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VOICES OF THE PAST, VOICES OF TODAY: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO JUDEO-SPANISH WEDDING SONGS

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> [I started singing Judeo-Spanish music because] I loved the melodies and the little stories that went with them. . . . after a number of years, it just became evident that I really had a responsibility. The Sephardim were telling me. Once you begin to work with individuals within a group of people, and they introduce you to relatives who have songs, you get into the center of the family, you become almost like a member. They are quite cognizant of the fact that they themselves will be gone in a matter of the next generation and that the language is dying out, that there are very few people doing anything about it, that their children are very busy assimilating, and that they entrusted me with helping to carry on the tradition even though I didn't myself grow up with these songs. But when I was beginning to learn them, they just felt so familiar and so comfortable.[1]

Like performer Judy Frankel, I did not grow up hearing or singing Judeo-Spanish songs, but when I began to learn them, they felt both familiar and comfortable. Something about these songs just spoke to me. I found them intriguing and soulful.

As I began learning and listening to more recordings of the songs, I realized the ones that most interested me were the wedding songs. Perhaps it was the energy I felt in their upbeat melodies, or maybe it was the joy I heard in the women's voices who sang them. Whatever it was, I knew that I wanted to learn more about these songs and the people who sang them.

I remember vividly the first time I learned about Judeo-Spanish wedding songs. It was my first year of cantorial school, and my journey in the world of Jewish music had just begun. I was taking a course on the history of Jewish music with Professor Eliyahu Schleiffer at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. I was eager to learn about the multicultural

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[1]Judy Frankel, interview by author, Tape recording, Telephone, San Francisco, California, 19 November, 1995.

nature of Jewish music, so the fact that the course covered Jewish music from many different countries appealed to me. I was particularly intrigued by Sephardic music because I had recently visited Spain and Morocco.

I became even more interested in Sephardic music when I learned that Judeo-Spanish song was primarily a women's tradition. Women in Sephardic communities sang these songs to celebrate holidays, to mark life cycle events and to teach their children about the values of their societies. As a young woman embarking on the cantorate, I was looking for female role models in Jewish music. Up until that point in our course, almost all of the music we had studied historically belonged to men.

About halfway through our course, our class learned that we would be performing a concert of Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish music. I did not hesitate to request Judeo-Spanish songs. One of the songs my advisors helped me to pick was "*Scalerica de Oro*," a popular Judeo-Spanish wedding song. A newlywed myself, I was more than thrilled to perform this song. It suited my voice, and I enjoyed performing it so much that I made a secret vow to myself that I would study and sing Judeo-Spanish wedding songs more in the future.

I later discovered that these songs could not only be effective on the concert stage, but also as part of a contemporary wedding. Once we had returned to the United States, one of my classmates asked me to sing "*Scalerica de Oro*" at her wedding. The response to the song, which we included in the wedding ceremony itself, was extremely positive. Both the bride and her guests not only enjoyed the melody and the instrumentation we added (guitar and tambourine), but they liked hearing Judeo-Spanish. This experience led me to consider how traditional songs can function effectively in contemporary settings, and planted the seeds for my some of the thoughts that have shaped

my senior project.

I could not have known when I first chose my topic where my study would lead me. It has been a constantly evolving process that has led me from books to recordings to interviews with fascinating women. It has enabled me not only to learn more about the Judeo-Spanish wedding song repertoire, but also to learn about other types of Judeo-Spanish songs as well.

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As Judith Cohen writes in the opening paragraph of a recent article, "Judeo-Spanish song has always been acknowledged as a repertoire sung, transmitted and, to a certain extent, shaped by Sephardic women. . . ."[2] In their original contexts, these songs were predominantly sung by women as an expression of their experiences in preparing for their own weddings and the weddings of friends and relatives. Today Judeo-Spanish songs are sung, studied and often reshaped by female performers and scholars. Though men have also sung these songs, ethnomusicologist Judith Cohen points out that it is primarily women who have developed new ways and contexts to transmit the songs.[3]

Through this paper I plan explore the viability of Judeo-Spanish wedding songs, both in performance and in academia today. Three specific women will serve as examples for how the songs' contexts have changed. I will explore how they present the songs in the new contexts. I will use the Judeo-Spanish repertoire and the women who transmit it as a window into a larger issue--the tension between striving for "authenticity" and pushing the limits of change in performing Judeo-Spanish wedding songs in particular and Judeo-Spanish

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[2]Judith R. Cohen, Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture, ed. Maurie Sacks (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 182.

[3]Ibid.

music in general.

The organization of this study is as follows: This chapter includes information that will help orient the reader to the material. Chapter Two focuses on the original contexts in which the wedding songs were sung and the way in which we can come to understand this repertoire through written works on them. Chapter Three deals with three contemporary women and their approaches to wedding music in particular and Judeo-Spanish music in general. Through these women, we can begin to understand some of the possible ways to present the music either through performance or through academic works. Chapter Four focuses on a comparison of five different performers' or ensemble's versions of part of the popular wedding song, "*Scalerica de Oro*." Through this comparison, I hope to show concretely how differently various performers approach one song.

The structure laid out above reflects my own journey through the Judeo-Spanish repertoire. I gathered information for this project in three ways:

1) through reading academic works--I read as much material on the subject as I could find in English.
2) through interviews that I conducted myself--I interviewed Flory Jagoda in her home in Falls Church, Virginia and Judith Cohen, who lives in Toronto and Judy Frankel, who lives in Los Angeles, by telephone.
3) through listening to many different recordings of wedding songs--I listened to recordings of several different groups, though I did not attempt to find <u>all</u> recorded wedding songs.

While I believe that I conducted my research in a multi-faceted way, there are two things in particular that I feel were limitations. One limitation

was language. I do not know Judeo-Spanish, so I was limited to reading only materials in English,[4] and I had to rely on others' translations of songs. The second limitation was that I was not able to travel and to collect more primary sources beyond those I gathered from the three women I interviewed. However, these limitations forced me to examine the material in a unique way, which is outlined above.

In order to examine the viability of wedding songs today and the meaning they can have to contemporary individuals and communities, it is necessary to understand how performers and scholars approach these songs. Do they seek to maintain the authenticity of the songs in order to preserve tradition? Do they adapt the songs in order to reflect contemporary society and aesthetic? Is one approach a more sound way to keep the songs alive? Is it possible to combine these different approaches? In order to begin answering these questions, it is useful first to understand how the songs were sung originally and in what contexts, then to explore how they are sung today in new context. Only through exploring the spectrum, from past to present, of the long-standing Judeo-Spanish wedding song tradition can we begin to grapple with the many issues involved in the questions of preservation versus change.

[4]Two important resources on Judeo-Spanish music are written in Spanish. They are: Manuel Alvar, *Cantos de Boda Judeo-Espagnole* (Madrid: CSIC, 1954) and A. Larrea Palacin, *Canciones Rituales Hispano-Judias* (Madrid: CSIC, 1971).

Prefatory Note on Language

Throughout the paper I will refer to the language spoken by Sephardic Jews, those Jews who lived in Spain before they spread out to Morocco and various countries throughout the Ottoman Empire, as "Judeo-Spanish." Judezmo, "Judeo-Espagnole" and "Ladino"are other terms for the Judeo-Spanish. Though the term "Ladino" is the most popular way refer to describe all Judeo-Spanish, it does not apply to all dialects of the language. Since my study is not limited to one particular community, I feel most comfortable using the term "Judeo-Spanish" because is serves as an umbrella term for all dialects of the language.

Judeo-Spanish was originally spoken by Jews who lived in Spain prior to the Expulsion in 1492. In its earliest form, it consisted of basic Medieval Spanish, otherwise known as Castillian Spanish, mixed with some Hebrew words. At the time, Hebrew was the Jewish language of prayer, and Judeo-Spanish was the language that most Jews spoke at home. It was predominantly the men who studied Jewish texts and went to synagogue to pray, so they were the ones who learned and utilized Hebrew. Women, on the other hand, mostly stayed at home to care for the house and the family. Therefore, they became the primary transmitters of Judeo-Spanish. Though both men and women spoke Judeo-Spanish, it was mainly the women who sang in Judeo-Spanish and taught the language to the children.

After the Spanish Jews were expelled from Spain, they dispersed to nearby Morocco and to various countries around the Mediterranean. In these countries, they continued to speak Judeo-Spanish. However, they often mixed in new words from their host countries and changed the pronunciation of

certain words creating new dialects. For example, *Hakitia* [5] evolved as the Judeo-Spanish dialect of Morocco while the Jews of the Yugoslavia called their special brand of Judeo-Spanish *Djidyo*.[6]

[5]*Hakitia* is the Judeo-Spanish dialect spoken by Judeo-Spanish Moroccan Jews. It "combines an archaic layer of medieval Spanish (Castillean) with Hebrew and Moroccan Arabic dialects. . . . With the establishment of the Spanish protectorate in 1912, *Hakitia* was exposed to the influence of modern Spanish, and one may find a mixture of *Hakitia* and modern Spanish in the songs texts performed until today." See Susana Weich-Shahak, Judeo-Spanish Moroccan Songs for the Life Cycle (Jerusalem: The Jewish Music Research Centre at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989) , 9.

[6]The term "*Djidyo*" is similar to Yiddish in that it translates to mean "Jewish."

CHAPTER II

WEDDING SONGS: THE ORIGINAL CONTEXT

In traditional Sephardic communities, the wedding was a central, if not the central, event in a person's life. More songs were written about the wedding than any other life cycle event.[7]

In order to gain a fuller appreciation of the use of wedding songs today, it is important to first understand aspects of their original contexts. In the first section of this chapter, I will describe the contexts in which women sang the wedding songs as well as the subjects about which the songs were written. The following section will focus on how women performed these songs. The analysis becomes more nuanced in the third section where I highlight the differences between two major Judeo-Spanish traditions. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion on scholars' methods in writing about this material.

