

# Table of Contents

From the Editors 3  
From the President 3  
From the Executive Director 5

## The Sound Issue

### “Overtures”

**Music, the “Jew” of Jewish Studies: Updated Readers’ Digest 6**  
*Edwin Seroussi*

**To Hear the World through Jewish Ears 9**  
*Judah M. Cohen*

### “The Sound of Music”

**The Birth and Demise of Vocal Communities 12**  
*Ruth HaCohen*

**Brass Bands, Jewish Youth, and the Sonorities of a Global Perspective 14**  
*Maureen Jackson*

**How to Get out of Here: Sounding Silence in the Jewish Cabaretesque 20**  
*Philip V. Bohlman*

**Listening Contrapuntally; or What Happened When I Went Bach to the Archives 22**  
*Amy Lynn Wlodarski*

**The Trouble with Jewish Musical Genres: The Orquesta Kef in the Americas 26**  
*Lillian M. Wohl*

**Singing a New Song 28**  
*Joshua Jacobson*

### “Sounds of a Nation”

**When Josef (Tal) Laughed; Notes on Musical (Mis)representations 34**  
*Assaf Shelleg*

**From “Ha-tikvah” to KISS; or, The Sounds of a Jewish Nation 36**  
*Miryam Segal*

**An Issue in Hebrew Poetic Rhythm: A Cognitive-Structuralist Approach 38**  
*Reuven Tsur*

**Words, Melodies, Hands, and Feet: Musical Sounds of a Kerala Jewish Women’s Dance 42**  
*Barbara C. Johnson*

**Sound and Imagined Border Transgressions in Israel-Palestine 44**  
*Michael Figueroa*

**The Siren’s Song: Sound, Conflict, and the Politics of Public Space in Tel Aviv 46**  
*Abigail Wood*

### “Surround Sound”

**Sensory History, Deep Listening, and Field Recording 50**  
*Kim Haines-Eitzen*

**Remembering Sound 52**  
*Alanna E. Cooper*

**Some Things I Heard at the Yeshiva 54**  
*Jonathan Boyarin*

## The Questionnaire

**What are ways that you find most useful to incorporate sound, images, or other nontextual media into your Jewish Studies classrooms? 56**

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## From the Editors

### Dear Colleagues,

Sounds surround us. There are sounds we seek out, by attending a symphony or placing a phone call. There are ambient sounds, sometimes only noticed in their absence (when a motor clicks off and sudden silence reigns) or their unwelcome presence (is it supposed to sound like that?). There are irritating sounds (the snapping of gum, a squeaking wheel), background sounds (the hum of the refrigerator, the click of the keyboard), and treasured sounds (a baby’s rough breathing, a yearned-for voice). Sounds can be musical and sounds can grate. Sounds mark off daily routines (alarm clocks, kitchen timers, car door chimes, and the dog demanding a walk), inform identity (the sounds of home and of not-home), and alert us to extraordinary events (sirens!). Sounds naturally punctuate our days, but they can also be unnatural. For all of sound’s ubiquity, however, the visual—the textual—customarily holds pride of place in Jewish Studies. The acoustic, though always present, constitutes a largely unacknowledged background noise.

With this issue of *AJS Perspectives*, we seek to highlight a few of the myriad roles that sound, and the study of sound, can play within the world of Jewish Studies. Some authors approach sound through a textual lens: the sound of poetry. Others attend to “intentional” sounds, notably music: its composition, performance, and implicit (and explicit) complexities. Other authors, however, draw our attention to ambient sounds: the sounds of Jewish life and religious practice, domestic and communal. In these essays, through the authors’ written words, we “hear” sounds lofty and lowly, banal and exotic, remote and immediate. It is our hope that as our readers engage with these pieces, they will become newly aware of the presence and power of the acoustic as an avenue for intellectual inquiry and a mode of pedagogy.

As editors, we also hope to use this issue to highlight the online presence of *AJS Perspectives*. Where possible, we have included links

## From the President

### Dear Colleagues,

I open my first president’s column with the sound of applause for *AJS Perspectives* editors Jonathan Hess and Laura Lieber and our contributors for urging us to think in new ways about Jewish soundscapes. Naturally, many articles in “The Sound Issue” explicate Jewish music and song in different contexts. A few investigate the Jewish sonic realm in the cackle of the barnyard and the shrill of sirens. Interestingly, almost all bypass what we scholars hear most often when we are not isolated in our studies and libraries, the sound of conversations.

During our annual conference these sounds are, of course, ubiquitous. We go to conferences for the conversations. They occur in sessions, meetings, and the lobby; at the banquet and receptions; and inside every coffee shop within a mile radius. I even had one sitting on the hotel stairs. At last year’s conference AJS inaugurated a new opportunity for the sound of conversation, Mentor Space.

to sound files in the web-based version of this magazine, available at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>. To be sure, the printed edition is still a terrific stand-alone, but our intention is that the multimedia elements of the online articles will be enriching for all our readers.

The topic of sound led us to consider the role of media more broadly in the classroom, and thus our questionnaire for this issue asks, What are ways that you find most useful to incorporate sound, images, or other nontextual media into your Jewish Studies classrooms? We are particularly gratified by the popularity of using essays from *AJS Perspectives* in classrooms; this issue, with its embedded sound files alongside accessible, inviting writing and engaging visuals, may prove particularly useful in such contexts.

Once we begin to listen for it, sound is everywhere in the Jewish tradition, textual and beyond: in Sarah’s laughter and Leah’s weeping; in the cries of the oppressed and the shouts of war; in the rustling of *lulav* and *etrog* and the smashing of the wedding glass; in lofty melodies and wordless *niggunim*. In assembling this issue, we found ourselves ever more attuned to the auditory richness of our surroundings. Simply put, sounds are—and always have been—everywhere. With this issue, we hope to reinterpret the traditional imperative, “Hear, O Israel!” as an injunction to attend to the world of Jewish sounds. We invite you to listen with us.

### Jonathan M. Hess

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

### Laura S. Lieber

*Duke University*

The sages instructed: “Provide yourself with a teacher” (Pirkei Avot 1:6). If they were writing these words today, when business administration sits atop the hierarchy of the most popular majors, the rabbis might have added “and a mentor.” In Sheryl Sandberg’s best seller, *Lean In*, an entire chapter considers the critical importance of mentoring. Research in organizational behavior, applied psychology, and business management proves that those who are mentored have greater career success and job satisfaction. Not surprisingly, the importance of mentoring has spilled over into the university. In my home department all new faculty are assigned a faculty mentor, something I certainly never had. Our own AJS Women’s Caucus helped launch the post-conference Paula E. Hyman Mentoring Workshop.

Our new Mentor Space welcomed fifteen distinguished scholars from a variety of fields. I want to thank Jay Berkovitz, Michael Brenner,

Kimmy Caplan, Arnold Dashefsky, Jenna Weissman Joselit, Marion Kaplan, Steven Kepnes, Joshua Lambert, Anita Norich, Meri-Jane Rochelson, David Shneer, Francesco Spagnolo, Michael Swartz, Steven Weitzman, Beth Wenger, Azzan Yadin-Israel, and Carol Zemel for carving time out of their conference schedules to meet with recent PhDs, junior faculty, and graduate students.

AJS Conference Program Associate Ilana Abramowitz handled the logistics. The discussants set their own agendas. Some mentorees focused on writing dissertations and turning them into books. Others, including a few from outside the United States, sought advice on the American job market. They chatted about career paths inside and outside academe, the grants process, tenure and promotion, teaching, and the administrative “stuff” that does not get taught in graduate school.

The liveliness of the Mentor Space conversations, confirmed by a post-conference survey, revealed that the program was a terrific success. Some mentees, attending their first AJS conference, reported that Mentor Space welcomed them in a way that conferences in their larger fields have never done. Immediately they felt more a part of our community of scholars. They sensed that not only was AJS interested in them but that they had a future among us. These junior colleagues heard new insights and fresh perspectives about their projects. They talked about how to define themselves as scholars. Not only were the mentors helpful in thinking about careers, but they also spoke openly of their own experiences with the tough issues of work-life balance. The mentees voiced how much they appreciated having an hour of a senior colleague’s undivided attention. They felt like they had gained allies.

The exuberance of the mentees is not surprising, but the mentors also enthused about the stimulating conversations. Research literature

on mentoring emphasizes that it works best when there are elements of reciprocity. Wistfully reflecting on their own early careers, some mentors wished that they would have had such an opportunity when they were just starting out. They found it energizing to meet younger people in their field and encouraging to see a new generation moving forward on trajectories that they themselves had pioneered. Building on the success of this first experiment with a formal mentoring program, AJS will offer Mentor Space at the 48th Annual Conference in San Diego. Are there ways AJS could offer mentoring opportunities throughout the year, or could we help guide you in building a mentoring program at your own institution? Please share your ideas and let us know.

Year after year, more than half our membership turns out for our annual conference. Here we visit with colleagues who have become friends. In between conferences we sustain those friendships by email and phone, and, for some of us, through social media. But, at the conference, conversations flow from those first 7:30 am meetings into late at night after the last reception has ended. I return from AJS exhausted from so much conversation and ready to retreat again to the quiet spaces where I think and write. But the echoes of the sounds of those conversations with colleagues and friends and between mentors and mentees carry us forward into the year ahead until next year’s conference.

**Pamela S. Nadell**  
*American University*

## From the Executive Director

### Dear Colleagues,

Every few months, I receive an email or phone call from a member, asking for advice about a politically complicated campus issue. In many cases, these matters relate to Israel; frequently, it pertains to a speaker invited to campus, whom there is pressure to disinvite, or who has been treated disrespectfully, or who threatens to test the limits of academic freedom through offensive language. In some cases, the member just wants advice on how to handle the situation. Other times, there is a request for AJS to issue a public statement about the matter.

The question of whether AJS should take public stands on political issues, especially about Israel, is one that has taken up a good amount of time at board meetings. The most intensive discussions occurred in 2013, when the American Studies Association passed a pro-BDS resolution. Like other learned societies, AJS’s leadership struggled with how to respond to a boycott movement that threatens Israeli academics, several of whom are members. On the one hand, there was consensus on the board that academic boycotts violate principles of academic freedom, as laid out in the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) statement opposing academic boycotts (see <http://aaup.org/news/aaup-statement-academic-boycotts>). On the other hand, there were diverse opinions on the board about Israel, and our own discussions at board meetings began to go down a path that would have taken us far afield from Jewish Studies.

Ultimately, the concern was that getting involved in political matters, domestic or foreign, could swallow up the work of AJS, and overtake our main priorities—to serve our members and the field. We could all cite other societies that had morphed into advocacy organizations more so than academic associations, which had the effect of alienating a good number of their members and diluting their impact on scholarly matters. The board thus sought to steer AJS away from such a path, while at the same time voicing its opposition to academic boycotts. On December 20, 2013, AJS’s leadership passed a resolution, affirming the principles of academic freedom and endorsing the AAUP’s statement on academic boycotts (see <http://ajsnet.org/press2013.htm>).

AJS makes a clear distinction between scholarship and advocacy in our publications and conference, and likewise in the

programs and services we offer. This approach can sometimes be difficult to uphold, in part because the vast majority of AJS leaders care deeply about domestic and foreign affairs, and have strong opinions about them; in part, because the dividing line between politics and academic affairs is not always a clear one; and for me, personally, as someone who spends most of her work life building programs that respond to member needs, it’s difficult not to address challenging issues facing academics on campus. But we have a diverse membership, with a range of views on all sorts of topics, and to engage matters outside the scope of higher education and Jewish Studies risks cleaving what unites us—teaching and research.

AJS has not issued a resolution on academic boycotts or other matters since 2013. This is not to say we won’t; but given the extraordinary amount of time it takes to draft, redraft, and come to agreement on such resolutions, and the very small staff we have to oversee such cases, we issue them carefully and selectively, on matters directly related to the profession, under circumstances where we feel we can have an impact (see for instance our “Statement on Hiring Practices,” issued with the American Academy for Jewish Research, <http://ajsnet.org/ajshiring.htm>). Likewise, the board may sign on to other learned societies’ resolutions, if they meet the same standards of academic relevance and import.

This is not to say we can’t help when members phone or email us. Quite the contrary, we are eager to. AJS leaders and I are available on an individual basis to guide members through difficult times, and help them navigate complicated situations on campus. I have learned much from watching our members maneuver through very choppy waters. And if I or a board member can’t offer advice, then we can suggest someone else who can. So please reach out. This is just one of the many ways our association seeks to support its members.

**Rona Sheramy**  
*Association for Jewish Studies*



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# The Sound Issue

## “Overtures”

### Music, the “Jew” of Jewish Studies: Updated Readers’ Digest

Edwin Seroussi

In 2009 I wrote a very long essay with the above title. Commissioned by the World Union of Jewish Studies and published in volume 43 (pages 3–84) of *Jewish Studies*, the article germinated from a casual conversation with a member of the World Union of Jewish Studies board who said to me: “You make such a fuss about the importance of music in Jewish Studies. Why don’t you tell us in writing what it is all about?” To compress those 30,000 words to the 1,000 included here, I will immediately state: Many times music tells a different story than texts. Escaping the logocentric leaning of Jewish Studies is the main objective of the proposed “musicology of the Jewish,” an approach to Jewish soundscapes that aims to escape the cul-de-sac of “Jewish music.”

A sonic approach to the study of Judaism can help illuminate, for example, the elusive borderlines between Jewish and non-Jewish spaces that preoccupy so many disciplines. “Sonic” refers to a comprehensive consideration and interpretation of all forms of nonverbal utterances, vocal and instrumental, transmitted orally, graphically, or electronically. Music constitutes but one category of humanly designed sound. Any attentive listening to traditional Jewish rituals discloses a rich palette of meaningful sonic phenomena that should be the concern of scholars. The new concept of “musicalization” describes the process whereas in modernity music has been gradually silencing other significant Jewish sonic formations.

Sonic studies pose challenging methodological demands. Orality has been the hallmark of Jewish sonic memory until quite recently, and, in many contexts, remains so. Therefore, the “sonic text” is in constant flux and needs to be frozen to be analyzed, challenging entrenched concepts of what constitutes a text. Although orally transmitted sound can only be experienced and registered



Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Sefer ha-shirim: Kovez shirim 'ivrim ve-germanim le-ganei ha-yeladim, le-batei-sefer 'amamiyim ve-tikhonim* (Berlin: Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, 1912), no. 41.

in an ethnographic present, it can carry echoes of distant pasts that reappear in unexpected new locations. Historicizing Jewish oral traditions is therefore one of the daunting tasks for researchers of sonic Judaism. And because the natural habitat of music is in performance, performance studies should be a major concern to a musicology of the Jewish.

Another essential concept of my proposed agenda is the avoidance of binaries. For example, labeling music “Sephardic” or “Ashkenazic” erases the sonic nuances of place that are so meaningful to performers. Jewish places in the distant past as well as in the present are home to very different Jewish sonic spaces. Speaking about “Jewish musical traditions,” then, is another methodological mishap that should be revisited with attention

to individual and more localized voices. Sharp binary divisions of repertoires based on gender obliterate overlaps between female and male sonic realms at different historical junctures. Distinctions based on alleged authenticity as opposed to inauthentic accretions disregard the constant construction of “tradition” (in the distant past as well as in the present) through performance practice and innovation.

Another fundamental tenet of my proposal was our massive ignorance of the repositories of sound that are available to research. Academics (and stage performers of “Jewish music,” as well) keep recycling materials that were exhausted by previous generations of scholars instead of looking for fresh oral and archival resources. Just as an ear opener: since 2009 when I wrote my original article, research in early Jewish discography has developed dramatically with the location of Jewish recordings in archives of major record companies (such as EMI in London), academic institutions, and private collections. The number of pre-World War II 78 rpm Jewish recordings that survived the vicissitudes of time is breathtaking. Early twentieth-century recordings are not “productions” in the sense of the modern recording industry but rather ethnographical snippets. Past practices that have disappeared can still be audible in spite of the serious limitations of old technologies (of which the three-minute take is the most notable). Who dreamed until recently of hearing piyyutim from 1930s Bombay or a Yiddish theatre troupe from 1906–1910 Lemberg/Lviv? But why look back to the past exclusively? Even present-day music in Jewish communities of Latin America, South Africa, and Australia is marginalized from research by the hegemonic centers of Israel, the United States, and western Europe.

Not only do sound recordings from the distant past or the present await scholarly



Mayer Levi of Esslingen, *Die Melodien für den israelitischen Gottesdienst, Tefillat shaharit le-rosh ha-shanah*, Mus. Add. 26, ca. 1857–1862, fol. 20, Birnbaum Collection, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati.

evaluation; copious annotated sources are still utterly overlooked. For example, the magnificent Birnbaum Collection of Jewish music at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati that was made available to the scholarly community in its fullness after its modern cataloging in 1979 is hardly consulted. Perhaps the current project of digitization of this collection will stir more interest in it.

Even Jewish Studies scholars who find the musical text intractable can address texts that illuminate how Jews conceived nonverbal sound, for example music as a transformative force in religious experience. “Musicologists” from the circles of *Sefer Hasidim* or the Zohar delivered utterances on sound and music reflecting intellectual interactions with the surrounding cultures. Their ideas continued to resonate in the early modern period and beyond, once their texts were printed and widely circulated. Music was a subject of inquiry for Abraham Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Menaḥem di Lonzano, Leone de Modena, Shneur Zalman of Liady, and Franz Kafka to mention a few. However, their “musicology” is sporadic and has to be gleaned from large textual repositories, requiring a meticulous and at times Sisyphean task.

Finally, music is a field where Jewish modernity displays its trials with distinctive intelligibility. The crisis of “tradition,” the challenges of nationality, the yearning for lost places, the commodification of identity, all can be heard or read through music. To illustrate: if writing music from right to left is a visual metaphor of musicking by modern (European) Jews as Jews and for Jews, we can locate it in unexpectedly disparate contexts: the pedagogy of a rural instructor of liturgy (Mayer Levi of Esslingen) from



Alexander Eliezer Neswizski, *Ha-mitpalei: Yakhil reẓitativim be'ad [sic] ḥazzanim u-ba'alei tefillah li-tfillot ha-yamim ha-nora'im*. fol. 6b–7a, Vilna, 1903.

mid-nineteenth-century southwest Germany; the autoethnography of an early twentieth-century cantor (Alexander Eliezer Neswizski) from Pruzhany in the Grodno Governorate of the Russian Empire; and, around the same time, the Hebrew-centered musical agenda of a fervent Zionist Jerusalemite (Abraham Zvi Idelsohn), arguably the “father” of the very modern concept of “Jewish music.”

One can listen to Judaism without necessarily commanding the jargon of *Musikwissenschaft*. Music can be mystifying, but one should not mystify music as an intractable form of communication that

is of no concern for nonmusicologists. Musicologists of the Jewish are avid readers of most Jewish Studies disciplines. The time has come for the Jewish Studies community to take Jewish soundscapes into thoughtful consideration.

Edwin Seroussi is the Emanuel Alexandre Professor of Musicology and director of the Jewish Music Research Centre at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has published on North African and eastern Mediterranean Jewish music, Judeo-Islamic relations in music, and Israeli popular music.

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## To Hear the World through Jewish Ears

Judah M. Cohen

To state the seemingly obvious: you don't need to be a specialist to write about "Jewish" sound. Similarly but contrapuntally obvious: Too often, even after a lifetime of sonic experience, many Jewish Studies scholars still don't feel comfortable writing about sound. Why this reticence?

As trained musicologists, perhaps my colleagues and I have been complicit in cornering the field, building a wall of specialized vocabulary and skills around sonic phenomena (music theory, anyone?). But I think the matter goes far beyond scholarly monopoly. Music and sound are tough to pin down and hard to control and this slipperiness can trouble an academic field deeply (overly?) invested in the written word. Sound in this environment tends to receive awe or be regarded as novelty, though too often that means exclusion. Yet without sound, are we really doing justice to the full subject of Jewish Studies?

It's both illuminating and maddening. We live in sounds. Sound accompanies every moment, every setting, every social situation, every act. It coordinates ears and skin (or one or the other) and translates vibrations into meaning. Barring a perfect vacuum, moreover, even the most soundless of silences is a conceit. Postwar composer John Cage highlighted this idea in his performances, most famously in his piece 4'33" revealing how the unfulfilled expectation of a "performance" yields a more layered complexity of ambient sound. Humanity operates by creating, regulating, and responding to its own sounds, acknowledged or unacknowledged, intentionally or unintentionally. We can't escape them, even as they confound our ability to describe them.

How people shape, interpret, and respond to those sounds presents a rich and still-developing area, and a challenge to the current state of our field. As a historian, I go searching for echoes in documents, memories, notation, recordings, ephemera, and musical instruments. As an ethnographer, I go where sounds happen, experiencing them when I can see Jewish discursive patterns in action. They're not easy to avoid; and by listening carefully, we have an obligation to figure out how those sounds generate significance in context.



Jeff Klepper and Debbie Friedman at CAJE (Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education), circa early 1980s. Courtesy of Jeff Klepper.



Cantor Alois Kaiser and Rabbi Benjamin Szold at the Oheb Shalom Synagogue in 1868. Courtesy of The Jewish Museum of Maryland, 1989.079.074.

Fortunately, scholarship has largely moved beyond the idea that "Jewish sound" has a common origin and vocabulary. Rather, we can view it as simultaneously ephemeral and historical, reinforcing the ideas of a moment and then decaying quickly. Understanding that relationship and our

attempts to capture those moments in writing or on recording reveals the stakes in creating Jewish sonic cultures, and thus ideas of sonic (or musical) "traditions." In eras when Zionists sought to establish new musical conventions for a Hebrew-speaking world, when liberal Jewish leaders attempted to spur Jewish identification through a more noticeable "ethnic" musical form, when cantors aimed to assert their place in Jewish history by creating parallels to opera singers, and when composers explored ideas about Jewish music to parallel other national sonic narratives, sound's fleeting/permanent dichotomy became an important component. Each group constructed an answer to the problematic question "What is Jewish music?" that could meet emotional needs first, and intellectual needs through repetition and writing.

In doing so, each group included some sounds as "Jewish," and excluded others. More significantly, these approaches valorized specialized musical training as the necessary skill for discernment. Today, recognizing the idiosyncratic lacunae such efforts created, scholars of sound aim to swing the pendulum back somewhat: to reopen productive dialogues with historians, cultural theorists, philosophers, theologians, and others in the world of Jewish Studies. Aided by the many technologies we now have to preserve sound, including about 1,400 years of musical notation, a century of media recordings, seventy years of "early-adopter" consumer-grade recordings, and at least a decade where audio/video collection is more convenient and immediate than writing itself, new explorations can perhaps rebalance sound as a normal and accessible component of experience: continuous with other written materials that have served as the backbone of our scholarly pursuits.

