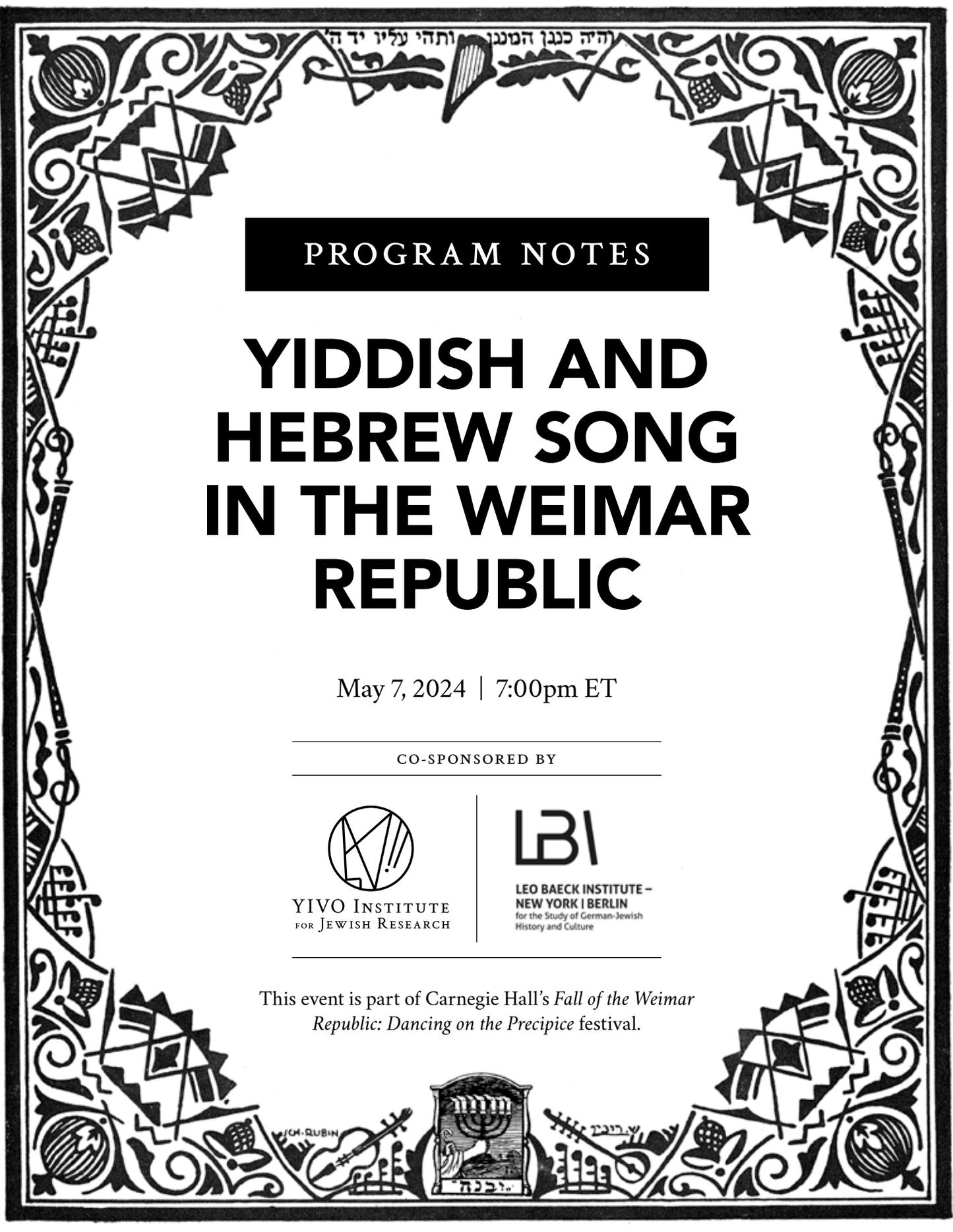


וְהָיָה כְּנֶגֶן הַמִּנְעֵן וְתָהִי עֲלֵינוּ יָד ה' 

PROGRAM NOTES

YIDDISH AND HEBREW SONG IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

May 7, 2024 | 7:00pm ET

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PROGRAM

Ostjüdisches Wiegenlied — Eastern European Lullaby
MUSIC BY LEON KORNITZER, TRADITIONAL, CA. 1933

Di alte kashe — די אַלטע קשיא — The Ancient Question
MUSIC BY LEON KORNITZER, TRADITIONAL, CA. 1933

Elul-Melodie II
MUSIC BY LEON KORNITZER, ORIGINAL YIDDISH POEM BY MORRIS ROSENFELD, CA. 1933

Yerusholaim — ירושלים — Jerusalem
MUSIC BY LEON KORNITZER, TRADITIONAL, CA. 1933

Op. 53 No. 1, *Wie einsam würde ich* — עם חלומי — I Remained Lonely
MUSIC BY JOSEPH ACHRON, WORDS BY DAVID FRISHMAN, 1923

Es fiel eine Träne — נטף נטפה הדמעה — The Tear Drop Dropped
MUSIC BY ISRAEL BRANDMANN, WORDS BY CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK, 1933

Op. 34 No. 1, *Minhag khadash* — מנהג חדש — A New Way
MUSIC BY JOEL ENGEL, WORDS BY CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK, 1923

Op. 34 No. 2, *Eins, Zwei, Drei* — אחת, שתיים, שלש — One, Two, Three
MUSIC BY JOEL ENGEL, WORDS BY CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK, 1923

Op. 34 No. 3, *Der goldener Pfau* — טוס זהבי — The Golden Peacock
MUSIC BY JOEL ENGEL, WORDS BY CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK, 1923

Shotns — שאַטנס — Shadows
MUSIC BY LAZAR WEINER, WORDS BY YEHOASH, CA. 1936

Op. 32 No. 3, *Die lockigen Haare Dein* — על רכים פניה לה — Your Curly Hair
MUSIC BY MIKHAIL GNESIN, ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM BY TICHON TSCHURILIN,
TRANSLATED INTO HEBREW BY SHAUL TCHERNIKHOVSKI, 1923

Boker te'ireni dimati — בקר תעירני דמעתי — In the Mornings Tears Wake Me
MUSIC BY ALEXANDER KREIN, WORDS BY A. EFRAT, 1923

Rakim merokh panayikh — רכים מרך פניך — Soft and Tender Face
MUSIC BY ALEXANDER KREIN, WORDS BY MANDELSTAM, 1923

Bearbeitungen Ostjüdischer Volkslieder — Arrangements of Yiddish Folksongs
MUSIC BY STEFAN WOLPE, TRADITIONAL, 1923-1925

Drei Palästinensische Volkslieder — Three Palestinian Folksongs
MUSIC BY A. M. ROTHMÜLLER, VARIOUS WORKS, 1931

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

by NEIL W. LEVIN © 2024

JOSEPH ACHRON

“Joseph Achron is one of the most underestimated of modern composers.”

—Arnold Schoenberg

Every serious violinist the world over, Jewish or not, will recognize instantly the name Joseph Achron—but in one and only one connection and for one and only one piece: his *Hebrew Melody Op. 33* (1911) for violin and piano—even though as a violinist as well as a prolific composer for many media he wrote and published dozens of other violin pieces, including three violin concertos. Most knowledgeable conductors, too, are familiar with, or at least aware of *Hebrew Melody*. But inasmuch as it is the only piece among Achron’s many works that can be said to have joined the canon of so-called standard repertoire, few in the classical music world in any capacity are aware of the rest; nor do most know anything more about the composer, as if to assume simply, and without giving the matter a thought, that Achron—“whoever he was”—might actually have written nothing other than this one piece. Anything further about Achron—his significance, contributions, and voluminous opera—generally comes as a startling but welcome surprise to all apart from those with special knowledge of the Jewish music movement born in pre-Bolshevik Russia, in the first decade of the 20th century—a movement in which he played an important role.

Achron claimed to have based *Hebrew Melody* on a theme he remembered hearing in a Warsaw synagogue in his youth. In 1912 he played it in St. Petersburg as an encore after a recital of classical works (by others) at a ball-concert presented by an adjutant to the Tsar. Its enthusiastic reception was instantaneous, and it catapulted both the piece and its composer to immediate recognition. Beginning shortly afterwards, it has been recorded by Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, Mischa Elman, Henryk Szeryng, Itzhak Perlman, and so many of that caliber and fame in each generation; and for a larger number of violinists, the piece has been a staple in their repertoire, especially as an encore number.¹

And yet, during his all-too-short life, Achron enjoyed much critical acclaim and the respect of colleagues and peers for far greater accomplishments; and he was a quite visible figure on the West Coast classical music scene.

¹ *Hebrew Melody* was written originally for violin and orchestra, but Achron made his own reduction as a violin and piano piece. It has been recorded and played in both versions, but far more frequently in the latter.

Achron belongs to the school of musicians, ethnologists, folklorists, and other intellectuals in Russia who, in the first decade of the 20th century, attempted to establish a new Jewish national art music based on ethnic, secular cultural, and religious heritage. The musical coterie formalized itself in 1908 as the Gesellschaft für jüdische Volksmusik (Society for Jewish Folk Music) in St. Petersburg, and, along with other composers of the same bent, became the New National School in Jewish Music. Achron's brief Gesellschaft experience (during which his *Hebrew Melody* was published by the Society in 1914 as Number 33 in its catalogue) turned out to be his guiding inspiration for much of his artistic life. Though a relative latecomer to the organization, he was one of the leading personalities to come out of its milieu.

Achron was born in Losdzey (Lozdzieje), in the Suwalki region of historic Lithuania (then part of Russian Poland; now Lazdijai, Lithuania) into a comfortable middle-class family. His father was an amateur violinist as well as a lay *ba'al t'filla* (precentor, or non-professional cantor). Joseph's younger brother Isadore was an accomplished pianist who later became Jascha Heifetz's accompanist for a time in America. The family moved to Warsaw, where Joseph began violin lessons at the age of five. He soon emerged as a child prodigy, and at seven years old he wrote his first known composition—a lullaby for violin (an unpublished manuscript now in the British Museum). He made his debut at the age of nine (reviewed in a St. Petersburg newspaper) and his first tour at thirteen, which took him to many European parts of the Russian Empire: Kiev, Odessa, Łódź, Białystok, Grodno, and St. Petersburg, where he played at the Imperial Palace at a birthday celebration of the Tsar's brother, Grand Duke Michael. On that occasion he was presented with a gold watch by the Tsar's mother, Tsarina (Empress) Maria Fedorovna.

In 1898 the family relocated again, this time to St. Petersburg, where Achron entered the conservatory with monetary assistance from the Grand Duke and joined the class of the legendary violin teacher Leopold Auer, whose other pupils included Jascha Heifetz, Mischa Elman, Efrem Zimbalist, Nathan Milstein and Tascha Seidl. Achron also studied composition with Anatoly Lyadov, best known today outside Russia for his descriptive orchestral pieces and virtuoso piano works, but also for his rejection of Diaghilev's commission for a *Firebird* ballet score, which then went to Stravinsky and launched his brilliant career.

By the time Achron graduated from the conservatory in 1904, he had written a dozen compositions. He demonstrated an affinity for Judaic themes even before his Gesellschaft association. His *Variations on Kamarinskaya* Op. 12, for example, has a theme and variations (No. 9) marked "*Hebraïque*."

He went to Germany for three years, where his concerts met with great success. His performance of the Beethoven violin concerto with the Leipzig Gewandhaus, conducted by Arthur Nikisch, incorporated his own cadenza. On his return to St. Petersburg, his interest in composition grew, and he studied orchestration with Maximilian Steinberg, Rimsky-Korsakov's son-in-law. Analysts of Achron's music have observed that of all the Russian composers, Scriabin exerted the most influence on his work. On Scriabin's death, in 1915, Achron wrote an *Epitaph* (Op. 38) in his memory.

For a while Achron was hopeful for inclusion in the general mainstream of Russian music. Around 1911, however, he became attracted to the work and mission of the Gesellschaft circle, intrigued by its reaction to the musical assimilation of many Russian-Jewish composers who demonstrated obliviousness to Jewish roots. Solomon Rosowsky, chairman at the time of the Musical and Arts Committee of the main St. Petersburg section of the Gesellschaft, became friendly with Achron after hearing him play, and he introduced him to the Gesellschaft's activities and its discovery of Jewish heritage and folklore as sources of artistic creativity. Achron joined the Gesellschaft that year and became chairman of its music committee. Rosowsky served as his mentor, a relationship that continued throughout their lives after both had immigrated to the United States.²

Achron's next piece after *Hebrew Melody* was a ballad on Hebrew themes for cello and piano, *Hazzan*, Op. 34; and a number of pieces related to Jewish themes followed: *Three Pieces on Jewish Folksongs*; *Hebrew Dance*; *Hebrew Lullaby*; *Dance Improvisations*; variations on *El yivne hagalil*, for piano; and *To the Jewess*.

Achron became preoccupied with developing a "Jewish" harmonic and contrapuntal idiom that would be

2 According to Albert Weisser, *The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music* (NY, 1954), p. 46, the chairmanship of what he identifies as the Musical and Arts Committee was held by various individuals at different times, including Lazare Saminsky and, eventually, Achron. However, we should be aware that a great deal of the purportedly first-hand information contained in that book is based primarily if not solely on what Rosowsky—and, to some extent, Saminsky—related to him in their numerous conversations in New York, at which time Weisser had no choice but to accept what he was told as reliable, accurate and unadorned. Obviously, Weisser had no access to archives, preserved records, libraries, or the like in the USSR, which only became open and available to outside researchers after 1991—and which now have revealed much contradictory information and clarified many matters. (And of course Weisser had no access to possible collegial or other informants who had remained in the Soviet Union, even if some were still alive in the early 1950s.) The only relevant pre-1918 Russian/Russian-Jewish and Russian Zionist periodicals available to Weisser for his research were those that could be found then at the New York Public Library and, to a lesser extent, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (now the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research), and a very few other research venues.

more appropriate to Jewish melodies than typical Western techniques, but he opposed the notion of an artificially superimposed “Jewish style.” He was convinced that any possible stylistic development of a Jewish national art music required an evolutionary course, just as Western music had evolved over centuries. In his essay, “On Jewish Music,” he wrote that any serious Jewish art music must “be developed by gradual assimilation” and that if Jewish composers were to express their own Jewish experiences musically, the creative product would be “welcome and accepted as an important and integral part of music as a whole.” That is, any Jewish national art music—music pertaining to Jewish experience as a people—must first stand as music, and *then* as a subset of cultivated western music, rather than the reverse.

In terms of qualitative—and qualifying—musical merit, that tenet might be said to have presaged misunderstood assertions decades later by the erudite composer, Hugo Weisgall, who, with his characteristic scowl that often camouflaged a mixture of curmudgeonly humor with judicious conviction, insisted that for serious music to be considered “Jewish” it must first be “good music.” If his pronouncements of that manifesto were best considered with a grain of salt, Weisgall was nonetheless quite legitimately dismissing the vulgar, mundane clichés and trite populist echoes that had come to be perceived as “Jewishness” in music. Achron encountered that trend in his day as well, and he had no use for it. At the same time, he rejected as naïve any chauvinistic perceptions of “purity” and “authenticity.” “Such purity does not and cannot exist,” he wrote. “This is as true of art as of life’s other constituents, since inter-influences are not only unavoidable but desirable.”

During the First World War, Achron served in the Russian Imperial Army and experienced action at the Western Front. He then joined the music corps of the army and was headquartered in Petrograd (viz. the former St. Petersburg, so renamed patriotically after commencement of the war with the Russian equivalent of the German “Petersburg”). After Russia’s exit from the war and during the first few years of the so-called October Revolution, he continued his performing career and began to solidify his reputation as a composer. In 1922 he abandoned the young Soviet Union for Berlin, where, with a few other émigré colleagues (most notably, Joel Engel), he tried to replant the Gesellschaft, which by then had been disbanded in Russia. Among his major works of that period is his *Children’s Suite*, based on motives of biblical cantillation—a source to which, along with secular Yiddish and Hebrew folksong, he became increasingly attracted for new compositions. But, unlike many of his colleagues, he grew less interested in Hassidic song as a

well from which to draw.

