreich der Liebe* (1928; *The Magic Realm of Love*), deal sensitively with the problems of love. His *Franz Kafka, Eine Biographie* (1937; *Franz Kafka: A Biography*), presents a highly developed, personal point of view. Brod also edited Kafka's diaries (1948-49) and letters (1954 and 1958). These and other works made Brod a well-known personality in German literature. He unselfishly promoted other writers and musicians. His critical endorsement would prone to be crucial to the popularity of Jaroslav Hacek's *The Good Soldier Svejk*, and he played a crucial role in the diffusion of Leos Janacek's operas.

Among Brod's other works are collections of essays, *Heidentum, Christentum, Judentum* (1921; *Paganism, Christianity, Judaism: A Confession*) and *Diesseits und Jenseits*, 2 vol. (1946-47; "*On This Side and on the Other Side*"), which attempt to define a modern Zionist's intellectual position.

By contrast Brod's musical compositions are little known. They include songs, works for piano and incidental music for his plays. He translated some of Leoš Janáček's operas into German, wrote a biography of him in 1924, and authored a study of Gustav Mahler, *Beispiel einer Deutsch-Jüdischen Symbiose*, in 1961.

His musical creativity not withstanding, Brod is better known as a music critic. In his article, "Eastern European visions of the Mediterranean", the contemporary Israeli musicologist Edwin Seroussi the extensively discusses Brod's contributions to Israeli

music criticism. According to Serrousi, Max Brod was the first one to use the concept of a 'Mediterranean style,' attributing it to Hungarian-born Jewish composer Alexander U. Boskovitch (1907-1964) who had immigrated to Palestine in 1938. According to Brod, Boscovitch employed the term to refer to musical works that were influenced by the "Oriental" Jewish folksongs collected and made public by the Yemenite Jewish singer Bracha Zephira. The adjective 'Mediterranean' also appears in the title of few musical compositions from about the same time (early 1950s), such as Menahem Avidom's *Mediterranean Sinfonietta* of 1951.[7]

Brod's approach to the Mediterranean style was mainly based on a list of musical traits referenced in his study on Israeli music. There he argues that the works of Mediterranean music, "had their rhythm in the harsh irregular meters, the obstinate repetition but also the manifold ceaseless variation which enchants by its apparent freedom from rule and impulsiveness. The structure of the movement is sometimes linear, unisonal, or at least not polyphonically overburdened. The influence exerted by the melodies of the Yemenite Jews, the neutralization of the boundaries between major and minor keys, the return to ancient modes, the neglect of the augmented second, so characteristic of the Diaspora in all these respects, lines of connection can be drawn with Arabic music... Climate and landscape, shepherd's song, oboe and clarinet, play their part. Accompaniment by tympani or tambourine, real, only hinted at, or imaginary, add to some of these songs... a strangely monotonous, even hypnotic character; but whoever

[7] Seroussi, Edwin. Mediterraneanism in Israeli Music: an Idea and its Permutations. *Music & Anthropology, Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, 2002. p. 5

immerses himself in this apparent monotony is enabled to hear delicate and subtle nuances which have been denied to European ears."[8]

Some contemporary Israeli musicologists suggest that the music identified as 'Mediterranean' does not constitute a school, but is better understood as an attempt to include diverse regional musical elements. The model of "Mediterranean music" style that Max Brod introduced in his book on Israeli music is compared to Arabic music by Edwin Seroussi. He describes his model of music as "southern," "tense," and "infused with the bright light of Mediterranean air."[9]

The contemporary Israeli musicologist and historian, Jehoash Hirshberg argues against the existence of a "Mediterranean school" of Israeli music, referring to this term as a "fallacy". He also concludes that Mediterraneanism did not constitute a coherent musical style, but rather a set of semiotically-loaded musical patterns which were frequently juxtaposed with other similar sets, such as that of Diaspora-related patterns.[10] Hirshberg argues that "schools" of music in the compact circle of Eastern European Jewish composers of Western art music active in Tel Aviv in the late 1940s did not have enough knowledge of Arabic music in general, and that as a result their Mediterraneanism did not have significant effect upon the development of new musical genres. His Mediterraneanism is a true, if anachronistic echo of late 19th century

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[8] Brod, Max. *Israeli Music.* Tel Aviv: Sefer Press Ltd., 1951, p. 35

[9] Seroussi, Edwin. Mediterraneanism in Israeli Music: an Idea and its Permutations. *Music & Anthropology. Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean,* 2002. p. 5

[10] Hirshberg, Jehoash. "Alexander U. Boskovitch and the Quest for an Israeli National Style." In *Modern Jews and their Musical Agendas* (*Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 9), New York: Oxford University Press, 1993

European musical Orientalism. As it is well known, the abstract concept of Arabic music does not exist in reality, for many contrasting genres and styles of music coexist in the different Arabic cultures. One may also wonder how much Arabic music Brod had actually listened to."[11] However, this term, 'Mediterranean' style, is still widely used and recognized by the music critics and musicologists.