Wedding Song Subjects

The marriage of a woman and a man is not just an event, it is a process. In the Sephardic tradition, the preparations for the wedding continued for months, or even a year, leading up to the actual wedding ceremony. The whole community was involved. The women especially created and sustained traditions throughout this process in which music played a large role. All of the lifestyle changes, the new feelings and experiences, and even the technical

[7]The genres of Judeo-Spanish song break down into several main categories. Although scholars differ as to how they define these categories, I will use the groupings established by Judith Cohen: *romances*, life cycle songs, calendar cycle songs, lyric songs and locally composed songs. See Cohen, "Women's Roles in Judeo-Spanish Song Traditions," 183.

logistics became the basis for their songs. The details of the song subjects varied from community to community since Sephardic customs were often influenced by the "host" country. In general, though, their songs usually addressed at least one of the four following subjects:

1) **physical preparations and characteristics** - including the bride's beauty and clothing
2) **relationships** - including the relationship between the bride and her mother-in-law, the relationship of the bride and groom before marriage, the bride's sadness at leaving her family and the groom's family's claim of ownership over the bride
3) **the bride's worth** - including the dowry and trousseau
4) **events** - including the bride's visit to the *mikvah*, *henna* night[8] and wedding feasts

From the earliest stages in preparation for the wedding, women might sing songs on any or all of the above subjects. Certainly, during an event such as going to the *mikvah*, they would sing about the *mikvah*, but every communal event was seen as an excuse to sing whether the songs related directly to the event or not.

In order to illustrate better the wedding preparations, I will take a closer look at a popular example from each of the above four subjects.

Physical preparations and characteristics: Beauty

As the bride prepared physically for the wedding, her female relatives would sing songs in praise of her beauty. The text of "*Dice la Nuestra Novia*,"

[8]Also known as *noce d'alxenya* or *noce de tafi*, this refers to an evening event where the bride's hands and feet are painted with henna. This custom, popular among Sephardim who lived among Muslim women, was meant to protect the bride from the evil eye.

uses poetic metaphors to describe the bride.

> Her hair is like silk, her forehead a shining sword, her eyebrows are like ribbons, her eyes are like balconies, her nose is like a date, her face is a rose, her mouth a ring, her teeth are like beads, her belly is a river to swim to, her arms are like oars and her back is as straight as a washboard.[9]

While it seems natural that others would praise the bride's beauty, some believe that the bride's own meticulous attention to the details of her looks was a stalling mechanism before the wedding.

In "*Ah, Sinora Novia*," the bride is summoned, "Ah, lady bride, come down below!" She replies, "I cannot, I cannot, I am combing my hair, a bride's headdress in honor of the groom." She is called again, "Ah, lady bride, come down below!" "I cannot, I cannot," she answers, "I am dressing in the bride's dress in honor of the groom."[10]

Relationships: Mother-in-law.

For the traditional Sephardic bride, the relationship with the mother-in-law was especially significant since the new couple usually went to live with the groom's family for at least a year immediately following their marriage. While some songs portray the mother-in-law as someone who only wants to come to know her new daughter-in-law, most depict an "evil" mother-in-law who is critical of her daughter-in-law and protective of her son. The text of "*Mi Suegra*" ["My Mother-in-law"] best shows this:

> My mother-in-law, the evil one, always she attacks me. I can no longer live with her. She is awful, more than death. One day I shall be rid of her. One day she sat beside my husband. She behind me like an enemy

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[9]Weich-Shahak, Judeo-Spanish Moroccan Songs, 66-67.

[10]Susana Weich-Shahak, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian-Sephardi Jews: A Preliminary Study," Orbis Musicae 7 (1979-1980): 91.

began to pinch and bite me. May I soon be rid of her! [11]

The bride's worth: Trousseau.

"A trousseau for a lovely bride to be sent with the best of luck in a happy hour."[12] The trousseau [*ajugar*] consisted of the material things that the bride's family gave to the groom. Along with the monetary part of the bride's dowry, the trousseau represented the bride's worth. Once a daughter became engaged, she and her female relatives began sewing various items for her trousseau. While they were sewing, the women sang. Some of the songs were specifically about the trousseau and all of the items in it. The trousseau usually included outer clothes[*vestidos*], bedclothes, mattresses, pillows and linens[*camasires*],tablecloths, towels, curtains [*blankeria*],[13] jewelry, and kitchen and other household items.

The bride's family displayed the trousseau for the groom's family up to a week before the wedding ceremony. Often the bride's family would have a party surrounding this event. As ethnomusicologist Susana Weich-Shahak describes,[14] the trousseau items were laid out on tables and hung on clotheslines throughout the house. The groom's family would come to inspect everything and criticize the bride's family for whatever was missing, upon which the bride's family would go and buy the missing items.[15] Once the groom's family had assessed the trousseau, they would take it to their house

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[11]Booklet from Romances Judeo-Espagnoles , Ensemble Lyrique Iberique (Eguilles, France: Harmonia Mundi S.A., 1986) , compact disc recording.

[12]From the song "*Ajugar de Novia*;." see Weich-Shahak, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian Sephardi Jews," 84.

[13]Esther Juhasz, ed., Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire: Aspects of Material Culture (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Publishing House, 1990) , 201.

[14]Weich-Shahak, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian Sephardi Jews," 84.

[15]Ibid., 83.

where, as mentioned above, the bride and groom usually lived for at least a year following the wedding.

The importance placed on the trousseau certainly must have made the soon-to-be-bride anxious. However, in the song, "*Asuar Muevo*" ["A New Trousseau"], the bride who might worry that her trousseau will not be approved allows herself to think about other things:

> I'll place my new trousseau before you
> mother- and sister-in-law, there's nothing you can say about it.
> Last night, mother I dined and went to bed,
> I dreamed a dream sweet to recount:
> that I fell asleep on the shore.
> with love, mother, I'll go to sleep;
> that a wave came to carry me off. . . . [16]

Events: The bath.

The requirement that the bride go to the *mikvah* before marriage inspired an entire event, the *bano de la novia* [the bride's bath]. Often the female members of the bride and groom's families accompanied the bride. It was considered an honor to wash the bride and her hair, an honor which followed a prescribed order of the mother-in-law [*la esfuegra grande*], the bride's mother, aunts and new sisters-in-law.[17] In some communities it was customary to throw sugar cubes into the water before the ritual immersion and put marzipan cakes into the mouths of the unmarried girls.[18] After the bath, the bride was taken to the groom's house where she was showered with coins and sweets for good luck.

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[16]Judith R. Cohen, "*Y'a Salio de la Mar* : Judeo-Spanish Wedding Songs among Moroccan Jews in Canada," in Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective , ed. Ellen Koskoff (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989) , 57-58.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Juhasz, 206.

Performance Practices

The above glimpses into the women's songs show how colorful and rich with tradition the wedding preparations must have been. These songs help us picture groups of women--relatives, neighbors and friends--accompanying the bride and singing to her throughout her journey to the *huppah*.

The women usually sang the songs loudly and in heterophony. Often they sang together, though sometimes they traded off the verses of the songs as solos, joining on the refrains. When several songs were strung together to form a suite, one woman might have taken the lead in starting a new song.

Traditionally, Sephardic women rarely played melody instruments; they accompanied their singing with percussion instruments, primarily tambourines--know as *sonajas* in Morocco and *panderos* or *panderikas* [a diminutive form of *panderos*] in the Eastern Mediterranean countries. Differences between these geographical locations will be discussed further below. Women in Morocco also played *derbukkas* [goblet-shaped drums] along with their wedding songs, and some say they used castanets as well.[19] When no instruments were available, women marked rhythms by clapping their hands or banging on pots, pans and tables.

Several devices, such as the rhythmic patterns, served as a bridge between songs strung together as suites. In addition to these percussive patterns, various yelps of joy served as punctuation marks between songs and between verses, though they were also used at other points in the songs. In

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[19]Weich-Shahak says that Moroccan women used castanets, and the women on her accompanying cassette often use them; see Judeo-Spanish Moroccan songs for the Life Cycle, 14. However, Judith Cohen told me during our interview that it is unclear as to whether or not Moroccan women originally used castanets to accompany their singing.

Morocco, women rendered tongue ululations known as *youyous* or *yelulas*,[20] while in the Eastern Mediterranean they let out something sounding like "*yip!*"[21] In both traditions, they also enhanced their melodies with trills and ornaments.

Musical Characteristics: West and East

After the Expulsion from Spain, Sephardic Jews spread throughout the world. Primarily, as mentioned above, they went to two areas: North Africa, particularly Morocco, and the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Greece, Turkey and the Balkans. Israel Katz suggests that Judeo-Spanish music can be divided similarly into two traditions: Western and Eastern.[22]

Wedding songs from the Moroccan tradition tend to be based on the Western tonal system, and their melodies follow a descending a motion, emphasizing adjacent intervals rather than leaps. Where wide intervals do occur, they are often filled in with passing tones or other ornaments. The range sometimes encompasses or even exceeds an octave.[23] In general, the songs have a simple duple meter.

The Eastern wedding songs share much with their Moroccan counterparts. For example, the Eastern songs have a wide range with a tendency toward a descending melody line and are usually in duple meter. Differences arise in the fact that the Eastern songs are often based on

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[20]Cohen, "*Ya Salio de la Mar*," 64-65.

[21]Flory Jagoda, interview by author, Tape recording, Falls Church, Virginia, 12 June, 1995.

[22]See Israel Katz, "A Judeo-Spanish *Romancero*," Ethnomusicology 12 , no. 1 (1968) : 75.

[23]Cohen, "*Ya Salio de la Mar*," 64-65.

maqamat[24] and occasionally use quarter flats. The influence of Balkan folk rhythms are seen, for example, in the "additive meter" of Bulgarian Sephardic wedding songs. In this "additive meter" a 9/8 meter, for example, is organized as 3/4 + 3/8.[25]

Textually, most weddings songs, both Western and Eastern, are based on *coplas*, strophic poems with fixed metric schemes.[26] Though most of the songs have refrains and many verses, they do not all follow one set form (e.g., ABCD).

When we get to the differences in the actual texts and tunes of the songs, it becomes difficult to generalize. Some texts or parts of texts are shared between East and West, but they are usually portrayed with completely different tunes. Some texts might not be shared between the two traditions at all. What complicates the issue further is that some of these variations occur within a single tradition as well. For example, as I will show in Chapter Four, the tune and the text for the opening section of the typically Eastern song "*Scalerica de Oro*" may vary from country to country, but the refrain stays the same.

Academic Approaches to the Wedding Songs

Scholars today who analyze Judeo-Spanish wedding music vary in their methodologies. Some focus primarily on the music, some on the text, some on the cultural context, and some on a combination of all of these.

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[24]They may also be based on the Western major and minor scales; see Elayne Robinson Grossman, "Introduction" to The Flory Jagoda Songbook: Memories of Sarajevo (New York: Tara Publications, 1993), 19.

[25]Weich-Shahak, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian-Sephardi Jews," 101.