While in Berlin, Achron developed an interest in the Hebrew theatrical productions of TAI—Teatron Eretz Israeli—which was performing in Berlin on tour while he was still there in 1924. This inspired his original score of incidental music for its staging of the play *Belshazzar*—whose playwright’s identity remains inconclusive.³ In 1931 he created an independent concert work from two scenes of the original score, which he rewrote and reorchestrated for an unusually large orchestra (including 28 wind instruments) under the title *Two Tableaux from the Theatre Music to Belshazzar*.

Achron’s Berlin sojourn proved to be short-lived, and in 1924 he went to Mandatory Palestine for several months before immigrating to the United States. (Many former Gesellschaft associates did the same, although most stayed longer in Palestine, and a few remained permanently.) That visit to the Jewish homeland had a profound effect on Achron’s subsequent music, both spiritually and in terms of various melodies, modes and Near Eastern and Mediterranean biblical cantillations he heard there for the first time. He arrived in America in 1925—going first to Chicago and then to New York for nine years. He devoted himself ever more diligently to composition during that time, but he still performed frequently. At an eightieth-birthday tribute to Leopold Auer at Carnegie Hall, Heifetz, Zimbalist and the honoree played Achron’s cadenza in their rendition of a Vivaldi concerto for three violins (a concert that also included performances by Rachmaninoff, Joseph Hoffman, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, and other supreme pianistic giants).

Achron’s first violin concerto (Op. 60) was the first large-scale work of his American years. Written mostly in 1925 and completed and orchestrated the following year, its overt connection to the Hebrew Bible is not a matter of imagined programmatic or pictorial biblical depictions, in which fantasies many composers have indulged. Rather, it is the first known concerto (for any instrument) with a movement based entirely on the musical substance of authentic biblical cantillation—“*trop*” or “*trops*” in common or lay parlance of

3 Authorship of the play is generally credited to one Henia Roche, whose identity remains unclear. Scholars of Jewish theatre in Germany during that period have offered varying suggestions regarding the play’s origins, including whether the mysterious Roche was in fact its playwright or the translator into Hebrew of an earlier German play. According to one account, the play was found in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek. Menahem Gnesin, the director of the TAI production, claimed that he first discovered it in *Hadoar*, a Hebrew literary journal in which it did appear in 1904. More recently, it has been claimed that the play was actually by Heinrich Heine (who wrote the earlier poem on the Belshazzar story), that the name Roche was used as a pseudonym, and that the version in *Hadoar* was a translation from the German.

Ashkenazi Jewry, although the practice in principle vis-a-vis biblical “readings” applies to every tradition albeit each with its own system of motives, intervals, variants, pitch cells, punctuation, patterns and modalities, and is more accurately known as *ta’amei hamikra* (lit., the meaning and sense of the verse recitation).

Of the fifteen cantillation motives used and manipulated in this concerto’s first movement, the most prominently featured ones are from the Ashkenazi cantillation of *Eikha* (the Book of Lamentations), which, despite other various cantillation motives interspersed throughout (from the Eastern European variant of the Torah cantillation, for example), gives the movement an overall spirit of connection to the fast day of Tisha b’Av—the annual commemoration of the destruction of the First and Second Temples on which the entire Book of Lamentations is chanted according to its established, unique cantillation. When audiences first recognized Leonard Bernstein’s use and manipulation of these same *Eikha* motives sung in his *Jeremiah* Symphony, they were often fascinated by his discovery of their potential value for classical composition. But few if any could have realized that Achron had seized upon the same cantillation for a similar purpose decades earlier, albeit for instrumental rather than vocal rendition.⁴

The second movement of this concerto is based on two secular or quasi-secular Yemenite Jewish folksongs, which Achron heard during his sojourn in Palestine. Their use here represents another of the sources typically mined by Gesellschaft-associated and other New National School composers: authentic indigenous Jewish folksongs from the various lands of the Diaspora where Jewish communities had resided for long periods. The first of the two, stated unharmonized and in full by the orchestra at the outset, is known as *Eshala elohim* (I Will Ask God) and is typical of the Yemenite folk tune genre in its lean, crisp phrases, narrow range, and decisive rhythm. Its words, even though they are not heard, reflect the basic Zionist orientation of the Gesellschaft and the New Jewish National School with respect to new national art music: “We shall go up to [settle] our land, with song and rejoicing.”

4 Also conspicuous are interspersed or intermingled echoes of the Hebrew liturgy, for example, a phrase commonly associated with the traditional Ashkenazi rendition of the *kiddush* for the Three Festivals (emphasized in elegiac solo violin passages), and a motive associated with one of those Festivals, Shavuot, as the incipit of the Ashkenazi Shavuot *Leitmotif* in its Eastern European variant—often labeled the *akdamut* tune. But both these liturgical references are derived from biblical cantillation—something that would not be known to most if any laymen, which suggests that Achron had made a serious study of the subject.

Achron dedicated this concerto to Jascha Heifetz, who by then had become his friend and enthusiastic supporter. It received its world premiere in 1927 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitsky, played by its composer. Some of the Boston critics seemed befuddled by the very notion of basing a concerto on such patently Judaic material; and most glossed over it, as they felt unable to assess it. The significance of the cantillation-based structure eluded most of them, yet the critics for *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, the newspaper of émigré Russian Jews, offered an interesting observation in referring to the concerto’s “Dionysian imbalanced exaltation” and its wide range of emotions—“from restless mysterious meditation of strongly religious character to dizzying Dervish-like ecstasy.”

The concerto received a few subsequent performances—in New York, Vienna (with Louis Krasner), Krakow and Tel Aviv—but it then fell more or less into oblivion, although many violinists had heard about it and some expressed interest in a revival from time to time. But that never happened until 1998, when the Milken Archive for Jewish Music recorded it with violinist Elmar Oliveira and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, conducted by Joseph Silverstein.⁵ At first the full orchestral score was nowhere to be found, and the project came close to being abandoned. After much perseverance, however, it was eventually located—stuck away for decades in an old storage area of its Viennese publishers, whose motive can only be suspected. Even then, not all the instrumental parts remained, and some had to be extracted anew in addition to some needed overall reconstruction of the score.

Immediately following the recording sessions, Maestro Silverstein, himself an internationally acclaimed violinist for whom this concerto was a revelation, offered an arresting if fanciful speculation: “Had Achron remained in Russia after the Revolution, as did some of his Gesellschaft colleagues, instead of emigrating,” he remarked, “and had he still written this same concerto there in the 1920s—and certainly the first movement would have been possible—then *this* might well have been the modern Russian violin concerto introduced to the West by David Oistrakh on his first visit to the United States to launch the Soviet-U.S. Cultural Exchange in the midst of the Cold War in 1956, instead of the Shostokovich concerto; and then this Achron concerto would have joined the standard repertoire.”

While in New York, Achron wrote several scores of

5 That recording of the concerto appears on a Milken Archive/NAXOS CD devoted to Achron, which also includes his *The Golem (Suite)* and his *Two Tableaux from Belshazzar*: No. 8.559408.

incidental music for productions at Maurice Schwarz's Yiddish Art Theater. Among those plays were Goldfaden's *The Tenth Commandment*; Sholom Asch's *The Witch of Castille*; two plays by Sholem Aleichem: *Kiddush hashem* and *Stempenyu* (titled after the pseudonym for Yosele Drucker, a late-19th century klezmer, or wedding band musician, in the Russian sphere); and H. Leivick's *The Golem*.

On the whole, Achron's music proved too sophisticated even for the Yiddish Art Theater audiences, whose tastes were expected to be more cultured and refined than those of the regular patrons of the popular, mass-appeal, patently commercial and sometimes vulgar so-called Second Avenue Yiddish theatrical fare (although of course some could find enjoyment in both). Despite their apparent interest in serious, tasteful theatre, however, it seems that the Art Theater's audiences would have preferred more inconspicuous incidental music than Achron provided. He therefore reworked some of those scores for concert use. *Stempenyu* became a piece for violin and piano with the same title, which was premiered by Joseph Szigeti and then later programmed by Heifetz. And from the original score for *The Golem* he extracted five fragments and rewrote them as *The Golem Suite*. Now scored for chamber orchestra with atypical instrumentation, the suite received its premiere under the baton of no less an internationally acclaimed maestro than Fritz Reiner (to whom the piece is dedicated), at the Second International Music Festival in Venice in 1932.

Also in New York, Achron wrote his one serious synagogue work, *Evening Service for the Sabbath*, for baritone cantor, mixed choir and organ—written according to the American Reform liturgical format on commission from Temple Emanu-El and its music director and also former Gesellschaft colleague in St. Petersburg prior to immigration, Lazare Saminsky. The work exhibits exceptional nobility in its attention to pentatonic and other modalities within a modern framework tinted with audible piety.

In 1934 Achron relocated to Los Angeles, which was then playing host to a significant group of émigré composers, authors, intellectuals and performers, such as Mario Castelnovo-Tedesco, Arnold Schoenberg, Thomas Mann, Eric Zeisl, Ernst Toch, Igor Stravinsky, Artur Rubinstein, Gregor Piatigorsky, and Heifetz—among many others. Achron became part of that circle and, like many fellow composers, he took advantage of opportunities for involvement in film scoring (though in his case, with minimal success) and playing in Hollywood studios.

He completed his second (1936) and third (1937) violin concertos in Los Angeles, the latter on a commission from Heifetz, and he played the premieres of both with the Los

Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Otto Klemperer. Unlike his first violin concerto, however, neither of those utilized any Jewishly-related material or purported to be Judaic art works. Although the second concerto received favorable reviews, some saw in the third a loss of the charm and inspiration so evident in the first. Indeed, at that point in his life Achron was attempting to join the avant-garde, and he sometimes allowed a forced theoretical approach to crowd out his natural inclination towards emotional freshness.

In addition to chamber and orchestral works, solo piano pieces, Hebrew and Yiddish lieder, and choral settings, Achron's considerable opera also includes eight cadenzas for Paganini, Brahms, Mozart, Beethoven, Vivaldi and Haydn concertos, and at least thirty-three known violin and piano transcriptions of songs and piano miniatures by such composers as Grieg, Brahms, Liszt, Rameau, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann. Found among his papers and other effects shortly after his death in 1943 were sketches for a planned seven-movement symphonic work.

All of Achron's Jewishly-related music reflects the central thesis of the Gesellschaft and the New Jewish National School that indeed the creation of a genuine "Hebrew music" was possible. In spite of the argument that by the 20th century Jews had been without national roots for too long and therefore could no longer resurrect an individual musical character, Achron insisted that it was still possible to ferret out and define at least some national characteristics of style, especially since some of the fundamentals of ancient Hebrew music could be traced through continuous usage (in particular, for example, biblical cantillation and modal motifs), even allowing for transmutation and acculturation over time. To those opponents who posited the rebuttal that the length and geographical breadth of the Diaspora—and its crystallization of host influences—precluded a freely created Jewish national music, he replied in an interview that "the same thing could be said about any music at the time of its creation," that

Always and everywhere, dependence upon others precedes the liberation of one's own artistic idiom and self-determination. In the first 'real Russian' compositions (Glinka), for example, we find Italian influences.

In stating further that a valid Jewish art music must actually incorporate at least some of the acculturated aspects in order to go beyond the narrowness of pre-Diaspora elements, he demonstrated a profound understanding of the issue both historically and aesthetically.

Achron's path as a composer was thus partly a lifelong search for a new language of musical expression. Over the course of that search he underwent a series of stylistic transformations, ranging from mid-19th century Romantic idioms to some of the most significant forces in Western musical developments of the 20th century—from Russian nationalist and French Impressionist schools even to some of the post-tonal influences of the Second Viennese School. But underlying so much of his work, whether explicitly or subtly shaded, was his preoccupation with Jewish elements. Albert Weisser, the first music historian to address his oeuvre and its reception with thoughtful analysis in the context of the New Jewish National School phenomenon, suggested one perspective: "Achron's music stood, as it were," he theorized, "between two poles, the specifically Jewish public and the general music audiences; and it could not be wholly accepted by either." Perhaps so up through the 1950s, before the emergence of a heightened level of general public attraction to artistic exposure of previously unfamiliar Jewish (or other ethnic-religious) elements on the one hand, and uninhibited Jewish pride in the unmasking and sharing of that musical heritage on the other. And in acknowledging Achron's ability to fuse finely-honed craft with artistic integrity and western standards, Hugo Weisgall astutely evaluated the success of his overall pursuit: "In his best music, he succeeds, like Janacek and Bartok, in making the idiom of the particular serve as the language of the universal."

ISRAEL BRANDMANN

Born in 1901 in the Ukraine, Israel Brandmann was one of the composers associated with the New Jewish National School in music, although one of the least remembered. Like many other composers of that school, he studied at the Moscow Conservatory for a while, and then lived in what was called at the time Palestine before returning to Europe and resettling in Vienna in 1924. There he was one of the founding members of the Society for the Promotion of Jewish Music, which in effect was a continuation of the by-then defunct Gesellschaft für jüdische Volksmusik, founded in St. Petersburg in 1908. And he directed the Jewish Choral Society in Vienna. Probably his most important composition from his Vienna years is his symphonic poem, *Hechalutz*. After its premiere under his baton, his former composition teacher, Franz Schmidt, remarked that "Brandmann will become the national hero of his people; we can predict a great future for him."

With the rise of violent anti-Jewish incidents in Vienna by Nazi thugs and increased restrictions, Brandmann made *aliya*—viz., permanent immigration to Palestine, in 1935. There he organized the Workers' Choir, a large-scale chorus that he directed. Its aim, like that of the United Chorus, organized and directed by Shlomo Kaplan, was the cultivation of Palestinian Hebrew traditional, classical, and socialist song as a sort of contrast to the large-scale oratorios and chamber choral music being offered simultaneously by the Palestine Oratorio and the Tel Aviv Chamber Chorus—the latter which eventually developed into the Philharmonic Choir.

Among Brandmann's important works is a sonata for violin and piano. Written in traditional form and influenced by the Eastern European Jewish national school as well as by Central European modernism with a rondo on a Jewish dance tune, *Variations on a Hebrew Dance Tune (Hava nagila)*, and *Variations on a tune by Joel Engel*, in addition to a number of creative folksong arrangements. In his later years, however, he devoted most of his energies to choral conducting while neglecting composition for the most part.

JOEL ENGEL

Dating to his *aliya* in 1924, and although his untimely death less than three years later precluded a more substantial opera of new works from the Land of Israel than might otherwise have been the case, Joel [Yuli/Iulii Dmitrevich] Engel (1868-1927) came to be considered in many estimations the initial composer of the classically-oriented music of modern Israel. For, his unfortunately brief period in what was then known as Mandatory Palestine preceded the arrival beginning in the 1930s of composers such as Ben-Haim, Lavry, Boskovitch, et, al., who would fashion new styles and approaches that came to be heard as emblematic of the high music culture of the *y'shuv* and its extension into the culture of the sovereign state. And upon his death Engel was celebrated internationally, if a bit simplistically, as "the father of modern Jewish music"—a perception reinforced by Gershon Swet's memorial tribute, and perpetuated vis-a-vis his role in the course of the music of modern Israel by the city of Tel Aviv's Engel Prize for Israeli composers. Yet, with the benefit of perspective, he is remembered appropriately as much if not more so for his landmark contributions to Jewishly-related music (viz., music of Jewish life and experience) as an ethnographer, collector, musicologist, and music critic. In Russia, prior to his *aliya*, he had been a seminal figure of the New Jewish National

School in music and a leader of the Moscow chapter of the Gesellschaft für jüdische Volksmusik.