2. Paul Ben Haim

Paul Frankenburger, a graduate of the Munich Academy of Music, became another pioneer in the synthesis of the Eastern and Western musical traditions that sill lies at the heart of the Israeli contemporary music. Paul Ben-Haim studied composition and conducting at the Munich Academy of Arts, from 1915 to 1920 with Friedrich Klose and Walter Courvoisier. Later, from 1920 to 1924, he worked as an assistant conductor to Walter and Knappersbusch at the Bavarian Opera, and then as music director at Augsburg, until Hitler's accession to power in 1933 cut short his career and forced him to emigrate to Palestine.

Inspired by his friend and colleague, Heinrich Schalit, as early as the late 1920s, Paul Frankenburger, began to explore Jewish themes and experiment with the synthesis of eastern and western music traditions. His oratorio *Joram,* composed in 1933, was premiered much later, in 1979, in Tel Aviv. His last composition written in Germany, the Suite #1, Op.2, for piano, contains motives from a popular Yemenite folksong, *"Ali Be'er."* Ben Haim treats the melody within expressive, evocatively textured moments,

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[11] Seroussi, Edwin. Mediterraneanism in Israeli Music: an Idea and its Permutations. *Music & Anthropology,Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean* , 2002, p. 6

with eastern melismatic ornaments and pedal points. This provides an exotic cloak through which the more French-influenced harmonization of the Yemenite folk-song emerges, gradually becoming more and more oriental in sound. It was this type of synthesis of West and East which came to characterize Ben-Chaim's style as he became more and more acquainted with the musical tradition of Palestine and Israel.[12]

In 1933, Paul Frankenburger emigrated to Tel Aviv and changed his name to Paul Ben-Haim. He taught and conducted in Tel Aviv and by the '50's was recognized as a leading Israeli composer. Moving away from European modernism, Ben-Haim espoused the so-called Eastern Mediterranean style. This consisted of a distinctive blend of oriental and European elements, influenced by the impressionist exoticism of Debussy, Ravel and de Falla, and Jewish folklore, both of Eastern Europe and of the Yemenite and North African heritage. Ben-Haim's oeuvre covers many styles from the Romanticism of his early years to the large-scale orchestral and choral works inspired by Biblical themes to the Neo-Classicism of his later years. Paul Ben-Haim is perhaps the best known of the *Yishuv* composers. He helped to forge a national Israeli style in the early years of the state and exerted a powerful influence on subsequent generations of Israeli composers.

Some of his works include the Concerto Grosso of 1931, Symphony No. 1 of 1940 and Symphony #2 of 1945. In 1953, he won the Israeli State Prize for the composition *Sweet Psalmist of Israel* scored for harp, harpsichord and orchestra. Ben-Haim's music can best be described as late romantic with an Oriental/Mediterranean

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[12] Miller, Malcolm. Paul Ben-Haim and the Mediterranean School: A Reassessment, *Jewish Music Institute –International Centre for Suppressed Music, Online Journal*, 2005

overtone. He embodies the general tendencies of this group of composers who were trained in the classical late romantics of the late nineteenth and early twenties century. After escaping from the difficulties of European life, they turned to the life that they were embarking on. Like Vaughn William, Bartok, Kodaly and Grainger, they began to incorporate the music and folkways of the country of which they had become part. Ben-Haim died in Tel Aviv, in 1984.

3. Paul Ben -Haim and Bracha Zephira

The pioneering attempt to build a bridge between East and West was the unique project of ell known folk singer Bracha Zephira (1910 -1990), the first performer of Arabic and Jewish ethnic songs. She was born in Jerusalem and at age three lost her both parents. She was raised by several foster families of different ethnic origins. From these different backgrounds Zefira learned a large repertoire of traditional songs. After studying music at the Jerusalem Conservatory and for a brief period of time in Berlin, she began her performances with the improvisatory pianist and composer Nachum Nardi. Her concerts were a great success in Europe. In 1937 her nine-year marriage to Nachum Nardi ended. Their union resulted in a union of Eastern, often Yemenite melodies with Western harmonies, however, none of the music that Zephirah and Nardi performed together was written down. In 1939 she approached nearly all the composers in Palestine of that time and commissioned arrangements of the songs, insisting on Western orchestral instruments.[13]