To see how this process works, look to the celebrated writing of my mentors and colleagues: Kay Shelemay on the Beta Israel populations; Mark Slobin on Yiddish theater and cantors; Edwin Seroussi on music of Jews of North African and central Asian heritage; Mark Kligman on Syrian Jews; James Loeffler on the late Russian Empire; Tamar Barzel on the downtown Manhattan avant-garde scene; Evan Rapport on the Bukharian Jewish diaspora; Philip Bohlman on central Europe;

Klara Moricz on the turn of the twentieth century; Tina Frühauf on the centrality of the organ; Lily Hirsch on Holocaust-era orchestras; Amy Horowitz on Israeli popular music; Josh Kun on American popular music; and a bevy of others. All bring sound to bear on the intersection of history and identity using increasing precision and depth, inclusively integrating sonic materials into broader political, historical, and cultural frameworks.

And sound, with its unique qualities, has much to say. I spent three years learning, talking, and performing with cantorial students at Hebrew Union College to understand the role of sound in considering Reform Jewish life and history. Taking notes and (authorized) recordings along the way, I witnessed students combining artistic, historical, and theological perspectives in intensive dialogue with mentor-cantors, rabbis, educators, voice teachers, and musicologists. And the closer I came to the sound, the more it became a complex entity of dynamic, moving strands. Looking at each strand, with the help of sources such as sheet music, course catalogs, and recordings, illuminated a textured, twentieth-century history of musical definition and redefinition,

as liberal Jewish leadership looked to elevate sound as a component of spiritual authority. While many know sound's power as an aesthetic strategy for promoting identity-based historical narratives—at concerts, say, or in the service of religious ritual—intimacy with the same sounds became here a clarifying lens into an overlooked yet ever-present part of Jewish life.

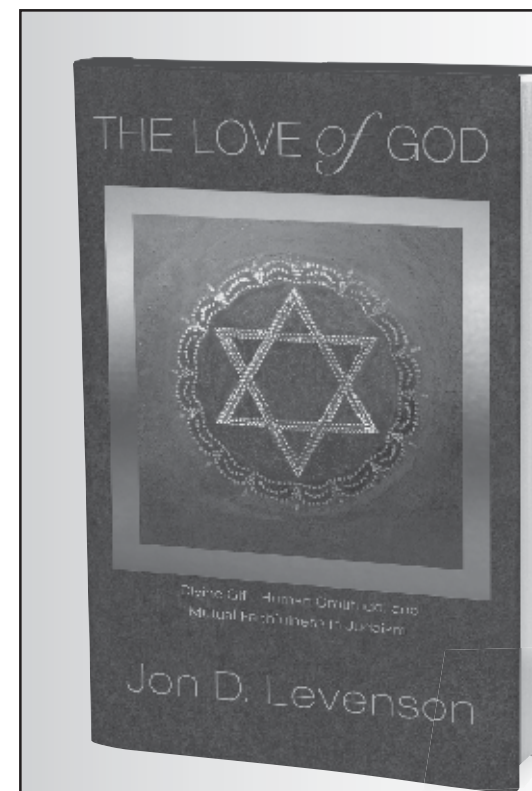
Sound opened up realms of popular culture as well, expressions often cordoned off by ornamental critiques of unseriousness or inappropriateness, or solely analyzed by lyrics. Cantorial schools, for example, faced dilemmas in addressing liturgical music based in folk or rock styles that clashed with historical Jewish music narratives, even as they comprised the majority of congregational sound. Attributed to major progenitors such as Debbie Friedman and Jeff Klepper, the music's proliferation in the late twentieth century became a source of cantorial frustration and/or moral consternation, symptomizing the potential loss of Jewish musical identity. Approaching the topic through sound helped me to understand the deep-rootedness of this debate as a centuries-long cyclical exercise of pitting musics of tradition and innovation

against each other in an existential battle for Jewish cultural primacy—and in each case reaching détente after decades of negotiation. Sound in this context became a central criterion for understanding the dynamics of liturgical practice: as musicians such as Debbie Friedman and Ben Steinberg joined liturgists such as Benjamin Szold and Adolph Huebsch as central figures in determining the dynamics of religious communal life.

Similarly, sound's deep and longstanding integration into performance-based arts such as theater offers opportunities for new angles of understanding. Preconceived notions of musical theater's so-called "light" entertainment, to give one example, tend to obscure the vast landscape of experimentation that "the musical" entails, especially when Broadway and its commercial implications cease to be the dominant point of reference. When, in presentations, I note that Anne Frank's diary has become the subject of at least fifteen musical theater works, I occasionally face pushback about musical artists' "commercial appropriation" of a central Holocaust symbol. The picture looks different, however, when viewed from the perspective of the artists, some of whom have devoted decades to these works, have extensive training and facility with musical models and histories, choose every note for a reason, and treat their work as a living, dynamic thing that changes from audience to audience. Their articulate responses speak to a wide range of composition and mediation, and show sound as both generative and responsive to human interaction.

In all of these cases, sound becomes a mode of philosophy that constructs its own worldview: defining the past and acting on the present, acknowledging in the process the richness of the moment and its echoes across Jewish life. Accessible—or rather, inescapable—sounds hardly require special talent or training to explore, only a willingness to consider how the senses fill meaning. With the state of digital humanities expanding rapidly, methods and colleagues available to consult, and broader openness among scholars to engage in arts-associated projects, the scholarly immediacy of sound may, hopefully, become as natural to us as it is in real life.

*Judah M. Cohen is the Lou and Sybil Mervis Professor of Jewish Culture and associate professor of Musicology at Indiana University. His current projects explore World War II-era narratives in musical theater, nineteenth-century American synagogue music, and American Jewish singer/songwriter/liturgist Debbie Friedman.*



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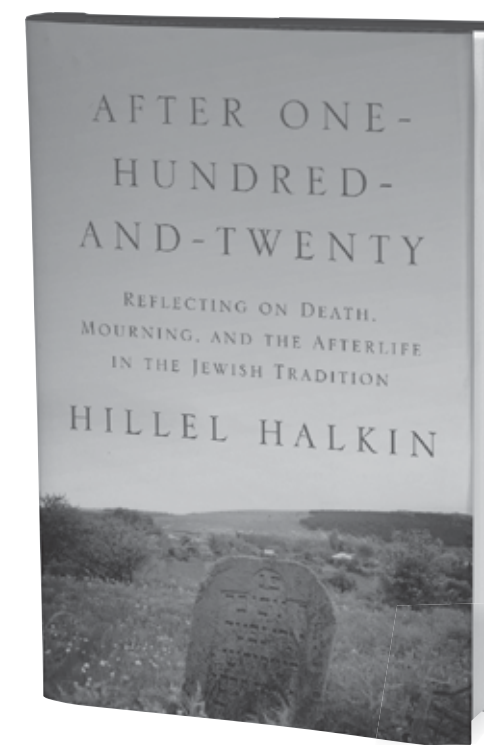
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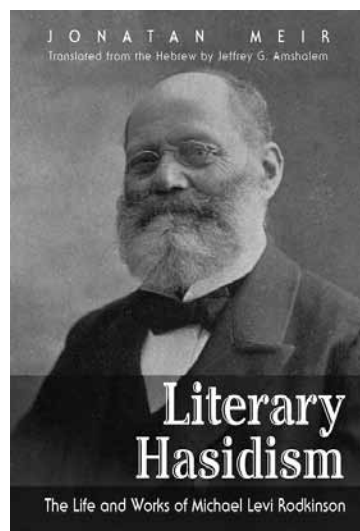
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# “The Sound of Music”

## The Birth and Demise of Vocal Communities

Ruth HaCohen

In the absence of a developed concept of “vocal communities,” it is hard to appreciate the formation, sustenance, and decline of real and imaginary Jewish communities in the last two centuries. Assigning such a role to organized sound must lead us into a certain history of perception and reception, performative practices, propagated and less pronounced ideas. Vocal communities, I propose, constitute themselves through a shared sonic phenomenology, embodied in listening, participatory vocalization, or both; the flow of communal emotions, as well as collective beliefs in the power of sound; and a cherished vocal corpus. A globally encompassing configuration, the social, religious, and ideological functions of vocal communities have considerably grown in modern times. This is particularly the case in the Western Jewish modern world. Across the Jewish Diaspora, premodern communities could construe themselves through a variety of means and media—comprising texts, rituals, learning, law, economic and familial relations, customs, and memories. The vocal dimension, however important, was one of several modes whereby a community could cement itself as a social and historical entity. Within the boundaries of the synagogal space, it was the men’s undertaking to uphold the sonic realm in a form that wavered between cantorial recitation and heterophonic participation, sometimes perceived by outsiders as noisy and unordered.

This sonic condition has radically altered since the beginning of the nineteenth century within major Jewish centers in Europe and, subsequently, in other continents. With the sociohistorical transition from a *Gemeinschaft* to a *Gesellschaft* social structure, often paralleling the shift from community to nation-state, indigenous Jewish communities lost their old moorings, while new ones established themselves in urban centers hitherto inaccessible to Jews. Attaining membership in a community became a matter of choice, one among several affiliations an individual could assume within and without the Jewish world. Communal life was concentrated mostly in the synagogue,



Learning to sing in Kibbutz Giv’at Shmuel, 1945. Gan Shmuel Archive via PikiWiki Israel.

whose architectural shape and sonic content underwent far-reaching transformations in an attempt to enhance its dignity and rites. The process of molding a disciplined sonic space-time involved, primarily, the assumption of control over modes of participatory vocal production, whose best model was choral singing, prevalent in the neighboring Lutheran churches.

Luther’s ingenious strategy for establishing his Reformed church as a confederation of local congregations entailed, first and foremost, the creation of an embodied theology of unmediated, synchronized, and vernacular communal voices. Hence the communities established were not only “imagined.” Through sound, shaped in chorale form, they shared a physiology of breathing, intoning, and listening; they sensed together the ebbs and flows of chorale melodies and the excitement of their amassment. Furthermore, however localized each community became over time, through a shared corpus and related common practices, each member could still feel at home in any of them. Allegedly, a single synagogal experience, however traditional, led Franz Rosenzweig to relinquish

his Lutheran proclivities and readopt the Jewish faith; yet he would still write the following regarding the singing community, on its “eternal way” to redemption:

For it is music which raises that first intimate togetherness that is founded in the mutual space and the mutual hearing of the word to the conscious and active intimate togetherness of all who are assembled. The space first created by architecture is now really filled with the sounds of music. The chorale, filling the space, sung mutually by all in mighty unison, is the real foundation of the church deployment of music. . . . In the chorale, language, which otherwise has to speak its own and particular word from the mouth of each individual, is brought to silence. Not to that silence which simply silently listens to the read out word, but to the silence of his peculiar nature in the unanimity of the choir. (Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005], 383, translation slightly altered.)

The affective unity that such simultaneity confers on the singing community—Rosenzweig further maintains—bestows on the text an existential longevity and a shared validity that words alone apparently lack. While he seemed to have overlooked the harmonizing effect of the chordal setting of the melody, divided among the standard four voices, his basic argument, related to the power of synchronized vocalities, remains intact. Vested in such musical attire, moreover, the various prayers enter the annual cycle of holidays, he further argues, engraving their specific festal flavor on the collective emotional memory. This is especially the case, one may add, when the verbal meaning of the text is no longer accessible to those pronouncing it—a characteristic predicament of many mid-European synagogue-goers at the time. The alternation between the unified singing of the community and the cantorial elaboration of the congregations’ emissaries—*hazzanim* and professional choruses—further deepened the sense of vocal community *qua communitas*.

Louis Lewandowsky (1821–1894), who divided his musical oeuvres for the synagogue between those intended for the professional chorus (*Todah ve-zimrah*), and those proposed for the use of the entire congregation (*Kol rinnah u-tefillah*), would have probably endorsed this appraisal. And so would his followers, up to the present day, spanning between Reformist and ultra-Orthodox Jews—those exposed, early on, to the synagogal treasures he bequeathed. Lewandowsky, however, was not the only one to supply the burgeoning vocal communities, spreading in Europe between London and Odessa, with the “tonal stuff their religious sentiments turned to be made of.” Viewed from this perspective, the state-sponsored, coordinated onslaught led by the Nazi authorities on November 9, 1938, known as Kristallnacht, was meant indeed to shatter what still remained of that hard-gained emotional solidarity and communal shareability that those vocal communities wrought in the course of a century of highly promising diasporic life.

Such vocal communities were not confined, of course, solely to the synagogue. In Germany, inspired by the various groups associated with the *Wandervogel* (lit., wandering birds)—the prototype of the youth movement founded at the turn of the twentieth century—for whom shared singing became a central social practice, various Jewish youth organizations similarly shaped their esprit de corps through group

singing. This trend became even stronger after the Nazis came to power, boasting new *Liederbücher* (songbooks) that featured German, Jewish, and Hebrew-Zionist songs, as in the case of the *Hawa Naschira* (Let us sing) collection, published in 1935 in Leipzig and Hamburg. Though of a clear Zionist orientation, this collection hinges, as well, on the beloved German lore of high and folkish tunes and songs. The typical introduction to this motley musical and lingual compilation, however, stresses that “communally sung song is an expression of shared sentiment,” in which “Jewish youth increasingly excels.” In the spirit of Jewish philosophers Hermann Cohen and his disciple Rosenzweig, whom they cite, the editors (Joseph Jacobsen and Erwin Jospé, both composers of some of the numbers) wished to deepen the knowledge of the sense of community rooted in “our music,” resorting, as well, to Maimonides’s authority (who embraced poetry for its intrinsic value rather than for its national-religious association) to allow for a “foreign” music. In comparison with the widespread *Was die Wandervogel singen* of 1900, which could have served as a model for their volume, one may find here a greater variety of styles, but in less sophisticated settings, maybe reflecting the lack of a proper musical training of the purported users of this *Liederbuch*, partially mimicking the monovocal *shironim* circulated at the time in the Yishuv. Like the Zionist *haluzim* (pioneers), even the most radically secularized ones, they, too, found the treasures of Jewish vocal communities beyond the Elbe—the potential of various Hasidic *niggunim*—of great *lebendig* (לעבעדיק) and devoted a significant portion of their volume to these tunes, as did the even more renowned *Schireh erez jisrael*, edited by Jacob Schönberg (likewise published in Germany in 1935).

It was, indeed, through such Zionist, semireligious handbooks, and the work of *shlihim* (messengers) from Palestine who taught enthusiastic youngsters *shirei ’Erez Yisra’el*, that communities of *haluzim* could crystallize while still in Europe, concomitantly bonding themselves to other such groups in an imagined confraternity. Indeed, one cannot conceive of the social cohesion and passion typical of that stage in the history of the Zionist movement without the adhesive choral power fostered by the ever-growing tonal corpus. All of us who still grew up in Zionist youth movements, before they became so strongly divided by means of an imaginary political green (or rather red!) line, experienced the yet-palpable connectivity

formed by such shared vocal lore, beyond the difference between *datiyim* and *hofshiyim*, Hashomer Hatzair or Hazofim (scouts). Part of this lore was deeply musical, other parts less so; some were movingly performed, others—in a peculiar “noisy” way. Differences notwithstanding, this shared canon shaped a grand vocal church, or virtual synagogue, of all such local and partisan communities. It also affected the “real” synagogues in Palestine (later Israel), whose Zionist aspect became less and less affected by the nineteenth-century middle-European “bel canto” synagogues. (The corresponding development in the United States was considerably different.)

True, all vocal communities—as in the case of other ritualistic groups—ever risk their precipitation into the abyss of routine and monotony. An informed renewal of repertory, working through the ethos or connotative value of imported or newly composed tunes has recently become a designated goal of newly formed minyanim in Israel and other diasporas. These predominantly egalitarian synagogues tend to adopt “performative” rather than “performance” strategies (or participatory rather than theatrical ones, to follow Michael Steinberg), while caring for the vocal quality of the “singing body”—often carried by female voices. And yet, while such communities benefit from the contribution of first-rate scholars in traditional Jewish Studies, they often miss a deeper understanding of the semiotics, aesthetics, and theology of the sonic realm, pertaining to the synagogue and beyond. It is through the quest for such knowledge that a vocal “togetherness” (à la Rosenzweig) may be creatively renewed, enabling new modes of spirituality and humaneness.

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# Brass Bands, Jewish Youth, and the Sonorities of a Global Perspective

Maureen Jackson



Izmir Sanayi Mektebi Badosu - Emre ARACI Archive. The school band of the *Islahhane* (or *Sanayi Mektebi*) of Izmir, c. 1909–10. Reproduced by permission from the personal collection of Emre Araci.

In 1859 the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid visited the Aegean port of Salonica on a multicity tour of the realm. Brass bands, imperial guards, girls with bouquets, and children from all local religious communities lined an avenue to perform for him. As Rodrigue and Stein note in *A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonica*, a group of seventy young Jewish men reportedly sang as the sultan passed by, while local musician Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi presented his compositions in Hebrew and Ladino for the occasion, as well as conducted a Jewish children's chorus and parade. Nearly forty years later, in 1897, the Ottoman state under Sultan Abdülhamid II, celebrating a rare military victory in a war over Crete, commissioned a spate of patriotic compositions. These included the march *Cenge Giderken* (Going into battle), with music by Santo Şikar (d. 1920), a renowned Jewish musician from Izmir, and lyrics by Mehmet Emin Yurdakul (1869–1944), a poet remembered for his nationalist verse in simple Turkish. With no record of its performance history, the march was likely played by young players in military-style bands and choruses ubiquitous in Ottoman

cities at the time. Soon after, in 1900 Kâmil Paşa, the governor of the Aegean province of Aydın, commemorated the arrival of the British navy in the bay of Izmir by organizing a banquet and ball in the government's quarters. The student band of the *Société Musicales Israélites* entertained guests with marches, and three Jewish master musicians, Avram Karakaş, Hayim Alazraki, and Isak Algazi, provided intimate Ottoman art music.

What ties together these accounts of late Ottoman Jewish music making, given their distinct periods, locales, and musical particularities? They not only detail active Jewish involvement in multiethnic imperial ceremonials as well as versatility in the areas of language (Hebrew, Ladino, Ottoman, and spoken Turkish) and musical genres (Ottoman art music and European-style marches). As Julia Phillips Cohen notes in *Becoming Ottomans*, youth brass bands and choruses also weave through each historical sketch, placing Jewish children with their Ottoman compatriots at the heart of public patriotic music making. By showcasing Ottoman youth as guardians of the future, the bands sought to bolster the imperial

message of marches and poems, while the entertainment value and colloquial language of the pieces would have increased receptivity in a diverse public. The music aimed to forge military-state-society relations through rousing open-air performance, especially during Sultan Abdülhamid II's administration (1876–1909), when centralizing and modernizing efforts grew in the context of territorial losses and European economic and military ascendancy. Performative media such as music and theatre arguably exceeded the impact of other means of communication, such as print media, on imperializing or nationalizing efforts in the Middle East, even as they interacted with published texts. The brass bands and choruses featured in the above descriptions exemplify such media in an imperial context. By participating in a broader politicization of Ottoman urban space through youth bands and choruses, Jewish communities extended their own patriotic image in the context of nineteenth-century reforms toward multiethnic citizenship, even if strategic silence on other occasions broadcast loyalty as loudly as a trumpet or a drum.

Let us focus primarily on brass bands and secondarily on choruses to explore a musical slice of Jewish patriotic activity in the late Ottoman Empire. Loud and typically marching outdoors, Ottoman brass bands announced patriotic space within wide-ranging earshot, as they performed a range of music from military commemoratives and sultanic panegyrics to popular European art music. Children typically filled the ranks of the bands, as they did patriotic choruses, becoming educated into imperial spirit by learning and producing the music. It is a global perspective on brass bands that furthers our understanding of how children—often homeless or destitute—became an integral part of this phenomenon worldwide and by extension within the empire and its multiethnic communities. Typically understood in elite terms as Italian-led reformation of Ottoman military music at court, or in Jewish terms as French infusions into Paris-sponsored Alliance Israélite schools of the empire, brass bands and military marches in fact enjoyed far-reaching concentric circles of migration—from an intensifying movement in Victorian England to Europe and its colonies, Asia, and the Americas. These circles more fully account for the growth of bands outside the imperial

palace and its professional performers to become a popular amateur youth activity in Ottoman urban centers across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Early public schools in the empire—*Islahhanes* (reformatories), which were first established in the Balkans to address the refugee crisis after the Crimean War (1853–56)—instituted bands to “uplift” orphaned children by offering them a marketable skill while provisioning the state with working bands for civic and state ceremonies. Musical models in the form of an amateur brass band movement had developed in Britain by the mid-nineteenth century in the context of European discourses about the unsupervised “dangerous child” and Victorian notions of “rational recreation.” Introduced into British, European, and American reform schools and factories to rehabilitate destitute or laboring youth, brass bands showcased easy-to-learn instruments, soldiering-style uniforms, and marching formations that facilitated the aim of instilling virtue rather than vice in vagrant youth and industrial workers. Extending to other regions of the world through musical tours, world exhibitions, and colonial activity, amateur brass bands rapidly became an integral part of Ottoman reformatories

and an expanding public school network under Abdülhamid II, and developed in multireligious communal institutions and missionary schools as well. By cultivating discipline, productivity, and patriotism in often impoverished youth, the bands sought to fulfill needs for urban renewal, youth rehabilitation, and civic performance across Ottoman urban centers, benefiting from the often unpaid services of working pupils.

Did Jewish orphans or child workers, like their counterparts elsewhere, fill the ranks of Ottoman Jewish bands? Possibly. Destitute Jewish locals and refugees from late Ottoman wars, especially from the Balkans to port cities like Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, and environs, would have provided ample numbers of child performers. Whether dispossessed or not, however, Jewish students were trained for brass bands and children's choruses in state and missionary schools, to which Jewish and Christian families, albeit a minority, sent their children. These public schools, moreover, sometimes employed Jewish music teachers: for example, the composer Santo Şikar was on the faculty of the *Islahhane* reform school in Izmir between 1888 and 1893, teaching Ottoman aspects of his Euro-Ottoman musical expertise and

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working alongside band conductors. In a trend shared with Greek, Turkish, and Armenian communities, Ottoman Jewish communities established their own bands, like the Société Musicales Israélites founded in 1891 in Izmir. Directed by Maestro Moroni, the band was composed of about forty students and, active intermittently for two decades, was employed to perform at a variety of civic events in Izmir, including official commemorations, benefit concerts, provincial balls, and banquets. Like the *Islahhane* bands, this association at times provided avenues to musically inclined students for further training: in 1913–14 it funded Albert Hemsî (1898–1975), who eventually became a prominent music collector, conductor, and scholar, to attend the Conservatory of Music in Milan and return to conduct the band until 1923.