Engel was born to a comfortable middle-class and for the most part Russified family in Berdiansk, Taurida Province, in the eastern Crimea—outside the Pale of Settlement. Like many others who would eventually be among the founders of the New Jewish National School, his interest in Jewish culture, including Yiddish language and literature as well as modern Hebrew, did not stem from his Russian-speaking parents or home environment—which was mostly devoid of Judaic religious practice or observance. He attended the local *gymnasium* (secondary school, modeled in principle on the German pattern). He studied at the University of Kiev and then at the University at Kharkov, from which he received a law degree in 1890—a typical Jewish middle-class pursuit at that time. Only during his studies in Kharkov did he become intensely interested in music, and he was already seventeen when he began formal music lessons. After military service, he commenced music studies on a part time basis at the Imperial Russian Music Society in Kharkov. His encounter in that city with Tchaikovsky, who happened fortuitously (for Engel) to be in that city on his travels, turned out to be a turning point for him. Tchaikovsky was impressed with his talent and encouraged him to enter the Moscow Conservatory in composition. On the basis of Tchaikovsky's recommendation he was accepted. For most of his student days at the conservatory, due to a tightened quota system concerning Jews living in Moscow, Engel is said to have been the only Jew in his composition class.

During those Moscow days, Engel became part of a coterie of Jewish students in the city, the *Zakharinka* circle, that espoused ethnic consciousness and discussed, encouraged awareness of, and advocated for Yiddish folklore and the Yiddish language. From his participation in that group's intellectually infused meetings, he became aware of the breadth and richness of un-Russified traditional Jewish culture as it still flourished in the towns and villages of the Pale on a level he had not imagined. And he was particularly fascinated by the musical dimensions. He soon tried his hand at utilizing such folk elements in an operetta, *Esther* (the score for which has not been found). His discovery of Jewish musical along with other folk materials, and the attention these attracted among Moscow Jewry, impressed him as a potentially new spirit of Jewish ethnic nationalism and national rebirth, even though not yet attached specifically to Zionist thought or commitments. The more he worked with Jewish melodies, he proclaimed, "the more Jewish I became." But at that point this was more personal than professional or a vision of any movement, and it was then still Russian music that occupied

his principal efforts.

Two of Engel's most inspiring professors and mentors at the conservatory were Sergei Taneyev and Nikolai Kashkin. In addition to composition, both influenced him to become interested in the scientific study of music—its history, theory, analysis, and criticism, in part along the lines of the disciplines of musicology (*Musikwissenschaft*) that had emerged in 19th-century Germany. After graduation from the conservatory and through Kashkin, he became a junior or quasi-apprentice music critic and writer on music for Moscow's primary liberal newspaper among its intellectual circles, *Russkie vedomosti* ("the voice of the bourgeois"), for which Kashkin had been writing music criticism and related articles about music for many years. When Kashkin retired, Engel became the chief music critic and music editor, and he continued in that capacity until 1922 (some accounts suggest 1918 or thereabouts).

By the closing years of the 19th century, Russian musical ethnography—collection and study—was an established and expanding field. Together with the recently budding Jewish ethnic-national consciousness and pride among a growing number of students, intellectuals, and artists in urban cosmopolitan surroundings—sentiments that, for some, would proceed eventually to various levels and manifestations of Zionism—the stage was set for a Jewish counterpart to the endeavors vis-a-vis Russian music and its traditions. At the twilight of the 19th century, Engel, now imbued with the importance of preservation and awareness of Jewish folk heritage in the Russian empire, started collecting Yiddish folksongs.

Also in that roughly two-year time frame, two members of the Russian Jewish intelligentsia, Haskala adherents, avid music aficionados, and historians-become folklorists (both with law degrees and one also an accountant), Pesach Marek and Saul Ginzburg, embarked on an ambitious collecting project that would culminate in their joint 1901 St. Petersburg publication, *Jewish Folksongs in Russia (Evreiskie narodnye pessi v Rossii)*. Although not based on actual fieldwork, relying largely on second-hand sources, and containing only the words/lyrics of the songs, the volume marked a historic moment in Jewish musical ethnography. It confirmed the validity of what had been a novel proposition, at least in Russian historical thinking: that the history of Jewish folk music throughout the empire was itself an essential component of Russian Jewish history in general—not merely a matter of musicological interest. It was the first serious and comprehensive collection of Yiddish folksongs, even as it was confined to the words/lyrics that could reveal much about Russian/Eastern European Jewish folk life and culture

(376 song and variant entries identified as emanating from four regions of the empire: Lithuania, Kurland, Poltava, and Podolia). Despite the plethora of subsequent collections and publications by more advanced field researchers and trained ethnologists and ethnomusicologists, it has served ever since as a major resource for students and scholars—notwithstanding its unavoidable view of “the folk” in many cases from the elite perspectives and sensibilities of the Jewish urbanized middle classes.

There remains some question about Ginzburg and Marek’s omission of the music—whether this was a conscious decision from the outset, as is maintained by some contemporary historians, or the result of necessary but reluctant compromise in the face of certain unavoidable obstacles. Although some contributors included musical notations along with the Yiddish words, which were then given to Engel to edit and prepare for publication, the volume went to press without them. Unexplained “exhaustive technical problems” is the reason cited in the preface for this omission, along with an unfulfilled promise that the music would be issued in a future publication. In any case, it was not until 1905 in Moscow that Engel self-published his *First Album of Ten Jewish Folksongs*.

Meanwhile, perhaps as a preview to their publication, Marek and Ginzburg included Engel in a 1900 public lecture-recital at the Moscow Polytechnic Museum, sponsored by the music division of the Imperial Society for Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography. Marek lectured on the literary components of Jewish folksong, and Engel addressed the musical dimensions—followed by soprano performances of his Yiddish folksong arrangements by a professor of voice at the Moscow Conservatory with Engel’s wife at the piano. So successful was that event and so much of a stir did it create, reviewed in the Russian as well as the Yiddish press with unprecedented favor and enthusiasm—and attended by many non-Jews as well as Jews of varying degrees of assimilation—that it was repeated in the spring of 1901 in a small hall at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. At that second event Ginzburg and Engel gave the lectures, and the vocal renditions were offered by a well-known baritone.

Those twin events raised the status of Jewish folksong in Jewish and general musical and intellectual circles. Moreover, they appear by most assessments to have solidified Engel’s reputation as not only a widely recognized and respected critic, but now as the foremost expert on “Jewish music” in the Russian Empire.

Engel grew increasingly impassioned, perhaps sometimes uncritically, about Jewish folksong—not only in terms of its objective merit, but also for its potential as a genuine

symbol and ignition of his own and his people’s Jewish consciousness. His developed views and convictions concerning authenticity could put him at odds with certain well-known personalities in the Yiddish cultural world as well as with Gesellschaft colleagues. He engaged in vehement, even acidic debates in the press with Sholom Aleichem and with that author’s “discovery” and promotion of the popular amateur songwriter Mark Warshawski, whose best known and most widely remembered (but obviously romanticized) song undoubtedly remains *Oyfn [afn] pripetshik*. At issue in these polemical exchanges were, from Engel’s perspectives, questions about what does or does not qualify as genuine folksong; the decisive, determining role of oral transmission; distinguishing actual folksong from “popular art” consciously, deliberately, and/or professionally or quasi-professionally created for its perceived if well-meant appeal to the “folk masses”; and, as the first thorough historian, critic and analyst of the New Jewish National School phenomenon, Albert Weisser (if now legitimately supplemented and in certain respects and details superseded by more recent scholarship utilizing sources unavailable to him), framed the dilemma, ascertaining “where the traditional folk material begins and the personal invention ends.”

“It is true that we have such songs that have come down to the folk masses from unknown sources of olden, long-forgotten times,” Engel wrote in his “Answer to Sholom Aleichem” in a 1901 issue of a Krakow periodical, *Der yid*, “or they may have been written recently, almost before our very eyes. But these (the latter) have become widely accepted among the folk masses because of their folk character (*nusakh*) [*sic*].”

The necessary ingredient for Engel was “folk character” in terms of an established folk *melos* as well as the legitimacy of the words’ reflections. Viz., a crucial element is a song’s *Volksgeist* (folk spirit, or character)—its reflection not only of the true, unromanticized (for commercial or entertainment value) folkways, lifestyles, customs, themes, and sensibilities of a cultural group, but also the familiarity of its own particular or peculiar folk *melos* that would resonate in those with folk temperaments and established melodic attachments.

By far Engel’s most famous public polemical exchange concerning authenticity and appropriateness, however, was that which began in 1915 with fellow Gesellschaft composer, “Jewish music” advocate, and student of what he believed were the oldest extant traditions, Lazare Saminsky. (Saminsky’s curiosity and research took him beyond the Pale and

Yiddish-speaking regions to such so-called “exotic” places as the Caucasus and Georgia, partly in search of materials for future compositions and arrangements.) Saminsky sharply challenged Engel’s views and assumptions concerning secular Jewish—and Yiddish in particular—folksong from the Pale and his focus on the genre as authentic reflection and documentation of Jewish history, musical or otherwise, let alone Judaic roots. For Saminsky, the Yiddish folksong could represent artificial acquisition, especially in its *melos* so heavily borrowed from neighboring or host cultures: melodic structures, intervallic stereotypes, emblematic modalities, and rhythms. Authenticity for him resided instead in naïvely presumed echoes of Jewish antiquity: biblical cantillation motifs, skeletons of psalmody, and some synagogue prayer modes or modalities (but not those mirroring or originating in Polish, Ukrainian, Eastern European Gypsy, or other musical cultures; nor, for that matter, those with Arabic or Turkish origins).

Key factors for Saminsky were age and original “Jewishness.” And, of course, even though the elements to which he assigned the weight of greater age and authenticity cannot be traced to antiquity in any audible or recognizable form, their emergence in the sacred and liturgical traditions of Judaic practices does predate Yiddish folksong, whose features may not even have been acquired much earlier than the 19th century—and even less likely prior to the 18th century. Whatever evidence we might have is simply insufficient for determining this. It can take several or many generations to establish a folk tradition, which may seem older than it is, but not necessarily centuries.

But the very notion of a Judaic musical continuum dating to antiquity (*viz.*, the era of the Temples in Jerusalem or even a few centuries following the Second Temple’s destruction), with neither adulteration nor acculturation—nor invention or adaptation—was both egregiously wishful and necessarily devoid of any supporting scholarship or tangible evidence. Similarly oblivious to reality is the romantically chauvinistic but unscientific as well as dangerous suggestion of musical (or other) “purity”—all the more misguided when cited as a prerequisite for, or confused with, authenticity. For Saminsky had no qualms about referring to traditional Judaic sacred *melos* as “a superiority flowing from its racial purity.”

One suspects that Saminsky’s chief grouse was more aesthetic than historical or academic, in the sense that the nature of much Yiddish folksong (and certainly pseudo-folksong or popular songs passed off as folk tradition)—and especially what he termed ‘domestic song’ bearing the stamp of surrounding Eastern European influences—simply failed to appeal to, even offended, his own personal and artistic

sensibilities. Still, he may have had a point in his rejection of Yiddish folksong as well as Hassidic music of the Pale as the dominant, conclusive symbols or artifacts of genuine Jewish heritage; the more so if he felt that primary attention to these genres eclipsed the significance of sacred music’s entrenched features to the religious history of Judaism and the Jewish people. Yet, at the same time, neither was Engel necessarily wrong in his embrace of folksong as an authentic heritage, however and under whatever influences it had evolved to become “Jewish.”

What ignited the polemical exchange was Saminsky’s article, “Recent Works of the Jewish Folksong Society,” published in St. Petersburg in a 1915 issue of *Rasviet*. He criticized severely the Gesellschaft’s publication (presumably with Engel’s blessing) of folksong or supposed folksong arrangements he considered—not entirely without cause in several cases—banal, trite, hackneyed, cheap, or false; and, in his judgment, anything but authentic components of tradition. Engel responded in the next issue, and the duel was on, fought out in more than one periodical. Saminsky derided what he called the “naïve belief in the sanctity of everything that our people sings,” insisting that “Hebrew [read Jewish] music should cultivate the old sacred chant . . . the basic material of Jewish folk music.” Engel’s rebuttal centered around the question of whether or not a folksong had, or had acquired, a specifically Jewish character, regardless of origin or influence: “Everything which the Jewish song gathers from its neighbors it changes to its own manner. . . the spirit of the people is expressed.”

Engel was not opposed to synagogal or sacred Jewish musical traditions, whether liturgical chant or melodies, psalmody, or biblical cantillation, as valuable sources for a new Jewish musical art. It was simply that he could not abide Saminsky’s doctrinaire insistence that this new, modern art should—indeed must—be based on them alone.

Eventually, the match became more one about emphasis than about total delegitimization of either genre—a question of which should take precedence over the other, if either, in the mission of the New Jewish National School. Yet, sacred and secular musical elements are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as the history of Western music in general or that of cultivated music of Jewish experience demonstrates; and symbiosis has often yielded enriched music. In the end, the entire polemic appears to have little meaning when revisited now armed with the fruits of modern scholarship coupled with liberal aesthetics. And it is perhaps with this in mind that Weisser referred to the bout as one “fought with ‘theoretical’ boxing gloves.”

Engel played a major role in the historic 1911-1914 Jewish Ethnographic Expedition throughout significant regions of the Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire—notably Podolia and Volhynia. The expedition was organized through the offices of the Jewish Historico-Ethnographic Society in St. Petersburg and pursued in the name, or memory, of Baron Horace Guinzbourg, from whom—or from his family or estate—some financial underwriting might have come. The purpose of the expedition was to gather and collect folklore, artifacts, music, and other documentation of still unmodernized Jewish life in the towns, cities, villages, and hamlets of those regions of the Pale, as well as to photograph old synagogues, tombstones, folk types, and folk scenes. All of this was to be brought back to St. Petersburg for scientific and scholarly study as well as artistic use—largely out of prescient awareness that this folk culture would one day become extinct as modernization would eventually spread and envelop it.

Presiding over much of the expedition, and in particular with regard to the literary-historical aspects—folk tales, folk sayings, folk poetry, stories, and, where possible, written or notated accounts—was the celebrated author, playwright, and folklorist S[emyon Akimovitch] An-ski [Solomon Zainwil Rappaport]. Hence, the informal, common reference to the project as the An-ski Expedition. Engel, together with Saminsky and Sussman Kisselgov, headed the music division. The undertaking was monumental. In 1912 alone, for example, Engel and An-ski visited sixty-six locations in Podolia and Volhynia. The fruits of Engel's collecting and recording of folk music during the course of the expedition occupied at least twenty-nine phonographic cylinders of musical specimens.

Engel is said to have been together with An-ski when an innkeeper's wife related the tale of demonic possession, which she and the townsfolk believed out of entrenched superstition to have been a real-life incident, and which inspired An-ski to write his famous play, *The Dybbuk*. (Some doubt about Engel's presence as a witness has been raised recently by music historian Jascha Nemtsov, though no conclusions have been drawn.) An-ski wrote the play in Russian, and only afterwards, when it was rejected by the Moscow Art Theatre, did he make his Yiddish translation. A Hebrew translation as a stage version followed by Bialik. Apparently, if indeed Engel was a witness to the telling of the tale, he was similarly artistically inspired. In any case, he wrote incidental music for the Hebrew version, which came to be perceived as inseparable from productions of the play

in any language. (The music for the 1937 film, however was written by Henoch Kon.)

Since An-ski's construction of the play relied on a question posed as the principal motif in a Hassidic song (perhaps also learned from the expedition), *Mipnei ma* (Why did the soul descend from the supreme height to the deep pit?), the tune of that song was used in the 1920 premiere, given in Vilna (now Vilnius) in Yiddish by the Vilner Trupe. Engel incorporated the *Mipnei ma* tune in his incidental music along with other authentic folk and Hassidic melodies. In 1926 he published the score as an independent concert work, *Suite hadibbuk*, op. 35, or *Suite from the Dramatic Legend, The Dybbuk* (Berlin and Tel Aviv, Yuwal). When Aaron Copland attended an English version of the play in New York, he was so taken with the incorporated tune that he seized upon it for his piano trio, *Vitebsk*.