[13] The full compilation of the songs appears in Bracha Zefira's autobiography, *Kolot Rabim* (Many Voices) (Ramat Gan, 1978; in Hebrew). See also Gila Flam, "Bracha Zefira-A Case Study of Acculturation in

Ben-Haim was one of these composers. Zephira asked him to arrange some of her songs, thus beginning collaboration which lasted until 1956. During the first two years of their work together Ben-Haim arranged fourteen songs. The transcription of the Eastern melodies into Western musical notation was not an easy task. Despite the fact that in earlier years Ben-Haim had already experimented with the eastern melodies and sounds, to organize those melodies in accordance with the western musical training and record them on paper was a difficult task. The modes that were employed in the songs were *maqamat*-like and often contained quarter tones. The difficulty in dealing with the non-tempered intervals, three quarter tones, and the third that consists of a whole tone in his arrangements Ben-Haim resolved by using open chords. In many arrangements, the composer employs alternative major and minor third and de-emphasizes the third scale degree.

"*Im Nin'alu*" is one of the most popular songs from the *Diwan.* The Yemenite Diwan was created over a period ranging approximately from eleventh to the eighteenth century. The earliest works included in it were written by the leading Hebrew poets of the Iberian Golden Age: Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, Abraham Ibn Ezra and others. The much of the Yemenite Diwan poetry was written by Shalem Shabbazi, the seventeenth century poet. Numerous version of *"Im Nin'alu"* can be found in different sources. Those melodies were orally transmitted from generation from generation. We can only guess that some of them were composed by the poets, who like Shalem Shabbazi, were also renowned prayer leaders and composed the lyrics and melody of the new poem as one musical entity.

Israeli Song," *Asian Music* 17 (1986): 108-125; J.Hirshberg, "Bracha Zefira and the Process of Change in Israeli Music," *Pe'am,* 19 (1984): 29-46 (in Hebrew)

4. "Im Nin'alu" by Paul Ben-Haim. Musical Analysis.

The short motifs with use of rich Impressionistic colors and dabs of folk-like melody depict not only the Yemenite music but also recreate the sights and sound in pre-Israel Palestine. The piano accompaniment makes
brilliant use of the repeated notes of the same motif contained from the double portion of intervals of second and fifths used in *ostinato* that are common not only to the folk arrangements of this type but also to almost all toccatas from Schumann to Ravel and to Prokofiev. This *ostinato* motif appears in the same rhythmical pattern of syncopations in the lower register of the piano accompaniment and develops later on into much more complicated *ostinatos* of paralleled octaves with their characteristically seconds and fifths inside.

The pastoral sound used in the upper register of the piano accompaniment uses Middle Eastern modes to depict a solitary flute sound in the desert. It is joined by another dialogue of the syncopated parallel octaves, which includes the modal sound of open fifths (or their reversed fourths) or sequences of seconds. Later on we have the fill out those octaves by adding the scales of sixteenth note in its characteristic modal sound.

Use of the same motifs throughout the whole composition is reminiscent of the minimalist technique used later on by various composers. Certainly in this specific composition such *ostinato* are used to emphasize the sense of very special rhythmical pattern of Yemenite music and its modal soundings.

The form in overall is certainly triple (ABA). It starts with the piano intro which hints to the future development of the whole piece in terms of its modal perspective: it starts with the characteristic motif of second and fifth and develops into the modal non-

stable cadence on tonic with the open fifth. The first part A starts with the vocal line appearance and contains four motifs based on the same *ostinato* with its slight variations. The cadence on supertonic emphasizes tonal instability and marks the end of the first part.

The second part is quite similar to the first but has an extended version of the cadence that emphasizes the supertonic like its first but continues with special sequential vocals encircling the fifth and an excursion in the piano part on its fifths degree. The last part is similar to the first with much more complicated figures in its piano accompaniment, while the last is taking the leading role in its duet with the voice and leads into the *d'vekut* section at the final cadence (after arpeggios).

In the last cadence (last 8 measures) we have the combination of the both rhythmic and melodic *ostinatos* in the accompaniment and encircling fifth vocal line while emphasize its modal character of the open fifths within the octave and its seconds as another modal characteristic. This last cadence is reminiscent of the introduction and accomplishes its almost symmetrical structure based on combination of both folk and classical minimalist technique styles. The open fifths and seconds inside the octave symbolically allude to the religious meaning of the text of the composition while the gates of heaven remain open no matter of what happens in our world...

5. Jacob Weinberg

Jacob Weinberg is one of composers who attempted to create a new Jewish national art music and during the first two decades of the 20th century found new compositions based on authentic Jewish musical heritage. It was his participation in the organization, known as the *Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volksmusik* in St. Petersburg and Moscow - *The Society*

for Jewish Folk Music that first defined for him the nature of his own Jewish identity and inspired him to compose and promote Judaically based art.