[26]Weich-Shahak, Judeo-Spanish Moroccan Songs for the Life Cycle, 13.

A popular method is for an author to frame her analysis around the wedding subjects, discussed in the beginning of this section. In her article, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian-Sephardi Jews: A Preliminary Study,"[27] Weich-Shahak uses several wedding song subjects particular to Bulgaria to organize the main body of her research. Judith Cohen takes a similar approach in her article, "*Ya Salio de la mar*: Judeo-Spanish Wedding Songs Among Moroccan Jews in Canada."[28]

Although it is logical to present wedding songs by textual themes that focus on the events and relationships surrounding the wedding, this is not the only way scholars have examined or organized the repertoire. Both Judith Cohen and Oro Anahory-Librowicz use literary themes as a means of analyzing and organizing the repertoire.[29] Judith Cohen identifies four overriding literary themes: the erotic, the pragmatic, the frivolous and the religious. According to Cohen, these themes are often intermingled within a given song.[30] While Cohen mentions these themes, she does not explain them extensively nor does she base her entire article around them.

Anahory-Librowicz bases her article, "Expressive Modes in the Judeo-Spanish Wedding Song,"[31] around the following literary themes, which she calls *expressive modes*: erotic lyricism, the poetic tone, the exemplary tone, the playful or diversionary tone and the bawdy or obscene tone. Anahory-

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[27]Susana Weich-Shahak, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian-Sephardi Jews: A Preliminary Study," Orbis Musicae 7 (1979-1980): 81-107.

[28]Cohen, "*Ya Salio de la Mar*," 62.

[29]Though the actual song categories discussed by these two scholars overlap, they were derived independently from one another.

[30]Cohen, "*Ya Salio de la Mar*," 57.

[31]Oro Anahory-Librowicz, "Expressive Modes in the Judeo-Spanish Wedding Song," trans., Judith R. Cohen, in New Horizons in Sephardic Studies, ed., Yedida K. Stillman and George K. Zucker (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 285-296.

Librowicz explains that songs that express *erotic lyricism* describe intense feelings of lust, love and desire. Songs that take on the *poetic tone* fall into two groups: 1) the bride speaking in the first person revealing her innermost thoughts and 2) third person praise of the bride's beauty. *The exemplary tone* category includes didactic texts which provide moral lessons for the bride and groom as they enter the sanctity of marriage. Songs about the patriarchs, matriarchs and Moses who serve as models of virtue and those which refer to Jewish law as guide are also included in this category. Songs in the category called *the playful or diversionary tone* often describe the relationship between the bride and groom before the wedding in a playful or diversionary tone. Songs that take on *the bawdy or obscene tone* often combine lyrical and bawdy verses. The bawdy verses, not originally part of the songs, are usually relatively recent additions.

While Anahory-Librowicz focuses primarily on literary themes, Cohen does not limit herself to this one approach. Her investigation incorporates other techniques. She combines literary themes with subject categories, musical examples, musical analysis, and performance practice. In essence, Cohen helps the reader to understand the full scope of the original context of the wedding songs.

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Judeo-Spanish wedding songs represent the wide range of events and emotions surrounding the Sephardic wedding, from the months before the actual wedding, to the wedding itself and beyond. The lively and appealing nature of these songs as they were performed in the past has inspired contemporary educators, performers and researchers to perpetuate the songs' legacy today.

CHAPTER III

WEDDING SONGS: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

Contemporary performers and scholars have a special challenge when they use Judeo-Spanish wedding music to instruct and entertain contemporary audiences: how much to preserve the music, and how much to change it. Some would argue that the Judeo-Spanish repertoire has always undergone change as Sephardim have lived in many countries under the influence of various cultural milieus. Therefore, it would not be natural for this constant state of flux to end now. David Harris of the performing group, "Voices of Sepharad," writes:

> Has [Judeo-Spanish song's] evolution come to an end, leaving us in the present with a warmed-over memory of something once vital? What is essential to me about the Sephardic musical legacy is that it has continued to be sung. It remains a vital vehicle for communication: from one person to another, one generation to the next. In a fundamental way, the tradition is dissipated and memory disregarded if the songs are not sung. They have not survived because they are excellent relics, but because they maintain the power to move those who hear and sing them. If we insist--too narrowly, I believe--on reproducing only how they were sung 100 years ago, which performance practice do we favor? The songs belong to a dynamic oral tradition replete with contrafacts, variant text, and an active interchange with the non-Jewish community. Singing even a traditional song is a re-creative act, not unlike the faculty of remembering, which always begins in the present frame and moves backward. . . . For those of us who take pleasure in singing the traditional music, we must respect its context and originating circumstances and yet pursue the purpose of a song--to move the hearts and minds and memories of those who *in the present* listen to us.[32]

As Harris indicates, the fact that performers are singing Judeo-Spanish songs is the main point. It does not matter where performers fall along the spectrum of change or what kind of approach they take to presenting the

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[32]David Harris, "Music of the Sephardim: Carrier or Memory," Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review 15, no.2 (1993) : 147.

songs.

Some performers seek to represent "unfettered" melodies that they learn from Sephardic people themselves. Their goals is to help preserve songs as they have been remembered by people from the tradition. Others seek to recreate these songs with new interpretations and new arrangements. With this approach, some would say that they are simultaneously preserving tradition and giving it new meaning in a contemporary context.

For others, scholars in particular, the dialectic between preservation and change takes on a different meaning. Many scholars seek to represent songs in their "most original form possible."[33] Depending on their backgrounds and the approaches they take, the nostalgic component of memory may or may not play a role in their research. As one might expect, such scholars tend to dislike performers who use new arrangements and interpretations for old melodies.

Three distinct categories emerge for the contemporary approaches to Judeo-Spanish wedding songs.

1) **Educator**: promoting these songs as a window into the Sephardic heritage with the hope that Sephardic audiences will gain a sense of the collective memory of their people and enhance their sense of identity and non-Sephardic audiences will appreciate the history and

[33]I put this in quotations because it is difficult, if not impossible, to talk about the urtext of a song. Because of the songs' complicated histories, we often cannot identify one time and place in which a particular song originated. Some scholars, however, often limit their studies to a single community in one particular place and time and are then able to try to represent melodies as done by that community in that time in history. For example, Cohen's study of Judeo-Spanish wedding music as represented in "*Ya Salio de la Mar*: Judeo-Spanish Wedding Songs Among Moroccan Jews in Canada," focuses, as the title suggests, on the songs of Moroccan Jews living in Canada.

culture of the Sephardim.

2) **Performer**: presenting these songs for their entertainment value.
3) **Researcher**: studying these songs to gain a deeper appreciation of Sephardic music and culture.

In this section, I will present three contemporary women who, in their own ways, are keeping these wedding songs, and Judeo-Spanish songs in general, alive today. Each woman's contribution to wedding songs and other Judeo-Spanish songs represents a specific example of one of the approaches outlined above. Though I label the women according to these approaches, I recognize that the definitions above are general and do not define the particular women per se. In addition, it is important to note that the women do not define themselves by these approaches.

Flory Jagoda approaches the songs as an educator, Judy Frankel as an entertainer, and Judith Cohen as a researcher. I have found these three approaches for perpetuating wedding songs to be a useful lens through which to understand each woman's work, but I also recognize that each is involved in all three approaches at some level.

Flory Jagoda, a Sephardic folksinger originally from Yugoslavia, seeks to promote memories of and to educate people about the community and culture in which she grew up. Through performances and recordings of both traditional and original[34] Judeo-Spanish songs, Jagoda not only teaches audiences about her own background, but exposes them to the heritage of Sephardic Jewry in general .

Judy Frankel, also an Ashkenazic singer, performs many types of

[34]By original, I mean Jagoda's own compositions which are often based on traditional musical and textual themes.

music,[35] but has a special interest in Sephardic music. Frankel seeks to utilize her own voice and style to render Judeo-Spanish songs without straying too far from the way she has heard the songs sung by someone from the Sephardic tradition. She only performs, and records songs that she has learned directly from a Sephardic person. Through performances and recordings, Frankel reaches both Sephardic and non-Sephardic, as well as non-Jewish, audiences.

Judith Cohen, already mentioned in this paper, is an ethnomusicologist who both researches and performs Judeo-Spanish songs. Her aim is to study and present Judeo-Spanish songs in their original contexts and to represent the most authentic form as possible of a given song. While she understands performers' and audiences' needs for adaptation and change, she expects performers to inform the audience of those changes and to tell them that the way they perform the songs is different from how they originally might have been sung.

[35]Frankel performs other Jewish music including Hebrew and Yiddish songs. She also performs non-Jewish music, particularly from the Medieval and Renaissance periods.

> A young man came to me, and he said, 'I want to write a Ladino[36] song.' . . . He wrote a beautiful melody, and played it for me and said, 'I want this to be a Ladino song. Make it Ladino. So, what do you do to make something Ladino? You close your eyes. You go back to the life of the community. What else is Ladino? It's the life, how they lived.
>
> . . . all we have now is memories and, for me, songs. Stories through songs. And this has to go on because that's what our ancestors used to sing . . . otherwise we'll lose them.[37]

For Flory Jagoda, preserving the memories of her relatives and of the Yugoslavian Sephardic community is one her life's missions. So Jagoda educates people through recordings and performances of traditional Sephardic folk songs. Jagoda also writes her own songs in Judeo-Spanish to paint a lasting picture of a life and a community gone-by. "The only way I could really stay with them or they could stay with me is to write about them."[38] Her songs tell of holiday celebrations, life cycle events, family and her village, Vlasenica. She remembers both fondly and sadly a rich village life where Jews, Christians and Muslims coexisted peacefully and where family and tradition were the focal points of existence.

It is only natural that Jagoda's memories take the form of songs. Her mother's family, known as the Altarac Singing Family, was very musical, accompanying their songs with violins, tambourines, guitars and *tambouritzas*. Like many other typical Sephardic songs, the Altarac's repertoire was influenced by the non-Jewish culture around them, so in addition to singing Judeo-Spanish songs, they also sang *sevdalinkas* [traditional Bosnian

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[36]Though throughout this paper I refer to the language of Sephardic Jews as "Judeo-Spanish," Flory Jagoda referred to it as Ladino. I chose to preserve her language when quoting her.

[37]Jagoda, interview.

[38]Ibid.

folksongs].[39] Like other Bosnian Sephardic songs, Jagoda's own songs represent this blend of musical styles as well.