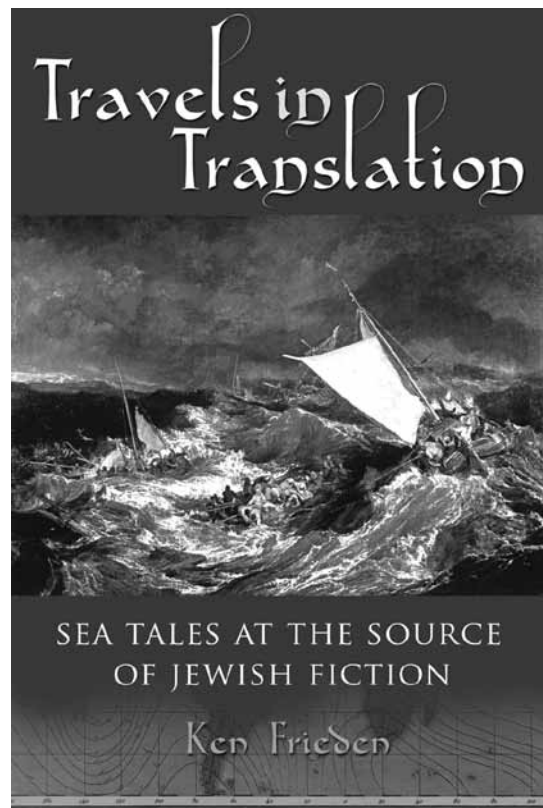
Ottoman youth bands as a whole showcased modernly schooled children as the voice of a sovereign and progressive empire, while the bands employed rhythmic marches to educate children into imperial patriots and heighten patriotic emotion in audiences. Youth choruses singing colloquial lyrics like “Cenge Giderken,” moreover, extended the impact of printed poetry by broadcasting their accessible language in open-air space and entertaining the economically and ethnically diverse crowds at official public occasions.

Just as such performative media enlarged state imperializing efforts, Ottoman Jewish participation enabled their communities to widely broadcast—and cultivate—their own political allegiances, when, by contrast, on specifically Jewish commemoratives leaders might encourage a low-decibel profile to present a decorous image of its citizenry. As official occasions cleared salutary space for high-volume patriotic display, child performers in Jewish bands and choruses projected the patriotic upbringing and potential of an entire future generation of Ottoman Jews in a way that elder career musicians would not. Even as political winds shifted across the Second Constitutional period (beginning in 1908–09), the Balkan Wars (1912–13), and the lead-up to World War I (1914–18)—as panegyrics to sultans gave way to pan-Turkish cultural motifs set to march tunes—young Jewish performers and conscripts could still find themselves in the poetry through the ethnicity-bending term “Turk,” glossed as “Ottoman,” and continue to display communal patriotism with their non-Jewish peers, now representing vanguards of change breaking with a “benighted” ancien régime. In the aftermath of the devastating war a veritable cult of youth would be constructed in the early Turkish Republic, while brass band musicians there

and elsewhere would progressively adapt their trumpets and drums to jazz combos (as discussed by Carole Woodall in “Awakening a Horrible Monster”). Popular musical tastes, wearied of war and militaristic marches, were shifting, and the Istanbul press of the 1920s would debate the sensuality and morality of the new musical and danceable fad. Until then, however, the case of Jewish youth bands and choruses in late empire sheds light on performative avenues open to the leadership of a non-Muslim community, often seeking a low profile, to expand its patriotic image and shape its members’ loyalties through the relatively loud, accessible, and entertaining public soundscapes of a broader imperializing enterprise.

*Audio examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

*Maureen Jackson researches multiethnic musical cultures in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic as a lens for understanding cultural history in imperial and national contexts. She is the author of *Mixing Musics: Turkish Jewry and the Urban Landscape of a Sacred Song* (Stanford University Press, 2013), winner of a Jewish National Book Award. She served as a Harry Starr Fellow at Harvard University and is currently working on her second book.*



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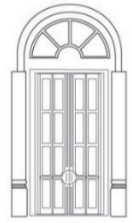
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## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### THEME

For its 2017–2018 fellowship year, the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies seeks applications from scholars asking new questions about the history of science, medicine and technology from the perspective of Jewish culture. This year will explore the theories, institutions, and paradigms that shaped how Jews have studied nature, and the ideas, applications, and cultural and religious consequences that emerged from such study.

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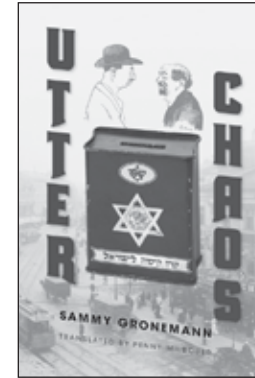
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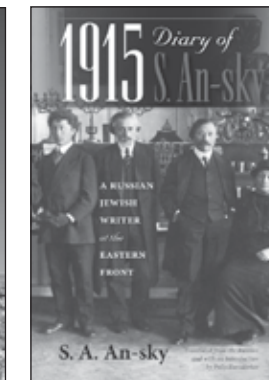
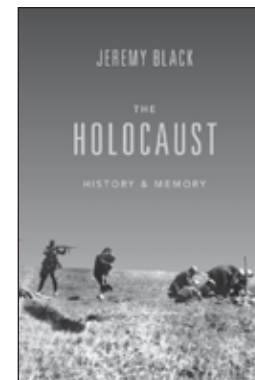
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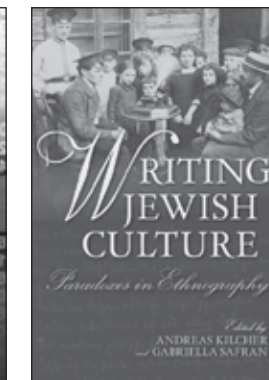
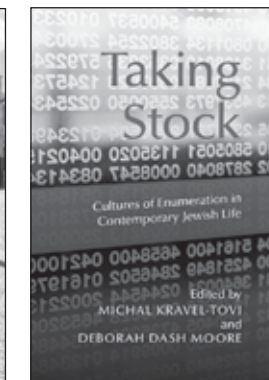


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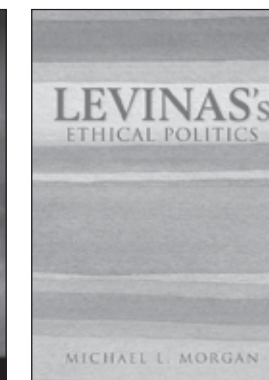
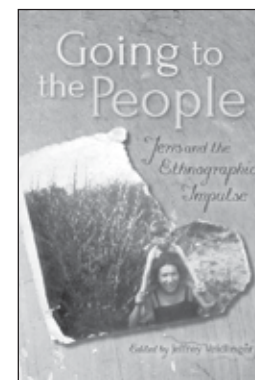
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# How to Get out of Here: Sounding Silence in the Jewish Cabaret

Philip V. Bohlman



Arnold Schoenberg (cello) at the time of his *Brettli-Lieder/Cabaret Songs*.

It is to cabaret's ability to turn worlds inside-out that I here call "the cabaret," a term that extends Mikhail Bakhtin's well-known concept of the carnivalesque. The cabaret stage depends on the inversion of inside and outside, the ways in which a skit or song allows the audience to experience themselves upon the stage without, however, entirely recognizing themselves. Audience members laugh at their own foibles and follies. They encounter themselves in a moment of self-reflection. The serious is made comic; the comic is made serious. The irony of an evening of enjoyment, as Leo Strauss invites us to experience, is revealed in the difficulty of escaping that moment when sounded in the real world.

The outer and inner worlds of the cabaret collide in Hanns Eisler's setting of Bertolt Brecht's "The Ballad of the 'Jewish Whore' Marie Sanders." Eisler (1898–1962) captures the form and narrative of broadside ballad—songs that detail the politics of the day and circulate in printed form on the streets of the city—to open a space for Marie Sanders to enter the public sphere in which she is mocked and driven from the city because she has a Jewish lover. Sound in all its dimension—lyrics, genre, intertextuality, arrangement of the score for cabaret ensemble—unleashes its reality to locate it in the historical moment of the Nuremberg Laws. In successive verses, reality unfolds sonically as broadside and newsreel converge. Aesthetically, the hideous reality of prejudice and racism becomes transcendent as a song of stunning beauty.

Although Marie Sanders herself never speaks in the song, we yearn to hear her voice. The serious work of cabaret resonates most clearly through the sounding of silence. It was the possibility of reclaiming silence for the marginalized that led to the spread of cabaret in the Jewish communities of the modern era, above all as they were forced to flee the traditions of an older world and embark on exile into a new world. These modern stories fueled the repertoires of the cabaret, which were transformed into the Yiddish theater, operetta, and the film music of modernity. There were new voices and new songs to take up the cause of denying finality. The silence of modernity

was vast, stretching across generations and boundaries of every kind. Kurt Tucholsky, Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, Kurt Geron, even Theodor Herzl in his Zionist writings and Leo Strauss's own father, Oscar Straus, the great operetta composer and mentor of Arnold Schoenberg when he arrived in Berlin to perform and compose cabaret on the eve of his turn toward modernism—all were cabaretists. By 1944, cabaret spilled from the stages of clubs, dance halls, theaters, and film, enveloping and envoicing the global soundscape of Jewish modernity.

## Sites of Silence

In Nuremberg they've passed a law,  
Giving women cause to weep,  
Who had been sleeping with the  
wrong man.

"The price of meat's going up in  
the city shops,  
The drums beat louder every day,  
God in heaven, if there's something  
you've not done,  
Do it right away."

(Hanns Eisler / Bertolt Brecht, "Die Ballade der 'Judenhure' Marie Sanders" [The ballad of the 'Jewish whore' Marie Sanders])

Listen to audio example online at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

## The Silence of Jewish Modernity

If you want to visit the coffeehouse,  
If the cabaret might be your thing,  
If you'd like to see the Strauss  
Ensemble performing,  
Come on in, we're at your service.

All your cares will disappear,  
Here, in this beautiful little space—  
But you need to keep one thing in mind,  
Just how to get out of here.

(Leo Strauss, "Einladung/Invitation,"  
Terezín ca. 1944)

How charming this invitation from the Leo Strauss Ensemble to join it for an evening of cabaret! And how ironic, uncanny, and tragic to know that most of those who joined them for the cabaret evenings they performed in the Terezín/Theresienstadt concentration camp never did "get out of here." The Strauss Ensemble offered a moment of sound in a world of silence, and in so doing the troupe joined Leo Strauss (1897–1944) in sustaining the historical tradition of cabaret to which Jewish musicians, writers, and actors had so richly contributed. Jewish cabaret formed at the confluence of sound, with streams gathered from the sacred and the profane, mundane and political, vernacular and elite. The heritage of the Jewish cabaret

was sounded with a fullness that might seem to forestall the end of all things.

## Sounding Sight

Want to buy some illusions?  
Slightly used, second-hand?  
They were lovely illusions,  
reaching high, built on sand.  
They had a touch of paradise,  
a spell you can't explain.  
For in this crazy paradise  
you are in love in vain.

Want to buy some illusions,  
slightly used, just like new?  
Such romantic inclusions, and  
they're all about you.  
I sell them all for a penny, they  
make a pretty souvenirs.  
Take my lovely illusions, some  
for laughs, some for tears.

(Friedrich Holländer, "Illusions," from  
*A Foreign Affair*, dir. Billy Wilder, 1948)

Listen to audio example online at  
<http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

The power of Jewish cabaret and the cabaret to sound silence appears in remarkable ways across the history of media technology, particularly in the history of film. The history of sound film begins on a musical stage indebted to the long history of Jewish cabaret. In the first synchronized sound film, Alan Crosland's 1927 *The Jazz Singer*, the title character, Jakie Rabinowitz, takes to the stage

as Jack Robin, enacting and envoicing the struggle between Jewish tradition in Samson Raphaelson's *The Day of Atonement*. The jazz singer inhabits the multiple worlds of the cabaret—*as Al Jolson / Jakie Rabinowitz / Jack Robin*—turning each inside-out through the transformation of speech (still silent in the film) into music. The jazz singer's musical transition from stage to film formed at the confluence of real-life transitions for European Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century—migration from rural shtetl to urban ghetto, immigration from the Old World to the New—and of allegorical transitions—from religious Orthodoxy to modern secularism, from Diaspora to cosmopolitanism. As the old order of European empire collapsed in the wake of World War I, the Jewish musical traditions gathered new metaphors of modernity and modernism, ripe for the tales migrating from the skits of the cabaret stage to the scenes filling the frames of sound film.

*The Jazz Singer* was followed five years later in Berlin by Josef von Sternberg's 1930 *Der blaue Engel* (The blue angel), the first German-language synchronized sound film, and once again modernity was sounded on the cabaret stage. The Blue Angel of the film's title (based on Heinrich Mann's 1905 novel, *Professor Unrat*) was itself a cabaret, and most of the music was filmed diegetically in the Blue Angel, performed by Marlene Dietrich and Friedrich Holländer's jazz band, Weintraub's Syncopators. Jewish cabaret would sound historical silence again—and composed again by Friedrich Holländer (1896–1976) for performances by Marlene Dietrich



Friedrich Holländer and Marlene Dietrich on the Lorelei stage in Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1948).

in the Lorelei cabaret in Billy Wilder's 1948 *A Foreign Affair*. The historical arc from the cabaret stage of the Blue Angel to that of the Lorelei, from the eve of Nazism to the wake of the Shoah, once again is sounded as film music from which Jewish cabaret is inseparable, just as reality has collapsed into illusion.

## Falling Silence

So very gently  
My heart longs  
To take the journey  
Back home. . . .

To hear the music  
Playing in my own home,  
Just as it was sung  
By Oscar Straus.

(Leo Strauss, "Aus der Familie der  
Straüsse" / "From the Strauss Family,"  
Terezín ca. 1944) (Migdal 1986, 67–70)

Listen to audio example online at  
<http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

The voice of Leo Strauss closes this essay again as at the beginning, in both instances from the final collections of cabaret songs he left in Terezín before his own deportation and murder in Auschwitz. The search closure in the closing epigraph—the sound of his own father's voice, at home, not from the cabaret stage—proved to be as inchoate as it was impossible. Closure, however, may never be fully accomplished by the cabaret. The silence it would seem to secure is one that Jewish cabaret seeks instead to undo by insisting that silence must be sounded again and again. It is with and through sound that cabaret realizes the very Jewishness from which modern history is inseparable.

Source for Leo Strauss lyrics: Migdal,  
Ulrike, ed. Und die Musik spielt dazu:  
Chansons und Satiren aus dem KZ  
Theresienstadt (Munich: Piper, 1986).

Philip V. Bohlman is Ludwig Rosenberger  
Distinguished Service Professor at the University  
of Chicago. Among his recent books are Hanns  
Eisler – "In der Musik ist es anders," with  
Andrea F. Bohlman, (Hentrich & Hentrich, 2012)  
and Wie sängen wir Seinen Gesang auf dem  
Boden der Fremde! (LIT Verlag, 2016). He is  
artistic director of the New Budapest Orpheum  
Society, whose *As Dreams Fall Apart* (Cedille  
Records) received a 2016 Grammy Nomination.

# Listening Contrapuntally; or What Happened When I Went Back to the Archives

Amy Lynn Wlodarski

I remember the first time I heard a Bach fugue—the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 543—in a Music History class at Middlebury College. It was a time in my life when I identified as a singer, one whose ears were predominantly tuned towards the lyricism and phraseology of melodies. In this context, the figuration of this Bach fugue presented a challenge for me. Its angular sequencing and instrumental counterpoint were difficult to sing, and I promptly dismissed it as mathematical and mechanical (as the young are wont to do). Later, a listening exam forced me to return to the score (as exams are wont to do), and I set about memorizing it by my standard method: singing along. As I did, I discovered the depth of associations within the work, how its *Hauptstimmen* (main voices) and *Nebenstimmen* (secondary voices) ultimately create textures that generate new resultant melodies that were not written in the score but were apparent to my ears. In short, by ignoring certain notes in the score, I found not only a version for my own voice but also a more holistic understanding of the artwork. And maybe that is why I have always chosen to begin my music survey course with this Bach fugue, where it begins an intellectual journey that will ultimately conclude with John Cage’s silent postmodern masterpiece 4’33”. It represents a piece that has gone from silence to sound and back again in the arenas of my own life.

The notion of counterpoint has become theoretically central to my work as a musicologist studying Holocaust witness. Indeed, the process of testimonial witness evokes a series of contrapuntal relationships: between history and memory; between present and past; between survivor and interviewer; between various transnational and exilic identities; between what gets said and what remains unspoken. To be certain, none of this was in my mind when I conducted my first interview with Henry, a child survivor of Ghetto Theresienstadt (Terezín) who had performed in the celebrated performances of the children’s opera *Brundibár*. I was a first-year graduate student in musicology, untrained in the nuances of oral history, and involved in a

local production of a work that would feature Henry’s testimony as part of its dramaturgical rendering. As we sat in the local JCC, Henry recounted his memories of *Brundibár* from 1943, noting that “every kid knew the songs or whistled the songs . . . I think that every child knew it in and out.” With obvious delight, he recalled his group of friends from the barracks—the “Fivers,” as they called themselves—and how rehearsals provided them with a collective musical experience from which they constructed memorable childhoods, despite the circumstances of their

surroundings. As I was leaving the building, Henry presented me with Joža Karas’s book, *Music in Terezín*, which he pressed into my hands with the following words: “It’s the real story, with the facts to prove it.”

Two years later, Karas’s book would accompany me on my first research trip to the Czech Republic, where I sifted through documents at the on-site archives of Ghetto Terezín. Among its sketches and scores, testimonies and diaries, I found confirmation of Karas’s thesis: that music had been a source of spiritual resistance and Jewish

self-expression in the ghetto. Materials related to the ghetto’s most celebrated composers—Pavel Haas, Petr Kien, Gideon Klein, Hans Krása, Viktor Ullmann—as well as interviews with amateur performers spoke of the myriad musical activities that the Jewish prisoners mounted during their time in the ghetto. Among these accounts was a postwar interview with Greta, another child survivor of Terezín, who had played the lead role of Aninka in *Brundibár*. “Music! Music was life!” she exclaimed to her interviewer—a remark that I had encountered before. Karas uses the vibrancy of her words to close *Music in Terezín*, arguing that participation in the *Freizeitgestaltungen* allowed the inmates of Terezín to “devote all [their] energy to [a] chosen field” and experience “exciting feelings [that] could not be dampened by the unpleasantness and difficulties of . . . life in the ghetto.”

To be honest, this is what I had been expecting—and, if I am to be honest with myself, emotionally seeking—when I made the journey to Terezín. Such empowering narratives about the *Freizeitgestaltungen* appear regularly in scholarly literature, performance series, and memorial projects. Celebrated productions of *Brundibár* or the *Defiant Requiem* promote the Terezín repertory as what one prominent theater historian refers to as a “tribute to the indomitable spirit . . . which somehow flowered in a sinkhole of horror.” And yet, as I sifted through the silent archival documents sitting before me, alternative musical narratives arose from the pages—the voices of ear witnesses whose stories did not neatly fit into what historian Wolfgang Benz describes as the “legend of Terezín.” In the midst of these alternative representations of musical performance, I was suddenly reminded of a marginal aside in my conversation with Henry that I had disregarded at the time due to my own belief in the positive humanism of musical Terezín. He had described for me how he navigated the dying bodies lying the street in order to get to rehearsals on time: “You just ignored it . . . You just stepped over them and kept going.”

Similarly, traumatic memories of music in Terezín have been traditionally side stepped—or at the very least marginalized from cultural accounts of spiritual resistance that feature the Terezín repertory. Spiritual resistance is a thorny historiographical vine to follow. In *Admitting the Holocaust*, Lawrence Langer asserts that our cultural predilection for redemptive tropes stems from our own postwar difficulty assimilating

the atrocity into our historical imaginations, but historian Shirli Gilbert argues that its roots awkwardly lay in German Romanticism and its nineteenth-century teleological construct of music as a redemptive if not prophetic language. Romanticism, she argues, “conceived of music as the paradigm of artistic expression, and the ultimate language of the emotions,” qualities that have been mapped onto musical life in Terezín. As Joseph Toltz describes, Terezín is valued as an emotional “counterpoint to [the] factual reportage and witness bearing” often associated with more traditional modes of history.

Toltz’s fugal characterization of spiritual resistance had a resonance for me as well—that of Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, in which he called for researchers to return to the cultural archive and “begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the [dominant] history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.” While Said’s call to action evolves from his postcolonial critique of history, it is just as influenced by his deep love of classical music and his own training in contrapuntal listening: the process of locating the *Haupt-* and *Nebenstimmen* within a fugal texture and identifying the variety of species—that is, the types or degrees of relationships—in which they operate.

And thus I went back to the archives armed with a new set of texts and questions—with different eyes and ears—to the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony at Yale University. When I explained to one curator that my focus was on traumatic recollections about music in Terezín, she cautioned that such research might not be fruitful and attempted to redirect me to testimonies of music in Auschwitz. Even the finding aids at the archive held a bias in that those testimonies that appeared under the search terms “music and Terezín” produced witnesses with redemptive stories about the *Freizeitgestaltungen*, despite the fact that testimonies without a “music” designation also contained telling narratives about music that were more traumatic or negative in tone. I started to wonder: how had the archivists *listened* thematically to these testimonies? What metanarratives about Terezín were conditioning our *hearing* of these witnesses and their stories?

Further structural problems in interview formats and techniques have also impacted the collection of testimonial narratives about

musical Terezín, an aspect that I recognize with some shame in my first interview with Henry—a testimony punctuated with interruptions, assumptions, and leading redirections on my part. And thus, it was with no false sense of superiority and a great deal of humility that I listened to the archive recording of Karas in which he described how he had handled contrapuntal or contradictory memories in his own oral histories: “I could show you on the tapes again, [how] I was talking to survivors and I was correcting them, because after the years they forgot and things changed in their mind, and I found documents which prove that I am right and the people who did that particular thing, they were wrong about [it].” It wasn’t a surprising admission, but it made me think long and hard about what may have been lost in the resulting silences.

In his biography of Mozart, the musicologist Maynard Solomon referred to silence as “a state that calls for sound to be brought into being.” Perhaps he had been reading Proust, who noted that the “work of art is the child of silence.” Regardless, it is certain that Said was reading both of them when he posited the sound artist John Cage as an unlikely prophet of postwar classical music. In “From Silence to Sound and Back Again: Music, Literature, and History,” Said praises Cage for rescuing silence from the periphery of the soundscape and recognizing it as “an essential component of art [that] symbolizes the difficulty but also the opportunity offered by the realm of the aesthetic.” Within the realm of musical witness, our challenge is to aesthetically return to the archive, as I once returned to the Bach fugue with new ears: to hear the previous silences as sounding bodies and the new sites of musicological insight and inquiry—to move, as Said put it once, contrapuntally from silence to sound and repeatedly back again.