Weinberg was born in Odessa in 1879. His parents were Russified, affluent, intellectually sympathetic and cultured people, but thoroughly assimilated and with little Judaic observance. Most members of Weinberg's family belonged to sophisticated musical and literary circles of the intelligentsia. His uncle, Peter Weinberg, a respected poet and professor, was known for his translations of Shakespeare and Heine into Russian. Another uncle was a brother-in-law of the world-famous pianist, composer, and head of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Anton Rubinstein. Weinberg's pianistic talent was evident at already very early age. However, his family insisted that he acquire a profession. At a young age Jacob was sent to the local government-sponsored commercial school. Upon his graduation at the age of seventeen, he assumed a position as a bank clerk in Rostov-on-Don where he worked for a short period of time. Soon Jacob resigned and went to Moscow. He enrolled at the Moscow Conservatory for piano studies and later studied counterpoint—as had Rachmaninoff and Scriabin—with Sergey Taneyev, a disciple of Tchaikovsky's. Still under pressure from his family, he also studied law at Moscow University, and graduating in 1908.

During that same time frame Weinberg began to compose. His early works include his *Elegy for Violoncello* (his first piece, dedicated to Tchaikovsky), his Sonata in F-Sharp Minor for violin and piano, and his first piano concerto, in E-flat minor, which he played in concerts in St. Petersburg, Kiev, and Odessa. In 1905 he participated in the

Anton Rubinstein Competition, in Paris, the most prestigious competition of the time for pianists and composers.

In 1910 Weinberg studied for a year in Vienna with the legendary piano pedagogue and author of piano methodology Theodor Leschetizky. In 1911 he returned to Moscow, where he taught various musical subjects as well as piano, and where he wrote two scientific works on music. During that period he became active in the relatively new Moscow branch of the *Gesellschaft*. Weinberg was profoundly influenced by composer and critic Joel Engel, head of its music committee. A few of Weinberg's early works were published by the Moscow branch of the *Gesellschaft*. Since that first experience Weinberg showed interest in Jewish musical heritage, and he started to collect and study Jewish folksongs.

In 1916 Weinberg returned to Odessa to teach at its Imperial Conservatory. He remained there until 1921, when he left to resettle in Palestine. During the five years he lived in Palestine, he resumed his contacts with Joel Engel. Weinberg absorbed much of the Near Eastern *melos*— Arabic as well as oriental Jewish modes, Yemenite melodies, and flavors that had been largely unknown in Europe. Weinberg soon added these to his compositions. Among his works from that sojourn are a twelve-movement piano album, *From Jewish Life*; *Jacob's Dream*, a setting of Richard Beer-Hofmann's play, which later became one of his most frequently performed pieces; and *Halutzim- The Pioneers*, one of the earliest operas in Hebrew, set to his own libretto about European settlers in Palestine. *Halutzim* won first prize in a competition of the *Sesqui-Centennial Association* in America, where it also later undervent several performances. But its most poignant

performance occurred in the 1930s in Berlin, during the Nazi era, where, forbidden from non-Jewish public venues as the work of a Jew, a concert version was presented at the *Prinzregentenstrasse Synagoge* with soprano Mascha Benya in one of the lead roles.

Weinberg came to the United States in 1926. Soon he was actively involved in New York's intellectual Jewish music circles. He delivered scholarly papers and lectures at various learned societies, directed concert programs, performed, taught, and composed new music. He renewed his contacts with Jewish composers and other leading Jewish music exponents. In New York he met once again with some of his former colleagues from the *Gesellschaft* in Russia, including Lazare Saminsky and Joseph Achron, Solomon Rosowsky, Abraham Wolf Binder, Gershon Ephros, Moshe Rudinow, and Frederick Jacobi.

From 1929 Weinberg taught piano and theory in the New York College of Music and later he taught at Hunter College's extension division. In the early 1940s he organized an extremely successful series of annual Jewish arts festivals in New York. He also spearheaded Jewish music festivals in other cities, sometimes involving major orchestras. In New York Weinberg wrote three complete Sabbath services, in addition to individual liturgical settings, as well as two biblical cantatas, *Isaiah* and *The Life of Moses*. Among Weinberg's other related secular works are a piano trio on Hebrew themes; *Sabbath Suite*; *Carnival in Israel*; and *Yemenite Rhapsody*—all for chamber orchestra; *Berceuse Palestinenne* for cello or violin; incidental concert encore pieces for virtuoso *klezmer* clarinet and orchestra, as well as various piano pieces on Judaic and secular Hebraic themes; numerous Hebrew art songs; and other chamber music.