For Jagoda, singing had always been an integral part of life. Her *Nona*, grandmother, the family's matriarch, sang all the time, and her children and grandchildren learned from her.

> She sang. She sang. She sang as she was cooking or cleaning. Evenings were spent story-telling and singing . . . [T]here was no TV or any of that stuff. What do you do all evening in winters? You sit and listen to stories. [*Nona*] would sing the stories.

As a child, Jagoda lived with her grandmother. Her mother's first marriage to Samuel Papo, Jagoda's father, ended in a divorce after just one year, so mother and daughter returned temporarily to Vlasenica from Sarajevo where they were living.

> Those years with *Nona* were the happiest a child could know. All of the long lasting feelings that I have for my Sephardic culture, its stories and especially its songs, were a loving gift from her to me. She taught her daughters and granddaughters the woman's *Birahas* and *Bendiziones* [prayers and benedictions] that she had learned from her *Nona* and *Biznona* [great-grandmother]. Included in her teachings was the important tenet of *tzedaka*. Just before every Shabbat evening, my cousins and I would hurry home from school to take baskets of food that *Nona* had prepared for the poor . . . .
>
> While the men were in the synagogue with their sons on *Shabbat*, *Nona's* daughters and daughters-in-law would come with their children '*a buzer lo menu di Nona*' [to kiss her had] and wish her a *Buen Shabbat*. And we children always knew that her pockets would be filled with *bonbonikos* [candies].[40]

When Jagoda was eleven, she went to live in Zagreb with her mother, Rosa, and step-father, Michael Kabilio, who adopted her. Jagoda adjusted to city life and the many lessons her mother arranged for her--piano, art, ballet, gymnastics and theater--but she missed life in Vlasenica. She returned every

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[39]Jagoda, The Flory Jagoda Songbook, 10.

[40]Ibid., 12.

summer where she relished in life with *Nona* and the family.

When war came to Yugoslavia in 1941, Jagoda was no longer able to go to school or to take music lessons, and her step-father lost his necktie manufacturing business. A friend of Michael's managed to get forged identity cards for the Kabilios, and Michael sent Jagoda on a train to Split. He told her, "Florica, from the minute you sit in that train compartment, don't open your mouth, just play your accordion." Jagoda did as her step-father instructed, and nobody even asked to see her papers.

Her parents arrived at Split four days later. They spent two and half years on the Dalmatian Island of Korchula and then went to Italy where Jagoda met her husband-to-be, Harry Jagoda, an American Army Tech Sergeant. They married in Bari and spent their honeymoon in Rome. When they returned from Rome, they learned the fate of the Singing Altarac Family. The entire family, save Rosa, her brother, Lezo, and a cousin, Jakica had been killed; the details were unknown.

In 1946, Jagoda and her husband set sail for America, where Jagoda was determined to start a new life. She started a family of her own and, like many Holocaust survivors, chose not to discuss her painful past. As she grew older, however, she realized that remembering was important.

> I wanted to share with my children the beautiful and wonderful things I had known and to pass down the songs and history that had formed the very structure of my life -- because it was their past too.[41]

In the mid-eighties, forty years after fleeing Yugoslavia and determined to face her past, Jagoda returned to Vlasenica with her husband. Jagoda asked many townspeople if they remembered her family. They said they did. But when she asked if they knew what happened to them, the reply was, "No,

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[41]Ibid., 6.

it was so many years ago."[42] Jagoda and her husband finally found a journalist who knew what had happened to the Altarac's. He took them to a farm eight kilometers outside of the village where they learned from a farmer that:

> the *Ustashi* (Croatian Fascists) with the help of the local Muslims, brought all the Jews from Vlasenica here on May 6, 1942 and put them in the big barn where they were beaten and killed and thrown into [a] ravine.
>
> We stood there silent, heartbroken, but in a way at peace that we had finally learned the truth, [as] terrible as it was. It was at that moment that I really came to understand that the Altarac Family would always live inside me, and now would also live in my children. Because every song . . . that I have composed continues the memory of my family in Vlasenica; I am still sharing the holidays with them. The love of music, of singing and dancing which they instilled in me, I see continued in my own children, and my grandchildren, in the hope that they may remain vibrant and alive for generations to come.[43]

Flory Jagoda's memories and music reach even beyond her family to her wide audiences across the world. Through her book, recordings and concerts, she shares with many people the memories of her childhood and teaches them about the traditions of the Sephardic community in which she grew up. As Jagoda explained, many people, Jews and non-Jews alike, did not even know before meeting her that there was a Jewish community in Yugoslavia.

> [E]very city . . . had a Sephardic community . . . with the synagogues and the *mikvahs* and rabbis [and they were there] for four and half centuries! [T]his is something that people don't know. Bosnia? Jewish? They just can't tie it together. See, they hear Serb, Croat, Moslem, but there was also a Jew.[44]

After the expulsion from Spain in 1492, Jews spread out and settled in various Mediterranean countries. The Jews who eventually settled in Bosnia

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[42]Jagoda,interview.

[43]Jagoda, The Flory Jagoda Songbook , 16.

[44]Jagoda,interview.

went there via Italy, Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria, and they carried with them cultural and musical influences of those countries. While some Jews had probably lived in Bosnia since Roman times, the first Sephardic Jews arrived to Sarajevo in the mid-sixteenth century. Like all Sephardic Jews, Bosnian Sephardim began to mix in some of the local language with their Judeo-Spanish. Women taught *Djidyo*, the Bosnian Judeo-Spanish dialect, to their children, although men spoke it as well. As Jagoda explained, *Djidyo* was the women's Jewish language (they did not generally learn Hebrew), and they fought to preserve it as such. In school and in the streets, children learned the local language, but at home they spoke *Djidyo*.

"I don't think you could sit down and intelligently teach [*Djidyo*]," Jagoda said. "It's folk, it's people, it's home, it's earth. [You don't learn it by] book and university."[45] Each Judeo-Spanish dialect has its own orthography so one could see the same word spelled many different ways, depending on which community it came from. While Jagoda prefers to use strictly Bosnian Judeo-Spanish orthography when writing her songs, her publisher, Velvel Pasternak chose to represent her songs in a way that was easier for the average person to learn.

For Jagoda, decisions between maintaining authenticity and providing easy-to-learn materials extend beyond orthography. The music she grew up with as well as the music she writes and records tends to have a lot of melismas and embellishments. However, when she teaches, she simplifies the music so it will be less intimidating. "Straight and easy to learn. And that's what we want if we want to continue. If not, forget it, it's passe completely."[46]

In trying to perpetuate memories of her life, her family and her

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[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

community, the survival of the songs Jagoda cherishes is crucial to her. Each song becomes like a memorial, and it is as if the act of remembering will somehow keep "alive" the people and the events of the past. In this way,

While Jagoda knows that simplifying her music may be one important means to this end, she also understands the importance of the songs' tenacity. For the most part, Jagoda accepts new interpretations of the folk songs she grew up with and even the ones she has written.

I asked Jagoda how she viewed the approach of a composer like Alberto Hemsi,[47] and she said:

> It's fine. This is his way. He has done his work beautifully because he spread this type of singing in his way. I'm doing it my way. Everybody is doing it in a different way. I think we all benefit. And we all sort of do the job.[48]

On the other hand, Jagoda also believes:

> You can ruin a song by making it too good. There is Neumann's piano arrangements.[49] They are beautiful . . . but it's no good for what we sang. Too good for us . . . [i]t's a folk song. It's people . . . [With my songs] I try to stay close to the sound I grew up with--the sound, the style. But that doesn't mean that I'm not going to use a G7 chord. I don't know if I would go into a diminished because that sound I never heard, but I will make it pleasant to an ear, so my purpose is that people sing.[50]

According to Jagoda, the sounds that she grew up with were primarily a

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[47]Alberto Hemsi (1897-1975), originally from Turkey, spent several years researching the Spanish Jewish musical heritage. When living in the Near East (Rhodes, Salonika and Izmir), he collected and wrote down 230 songs of the Sephardic Jews. He arranged and published 60 of these songs and published them in ten volumes called Coplas Sefardies (1932). See booklet: Ravel: Melodies Hebraiques/Hemsi: Coplas Sefardies, Menahem Wiesenberg, piano and Mira Zakai, alto (Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth, Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, 1988), compact disc recording.

[48]Jagoda, interview.

[49]Jagoda refers to Richard Neumann's arrangements in Nico Castel, The Nico Castel Ladino Song Book (Cedarhurst, NY: Tara Publications, 1981).

[50]Jagoda, interview.

mixture of medieval Spanish ballads and a Bosnian musical style which she described as "very Oriental."

> [These songs] are based on a Bosnian folk style which is called *sevdalinka*. And that *sevdalinka* is a Bosnian soul music . . . you put all the soul you have into it . . . Moslem women sang *sevdalinkas*.[51]

While Balkan rhythms include many different meters, the signature rhythm of the region is 7/8, which comes from the local dance. The most common harmonies were simple thirds, either above or below the melody line. Now Jagoda, who often performs with three of her children, uses other harmonies as well.

> [T]he harmony my son adds is America already. But I take it because I don't care how we continue, let's just continue. This is how his ear hears the harmony . . . but sometimes he adds even a fourth, a very odd harmony, and in some places I say, 'Elliot, it just doesn't go. Take it easy. It's just too modern.' . . . [The changes generally] don't bother me any more. It used to, but now I'm older, and I'm realizing, 'Hey, I'm lucky that there are people who are even interested in this song, so it changes a little, but it's the same song! The lyrics are there, and the Ladino is there.[52]

Jagoda emphasized the importance of using Ladino to describe the way Sephardic communities used to live. She did just that when she wrote, "*La Boda Djudiya*" ["The Jewish Wedding"]. The song describes a wedding party processing through the village to the synagogue.

> The whole village would come on each side of the street to see *la novia* (the bride) and then you would see . . . the mothers-in-law, usually you would always make fun of the mothers-in-law . . . they're fat and pompous, and that was funny. And, naturally, who was the money guy? It was always the man, the husband, and he brings the *dukadus* [gold pieces]. . . . It's a picture of the wedding. I talk it first so [the audience] can hear the sound of the language. . . . You do it with a tambourine . . . and at the end of every verse, [you do a] *Yyip*! Happiness![53]

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[51]Jagoda, interview.
[52]Ibid.
[53]Ibid.