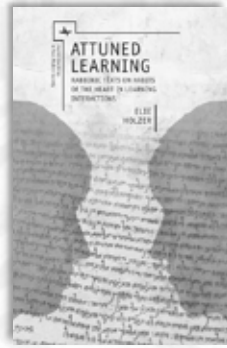
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*Amy Lynn Wlodarski’s research focuses on the interplay between music, memory, and trauma in postwar Holocaust representations. She is the author of Musical Witness and Holocaust Representation (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and coeditor, with Elaine Kelly, of Art Outside the Lines: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture (Rodopi, 2011). She is associate professor of Music at Dickinson College.*



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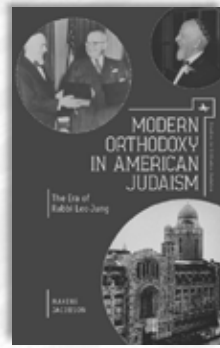
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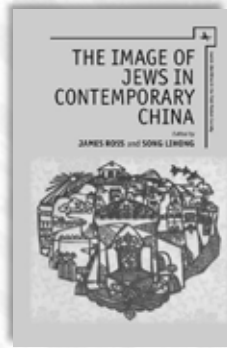
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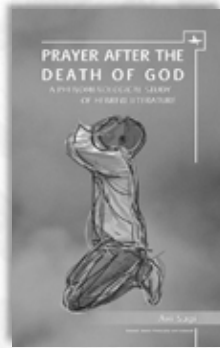
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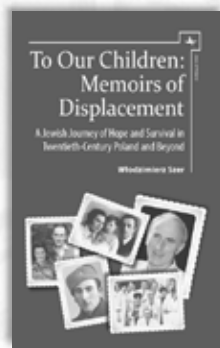
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# The Trouble with Jewish Musical Genres: The Orquesta Kef in the Americas

Lillian M. Wohl



Gastón Mohadeb, Rafael Suriñón and Juan Sevlever perform with other members of the Orquesta Kef at the 5776/2015 Rosh Hashana Urbano festivities in the Plaza República Oriental del Uruguay. Courtesy of SherBamate Productora.

The office of the Orquesta Kef is just a small apartment, really, a few blocks north of the Estación Lacroze, the busy train station linking Buenos Aires's suburban neighborhoods to the Ciudad Autónoma—Argentina's autonomous capital city. Framed press photos and album covers decorate the walls of the offices where Rafael Suriñón, the bassist and cofounder of the big band Jewish Argentine musical ensemble, greets me; Gastón Mohadeb, the front man, percussionist, and other cofounder, is giving me a tour of the space. I had met these two musicians on various occasions—at the Puro Purim (Pure Purim) concert, a Passover street party sponsored by the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (the AMIA, a community

center and mutual aid society), a Hanukah party sponsored by Chabad Lubavitch, and a bar mitzvah, which I attended as a guest of the band. No stranger to journalists after much success in the past few years (though perhaps still to ethnographers), Gastón handed me a packet of newspaper clippings and CDs to look at as we talked.

That afternoon in March 2013, in the offices of the Orquesta Kef, Gastón told me that the band was founded less as a conceptual or academic project and more as an opportunity to provide a musical service that was scarce in the Jewish community of Buenos Aires in the late 1990s. While performing in a series of high school rock and funk bands, Gastón realized that there were no

Jewish wedding bands playing special events. After conversations with his Aunt Sarita, friends more connected to religious circles, and other friends working as DJs, he realized that besides a few duos (namely Lerner and Moguilevsky), no wedding bands played live Jewish music. As such, he and a few friends—the founding members of the Orquesta Kef—began an exploration into Jewish musical history and diversity, experimenting with the klezmer repertory of the New York revivalists that had made its way to Argentina. While noting that a lack of Jewish wedding bands in Buenos Aires created a significant opportunity to find steady work playing at celebrations and parties, the Orquesta Kef emerged in the early 2000s to perform a musical labor—that of

sewing together a fragmented Jewish musical past in Argentina to create a contemporary musical aesthetic relevant to the band's Latin American publics. For Rafael and Gastón, the rhythms, songs, and melodies that they encountered also provided them with a sense of familial continuity—a heritage reimagined though music. As Rafael told me: "We take Jewish culture and music as an expression of art. We put a strong emphasis on entertainment in order to reach people who are not so close to Jewish identity or religion. In that way, we try to provide content from a place of enjoyment and entertainment, yes, based on Jewish traditions, that respects the things that are written in the Torah."

The Orquesta Kef plays Jewish music in Buenos Aires, touring throughout Latin America and performing regularly in their hometown. The word *kef* (כיף), meaning "joy" or "fun," is Hebrew slang borrowed from Arabic, and the moniker aptly summarizes the band's musical project. Much of the music that the Orquesta Kef performs is "party music," a category ethnomusicologist Evan Rapport uses to refer to "light" music, which captures cosmopolitan and multicultural attitudes while showcasing the range of skills of professional musicians. The band's repertory includes the 1980s rock-ballad style of Mordechai Ben David (Mordechai Werdyger), the world famous Hasidic singer, Israeli pop, rock, and liturgical music by composers like Uzi Chitman, klezmer revival rhythms and melodies, and also Yiddish folksongs. However, they also rely on Latin American and other American popular musics such as funk, reggae, ska, cumbia, and Argentine folkloric music to define their sound. The repertory that they perform is mainly in Spanish, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

The Orquesta Kef is actually just one band among many performing groups operated by the Sherbamate Productora—the production company run by Gastón and Rafael. In many cases, the musicians working for Sherbamate Productora perform with more than one of the Sherbamate groups: the Orquesta Kef (a big band Jewish music ensemble), Der Faier (klezmer and Yiddish folksong), Fiesta de Pueblos (folk and popular dance music from around the world), La Gipsy (Balkan and klezmer), and Goy Friendly (a musical stand-up comedy show), among others. The founding members, Lionel Mohadeb (percussion), Ariel Liberczuck (keyboards and arrangements), Iván Barenboim (clarinet and saxophone), Cristián Martinelli (trumpet and trombone),

Alberto Mirchuk (vocalist), Gastón Mohadeb, and Rafael Suriñón make up the "first generation" of Kef—the founding members who established the band's now iconic, energetic, up-tempo sound, embellished by brass horns and woodwind solos, driven by bouncy bass lines, and heavy on percussion.

Toward the end of our interview, I finally asked Gastón about the band's involvement as the catalyst for US immigration and cultural policy reform. What happened was this: In 2009, at the invitation of Jordan Peimer, then Director of Programming, at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, the Orquesta Kef agreed to play at the 2010 Fiesta Hanukah Party. Thrilled to perform in the United States, the band organized a full North American tour, lining up a variety of performance events, including an appearance during an NBA halftime show and gigs in Mexico and Central America. A few weeks before the concert, and much to the dismay of the band and the concert organizers, the P-3 nonimmigrant artists and entertainers visas filed on behalf of the band were denied. The Orquesta Kef was deemed to fail to meet the evidentiary standard of "culturally unique," according to section 101(a)(15)(P)(iii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(P)(iii) (2006), because they performed a "hybrid or fusion style of music" not considered to be "culturally unique to one particular country, nation, society, class, ethnicity, religion, tribe or other group of persons." The Orquesta Kef's experience navigating the P-3 visa application and adjudication procedures not only called into question the possibility for Jewish music to occupy a place in the Latin American cultural imaginary, and Latin America in Jewish music, it also highlighted the problem of defining the standard of "culturally unique" in the United States.

In a *Wall Street Journal* article appearing on December 11, 2009, journalist Miriam Jordan reported on the incident, spotlighting the Orquesta Kef's experience with the P-3 visa application process, while criticizing the adjudication procedures for nonimmigrant artists and entertainer applicants. With this issue in the public spotlight, the US Department of Homeland Security, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Administrative Appeals Office set a new precedent, eventually offering a surprising decision on May 15, 2012, more than two and a half years after the incident. In short, they officially overturned the original visa denial, forever tying the musical legacy of the Orquesta Kef to US cultural policy and

immigration reform. Although the approval of the visa was merely a symbolic gesture at that point, the decision was accompanied by a full clarification and reconceptualization of the definition of cultural uniqueness. Adjustments to the law expanded the definition of cultural uniqueness such that it was "not limited to traditional art forms, but may include artistic expression that is deemed to be a hybrid or fusion of more than one culture or region" and "may apply to beneficiaries whose unique artistic expression crosses regional, ethnic, or other boundaries." According to Gastón, when the band first received the news of the original denial, the Skirball Cultural Center canceled the tour immediately. Following the *Wall Street Journal* article, the band was permitted to travel to the United States; however, it was too late to reschedule the tour.

By endorsing so-called "hybrid" or "fusion" forms of cultural expression, this ruling addressed the limitations of the implied definition of culturally unique by replacing an emphasis from aesthetic categorization to personal and social embodiment. In the case of the Orquesta Kef, to argue that their music and performance style "crosses regional, ethnic, or other boundaries" is to deny the musicians their ability to be Jewish Argentines—to ignore the ways in which these racial and ethnic categories are not exclusive, but rather, mutually constitutive and representative of the longer history of Jews in Latin America. In spite of the rapid movement and exchange of music on the internet, the Orquesta Kef's experience being denied P-3 visas reminds us that musicians themselves do not always cross borders as easily, and that the ability for Jewish music to highlight Jewishness remains tied to Jewish embodiment. While the Orquesta Kef is perhaps unique in the world of Jewish Argentine musical performance, its struggles to establish its "cultural uniqueness" highlight the unresolved question of the cultural intelligibility of circulations of Jewish sound and musicians across national boundaries in the twenty-first century.

*Lillian M. Wohl completed her PhD in Ethnomusicology at the University of Chicago in 2015. In 2013–2014, she was a Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Doctoral Dissertation Fellow with the Foundation for Jewish Culture and in 2015 held a Lapidus Summer Fellowship at the Center for Jewish History. She currently teaches at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, NYC as a visiting assistant professor of Jewish Musicology.*

# Singing a New Song

Joshua Jacobson

*Zamru 'ahim zamru!  
U-va-zimrah ne'orer 'am.  
Sing, brethren, sing!  
Then with song we will rouse  
the people.*

(David Frischman)

Towards the end of my senior year in college I received a phone call from Stanley Sperber. Stanley had been my music counselor at Camp Yavneh in the early 1960s, and was responsible for my transition from a guitar-playing folkie to a student of classical music and an aspiring choral conductor. A few years earlier Stanley had started a youth chorus in Manhattan, dedicated to the performance of Israeli and Jewish music. Eventually they gave their chorus a name: Zamir.

Stanley was phoning to invite me to start a Zamir Chorale in Boston. And so, with naïve enthusiasm and youthful determination, I accepted and dived right in. In October of 1969 some forty students gathered for what would be the first of thousands of rehearsals of the Zamir Chorale of Boston.

Neither Stanley nor I was aware that we were actually carrying on a choral tradition. We had assumed that we were bold innovators, creating a new form of expression for our generation—Jewish cultural identification independent of the Jewish establishment. But we were wrong. A few years later I discovered that we were not the first Zamirs.

In 1899 a Polish attorney, N. Shapiro, petitioned the governor of Łódź for permission to establish a Jewish choral organization. Anticipating the hostile reaction with which government officials greeted any gathering that smacked of political sedition, Shapiro asserted that his organization would serve patriotic aims by keeping the young people of Łódź away from the revolutionary and antigovernment assemblies that were poisoning their minds. He ended his petition with the words, “Let these young kids amuse themselves with choral singing, then there will be none of that revolutionary foolishness on their minds.” Not only did the governor grant the petition, he instructed the police not to interfere with the choir’s rehearsals or to interrupt them in any way from their “patriotic” work.

An amateur musician by the name of Hartenstein was appointed the choir’s conductor, but after a few rehearsals it became apparent that someone with more professional expertise would be needed. It was at this point that the eighteen-year-old Joseph Rumshinsky was engaged to become the first permanent conductor of the chorus. Rumshinsky later recalled of that first rehearsal in his autobiography, “When we stood up and started to sing, a holy musical fire was kindled by the first Jewish choral ensemble in the world.”

The Łódź choir known as Ha-zamir (or Hazomir) became very successful, and soon inspired branches in other major cities of eastern Europe. In the nineteenth century choral singing had become more and more popular throughout Europe. Enthusiastic amateurs were creating and joining a type of ensemble that had never existed before: the secular community chorus. Some of these choruses were civic organizations, dedicated to performances of the great oratorios. Some were connected to a workplace or to a professional union. Others, like Ha-zamir, were devoted to the expression of nationalist sentiments through music.

Ha-zamir’s anthem was composed circa 1903 by the Warsaw Ha-zamir conductor, Leo Low. The music is in a rousing patriotic

style, in the bright key of A major, in a joyous tempo, with sharply chiseled rhythms and rising melodic lines. (To hear a recording, go to <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.) The lyrics by David Frischman reflected (as well as inspired) an identity shift among the Jews of eastern Europe: Jewishness could be expressed more comfortably as a nationality than as a religion.

*Zamru 'ahim zamru!  
U-va-zimrah ne'orer 'am.  
Sing, brethren, sing!  
Then with song we will rouse the people.*

The opening lines of the anthem reveal a secularization of the well-known verse from Psalm 47.

*Zamru le-'elohim zameru,  
Zamru le-malkenu zameru.  
Sing to God, Sing!  
Sing to our King, sing!  
(Psalm 47:7)*

The song is no longer directed to God, the Heavenly King. Now it is a call to social action—it is song that will awaken the Jewish people from its “dark ages” and into the enlightenment. The appeal to “brothers” evokes the ideals of the European Enlightenment, echoing the well-known



Image of Zamir Chorale in Łódź ghetto, 1941. Courtesy of the author.

egalitarian and communal sentiments of the French Revolution, “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité,” and of Schiller’s *Ode to Joy*, made famous by Beethoven, “Alle Menschen werden Brüder.” These musical maskilim were dedicated to the idea that music had the power to inspire people, to create a sense of community and to change their lives for the better.

The anthem continues,  
*U-va-'am ne'orer libot,  
U-va-libot regesh ram.  
Va-kam ha-'am ve-ne'or  
Ve-hayim be-hayim yamir.*  
Then we will awaken the hearts of the nation  
And in their hearts an exalted sentiment.  
And the people will awaken  
and be enlightened,  
And will exchange old life for new.

Here again Frischman is riffing off a biblical base. The idea of wakening the Jewish nation from its slumber and seeing the light is found several times in Isaiah.

*Ha-'am ha-holekhim ba-hoshekh  
ra'u 'or gadol.  
The people that walked in darkness  
have seen a great light. (Isa. 9:1)*

The mystical sixteenth-century rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz picked up on this idea in his beautiful poem *Lekha Dodi* (itself inspired by Isaiah 60:1 and 51:9):

*Kumi 'ori ki va'orekh  
'Uri, 'uri, shir daberi  
Arise, shine for your light as dawned!  
Awake, awake, sing a song!*

But while Alkabetz was singing to the God of Israel, Frischman’s sentiments were directed to the resuscitation of the Jews as a modern nation.

*Havu 'ahim zamru.  
Heyey ve-ha-hayey, ha-zamir.  
Brothers, let us sing.  
Viva Ha-Zamir, Give life!*

The Ha-zamir movement even spread across the Atlantic. In 1914 the first Jewish choirs in the United States were founded: the Chicago Jewish Folk Chorus, directed by Jacob Schaefer, and the Paterson (New Jersey) Jewish Folk Chorus, directed by Jacob Beigel. As immigration of Jews from eastern Europe



Image of Zamir Chorale of Boston. Courtesy of the author.

increased, Yiddish and Zionist choruses began to appear all across the United States. Among them were the Boston Jewish Folk Chorus (1924) directed by Misha Cefkin, the New Haven Jewish Folk Chorus, the Philadelphia Jewish Folk Chorus (1923) and the Detroit Jewish Folk Chorus (1924), both directed by Harvey Schreiber, the Los Angeles Jewish Folk Chorus directed by Arthur Atkins, the American-Jewish Choral Society of Los Angeles directed by Miriam Brada, the New York 92nd St. Y Choral Society (1917) directed by A. W. Binder, the New York Workmen’s Circle Choir (1925) directed by Lazar Weiner, the New York Jewish Philharmonic Chorus directed by Max Helfman, the Miami Jewish Folk Chorus (1943) directed by Bernard Briskin, the Newark Jewish Folk Chorus (1928) directed by Samuel Goldman, and the San Francisco Jewish Folk Chorus (1933) directed by Zari Gottfried.

But by the middle of the twentieth century, after the tapering of immigration and with the assimilation of Jews into the cultural fabric of American life, one by one the Yiddish Folk Choruses began to die out. So in the 1960s, even though we were proudly singing Leo Low’s Ha-zamir anthem, Stanley and I and our singers were totally ignorant of the Ha-zamir phenomenon that we were inadvertently reviving.

Today the Zamir movement continues to flourish. The American Record Guide dubbed the Boston branch, “America’s

foremost Jewish choral ensemble.” And the New York Zamir Foundation hosts a Jewish Choral Festival every summer that attracts hundreds of singers from all across the content, and has initiated a successful franchise of choruses for Jewish teenagers.

On March 15, 1941, in the Nazi-enforced ghetto, the Łódź Ha-zamir gave what was probably their last concert. I often think of those men and women, of what the act of singing under such circumstances meant for them. In 1999, to mark the centenary of the founding of Zamir, I took my chorus on a tribute concert tour to Łódź, where we were welcomed by the mayor. Go to <http://youtu.be/IKItPkjVFq8> to see a video of the Zamir Chorale of Boston performing the Ha-zamir anthem in the Łódź Town Hall and Hall of Culture.

*Audio and video examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

*Joshua Jacobson is professor of Music and director of choral activities at Northeastern University and senior consultant at Hebrew College’s School of Jewish Music. He is founder and director of the Zamir Chorale of Boston. His publications include books, articles, compositions, and arrangements. Jacobson holds degrees from Harvard College, New England Conservatory, and University of Cincinnati.*



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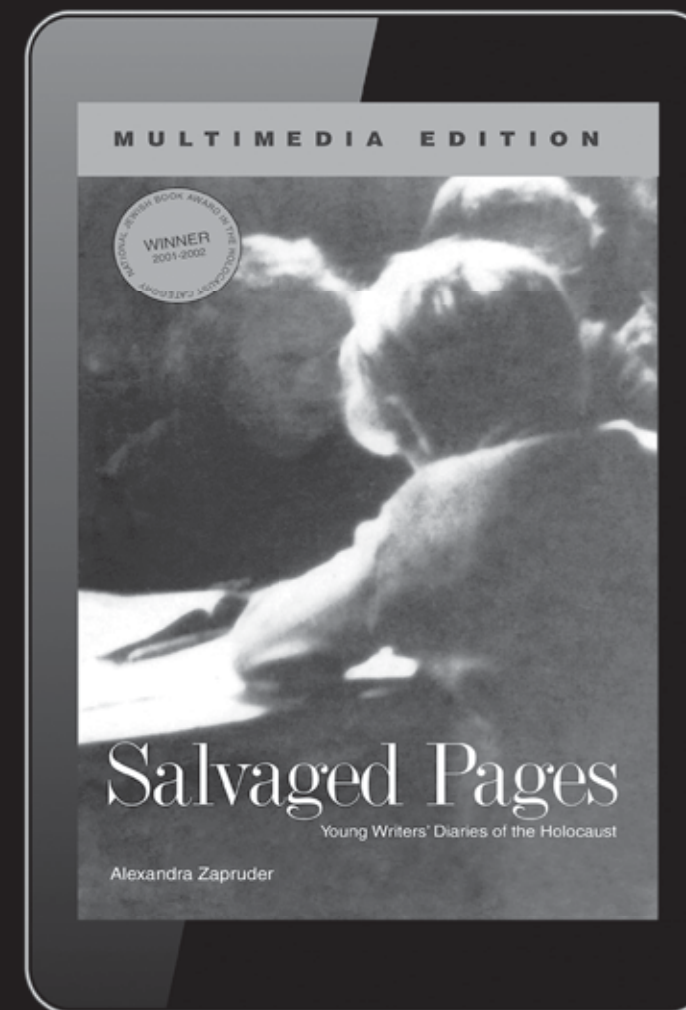
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## “Sounds of a Nation”

# When Josef (Tal) Laughed; Notes on Musical (Mis)representations

Assaf Shelleg

Sometime in late 1949 Peter Emanuel Gradenwitz, a German Jewish musicologist who had been living in Tel Aviv since 1936, published an ambitious study titled *The Music of Israel*. Covering 5,000 years of music from biblical times to the newly born State of Israel, Gradenwitz was probably the first musicologist to construct a redemptive and teleological narrative that climaxed with the music of the Third Jewish Commonwealth: “After almost two thousand years of dispersion,” he wrote, “the Jews have begun to create a new national and cultural center on the very same spot that once saw their most splendid achievements in national life, science, and art. They have brought Occidental civilization to their Oriental brethren.” Colonialist language of this sort was inseparable from a narrative that duplicated both the literalist way in which the Bible had been read in Zionist culture (stripped of hermeneutical layers of lore and law that have swathed the traditional text) and the redemptive trajectory that ran parallel to Zionist rhetoric on the move from destruction to exile to political independence. Such a narrative rendered modern Jewish art music a precursor of Hebrew culture unable to fully develop given the lack of national territory. Indeed, while the Swiss German composer Ernest Bloch was hailed as one of the most important creators of a “Hebraic idiom,” a “happy and sublime expression” was unreachable without a land Bloch could call his own. The redemptive and the teleological were wholly entwined with the territorial.

Within his survey of compositional attitudes of fellow émigrés who similarly facilitated the institutionalization of art music in Palestine/Israel, Gradenwitz disclosed a predilection for those who were at once aesthetically conservative but nevertheless successful in “sounding” the nation. Gradenwitz expected the immigrant composer to build “the idea of Palestinian music . . . out of a background of knowledge of centuries of European music,” while conquering “the spirit of the language in which he will speak



Josef Tal (center) with the Palestine Conservatoire of Music and Dramatic Art Orchestra, Jerusalem, 1939.



Josef Tal, Jerusalem, February 25, 2003. Photo credit: Etan Tal.

to his neighbors.” His yardstick for measuring such success was the ability to ring the bells and whistles of the Zionist project: citations of folksongs, of non-Western liturgical music, and other projections of exotic paraphernalia that communicated the “return to Zion” and/or the “gathering of exiles.” Omitted from this prescription were those whose musical syntax was too modernist and hence too dissonant to immediately transmit such tropes. Subsequently, if the music of the German-born Israeli composer Paul Ben-Haim tended towards the bucolic and the rustic, absorbing (in Gradenwitz’s words) the “influence of the rural, pastoral atmosphere of the countryside,” the works of Israeli composer Josef Tal (then Grünthal) were portrayed as “absolute music” with “little influence of Palestinian or General Oriental character.” An opposition

was therefore set; immediate symbolism communicated through exotic devices managed to create national portrayals while modernist formulations using atonal clusters seemingly failed to do so. Tonal music, of course, does not have to be considered under the purview of nationalism to prove that features such as limited macroharmony (the relatively small collection of notes heard over moderate spans of musical time) and acoustic consonances produce powerful psychological consequences. Gradenwitz’s annals, however,

set the tone, as it were, for disciplined representational paradigms rather than the nondifferential proliferation of their compositional approaches. While glossing over those who had been willingly trying to transcend Orientalist formulae he also passed down a taxonomy that would stiffen into generational groupings based mainly on chronological criteria and devoid of the elasticity needed to map what had been (and still is) a musical habitat that refuses policing.