6. Yemenite Song from the Palestinian Opera "The Pioneers" by Jacob Weinberg. Musical Analysis.

Jacob Weinberg blends western Romanticism with music of Jewish liturgy: the neo-Romantic, Russian –American Jewish composer using his virtuosic piano technique, with echoes of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Rachmaninoff. This piece illustrates the composer's masterful blending of Western musical idioms and Jewish folk musical sources in particular.

With the use of pianist figuration and sweeping gestures in its very induction this composition based on easily recognizable Judaic melodic and rhythmic pattern of Yemenite folk music. The syncopated rhythm and open fifth in the intervallic structure of the accompaniment and the melodic development of the motif from seconds and fourth in its wild harmonic perspectives produces a basic overview of what lies ahead during its development.

The form is binary; two Allegretto-Scherzosos are very similar, while in between it contains a small interlude in the middle (Andante, which is quite similar to the very first piano intro (also marked as Andante) according to its structure: its melody has the reversed fifth (from the original fourth) and arpeggios in the accompaniment that contains same intervals (second and fifth/fourth in its broader and freely arpeggio style).

The brief, energetic, Allegretto-Scherzoso- like part is based entirely on the motif of seconds with its structural fourth-fifth intervallic contents. The most familiar oriental motif of seconds and a fourth is associated with the pioneer settlers in Palestine during the decades prior to its statehood in 1948. This melody is developed and manipulated

throughout the movement, with a particular exploitation of its syncopated rhythm. Echoes of the tune are combined with reworked and augmented fragments of the second Allegretto-Scherzoso part with its unmistakable Rachmaninoff in its piano accompaniment.

In this work there is a bridge of the two-millennium chasm between antiquated and contemporary Jewish experience. The work is a transparent vindication of the conviction (and that such non-Jewish musical figures as Rimsky-Korsakov, who encouraged them) that there was a rich artistic combination of the source materials of authentic Jewish musical tradition, both sacred and secular. This constitutes the artistic bridge between the antiquity of Jerusalem- with it historical and emotional resonance in Jewish experience- and the spirit of Jewish modernity an renewal. This spirit was seen as exemplified by the young pioneers around Weinberg. Weinberg had been influenced by the colorful environment and the soil out of which the Bible grew with its distinctive characteristics, including frequevent interchanges between major and minor tonalities, Arabic-like motifs, and perceived Near Eastern ornaments. There are also echoes of ancient Psalmody and hints of biblical cantillation motifs throughout the whole motive development.

VI. Yemenite Women Singers

Shoshana Damari

Shoshana Damari was Born in Dhamar, Yemen in 1923. Her family migrated from Yemen to Rishon LeZion in the British Mandate of Palestine in 1924. At a very

young age she performed with her mother, and when she was fourteen she had her first songs broadcast on the radio. She studied singing and acting at the *Shulamit* Studio in Tel Aviv, where she met Shlomo Busami, the studio manager who became her personal manager. They wed shortly thereafter in 1939 when she was only 16. That year, Damari also performed her first solo, and subsequently became famous as a singer

Her strong alto voice was distinctive because of her Yemenite pronunciation of some Hebrew letters. She was very well known especially in the period before and after the founding of the State of Israel. She was famous for her nationalist anthems, popular with the Israeli military, and was deeply associated with the generation of the 1948-49 war and in the years following the establishment of the State. She is considered by many as the "Queen of Israeli song".

Damari's first record was released in 1948. In the year 1949, Damari launched a solo musical act at the Li-La-Lo Theater and became a permanent cast member at the theater. One of the numbers written for the theater by the poet Natan Alterman and composed by Shlomo Wilenski, *Kalaniot* (anemones) became her trademark song over the years" Damari's artistic collaboration with Alterman and Wilenski yielded countless songs that became a staple of Israeli music, including *Layla Layla* (Nighty Night), *Ani MiTzfat* (I'm from Safed) and *Ze Ya'avor* (It'll pass). *Hayu Zmanim* (The Old Days) and *Tzarich Letzaltzel Pa'amayim* (You Should Ring Twice) are two more of her most famous songs. She was also known for her popularity amongst Israeli soldiers, for whom she frequently performed over several decades. Over the following decades, her voice stood for the voice of a land in the process of renewal, full of optimism and hope. In the

early years of the state, the singer - who was renowned for her beauty - first brought the flavor of Middle Eastern music and its guttural pronunciation to mainstream Israeli culture.

Damari left to perform in the U.S. for the first time in the 1950s and over the next two decades divided her time between Israel and the States. She returned to the stage in the late 1980s after almost twenty years' absence and released her best-selling album *Or* (Light) in 1988. That same year Damari became an Israel Prize Laureate. In 2001 Israel's leading performing artists held a tribute concert for her.