La Boda Djudiya

Ya vyene la novya
Linda i ermoza
Vestida do seda
Si fazi muy hadroza
Vamuz al Kal
Ke il Dio muz de mazal
Vamuz al Kal
A dizir los birahas

Ya vyene il novyu
Kun il vestidu muevu
lo kamiza muy lavrada
lo kavesa alvantada
Nu poidi aspirar
A su novya a buzzer

Ya muz vyene la Suegra
Gorda i pompoza
Tukadu do seda
Kun la blanka roza
Il dulsi muz dara
Il kave muz buira

Ya muz vyene il Suegru
Muy orgulyozu
El Trayi luz tukadus
Para luz namuradus
Vamuz al Kal
Ke il Dio muz de mazal
Vamuz al Kal
A dizir los birahas

The Jewish Wedding

Here comes the bride
Pretty and beautiful
Dressed in silk
She is so proud of herself
Let's go to the synagogue
God will give us good fortune
Let's go to the synagogue
To say our prayers

Here comes the bridegroom
In a brand new suit
With his embroidered shirt
His head is held high
He cannot wait
To kiss his bride

Here comes the Mother-in-law
Fat and pompous
Wearing a silk head covering
With a white rose
She will give us sweets
And strong Turkish coffee

Here comes the Father-in-law
Very proud
He is bringing pieces of gold
To the couple in love
Let's go to the synagogue
God will give us good fortune
Let's go to the synagogue
To say our prayers

After she sang this song during our interview, Jagoda added:

The weddings were long and long and long.... They had so many different ceremonies. And it was so much fun for a family together, the preparation, that it was a dream come true to every household to have a bride who was going to get married. From embroidering, they had nights of just crocheting and embroidering... that's when you would hear [the wedding] songs, on the evenings of preparing the bride.... The wedding songs were rhythmical. It was happiness, joy. All the joy and happiness are always in this rhythmical way of singing.

The songs were predominantly sung by women accompanied by *panderikas* [tambourines]. Sometimes the men would join with Bosnian folk instruments like the *tambouritza*, a small mandolin-shaped instrument and on the *brach*, which is like a guitar.[54]

In "*La Boda Djudiya*," Jagoda highlights several of the wedding subjects discussed in Chapter II of this paper including: beauty, clothing, the mother-in-law, and dowry/money. The first stanza talks about the beautiful bride; the first and second stanzas describe the couple's clothing; the third stanza highlights the traditionally negative view of the new mother-in-law; the fourth stanza describes the father bringing gold pieces to the bride and groom.

Jagoda performs and has written other songs that fit into the subject categories highlighted in "*La Boda Djudiya*." Below are explanations of those categories and the songs that serve as examples. While each of the songs listed below has a predominant subject, more than one subject may be represented within one song.

Beauty

"*Yo Hanino, Tu Hanina*" is a song in The Flory Jagoda Songbook: Memories of Sarajevo that talks about beauty. In fact, the opening phrase means, "I am handsome, you are beautiful, let us marry." However, even more important than a couple's physical attraction to one another was whether or not the bride's family could afford the *dota* [dowry]. The couple in this song probably met at a party that one of the *kazamenteros* [matchmakers] held for eligible singles. While they obviously like one another, the woman's father does not (probably cannot) agree to the *dota* the young man and his family ask for. Though, according to Jagoda, the lyrics are from the Bosnian Judeo-Spanish

[54]Ibid.

tradition, Jagoda herself wrote the melody to this particular version.[55]

Yo Hanino, Tu hanina	**I am Handsome, You are Beautiful**
Yo hanino, tu hanina	I am handsome, you are beautiful
Mos tomaremos los dos	Let us marry
los ijikos ke mos nasen	We shall be blessed with children
Komo la luna i el sol	Like the moon and the sun
Aman . . . komo la luna i el sol	Aman . . . like the moon and the sun
Muchas grasyas manseviko	Thank you very much, young man
Ke mandates koredor	For giving me this offer
Muchas liras me demandas	But you ask for too many liras
Non mi acheta mi sinyor	My father is not accepting it
Aman . . . non mi acheta mi sinyor	Aman . . . my father is not accepting it

Clothing

Preparing beautiful clothing and other adornments is a subject that connects with the general subject of beauty. As Jagoda explained, the bride and her family spent weeks, even months sewing and embroidering not only for her *ajugar*, her trousseau, but also for the wedding itself. One particular custom that was followed by Bosnian Sephardic Jews was for the bride to embroider a vest for her new husband. The vest [*il bastidor*] is supposed to be completed in time for the wedding, but the overburdened bride in this traditional Bosnian Judeo-Spanish song,[56] "*Il Bastidor*" has not managed to find time to finish her new husband's vest:[57]

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[55]Jagoda, The Flory Jagoda Songbook, 53.

[56]The lyrics and melody are not attributed to anyone. In Jagoda's songbook, the by-line reads "Bosnian Folk Song."

[57]Jagoda, The Flory Jagoda Songbook, 26.

Il Bastidor

Vyarnes, gizo i skumparto
Vyarnes, marido asibivj Vos
Kuando ke Vos lavro este

Lindo bastidor

la la la . . .
Shabat malso i kanto
Alhad la kulada

Lunis dublar la kulada
Martis kuzir kun la kusuegra

Myerkulis alimpyar lo kaza
Dyuevis vizitar la mi Madri

Kuando ke Vos lavro este

Lindo bastidor

The Vest

Friday, I cook and chop
My husband, long life to you
When will I find time to
embroider you
A beautiful vest?

la la la . . .
Sabbath, I pray and sing
Sunday, there is all the wash to
do
Monday, fold the clothes
Tuesday, to sew with the
mother-in-law
Wednesday, clean the house
Thursday, to visit my mother

When will I find time to
embroider you
A beautiful vest?

The Mother-in-law[58]

As we saw in "*La Boda Djudiya*" and Chapter Two of this paper, the image of the mother-in-law in Judeo-Spanish wedding songs tends to be a negative one.

> The mother-in-law myth is like [the one that is] all over the world . . . there's always a joke . . . but the main thing I could see here is that they lived together. The custom was that the son brings his bride home to live. It was always at least one year. If they saw that everything was just working out, great! They were merchants. The father would open another store for his son, and the son would start his life, and they would maybe build a little house. But she had to do [as] the mother-in-law liked. And there is the same philosophy today. You have a man between two women. Same! Nothing has changed there.
>
> So it was very tough for a young bride. She had no life of her own. She did what the mother-in-law told her to do. The mother-in-law cooked. She was the boss. Matron of the family. It was tough. I remember myself when I was little, and my Uncle Chayim brought a bride from

[58]In most cases, the mother-in-law refers to the mother-in-law of the bride

> Zvorni,[59] which is about an hour from Vlasenica. And my *Nona*, whom I adored, I don't think she was very nice to this new girl. She criticized her all the time. That was the way it was . . . and the son would listen to the mother. So, many things have not changed even today.[60]

While most songs in the Judeo-Spanish wedding repertoire portray a negative image of the mother-in-law, there are a few songs that portray her in a better light. "*Yo Kon lo mi Kusuegra*" ["I am Satisfied with my Mother-in-law"] is such a song. While it talks about the bride's acceptance of her entire new family, the mother-in-law comes first, and hence gives the song its title, emphasizing the importance of the bride's relationship to her.

> This [song] was the opener [at the wedding]. If you have two families, his family and her family, how will they get together and mingle, how will they get to know each other? So the first was the bride. She would get up first, and she would say she's very satisfied with the mother-in-law, and the mother-in-law would get up [and dance with her]. . . and the motions were like this (puts both arms up in the air, each one slightly curved, and swings them gently back and forth), very elegant, back-and-forth dancing. And then she would say, 'I'm satisfied with my brother-in-law, my sister-in-law. . . . And this is the way they would bring up families from each side, and sometimes they would go on for a long time because the families were very large. It was a good get-to-know-each-other [game] or a circle dance.[61]

Yo Kon la mi Kusuegra	**I am Satisfied with my Mother-in-law**
Yo kon la mi kusuegra, yo sto kontente	I am satisfied with my mother-in-law
Ke salga balyar Ke la kero ver	She should come out and dance I want to see her
Yo kon la mi nuera, yo sto kontente	I am satisfied with my daughter-in-law
Ke salga a balyar Ke la kero ver	She should come out and dance I want to see her

[59] I am uncertain as to the correct spelling of this name.

[60] Jagoda, interview.

[61] Ibid.

Yo kon el mi kusuegro, yo sto kontente	I am satisfied with my father-in-law
Ko salga a balyar	He should come out and dance
Ke la kero ver	I want to see him
Yo kon el mi nuero, yo sto kontente	I am satisfied with my son-in-law
Ko salga a balyar	He should come out and dance
Ke la kero ver	I want to see him
Yo kon los mis kusuegros, yo sto kontente	I am satisfied with my in-laws
Ke salgan a balyar	They should come out and dance
Ke los kero ver	I want to see them

Dowry/Money

> [*A*]*jugar* is the dowry, including blankets and pillowcases, which was the main question and decision of whether the wedding would take place or not. They were very, very choosy. If you had a son, you had a piece of gold, and you could ask . . . anything, and the fathers of the daughters used to take loans to meet the demands of his family . . . the bride's family would start saving from the time she was a little girl, from when she was born. There's a saying, '*la ija en la fasa l'asugar en la kasa*,'[62] 'The baby just born, still in a swaddling cloth, you already start putting things in the chest.' [F]or every daughter you had a chest. And the mother would be constantly embroidering and sewing and put things in there. It was a job. And, naturally, all the rich girls went first. . . .[63]

As we saw in "*Yo Hanino, Tu Hanina*," the young woman was unable to accept the offer of her admirer because her family could not afford the dowry for which his family asked. In "*Scalerica de Oro*," a popular Judeo-Spanish wedding song,[64] the couple seems to break the bonds of tradition by deciding to marry despite the fact that the bride is poor. It is also about the bride reciting her marriage vows [*kidushin*], and the community coming to wish the couple joy, prosperity and lasting happiness.

I asked Jagoda to sing "*Scalerica de Oro*" for me since it was not on any

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[62]Spelling from Jahasz, 201.

[63]Jagoda, interview.

[64]"*Scalerica de Oro*" seems to be common among Eastern Sephardim. I have never encountered a rendition by someone from the Western Sephardic (Moroccan) tradition.

of her cassettes or in her book. Part of Jagoda's version of "*Scalerica de Oro*" will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter of this paper.