In addition to his pursuits in the realm of Jewishly-related music, Engel lectured and published about both Russian and the wider surrounding sphere of European music in general, as critic, historian, commentator, and translator. He published his own translation into Russian of Hugo Riemann's famous encyclopedic *Musiklexicon*, and his various writings included studies ranging from opera to the music of Alexander Scriabin.

After the 1905 revolution he taught at a modest music school he helped to found in Moscow, the People's Conservatory. Following the 1917 October Revolution, he headed a children's school or colony in Malachouka, a Moscow suburb. And he devoted significant energy to his work with the newly-formed Habima theatrical studio (later the national theatre of Israel), for whose Hebrew productions he wrote a number of scores in addition to the incidental music for Bialik's Hebrew version of *The Dybbuk*—which Habima staged in Berlin during its 1925–26 residency in Germany.

In 1922 Engel left the Soviet Union permanently and lived for two years in Berlin. There, he organized and gave concerts and lectures on 'Jewish music' and founded the *Yuwal* music publishing firm, for which he served as its editor. In that time frame *Yuwal* published many reissues or reprints of Gesellschaft publications (copyrights, if any had applied to these pieces in the first place in Russia, would not have been in force following the demise of the Gesellschaft in the Soviet Union) and other, new pieces by Russian Jewish composers, including some of his own. Many if not most of *Yuwal's* publications were then available at a thriving Judaica store on the Kantsrasse. Its inventory served as the (usually surprising) introduction to music of the New Jewish National School and the Gesellschaft for many émigrés and sojourning Jewish musicians in Berlin, not only from Russia,

but from elsewhere in Europe—as well as for German or German-speaking Jewish musicians—who had never previously heard of the movement or its repertoire. During that same period, Engel was also involved in the establishment of a second, smaller Jewish music press known as *Yibneh*.

Upon his *aliya* in late 1924, Engel settled in Tel Aviv and participated in a host of musical activities: teaching at the Shulamit Conservatory and at a teachers seminary as well as giving private lessons; conducting choirs; writing for various journals; and performing and lecturing. He continued to compose, writing, among other things, incidental music for theatrical productions of the Ohel Studio. His music from that brief period in the *y'shuv* of Mandatory Palestine—much of which has never been published—reflects his enthusiasm for the pioneering spirit in what he easily embraced as his new home. One moving poem that attracted him, and which he chose to set with appropriate and deliberate simplicity and slightly modernistic harmonic language, quotes a touching exchange of letters between an aging mother who chose to remain in the “old country” and her son who had made *aliya*. She asks him to “come home” because otherwise they may not see each other again. But, though this pains him deeply as he very much wants to be reunited, he must urge her instead to come to him in *Eretz Yisra'el* (the Land of Israel)—because he *IS* home!

Engel's catalogue includes much vocal music, the best-known works of which are his *Fifty Children's Songs*, *Three Songs to Poems of Tchernikovsky*, and *Three Series of Jewish Folksongs*; two violin-and-piano pieces as well as solo piano music; chamber music for various combinations; choral settings; and incidental music to four plays by Itzhak Leib Peretz that were produced in Israel in the year before his death.

Although he lauded Engel's contributions to Jewish music ethnography, his advocacy of Jewish folksong, and his furtherance of the New Jewish National School's mission, Albert Weisser was dismissive of his gifts as a composer. He referred, to Engel's arrangements, for example, as too often exhibiting a “spineless salon style” filled with “period mannerisms.” But in his judgment Weisser seems to have bypassed most of Engel's original works, and especially those from his post-*aliya* period, which, in all fairness, were mostly unavailable to Weisser. Indeed, much of his music displays artistic melodic invention, a solid sense of structure and development, harmonic exploration less simple than it might seem, natural communication, and, above all, an abundance of taste. Revisiting the full range of his opera tells us that it is time for a reassessment of Engel the composer.

MIKHAIL GNESIN

Mikhail Gnesin [Gniessen, Gnessin] was one of the founding members of the New Jewish National School in music in St. Petersburg who chose to remain in the Soviet Union. But one of his pieces was actually published by the *Gesellschaft für jüdische Musik*: his violin and piano arrangement of a Yiddish folk tune, *A nign fun Shayke Fyfer*, published in 1914. Apparently, he learned that tune from his maternal grandfather, Isaiah Flotsinger, a folk singer better known as Shayke Fyfer.

The son of a modern-leaning rabbi, Gnesin was born in 1883 in Rostov-on-the-Don to a comfortable and highly cultured family. He is reported to have been deeply influenced at a young age in Rostov by the famous learned cantor and cantorial composer there, Eliezar Gerovitch, who was a superb classically trained musician.

After a short time in Moscow, Gnesin matriculated in 1901 from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he became a protégé of Rimsky-Korsakoff. (He edited posthumously in 1911 Rimsky-Korsakoff's volume, *Collected Essays and Sketches*.) During those St. Petersburg years, he became attracted to a circle of symbolist artists, including poets, painters and playwrights. He traveled in Palestine for a while in 1914 and then returned to Rostov to teach at the state school there until 1921. He went again to Palestine, where he is believed to have written his two operas: *The Maccabees* and *The Youth of Abraham*—both also described as “opera poems.” After that second visit to Palestine, he resettled in what was by then Leningrad.

Oddly enough, except for a few more pieces published before the Revolution such as his *Variations on a Jewish Theme* for string quartet (1916), Gnesin wrote and published most of his Jewishly-related music in the Soviet Union—until about 1936, when it was no longer safe to do so. It was between 1921 and the mid-1930s that he wrote *The Story of Red-Headed Motele*, one of his best known pieces; three Hebrew songs to translated texts of Russian poets; *ORA*, variations on a Palestinian theme for piano four hands; a set of Hebrew Songs for voice and piano (1928); *Jewish Orchestra at the Ball of the Town Bailiff* (1926), which he adapted from his incidental score to Gogol's *Revisor*; and many Yiddish and Hebrew folksong arrangements. During the brief semi-thaw in Stalin's terror against the Jews immediately after the war, Gnesin wrote his *Sonata Fantasia on Jewish Themes* for piano and strings, which, although it has no opus number, is believed to have been composed around 1946.

LEON KORNITZER

Leon Kornitzer was one of the most esteemed cantors during the interwar years in Germany, when he held the post of *Oberkantor* (Chief Cantor) at the Liberale synagogue in Hamburg. Born in Vienna, he was a descendant of several generations of cantors, and he received his first training from his father. He also studied piano in his early years with L. Ungar and *hazzanut* (cantorial art) with Joseph Heller, then the *Oberkantor* of the Seitenshtetengasse Tempel (a.k.a. the Sulzer Tempel). He attended the K.K. Staatsgymnasium and completed his studies there with the state examination for teaching. Beginning in 1898, he conducted a synagogue choir in Iglau; and then, from 1899 to 1905 he served as *Oberkantor* of the Franz Joseph I Jubilee Tempel in Prague.

In 1913, Kornitzer began his most fruitful and distinguished period as *Oberkantor* of the Neue Israelitische Tempel in Hamburg, returning to that pulpit after his service in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War.

During his Hamburg years, Kornitzer composed both synagogue music and secular Jewish folksong settings and arrangements. Some of his liturgical compositions were published in 1926 under the title *Romemoss El*, but a number of his most beautiful synagogue pieces for cantor and choir were left in manuscript. Some of these were composed while he was on active army duty during the war, for example, his *L'kha dodi*, for which, as he later explained, he was inspired while on overnight guard duty atop a hill watching the stars on a clear night.

In Hamburg, Kornitzer published a collection of liturgical and secular melodies from a variety of sources, titled *Jüdische Klänge* (1933), with very simple piano accompaniments suitable for learning and singing at home. He extracted samples of liturgical melodies from compositions by important cantorial and synagogue choral composers throughout Central and Western Europe, and even England and the United States, such as Sulzer (Vienna); Lewandowski (Berlin), Moritz Deutsch (Breslau), Emmanuel Kirschner and Max G. Lowenstamm (Munich), Eduard Birnbaum (Königsberg), Samuel Alman (London), Samuel Naumberg (Paris), Borukh Schorr (Lemberg [L'vov]), and A.W. Binder (the United States)—along with liturgical pieces and samples of his own as well as several by now lesser-known cantors or cantor-composers. Another section includes melodies intended for home use, such as tunes for the Passover seder and for *z'mirot shel shabbat*, so-called Sabbath table songs.

But the surprising section was devoted to Eastern

European Yiddish folksongs, under the heading *Das Jüdische Volkslied*. This was highly unusual, even courageous for publication in Germany, where Jews there held a largely negative view of anything Yiddish. And it was one of the first printed introductions of Yiddish folksong to German-speaking Jewry to be offered by a distinctly German cantor or other singer. It was assumed at the time that Kornitzer probably heard many of these songs for the first time while in the army during the First World War, at or near the eastern front as the German forces pushed eastward into areas where there were Yiddish-speaking Jews—and/or possibly from contact with soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army.

Kornitzer served as chairman of the Association of Jewish Cantors in Germany and co-founded its monthly journal, *Der jüdische Kantor*, of which he was also editor-in-chief for ten years, and which included a number of his essays. He also wrote articles for the *Hamburger Familienblatt* and was a correspondent and reviewer for *Die jüdische Rundschau*. For the Hamburg community newspaper he wrote under the pseudonym Sabtaj. He published a collection of eighty liturgical, paraliturgical and folkloric melodies by various German Jewish composers—for home and school use as well as worship. He was also instrumental in the conception of the songbook, *Hawa Naschira!* (Let us Sing!), published in 1935 by Joseph Jacobsen and Erwin Jospe. Apart from his cantorial pulpit—which is known to have attracted Jews (sometimes clandestinely) from the orthodox synagogue just to hear him—and his composing, arranging, compiling and editing, Kornitzer was an active participant in Jewish community concerts and charity events, both vocally and as a piano accompanist.

In 1939, following the infamous pogrom in November 1938 throughout Germany and Vienna known (somewhat dismissively) as Kristallnacht, and as soon as possible thereafter, Kornitzer was able to obtain one of the prized visas as a needed musician and immigrated with his family to what was then called Mandatory Palestine. He became involved with the Palestine Broadcasting Authority (later Kol Yisrael). He and his family settled in Haifa, where he conducted the choir at the Haifa Central Synagogue until his death in 1947.

All Kornitzer's Yiddish folksong arrangements are treated quite simply, with the accompaniments easily playable by any average amateur pianist; and the accompaniments contain doublings of the vocal lines throughout. This feature is in accord with Kornitzer's intention for home use.

His *Ostjüdisches Wiegenlied* (Eastern European Lullaby) portrays a mother a bit frustrated that the child in the cradle hasn't fallen asleep. Nonetheless, she will continue to rock the baby to sleep with a song. The vocal line is a typical example

of what was perceived as the most significant feature of Eastern European Jewry's music, viz., the lowered second and raised third of the scale—which, in general, German Jewry found annoying. *Yerusholaim* is a typical longing for Jerusalem, although the text is a bit more sophisticated than many folksong lyrics. The “father” who once “loved the man” in the song but who has driven him out to wander from “one land to another”—with Jerusalem always in mind and heart—seems to be God, so that the old man weeping at Zion's gates represents the Jewish people of the Diaspora. *Di alte kashe* (The Ancient Question) could be said to speak for itself, without telling us what that ancient question of the world is, other than nonsense syllables. On the other hand, it may contain a measure of profundity by its very omission of any answer, leaving us to fill in an answer out of many possible ones. The vocal line once again traverses the scale with a lowered second and raised third, emblematic of much Eastern European Jewish folksong as well as liturgical music.

ALEXANDER KREIN

Highly regarded by the Russian music world of his day, Alexander Krein (1883–1951) was also one of the most gifted and compelling composers of the New Jewish National School in music as well as an active participant in the Gesellschaft für jüdische Volksmusik. He made valuable contributions to a sophisticated repertoire of Jewish-related, artistically developed ‘classical’ or concert music.

Of the significant composers of the New Jewish National School who chose for one reason or another to remain permanently in the new Soviet Union, however, Krein's story following the October Revolution is perhaps the most disturbing. At best it contains incidents and elements that continue to puzzle us; while some of the most egregious patterns of his conduct—including choices he made, activities in which he participated, and some of the works he composed—leave little room for allowance.

Krein was born in Nizhny Novgorod (later renamed Gorky) to a musical family that came from Lithuania in the 1870s. His father, Abraham, was a violinist who played in Jewish wedding bands of *klezmerim* or quasi-*klezmerim*, as did the young Alexander. (It remains uncertain whether or not his father was actually a member of the guild that qualified one to use the term *klezmer*.) And he is said also to have been an amateur collector of Jewish folksongs. Of his ten children, seven became professional musicians. Alexander's brother

David was concertmaster of the Bolshoi Opera Orchestra in Moscow, and another brother, Grigori, was a recognized composer.

At the age of fourteen Krein entered the Moscow Conservatory as a cello student, and about three years later Grigori joined him there to study violin. During those conservatory years, Krein also began private lessons in theory and composition with L.V. Nikolayev and Boleslav Yavorsky—and, according to some accounts, with Taneyev as well.

Around the time of the first (1905) Russian revolution, and still as a typically impressionable student, Krein was introduced by friends and acquaintances to the writings of Marx, Engel, and Plekhanov. These appear to have ignited his concern with social, political, and socio-economic issues, which would persist in one form or another throughout his life. Participation in student agitations connected to that 1905 event probably also helped inform his developing socialist worldview, even though the revolutionary goals of that 1905 uprising were more democratic-socialist than truly communist, or what would seventeen years later begin to engulf Russia and parts of the former tsarist empire as the fascist totalitarianism of Marxist-Leninist ideology and its call for an entirely new world order at any cost to human lives. The leanings Krein developed in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century would eventually mutate into acceptance if not embrace of the demanded doxology under Lenin, and then Stalin, which culminated in a campaign of terror and mass murder to be defended by Party and regime ideologists as necessary sacrifice for the successful, unobstructed “progress” of the Revolution.

Beginning in the mid-1910s, if not a bit earlier, the influence of Scriabin was manifesting itself in Krein's artistic path, and that influence continued to grow to become easily recognizable. The two became acquaintances and then personal friends—a relationship that lasted until Scriabin's death in 1915. Krein completed his Conservatory residence in 1908 (the year, coincidentally, of the formal founding and chartering of the Gesellschaft für jüdische Volksmusik in St. Petersburg). In 1909 the society known as “Evenings of Contemporary Music” was organized in Moscow, reflecting a budding interest not only in Russian composers such as Scriabin, but also in French Impressionists—primarily Debussy and Ravel—who were considered ‘modern’ at the time among those circles. Krein's music was performed publicly for the first time at one of that society's concerts of its first year, along with music by his brother, Grigori. The reception seems to have been favorable.

Within the year, at the society's request for a new work, Krein composed his *Jewish Sketches* (op. 12)—two suites for

clarinet and string quartet based on folk themes he claimed to have heard in his father's improvisations.

From 1912 until the second revolution (February, 1917) and then continuing to the Bolshevik coup later that year that became known as the October Revolution, Krein taught at the Moscow People's Conservatory.

By 1916 Krein's place in Moscow's musical life had increased in importance, and he appeared that year in a concert of his own chamber music in Maly Hall at the Moscow Conservatory. Also in 1916, his symphonic music had its first public hearing: his 1914 symphonic poem *Salome*, inspired by Oscar Wilde's literary work and conducted by Serge Koussevitsky at the Nezlobin Theater (later renamed the Central Children's Theater).