The repercussions of such methodology would soon color subsequent research in the field, which for the most part developed by force of inertia without resisting the larger inherited frameworks, and in turn migrated to Israel Studies classes (whenever such instances include music that is neither folk nor popular). Music composed in the Yishuv and the State of Israel was reduced in these discourses to exotic markers that could be easily deciphered as Zionist, Hebrew, Israeli, or Jewish by outsiders (and usually with no discussion on the archeology of these labels). And so a Yemenite wedding dance tune “corrected” to match the Western musical infrastructure that modernized it, or a hora dance in a symphonic garb would become more efficient for the performance of nativeness than the hybrids that evade such distinct music signifiers. While a lot could be said about the making of such music (and especially if looked at through

a postcolonial lens), it is important that we recall how Gradenwitz characterized Tal’s music in 1949—presemantic absolute music indistinguishable from its syntax, and self-referential compositional aesthetics incapable of absorbing even a “little influence of Palestinian or General Oriental character.” Put differently, Tal’s music lacked the ability to “represent” and as such could not audibly project ideas pertaining to the nation. No wonder that Gradenwitz focused on two works Tal had penned in the 1940s that he could present within the context of the Zionist allegory: the choreographic poem “Exodus” (1946/47), whose topos of deliverance was an allegory to the modern homecoming to the Land of Israel, and the symphonic cantata *The Mother Rejoices* (1948–9; <http://youtu.be/ydPF5SdXoyM>), which was based on the story from 2 Maccabees 7 (popularized in later version as the story of Hannah and her seven sons) that Gradenwitz conveyed as the realization of the exalted spirit of the bereaved mother and her martyr sons.

Both compositions offered a redemptive narrative. “Exodus” moved from slavery in Egypt to the jubilant chanting of the Song of the Sea. *The Mother Rejoices* progressed from the execution of the children to their angelic recitation of Psalm 92:2–3 (“It is good to acclaim the Lord and to hymn to Your Name, Most High; To tell in the morning Your kindness, Your faithfulness in the nights”), after which a full-cast apotheosis “Hallelujah” followed. These examples indicate that Tal had never been deaf to such topoi in Zionist discourse; but Gradenwitz focused on textual elements with which he could narrate Tal’s music and he was thereby limited to metaphors in commenting on his musical style. With metaphors Gradenwitz could do very little and so he ignored seminal works by Tal dating from the late 1930s and early 1940s, works that not only demonstrated Tal’s atonality but also showed how he used this syntax to destabilize musical constructs that had been perceived as national (and hence desirable). Tal’s oeuvre (until 1949) showed that he learned the kibbutz repertoire (through the composer Yehudah Sharett, whose compositions he edited). He even set three poems by Rachel Bluwstein for four-part women’s choir in 1936, despite the fact that his Hebrew was fairly broken. And then there was the Piano Sonata (1949; [http://youtu.be/\\_WPP75GiuZQ](http://youtu.be/_WPP75GiuZQ)) in which Tal both cited and defamiliarized a song by Yehuda Sharett. Gradenwitz ignored that piece in an ensuing publication from 1952 in which he

developed the chapter on modern Israel in the 1949 book. The sonata could have been perfect for a methodology focused on the “representational” while endowing it with a national function, yet the musical syntax must have rung too unusual for the rather conservative way in which folksongs or non-Western liturgical citations featured in Israeli art music. This generalization was all the more true, since Tal’s atonality did manage to harmonically recontextualize the quoted song while alienating some of the semantics composers had perceived back then as “Mediterranean.” Paradoxically, both Tal and Gradenwitz had known that such signifiers were mere constructs; for the latter, however, narrative rerouting was too complicated as it could violate the formerly constructed redemptive story of *The Music of Israel*.

Scholars of later decades who adopted this framework either credited Tal’s works for “nationalist” qualities they found in works such as *The Mother Rejoices* or the Piano Sonata or pigeonholed him as a “modernist” or “avant-gardist” (and this usually meant very little in a discourse clinging still to a metaphorical register). Under the radar, however, far more important developments would take place. By the 1950s Tal was part of a cohort of composers who had grown disillusioned with Western musical metaphors of the East and turned towards the melodic and harmonic properties they found in the oral musical traditions of North African and Middle Eastern Jews living in Israel. Allowing these properties to percolate into their musical syntaxes, composers were no longer attempting to write music that sounded exotic, Semitic, or Jewish. Rather than correct musical imports according to Western paradigms, they activated their music according to the melodic behavior and musical textures of Arab Jewish oral musical traditions practiced in Israel—free of the stipulations of Hebrew culture. Members of this cohort no longer attempted to write in a style that communicated the national, but rather sought a common syntactic space in which modernist practices and non-Western Jewish musics could interact with a minimum of Western asymmetries. As a result, music that imbibed from these musical traditions consumed the liturgical source and thereby ceased to objectify it in the name of the nation. Gone were most redemptive narratives alongside easily deciphered exoticist projections. Soon Tal would realize how uncharacteristic the redemptive trajectory that animated both “Exodus” and *The Mother Rejoices* had been. Leaving these

two works aside, we are left with his syntactic innovations and the way they commented on the constructs of Israeli culture.

And so sometime in late 1949, or perhaps the early 1950s, when Tal read what Gradenwitz had written about him he laughed hard. By that time he had added to his list of compositions not only the previously mentioned Piano Sonata but also a miniature for cello and harp titled *Hora*. This was the most unusual hora ever penned in the country that had just celebrated its independence. Set in triple rather than a double meter, the hora was forced to limp and resist the complementing choreographed gestures; and it was atonal rather than tonal, and thereby avoided the musical syntax that activated this folkdance. Tongue in cheek, no doubt, yet as if this were not enough, Tal had left a short comment in his own copy of Gradenwitz’s book: left of the paragraph he wrote, “Ha Ha Ha . . .”

We cannot afford to ignore what Tal sensed in 1949. The paraphernalia around which the discourse on national Hebrew or Israeli music had revolved cannot suffice with exoticism and the asymmetries it accommodates. In our discussions we should listen to the way a Persian Jewish dirge is rearticulated in his Second Piano Concerto (1953; <http://youtu.be/zXcqlGaPobQ>), how the textures of a congregational prayer animates Mark Kopytman’s piano quartet *About an Old Tune* (1977; <http://youtu.be/YiPS7T1V2zI>), or how Mordecai Seter absorbed transcriptions of Babylonian, Samaritan, and Bukharan Jewish music to write his *Motets* (1940–1951; <http://youtu.be/TsFtRPfkR68>). All of these examples and dozens of others display formulations that step beyond the audibly visible modes of “representation”; they point to a place where nationalist constructs collapse, where Jewishness and modernism do not stand as separate evolutionary stages, and where a dense network features similar hybridizations in other sister arts. Would you further complicate your syllabi by including some of these formations?

*Video examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

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# From “Ha-tikvah” to KISS; or, The Sounds of a Jewish Nation

Miryam Segal

In December 2001, on a visit home to the United States, and having been deprived of easy access to American radio for over a year while living in Israel, I took advantage of the break from my research on Hebrew and Israeli culture to catch up on all things American. I tuned in to a local New York satellite of National Public Radio to find no less a popular cultural icon than the former lead singer of KISS correcting the interviewer’s Hebrew:

**Gene Simmons:** Oh, thank you so much [for the introduction] and since this is National Public Radio and it prides itself on accurate information—most of it sounded good—I stand guilty as charged and proud to say that I’m a mama’s boy. However, point one is you mispronounced my Hebrew name. It’s not *Ḥayim*, which is the sort of sniveling please-don’t-beat-me-up Ashkenazi European way . . .

**Leonard Lopate:** Which is what I grew up in . . .

**Gene Simmons:** Which is—hey, that’s why you get beaten up. I don’t. The *sefaradit* way is the correct way. It’s *Ḥayim*, emphasis on the second vowel, like the Israelis do.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda was a major figure in the language revival movement, and one of the early Ashkenazic promoters of the “*sefaradit* way.” To further his revivalist goals, he taught Hebrew in Jewish schools in Palestine and supported the inculcation of a so-called Sephardic accent. His magnum opus was a comprehensive Hebrew dictionary, and he is known for having fashioned new words out of ancient roots to name phenomena of modern life, and for his practice of sending his young son outside to declaim these neologisms and their definitions. It is hard to imagine a less likely heir to Ben-Yehuda, mythical “Father of Modern Hebrew,” than the lead singer of KISS. Yet Simmons spends the opening moments of his interview rehearsing what are by now clichés of Modern Hebrew—a diatribe that reached more listeners in a few moments than a year’s worth of Ben-Yehuda’s public pronouncements of new



Gene Simmons performing at Azkena Rock Festival, 2010. Photo credit: Alberto Cabello, via Flickr Commons.

words or public statements in favor of the Sephardic stress system. Simmons, a.k.a. Chaim Witz, waged one of the longest-lasting teenage rebellions in American history, and made a career of rejecting the attitudes his short-lived education in a Brooklyn yeshiva would have tried to instill in him. The rejection of what Leonard Lopate “grew up in” jibes with an Israeli sense of a new Jewishness, one with which Simmons seems to identify. In matters of Hebrew diction Simmons would have made Ben-Yehuda proud, for his passion if not his expertise.

As it happens, Lopate did pronounce Simmons’s name as an Israeli would. In Hebrew, the word *ḥayim* means “life,” and when used as a common noun is pronounced with the stress on the final syllable. Names, however, are an exception to the rule—even the Israelis do not say them “like the Israelis do.” They invariably pronounce the name with the stress on the penultimate syllable, in this case the first, as *Ḥayim*, what he calls the “please-don’t-beat-me-up Ashkenazi European way.” (For Israelis, this pronunciation is a gesture of intimacy

associated with Yiddish and the memory of Jewish eastern Europe; the penultimate stress is sometimes used even for names usually pronounced with a terminal stress.)

As with all hypercorrections, Simmons’s objection to *Ḥayim* is a sign of the status and associations of a particular mode of speech. Simmons was born in Haifa a year after the founding of the State of Israel. He immigrated with his mother to the United States when he was eight years old. Despite his ignorance of “the way Israelis do” and do not pronounce his name, he is in tune with a cultural phenomenon that preceded the founding of the state and was continually reinforced with the institutionalization of Hebrew as the official language of the Jewish settlement in Palestine and of the State of Israel. The accent system he invokes is indeed associated with a masculine, nationalist Jewish persona—especially when contrasted with what from an Israeli perspective is an outdated Hebrew.

A commonplace among Americans who take an interest in Hebrew culture is that poetry occupies a more central place in the Israeli consciousness than in our

own culture. This alone, however, does not account for the number of times that, after hearing the subject of my research, my Israeli interlocutors responded in verse. To be precise, they quoted an early poem by the national poet Ḥayim Nahman Bialik, “To the Bird”:

*Sholom rov shuvekh, Tsiyuroh nehmedes,  
me-’arzos ha-ḥom ’el ḥaloni—  
’el kolekh ki ’orev mah nafshi kholosoh,  
ba-ḥoref bi-’ozvekh me’oni.*

Welcome upon your return, lovely bird,  
From the hot lands to my window—  
How my soul has yearned for  
your voice so sweet, In the winter  
when you leave my dwelling.

In short, they responded with the only work whose Ashkenazic Hebrew is consistently preserved in the literature curriculum of Israeli schools. By mentioning the transition to new-accent Hebrew I made speakers recall an artifact of an older Modern Hebrew—one of a very few reminders that Hebrew speech in the Land of Israel in modern times was ever ruled by different protocols for pronunciation than it is today. To be more precise, my Israeli interlocutors offered a partial rendering of an Ashkenazic Hebrew. Not inappropriately for accentual-syllabic poetry, they preserved the rhythm of the penultimate stress—if also somewhat imperfectly as the speaker’s habitual dialect fought this overriding of the rules of Israeli Hebrew (Nehama maintains a penultimate stress pattern consistently—while vowels and consonants conform to standard Israeli [<http://youtu.be/RtQGufxepjg>]).

A compromised rendering of Ashkenazic Hebrew can also be heard in the recitation of a poem far more well known the world over than anything Bialik ever wrote, composed by a poet far less celebrated. With each performance of the national anthem—“Ha-tikvah” (The hope), based on Naftali Herz Imber’s “Our Hope”—Israelis utilize an Ashkenazic, penultimate stress system with an admixture of terminal stress at the ends of lines. The State of Israel’s official anthem is distinct among national anthems: it was neither composed nor is it recited in the standard national language.

Whether sung by Al Jolson (<http://youtu.be/tqB8kZjxOCI>), Barbara Streisand ([http://youtu.be/aLB\\_mtoEZWY?list=RDalb\\_mtoEZWY](http://youtu.be/aLB_mtoEZWY?list=RDalb_mtoEZWY)), the Israeli pop singer of Moroccan-Jewish descent, Maya Bouskillla (<http://youtu.be/1AZDp84q5Mc>), or Rita (<http://youtu.be/U9h63FTppwo>), a singer

of Iranian-Jewish heritage, “Ha-tikvah” preserves an older nationalist aspiration. Precisely by entertaining both the Ashkenazic past and, in its consonants, the Israeli present, the sounds of “Ha-tikvah” echo a romantic story of Ashkenazic nationalist longing inscribed in the anthem’s lyrics:

*U-l-fa’atei mizrah kadimah  
’ayin le-ziyon zofiyah*

And onwards, to the eastern corners  
An eye looks towards Zion (lines 3–4)

Many have understandably criticized its exclusion of Arabs. The story and sounds of “Ha-tikvah,” however, also exclude the Jews of the Middle East who would have turned west to face Zion—and pronounced the hope *ha-tikvah*, not *ha-tikvah*.

Although Ashkenazic is more commonly heard among American Jews of Ashkenazic descent than among Israelis, communities identifying as “liberal” or “Zionist” or “Modern Orthodox” most often adopt an Israeli accent as an expression of their religious-ethnic-political identity, peppered with American intonations. When Imber composed “Our Hope” in 1878, and Bialik composed “To the Bird” in 1891, however, the traditional Ashkenazic dialects were still predominant among Ashkenazic Jews in Europe and Palestine and the United States. Ben-Yehuda’s and others’ attempts to adopt and teach a Sephardicized Hebrew in Palestine were just beginning.

Thanks to Bialik’s and Shaul Tchernichovsky’s prosodic innovations, by the end of the twentieth century there were Hebrew poems with the accentual-syllabic sounds of European poetry (English, German, Russian, Yiddish) in which the regular recurrence of stressed syllables generates rhythm. Unfortunately for Bialik, the stress system in which he spoke and wrote was not the one that would become the standard for spoken Hebrew. In 1892, Bialik’s poetic persona could sing to the bird melodiously in an Ashkenazic Hebrew from the pages of *The Orchard*. By 1894 Bialik regretted the “distorted” Hebrew in which he would nevertheless continue to compose. He expressed this sentiment again thirteen years later while in Palestine. He had heard the future of Hebrew and it was not his. When children read his poetry, they might even wonder at Bialik’s reputation: where was the beauty, the rhythm? It is perhaps this additional context that makes sense of his poem’s current position as the paradigm of

Ashkenazic poetic Hebrew. The bird comes from Palestine and the poet questions her throughout, asking after the inhabitants of Zion, and she never says a word.

But what would the bird sound like if she *did* respond to the speaker’s questions?

In the retrospect of Bialik’s visit to Palestine in 1907, and his realization that his own Hebrew pronunciation might be extinct within a few years, one is tempted to chide the poet: if only he had let her have her say, he might have learned a thing or two about the new pronunciation. Even as Bialik’s Hebrew was replaced by a pseudo-Sephardic dialect, his poetry retained pride of place in the national poetic canon. The bird-muse had in the meantime opened her mouth, becoming the new citizen of the Hebrew-speaking nation, subjected to the babble of a hopelessly exilic Jew. What upon publication expressed the nationalism of Jews of Russia and eastern Europe, of their longing for the land of their forefathers, now marks the difference of the Diaspora even more, offering an impression of the exilic Jew from the bird’s-eye view of the nation. The bird visits the speaker on her annual migration from Palestine and stays for the duration of the poem, just long enough to spur a new cycle of longing for the bird’s return and for the Land of Israel itself. Her silence represents the poet’s distance from the homeland and his unfulfilled nationalist desire; it memorializes the desire for a Zion that is always just out of reach. The national anthem’s sound likewise puts Israel’s citizens in Bialik’s proverbial shoes, marking the distance from—and thereby the longing for—the homeland.

*Video examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

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# An Issue in Hebrew Poetic Rhythm: A Cognitive-Structuralist Approach

Reuven Tsur

This article applies in a nutshell my research on English poetic rhythm to one line from Modern Hebrew poetry. It is widely recognized that all rhythm is based on some repetition or periodicity. According to the definition of the iambic pentameter, for instance, a verse line should consist of feet containing an unstressed and a stressed syllable, and five of them should recur in a verse line (that is, ten syllables). However, in the first 165 lines of *Paradise Lost* there are no more than two such lines. Nevertheless, Milton is considered one of the most musical poets in English. Much metric research is devoted to the question of what rules govern poetic rhythm in English. During the past decades I have propounded yet another theory of English poetic rhythm. I have adopted from René Wellek and Austin Warren a structuralist conception, according to which one may account for poetic rhythm by three concurrent patterns: an abstract versification pattern, a linguistic pattern, and a pattern of performance. The sixty-thousand-dollar question is, how can one convey with one voice three concurrent patterns?

Linguistic patterns deviate (in baroque and romantic poets more, in classicist poets less) from the regular versification pattern, but at certain crucial points they have coinciding downbeats. When regularity is suspended in the linguistic dimension, the regular alternation in the versification pattern may reverberate for a very short time in short-term memory. A rhythmical performance is one that accommodates the conflicting linguistic and versification patterns such that both can be perceived simultaneously. To enable this, mental processing space must be saved by grouping and clear-cut articulation of phonemes, word endings, phrase endings, and line endings.

I don't intend to present in this article all the metrical theories that tried, in the course of the twentieth century, to solve the riddle of poetic rhythm. I only want to briefly confront the approach advocated here with an approach that lately became fashionable again, that of equal or proportional timing. The question is, what is it that recurs with some regularity? According to the equal-timers' approach, it

is some immediately observable, measurable time periods that recur. According to the structuralist-cognitive approach proposed here, it is an abstract pattern of weak and strong positions, not immediately observable, that alternate regularly. As to the assumption of recurring equal or proportional time periods, it has been time and again refuted by electronic equipment since the early twentieth century. Despite accumulating evidence to the contrary, belief in equal timing persists. The purpose of this article is to produce evidence to support the structuralist-cognitive approach.

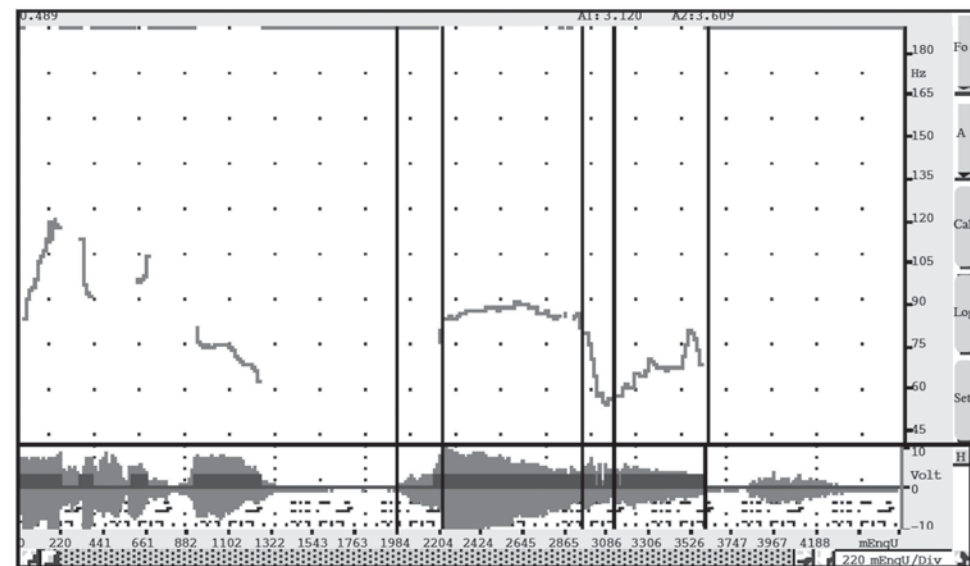
Let us consider at some length the following verse line by Nathan Alterman:

אָנִי חָשַׁבְתִּי: — זֶה לֹא טוֹב...  
s w s w sw sw  
 aní ḥašavti: — zé lo tov  
ws ws w s ws

I thought: — This [is] not good

Above the Hebrew original and the phonetic transcription small strokes mark linguistically stressed syllables. Under the text, the regularly alternating /w/ and /s/ letters mark weak and strong positions of the versification

pattern. The two patterns were assigned independently of each other. Thus, they show up where the stressed and unstressed syllables coincide with strong and weak positions, respectively, and where they deviate. In English and Hebrew linguistic prosody, when three consecutive equally stressed syllables occur, there is license to demote the middle stress in order to gain regularity. In reading poetry, however, the majority of leading British actors don't take advantage of this license to secure regular rhythm in, for instance, the iambic meter. Instead, they have recourse to grouping and overarticulation to save mental processing space, so as to make it possible to perceive concurrently the vocalized linguistic pattern and the suppressed versification pattern merely reverberating in short-term memory. Thus we can see how one actor, with one voice, can convey three concurring patterns: he vocalizes the linguistic pattern; in his performance he has recourse to grouping and overarticulation, so as to save mental processing space, enabling the perception of the versification pattern merely reverberating in short-term memory. I strongly suspect that Yossi Banay overarticulates the words "ze lo tov" not for



Wave plot and intonation contour of the line "ani ḥašavti — zé lo tov" in Yossi Banay's reading.

rhythmical but rhetorical purposes. This, however, does not detract from the rhythmic effect of these vocal manipulations.

As I marked the meter of this verse line on the paper, it is the iambic tetrameter. Every even metrical position is stressed, every odd position unstressed, and there are eight positions all in all. On this level, then, there is regular periodicity. As performed by Yossi Banay, the seventh (weak) position, however, is occupied by a stressed syllable. Three features are conspicuous in this performance. The three words "ze lo tov" are equally stressed, they are perceived as one phrase, but are perceived as sharply separated from one another: their boundaries appear to be overarticulated by longish pauses. For the equal timers this is evidence that there is regular alteration between overstressed linguistic stuff and periods of silence, reinforcing the iambic (but not the tetrameter) pattern. When, however, we have a look at the output of the speech processor, we have a small surprise in store.

The word "tov" is separated from "lo" by a considerable pause. However, between

"ze" and "lo" there is no measurable pause. The sense of discontinuity is generated by a long-falling intonation contour on *l*. It would appear, then, that in indicating discontinuity there is a trade-off between two acoustic cues: a pause and a long-falling intonation contour. The fact that this intonation contour is on *l* and not before it suggests that, in spite of all, the two words are tightly grouped together.

It is widely accepted today that the human cognitive system has limited channel capacity, which cannot be extended by training, only by recoding the processed stuff in a more parsimonious way. Grouping and discontinuity (overarticulation) are such recoding devices. They save mental processing space needed for hearing the vocalized linguistic stuff, and perceive, at the same time, the acoustically suspended versification pattern reverberating for a short time in short-term memory (what Chatman calls "metrical set").