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Flory Jagoda is the only one of the three women I interviewed who is Sephardic. When she talks about preserving Sephardic memories and music, she is speaking about her own tradition. Her desire to preserve these memories and to educate others about them, therefore, is a truly personal one. It is as if she personally will lose something if she does not transmit the information she seeks to pass on.

Jagoda's life and her ability to share it with others provides a valuable contribution to the legacy of Judeo-Spanish music. Her life and her work are so intertwined that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. I am particularly inspired by Jagoda because of her passion. She truly believes in her mission to keep Sephardic music alive. As Jagoda said:

> [W]ith me being the last of my generation over there [Bosnia] with my family and dozens of others who have the same story, who's going to continue? Three of my children? That's not enough! So, I'm lucky to have performers learning these songs.[65]

[65]Jagoda, interview.

Judy Frankel: Performer

Judy Frankel, an Ashkenazic Jew originally from Boston, has lived in San Francisco for close to 25 years. Her family is from Lithuania. Frankel has a classical music background and said that her flute teacher, who plays with the Boston symphony, was her most influential music teacher.

Frankel has sung with the San Francisco chorus and has studied with a Medieval/Renaissance ensemble from New York called "Music for a While." The ensemble encouraged Frankel to study and sing more Renaissance music, which she was able to do as a soloist with the San Francisco Consort. Her work with the Consort involved much church music. At a certain point, Frankel decided to see if there was not also Jewish music from the Medieval and Renaissance periods.[66] She went to the Diaspora Museum in Israel and became reacquainted with Sephardic music, with which she had had some contact in the 60s through listening to and singing Judeo-Spanish folk songs.

After her trip to Israel, Frankel returned to San Francisco and got funding to gather Judeo-Spanish, Yiddish and Hebrew songs from the oral tradition of various Jews in San Francisco. Frankel described an encounter with Rachelle Hazzan, a Jew of Turkish descent who had grown up in Egypt:

> I sang a few songs for her that she knew, and she just burst into tears. She hadn't heard these songs for something like 15 or 20 years and hadn't sung them herself for 25 to 30 years. And little by little she began to remember songs. She had a son in France who helped support our work and a daughter who helped translate.[67]

Frankel describes herself as a performing artist who is mainly interested in historical music, particularly the music of the Jews and, more particularly,

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[66]While many associate Sephardic songs with Medieval and Renaissance Spain, much of the music developed later and in the many countries to which the Sephardim scattered after the Expulsion.

[67]Frankel, interview.

the music of the Spanish Jews. Her method of learning melodies, their styles and contexts is to learn directly from a person from the tradition she seeks to represent.

> My work comes pretty much from the individuals from whom I learn the songs. So if they say, 'this is what we did in our little village, in our community, and this is how my uncle sang it' or 'this is how my auntie sang it,' then I take it from there rather than doing a survey.[68] But I'm aware that [these songs] cropped up in a number of [different] areas where the Sephardic Diaspora went.[69]

Through her process of learning the songs and reproducing them, Frankel tries to maintain a balance between representing exactly what she's heard and being true to her own voice.

> I always try to do exactly whatever they've sung into my ear. I try to reproduce, but still maintain the integrity of being myself. I don't want to become an actress and imitate what they're doing and sing it in their key . . . I have to be who I am.[70]

As Frankel said early on in our interview, even though she follows the research on Judeo-Spanish music a little bit, she primarily sees herself as a performing artist. As such, her main purpose in gathering Judeo-Spanish melodies is to learn, perform, and often record them herself. However, ever since becoming involved with Judeo-Spanish music, her goals have broadened. Now she learns songs not only for the concert stage or recording studio, but also in order to teach people, both Sephardim and non-Sephardim, about Sephardic heritage. In this way, she, like Flory Jagoda, is a teacher. Though she herself is not from the Sephardic tradition and cannot draw on her own memories of life in a Sephardic community, she uses performance as a vehicle

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[68]I think that when Frankel uses the word "survey" here, she is referring to those who base their performances on research they have done using many different sources, both written and oral.

[69]Frankel, interview.

[70]Ibid.

to help elicit memories from Sephardim.

> [I started singing Judeo-Spanish music because] I loved the melodies and the little stories that went with them. I was doing them with guitar accompaniment . . . And then, getting the songs in the oral tradition, after a number of years, it just became evident that I really had a responsibility. The Sephardim were telling me. Once you begin to work with individuals within a group of people, and they introduce you to relatives who have songs, you get into the center of the family, you become almost like a member. They are quite cognizant of the fact that they themselves will be gone in a matter of the next generation and that the language is dying out, that there are very few people doing anything about it, that their children are very busy assimilating, and that they entrusted me with helping to carry on the tradition even though I didn't myself grow up with these songs. But when I was beginning to learn them, they just felt so familiar and so comfortable.[71]

While Frankel herself feels comfortable with singing songs in Judeo-Spanish, she indicated that not all of the Sephardim themselves are comfortable, or even familiar with, the repertoire. Moreover, Frankel believes that many Sephardim are almost completely out of touch with the tradition that is their heritage. She believes that her work with Judeo-Spanish folk music can fulfill a great need of reconnecting Sephardim with their background.

> Some of the very people who have been busy assimilating, every now and then, will come up to me or write to me after a concert and say, 'You know, I don't really understand Ladino, I didn't grow up speaking it, but this really touches my heart,' and it begins to open doors for them. If I can do that much, that's fine. And it encourages them to find out more about their background.[72]

For those Sephardim who do have a connection with their Sephardic background and who are familiar with the repertoire, the issues surrounding Judeo-Spanish songs are a little different. As Judith Cohen indicates, their concern is not only on why these songs should be sung today, but how. Cohen states that most Sephardim are not opposed to change. Change, as Frankel points out, is a natural outcome of the progression of time.

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[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

> The main thing that has caused change is memory. I think that with each succeeding generation, something is lost, which is only human nature. And as far as why the songs are still being sung, I think that is based almost entirely on nostalgia.[73]

Even though, in her own work, Frankel chooses to learn Judeo-Spanish songs directly from people from living Sephardic people, she recognizes that even this process involves changes in the way the music was originally sung.

> I don't see how we can possibly know how things were performed in pre-Exilic times. . . . [74] We hardly even have a scrap of melody extant. And with every succeeding generation and every new century, we're talking about the tremendous influences of many countries--[in terms of] instrumentation, the style of singing, anything relating to Turkish or Arabic music [which uses] the *maqam*[75] system or is strongly influenced by it. [How can we really] say, 'Well, we have to hang onto this,' because, of course, it's constantly evolving. So, it therefore becomes a tremendous problem when you say, 'What is the traditional way of doing this?'
>
> My own route has been to kind of go down the middle -- not to be too creative because I don't want to make gross changes, but on the other hand, I think if you're going to do a concert for an hour to an hour and a half, you don't want to put your audience to sleep. So if you sing completely unaccompanied, no matter how wonderful a voice might be, the audience might get a little bored. . . . So what I've tried to do is to stick as closely as I can to what was taught to me in the oral tradition, but using my own voice instead of trying to imitate the voice of the other person and to add guitar, partly because I'm comfortable with it, and partly, and more importantly, because it came from the *de huela de mano*, which was a Spanish instrument, and I'm always trying to reflect again the Spanish influence and not to lose that.[76]
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> [Sephardic] people have occasionally said to me, 'We love your harmonies, but how can you do that? In our family, there weren't [harmonies].' My personal experience has been, being invited over and

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[73]Ibid.

[74]This may not be the only music we need to understand. Much of the Judeo-Spanish repertoire developed after the Expulsion from Spain, once the Jews were settled in various countries in North Africa and the around the Mediterranean.

[75]The *maqam* system is the Arabic modal system.

[76]While all Sephardic communities originated in Spain, it was not the source for all Judeo-Spanish melodies nor do all Judeo-Spanish songs reflect a direct Spanish musical influence.

> over again to Sephardic gatherings,[77] women who are singing . . . it's mostly unison, but there is, [eventually] always somebody who breaks into a harmony,[78] and that's what gave me the idea. And I think it probably came because someone couldn't get the high notes, so they just dragged down below, and it sounded really good, so they stuck to it.[79]

When I asked Frankel about the wedding song repertoire, she referred mostly to liturgical wedding songs rather than those sung by women during or about the events leading up to the wedding. As Frankel said, what she knows about the songs she sings essentially comes from the person from whom she learns the song. It seems those from whom Frankel learned wedding songs did not discuss the context in which the songs were sung since Frankel did not mention them. In Chapter Four, I will discuss Frankel's recording of "*Scalerica de Oro*."

As Frankel herself explained, she takes the "middle road" in her approach to performance. On the one hand, she seeks to be true to the tradition she represents. On the other hand, she knows that her renditions of the songs necessarily will be different than the tradition because her voice and her accompaniments will change them. Frankel 's approach to performing the songs shows that she does not only perform for the sake of entertainment, but also to teach others about Judeo-Spanish music.

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[77]For example, *Los Amigos Sephardies* organization, with which Frankel has been quite involved.

[78]Frankel said that the harmonies are usually a third above or below the melody.

[79]Frankel, interview.

Judith Cohen: Researcher

Ethnomusicologist Judith Cohen is a prominent scholar in the field of Judeo-Spanish music research. Like Jagoda, she is an educator. However, her mode of education is through university teaching and academic publishing. Like both Jagoda and Frankel, Cohen also uses performance as a way to teach people about Judeo-Spanish music. Her main goals in her performances and recordings are to expose people to the less popular Judeo-Spanish melodies and to render them as authentically as possible.

An Ashkenazic Jew who lives in Canada, Cohen received her Bachelors of Fine Arts with an emphasis in music from Concordia University in Montreal. She earned a Masters of Medieval Studies from the Universite du Montreal and holds a Doctorate in Ethnomusicology from the University of Montreal.

Cohen has studied extensively the music of the Moroccan Jews of Canada and, among her publications, has co-authored articles on Judeo-Spanish wedding music. She also performs and records Judeo-Spanish songs as a member of the musical ensemble Gerineldo. In addition to singing with Gerineldo, she is a well-versed instrumentalist who can play, among other instruments, the *oud*, clarinet, Medieval fiddle, recorder, dulcimer, guitar and percussion instruments.

Like Frankel, Cohen says that she became interested in Sephardic music by chance--through a combination of an interest in Medieval music, travels through Spain, Morocco, Turkey and the Balkans, some tapes of Sephardic music sent to her by friends, and the work of Samuel Armistead.[80]

As a scholar, Cohen seeks to contextualize Judeo-Spanish songs by discussing their original functions and the culture which they reflect and to

[80]Samuel Armistead was a scholar who, along with Joseph Silverman and Israel Katz, extensively researched and published several works on the Sephardic ballad tradition.

analyze both the music and the text. She also has a particular interest in studying Judeo-Spanish folk songs as a women's repertoire.