In 2005, at age 82, she recorded two tracks for the *MiMaamakim* album by Idan Raichel's Project and participated in some of their live performances. The two had been slated to begin another joint project. She died in Tel Aviv, on February 14, 2006 after a brief struggle with pneumonia. She breathed her last while *Kalaniyot* was sung by her family and friends.

Ofra Haza

Ofra Haza was born on November 19, 1959. The youngest of nine children in the Yemenite Jewish family that lived in poor neiborghood in Tel Aviv, Hatikvah, she instantly became local and then national success story and a source of great pride for many Israelis of Yemenite origin. Inspired by the ancient melodies taught to her by her mother and by a love of Yemenite-Jewish culture, her music somehow bridged the divide between the Jewish and Arab peoples and her appeal quickly spread to a wide Middle Eastern audience. As her career progressed, the multi-lingual Haza was able to switch

between traditional and more commercial singing styles without jeopardizing her credibility. Her music fused elements of Eastern and Western instrumentation, orchestration and dance-beat. Success was to follow in Europe and the Americas; during her singing career, she collected many platinum and gold discs.

Age 12, Haza joined the local theater troupe. Its manager, Bezalel Aloni spotted her exceptional singing talent and staged many of his productions around Haza as the centerpiece. As her career developed, he became her long time manager and mentor. At the age of 19, she was Israel's first bubble-gum pop princess and, retrospectively, music journalists even described her as the 'Madonna' of the east.

By the time she had completed her military service in 1979, Aloni's protégé had matured as a singer and was ready to launch a solo career. Representing Israel, she made her international debut at the Eurovision Song Contest 1983 with the song "*Chai*" and finished a close second to the Luxemburg entry.

There were many successful recordings in her homeland, including her first album, recorded when she was only eighteen. Her Israeli hits included 1979's "*Shir ha-Frekha*" ('The Teaser Song', or 'The Tart'), the theme song from the movie *Shlager* (in which she also acted) and "*Le 'Orekh Ha 'Yam*" ("Along the Shore").

It was with the crossover album *Yemenite Songs* (1985) that Haza took her first real steps towards global appeal, combining traditional orchestration with western dance beats and lyrics drawn from the poems of a seventeenth century poet Shalem Shabbazi. Haza boldly re-imagined traditional Yemenite songs, combined techno music with

traditional Yemenite folk songs and combined techno music with traditional Yemenite folk songs to create her own unique sound. The album was a big hit both at home and abroad, and contributed to the formation of a whole new music category, nowadays commonly referred to as *'world music'*.

When asked about her musical roots in an interview on KCRW-FM radio (1993, Santa Monica), Haza spoke of her Yemeni parents, a childhood filled with music and singing and a passion for traditional Yemenite songs, picked up from her mother. Questioned about the theatre troupe, she spoke of the poverty and the total neglect of successive governments for the *Hatikvah* area; and how, by way of protest, the community had rallied to create something positive and dramatic, which would make others sit up and take notice of a forgotten neighborhood. Throughout the interview, Aloni can be heard in the background, adding information and, curiously, correcting Haza about her age at a particular point in her life (by subtracting two years). Opinion is divided on whether she was born in 1957 or 1959, but the former may be the case, given that most artists seek to appear younger.

Her voice has been described as mezzo-soprano of near-flawless tonal quality, capable of lending itself to a variety of musical styles with apparent ease. It is thought likely that Haza's voice had the most upper harmonic overtones of any singer in history, reaching as many as thirty-two on some songs, such as "Love Song" from the album *Shaday* (1988).

Ofra Haza's contribution to international music is more than just a performance among celebrated artists; it could be seen to represent her recent efforts in the cause for

peace. In the 1991 she participated in Artists of the World For Peace in the World video of John Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance." In 1994 at the request of the late Israeli Prime Minister, Izhak Rabin, Ofra Haza performed at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo, Norway in December, 1994

Ofra Haza's death on February 23, 2000, at the age of 41 deprived the world of a lovely woman, a great vocalist, and a fearless cultural advocate. The cause of her heath was reported as organ failure or pneumonia, arising from AIDS complications. Her family declined to confirm or deny these reports however, stating that it was Haza's wish that the matter should remain private. There was considerable media interest into the circumstances of her death.

After Haza's death was announced, Israeli radio stations played non-stop retrospectives of her music and Prime Minister Ehud Barak praised her work as a cultural emissary, commenting that she also represented the Israeli success story - "Ofra emerged from the Hatikvah slums to reach the peak of Israeli culture. She has left a mark on us all". In 1997 Haza had married businessman Doron Ashkenazi, who died a year after her. They had no children.

