

EAJS Conference Grant Programme 2018/19

REPORT

Musica Judaica Jewish Music Between Oral and Written Traditions: The 19th Century in Context

Sunday-Monday, 14-15 July 2019
Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

1. **Rationale of the event**

Musica Judaica was organised in light of the still vibrant cultural predispositions and tensions with regard to oral and written traditions. Until very recently, music studies have focussed solely on the literary or musical texture of a song or instrumental piece - necessitating written sources. Dichotomies of “written vs. oral”, often equalling “high vs. low”, “polyphonic vs. unison or monodic”, “art vs. folk/popular” have been potent in scientific as well as popular discourses of the subject.

However, these binary categories themselves can be seen as products of a scientific and aesthetic discourse which reached its peak in the 19th century, the very century which became the single most defining period in the history of Central European Jewish music during which the relation of oral and written music was altered and changed on a hitherto unknown scale within sacred as well as profane spaces. Part of this complex set of changes relates to space (ritual/representative or profane), language (scholarly/holy or vernacular), educational contexts, and gender (performances by men, women or both). The 19th century was the final point of shift from oral to written Jewish musical cultures in Central Europe. Orality continued to coexist within sacred and secular spheres, especially among East European Ashkenazim — it was sometimes even reintroduced by East European cantors and musicians in Western Ashkenazic contexts where the concept of written music had already been embraced. Oral expressions and traditions were seen by Western Jewish communities as backward, non-sophisticated or “artless” in contrast to written music which was regarded superior in terms of artistic expression and cultural transmission.

At the same time, living oral traditions of music became important sources for Jewish art composers and were part of a new awareness for European Jewish heritage and Jewish (as

well as Yiddish) nation building. East-European cantors were hired to work in the West where a growing spectrum of counter-reform activists wanted to reintroduce the dwindling knowledge of the *nusakh* into their services. 19th-and early 20th-century collections of Jewish music bear witness to these developments, embodying the wish to archive vanishing oral expressions, and prove a new appreciation of what was considered a more “authentic” form of Jewish music.

The fruitful interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish composers, performers and audiences resulted in the development of high quality choral and instrumental traditions in Western musical styles. The same composers wrote music for Jewish ceremonies as well as for Christian or secular occasions; the same performers appeared in the splendid synagogues and the lavish opera houses of the time, often in front of an audience which was no stranger to either venue. Liturgical music reflects the increasing influence of reform and popular melody. Genres like cantata, oratorio, operetta or even patriotic odes indicate the extent to which Jewish music became inspired by non-Jewish elements. From the Renaissance until the Shoah, Jewish art music spread throughout Europe and beyond. The wandering cantors, who were familiar with the intricacies of cantillation as well as of intonation, became ambassadors of their musical traditions thanks to their rigorous training in both Jewish liturgy and classical music. The musical tradition from lesser known Jewish locations encourages to rethink how centre and periphery, synagogue and folk traditions, orthodox and progressive communities related to each other in Jewish Europe.

Musica Judaica included four academic sessions which highlight different aspects of Jewish music between oral and written traditions. One session focused on the relation between sacred and secular in Jewish music. Three further academic sessions on the second day of the conference investigated the challenges of performing Jewish music, how musical output can be used for the reconstruction of Jewish life in 18-20th-century Europe, and what music tells us about the ways Jewish communities used and understood sacred texts in the cultural centres and in the peripheral towns and villages. Invited scholars of the panel discussion challenged the concept of “classical”, and drew our attention to how blurred the division between “sacred” and “secular”, “Jewish” and “non-Jewish” music is.

2. Programme and Papers

Sunday 14 July 2019 – Clarendon Institute, Walton Street, Oxford, OX1 2HG

13.30-14.00: Registration and welcome coffee

14.00-14.30: Welcome note

Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (President, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies)
Diana Matut (University Halle-Wittenberg/Hochschule für Jüdische Studien, Heidelberg)
Marton Ribary (University of Manchester)

14.30-15.30: Plenary discussion: The future of Jewish music collections

Chair: Diana Matut (Halle-Wittenberg/Heidelberg)
Martha Stellmacher (European Centre for Jewish Music, Hannover)
Mark Kligman (University of California, Los Angeles)
Hervé Roten (Institut Européen des Musiques Juives, Paris)

Collections and archives are repositories of memory and history. They form, in themselves, sources for the continuity and shift Jewish communities experience(d) worldwide, and mirror the significance that is ascribed to them by Jews or non-Jews, in a private, public, religious or scientific context at any given point in their existence. And while their role in the preservation of knowledge and musical heritage is a given, the twenty first century with its means and spectra of preservation, publicizing and participatory nature opens up a new array of questions regarding collections. These do not only concern the latter's availability and visibility, but also their meaning for performers or researchers of Jewish music in years to come. This panel discussion gave those directly concerned as scholars, curators or performers a voice with regard to these questions and the chances and challenges of Jewish music collections in the twenty first century.

