

PREFACE

As this volume goes to press, almost ten years have passed since the papers included in it were read (among many others) at a conference entitled *Lebush vetokh*. Bar-Ilan University hosted this conference in May 25-26, 2003, under the auspices of the Aharon & Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society & Education in the Sephardic Heritage and the Department of Music of Bar-Ilan University. The intriguing and rather unusual Hebrew title of the conference, roughly translated as *Garment and Core*, has kabbalistic overtones and addresses the dialectic tension between form/objective perception of the outside world and content/inner or subjective perception. This expression became well known in modern Hebrew literary criticism as a result of the title of David Tamar's essay on Shmuel Yosef Agnon, included in the 1959 *Festschrift* dedicated to the Literature Nobel Laureate – a title that Tamar eventually adopted for his expanded monograph on Agnon in 2003.

In choosing this title, the conference organizers challenged the participants to note the ways in which musical forms and concepts have acquired specific meanings in Jewish thought and practice, past and contemporary. After the present bilingual selection of papers from the 2003 conference took its final form, we added “Jews and their Musical Experiences” to the subtitle in order to express the recurring phenomenological approach, which underlies most of the articles. The studies in this volume therefore tackle the ways in which Jews experienced and conceived music as individuals and as isolated communities living in diaspora conditions. Negotiating the constitution of a Jewish self through music, within a wide variety of social and cultural non-Jewish milieus, transpires as another thread interlacing the articles in this volume.

Considering the variety of source materials, methodologies, and theoretical approaches employed by the authors, we have found no better way to organize the papers in this volume (from among many possible permutations) than by

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sorting them into four “gateways.” This scheme follows a medieval format, conspicuously found in medieval Hebrew literature, which offers the reader a cognitive recipe to “enter” the subject matter of the book through several possible avenues.

Gateways Two and Three of this volume are primarily spatial, binding papers together on the basis of territorial geography. We are aware, nevertheless, that by putting at the center of this book the Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe – the dominant areas of Jewish diaspora experience – we are deliberately giving way to the hegemony of Eurocentric discourses regarding “Jewish music.” Gateways One and Four, on the other hand, explore other, less tangible frontiers, such as concepts and ideas about music and musical performance, as well as geographical areas and identities removed from the dominant Euro-Mediterranean epicenter.

The Hebrew section of the book opens with a sweeping overview by Dov Schwartz on music in Jewish thought. Ranging from the Bible, the Oral Law, Kabbalah, via medieval Jewish exegesis up to the writings by thinkers from the heartland of Jewish modernity (e.g. the writings of Franz Rosenzweig and Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik), this review draws on the dichotomy of music as a medium, e.g. the instrumental uses of music as therapy, as magic, as an incitement to prophesy, etc., and music as an end in itself, e.g. as a reflection of celestial harmony or as a substantial principle of the divine conception of the cosmos. Schwartz cautiously emphasizes that this binary polarization of musical conceptualization was not the exclusive domain of any single Jewish thinker, and, rather, that hybrid combinations of both perceptions were the rule. He concludes by stating that we are still far removed from a full grasp of the subject of music in Jewish thought.

Unlike Schwartz, Rabbi Zev Gotthold, of blessed memory, takes us on a journey deep into the process of musical creativity of one of the masters of Hassidism, Rabbi Levy Yitzchok of Berdichev (1740-1809). “Dudele,” a folk song attributed to him (apparently with a certain degree of historical accuracy), is the subject of a detailed search into the multilayered veiled meanings (the *tokh*, or “core” of our title) of the apparent text and tune (the *lebush*, the “garment”). From a primordial linguistic cell, “Du,” the simplest pre-linguistic syllabic utterance of a folk song’s nonsensical refrain, and moving on to the intimate call to the Other, and eventually to the Divinity, by the mystic aspiring to cleave to Him, Rabbi Gotthold masterfully guides us into an analysis of

how the ingrained concept of the power of song developed in early Hassidism from earlier notions. The essence of the detailed musical analysis of *Dudele* included in this article is to show the deep meanings of juxtaposing diverse Jewish musical soundscapes into one piece.