As a performer, Cohen tries to present songs in their purest forms. In other words, she tries to perform them in a fashion that will reflect how they were originally sung. So, for example, if instruments were not originally used, she most often will use no instruments. Occasionally she and Gerineldo will add something that they know was not originally part of the song, like Middle Eastern violin, but they make sure to tell their audiences that this was not originally part of the song.

> [My role models] for Sephardic singing are only and exclusively original informants. I'm already taking [a song] a step away by singing it when I'm not from the tradition myself. So if I can avoid taking it any more steps away, I will. I'm not saying that anyone who does anything else is wrong, but that's the way I operate things. And it fits in with my goals, because my goals are actually not to be creative. It's not where my gifts or my goals are personally. They're really to try to recreate traditions as far as possible. And for someone who is interested in creating their own artistic creation, that's a whole different story.[81]

While Cohen's personal goals are to preserve and promote authentic tradition as much as possible through the songs she performs, she understands that other performers may make different choices.

> My personal, non-musicologist [reaction to people who adapt and change traditional tunes] is that I don't like it. I like traditional stuff. I just like it. It's as simple as that. My musicologist answer is [that] I think it's absolutely fine as long as people are honest about what they're doing. As long as they say something like, 'I know this is not the way a seventy-five-year-old grandmother would sing it, and I know they wouldn't have used these instruments . . . but I love this song [and] this is how I'm doing it. This is my background; this is my musicality.' I have no problem with it at all.
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> What I really don't like is when it's implied that this is the way the tradition is. Like, for example, when an early music group takes Sephardic songs and says, 'these are jewels of the Medieval Sephardic

[81]Judith R. Cohen, interview by author, Tape recording, Telephone, Toronto, Canada. 20 November, 1995.

> repertoire.' This is nonsense. If they say, 'We think these songs sound terrific on early instruments. We know the music isn't Medieval, but this is our training, and we like the way they sound this way, and it sort of gives us an atmosphere that reminds us of the Jews in Medieval Spain . . . fine. Go ahead. I'll listen to it, and I'll probably even like it if it's well done. But if they're suggesting to the audience that Jews sang these tunes, which are mostly 19th century tunes, in Medieval or Renaissance Spain, then I'll get really annoyed. But it's really just in the presentation and the honesty where I have a problem, not so much in the music.

In my interview with her, Cohen indicated that many scholars berate performers and performances that are not "authentic" whether or not they are honest about their work. Such scholars believe that the songs should only be presented in an "authentic," "pure" fashion and should never be changed, arranged or adapted. Cohen said, "I found this really disturbing because it was removed from reality and because a lot of Sephardic people don't mind."[82] Cohen recently conducted a survey of performing groups, listeners and researchers in which she showed that most Sephardim themselves are not opposed to adaptations of Judeo-Spanish songs. According to Cohen's survey, while many scholars said that the only people qualified to make changes are those within the tradition, the Sephardim did not agree. The only thing that really bothered them about others performing their music was when they used bad pronunciation.

While some write arrangements of Judeo-Spanish songs to make them more palatable to the audience, Cohen believes that "people don't give audiences enough credit. In my own experiences, I find that audiences are far more open to stuff than we think they are. We tend to say, 'Well the audience won't like this.' So they don't, because they don't hear it."[83] And while one might think that Sephardim want to hear the songs sung in a "traditional"

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[82]Cohen, interview.

[83]Ibid.

fashion, many are more interested in hearing songs with arrangements because they themselves can sing the songs without the arrangements.

As the presentation of the songs takes on many forms today, so does the context of their performance. Where songs were once sung for social occasions, holidays and life cycle events, they are now primarily limited to the concert stage and to staged events like weddings and wedding rituals where the songs used to occur. While some events still exist that resemble the original contexts for the songs, the traditional wedding songs are barely used at those events any more. Cohen told me about one such event, a *henna* night, that she attended. She had been looking forward to hearing traditional Judeo-Spanish wedding songs only to be disappointed by hearing mostly Israeli and Arabic pop music.

> At another wedding I went to, some of the women stood up and sang some of the wedding songs in a corner, but nobody paid any attention to them. Sometimes at a *henna* night, some women will sing some of the old songs for five or ten minutes. [But] now mostly they don't remember the old wedding songs, so they sing what they know from old Yehoram Gaon[84] recordings. A lot of the women, especially those in their fifties, forgot the songs or their families put them down for speaking Ladino because it wasn't "classy" or in Israel because you were supposed to speak Hebrew instead of whatever language you grew up with. And they relearned the songs through Yehoram Gaon's versions, which are quite Westernized, and that's what they'll often sing to you at weddings, and they'll call them *romances* without a clue that they have nothing to do with *romances*. . . . The wedding songs were originally accompanied by loud percussion, so they're sung loudly. They're functional. People are dancing. People are playing tambourines, banging on frying pans. You've got to be heard. So they're not the place to be subtle.[85]

Cohen believes that the future of the wedding song repertoire is limited without the events to which they were originally connected and with fewer people really knowing the songs.

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[84]Yehoram Gaon is a popular Israeli Sephardic singer who has made several recordings of Judeo-Spanish songs.

[85]Cohen, interview.

> They have a future, but it's an artificial one. They've all been recorded . . . I think that their context is totally gone. I think that there will be more and more staged weddings and staged contexts. . . . There were songs for the trousseau and for coming out of the *mikvah*, and a lot of them weren't meant to be sung in front of men. They were meant to be sung among women, so some of the erotic references weren't meant to be heard by an audience *per se*. It was just family and friends, and certainly not a mixed audience. So the whole context has changed.[86]

Even though she believes that the future of the wedding repertoire is bleak, Cohen remains committed to studying, analyzing and performing these songs. She continues to expose her readers and audiences to songs they may never otherwise hear, and through her work, she can give people a sense for the original contexts and authentic sounds of those songs. As an academic researcher, Cohen is able to breathe new life into Judeo-Spanish songs while still maintaining their authenticity.

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Flory Jagoda, Judy Frankel, and Judith Cohen represent three distinct approaches to Judeo-Spanish songs. Jagoda is primarily an educator, Frankel a performer and Cohen a researcher. Even though each woman basically approaches the Judeo-Spanish repertoire differently, their approaches sometimes overlap. Jagoda and Frankel are at once educator and performer, while Cohen is simultaneously researcher and performer.

Each woman's background also plays a role in her approach to the music. Jagoda is Sephardic, and she learned the songs from her family. For her, Judeo-Spanish songs represent memories of her childhood. Both Frankel and Cohen are Ashkenazic and began working with Judeo-Spanish songs by chance. While they are both passionate about the songs, their motivation for studying and singing them is necessarily different from Jagoda's. Unlike Jagoda, they do not feel a *personal* urgency to share memories of a Sephardic

[86]Ibid.

heritage through these songs. This being said, all three women feel the responsibility, in one form or another, to share Judeo-Spanish songs with others--Sephardim, Ashkenazim and non-Jews alike.

Even with their different backgrounds and approaches, each woman strives to maintain the songs today whether by keeping them authentic or by changing them. Each woman, based on her knowledge, interests and talents finds a meaningful way to perpetuate the age-old tradition of Judeo-Spanish wedding songs in a contemporary society.

CHAPTER IV

SCALERICA DE ORO: A COMPARISON OF RECORDINGS

In recent years, many performers and ensembles--Sephardic, non-Sephardic and even non-Jewish--have discovered and begun to popularize Judeo-Spanish songs. As we saw in the previous chapter, some performers seek to replicate "authentic" renditions of the songs, while others incorporate other musical styles and interpretations in order to reshape the songs. We cannot underestimate the power of recordings in helping simultaneously to preserve and change parts of the Judeo-Spanish song repertoire. In the article "New Directions in the Music of the Sephardic Jews," musicologist Edwin Seroussi identifies "the internationalization of the Sephardic folksong repertory through the popular music industry" as one of the primary factors both in keeping Sephardic songs alive and in reshaping them.[87]

In this chapter, I will look at the opening section of "*Scalerica de Oro*" as recorded by five different performers or ensembles. I have transcribed each version of this section from the recordings (transcriptions can be found on page 53). The similarities and differences in the five versions of this section alone are representative of the variations possible in other recorded Judeo-Spanish songs.

Each performer or ensemble takes a different approach to rendering this song. Their renditions often depend on where they learned the melody, what kind of interpretation or arrangement they use, and what instruments, if any, they add. Textually, the words for four of the renditions are the same; musically, three share a similar melody, while the other two each have different melodies. These five versions are all connected because they share

[87] Edwin Seroussi, "New Directions in the Music of the Sephardic Jews," Modern Jews and their Musical Agendas 9 (1993) : 62.

the same refrain and are variants of the same text; four of them, as mentioned, are identical. The refrain is not represented in my transcriptions, but I will comment briefly on each performer's or group's rendition.

About the Performers and Their Renditions

1) **Fortuna Safdie** was born in Sao Paulo Brazil and has studied music, dance and theater. She has sung in many musicals and has sung back-up vocals for several different Brazilian musicians. During a tour in Israel in 1992, she discovered Sephardic music when listening to a fragment of the Judeo-Spanish lullaby, "*Durme, Durme*" at *Beit Hatefutsot*. "At that moment I became totally enthralled and realized that my life would take an entirely new turn."[88] Safdie began to do intensive research about Judeo-Spanish songs. She found resources--records, books, costumes, photographs and musical scores--in Israel, Paris, London and New York. Through this, she says, "I discovered a new and immensely rich dimension of my people and felt as if I was getting in touch with my own spiritual roots."[89]

Fortuna's version of "*Scalerica de Oro*" is like most of her renditions of Judeo-Spanish songs in that it has a floating and mellow quality that makes it sound somewhat like "new-age." The introduction to the song is played by oboe, flute and another instrument which I could not identify. When Fortuna begins to sing the first section, the guitar is added with a simple, supportive accompaniment. The drum is used to mark the two and a half beats of rest in between the first and second halves of the first section of the song. More

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[88]Fortuna Safdie, La Prima Vez: Kantes djudeos Espanyoles , Fortuna Artistic Productions (Sao Paulo, Brazil) , compact disc recording.