The foregoing example suggests, then, that what is important here is the articulating (discontinuity) effect of the two acoustic cues rather than the possibility of equal or

proportional timing, which would apply to only one of them, if at all. What is more, a pause before a stop midword is perceived as the overarticulation of the stop rather than a period of silence; here, since it occurs in mid-phrase, between two monosyllables, it is perceived as a period of silence as well.

I believe that equal or proportional time periods are, at best, properties of casual performances, for which it is difficult to find an example. I, at least, haven't yet encountered one.

An audio example is included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

Reuven Tsur is professor emeritus of Hebrew Literature and Literary Theory at Tel Aviv University. According to *Literary Theory: An Oxford Guide*, he is one of the founding fathers of the cognitive approach to literature. He applied his theory to rhyme, sound symbolism, poetic rhythm, metaphor, genre, period style, poetry, and altered states of consciousness.



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# Words, Melodies, Hands, and Feet: Musical Sounds of a Kerala Jewish Women's Dance

Barbara C. Johnson

Today only a few of the oldest Jewish women from Kerala, South India, can personally remember the traditional women's circle dance that highlighted the Hanukah parties of their youth. It was performed by their mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and neighbors, moving around a circle in a coordinated pattern of hand clapping, foot stamping, and turns, while singing traditional Jewish songs in the Malayalam language of the land.

Imagine the joyful sounds of laughter, talk, song, and dance associated with these parties! It's easy to hear them on a warm Kerala night, through windows open to the narrow Jewish street in the city of Kochi (Cochin). The sounds echo from a crowded front room in a not very large house described by Ruby Daniel (1912–2001) in her memoir *Ruby of Cochin: A Jewish Woman Remembers*:

Every night during Hanukkah . . . people would join together and have a party in one house or another in the Town, a different house every night. People shared the expenses and made some snacks—such as a small roasted fish stuffed with onions and chilies—and toddy [alcohol from fermented coconut palm sap] and other things too. This was the time the ladies would sing and dance around in a circle clapping hands and keeping time with their feet.

Most women who remember these parties were teenagers or young women when they migrated to Israel, in the group aliyah of most Kerala Jews during the early 1950s. The Hanukah dances were not continued after that time—not in India, where only a few dancers remained, nor in Israel, where the Malayalam language and songs of the past were gradually set aside by immigrants and their descendants (more than 5,000 now identify as “Kochinim” in Israel).

But fortunately the old songs were not completely lost in the pressures of adjusting to a new life. Beginning in the late 1970s, more than 300 Malayalam Jewish women's songs were salvaged through cooperation between older Kochini women and outside scholars. When the late Israeli anthropologist



Women's song notebook from Ruby Daniel's family, c. 1850, Photo by the author.

Shirley Isenberg (1918–2000) and I first began to make audio recordings and collect handwritten song notebooks from Kerala Jewish women in India and in Israel, we were told about the Hanukah parties and circle dances that used to be associated with just one of the eight synagogue-based Jewish communities in and near the city of Kochi. This was the Kadavumbhagam community in Kochi, whose colorful synagogue interior would be transported from India, restored, and reconstructed inside the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 1995. Alongside the physical structure of their synagogue, their traditional circle dance, called *ninnukali* (standing play) was also preserved for posterity, in the form of a 1981 video recording.

After aliyah, many immigrants from Kadavumbhagam-Kochi settled in Moshav Taoz near Jerusalem, where Isenberg became acquainted with older women who remembered the dance. As a result, a special Hanukah party was arranged for Avigdor Herzog from the Jewish Music Research Center (JMRC) at Hebrew University to film the dance. His video recording from that party, on December 23, 1981, in Taoz, is the only existing record of a complete Kerala Jewish circle dance. Digitized in the National Sound Archives of the JMRC, it is a rich resource for analysis of the dance form.

The Taoz performance included the singing of ten songs with accompanying dances, which display considerable variety in themes, melodies, rhythm, and tempo. As in most traditional Indian dance performances, the opening number is an invocation—in this case a poetic rendering in Jewish Malayalam

of “Yigdal 'Elohim Hai,” the well-known fourteenth-century Hebrew piyyut, which appears in the extensive Kochini repertoire of Hebrew songs (which are sung together by women and men). It is followed by another devotional song, uniquely Indian with its reference to a woman so caught up in “worldly delusions” that she gets lost in the mundane task of counting chili peppers rather than counting her spiritual treasures. Then comes the popular “Parrot Song” conveying an allegory of community origin in Kerala, then three lively wedding songs, and four biblical narratives.

At first glance, the dance steps and clapping may appear simple, but the dancers move skillfully in transitions between four different patterns of clapping, foot movements, and gestures. A straightforward clapped beat with steps toward and away from the seated singers punctuates the graceful melody of a marriage song, capturing the rhythm of a bridegroom bending “this way and that way” as he walks through the Jewish street in his wedding procession. Performance of a song about how Aaron helped Moses to receive the Torah combines a simpler and more repetitious tune with a more complex pattern of clapping and gestures. A third rhythmic pattern involves combining hand claps and foot stamps with a growing escalation of tempo, accompanying “Golden Palanquin,” a riddle song about a bride and her mother.

This 1981 video can be viewed in terms of its two cultural contexts—Indian and Israeli. Ancestors of today's Israeli Kochinim lived for well over a thousand years in peace and security on the lush green Kerala coast of southwest India. They were loyal and observant Jews who also identified proudly with the wider culture of Kerala, enjoying good relationships with Hindu, Muslim, and Christian neighbors. Their Hanukah dance was a Jewish version of the women's circle dance genre known in the Malayalam language as *kaikoṭṭikali* (hand-clapping play), traditionally and currently performed throughout the area by members of all four religious traditions: *Margamkali* by Christians, *Oppana* by Muslims, and *Tiruvātirakali* by Hindus.

The association of the Jewish circle dance with Hanukah may be related to the shared centrality of lighted lamps. In the Hindu and Christian circle dances, women move in a circle around a tall ritual lamp lit with coconut oil. The Jewish *ninnukali* began only after the brass Hanukah lamps had been lit and placed near the window of each Jewish home, and the honored place in the center of the *ninnukali* circle was held by older women experts leading the songs.

In addition to providing valuable information about the dance itself, the 1981 video shows the Taoz community's effort to place the *ninnukali* in its traditional Indian context—a community party for women, men, and children featuring typical Kerala snacks and the ritual lighting of Hanukah candles (replacing the coconut oil lamps of Kerala). We see that some women have set aside their everyday Israeli clothing and dressed up in saris for the occasion, adding long-sleeved sweaters to ward off the December chill in the hills west of Jerusalem, far from the warmth of tropical Kerala. Though the video stops before the end of the dancing, the audio captures its conclusion—the loud, joyous sound of *kurava*, the celebratory ritual ululation performed by women on festive occasions throughout South Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Now let me jump ahead to an unexpected twenty-first-century development—a performance revival of Malayalam Jewish songs by a group of older Kochini women in Israel, for whom the 1981 video provided some inspiration. Eight of the ten dance songs recorded that evening in Taoz were among the thirty-two excerpted in a 2004 CD produced by the JMRC: *Oh! Lovely Parrot: Jewish Women's Songs from Kerala*. The process of producing this CD also involved studio re-recordings by five Kochini women. From their initial meeting emerged a performing group calling themselves the Nirit Singers. During the next few years they gave a variety of public performances—not only for Kochini gatherings but also at Hebrew University for the launching of the CD; at a municipal auditorium in Rishon LeZion; for a scholarly audience at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem; and for an Indian Independence Day celebration at the Tel Aviv home of the Indian ambassador.

A standard feature of their repertoire was the song “Oh! Lovely Parrot,” performed as a *ninnukali*. Venus (Tzipporah) Lane recalled for me how they all learned to do the dance, which most of them had never seen. She went with her friend Simḥa Yosef to the apartment



Nirit Singers. Photo by the author.

of a relative to watch a family copy of the 1981 Herzog video, in which Simḥa's mother Rachel Nehemiah had been the lead singer. Carefully studying the dancers' steps and gestures, they then taught them to the other Nirit Singers. An excerpt from their 2006 performance at the Van Leer Institute can be viewed with the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

In contrast to the 1981 video, Nirit Singers' performances were detached from the Hanukah context. Some were held on an elevated stage, with singers facing a physically separate audience including non-Kochini strangers. They wore colorful matching costumes made for the occasion, patterned after an old-fashioned style of Kerala women's dress. Their entrances, exits, and transitions were carefully choreographed and rehearsed. The brief *ninnukali* number was adjusted to fit the spatial constraints of the stage, with two lead singers standing to the side and the dancers circling around one seated member of the chorus.

Much had changed in Israel during the twenty-five years between these two dance performances. In 1981, though no longer living on one Jewish street in India, where the *ninnukali* had been an integral part of the surrounding Kerala culture, the older women of the immigrant generation were still grounded in that culture. They lived in an Israeli community of families originating from the Kadavumbhagam-Kochi community. They spoke Hebrew with other Israelis, including the researchers, but still spoke Malayalam with each other. Although they initiated this event in response to a

request from outside, it was also for their own enjoyment, as an approximate recreation of a well-remembered Kerala Hanukah party.

In contrast, members of the Nirit Singers grew up in families from five different Kerala Jewish communities, and by the early twenty-first century they lived in widely scattered Israeli towns and cities. As articulated by retired social worker Galia Hacco, organizer and leader of the group, their commitment to a rigorous schedule of group meetings, rehearsals, and performances reflected a desire to preserve and pass on something of their Kerala culture for future generations of Israeli Kochinim, as well as proudly share that culture with other Israelis. When they produced a CD of their own, it was accompanied by a booklet with the Malayalam song texts transliterated into Hebrew script for that new audience. And thanks to the 1981 Taoz recording, they were also able to include in their performances a small sound-glimpse of the *ninnukali*, which may never again be performed in its entirety.

Video examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

Barbara C. Johnson is professor emerita of Anthropology at Ithaca College. She is coauthor of *Ruby of Cochin: A Jewish Woman Remembers* (Jewish Publication Society, 1995) and editor of the CD/booklet *Oh, Lovely Parrot! Jewish Women's Songs from Kerala* (2004) and a forthcoming companion book of seventy-nine Malayalam Jewish songs with English translations, notes, and musical transcriptions (Jewish Music Research Centre, Hebrew University, Jerusalem).

# Sound and Imagined Border Transgressions in Israel/Palestine

Michael Figueroa

Now, between Yad Hana and nearby Tulkarm  
A muezzin cries atop a tall mosque  
Layla is alone, behind heavy glass  
Wandering around but it's impossible to hear  
Layla's on the radio! Maybe she's calling me  
I only remember a burning field and bombs overhead  
Heat in my eyes, suddenly I'm friendless here  
A white room closes on me. I am alone tonight.  
Layla, Layla . . .

[Refrain:]

Radio Ramallah, Layla and night  
It's her whispering voice chattering and conquering 1965

Confounding me  
Radio Ramallah, Layla and night  
One day we'll meet, reminisce, and be excited  
About how it was in '65, Layla, Layla

And this is how I waste opportunities  
Imagining what was and what could've been  
Memories mixed with nostalgia  
And burning like salt in wounds

Machine noise between cotton and mine fields  
Severing the connection between us  
Layla doesn't answer, but I still have faith  
G-d is great and is probably on our side  
Layla's on the radio, or maybe it's just my imagination  
I search for her but there's nothing on the dial  
Layla's silent, a transistor radio plays  
If only I could call her on the phone tonight

Layla, Layla . . .

[Refrain]

In this popular 1988 song, "Radio Ramallah," by the Israeli rock musician Yehuda Poliker, the narrator decries a lost voice—the voice of a woman named Layla. Who is Layla? What can we know about her from the song's narrative, in which—by virtue of an intersemitic homophone—an Arabic female name sounds interchangeable with the word for "night" in both Hebrew and Arabic: *laylah*. The geographical marker in the song's title drives the point home:

עכשיו בין יד חנה לבין טולכרם השכנה  
מואזין בוכה בראש מסגד גבוה  
לילה לבדה מאחורי זכוכית כבדה  
משוטט אבל אי אפשר לשמוע  
לילה ברדיו! אולי היא קוראת לי  
אני רק זוכר שדה בוער ותופת מלמעלה  
חום בעיניים, פתאום אני כאן בלי אף חבר  
חדר לבן עלי סוגר, חושך הלילה  
לילה, לילה, לילה, לילה, לילה.

רדיו רמאללה לילה ולילה  
זה קולה המלחשש מקשקש וכובש 1965

מטשטש אותי  
רדיו רמאללה לילה ולילה  
יום יבוא נפגש, ניזכר נתרגש  
איך היה ב'65, לילה, לילה

וככה אני מבזבז אפשרויות  
מדמיון את מה שהיה ואת מה שהיה יכול להיות.  
זיכרונות מתערבבים בגעגועים  
ושורפים, כמו מלח על הפצעים

רעש מכונה בין שדה מוקשים לשדה כותנה  
מפלה את הקשר שביננו  
לילה לא עונה, אבל עוד יש בי אמונה  
אלוהים גדול הוא בטח לצידנו  
לילה ברדיו, אולי רק נדמה לי  
אני מחפש אותה ואין כלום על הסקאלה  
לילה שותקת, רדיו טרנזיסטור מנגן  
לו רק יכולתי לטלפן אל לילה הלילה  
לילה, לילה, לילה, לילה, לילה.

the woman, if she is an actual woman, is a Palestinian Arab. Why is her voice missing? In the final stanza, her voice shudders like a phantom limb, perhaps imagined but also viscerally real. And where does this voice exist? The answer is complicated: the voice is embodied in Palestine and resonates sonically in Israel. The medium bridging this schizophrenic divide between the physical and aural domains—is the radio. From a twenty-first-century perspective,

it can be difficult to imagine the altogether foreign media paradigm of pretelevision Israel. Radio broadcasting in Mandatory Palestine began under the auspices of the British, who established the Palestine Broadcasting Agency (PBA) in 1936. In 1948, the newly established State of Israel inherited the PBA and rebranded it as Kol Yisra'el, the "Voice of Israel." Radio was unquestionably the hegemonic media form of the early state, even after the introduction of television to the

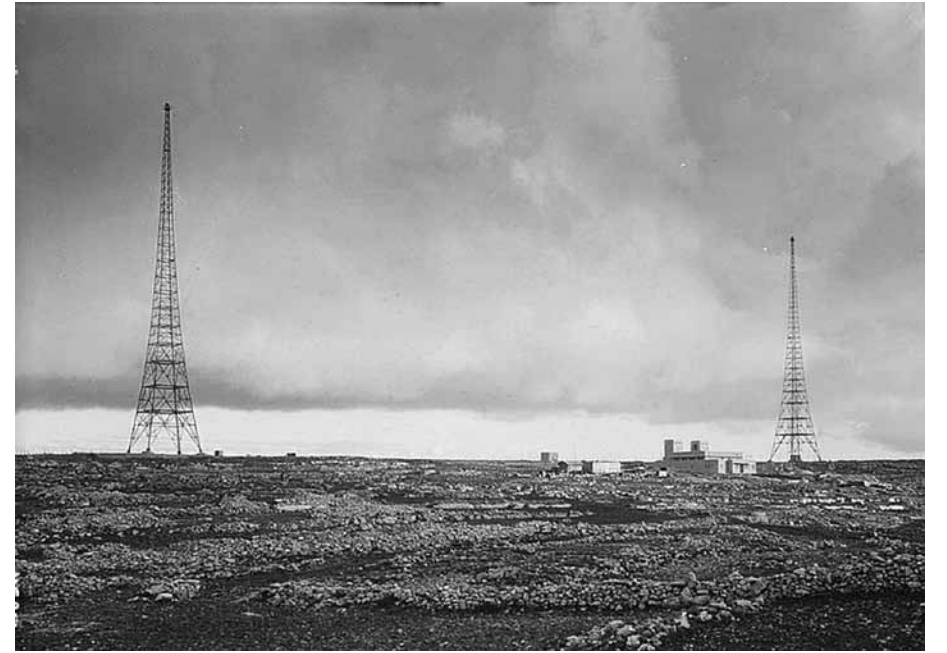


Courtesy of the author.

country in 1968. As in other emergent socialist democracies in the Middle East and Europe, the state broadcasting agency maintained absolute control of radio programming and content, and Kol Yisra'el was the exclusive Israeli station until the establishment of Reshet Bet in 1960, Galei Tzahal in 1973, and Reshet Gimme! in 1976. Each of these stations remained under the Israel Broadcasting Authority except Galei Tzahal, which was run by the army. Together, these stations dominated the sonic sphere of Israeli cultural life until the 1990s, when the entrance of satellite television and private media conglomerates brought globalized media to the country at an unprecedented pace.

Radio's media specificity meant that its reach had little correlation with the transmutable political boundaries that were subject to redrawing after the various wars fought between Israel and its neighbors. "Tuning in" to radio created a unidirectional relation between transmitter and receiver; this relation consisted of invisible, radiating waves of electromagnetic energy modulated either by amplitude (AM) or frequency (FM) and measured in figures that we use to signify specific stations. For example, today Reshet Bet's wave frequency modulates at 95.5 megahertz (95.5Hz x 10<sup>6</sup>) and so is called FM 95.5. As they travel through space, radio waves are indifferent to national borders; thus, from a political perspective they are inherently transgressive and cover whatever territory their physical waveforms allow. What this has meant in Israel is that people living on both sides of the Green Line separating Israel proper from the West Bank and other territories could tune in and listen to the Other's—the so-called enemy's—mediascape. Since 1948, Jordanians and Palestinians could readily tune in to Kol Yisra'el and, later, Reshet Bet and Reshet Gimme!. For those living on the Israeli side, the primary carrier of the voice of the Other between 1948 and 1967 was Radio Ramallah, the subject and title of Yehuda Poliker's song about tuning in to the radio during his military service.

As the station's name indicates, Radio Ramallah was based in the Palestinian city of Ramallah, located 20 km north of Jerusalem, and this is where the British Mandate's Palestine Broadcasting Agency was headquartered before its 1948 relocation to Jerusalem and renaming as Kol Yisra'el. Out of the ashes of the PBA in Ramallah rose Radio Ramallah, a Jordanian-run station that broadcasted through the PBA's



Palestine Broadcasting Authority towers at Ramallah during the late 1930s. Photo credit: The American Colony Photo Department in Jerusalem, via 972 Magazine.

old transmitter at 667 kHz. In contrast to Kol Yisra'el, whose explicit agenda was to facilitate the assimilation of immigrants and pedagogical practices that would serve the Israeli nation-building project, Radio Ramallah's programming eschewed nationalist politics and was centered on musical cosmopolitanism. Thus, while Kol Yisra'el transmitted material such as European classical music, with its pretensions to civilization, and Hebrew national song (in addition to news programs and radio dramas), Radio Ramallah specialized in Western and Arab popular music.

For many Israelis, Radio Ramallah was the primary portal through which to experience the outside world sonically from the comfort of home. It is difficult to imagine, furthermore, the emergence of Israeli rock, which since the mid-1960s has been a powerful force in the cultural sphere, without Israeli musicians having had access to the American, British, and continental European records transmitted over Radio Ramallah's airwaves. The sounds they heard informed the small, burgeoning rock scene in mid-1960s Ramla, a mixed Jewish-Arab city that sits in central Israel due south of Ben-Gurion Airport. Early rock bands collectively called *lehakot ha-kezev* (lit., rhythm bands) performed a repertory that consisted mainly of covers of English-language rock songs they heard on Radio Ramallah, along with some original Hebrew-language

compositions that would form the backbone of Israeli rock over the next decade.

This early rock movement, in fact, provided the foundations for Yehuda Poliker to develop his own rock and *muzikah yam tikhonit* (Mediterranean) style that we hear in "Radio Ramallah," with its distorted guitar, backbeat drum, Greek bouzouki, synthesizers, and reverb-drenched, melismatic voice, which together evince clear stylistic connections to both Mediterranean Arab and Anglo-American popular music, as noted by Amy Horowitz in *Mediterranean Israeli Music*. The lyrics, as we have seen, insist on a "memory mixed with nostalgia" for a time during which hearing the Other was an affordance made possible by the nature, and exclusive dominion, of radio technology, before the political and technological developments that would shape post-1967 Israel. In the history signified by this song, we might observe how listening to Others has helped to breed connections, even if only in the imagination. Without such connections, the singer feels "friendless" and "alone."

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# The Siren's Song: Sound, Conflict, and the Politics of Public Space in Tel Aviv

Abigail Wood

November 15, 2012: "I was sure that it was a new song by Shlomi Shabat, but it turned out to be a siren," tweeted Israeli rock star Aviv Geffen. At first glance, this tweet was part of an ongoing, good-natured banter between Geffen and fellow musician and reality TV judge, Shlomi Shabat. This particular jibe was neatly placed, comparing the rising and falling wail of the siren used in Israel to warn of an incoming rocket attack to the soaring sounds of Shabat's voice, whose high, nasal production and melismatic slides serve as a markers of the genre of *muzikah mizrahit* (eastern music), contrasting with Geffen's rough rock tones.

On this day, however, Geffen's tweet indexed a significant change in Tel Aviv's public soundscape. For the first time since the Gulf War, sirens sounded across the city warning residents to take shelter from an incoming missile. The sounds of the sirens themselves were familiar—the same sirens are sounded on a continuous note on Israel's Holocaust Memorial Day and national Memorial Day, and are periodically sounded for tests and drills—and were perhaps even expected: sirens had sounded sporadically in the south of the country during the previous year, warning of rockets fired from Gaza, and the Israeli military operation Pillar of Defense had begun the previous day, marking an escalation in the immediate level of conflict. Nevertheless, the warning sound caused a stir in Tel Aviv, which was reported with some humor later in the evening by the *Haaretz* news site:

One siren at 6:38 PM was enough to paralyze the most important oxygen line of Tel Aviv: the cellular phone networks. Calls did not connect . . . The tables in popular Café Landwer in the middle of the boulevard emptied fast. Half of the clientele ran for shelter shouting "Imaleh!" [Mama!] and the other half filmed on their cellphones. Very quickly the guessing game began: "where did the rocket fall?" Tel Aviv is spread over 54 square kilometers, but miraculously—everyone heard the boom. From the south, from the north, from the sea.



Tel Aviv skyline. Photo credit: Ron Shoshani, via Flickr Commons.

Someone on Rothschild quickly updated that the rocket fell "at Herzl-Yigal Alon"; only after long minutes did the correction come that there is no such street. After that it was said that the rocket fell on the Tayelet, and then among the sands of Bat Yam, in the south, in the southeast.

Light hearted as it might be, the *Haaretz* report captures the centrality of sound to the experience of civilians in Israel during the recent rounds of military conflict with Hamas militants in Gaza (November 2012, summer 2014). Sounds not only warned of an imminent threat; they became a defining experience of "being there" during the conflict and a source of up-to-date information, giving auditory confirmation that a rocket had indeed exploded and allowing civilians to judge (or at least to speculate on) locations of rocket impacts, which were generally not reported in the press.