15.30-16.00: Coffee break

16.00-17.30: Session 1: Sacred and secular in Jewish music

Chair: Geraldine Auerbach (Jewish Music Institute, London)
16.00-16.30: Tina Frühauf (Columbia University, New York)

“Blurring the boundaries of sacred and secular: Music for the Beer-Jacobson Tempel in Berlin”

Motivated by the ideas of the Haskalah, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, Israel Jacobson (1768–1828) created a radically new Jewish service. After first forays in Seesen beginning in 1810, he moved to Berlin, transplanting his aesthetic vision of a worship service without cantillation, but with congregational song and choral music in German, and organ accompaniment in his private home from late 1814 into 1815, and continuing it in the house of Jacob Herz Beer (1759–1829) at Spandauer Straße 72. In 1817 the local synagogue underwent renovation and services of the Berlin Jewish community moved to Beer's private prayer hall. The reformers were now forced to find compromises of their “radical” ideas. With the completion of the synagogue's renovation, Friedrich Wilhelm III officially closed the Temple in September 1823, as he had done once before, in order to avoid an inner-Jewish schism. During its short time of existence, the Temple brought about one known noteworthy work which reveals the shift that had musically taken place, an abandonment of Jewish “tradition” and an embrace of a new aesthetics that blurred the boundaries of the sacred and the secular, as well as the Jewish and the universal: *The Hallelujah* by Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864). In August 1815 Herz Beer himself commissioned his son to write the cantatine,

which the young composer dutifully executed, delivering a work for four male voices with accompaniment of an obligato organ and children's choir ad libitum. This choral work, which is testimony to a clear departure from oral traditions, is discussed in its historical and cultural context.

16.30-17.00: Diana Matut (Halle-Wittenberg/Heidelberg)

“The marvellous art of in-between: Old Yiddish songs between secular and sacred”

The world of Old Yiddish songs is, in every respect, a perfect expression of cultural hybridity and fusion of secular and sacred markers. Between song cultures of the co-territorial majority and secular, para-liturgical as well as sacred inner-Jewish traditions, Old Yiddish songs borrowed from all forms and created in turn unique characteristics that created yet another space in its own right. The marvellous art of in-between is captured in the choice of melodies, languages, topics and subjects, performers and performances was analysed in this lecture.

17.00-17.30: Jascha Nemtsov (Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, Weimar)

“Influence of biblical cantillations on art music in the 20th and 21st centuries”

The oldest part of Jewish music culture is the ritualized presentation of texts from the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), organized through a complex and highly diversified system of strict musical rules and distinct motifs (cantillations). This system was essentially created during Biblical times; it was then passed on orally for several centuries and codified in the 9th century with special signs (te'amim). Since the beginning of the 20th century, the motifs of biblical cantillations have been perceived by Jewish composers as the “most authentic” part of the Jewish musical tradition and used as a source of inspiration and “building material” in many works. As a rule, in this context the motifs of cantillation lost their connection to the liturgy and their direct relation to the text and were merely identified as the musical embodiment of Jewishness. By their archaic character and their shortness of breath they also significantly influenced the musical style of the new Jewish art music.

17.30-19.15: Dinner break

19:15-21.00: *Public keynote lecture with musical illustrations*

Venue: Oxford Jewish Synagogue, 21 Richmond Road, Oxford OX1 2J

19:15-19.30: Welcome note and introduction

19:30-21:00: Mark Kligman (UCLA)

“American Jewish liturgical music: A European legacy and beyond”

Monday 15 July 2019 – Clarendon Institute, Walton Street, Oxford, OX1 2HG

9.00-9.30: Welcome coffee

9.30-11.00: *Session 2: Performing Jewish music – Between written and oral tradition*

Chair: Gershon Silins (Leo Baeck College, London)

9.30-10.00: Alexandre Cerveux (Institut de recherche en Musicologie, Paris)

“The place of music in medieval Catalan and Provençal Jewish education”