Ahinoam Nini

Ahinoam Nini (Noa) was born in Israel in 1969. Her grandparents had moved to Israel from Yemen in the 1920s where her parents were born. Though Noa was born near Tel Aviv, she and her family left for America when she was a year old, her father to study chemical engineering at Columbia University. In New York, she went to religious school

and sang in the choir. Noa first attempted to compose and write poetry at age eight. When she was only 12, a teacher brought her to a studio to record some songs she had written and thoughts of child stardom loomed. She later attended the famed High School of Performing Arts, singing and dancing in musicals, but still never thought she would be a performer. She was raised in America but did not feel like an American. At home, she was a Yemenite: the food, the music, the books, the culture. There was a great conflict within as she grew up. She was not finding her place in America. She was also inspired to move to Israel by a teenage boy she met on a trip to Israel. She convinced her parents to allow her to move to Israel, where she finished high school. In a rare example of first love fulfilled, she eventually did marry her boyfriend, now Dr. Asher Barak, a pediatrician.

At age seventeen she returned to Israel and upon graduation from High School Noa was drafted into the Armed Forces of Israel, where she served in the entertainment division, the Northern Command Ensemble, a USO-like vocal group that toured the country's military bases. Over two years, she performed hundreds of shows, often under the most difficult conditions. At one camp, there was no stage, no seats, and not enough electricity for both the microphones and the lights. So they plugged in the microphones and sang by the headlights of the circling Army Jeeps.

In the early nineties Ahinoam Nini met Gil Dor, the renowned Israeli guitarist. Dor had studied at Boston's legendary Berkley School of Music when Pat Matheny, a

teenage jazz guitar prodigy was teaching there. Gil Dor introduced Noa to the works of the legendry jazz musician. This collaboration in the recording of two albums "Ahinoam Nini Gil Dor Live" and "Ahinoam Nini Gil Dor", the latter becaming a platinum album. Ahinoam Nini continues to create albums that are well received in Israel and abroad. She sings in Spanish, German, French, and Italian. Ahinoam is one of the most popular contemporary singers in Israel.

Ahinoam Nini rails against musical barriers. Though many songs in her albums are sung in Hebrew they are not greatly influenced by the World Beat style or Yemenite ethnic folk music. The songs are certainly reminiscent of a different place and they have a unique percussive element, both vocally and instrumentally. Noa's voice has a beautiful warm tone. She is an exceptionally well traned vocalist. Noa stands decidedly apart from another well-known Israeli Yemenite singer, Ofra Haza. She is not dominated by the Yemenite musical roots as much as Ofra. As she explained in an interview, her Oriental roots are accidental and that she been inspired more by musicians like Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, and Leonard Cohen.

Noa's career together with Gil Dor has led to three international albums, four Israeli albums, and hundreds of concerts throughout the world. Nini performed with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and like many artists, she has used her talent to trumpet political causes. Together with Miri Aloni and Aviv Gefen, Nini performed at the fateful 1995 peace rally in Tel Aviv at which Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. Later she sang in the White House and in Oslo at special concerts dedicated to Rabin's memory, both attended by then-US president Bill Clinton. Her most memorable, and

controversial, performance was a rendition of "Ave Maria" to an audience of some 100,000, including the pope, at the Vatican in 1994.

VII. The Incorporation of the Yemenite Tradition in Popular Israeli Music

The Yemenite singers whom we discussed in previous chapters, are important figures on the scene of Israeli popular music. From Brachah Zephira, who spent most of her life collecting and promoting Yemenite musical heritage and Shoshanna Damari, who played a leading role at the time when the culture of *shirei eretz Israel* (the songs of the Land) was predominant, to Ofra Haza, who despite her early attempts to distance herself from her oriental roots, later in her carrier turned towards the Yemenite musical tradition and Ahinoam Nini, who is a product of the new Americanized Israel we can observe development of the oriental popular music of Israel. Each of them in numerous ways represented their epoch. In their article on the dynamics of change in Jewish ethnic music in Israel, the acclaimed Israeli ethnomusicologists Amnon Shiloach and Erik Cohen, state that "music reflect the life of a society and its culture."[14] Each of those four talented Yemenite artists represents her time in the history of the State.