[89]Ibid.

instruments are added on the refrain, which is more rhythmical, though it maintains the ethereal quality that Fortuna established with the first section. While most performers end the song with the refrain, Fortuna ends it with a repeat of this first section.

2) **Ensemble Lyrique Iberique**, a French ensemble, consists of singer Dominique Thibaudat, lutist and percussionist Nabil Ibn Khalidi and *zarb*-player [the *zarb* is a wooden Iranian drum in the form of a chalice, over which goatskin is stretched] Pierre Rigopoulos. The ensemble says it

> "strives to convey the oral aspect of [the Judeo-Spanish song] tradition by freely interpreting the ornamental improvisation central to the musicological transcriptions. The use of 'Oriental' instruments--the *zarb* and the [o]*ud*, which existed in the 13th century at the court of Alphonse X the Wise, contribute to our sense of being in another time and place."[90]

The fact that all three musicians have a background in Arabic music is reflected in all of their renditions of Judeo-Spanish songs, and "*Scalerica de Oro*" is no exception. In their recording of this song, they use the *zarb* and *oud*. The song begins with the *oud* playing tremolo. In the first section of the song, the vocal line is rendered lightly and in a high tessitura with many embellishments. The *oud* tremolo continues beneath the melody. The last note and the accompaniment of the first section ends suddenly, and there is a moment of complete silence before the refrain begins. This sudden ending of phrases is typical of Arabic music. On the refrain, the *oud* plucks individual notes, while the melody line becomes more rhythmic. As in the first section, notes that end phrases stop suddenly.

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[90]Daniel Becker, musicologist; see compact disc booklet, Romances Judeo Espagnoles.

3) **Judy Frankel**'s background and information about her approach to Judeo-Spanish music are described in detail in Chapter Three of this paper. In my interview with Frankel, she spoke about her approach in recording "*Scalerica de Oro*."

> Hazzan Behar, cantor emeritus of Tiferet Israel on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, sang the song to me with no instruments. . . . I really didn't do anything to it. It's just that my lungs are different than his lungs, and the inside of my mouth is different than his. I was born in America, and he's a Turk who was born in Bulgaria who had studied Sephardic style cantorial music. The rhythms, style, tempi [and so forth that I did on the recording] were all pretty much like his. . . . I added drum and tambourine because I talked to a number of Sephardim in the Los Angeles area and asked them what instruments they used at weddings and festivities, and they told me, and then I decided to find someone who played those instruments. [The rhythms played by the instruments] came from whatever seemed natural. One of the guys on this album[91] is Arabic, and because I was trying to get at the roots of Southern Spain, and this is what he came up with, it just felt right. But also, I played it for several Sephardim who said, 'Yes, this is it. This is what we did.'[92]

Frankel sings the opening section of this song a capella, only adding the drum and tambourine with the refrain and subsequent verses. She sings in a medium register and with a quick, rhythmic pace. Her vocal style is simple and unembellished, though she occasionally scoops between notes.

4) **Flory Jagoda**'s background and information about her approach to Judeo-Spanish music are also described in detail in Chapter Three of this paper. As Jagoda told me after singing "*Scalerica de Oro*" during our interview, "My intro, the introduction as you see the bride coming in, is different than [the

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[91]The album (compact disc) is also entitled "*Scalerica de Oro*." It was recorded on the Global Village Music label in 1990.

[92]When Frankel recorded the song "*Scalerica de Oro*," she had not heard any other versions of it.

ones you know], but the main thing [the refrain] is the same."[93] Jagoda was not sure where this version came from.

She sang the song with her signature vibrato and a simple guitar accompaniment. In the first section of the song, Jagoda played a tremolo introduction on the guitar. The tremolo continued when she sang the melody line, but soon she strummed the supporting chords. There was a significant interaction between Jagoda's voice and the guitar. During a mini-interlude about halfway through the first section, Jagoda picked the chords and played a little melodic motif on the guitar; toward the end of the first section, she used the guitar to echo a motif she had sung. Jagoda's representation of the refrain was more rhythmical than the first section and was accompanied by a simple, supportive, strummed guitar accompaniment.

5) **Western Wind** is an ensemble made up of: sopranos Phyllis Elaine Clark and Cheryl Bensman Rowe, countertenor William Zukof, tenors Lawrence E. Bennett and William Lyon Lee and baritone/guitarist Elliot Z. Levine. Guest artists on the CD on which "*Scalerica de Oro*" is recorded are: Tina Chancey, (*kamenc, rebec, vielle,* violin), George Mgrdichian (*oud*), Scott Reiss (recorders) and Arto Tuncboyaciyan (*dumbek*).

The Western Wind's repertoire is eclectic ranging from Renaissance motets to 50s rock n' roll, from medieval songs to barbershop quartets and from folk tunes to avant-garde contemporary works. Their recording, Mazal Bueno: A Portrait in Song of the Spanish Jews, is comprised of Judeo-Spanish songs interwoven with narration about the songs and the contexts in which

[93]Jagoda, interview.

they were sung.[94]

The Western Wind's version of "*Scalerica de Oro*" includes solos by Lee, Clark and Bensman Rowe. The ensemble uses its own arrangement of the Bulgarian version of the song.[95]

The entire first section of the song is syllabic. It begins with male voices singing a capella, then drum and a stringed instrument are added. About halfway through the first section, it switches to female voices, though the men sustain their last note (A) throughout the women's singing. The men and women begin the refrain together then go into a canon. They use the same ornamentation and the same brisk tempo that they used for the first section.

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Please see the next page for transcriptions of the above songs and the page following for a comparison of the three similar melodies.

[94]See compact disc booklet, Western Wind, Mazal Bueno: A Portrait in Song of the Spanish Jews, narrated by Tovah Feldshuh, written by Jane Mushabac, Western Wind Records (New York: 1992), compact disc recording.

[95]The Bulgarian version of this melody is notated in Weich-Shahak, "The Wedding Songs of the Bulgarian Sephardi Jews," 94.

Comparative Chart of "*Scalerica de Oro*"

A Brief Comparison of the Three Similar Melodies as Performed by: Fortuna, Ensemble Lyrique Iberique, Judy Frankel

The recordings of the opening section by Fortuna, Ensemble Lyrique Iberique and Judy Frankel are based on the same melody, which allows for instructive comparison. The recordings of Flory Jagoda and Western Wind are based on variant melodies.

My comparison of the three different representations of the same melody is based on the transcription on the previous page. I have circled significant features in each of the three representations and have labeled the two halves of the section with Roman numerals. As indicated above, the performers render the melodies differently based on tessitura, tempo, instrumentation, and vocal styles.

The three representations (Fortuna, Ensemble Lyrique Iberique and Judy Frankel) of "*Scalerica de Oro*" share many features. They are all in duple meter. The shape of the melody is the same in all three representations. The melodic line generally follows a descending motion and moves in intervals of seconds with occasional thirds. Two instances of intervals of fourths occur between the last two notes of each half of the section. In general, the tied notes fall in the same place in each melody, though in each representation a different number of notes may be tied.

Ensemble Lyrique Iberique's and Judy Frankel's representations of the melody are strikingly similar. The text and the notes in these two representations line up almost perfectly. Fortuna's representation, however, is lengthened rhythmically. She holds the notes longer and elongates the syllables as seen on the syllable "ri" in the word "*scalerica*" and the syllable "o" in the word "*oro*."

Other significant features distinguish the three representations from

one another. Fortuna represents the word "*de*" with a grace note in both places where it occurs. She also adds two ascending grace notes to the pitch on the word "*mar*" and uses grace notes to slide into the pitches on the syllables "du" and "shin" in the word "*kidushin*." The most outstanding feature in Ensemble Lyrique Iberique's representation is the embellishments before the words "*novia*" and "*kidushin*." In Frankel's representation, scooping between intervals of thirds is a salient feature.

In my opinion, all five representations of "*Scalerica de Oro*" shown here have merit. As a whole, they teach us not only about melody variants for the same or related texts, but also about the possible differences within one melody. These differences highlight the realm of artistic choices performers make when they render these songs.

I believe it is important to be exposed to both kinds of representations--the ones that stick close to tradition, and the ones that adapt the tradition. Performers who stick close to tradition teach us about how the songs might have originally been sung. Those who adapt the tradition teach us about how to hear old melodies sung in a new way.

Whether a person prefers one representation over another, in my mind, depends partly on taste. However, it also depends on how that person comes to the song--whether s/he is Sephardic or Ashkenazic and whether or not s/he feels that changing the tradition means losing the tradition. It is also important to consider what that person wants to get from the song--whether s/he purely wants to learn about the tradition or to hear a new rendition of the tradition. In my own work with Judeo-Spanish wedding songs, I seek both to understand the tradition and to expose myself to the many ways to adapt it. With this background, I feel more qualified to perform these songs myself.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

As I have shown in this paper, there are many ways to try to perpetuate the tradition of Judeo-Spanish wedding songs in a contemporary world. Some strive for the purest forms of the songs. For them, the tradition is lost once these songs are changed. Others take great liberties with the songs by adding their own arrangements and interpretations. They believe that the only way to keep Judeo-Spanish songs alive is to reshape them constantly to suit the needs and interests of the performers and their audiences.

For me, it is essential to understand where the songs came from and how they functioned in their original contexts before I can even think about reinterpreting them. However, these songs must be flexible in order to continue to convey meaning. Intelligent, tasteful innovations are the keys to the songs' survival.

Through this project I have begun to understand some of the issues that contemporary researchers, performers and educators of Judeo-Spanish music must confront in their work. Not only has my research broadened my understanding of the repertoire and the various approaches to it, but it also has greatly influenced the way I think about all music, particularly ethnic music that changes in function and performance practice over time. The issues that arise from this paper are the same issues that arise in the synagogue when we talk about *nusach*, whether to preserve it as close to the tradition as possible, to incorporate it into more modern sounding melodies, or to ignore it completely. What do we need to do in order to preserve tradition, and how far can we push the limits of change without relinquishing that

tradition? I agree with David Harris who writes:

> For those of us who take pleasure in singing the traditional music, we must respect its context and originating circumstances and yet pursue the purpose of a song--to move the hearts and minds and memories of those who *in the present* listen to us.[96]

Harris' charge both to respect the tradition and to pursue the contemporary purpose of a song captures my own approach to Judeo-Spanish wedding songs. On a larger level, this tension between preservation and change is a central issue that I expect to revisit throughout my career as a cantor and a Jewish musician.

[96]Harris, 147.

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