While the sirens themselves lasted only a few minutes at a time, their existence in the wartime soundscape prompted new regimes of auditory attentiveness. Friends and colleagues reported changed practices

of everyday listening ("I listen to podcasts with one earphone only in case there is a siren") and a growing intimacy with the sounds peculiar to this upsurge of conflict ("the siren sort of coughs before it begins"). Israeli national media joined the network of sonic warning: popular songs on the radio were frequently punctuated by a newscaster's voice reading alerts of sirens in different parts of the country. While not predictable by time or place, the sirens produced a kind of rhythm to the war, both on a short timescale, as civilians waited for the "boom" a predictable number of seconds after the siren sounded, and marking waves of tension and catharsis on a larger scale. The presence or absence of sirens enabled civilians to speculate on diplomatic matters, judging the success or failure of ceasefire efforts.

The sirens did not only demand active listening—they also disciplined the body, calling for immediate action. Primed to listen for rising and falling sounds, increased auditory sensibilities led many Israelis to experience "false alarms" upon hearing ambulance sirens or passing motorcycles: during the summer of 2014 Israel's Magen

David Adom changed the siren of ambulances to an alternating high-low pattern to avoid confusion. Discursive echoes of sirens filled conversations ("did you hear that?" "what were you doing when . . .?") and public discourse. These sounds took the place of others that were less easy to talk about, if equally part of the daily soundscape during these periods of heightened conflict: the loud engines of warplanes flying south, the dull thuds of shots being fired during police clashes with Palestinian protestors in East Jerusalem, and the eerie silence of late-night military funerals. In turn, the wartime soundscape also exacerbated other sonic tensions in society. Far-right Jewish youth dressed in t-shirts of the Lehava organization patrolled the streets of central Jerusalem for some weeks, listening out for Arab accents; some Palestinians in East Jerusalem celebrated Hamas rocket fire with loud fireworks. Meanwhile, during the summer of 2014 Israeli and IDF spokespeople used the sound of the siren as a central part of *hasbarah* (propaganda) speeches and video clips seeking to persuade the international community of the legitimacy of Israel's offensive operation.

"A history of modern nation-states," writes Brian Massumi, "could be written

following the regular ebb and flow of fear rippling their surface, punctuated by outbreaks of outright hysteria." Recent research on the soundscapes of violent conflict has generally focused on the intense experiences of the front lines of battle, whether of civilians seeking shelter or fighters playing heavy metal music to pump themselves up before a mission, or on symbolic uses of music outside the immediate conflict zone. Yet the auditory experiences of civilians in the hinterlands of active conflict help equally to shed light on the lived dynamics of modern asymmetric warfare. While the experiences of most civilians living in Israel's central regions during the 2012 and 2014 military operations were very far from the physical destruction that civilians in Gaza experienced at that time, the soundscape of the war touches on the ripples of fear that armed conflict causes in the stable surface of the state. The frequent sounds of the sirens reinscribed the politics of public spaces at the center of Israel's civic life, at once articulating both the state's efforts to protect its civilians from harm, and its failure, in the form of an incoming missile, to ensure security. These sounds fused public and private spaces: the sounds of the sirens and the explosions

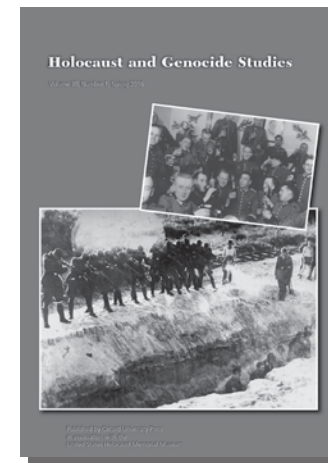
of missiles penetrated individual homes in a way that mirrored the penetration of national space by the missiles themselves.

The sounds of sirens and explosive booms—and the dark humor generated in their wake during the weeks of the conflict—came to an abrupt halt as ceasefires were reached in both periods of conflict, and for most residents of Israel, life returned to normal. Yet their echoes remained in the bodily habitus of Israeli civilians who still found themselves starting at the sound of ambulance sirens, an embodied reminder of the ability of the soundworld of military conflict to seep into, and to color, everyday auditory experiences.

Audio examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

Abigail Wood lectures in Ethnomusicology at the University of Haifa, where she is also head of the Music Department. She is coeditor of Ethnomusicology Forum. Her research focuses primarily on urban musics and soundscapes; she is the author of a book on contemporary Yiddish song and several articles on the soundscape of Jerusalem's Old City. (With thanks to Moshe Morad.)

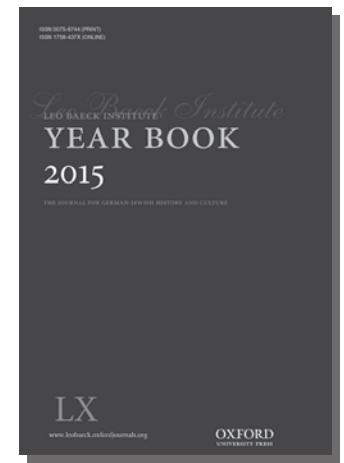
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# JUDAISM IN CONTEXT

JUDAISM IN CONTEXT 18

"It's better to hear the rebuke of the wise than the song of fools" (Qoh 7:5)

Proceedings of the Midrash Section, Society of Biblical Literature, Volume 6

Edited by  
W. David Nelson  
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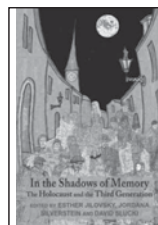
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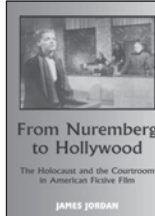
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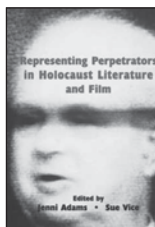


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## “Surround Sound”

# Sensory History, Deep Listening, and Field Recording

Kim Haines-Eitzen

This fall I tried something new in my advanced seminar “Sound, Silence, and the Sacred,” premised on Jonathan Sterne’s claim that “the history of sound implies a history of the body” and Brandon LaBelle’s argument that “sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating.” Each week I asked the students to make a recording (of any sound or soundscape) and to write a reflection paper about what they discovered at the intersection of their recording and the readings for the week. My goal was to pursue two lines of inquiry into the world of sound: the first was to think through how sound, place, and identity are intimately interwoven in a web that is both ephemeral and transformational; the second was to explore how the practice of making recordings might in fact shape our understanding of sound both in the contemporary world and in history. Recording sounds is an embodied experience, I have found, and thus it provides tremendous affective insight into sound, even historical sounds. The seminar’s capstone project was the creation of a website for which I gave my students only the faintest suggestion—a Cornell Sound Map (<http://cornellsoundmap.wordpress.com>) perhaps?—where they now offer listeners a veritable auditory feast of campus and community sounds as well as an aural record of their work. It also provides them with the ability to be transported back to the moment they made the recording, to remind themselves of where and who they were at that time. Sound is intimately interwoven with memory, the body, and imagination.

On the last day of class, I asked my students how the experience of making recordings shaped their experience and understanding of our surround-sound world: some argued that recording provided them with a “sound sensitivity” they had never experienced before; others said that recording gave them a sense of presence and immersion



Courtesy of the author.

in a place that was altogether new; still others spoke to the challenge of describing sounds in words and classifying sounds into categories like “noise” and “silence.” Above all, the results of their work showed us how varied, rich, and dynamic our soundscapes are and how even the most mundane and common sounds (ceiling fans, air vents, elevators, the chatter around a table, and so forth) can be heard in new ways if we only take the time to listen. Composer Pauline Oliveros (<http://deeplisting.org/site/content/about>) has called what we were doing “deep listening”: “[G]oing below the surface of what is heard and also expanding to the whole field of sound. . . . unlocking layer after layer of imagination, meaning, and memory down to the cellular level of human experience.” Perhaps the best lesson for all of us was that recording both demands and informs heightened listening skills, requiring us to recognize relations between ourselves and the places we inhabit, the embodied experience of sensory landscapes and buildings, and the acoustic cues that inform our sense of identity.

But what about recording modern soundscapes in conjunction with a historical project, I asked them? Truth be told, it is a question I have asked myself ever since I began making field recordings as part of a historical project (<http://kimhaineseitzen.wordpress.com>) on desert sounds and the religious imagination in late antiquity. Several years ago I became convinced that in order to understand the sonic imagination of late ancient Christian monastic texts from Egypt and Palestine, I needed to record the sounds of modern desert environments. Over the course of several years, I travelled multiple times to the four deserts of North America and to the Negev and Judean deserts in Israel/Palestine. My recordings are not intended, of course, as transparent records of what the ancients heard when they went to the desert any more than, say, a photograph of an archaeological site could conjure up lived experience; to my mind, field recordings of wind, water, birds, insects, and so forth were both a necessary evocation—an instance of a place “calling out” its signature sounds—and crucial instruction for how to read, imagine, and hear an acoustic register mostly obscured by mostly silent texts. The sayings and lives of the desert fathers, the writings of Athanasius, Besa, and John Climacus, and others—were not so silent after all, I found. Barren mountain canyons echo with the croaks of ravens, wind howls around rocks and through crevices, birds set up their home territories each spring with their voice, and the sound of water is especially striking in arid landscapes—no wonder, then, it features through biblical and postbiblical literatures in richly paradoxical form: rushing waters can be the sound of God’s voice or the sound of terrifying beasts and demons. In fact, these stories of desert saints betray a dynamic repertoire of sounds through which to understand Brandon LaBelle’s “acoustic territories,” to rethink how identities are fashioned through sensory experiences of place, and to enliven an embodied experience of a sacred and sonorous desert.

I hope to suggest by way of two very brief examples how modern recordings can

illuminate the study of ancient texts. The first comes from the Wisdom of Solomon, a work probably composed by a Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria in the first century BCE. It is in some sense a “classic” work of wisdom literature as it exhorts readers to righteousness and condemns the ungodly and, above all, praises wisdom: “Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her” (6:12). Within a set of chapters on “uninstructed souls” and “lawless people”—an extended foray into the differences between Egyptians and Israelites—we find the following passage:

For whether they were farmers or shepherds or workers who toiled in the wilderness (*eremos*), they were seized, and endured the inescapable fate; for with one chain of darkness they all were bound. Whether there came a *whistling wind*, or a *melodious sound of birds* in wide-spreading branches, or the *rhythm of violently rushing water*, or the *harsh crash of rocks* hurled down, or the unseen *running of leaping animals*, or the *sound of the most savage roaring beasts*, or an *echo* thrown back from a hollow of the mountains, it paralyzed them with terror. For the whole world was illumined with brilliant light, and went about its work unhindered, while over those people alone heavy night was spread, an image of the darkness that was destined to receive them; but still heavier than darkness were they to themselves (17:17–21).

The “wilderness” here is the *eremos*, the desert, and the casting of night sounds as terrifying—whistling, violent, harsh, savage—is hardly coincidental. Those who are able to see (the Israelites) have little reason to fear while those who only hear (the Egyptians) are doomed to terror. Sounds place identities. Now try reading the passage while listening to desert night winds (listen on <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>), imagining scorpions underfoot, a pitch-black darkness, and the terror of indiscriminate or unidentifiable sounds. The affective force of hearing (but not seeing) people to places—here, the desert, a place that is closely tied to memory, fear, and the sensory imagination.

Consider another example, here taken from the *Life of Antony*, the paradigmatic story of an Egyptian Christian hermit told by the fourth-century Alexandrian bishop Athanasius: as the story begins, Antony hears

the words of the gospel (“go sell everything and come follow me”) read in church and decides to take this literally, selling his possessions and going into the far reaches of the desert to live as a hermit. One of themes implied by the story is that he will also face fewer distractions in the desert, especially acoustic distractions. But what happens is precisely the opposite: in fact, Athanasius tells the story of a cacophonous desert: “the [demons] when it was nighttime made such a crashing noise that that whole place seemed to be shaken by a quake. . . . and altogether the sounds of all the creatures that appeared were terrible, and their ragings were fierce” (*Life of Antony* 9). Throughout this text demons make “obnoxious noises;” they clap, hiss, crash, and shake Antony’s ascetic resolve. It would be too simple to dismiss such passages as fanciful imagination, and a modern recording forces us to reconsider. The language here used to describe the sounds of demons—crashing like thunder, and shaking like earthquakes, hissing like snakes—are some of the most dynamic sounds one hears when recording in desert environments. The crashing of thunder (listen on <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>) is, indeed, a nearly surreal surround sound in a mountainous desert that reverberates all the more in a dark deserted wilderness. But there is a weapon one can use against the din of demons: Antony, in fact, partly becomes a monk by way of an acoustic exchange or, an acoustic ecology, if you will: he wards off the noisy demons

who torment him with his own sounds of chanting and prayer. Sound is relational.

If there is a late ancient Near Eastern counterpart to the Native American Naalagiagvik, the “Place Where You Go to Listen,” it is surely the mountain, the wilderness, and, above all, the desert. The desert reverberates in biblical and postbiblical Jewish and Christian literatures as a place of revelation, temptation, and at once a site of alienation and belonging. Far from empty, static, and silent wastelands, deserts are endlessly productive for the religious imagination—their undulating sands, ever shifting with wind, become cacophonous landscapes of discovery and transformation. They reveal themselves as social and cultural products; they are not “inactive and at rest” (to quote Edward Casey) but rather dynamic and powerfully evocative. And the practice of listening to them returns us time and time again to our place within their sound worlds.

Audio examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.

Kim Haines-Eitzen is a professor of Religion in Late Antiquity in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University. Her previous books have treated early Christian scribal practices and the role of women in ancient book culture. She is currently writing a book, *A Sacred and Sonorous Desert, about desert sounds and the religious imagination*.



Courtesy of the author.

# Remembering Sound

Alanna E. Cooper

A loud ring. “Allo, Allo.” Some muffled words, then Nina rustling across the house. She opens the heavy door to my bedroom. It is 4 a.m. I am now awake. The call is for me. It is my brother from New York.

Those noises—which interrupted my sleep one winter night in 1997—are among the few sounds I remember from the period I spent doing research in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. I was a disciplined doctoral student back then. I spent my days at the Jewish institutions in town and visiting people in their homes, conversing and conducting interviews. Each night, I stayed awake at my computer, recording what I had learned that day.

Today, my notes from those months fill a row of binders that line my office in Cleveland, Ohio. I took time to read through them while preparing to write for this volume on Jewish Studies and sound. I confess that I found little related to the topic. Not only is an auditory description of that 4 a.m. call missing; I have almost no reference to sound at all. This essay explores why sound is often left out of ethnographic description, and what might be gained by including it.

Before beginning, though, I should clarify that when I use the term “sound” here, I do not mean the same thing as music. While I was doing research among central Asia’s Jews (both in Uzbekistan and in their immigrant homes in the United States and Israel), I attended community celebrations, synagogue services, weddings, and mourning rituals. The music I heard at these events was almost all foreign to my American, Ashkenazic ears. I had little context to understand or characterize. Were the vocalists skilled or not? Was the music classical or contemporary? Were the forms amalgams, and if so—then of what? Likewise, I lacked technical vocabulary. I grasped for descriptive words, finding only unsophisticated phrases, such as “bouncy tunes,” and “piercing notes.”

I have made peace with this gap in my writing by acknowledging that others with expertise in ethnomusicology have addressed these issues: Ted Levin in *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia*, and Evan Rapport in his recently published *Greeted with Smiles: Bukharian Jewish Musicians in New York*.



Courtesy of the author.

But there is more to be said about sound. One needs no expertise to notice and describe feet shuffling, electricity humming, water running. Such sounds are ever present. Yet they are often ignored, left unmentioned and undescribed. Maybe a phone ringing or a door opening in Samarkand does not sound much different than it does in Cleveland. Unremarkable, perhaps it is not worth writing about. Or maybe the human sense of sound is relatively undiscerning, and our vocabulary about the topic thin, so it seems there is little to convey.

But descriptions that include sound can make a difference. Articulating the whirring of daily life in words allows us to capture the atmosphere of a place at a particular moment in time. Below is a portrayal of Jewish life in Uzbekistan during the years after the fall of the Soviet Union, created by remembering sound. Or to put it more accurately, it is created by stretching to recall the sounds I have forgotten. I begin with the chickens:

When I asked Nina how a chicken egg is fertilized, she must have thought it funny. “Don’t laugh,” I probably retorted sheepishly, and she likely listened with an encouraging smile, while I developed my question in Russian with some difficulty. “So, does it happen inside the chicken? Or once it is laid?”

Shmuly laughed. He was also entertained by my question. He was one of the young Chabad emissaries from New York. Like me, he was a boarder in Nina’s sprawling compound. He shared an apartment-sized unit with two other Chabad emissaries. Their large dining room windows overlooked the courtyard where they had a view of the garden, the eating area, and the chicken yard.

My situation was different. My room was tucked in a corner, with a small window that looked onto the courtyard’s dark entryway. From here, I missed the spectacle of the hens running away from the large rooster, and his triumphant jumping on them. That’s how the eggs got fertilized, Shmuly told me. The sounds of these activities must have carried across the courtyard. But I was clearly not paying attention.

Early one morning, Nina came into my room and surprised me, holding something unexpected up to my face. It was an egg that a chicken had just laid, warm against my cheek. Sometimes the breakfast she prepared for us included fresh eggs like this one. Other times, she sold or bartered the eggs. Once, she showed me a colorful second-hand dress, which her neighbor had given her in exchange for a few.

At Passover time, a whole different group of chickens was brought into Nina’s courtyard. They came to be slaughtered at the hands of Levi Forta, another Chabad emissary, who had flown in from Maine for the holiday. By this time—a few years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union—Samarkand’s Jewish population had been drastically reduced as a result of mass migration. Among those who left were all the city’s ritual slaughterers. On occasion, a ritual slaughterer who lived in another part of the country traveled to Samarkand to help out. But for the holidays, when the demand for chicken skyrocketed, this was not enough. Levi—who had spent a year in Samarkand previously—returned to offer assistance.

In the mornings he traveled between the city’s two synagogues. Those who did not manage to catch him at either, knew they could find him at Nina’s place, where he was staying with his friends. Just a few days after arriving, Levi told me he had already killed about 280 chickens. I wish I had paid attention to the sounds of the birds he picked up and dangled by their feet. Did they cry out? I cannot remember.

Nor can I recall the cackles of the chickens, the calls of the mating rooster, or the sizzling of freshly laid eggs in Nina’s frying pan. Yet, as I work to conjure them, these sounds give dimension to my memories of Passover in Samarkand. They

call attention to the contours of the local economy, to communal change in the post-Soviet years, and to the cycle of life itself.

As the chickens in Nina’s compound had a set of sounds, the many people who lived there did too. Ours was complicated because we spoke so many languages. Adding to the complexity were our halts and stammers as we crossed linguistic boundaries.

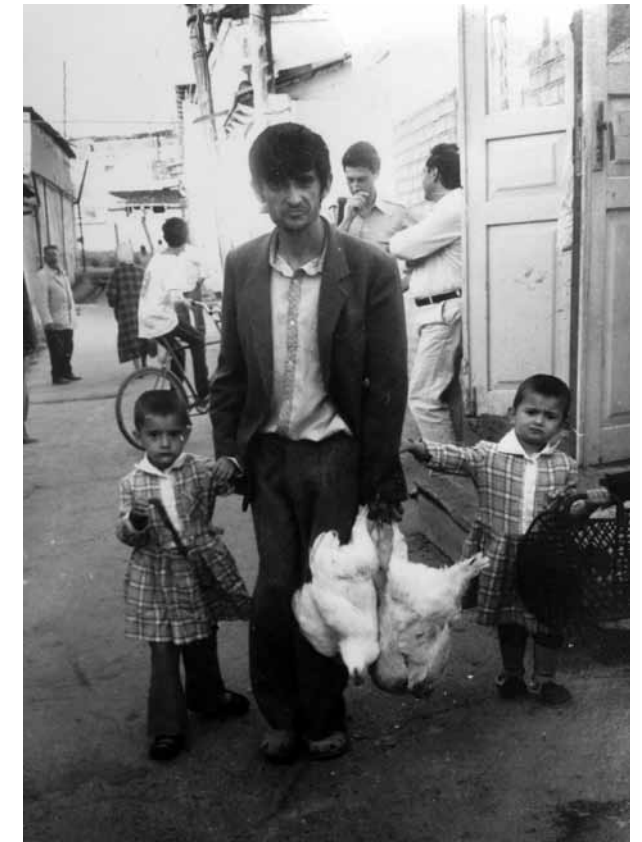
Nina was studying Hebrew. Before the Soviet Union dissolved, she could not read or speak the language. Now, though, with ease of travel to the region, and an influx of representatives from international Jewish organizations, Hebrew could be heard all over the town. Sharp witted and industrious, Nina understood that the language could connect her to travelers—like myself—who might come to her for room and board. By the time I met her, Nina had rudimentary skills, which she was working to improve. I tutored her, poring over her Hebrew textbook, she reading in a Russian Bukharian accent, and me with American tones.

Mostly, though, when the two of us were together I worked on my Russian. She told me about her childhood, her marriage, and her relatives who had emigrated, speaking deliberately so I could transcribe her stories. When she used words I did not know, she repeated them, and I added them to my vocabulary list.

I also needed help with Bukharian. This Persian language (often referred to as Tajik) had been the Jews’ native tongue prior to the nineteenth century, when the region came under Russian control. Sometimes Nina and her husband spoke to one another in Bukharian to discuss household logistics. The long consonants and rush of syllables were song to my ears. But their command of the language was not sophisticated. Nina was unable to help me with the speeches I had recorded on small audiotapes.

For this, I turned to Lolita. Chiseled cheekbones, her hair swept up, Lolita wore stylish shoes and carried herself with confidence. She was so sure of her English grammar, which she had learned in school, that she sometimes corrected me. Lolita’s grandfather was a professor and her uncle was a skilled orator with a strong command of classical Bukharian. With her language skills and access to her erudite family members, she was well suited to help me translate my recordings.

Misha’s face lit up whenever Lolita came to the compound to work with me.



Courtesy of the author.

He was Nina’s son, who was longing for romance. He knew some English, and used it as swag. “You are beautiful,” he told Lolita, sounding like a Russian Humphrey Bogart. “I love you,” he continued. Serious, and traditionally minded, Lolita had no interest in Misha’s antics. She asked that we move to a separate room to work in quiet.

The country’s national language stood apart from all these others. Since independence, Uzbek (a Turkic language) was becoming dominant in schools, places of work, and on the street. But in Nina’s compound, it was heard only amongst the Muslim university students who were boarding with her. On occasion I used Russian to communicate with them. But they mostly kept to themselves, and I kept my distance, daunted by the prospect of breaking through another cultural and linguistic boundary.

Uzbek, Russian, Hebrew, English, and Tajik; these were the languages of our compound. We tripped over them with broken sounds as we worked to connect with each other in utterances that took effort to deliver and to understand.

On occasion an intruder reminded us that language does not always have this

quality. When the lone telephone rang, it could be heard across the courtyard. Was it for me? I wondered each time. Was it a family member with whom I could speak fluidly, in the effortless language of home?

Often such a call would come in the middle of the night, as friends and relatives miscalculated the time difference between them and us, so far away. That’s what happened when my brother called at 4 a.m. to tell me that he and his girlfriend had decided to get married.