During his conservatory days Krein became attracted to Russian (as well as French) Symbolist poetry: for example, Alexander Blok and Konstantin Balmont. Not only his settings of Symbolist poetry, but other works from the 1910s and 1920s, have been shown to reflect Symbolist influence. Examples of Krein's carefully worked-out pieces exhibiting the impact of Blok's poetry, along with traces of Scriabin and Ravel, are his symphonic fragments composed as incidental music for the play, *The Rose and the Cross* (1916–17; op. 26). That music was commissioned by the Moscow Art Theater, but never used (he also wrote vocal pieces for that play). The symphonic fragments waited until 1925 for a premiere as a single work by the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra. (Krein's fellow Jewish composer and active participant in the New Jewish National School movement, Mikhail Gnesin, was also commissioned by the Moscow Art Theater for music to the same play; and this, too, was never used for the production.)

For the harmonic language he developed, both for his pieces of explicit Jewish connection and for those unrelated to deliberate Jewish expression, Krein chose not to turn to the path of musical Russification, paved by composers of the Russian cultural-national movement which rejected 'foreign' Western European precedents in its pursuit of an authentic 'Russian character.' Instead, the principal influences, in addition to some of the spiritual mystique emblematic of Scriabin, are usually heard as Grieg, Debussy, and Ravel, along with others of the French Impressionist school. From them, in various ways, he gained his rich palette of tone colorations, coloristic effects, and color combinations, which he brushed with innumerable nuances and shades. But perhaps Scriabin had the greatest impact overall. Krein is reported to have remarked on a number of occasions that his desiderata was to develop Scriabin's devices to a new level.

In his 'Jewish pieces,' unlike Engel, Saminsky, and others among his fellow advocates of a new Jewish national

cultivated music, Krein was not inclined towards direct quotation of secular folk music or sacred/liturgical sources such as biblical cantillation or synagogue prayer modes. Rather, he worked instinctively at creating original themes and melodic material, while employing what critic and historian of the movement, Albert Weisser, called "characteristic substances in both areas."

Benefitting consciously or subliminally from the various influences that have been detected, Krein began while still a conservatory student to develop his distinctive approach to original music of Jewish inspiration. He continued to pursue that course and its stylistic ramifications in his treatment of echoes (almost never replications) of melodic curves, modalities, spirit, and other features of Yiddish folksong, Jewish or Jewishly-adopted instrumental folk music, and sacred music traditions.

By the October Revolution he had come to consider himself—and was so viewed by the Russian music world—well within the modernist camp. Towards the end of the 1920s, although he had already established himself as a key player in the New Jewish National School, he began an accelerated increase in reliance on the substance and characteristics of received Jewish as well as perceived 'oriental' folk *melos*, which he cast within the harmonic frameworks, instrumental timbres, and other techniques he had absorbed from the French Impressionist school.

Krein stood aside from the famous Engel-Saminsky polemic about the relative or competing merits of Jewish folk music versus older albeit romantically-perceived 'ancient' or 'Hebraic' components of sacred/liturgical music traditions. He was prone to cull from both sources, sometimes in a single work in which traces of cantorial ornamentation, non-metrical recitative styles, and prayer modes could be interwoven with folksong features. But folk music derivations predominate in many pieces; for example, in his 1922 *Hebrew Caprice* for violin and piano, in which one can hear Yiddish lullaby reverberations in one theme and tune styles of *klezmerim* in the other.

Also composed in the early-to-mid 1920s are some of Krein's most important works in larger forms, which, to varying degrees, reflect both Jewish folk and Judaic religious sources and the fruits of his search for a manifestly 'Jewish' soundscape: his first piano sonata and first symphony; and, one of his most intriguing, even surprising works, *Kaddish* (op. 33)—a symphonic cantata for tenor solo, mixed chorus and orchestra. Although dedicated to his parents' memory, the orchestral introduction is based on the long-established and canonically fixed (probably from the late medieval period) motifs of the *hatzi kaddish* exclusive to its rendition

introducing the *mussaf* services on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in all Ashkenazi practice, without alternatives. But this version of *kaddish*—both the text variant and those musical motifs—have nothing to do with *kaddish yatom*, the ‘mourner’s’ *kaddish*, recited—never sung—to honor the memory of one’s parents, spouse, or siblings.

Obviously, the text of *kaddish yatom* has no musical counterpart or attachment. We cannot know if Krein, who certainly was not inclined towards regular synagogue attendance, was aware of the distinction between the two *kaddish* versions or variants, or if he might legitimately have availed himself of artistic license. Either way, he did set the *kaddish yatom* text for all choral sections save one. (In 1928, Universal Editions in Vienna published a piano reduction of *Kaddish* with the text in Russian, German, and English translations. The full score and parts were left with Universal in anticipation of an impending performance that never occurred. Following the Anschluss in 1938, when Austrians voted overwhelmingly, freely, and enthusiastically to dissolve their polity and become part of the Third Reich, the authorities saw to it that all works in Universal’s hands by ‘non-Aryan’ composers were destroyed. As of 1996, and unless a subsequent discovery has been made, the score of *Kaddish* is thus irretrievably lost.)

At least in part for reasons deemed to be advantageous to the Party, the period of the NEP (New Economic Policy) witnessed a resurgence of Jewish theatre, which included an accepted recurrence of “Western” (viz., not specifically Russian or Communist-driven) presence in terms of plays and playwrights such as Peretz and Sholom Aleichem. Music played an important role in that episode. In that time frame, two theaters operated prominently in Moscow: HABIMA, whose plays were in Hebrew; and GOSET, the State Jewish Theater, which produced Yiddish plays and was led by Solomon Mikhoels, widely and even internationally regarded as the greatest serious dramatic Yiddish actor of his day. (By the Great Patriotic War, i.e., the Second World War, Mikhoels had become the de facto spokesman for Soviet Jewry, a role that led after the war to his grisly murder on Stalin’s orders, after which Stalin had flowers sent to his funeral.) Krein wrote music for both theaters, as well as for the State Jewish Theaters in Kiev and Minsk. Some have opined that HABIMA’s productions had the greatest overall influence on Krein’s own musical path outside the theatre. For example, he appears to have been enchanted by what was then viewed as eroticism in a motif of the Ashkenazi cantillation for *Shir hashirim* (the biblical Song of Songs), which was incorporated into the production of An-ski’s famous play, *The Dybbuk*—for whose Hebrew version (in Bialik’s translation) Joel Engel

wrote the incidental score. Krein utilized that motif in both his first piano sonata and his first symphony.

Yet, his most enduring theatrical score is the one he wrote for the Moscow State Jewish Theater’s 1924 production of Peretz’s *The Night at the Old Market Place*. He later turned the score’s sixteen musical fragments into a concert suite under the same title, which was published in Vienna in 1934. By that time, in line with, or bowing to, Party doctrine and its twisted view of “progress,” Krein described the theme of the suite in political-ideological terms:

... the death of the old ghetto, the end of the age-old system of autocracy [by ‘the rabbis’] and exploitation of the Jewish small town (*shtetl*), oppressed by cruel poverty, a stagnant way of life and the scourge of religion . . . driven out by the cleansing whirlwind of the Revolution.

Was he parroting a Party-line “updating” of Peretz’s play with superimposed contemporary significance to satisfy the political correctness of the day? Or was he protecting himself from politically incorrect nostalgia for traditional Jewish life? Or, had he been seduced actually to believe what he wrote?

Krein’s opera, *Zagmuk*, was commissioned by the Bolshoi Theater in 1928. Based on the play of the same title by A. Glebov about a fictitious uprising of slaves in ancient Babylonia, *Zagmuk* has been cited frequently as one of the Soviet era’s first operas to address social and class struggle. It is not, however, one of Krein’s Jewishly-related works, as some 21st-century music historians have assumed erroneously because of the historical (and biblical) fifth-century B.C.E. destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonian Empire, followed by the Babylonian Captivity. But the biblical account is as much a part of the Christian Old Testament as it is of the Hebrew Bible. (Analogous mis-assumption often surrounds Verdi’s *Nabucco*, though as a result of no such claim by Verdi.)

* * * *

There is little doubt that Krein was enthusiastic about the October Revolution. He lost no time in participating quite voluntarily in its proclaimed “new revolutionary socialist culture.” By 1918 he was working as the secretary of the artistic section of *MUZO NARKOMPROSA*; and he subsequently became secretary of the academic and ethnographic department (also head of the academic department) of the State Musical Publishing House.

Krein is reported to have been deeply grieved by Lenin’s

death in 1924. The Commissariat of Culture commissioned him to write his *Mourning Ode* (1925-26) in Lenin's memory. The work, for chorus without words and symphony orchestra, was performed quite a few times on anniversaries of Lenin's death, and even in the United States under Leopold Stokowsky's baton. (At the time, of course, the full unwhitewashed truth about Lenin, the tyranny and brutality of his regime, the extent to which it may have paved the way for Stalin, and, for that matter, the generic dangers of *any* unfiltered or unmediated utopianism, were not yet fully appreciated—or necessarily known—even among anti-Communist and non-leftist but liberal circles in America.) From post-Soviet era perspectives, it can be nearly impossible to reconcile Krein's adoration of Lenin—by all accounts genuine—and his enthusiasm for the Revolution, with his embrace of Jewish national heritage and his inner drive to foster a Jewish national art music. For it was no secret that, as early as 1913, Lenin had reviled openly what he condemned as “Jewish petit bourgeois nationalism” and “national separatism,” claiming that “Jewish nationalist culture is a slogan invented by the rabbis and the petit bourgeois, by our enemies”; and he had proposed that:

Jews of the ‘civilized world,’ who do not see themselves as having to ‘live like a caste,’ can be viewed as on the great universal progressive side of Jewish responsiveness to the progressive forces of the age Whoever speaks directly or indirectly of a Jewish national culture (however good the intentions may be) is an **enemy of the proletariat**—a supporter of the old caste system in Jewry, and an **accomplice of the rabbis** and petit bourgeois.

On the other hand, Jewish Marxists who join the Russian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian workers in international Marxist organizations in creating an international culture for the workers' movement, those Jews working against the separatist ideas of the Bund, are continuing the best traditions of Jewry in the struggle against a national culture. *[Emphasis added]*

It must be acknowledged, of course, that legions of Jews were passionately if naïvely seduced by the supposedly antidotal notion of ‘internationalism,’ which they were led to believe would put an end to the former plight of the unprivileged Jewish majority through ideals such as an international proletarian brotherhood. And many were convinced that the new world order would also put an end altogether to

anti-Jewishness and anti-Judaism (read “antisemitism”). Nonetheless, Krein's acceptance of Leninism at *that* early stage, when he was actively engaged at the same time with—and cared very much about—the “separatist” music reflecting warmly Lenin's condemned traditional Jewish life, is not easily explained. Moreover, while we now understand why so many Jewish artists and writers shied away reluctantly from Jewish expression from the 1930s on—or, conversely, why and how others justified employment of Yiddish culture in the service of Stalin, as the perceived bulwark against both Western European Fascism and the feared bourgeois hindrance of the progress of the ‘new order’—it is nonetheless stranger still to consider Krein's apparent *comfort* with abandoning ‘Jewish music’ altogether after 1937. For that choice cannot be understood simply by invoking the very real contemporaneous pressures and well-founded fears that did not apply to him and his particular case.

Claims in student dissertations and otherwise respected published sources that Krein continued to compose ‘Jewish music’ after 1937 and “well into the 1940s” are without basis, resting, or so it would seem, on non-objective, quasi-defensive wishful guesswork or groundless interpretations of what a piece might ‘mean’—almost as if to have Krein appear better, less cowardly, or less ready to forsake his past association with Jewish national culture. It is fantasy, for example, to report casually as fact that his second symphony is a “meditation on the historic sufferings of the Jewish people from ancient times through the Holocaust.” One may—and many do—choose to read or hear into a piece of music whatever one would like to hear, or whatever one might wish the composer to have intended. But passing off uninformed personal reactions as information is another matter. The symphony was written in 1945, when even by then—with signs already evident of Stalin's soon-to-be-launched full-fledged campaign against Soviet Jewry as a reversal of self-serving wartime leniency and strategic use of major Jewish figures—no prescient Jewish composer would have thought to risk charges of cultural-nationalist regression by musical expression of particularist solidarity; nor, for that matter, of anything Jewish.

Nor, as has been claimed irresponsibly, did Krein write anything for Jewish theatre as late as 1941. It is true that even after the bulk of Soviet Jewish secular-cultural institutions had been suppressed or liquidated—a reversal of their earlier toleration, even encouragement, by Stalin as a strategy of Realpolitik that was no longer applicable or necessary—some token remnants, such as the Yiddish art theater in Moscow, were left in place as “show” propaganda for the West and as public relations instruments. Krein could have written for

the Moscow Jewish theater had he wished to do so. But he did not. His last known theatre score was written in 1926: incidental music for the Moscow State Jewish Chamber Theatre's production of *137 Kindergartens*.

Until 1937 Krein continued to intersperse some of his music with elements of Jewish national culture, albeit even then sometimes cleverly couched in revolutionary interpretations. Indicative of his simultaneous enthusiasm for the 'new order' and its leadership, however, was his 1931-32 oratorio *The U.S.S.R.—Shock Brigade of the World Proletariat*, with narrated excerpts from one of Stalin's speeches, quotations of revolutionary songs and hymns, and of course the *Internationale*. The main thrust of the work was the utopian, ideally seamless fusion of "the masses" of all nationalities into a world proletariat. Yet Krein was anything but a member of *any* proletariat. And, whereas composers could have benefitted from such prostitution in the mid-1940s and afterwards, or bought into it to ensure immunity from official denunciation, there was neither pressure nor force on Krein at play in 1931.

Throughout the Great Terror and show trials of the 1930s, when very many artists "disappeared," were sent to the Gulag, were victims of denunciation upon whom friends and even family members could be induced to inform, committed suicide, or, at best, lost positions, Krein was able to live and work undisturbed. He was awarded the designation "Honored Artist of the Soviet Union" in 1936—the same year in which Shostakovich was publicly denounced by the Party through its organ, *Pravda*, in an article that was also understood by all as an official warning against all modernism in Soviet music. And the subservient puppet entity, the Union of Soviet Composers, quickly took the cue and joined in the campaign to root out composers and music that could be considered counter-revolutionary and not in the interests of proletarian progress.

Krein wrote his last Jewish piece, *Ten Yidishe Lieder*, in 1937. By then the results of the Terror were everywhere to be seen, but he was never in danger of being branded an "enemy of the state"—nor of the Party or the Revolution. He lived comfortably and safely as a well-compensated functionary of the State Publishing House. He was given important commissions, such as the ballet score, *Laurencia*, in 1939, which was intended as disguised commentary from Communist perspective on the Spanish Civil War, whose mass atrocities were abundant on both sides however much a difference between spontaneous and planned ones might be argued. That commission and the ballet's production only further solidified Krein's reputation and position as one of the Communist elite composers. It is probably thanks to that

status that he was included in a group of prominent artists (Prokofiev and a "rehabilitated" Shostakovich among them) that was evacuated to safety in areas far from the fronts during the Second World War.

The Stalinist postwar paranoia coupled with a renewed, reinvigorated campaign against Soviet Jewry (camouflaged, of course, by disingenuous political ideological accusations), as well as Party denunciations of major Russian composers, had no effect on Krein.

In 1946 the Jewish composer Moses Milner "disappeared," and his body was never found. (We are able now to assume the year of his death with the help of descendants.) Milner and Krein had collaborated closely in the work of the New Jewish National School and in their *Gesellschaft* involvement. Yet we know of no concern expressed by Krein over Milner's unexplained disappearance (read murder). And in the very year of Mikhoel's murder on Stalin's orders, Krein was composing *The Song of the Stalinist Falcon*.