A brief excursion into the history of the development of the Oriental music in Israel will help us to get a better understanding of the role of these artists and their place in Israeli musical culture. The immigrants of the European origin brought Western culture and musical traditions to Israel and these continued to develop and evolve in the relation with the new Israeli culture. Waves of immigrations also brought newcomers from the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, whose musical traditions were not

[14] Cohen, Eric & Amnon Shiloach. The Dynamics of Change in Jewish Oriental Ethnic Music in Israel. *Ethnomusicology 27*, 1983, p. 229

highly regarded in professional musical circles. In the beginning, during the Mandate and early years of the State of Israel, despite the official attitude that supported a melting pot and advocated disappearance of ethnic traditions, composers of the *Yishuv*, many of them inspired by Bracha Zephira attempted to elevate these so-called Oriental music or to incorporate its elements into their "Western" compositions. Zephira and her contemporaries took the position that the incorporation of Oriental music (Mediterranean style) was a way to form a new *Eretz*-Israel style. They believed in *Israelization* and strived to create a uniform Israeli culture. However, their borrowing of the tunes was highly selective, sporadic and tainted by a tendency to exoticism. Composers of the *Yishuv* clearly did not intend to widely promulgate ethnic musical traditions to the public. Their procedure was to introduce Yemenite mode into a Western matrix. In general, ethnic music was preserved mainly in the communities of immigrants, through religious observances and life cycle events.

Shoshana Damari, who is recognized as one of the most famous Israeli singers, became an icon of the *Israelization* period in the early years of the State. Shoshanah Damari, the talented singer and devout patriot of her new homeland, actively promoted Yemenite traditional music and "helped to propagate an image of the Yemenites a versatile, artistically gifted people, whose tradition significantly enriched the emergence of Israeli culture.[15] She represented the time in the history of Israeli musical culture when inspired by the pioneering Zionism, composers trained in Western traditions were to express "the integration of the Diasporas."[16] It is important to point out that the adaptation of the Yemenite traditional songs and their distinctive mode traditional to the

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[15] *Ibid*, p.246

[16] Cohen, Eric & Amnon Shiloach. Major Trends of Change in Jewish Oriental Ethnic Music, *Popular Music* 5, 1997, p. 202

European performance that is with addition of the accompaniment, Western notation and aesthetisation, was essential in the popularization of the traditional Yemenite songs. As time went by and the immigrants from the "Oriental" countries took a greater role in Israeli society, they demanded a wider recognition of their musical heritage. In the early years of the *Yishuv* and the state ethnic culture was not something that young people were proud of. However, in the seventies numerous attempts were initiated for the preservation of original ethnic traditions.

The creation of the Center for the Integration of the Oriental Jewish Heritage, Culture and Education, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the establishment of the new "Festival of Songs in the style of Oriental Communities" testify to the fact that the idea of the "melting pot" and the "integration of the Diasporas" was only partially successful, and this mostly in the area of economics and politics, but not in the area of culture. This period in the history of the State of Israel was marked by a general tendency to return one's roots and to strive to revive old traditions. According to Cohen and Shiloach, this period should be called *ethnisation*. This is the time when the smaller communities desired to achieve wider recognition within the wider Israeli culture by displaying their distinctive cultural achievements before trans-ethnic community. The music of the Yemenites is no longer recorded and preserved by outside musicologists and ethnomusicologists. As the distinctive elements of their traditions were lost to the younger generations, these young artists, born and raised in Israel, recorded them from the surviving elders of the community. In the seventies it was the Yemenite Jews themselves who took measures to preserve their heritage.

Ofra Haza is one of those performers and composers, who started her career as a humble singer of *musica mizrachit* in the *HaTikvah* neighborhood and became an internationally recognized performer. She was recognized in Israel as a new Bracha Zephira and Shoshanna Damari for her efforts to promote Yemenite music in Israel and abroad. As pointed out by Regev and Serroussi, Haza became the most globally successful Israeli pop singer ever. Ofra Haza managed to establish herself as a mainstream Israeli singer. This was not an easily achieved goal for a singer of a minority group. Soon afterward she showed the world what traditional *Musica Teimanit* sounds like. By bringing singing traditional Yemenite music to a wider audience she "made a break through their parochialism and achieved an appropriate status in the national musical culture."[17] She was perceived as a new, more sophisticated type of the *mizrahi* singer and even became a source of notional pride. Ofra Haza, though at first seeking to distance herself from Yemenite music tradition, later, was influenced we can assume by a general search for the preservation and popularization of this tradition. Her passion derived from a general movement toward *ethnisation.*

Ahinoam Nini, who was raised in USA and returned to Israel only at age seventeen, was clearly influenced by both Yemenite-Israeli and American musical traditions. She sings in English, Spanish, Italian, other languages and performs all over the world. She is one of the popular Israeli contemporary singers. Nini is known in France, Itali and Spain. As the tastes of Israeli society gradually changed and western poplar music became a common source of interest for the new generations of both European and Oriental origin and music market of the popular music was flooded with

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[17] *Ibid,* p. 204

recordings of Westernized music as Israeli performers jockeyed with one another for a place in the growing area of globalization.

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