I would go home for the wedding a few months later. And then my life in Nina’s compound fragmented into bits of disjointed information, scattered through my notes and letters. Now, by working to recall sound, I have stitched it back together enough to formulate this microportrait of Jewish life in Samarkand in its waning, mobile, post-Communist days. Nina and her husband Boris are still there, but likely not for much longer.

*Alanna E. Cooper is director of Jewish Lifelong Learning at Case Western Reserve University. She is a cultural anthropologist and author of Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism (Indiana University Press, 2012).*

# Some Things I Heard at the Yeshiva

Jonathan Boyarin

The careful and muted sound  
Of a fruit falling from the tree  
Amidst the unbroken singing  
Of deep silence of the forest . . .  
Mandelstham

## December 2015

For the last four years, I have spent much of my free time studying Talmud at Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem (MTJ), the yeshiva on New York's Lower East Side where, for decades, Reb Dovid Feinstein has presided as rosh yeshiva. MTJ includes a lower school along with an advanced study hall, or bes medresh, which is where I study. The bes medresh is a large, roughly square, high-ceilinged room, with huge windows on two sides, one of those sides opening onto East Broadway. Unlike some yeshivas where students all face the front of the room, at MTJ we sit at tables, and study pairs or chevruvas generally face each other rather than sitting across from each other. My place is in the corner of the bes medresh closest to the entrance and the street. Opposite, facing the interior courtyard, another corner has been closed off to form a separate library room. Reb Dovid's daily 11:00 a.m. Talmud shi'ur, which I attend, is held in the library. Otherwise, I am mostly preparing or reviewing, alone or with regular partners, the text covered in the shi'ur—right now, the tractate Bava Kamma.

For the past couple of months, I have attempted to note as sound, and not as semiosis, what I hear at the yeshiva. It is a difficult task since so much of the sound at MTJ consists of discursive textual study, or as I called it elsewhere, "Voices around the Text." Here are some of my notes, slightly edited and rearranged to help the reader imagine the spaces where these sounds arise or are heard in the course of the study day.

Names are changed per ethnographic convention, though I think there are no secrets here.

Some of the "sentences" below, like Mandelstham's poem above, have no verbs. If I could, I would have written this entire piece without verbs. But I am no Mandelstham.



Photo credit: Daniel Stein.

In the hallway outside the bes medresh, quarters dropping into what is perhaps the last fifty-cent soda machine in New York, cans dropping down, the top being popped. A burp? Yes, but perhaps unconnected.

A sandwich or breakfast roll being unwrapped from a plastic bag behind me.

I can't tell what he's saying but it's Larry Browner's voice in the opposite corner of the bes medresh, closer to the 'aron kodesh and to the windows facing the courtyard. Hershl Yekhezkl's voice likewise distinguishable, but not the words, from the library.

Something between a murmur and a cacophony of voices from three to five people in the opposite corner. A young Hasid comes in at the table next to us and learns in a murmur, and continues to do so while his friend has come into the bes medresh and sits down across from him. The background murmur or cacophony gradually grows louder toward 11:00 a.m., as people drift into the bes medresh. The clicking sound made by the legs of two chairs as the Hasid next to me stacks them so he can sit higher. But footsteps walking on the carpet are silent: you see

people walking, of course, but you don't hear them.

The liquid flapping of seforim being removed from the shelves.

Catty-corner from me, Rabbi Berg and Rabbi Fetterstein's separate gemara niggunim create a pleasant buzz. It reminds me of the years I studied oboe with a master: when we played scales together at a set interval, there was a clear third intertone that found itself at the place where our sounds met.

The ebb and flow of conversations from several chevruvas reminds me again of the passage in Edmond Jabès's *Book of Questions* where he clarifies that Jews at prayer only appear to be standing, and rocking on their feet. Actually, he says, they are prone, and rocking on the waves of the sea. Here, the conversations are the waves, and the words I catch ("Rashi . . . actually . . . sure, but it wasn't a . . . let's see the Rashi . . . vayter vayter vayter . . . generally is . . .") so many bits of foam and spray that detach from the current for a second and then return to it. Even if I do catch some of the words I can't necessarily tell what's being studied,

since unlike many yeshivas not everyone at MTJ is studying the same text.

My cell phone ringing to pull me out of the rhythm of group study, imperious as the telephone on its stand in the hallway of Walter Benjamin's childhood home as he describes in his *Berlin Childhood around 1900*.

Someone's watch beeps to mark the hour.

At the table behind me, Rabbi Flinker clicks his fingers, whether to get his study partner's attention or to help stress a logical point.

The quiet rush of local traffic when the window is open on this hideously mild day. Ten minutes later the window bangs shut by itself, an echo of long-ago arguments about whether to keep the window open or not. Then the rustle, like distant traffic or the waves on the seashore, of the air conditioning switched on in mid-December.

As we wait in the library for the shi'ur to begin, Uncle Shlomo points to Zalie Scharf sitting by the wall, where (unlike where I'm positioned) he will not be the first to see the rosh yeshiva as he walks into the room. Shlomo explains: Zalie listens for the sound of the rosh yeshiva's office door closing, outside the bes medresh and across the hall, where we can't see it from the library. And apparently it's true, because Zalie stands up before any of us has heard or seen the rosh yeshiva approaching.

In shi'ur, the rosh yeshiva shows traces of a native Litvak phonology as he reads the words of the Talmud, Rashi, and Tosafos. As a few more people drift in to the shi'ur, the sound of the library door opening and closing, footsteps, slight scraping of chairs.

A scraping sound under the table around which we're all sitting—I've heard it often in shi'ur before. It must be someone scraping his feet on the bars of the table. (It sounds like radiator pipes banging but there's no radiator there.)

During shi'ur, kids bang on the locked back door of the library leading to the fire escape and thence to the play yard, or try the handle to see if they can get in through a shortcut.

Shuffling of pages as Rebbe refers back to an earlier passage in the Gemara.

As Rebbe works through a difficult analysis in Tosafos that I'm incapable of following, I doze off, trying to catch myself before I begin to snore.

Hershl Yekhezkl's Gemara rips as he flips back a couple of folios, turning them by the bottom of the page.

Later, as everyone stands, facing the 'aron kodesh and (roughly) east for the MinDah prayer, coins jingle in a tzedakah box borne by my study partner.

The loudest sound of the day, quite likely, is the collective response "yehey shmey rabbo . . ." during the Kedushah.

After lunch, the sound of trop as someone reviews the Torah reading for the coming Sabbath.

Jonathan Boyarin is the Diann G. and Thomas Mann Professor of Modern Jewish Studies at Cornell University. He previously held professorships at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Kansas. He is the author and editor of numerous volumes of criticism, theory, and ethnography, recently including *Jewish Families* (Rutgers University Press, 2013) and *A Fire Burns in Kotsk, a translation of Menashe Unger's Pshiske un Kotsk* (Wayne State University Press, 2015).



Photo credit: Daniel Stein.



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# Questionnaire

## What are ways that you find most useful to incorporate sound, images, or other nontextual media into your Jewish Studies classrooms?

**David Biale**

*Department of History, University of California, Davis*

As the holder of the Emanuel Ringelblum Professorship in Jewish History at the University of California, Davis, I teach several courses on the Holocaust. The challenge in teaching this subject is to make it possible for students who often have no personal connection with the event to experience it both intellectually and emotionally. Indeed, this is one of very few subjects in the university curriculum that have real emotional impact, something I consider important to discuss with the students. What is the appropriate emotional response to genocide? Where is the dividing line between kitsch and art in reaction to this event?

One way to answer these questions is by using music not only to set a mood but also to raise important issues. I typically start my course on the “Memory of the Holocaust” with a Yiddish poem, set to music by Chava Alberstein. The course on memory is, in fact, the only course in the History Department that investigates the cultural memory of a historical event, so it is challenging for students used to more conventional courses.

The poem with which I start the class is by Binem Heller (1908–1998), a Polish-born Yiddish poet living in Israel. Entitled “Mein shvester Chaya,” it is the poet’s memory of his sister “with green eyes and black braids” who raised him when their mother went off to work. Only in the fifth stanza do we learn that “a German burnt her in Treblinka.” The poet writes his song in Yiddish since that was the language in which he remembers her. Indeed, he is the only one who remembers her and he preserves that memory in the *yiddische medine*, where, ironically, Yiddish has become an alien language.

The musical setting by Chava Alberstein is deeply evocative and sets the mood for the class. But hers is not a traditional Yiddish melody, so it stands for the same alienation from the memory of the event that Heller

speaks of in his poem. The song creates the longing for connection to the murdered world, but it can never fully bridge that distance, thus serving as a theme for the course as a whole.

**Nina Caputo**

*Department of History, University of Florida*

I was trained as an intellectual historian of the Jewish Middle Ages, so my scholarly world has been one of texts. More precisely, it has been one of unadorned, often printed texts. Consequently, sound, images, and other forms of nontextual media have rarely played a significant role in my teaching. In my experience, images of medieval texts, illuminations, windows, and buildings have limited application when teaching medieval Jewish history. And attempts to integrate diverse sources and media into classroom presentations have been only marginally successful. When I played music in a class on medieval and early modern Jewish Iberia, for example, the students found the rhythms, melodies, and lyrics to be alienating at best and humorous at worst. And I was at a loss for how to mediate effectively. I’ve had better luck with film, but to say that there are few medieval Jewish historical films available is an understatement.

Yet I’ve long believed that many episodes in medieval Jewish history lend themselves to translation into visual or dramatic form that could thereby provide a fruitful pedagogical tool. With this in mind, I embarked on a collaborative project with a graphic artist, Liz Clarke, to produce a graphic history of the Barcelona disputation. This forced me to carefully consider how visual (though not entirely nontextual) media could provide a foundation for a textured introduction to Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages. Though I haven’t had the opportunity to use this yet in a medieval Jewish history class, experimental presentation of portions of the graphic history to undergraduates in a class on

a different subject was encouraging. Students who knew nothing about the topic engaged with the theological debate and constructively interrogated artistic and scholarly choices. Liz and I made in organizing and presenting the story. I’m hopeful that the graphic history will provide a useful and interesting bridge between the documentary past and contemporary modes of representation.

**John M. Efron**

*Department of History, University of California, Berkeley*

My remarks largely pertain to teaching undergraduate survey courses in modern Jewish history or courses on modern Jewish culture, loosely defined. We live and work at an unprecedented moment in the history of pedagogy with respect to the sheer quantity and range of nontextual resources available to us. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we must first reconceptualize the classroom. Instead of merely conceiving of it as a venue where we lecture or lead discussions over written texts, it would help enormously to consider the classroom as a venue that also caters to sensory experience.

Nontextual sources can be especially helpful in our increasingly diverse classrooms, where larger numbers of non-Jewish students now take our courses, most of whom have never heard the sound of any Jewish languages or Jewish music. Indeed, this observation applies to an expanding number of Jewish students as well. If any of our students has heard a Jewish language, it is, understandably, Hebrew. But how many American college students have ever even heard non-Israeli forms of Hebrew, Yiddish, or Ladino? I don’t think it matters that they are unable to understand these languages; letting them just sample the sounds, rhythms, and cadences makes for a good beginning. By showing films (many of which are subtitled so students won’t be completely unaware of what is going on) or using well-chosen sound

bites, students cannot but begin to develop a deeper appreciation of Jewish cultures. If, for example, they were to see *Unzere kinder*, the extraordinary 1951 Yiddish feature film about post-Holocaust memory that was made in Poland, starring the great comedy team of Dzigal and Shumacher; hear Bialik’s “Be-ir ha-haregah” (listen on <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>) recited in Ashkenazic Hebrew; watch interviews with Ladino speakers (<http://youtu.be/6q323moRRPU>), listen to Ladino music or to recordings of the greatest operatic *Hazzanut*, a tradition very few synagogues around the world have been able to maintain; or make use of websites such as that of the National Sound Archives of the Jewish National and University Library (<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/eng/music.html>) that allow one to compare and contrast widely differing versions of the same song, students will be made aware of the vast range of Jewish musical styles and their classroom experiences will be deeply enriched.

These are just a few examples of what using sound can achieve from a pedagogic standpoint. Of course, none of these resources is intended to replace textual sources, but rather to supplement and enhance them. Jewish culture in its religious and secular forms is one of the greatest of print cultures, but early on, “Hear, O Israel” was the command, testament to the fact that listening, sound, and audible recitation and proclamation are fundamental elements of the culture as well.

*Audio and video examples are included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

**Meira Z. Kensky**

*Department of Philosophy and Religion, Coe College*

Seven years ago, facing a recalcitrant “Intro to Religion” class and looking for anything to spur more energy in the room, I stumbled across “The Wedding of Ezra and Olivia” on YouTube, an eight-minute highlight reel of a wedding in Jerusalem between possibly the two loveliest people on the planet. More moving than your typical videography, the film is filled with music, as friends and family spontaneously break out into song, people randomly show up with guitars, and the couple themselves sing under the *huppah*. Since discovering this video, I have incorporated it into multiple

classes; and by the time it concludes, the students feel as though they were at the wedding. Pedagogically, the images and the couple’s happiness concretize the memories of the wedding rituals.

The film begins with shots of the *tish(es)* (tables), where the bride and groom sing, laugh, and toast their friends and family. Celebrants sing a joyful version of the “Marseillaise” in honor of the groom’s French relatives, and the bride speaks of her love for Ezra. The *tishers* bring Ezra to meet Olivia; he immediately breaks down in tears. This scene is followed by the *bedeken* (veiling), the signing of the *ketubah*, and more singing. As the sun goes down, the groom’s parents escort a now sobbing Ezra down the aisle, and the two engage in the rituals under the *huppah*.

For most of my Midwestern students, these rituals are brand new; most have only ever been to Protestant or Catholic ceremonies, and seeing a couple their age, clearly in love and committed to their traditions, has a profound effect on them. The wedding is traditional, but the couple have personalized it, making choices that reflect their commitments and their love of Judaism. Because the video covers almost all of the “major moments,” I am able to pause the video and ask students what is going on, discussing what changes the couple has made to the rituals they read about (I usually assign a chapter of Harvey Goldberg’s *Jewish Passages* as background reading).

I know it’s not very innovative to say “I use a YouTube video” in response to this question, but this find has been truly serendipitous. Year after year even the most apathetic students start smiling and laughing and contributing to discussion. If anyone out there knows Ezra or Olivia, can you tell them that for seven years, college students in Iowa have vicariously participated in celebration of their wedding and think they are the loveliest couple around? Oh, and that they have somewhat become the personification of “Jews” for them?

**Kelly Murphy**

*Department of Philosophy and Religion, Central Michigan University*

In J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, Dumbledore once notes, “Ah, music, a magic beyond all we do here!” As someone who teaches undergraduates who are (mostly) unfamiliar with Judaism, I rely heavily on a number of teaching tricks, including the

many ways music produces “magic beyond.” In particular, I find that incorporating music *into* the classroom helps transport students *out of* the classroom and so, too, out of the middle of Michigan. Often, this transportation also involves changes to their own expectations and preconceived notions about the history and traditions of Judaism. Music informs nearly every section of the intro-level Judaism course I teach: from the place of ‘Avinu Malkeinu in the liturgy, the Sephardic origins of Lekha Dodi with its image of Sabbath as bride/queen, to the writing of “Ha-tikvah” and the way the song eventually became the national anthem of the modern State of Israel. But I also draw on slightly less traditional music as well, including several of the music videos created by Yeshiva University’s a capella group the *Maccabeats*. A favorite among students is their “Les Misérables Medley,” (<http://youtu.be/qmthKpnTHYQ>) which retells the Passover story by sampling from the musical adaptation of Victor Hugo’s novel. As the video plays, I ask students to note what they recognize *and* what is unfamiliar to them. The list of recognizable elements regularly includes the basics: the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt, Moses’s birth story, the plagues. When we move to what was new to them, at least one brave person usually raises a hand and asks, “What was with the guy holding the two plates in the video?” Of course, “the guy with the two plates” provides an opportunity to introduce the idea of midrash. We next read a section from Exodus Rabbah and I explain how midrash functions as a way to address “gaps” in the biblical text. I ask students to figure out what biblical “gap” sits behind Exodus Rabbah 1:26, where young Moses, playing on Pharaoh’s lap, reaches for the jeweled crown atop the king’s head; Pharaoh and his counselors, suspicious that Moses might grow up to steal the crown, put the child to a test. As in the music video, two bowls are set before Moses: one with gold and the other with burning coals. Not shown in the *Maccabeats* rendition is how, although Moses reaches out for the plate of gold, an angel intervenes and pushes his hand toward the coals, leaving Moses with a burned tongue. As students soon realize, the midrash explains the biblical assertion that Moses was “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Exod. 4:10). With the “Les Misérables Medley,” the magic of music leads the class to the magic beyond: namely, to the textual world of the Oral Torah.

*A video example is included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

## Esther Raizen

Department of Middle Eastern Studies,  
The University of Texas at Austin

As an enthusiast of computer-assisted language instruction, I became an early adopter of the internet in the mid-1990s. I have since created and posted a large volume of open educational resources for Hebrew language instruction, relying heavily on nontextual media in the development process and in the pedagogy underlying our Hebrew curriculum, where I follow the inverted-classroom model. In this model, preparation work outside the classroom creates a firm basis for skill-activation work in the classroom itself, minimizing my involvement in activities that allow for student independent learning and maximizing the efficacy of class-time activities where student-student and student-instructor interactions take place.

In the contemporary language classroom, books have gradually moved to the background, and internet-based materials are used more and more frequently. Such materials allow instructors to respond to students' expectations for a dynamic environment in which images, sounds, animation, and interactivity are integrated into the learning process. With unlimited server capacity and robust support from our information technology services, I work with sound files in designing listening comprehension activities, flashcards with sound, and drag-and-drop and matching exercises. I ask students to articulate stories and problems based on images, and direct them to internet searches for authentic materials, including, among others, jewelry, Judaica artifacts, short movies and music clips, commercials, and photos from historical archives. All these lead into class activities in the form of conversations, debates, presentations, opinion surveys, arts-and-crafts work, role-play, and calligraphy exercises.

While I do not yet work with specific competency standards for visual literacy, my extensive use of images in both preparatory and class activities, and the established expectation that students learn how to interpret and produce visual materials, make me well positioned to adopt such standards and incorporate them into our program's learning objectives for the upcoming years.

## Seth Sanders

Department of Religious Studies,  
University of California, Davis

Since I can draw while I lead a discussion, I like to draw big pictures on the blackboard as we talk, things like the Jerusalem temple or the impaled victims on Assyrian banquet hall reliefs. Seeing the physical form of a written idea helps both me and the students think about how it could play out, and keeps all of us awake. Ancient artifacts make you think about the dialectic between physical realities and the human imagination in history. I've taken them to Assurnasirpal's throne room at the Met and read them Ezekiel's description of the hybrid monster angels with their eyes closed. When they opened them the first thing they saw were real, two-ton hybrid monster angels—the winged man-bull statues that flanked the throne of the most powerful being on earth: the Assyrian king. Seeing how an ancient object would take up space in the real world can give us surprising new insights and questions.

This is true of sound as well. Having students sing part of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice or the hymn from Revelation makes them realize this stuff was performed by people with their whole bodies, and consider how texts would have been experienced. Ultimately most of our most profound ways of knowing, learning, and doing things come from senses beyond reading. But reading, writing, and thinking are in dialogue with them. They're not things that sitting down taking notes might naturally facilitate. But if you ask the right questions of it, just a moment of seeing or singing can provoke you to think in whole new ways.

## Michael L. Satlow

Program in Judaic Studies / Department of  
Religious Studies, Brown University

One of the major challenges that I have always faced in my classes is the gap between the academic approach to religion and student expectations. We examine texts and scholarly interpretations in class but at the end of the day many students also want to know how “most” Jews might approach the topic. Frequently, what they really want to do is to talk to a rabbi, ask questions for which they already have scholarly responses, and

compare the answers. One solution to this gap is of course simply to bring a rabbi into class, but logistically and pedagogically that often poses challenges, especially when a clergy member coming from one denomination or perspective attempts to offer global answers.

In order to address this issue, a few years ago I set out to collect video clips of rabbis from different denominations (as well as other, non-Jewish clergy) answering a variety of questions. I precirculated the list of questions—all designed around my anticipated teaching needs over the next few years in a variety of courses—and then with the help of a video team supplied by the university went to their offices and conducted an interview that usually lasted about an hour. I ended up interviewing five clergy members, creating about seven hours of raw video footage in digital form. The university's technicians cleaned the footage and marked transition points. (For a public sample of how I used these clips to create a short video on why people enter the clergy, see the video “Serving God” on YouTube: <http://goo.gl/qs4o67>.)

When I am teaching a topic, I am now able to quickly find the relevant video clips for each of the clergy, and using image software on my desktop computer, splice together answers. When we are talking, for example, about the meaning of prayer, or abortion, I can then integrate this ten-minute clip into the class, usually either at the beginning or toward the end. This allows me to give “faith” a voice but to do so in a controlled manner.

*A video example is included in the online version of this article at <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org>.*

## Raymond P. Scheindlin

The Jewish Theological Seminary

Most of my teaching deals with medieval Hebrew texts. I am fortunate to teach at an institution that has a major research library with an enormous collection of manuscripts, including a huge collection of Genizah fragments. The availability of these materials makes it easy for me to supplement my textual teaching by showing students the raw materials from which these texts are derived and from which they make their way to printed editions. Putting students into such close contact with these materials makes concrete for them the ways in which

medieval Hebrew literature was used, preserved, and transmitted, besides providing them the thrill of contact with earlier times.

Thus, in my courses on Hebrew liturgical poetry, a visit to the library demonstrates, more forcefully than anything I could say, the prominence of poetry in the liturgical practice of earlier times. The illuminations in some manuscripts afford another way of looking at the texts besides the more philological work that we do in class. For a course on medieval Hebrew rhymed prose stories, I developed a session on the history of the illustrations of Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-kadmoni*, the first-known Hebrew work that was designed by the author to be illustrated. Our holdings are sufficiently extensive to

enable me to show the class nearly every premodern edition and the ways in which different illustrators interpreted the text. When teaching a course on Judah Halevi's poetry, I was able to show the class two autograph Genizah manuscripts of Halevi's documenting his famous pilgrimage. They were thrilled to find that they could make out the Arabic title (written in Hebrew letters) of the Kuzari in Halevi's own handwriting!

I almost always devote a session of my liturgical poetry courses to the associated music, inviting a cantor/musicologist who lectures, plays recordings, and demonstrates at the piano. Last year I also invited a performer who specializes in Jewish music of the Near East and Israel to demonstrate

Middle Eastern piyyut chants and to address the current piyyut fad in Israel.

I have occasionally organized field trips. For an undergraduate course on Islam and Judaism, I arranged for a trip to the 96th St. Mosque, where the imam kindly met with the class; and to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where a docent guided us through the collection of Islamic art. I once organized a tour to the Cloisters for students interested in Medieval Studies, again with the guidance of a docent. For an undergraduate class on common motifs in Greek and biblical narratives, I held an after-hours showing of the 1977 film *Iphigenia in Aulis* (with pizza) to provide an opening for our discussion of the play.

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