There is no evidence that Krein ever felt demoralized or even uncomfortable with his outward musical support of either the Lenin or the Stalin regime, the Party, or his cooperation. To the contrary, he is described in Yuli Krein and Nina Rogozhina's 1964 biography as "accepting of the October Revolution with all his heart and an active participant in building socialist culture," always paying "close attention to the rapidly developing Revolution" with "heartfelt words whenever he discussed it."

Meanwhile, objective, retrospective musicological analyses have yielded observations suggesting that the musical quality of Krein's work grew diminished in proportion to the increase in his expression of—or in line with—Party doctrine as well as his glorification of the Revolution's "progress."

* * * *

Having kept himself immune to the fate of so many other artists, and having guarded his reputation as an overtly loyal Stalin admirer, Krein died in comfort in a government-subsidized artists' retreat—just as Stalin was already looking forward to his next step vis-a-vis Soviet Jewry: his own planned version of the "final solution," thwarted only by his sudden fortunate death (or murder?) in 1953.

Krein's motivations behind his behavior will probably always remain an open question. That question was raised transparently in a 1996 masters thesis by Mischa Pizman, a Russian Jewish émigré who had also earned a graduate musicology degree in the former Soviet Union:

Did he [Krein] naïvely believe in the Revolution for the duration of his life despite the obvious butchery and repression? Did he lose his faith in the Revolution and make a cynical decision to play the role that would give him a good life? Or did he, realizing that his dreams and ideals were in ashes, live and die a disillusioned coward driven by fear and the instinct for self-preservation? None of the alternatives is appealing . . . Very possibly he was originally motivated by the highest human intentions, but he ended up the servant of a regime that was inhuman . . . He must have lost his idealism somewhere along the line. He certainly lost his Jewish identity and creative inspiration.

Only a year after Stalin's death and three years after Krein's, when nothing of the latter's puzzling if not disturbing conduct could have been known in the West (and it would be three years before Stalin's mass crimes and their grisly details would be acknowledged initially by Soviet Premiere and Communist Party Chairman Nikita Khrushchev's famous "secret speech" to the 20th Party Congress in 1956, followed by revelations in the 1950s)—and when only some of Krein's published music was available for perusal in the United States—Albert Weisser undertook a preliminary analysis of his oeuvre. Weisser posited that Krein's once-thought 'radical' harmonic innovations were by then no longer the novelty upon which his recognition as a sophisticated composer of Jewishly-related art music had once rested. Rather, Weisser, wrote, "What we still find moving in him . . . is the sensitive manner with which he can duplicate the folk *melos* and kind of pagan excitement he has been able to engender in certain elements of biblical chant." Now that the entirety of his catalogue of extant works is more or less available to scholars as well as performers, and given more than a half century of perspective, the time may be ripe for a more thorough assessment of Krein's artistic achievements.⁶

⁶ "If you become a teacher, by your pupils you'll be taught," proclaims Anna in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*. Indeed! For I am indebted to my former graduate student and thesis advisee, Mischa Pizman, for much information and many clarifications in his masters thesis on Krein as the fruits of his research. As an émigré from the former Soviet Union, he had access to archives, music, and other sources not then available in the United States.

ARON MARKO ROTHMÜLLER

Born in Trnjan, Croatia, Aron Marko Rothmüller became a world-renowned baritone who also composed a good deal. As a teenager he began collecting and publishing Jewish folksongs. He studied voice in Vienna, and was one of the founders of Omanut—a society for the advancement of Jewish music and art. He made his operatic debut in 1932 in Hamburg-Altona as Ottokar in *Der Freischütz*. After returning to Zagreb, he was engaged by the Zurich Opera, where he sang regularly until 1947, in Verdi as well as Wagner roles; and he created there the role of Truchsess von Waldburg in Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*. He was engaged by the *Wiener Staatsoper* in 1946, where he sang for three years. Even before his time in Vienna was over, he joined the roster of singers at Covent Garden in London and sang a wide variety of roles there until 1952, including the title role of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. In America he made his New York debut with New York City Opera in 1948, and also sang at the Metropolitan Opera. From 1955 until 1979 he served on the voice faculty at Indiana University.

Rothmüller also continued his interest in Jewishly-related music throughout his life. He published his still well-known book, *The Music of the Jews: An Historical Appreciation* in 1954 (revised in 1962, and preceded by its original German publication in 1951, in Zurich). In addition to numerous artistic folksong arrangements, he composed quite a few original works, including Sephardi religious songs, a setting of Psalm XV, a symphony for strings, and two string quartets.

LAZAR WEINER

Lazar Weiner (1897-1982) will always be most widely remembered as the supreme exemplar and advocate of the Yiddish art song, or *Lieder*, genre. Through his opera of more than two hundred songs, he elevated that medium to unprecedented artistic sophistication. Without in any way minimizing the artistic value and importance of the respectable body of serious Yiddish *Lieder* that had its genesis prior to his cultivation of the genre—in particular, the work of the composers associated with the new, culturally national school in Jewish music that was born in Russia—it must be acknowledged that, ultimately, it was Lazar Weiner under whose pen the Yiddish art song attained its fullest

and richest bloom.

Yet his devotion to Yiddish choral art preceded his focus on the solo song as his primary endeavor, and it is only because of the waning of Yiddish choruses throughout North America that Weiner's significant body of Yiddish cantatas and other choral works may be less known today. He also wrote a substantial amount of serious liturgical music, mostly for the American Reform worship format, as well as incidental theatre music, an opera, orchestral works, and miscellaneous vocal and instrumental pieces—including some for piano that reflect his own brilliant virtuoso pianistic gifts.

Weiner was born in Cherkassy, in the Ukraine, where his musical talent was discovered at a young age. He was admitted to the choir of the prestigious Brodsky Synagogue in Kiev when he was only nine years old, where the choirmaster was the well-known Abram Dzimitrovsky. Like many such modern Eastern European so-called Choral Synagogues, the Brodsky Synagogue had a secular school attached to it, where the young Weiner received a modern Russian elementary education—in addition to exposure to classical liturgical and cantorial repertoire in the choir. By the age of eleven he began singing in the Kiev Opera chorus, and then studied piano with Dzimitrovsky before entering the State Conservatory of Kiev to study piano and theory. His general music education was furthered by the rich concert and operatic offerings in that city.

In the aftermath of anti-Judaism and Jew hatred that followed the infamous Mendel Bellis blood-libel trial (despite his acquittal), the Weiner family emigrated to the United States in 1914. At that point Weiner's musical goals centered around his pianistic gifts, unrelated to any Jewish interests. The future avid Yiddishist was, during that impressionable period of his life, still oblivious to high Yiddish culture. In New York, he was engaged as a pianist for the studio of a well-known voice teacher. He soon acquired a reputation as an expert artistic accompanist and vocal coach, eventually with his own lucrative coaching studio. He also found work as a pianist and librarian for an amateur community orchestra in Brooklyn, the Mendelssohn Symphony Orchestra, of which he later became the conductor. It was during that period that he began experimenting with composition, although his primary ambitions still centered around the piano.

The Mendelssohn Symphony position turned out to be fortuitous for Weiner's ultimate artistic and Jewish paths. A violinist in the orchestra, Nahum Baruch Minkoff, was one of the coterie of Yiddish poets who espoused a modernist introspective literary approach based on personal experience and who were known as the *In zikh* poets—a

school, or movement, whose core founders also included three other poets whose verse would later be the basis for some of Weiner's most admired songs. Minkoff introduced Weiner to his own literary circle and to the world of modern Yiddish literature and poetry in general—to which he was instantly and powerfully attracted. The seeds were thus sown for Weiner's subsequent devotion to Yiddish language and culture and, eventually, to both the Yiddish choral medium and the Yiddish art song. That newfound, rather sudden fascination with an aspect of Jewish culture of which he had not been aware reversed his gravitation toward alienation from even secular Jewish identification.

Weiner's immersion in the American Yiddish literary milieu was not confined to the *In zikh* poets. Minkoff brought him to literary-intellectual salon evenings of poetry readings and discussions, where he met some of the significant poets of the older European generation, as well as younger adherents of other, divergent orientations and movements—especially *Di yunge*, an earlier school (founded in America in 1907) of young immigrant writers who had sought to remove Yiddish literature from association with social, political, or moral agendas and ideologies and to free it from restriction to specifically Jewish subject matter. Their focus was more on form than content, with the desiderata of Yiddish literature as pure art for its own value—and as a potentially universal expression, enhanced and refined by an infusion of elements found in the work of major European and American figures in the world of belles lettres. Works of these poets, too, as well as poems by many others not specifically associated with either movement, would, at various periods in Weiner's creative life, find expression in his songs.

Those salon evenings also provided Weiner's initiation into the realm of Yiddish folksong—an entire tradition that had eluded him in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Kiev. He later acknowledged that nearly all the many folksongs and folk-type songs he had come to know were heard by him for the first time at those gatherings.

An event that ignited Weiner's Jewish musical interests at the end of the second decade of the century was the North American tour of the Zionist-oriented and inspired Russian émigré group, the Zimro Ensemble, which played at Carnegie Hall and elsewhere in New York. Founded in Petrograd (St. Petersburg, prior to its change of name to the Russian equivalent when Russia went to war with Germany) by clarinetist Simeon Bellison, its six members had all been part of the new national movement in Jewish music to one degree or another; and its Jewishly-related repertoire was drawn from the collective oeuvre of the Gesellschaft-affiliated composers—sophisticated and classically constructed

chamber music based on Jewish folk or liturgical themes and modes. Weiner had been unaware of that movement and of the Gesellschaft. Until his attendance at Zimro's first Carnegie Hall concert, his own context and associations of "Jewish music" had been confined to either the synagogue or the theatre.

He was instantly fascinated with the new genre and school advocated by the Zimro Ensemble. The very notion that serious, cultivated secular musical expression of Jewish life and experience could be built melodically and harmonically on elements of genuine Jewish folk *melos* and tradition—secular or liturgical—and could have universal aesthetic appeal, turned out to coincide with his own artistic instincts. As a result of that initial exposure, he began a correspondence with Joel Engel, who had been at the helm of the Gesellschaft's Moscow branch but was then living in Berlin. (Engel subsequently immigrated permanently to what was then known as Palestine and became—in most judgements—the first important serious classical composer of modern Israel.) Engel offered him valuable advice about composition of Yiddish Lieder.

In the 1920s Weiner began his affiliation with secular Yiddish choruses. In 1923 he was appointed conductor of the Frayhayt Gezang Farayn (later known also as the Jewish People's Philharmonic Chorus), an unabashedly Far Left workers chorus that had communist sympathies and, later, more direct Communist Party links as one of thirty such choruses throughout the United States that were federated under the umbrella of the Jewish Workers Musical Alliance (with the all-too-transparent reference to "workers" eventually dropped) and the Ordn—the Jewish People's Fraternal Order. Like so many artists and intellectuals of that period and through the 1930s, Weiner was drawn initially to some of the avowed social ideals of the Communist Party, its utopian spirit, and the principle of organized labor. But he was never a Party member. He later became staunchly opposed to communism ("ferociously so," in his son, Yehudi's, characterization), especially after an eye-opening visit to the Soviet Union in 1927 that disabused him of any notions of truth to the propaganda that had been circulating in America. Also, his wife, Sarah Naomi, recalled that he had become repulsed by "the party's" attempted interference with his artistic freedom. Shortly after his return to New York from the Soviet Union, Weiner severed his ties to the Frayhayt Gezang Farayn, which, in any case, could not have provided him an artistically rewarding experience. Its repertoire in the 1920s consisted mainly of workers', labor movement and other Yiddish songs in simple if not trite choral arrangements, and occasional Yiddish translations of some standard

Western classical choral literature that the roughly thirty-five members were ill-equipped to handle musically or vocally. The days of its large-scale Yiddish cantatas and pageants, and its growth to more than one hundred members, were yet to come.

Weiner's humanistically and culturally related, moderately leftist and socialist leanings remained with him. But these could easily be accommodated by other fully American and patriotic Jewish choruses and their parent organizations—most especially the Arbeter Ring (Workmen's Circle). Its New York chorus (the Arbeter Ring Khor) became Weiner's principal performance vehicle for thirty-five years beginning with his appointment as its conductor in 1931. He accepted its invitation, however, on two basic conditions: that he have a full year of rehearsals without concerts in order to rebuild the group according to his musical standards; and that he would be permitted without interference to unify its Yiddish pronunciation and diction according to "high" or literary Yiddish (now cited as YIVO Yiddish)—eliminating other, regional or colloquial, dialects. Under his direction the chorus was elevated into a first-class performing ensemble, with an eventual membership of nearly one hundred. It came to be considered a part of New York's general cultural life, and critics referred to it in the general as well as Jewish press as one of the city's best amateur choral ensembles.

Most of Weiner's choral music was written expressly for the Arbeter Ring Khor. Among his important choral cantatas are *Amol in a tsayt—Legend of Toil; The Last Judgement—Bontshe shvayg; Hirsh lekert; In kamf far frayhayt* (subtitled a "choral ballet"); *Amos; Mentsh in der velt; and Tsu dir, Amerike*. At the same time, however, he began devoting increasing energies specifically to Yiddish art songs for voice and piano, continually refining his techniques and expanding his pool of literary sources. By the time he left the Workmen's Circle Chorus, in 1966, having determined that its artistic level was no longer sustainable, Yiddish Lieder had become his priority.

Weiner often rebuked others for simplistic quotations of undeveloped Jewish folk or traditional tunes, and in his own art songs he never included an existing folk melody—even when the poem might have suggested one. "If I need a traditional melody," he was fond of telling students, "I create my own." Only in his liturgical music did he sometimes lean on traditional material when he felt it appropriate, but only as a cue. And he respected the tradition of certain obligatory synagogue melodies of the Ashkenazi rite. But he developed that melodic material with the polyphonic and advanced harmonic techniques that he had avoided in his secular Yiddish choral pieces, in part because his liturgical music was always intended for fully professional choirs.

For Weiner, the poetry he set was sacrosanct, deserving of his undiluted respect, so that—as his son, Yehudi Wyner, has explained, “he allowed himself no departure from the text,

no elisions, no prolongations, no cuts or repetitions. He followed the changes in the mood or action within a poem with meticulous care. Rarely would he permit himself a decorative melisma or a brilliant high note for dramatic effect alone. Piano introductions were kept brief, and interludes and postludes were avoided. His focus was on economy and on natural flow of diction.

Nonetheless, inventing an instrumental setting that could provide an interesting musical texture appropriate to the mood and spirit of the poetry, while not obscuring the character of the melodic line, was an equally vital concern. The piano parts are not accompanimental. Rather, they form an inseparable unity with the poetry and with the vocal lines. The pianistic component is highly varied in style as well as texture, and it plays a major role in punctuating and reflecting the changes in the poetry of each song.

There was a phantom model for Weiner’s approach: his admiration for the music of Modest Mussorgsky was boundless. For Mussorgsky, song emerged directly from language with a minimum of artificial invention . . . Weiner absorbed Mussorgsky’s approach, adapting it to the particular qualities of the Yiddish language and allowing it to evolve.

After his retirement from his music directorship at Central Synagogue in New York in 1974, Weiner abandoned liturgical music altogether. He had become disgusted with the appalling introduction of pop and other entertainment music in American synagogues since the late 1960s—initially echoing, if unintentionally, some of the lowbrow informal musical dimensions that had become fashionable in certain populist churches outside the mainstream denominations and in related broadcast formats, but also imitating Jewish summer camp ambiances. “I want a *m’hitza* (a division, referring to the required gender separation in orthodox synagogues) between the sacred and the profane, between the mundane and the spiritual,” proclaimed this Jew who insisted to the world that he was nonreligious. “And I do not want to bring the musical comedy into the synagogue. Each

has its place, but . . . “For the next eight years he dedicated himself exclusively to art songs.