The emergence of the night as the main stage for the performance of musical rituals in Judaism is the core of the article by Haviva Pedaya. Departing from the poetry of the great bard, Rabbi Israel Najara (c. 1550-1625), the author deploys a detailed narrative to seek the roots of Jewish mystical thought and practices, and their associations with nightly musical practices. From the structural, semiological analyses of the texts, Pedaya portrays the process of the emergence of a pervasive engagement with the nocturnal space as the locus for alternative spiritual experiences in Judaism.

Following the meticulously researched essays by Rabbi Gotthold and Pedaya, we move in the last section of Gateway One into discussions of a much more general nature. Eliram calls into question the almost exclusive study of the “Songs of the Land of Israel” (*Shirei Eretz Yisrael*) genre in the framework of the formation of a lyrical canon of modern Israeliness. She argues in favor of framing this repertoire of songs also within wider discussions about transposed Jewish cultures. In the English Section of Gateway One, Izaly Zemtsovsky embarks on a theoretical excursion about the centrality of hearing in music research. He introduces the concept of ethno-hearing as a conceptual tool aimed at incorporating the complexity of the phenomenological musical experience in the formation of musical cultures. Marina Ritzarev explores the concept of “vernacular” based on her own experience of changing musical (and academic) cultures following her immigration from the former Soviet Union to Israel. The meanings that old Russian songs acquired in the new Israeli society at the beginning of the twentieth century, as decoded by a Jewish Russian new immigrant from the latter part of the same century offers a touching counterpoint to established perceptions of authenticity in the Israeli folk song repertoire. In this sense, Ritzarev communicates with the premise of Eliram’s article, while at the same time articulating within a specific case study (her own experience) some of the theoretical tenets suggested by Zemtsovsky.

Gateway Two opens with a study written by Rivka Havassy on the changing scene of popular music in Salonikan Jewry between the world wars. Caught in a time of changing social currents – the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the inclusion of Saloniki in a renewed Greek nation state, and the

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incipient globalization of the music industry via recordings and broadcasts – this old, mostly Sephardic, Jewish community reinvented its song repertoire by adopting strategies of accommodation and renewal through the technique of *contrafactum*. The following two articles, by Essica Marks and Komiko Yayama, address the Arab and Turkish soundscapes in which the Sephardic Jews of Jerusalem articulate their liturgical and paraliturgical repertoires in the present day. Focusing on one cantor (Marks) or on a community of performers (Yayama), they explore the constitution of a liturgical tradition engaged in a constant dialogue with co-territorial musical cultures that, in this specific case and time, means continuing a musical dialogue with the enemy. The studies of Havassy, Marks, and Yayama all present the use of *contrafactum* as a vital strategy for reconciling new music with older texts, or new texts with pre-existing music, to create new sonic spaces suffused in contradictions.

In the English Section of Gateway Two, Edwin Seroussi draws the reader into the erratic journey of one Judeo-Spanish song from its non-Jewish Spanish origins through the process by which it acquired an “aura of authenticity” and became an icon of Sephardic culture. Francesco Spagnolo discusses the emergence of a true Orientalistic discourse among Italian Jewish intellectuals immediately after the *Risorgimento* (and the establishment of the modern Kingdom of Italy) and its musical ramifications. Perpetuating images of authenticity of liturgical music, Spagnolo points to the dissonances between the discourses of the visual (architecture, ritual objects) and the textual with that of the musical. These two articles resonate with a similar idea, the relocation of a musical style or song origins in an imagined spatial Other (medieval Spain or the biblical Orient).

Gateway Three includes two articles on Ashkenazi traditions. In her essay, Judit Frigyesi summarizes her life experience as a researcher of Ashkenazi liturgical music. She concludes that any attempt to categorize an Ashkenazi liturgical “tradition” in a fixed set of versions is doomed to failure. Each performer of the liturgy is an individual artist casting his own creation, and each performance is a unique “work.” Therefore, a scholarly approach to the Ashkenazi liturgy has to defer to the authority of each individual artist, and refrain from suggesting a generative model that can explain all performances. Rafi Ben Moshe addresses a unique genre of Hassidic tunes, the *niggunei hitbodedut*, “contemplative tunes,” which are performed by the *hassidim* of the Chabad dynasty on special gatherings dedicated to the spiritual uplifting and

religious strengthening of community members. Analysis of these tunes shows that the contour and movements of each melody is a reflection of the upward and downward oscillations of the soul in its process of seeking true religious experience.

Gateway Four opens with Daniel Sandler's essay on a sermon about music at the Temple of Jerusalem, written by the Italian Jewish physician Abraham Portaleone (1542-1612). This sermon is included in Portaleone's idiosyncratic book *Shiltei Giborim*, published posthumously in 1612, which describes in minute detail the musical pageantry of the Temple rituals through the lens of the elevated courtly musical culture of the author's contemporary Mantua. Questions regarding the sources of Portaleone's *sui generis* essay and the motivations behind this unique text, however, remain sealed. Also at a remove, and yet at the same time close in time and space, is the religious poetry of the remaining twentieth-century Karaite Jews, studied by Rachel Kollender. The fundamental dialogic nature that characterized the historical relations between Judaism and Karaism is still evident in the singing of medieval Hebrew poetry by Karaites now dispersed in new diasporas in the State of Israel and the USA.

Two studies in the last Gateway (English Section) address diverse aspects of the musical culture of the "Bukharian" Jewish community. Originating in modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, this ancient Jewish community found itself dispersed, after the fall of the Soviet Union (incidentally, much like the Karaite Jews), in a second (or even third) diaspora, in the State of Israel or in Queens, New York. Evan Rapport focuses on the variegated performance styles of Izra Malakov, one of the most distinguished representatives of the traditional *shoshmaqam* repertoire of Central Asia. Flexibility in adapting this repertoire to diverse contexts of performance underscores Malakov's unique artistry and adaptability to the shifting realities caused by immigration. Elena Reikher, on the other hand, stresses the musical repertoire for circumcision among Bukharian Jews. She finds a clear divide between different genres performed within the same ritual. Diverse forms of dialogue with the surrounding Muslim musical culture are the basis for such distinctions between genres cohabiting in the same ritual space.

In conclusion, this volume attempts to avoid falling into the trap of "Jewish music." It becomes evident that concepts of authenticity in the Jewish musical cultures emerge from very local and distinct circumstances. Moreover, such conceptualizations of authenticity arise out of the agency of specific

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actors acting at particular junctures of space and time, such as: individual cantors (Frigyesi, Marks, Yayama, Kollender); singers (Seroussi, Rapport) or singing congregations (Ritsarev, Yayama, Spagnolo, Kollender); composers (Gotthold, Havassy); and poets (Gotthold, Pedaya); or of objects designed by particular individuals that appear on the public stage at strategic moments in the historical continuum, such as: printed folk music collections (Seroussi); editions of liturgical anthologies (Frigyesi, Spagnolo); and commercial recordings (Havassy, Seroussi). Modernity appears as a mighty force behind the reconfiguration of many Jewish musical communities. Diverse diaspora conditions of the past (Italy, Central Asia, Ottoman Empire) and of more recent times sharply interrupted by world wars, the falling of empires (Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, Soviet), and relocation (USA, Israel, Western Europe) all play a crucial role in the way music is created, performed, heard (Zemtsovsky), and conceptualized (Ritzarev) by Jews. In short, the musical experience of modern Jews is articulated by a plethora of disjunctive social processes that generate a rich palette of styles and genres.

By offering substantial readings on specific individuals, songs, repertoires, styles, concepts, and texts about music, the relevance of the essays included in this volume have not dwindled roughly ten years after their date of conception but are as relevant now as they were then. We hope that this volume will join a growing literature that departs from the limited notion of “Jewish music” toward more inclusive studies of the music emerging from the rich tapestry of lived Jewish experiences of modernity.

All that remains now is for us to thank all those who made the publication of this volume possible. To Mali Ohana for the editing of the articles, to Professor Judith Cohen for her assistance in editing Daniel Sandler’s contribution, to the staff of the Dahan Center at Bar-Ilan University, especially to Ora Kobelkowsky and Shimon Ohayion, and finally to the staff of Bar-Ilan University Press, Anat Gal and Anne Lamdan, for their patience and care in the editing and preparation of this manuscript for publication.

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