In his devotion to Yiddish, Weiner did not necessarily choose sides with the Yiddishists against the Hebraists of the Haskala. Nor did he believe that the modern revival of the Hebrew language and literature was any less an authentic Jewish expression than Yiddish culture.

Apart from their literary content (which in only some cases involves overt Judaic references), Weiner’s art songs are manifestly Jewish first and foremost because of the Yiddish language itself, and because of the way he instinctively understood and interpreted its subtle nuances, inflections, accentuations, internal rhythms, cadences, and turns of phrase. For Weiner, Yiddish was in and of itself an authentic Jewish expression. Like many of the poets he most admired, he did not treat Yiddish as an ideological or sociopolitical vehicle, as did so many Yiddishists of his generation, but rather as a literary and musical art that took on the passionate character of a mission. Yet he was always conscious of the irony that his devotion to Yiddish—in fact to things Jewish—was an American phenomenon, not a personal carryover from Europe. In an interview only a few years before his death, he recalled Engel’s response to his first songs: “That letter marked the beginning of my Jewishness,” he mused. “All my life [prior to 1919] it was Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, Schubert. . . Here in America I discovered the Yiddish song!”

STEFAN WOLPE

All attempts to categorize or classify the music of Stefan Wolpe within any one school or development, even if only in the interest of context, have been—and always will be—futile. It goes without saying, of course, that every artist of originality and integrity is ipso facto sui generis. But Wolpe was sui generis on each of many more distinct planes than could apply to almost any other composer of his generation(s) on the international scene, to whose circles he was an outsider much of the time. For one thing, as Austin Clarkson, the foremost authority on Wolpe and his music, has discerned, Wolpe not only believed that modern art could be a vehicle for transforming both the individual *and* society—a view also held by certain other composers as well—but that he was “imbued with the idea that avant-garde art can serve the man on the street *and* the audience in the concert hall,” and that he committed himself to “forming an entente between

new music and the ordinary listener.”

As an artist of Jewish birth for whom the Zionist dream became the unsuspecting midwife of Jewish self-perception, affiliation, or connection however, Wolpe was hardly unique. For some Jews without religious upbringing of any sort nor even their own or their families’ secular-cultural Jewish involvement, such awakening could begin with Zionist activity in the Diaspora. For others, like Wolpe, who had little if any exposure in Germany to any aspect of Jewish life, apart from observance in a Berlin synagogue of his having become a *bar mitzva*, that quasi-epiphany awaited his arrival in the *y’shuv*—the Jewish communal settlement in what was then Palestine under the British Mandate. In that heady environment, his already established commitments in Germany to social, economic and political ideals of the Left found ready resonance in the non-religious (in some cases anti-religious) collective orientation of the kibbutz movement and in the pervasive, easily infectious optimism of the settlers and pioneers who were bent on fashioning a new order of society based on reconsidered values.

On an aesthetic plane, Wolpe seems to have been gripped almost instantly by the allure of musical exotica: Near Eastern musics as well as aural features of Hebrew as well as Arabic, all of which he encountered in the *y’shuv* for the first time and which contributed in no small measure to his new sense of cultural, ethnic, national and mythical identification.

Paradoxically and unexpectedly, Wolpe’s sojourn in the Jewish homeland during its ebullient rejuvenation and ascension towards statehood also became part of an internal, ideological departure from his former, exclusively universalist worldview on a trek towards one that, without necessarily being a total replacement, could accommodate and assimilate solid Jewish national sensibilities and aspirations. And yet, he never abandoned his broader concerns for *universal* social progress, justice, and proletarian causes.

Born in Berlin to a comfortable upper-middle-class family, Wolpe was descended on his father’s side from Sephardi Jews who had settled in Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania. His father was born in Moscow but emigrated to Berlin, where he became financially successful in the leather goods manufacturing business. Wolpe’s mother was the daughter of a Hungarian-Jewish family that had come to Vienna from Trieste. Having begun piano lessons as a youngster and music theory studies when he was fourteen, Wolpe was introduced to the Bauhaus and its adherents—students as well as teachers—during a summer he spent in Weimar in 1920, and some aspects of his musical direction of those early years has been traced to the influence of that school.

Also in the 1920s, Wolpe became powerfully attracted

to the Dadaists and their assault on what they perceived as relatively stale, stifling bourgeois inhibitions that extended from modern social order to artistic creativity. He later acknowledged that it was under Dadaist influence that he began engaging in “extreme innovations, suddenness, contradictions, shocks, simultaneities, and disassociations” that he pursued in succeeding decades as one part of his artistic expression.

The complexity and undulating degrees of Wolpe’s politically left-leaning attractions, sympathies, espousals, and even outright formal affiliations at various junctures in his life could easily be, on their own, the subject of numerous and not necessarily similarly argued dissertations. But probably none of them would be conclusive, and none would succeed definitively in reconciling some of the contradictions of his commitments, for example, between liberal Jewish nationalism and the anti-Zionist and anti-Israel sentiments of much of the Left with which he identified, albeit on various and sometimes intersecting planes and under varying circumstances.

In Germany, Wolpe joined the Novembergruppe, an amalgamated organization of Communists together with other, not necessarily openly Communist left-wing artists and literary figures. The organization was named after the Bolshevik coup that occurred in November on the Western, Gregorian calendar in 1917, but, inasmuch as that same date is October on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia, it has always been known there as the “October Revolution”—even though, in the real sense or meaning of the term, the event was not, or not yet, a revolution, but rather, Lenin’s pretty much overnight coup. (The actual 1917 socialist revolution, which forced the Tsar’s abdication and the house arrest of the Imperial family along with the installation of a provisional government under Kerensky, occurred in February of that year—preceded by the 1905 revolution.) Like many intellectuals and artists in interwar Germany (and, for that matter, elsewhere in Europe as well as in the United States), the moral high ground in terms of social conscience and maintenance of world peace was perceived naively by Wolpe as inseparable from automatic allegiance to the Left, for which ethical virtue could be linked uncritically and synonymously to workers’ causes, and which at the same time recognized justifiably a growing danger on the political right. Wolpe was thus drawn in that context to radical aspects of socialism, and even to specifically Communist circles and the propaganda from Moscow that fueled them.

To many creative people of that period, and especially to much of the artistic avant-garde, the Left and its illogical but persuasive repudiation of nationalist orientations per se

appeared to offer both the only remedy for inequities supposedly inherent ipso facto in capitalist societies and the sole protection against further wars—which were assumed to be the natural, unavoidable byproducts of national desiderations and nationalist political entities. (In the event of course the ultimate menace turned out ironically to be another round and new guise of *imperialist*, not national ambitions; for the victors of the First World War, the insistence on internationally respected nationhood and independent nation states had referred to individual national sovereignty and self-determination of peoples.) Many in that avant-garde naïvely accepted the cleverly manipulated rumors and reports from the young Soviet Union, looking on that system and its putative social progress as a utopian model for a new progressive world order.

Whether or not Wolpe actually joined the German Communist Party as a bona fide member—and what, precisely, differentiated membership from fellowship—remains in some question. One account by a fellow Bauhaus adherent and future émigré (to Palestine), the painter Mordechai Ardon [Max Bronstein]—with whom he shared a patron at one point—later asserted that Wolpe in fact joined the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) in 1925. But the consensus among scholars now seems to challenge that recollection. Their refutation is supported by the observation of the Austrian painter, actor, and Communist Party member Franz Boensch—with whom Wolpe did collaborate for performances at Communist gatherings—that Wolpe was “for the party,” in contrast to certain other composers of similar or more radical bent, such as Hanns Eisler, to whom he referred as having been “of the party.”

Yet the question concerning “membership” is probably irrelevant to the sentiments that guided Wolpe’s artistic path in that timeframe. For his leftist sympathies during the Weimar era, which might have begun as benign liberal proclivities during his teen years, are unmistakable. His involvement with the Novembergruppe from 1923 on may have been more a matter of creative and artistic attraction to the “spirit” of the revolutionary cause than any intellectually driven agenda of reasoned political ideology. Nonetheless, as the vanguard of Fascism grew louder, uglier, and more palpably dangerous by the end of the decade, as violent incidents were increasingly instigated by Fascist groups, and as the specter of their goals galvanized a counter campaign of resistance, Wolpe, along with colleagues and friends of various shades of socialist affiliation, gravitated even further to the Left. His work with Die Truppe 1931—a group of communist and communist-leaning actors and actresses for which Wolpe directed its music and composed for its

productions, some of which clearly reflected communist doctrines, might be viewed as more politically transparent. Yet none of us today would take him to task for some of his anti-Fascist expressions, such as a 1928 stage work that mocked Hitler in the character of a thinly veiled would-be god of antiquity who is bent on European domination, and who inadvertently confuses his love object with a prostitute.

By 1930, Wolpe’s evolved solidarity with the radical Left led him to attend the Marxist Workers’ School (*Parteischule*) of the KPD. Moreover, his artistic association with the politically-inclined cabaret scene and with elements of the musical theatre of the absurd; his dabbling in newly-fashionable non-European dance forms and popular genres with association in what was then quite respectfully known as American Negro culture (blues and jazz influences), perceived American decadence (the Charleston, for example), and Latin American expressions such as the tango; and, ironically, the embrace of advanced modernist European-based techniques in his sophisticated art music—all eventually placed him in or close to the camp of those whom both the Nazi ideologues and their party hacks indicted for polluting German society with “degenerate art” and “cultural Bolshevism.”

Between 1929, when he allied himself with Eisler and the Workers’ Music movement, and 1933, Wolpe expended considerable creative energy on music for “the cause”—not only for theatrical and cabaret settings and agitprop groups, but also for more mundane contexts such as meetings and rallies of communist-affiliated union organizations. Some of the very titles of his pieces from that time frame—*Vier Lieder auf “Texte von Lenin,”* including *Eine unterdrückte Klasse* (on a text by Lenin) and *Decret no. 2: An die Armee der Künstler; Politische Satyren* (with a movement titled *Hitler: Neunzehnhundertdreiundzwanzig*); *Vier Antikriegslieder* (including *Rote Armée* and *Rote Soldaten, rote kolonnen*); *Couplet der Kapitalisten* (from the first theatrical revue of Die Truppe 1931); *Links den Kurs*; and *Arbeit und Kapital*, among many others—are revealing about the passion of his alignment and the thicket of future danger into which he had cornered himself by the time Weimar’s collapse became the National Socialist German Workers Party’s (Nazi) triumph.

Between 1923 and 1925, Wolpe also arranged a set of Yiddish folksongs. It can be tempting to ascribe his motivation to a moment of Jewish cultural identification, especially since those particular songs stemmed from traditional Jewish life in the small towns and outlying regions of the former Tsarist Empire, and not from revolutionary sentiments. But the catalyst was obviously political rather than ethnic or spiritual. To some on the Left in Weimar Germany who were unfamiliar with the stratifications of Eastern European

Jewry and the differences among Yiddish song categories, Yiddish folksongs (or perceived folksongs) could, without regard to their words, simplistically symbolize a previously disenfranchised people whose liberation had supposedly come with the Revolution. Wolpe's arrangements were probably conceived simply as an ode to fellow revolutionaries to the east—even though these are not the Yiddish songs of protest sung by Jewish socialists, anarchists, Communists, and other revolutionaries at their rallies.

Throughout the Weimar years, the political and quasi-political leanings of artistic avant-garde circles such as Wolpe's invited the contempt of those elements among Germany's conservative old guard that saw not only avowed Communists but also pacifists and social reformers as betrayers of Germany's imperial cause during the First World War, and therefore the agents of her disastrous and humiliating defeat. As economic conditions descended to utter havoc, as fear of communist envelopment mushroomed to expanded echoes of a "red menace," and as political factions and adversarial groups grew increasingly polarized, those biases were easily fueled and exploited by the National Socialists. Once they achieved exclusive power in 1933, one of the first items on the agenda of the new regime was the annihilation of communist and perceived communist organizations—with which Jews could conveniently be associated. Wolpe now faced exposure on three counts: his political brand, the nature of his music, and his Jewish birth. The imminent danger in which he naturally felt himself was brought to a peak of panic when his brother, during a roundup of Communists, was brutally beaten. But Wolpe's rapid exit from Germany at that early stage of the Nazi Party regime was probably less as a Jew and more out of fear related to his political taint.

After going first to Zurich via Czechoslovakia, aided by the Romanian pianist and future (second) wife, Irma Schoenberg, who also managed to retrieve his manuscripts in Berlin, Wolpe went with Die Truppe 1931 to Moscow in May 1933 to attend the International Workers' Olympiad. He stayed for the summer, and he is said to have considered settling there, although he had to return to Switzerland to renew his passport at the German Consulate. But after four intervening months studying in Vienna with Anton Webern, the committed serialist composer of the Second Viennese School, and then, threatened with deportation, his refuge in Irma's home in Bucharest, Irma—who had given a recital in Palestine in 1931 as a guest of the Jerusalem Music Society and retained positive memories of the *y'shuv*—convinced him that Palestine presented the wisest option for both of them.

It can be telling in terms of Wolpe's revised post-1934 national-cultural identification to keep in mind some of his

earlier politically-oriented piece titles. By contrast, we may consider some of the works that flowed from his pen in the *y'shuv*: *Olam hadash* (A New World), *Tz'daktem habonim* (You Were Right), and *K'vish* (Road), from his *Hebrew Choral Songs*; *We Are One Driven Tortured Flock* (the original Hebrew setting of which has not survived), from his *Hebrew Solo Songs*; *Ali b'eir* (Ascend My Well, to a poem by Chaim Nachman Bialik); *Al admateinu* (In [on] Our Land) and *Hahayalim tz'u lilhom* (Soldiers Going to War)—*On This Our Blessed Land* and *Know How to Fight*, in their English versions, respectively—from his *Four Songs from "Ballad of the Unknown Soldier"*; and songs about rebuilding the land, such as *Saleinu al k'tafeinu* (Our Baskets on our Shoulders), *Lamidbar* (To the Desert), *Tel Aviv hi ir y'hudit* (Tel Aviv is a Jewish City), and *Ra'inu amalenu* (We Behold our Toil), included in the collection of artistic arrangements, *Folk Songs of the New Palestine* (1938), compiled and edited by Hans Nathan.

Although they do not necessarily imply his own personal political involvement or action, these pieces indicate Wolpe's new receptivity to the Zionist enterprise and its premise of a dispersed nation now reclaiming and rebuilding its legitimate ancestral homeland in socially collective and egalitarian contexts. For one already previously drawn to the vision of a new world order as a remedy for entrenched injustice and subjugation, we may imagine the initial appeal of that radical "new Jewish world order," in which selfless idealism, common spirit, labor organization, and collective agricultural endeavor were viewed as replacing individual material quest. And for Wolpe the artist, there was also a newborn sense of identification with the aesthetic aura surrounding the fashioning of that new society.

Nor did that adopted, expanded self-identification dissolve with Wolpe's departure from Mandatory Palestine. To the contrary, various pieces from his subsequent American years underscore its transcendence, such as *Zemach Suite* (inspired by and dedicated to the celebrated Jewish dancer, Benjamin Zemach, who was instrumental in developing a new genre of modern Jewish choreography), in which an Arabic modal cell influences the two fugues, and whose final movement is based on the rhythm of the Israeli hora dance (notwithstanding its title, *Dance in the Form of a Chaconne*); *Three Time Wedding*, which comprises movements such as "Yiddish Wedding Dance," "Yemenite Dance," and "Hora"; *Two Songs of Bialik*; *Seven Arrangements of Palestinian [Hebrew] Folksongs*, including an early Zionist song, *Lo nelekh mi'po* (We Will Not Go Away from Here); biblical settings in English, Hebrew, and even Yiddish (on Yiddish translations from Jeremiah by the well-known Yiddish poet Yehoash [Solomon Blumgarten]); *Piyyutim k'tanim*: "Shahar a lei," to words by

the medieval Spanish-Hebrew poet, Solomon ibn Gabirol; fragmentary or uncompleted works and sketches such as *Israel and His Land* (a cantata); *The Prophets*, a cantata on a text by Saul Tchernikovsky; *Molad'ti*; and *Palestine at War*, music for a film for the Palestine Labor Committee composed jointly with German-Jewish refugee Trude Rittman, in which the number "Jewish Soldier's Day" was recycled and adapted from his earlier song, *Rote Soldaten* (Red [Army] Soldiers), written in Germany from a quite different perspective as part of his *Four Antiwar Songs*.

One of Wolpe's most arresting, completed Judaic works is *Yigdal Cantata*—a hymn summarizing Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith, believed to have been penned in the 14th century by Daniel ben Yehuda of Rome but sometimes attributed instead to his contemporary, Immanuel ben Solomon, also of Rome. This complex setting was commissioned by Cantor David Putterman for the third annual service of new music at New York's Park Avenue Synagogue in 1945 (although only portions of the piece were performed then).

Once in Mandatory Palestine, Wolpe immersed himself in local Jewish and other indigenous folk cultures. He explored with enthusiasm Arabic and Turkish music traditions, as well as the musics of oriental (viz., Mediterranean and Near Eastern) Jewish communities that had resettled in Palestine. He was soon intrigued by a subjective feeling that his own ethnic roots somehow lay in the Near East. That self-discovery, of course, was more emotional reaction and adopted cultural perception than historical reality for a Jew with so rooted a European heritage. But it might have satisfied some dormant spiritual instinct, almost as a realization of a theretofore missing link. In Jaffa, he is said to have reacted to his initial exposure to the sound of Arabic by exclaiming, "This is my sound!" And according to his wife, Irma (the two married in Jerusalem), it was not only—or even so much—the "Jewishness" that he loved at first, as it was the "native atmosphere" of Palestine, and the sum total of its natural aesthetics. He soon envisioned a potential productive synergy between the local folk cultures and the advancement of a serious concert music.

Writing about what was then perceived as an emerging "new [Hebrew] Palestinian music," he observed: "To the professional composer whose material is the European art music, the Jewish and Arab Palestinian folklore opens up a fertile and rejuvenating world." Israeli music historian Jehoash Hirshberg has identified Wolpe as among the first European composers in Palestine to emulate, for example, the pluck sounds of Arabic instruments such as the *qanun* and the oud, through clashes of major and minor seconds. And Hirshberg has interpreted as Wolpe's response to the

Near Eastern *melos* his use of heterophonic techniques in certain pieces from that period.

In later comments on the Hebrew songs he composed during those four years, and on the overall imprint of the experience on his artistic direction, Wolpe noted:

When I was in that country, I felt the folklore which I heard there to be profoundly latent within me. To this day I cannot forget how the cadences of the language there struck me, how the light of the sky, the smell of the country, the stones of the hills around Jerusalem, the power and the sinewy beauty of the Hebrew language, all turned into music which suddenly seemed to have a topographical character to it. It seemed new to me, and I felt it as an old source within me.

As Austin Clarkson and other Wolpe authorities have emphasized, Wolpe diverged from the path of many colleagues in his insistence that advanced artistic expression should provide the *framework* for constituent folkloristic elements, rather than bow regressively to the domination of more conventional concert music styles to which folklore is merely adapted. In that approach, it would appear that he rejected the much more widely accepted development of a so-called Mediterranean stylistic umbrella in classical music, as promoted by some of the most famous composers of that era such as Marc Lavry, Paul Ben-Haim, and Alexander Boskovitch.

Wolpe's undiminished socialist worldview seems not to have come into conflict with the nationalist underpinning of the Zionist endeavor. To the contrary, that view found mutual encouragement and expression in his music for kibbutz ensembles, his work with choirs, and his tutelage of kibbutz composers such as Sholom Postolsky and Mordecai Zeira, who were among the leading creators of *halutz* (pioneer) songs and thus the progenitors of an Israeli folk music idiom. Some of the music he provided for kibbutz groups even included new Hebrew translations of earlier German songs of social protest and struggle from his Berlin days. And he contributed to socialist-oriented kibbutz events, such as the May Day celebration in the Jezreel Valley.

Among the European émigré composers in Mandatory Palestine, Wolpe is generally considered the first to have arrived already substantially influenced by the serial techniques of the Second Viennese School and its advocates—an imprint that was met with considerable resistance. Throughout his stay he refused to bend to pressures to mediate his approach to serious concert music. Instead, he continued

to confront artistic modernity and to further flesh out his personal response to twelve-tone procedures and other contemporary departures from conventional aesthetics. Whether from his Berlin, Palestine, or American periods, Wolpe's music is most often characterized as "transgressing" boundaries of popular, folk, and cultivated art genres and their respective musical languages. Although his music for amateur groups in the *y'shuv* was appreciated, the audience for the music he infused more rigorously with dodecaphonic and other avant-garde manifestations was small, and this was a constant source of frustration. In fact, that dual experience appears to have been a function of the impenetrable boundaries of artistic sophistication and modernism at that stage in the *y'shuv*. "It is with Stefan Wolpe," musicologist Philip Bohlman has observed, "that one sees, perhaps, the stylistic limit that the musical environment of Palestine in the 1930s would or would not tolerate."

Nonetheless, Wolpe soon attracted a circle of devotees and students in Jerusalem, which, apart from his kibbutz activity, was the principal habitat of his work. He introduced students to the most progressive techniques and developments of the time, urging them to navigate the extended possibilities inherent in liberation from tonality, and then to forge—as he did himself—individual creative paths. He was appointed to the faculty of the Palestine Conservatoire of Musical and Dramatic Art (founded in 1933 by violinist Emil Hauser) as the first—and only—teacher of composition. Wolpe's home in Jerusalem became a gathering spot for students and other receptive musicians and aficionados, who presented there a monthly program of new music. He also participated actively in the work of the short-lived World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine.

By 1938, a trickle of recognition by the more entrenched establishment had begun to come his way, and the Palestine Broadcasting Authority devoted a radio program (*The Hebrew Hour*) to Wolpe's songs on biblical texts and modern Hebrew poems. But by that time his patience seems to have worn irreversibly thin. His failure to gain wider acceptance, manifested in the refusal of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra (now the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra) to program his music, remained more indicative of his general disillusionment and feeling of artistic alienation. (In all fairness, Wolpe's expectation was probably unrealistic. He had not established an international reputation in Germany; and at that early stage in the orchestra's life its founder-director, Bronislaw Huberman, had to focus on standard repertory to solidify an audience base.) Heightened by his growing fear for personal safety in the wake of the 1936 Arab revolt against both the *y'shuv* and the British administration, a fallout and

polemical collision with the conservatory—partly personal, but in the main artistically ideological—was most likely the culminating factor in his decision to abandon ship and leave for America in 1938.

That departure signaled neither renunciation of the modern brand of Jewish selfhood he had acquired in Palestine nor rejection of Zionist orientation and its related modern Hebrew *melos* and literature. Nor did he ever regret the experience. In introductory remarks at a concert of his works in the United States in 1941, he even spoke optimistically about the gradual cultivation of musical tastes and standards through work with, and appeal to, "the people":

In Palestine there exists a closer cooperation between the composer and the people, as a result of which the composer becomes the guide of the amateurs, gradually heightening the musical values and preventing the stagnation of musical folklore.

Moreover, in America, he exhibited a logical solidarity with other émigré artists and, after the war, with artists who had survived the Holocaust either then living in Europe or as refugees in America. During the 1940s (he acquired citizenship in 1945) Wolpe came up with his unique concept of spatial proportions, wherein sonic planes can intersect or rotate, even simultaneously but independently. Clarkson has described this as a replacement of traditional thematic space with an "abstractionist space" in which not only such planes of sound, but also "nonfigurative shapes and masses of sound move freely" without necessary connection to each other. All or much of this is evident in his *Seven Pieces for Three Pianos*. Another rather eccentric piece from that decade announces in its title his eclectic, layered mixtures and his deliberate aim to shock listeners: *Displaced Spaces, Shocks, Negations, a New Sort of Relationship in Space, Patterns, Tempo, Diversity of Actions, Interactions and Intensities*, which is a component of his larger collection, *Music for Any Instruments*.

Wolpe's imaginative, at times phantasmagoric seventeen-scene ballet score, *The Man from Midian*—based with abundant license and fanciful departure on the life of Moses and the delivery of the ancient Israelites from Egyptian bondage—received its choreographed premiere in Washington, D.C. in 1942, but only in a two-piano version. The orchestrated score, which has yet to be danced in its entirety and a part of which Wolpe turned into a concert suite, remained unrecorded until 1998 for release on the Milken Archive of Jewish Music's 2006 CD on the NAXOS label. The musical language illustrates Wolpe's idiosyncratic eclecticism, relying

at various moments on octatonic, enriched diatonic, and nonserial but overtly chromatic components. The drama inherent in the ballet's episodes is achieved by correspondingly powerful, if sometimes appropriately momentary, motivic gestures; skillfully manipulated and compounded layers of juxtaposed sonorities; tone clusters that dissolve to thinned-out chords; and forceful motoric rhythms.

Wolpe frequented meetings in New York of the Eighth Street Artists' Club, where he established relationships with artists such as Franz Kline, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Mark Rothko and others in the forefront of modernism. For four years he served as music director of Black Mountain College, in North Carolina, where he composed some of his most significant pieces: *Enactments for Three Pianos* and *Piece for Oboe, Cello, Percussion and Piano*. About his Symphony from that period, he said his goal was "a very mobile polyphony in which the partials of the sound behave like river currents and a great orbit-spreadout is guaranteed to the sound, a greater circulatory agility (a greater momentum too)."

Wolpe's ideas, conceptions, experiments and procedures continued to evolve throughout the 1960s. Some of his music from that period exhibits sectional and sharply contrasting juxtapositions of tightly shaped order against deliberate disorder—to the point of a kind of "planned chaos" that can be heard as aleatoric, but in fact is notated with exactitude. "Projecting complementaries on both the minor and macro level" is how Clarkson has described this procedure, by which the disorderly second section of a two-part piece can have "the section scattering and dispersing, and the mode of thought disrupted and disassociated." And yet, in that very juxtaposition of opposing sections and order versus disorder, Wolpe found a way to provide overall "intuitive coherence."

Wolpe gave a number of important public lectures during his American years elaborating on his own concepts and discussing the contributions of some of the leading modernist and (then) avant-garde composers of the era. He also continued to be drawn to teaching and mentoring, and his beneficiaries represented a broad range of fields—film and musical theatre, even television and jazz, in addition of course to art/concert music.

In 1957 Wolpe became a professor of music at C.W. Post College, Long Island University. And in the 1960s his music enjoyed an enthusiastic discovery and revival by the (then) young generation of composers, composition students and 20th-century music aficionados, thanks in large measure to its vigorous promotion by Charles Wourinen and Harvey Sollberger's Group for Contemporary Music (founded in 1962 in New York), followed in short order by Joel Sachs and

Cheryl Seltzer's ensemble, Continuum (founded in 1966), Ralph Shapey's Contemporary Chamber Players at the University of Chicago, and several similar ensembles throughout the United States. He was awarded two Guggenheim fellowships and was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Despite being plagued by Parkinson's disease just as his recognition and rediscovery had reached a high point, and even after suffering the loss or damage of important papers and other possessions in a fire, Wolpe never retired from composing. His final work was completed just a few months before his death in 1972.

While Jewish expression is not discernible (or at least not directly) in his very late works, which exhibit some flirtation with echoes of conventional albeit ingeniously reconsidered forms and formal structures, Wolpe never shrugged off his identification with the Jewish people, modern Hebrew culture, or the State of Israel. In that connection, it is worth referring to the sentiments he expressed in a letter to his by then former wife Irma in the mid-1950s (he was divorced a second time and had wedded Hilda Morley) upon completion of his *Four Pieces for Mixed Chorus*—settings in their original Hebrew of three biblical texts and one by a modern Israeli poet:

O how my Hebrew music settles in my
blood! And how this bloodstream,
this remarkably ancient, history-filled
stream, deepens, mingles wonderfully and
is purified.

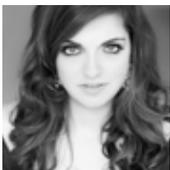
Sad to say, the Wolpe renaissance of the 1960s, extending into the 1970s and a bit through some of the 1980s, has not lasted into the 21st century.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES



Baritone **GIDEON DABI** continues to receive great acclaim, delivering “powerfully felt, beautifully performed and articulated” performances across a wide array of genres and styles. His “earnest interpretations” have

thrilled audiences throughout the United States, to Israel, Italy, and back again. This season, Gideon sings Dandini in *La Cenerentola* with Opera Columbus as well as the studio recording of Gerald Cohen’s *Steal a Pencil For Me*, which he premiered with Opera Colorado. He was a featured singer on *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* and has done multiple engagements with American Opera Projects. He has also performed with Chautauqua Opera, American Lyric Theater, Dallas Opera, Sarasota Opera, Charlottesville Opera, Tulsa Opera, Merola Opera Company, Annapolis Opera, and Chautauqua Opera.



Hailed by the *New York Times* for her “technically accomplished coloratura” as well as, “floating lyricism,” soprano **NICOLE HASLETT** has performed with Opera Hong Kong, Arizona Opera, Heartbeat Opera,

Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Toronto Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera, the Berkshire Opera Festival, the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Theater of Saint Louis, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chautauqua Opera, Opera in the Ozarks, and Portland Opera. Recent concert performances include Handel’s *Messiah* with the New Choral Society. She was a 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions grand finalist. She is a 2015 second place winner of the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition and Encouragement Award winner of the George London Foundation Competition.



Brooklyn-based composer, pianist, music director, and arranger **DAN SCHLOSBERG**’s music has been performed at Carnegie Hall, (le) poisson rouge, Royal Albert Hall, Sydney Opera House, Beijing Modern Music Festival, and David Lynch’s Festival of Disruption. Current projects

include the new love-in-the-time-of-climate-apocalypse

opera *The Extinctionist* (2024); a summer 2024 opera at New York’s Little Island; a new orchestration of Poul Ruders’ *The Handmaid’s Tale* for the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity; and composition/music direction for Jeremy O. Harris’ *A Boy’s Company Presents*. In 2021, Schlosberg was the audition, rehearsal, and soundtrack pianist for Steven Spielberg’s *West Side Story*. As Heartbeat Opera’s music director, Schlosberg’s re-orchestrations of classic operas have garnered national acclaim.



The daughter of a mother with roots in Latvian Jewry and a Baghdad-born father of Babylonian Jewish tradition who immigrated to America in 1947, Cantor

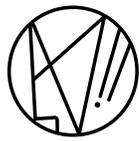
ELIZABETH SHAMMASH feels the proud

inheritance of two rich Jewish lineages. She has served as Hazzan in the Philadelphia area since 2007, including Tiferet Bet Israel (Blue Bell) and Adath Israel (Merion Station) congregations. Prior to entering the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2004, her career in opera and concert took her to work with companies including New York City Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Sarasota Opera, Israel Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv, and the Beijing Music Festival.



Tenor **DANE SUAREZ** has developed an exciting and varied career. Engagements of note for the 2023-2024 season include Don José (*Carmen*) with Festival Opera, Il Duca (*Rigoletto*) with Opera Delaware and Opera

Baltimore, Antonin Scalia (*Scalia/Ginsburg*) with Anchorage Opera, Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*) with Opera Columbus, and Don José (*La tragédie de Carmen*) with Newport Classical. He has also performed with Gulfshore Opera, Maryland Opera, The Carolina Philharmonic, Heartbeat Opera, Penn Square Opera, New Jersey Festival Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, On Site Opera, Lyric Opera of the North, Opera Birmingham, and The Phoenix Symphony. Next season, Suarez makes his international debut at Wexford Festival Opera in recital and performing the role of Don Ferolo Whiskerandos in Stanford’s *The Critic*.



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