The study of medieval Hebrew texts from Catalonia and Provence reveal that rudiments of music theory were taught in some rationalist circles. Indeed, true to the Muslim philosophical tradition, some Jewish scholars considered music as one of the elementary sciences. They considered the latter as part of the curriculum that possibly leads to philosophy and superior knowledge. This said, a question that might be raised is: what precisely did Jewish

pedagogues teach about music? Some texts display Jews' remarkable command of music theory. However, compared to the Arabic or Latin sources upon which they relied, the music theory contained in Hebrew treatises seems obsolete. Moreover, themes and notions seem to have been carefully chosen by the compilers of these texts, who aimed at a goal that is superior to the sake of music. This presentation therefore apprehended the subject from a slightly different angle: why and how did Jewish pedagogues speak about music? Answering this question led to a discussion about the assimilation of secular material in order to apprehend sacred matters, e.g. to assimilate rudiments of terrestrial music in order to apprehend the perfect harmony of God's Creation. It also shed new light on the notion of "Jewish music", with respect to the Jewish rationalist conception of music and the concept that underpins it, namely, harmony.

10.00-10.30: Enrico Fink (Orchestra Multietnica, Arezzo)
"I canti de Scola"

The public performance of synagogue song is, in itself, an act of conscious unfaithfulness – a translation of living matter to a context far removed from (and often completely at odds with) its natural habitat. Enrico Fink has dealt mostly with the traditions of the Jews in Northern and Central Italy, with local minhagim defined by a network of interactions: between the different traditions cohabiting the same spaces, between the different communities sharing a common tedesco, spagnolo or Italian descent but evolving in different geographical contexts; and above all, interactions with the surrounding, non-Jewish world. Such a complexity must be approached considering the extant (recorded and live) oral sources together with the wealth of written material available in local archives (and still much in need of scholarly attention). These materials appeared in a long span of time roughly centred around the Emancipation, a period that saw the creation of much new music and a conscious effort to conform to modern standards while attempting to preserve what was or at least was perceived as an ancient legacy. The Emancipation also served as a defining period which marked the crystallization of traditional practice into the form that contemporary communities strive to adhere to. Such scholarly reflection is what can make performance, consciously unfaithful it may be, informed, respectful and meaningful.

10.30-11.00: Hervé Roten (IEMJ Paris)
"The influence of Western written music on the French Sephardic-Portuguese traditions in the 19th century"

Since the middle of the 16th century, the South-West of France has sheltered Sephardic-Portuguese communities. After a presentation of the musical practice of these ancient congregations of "Marranos", this lecture discussed the evolution of their oral traditions after the introduction of written music in the Western style, at the beginning of the 19th century and tackled the questions of: How did the Sephardic-Portuguese Jews reorganize their musical liturgy? Who were the main actors (composers or arrangers) of that reform? What impact had those changes on the evolution of oral tradition and its transmission modalities? The lecture also consider the relation between oral and written tradition and the degree of continuity or change of this liturgical music by comparing several versions of the same prayer (oral and written, monodic and polyphonic versions) over a period of more than 100 years.

11.00-11.30: Coffee break

11.30-13.00: *Session 3: Writing Jewish history through music*

Chair: Mark Kligman (UCLA)

11.30-12.00: Martha Stellmacher (EZJM Hannover)

“Boruch sheomar and Tempelgesang: Collective liturgical singing in the Prague Jewish Community”

Multiple forms of collective singing practices were present in the thirty odd synagogues associated with the Prague Jewish Community until the Shoah. Since the late 17th century, lay groups known as “Chevra kadisha Boruch sheomar” assembled early in the morning for singing and praying according to an orally transmitted repertoire. In the course of the 19th century, several synagogues introduced synagogue choirs in their services. They initially included boys only, but they were later transformed to mixed choirs indicating an increasing professionalisation of collective singing practice. Some choirs also developed social and musical activities beyond the synagogue. In the same period, most of the Boruch sheomar societies turned into religious welfare organizations and their singing activities nearly disappeared. The paper explored different forms of collective singing in Prague’s Jewish liturgical context focussing on the repertoires of these groups, their activities and shifts of meaning. Stellmacher also explored how Jewish singing practices reflected social settings.

12.00-12.30: David Conway (University College London)

“Hebrew melodies – From London to St. Petersburg”

Isaac Nathan’s “Hebrew Melodies”, settings of lyrics written especially for him by Lord Byron, were the first attempt to present synagogue melodies as folk songs, in line with the tastes of contemporary romanticism. First published in 1815, their remarkable success owed more to Byron’s notoriety than to Nathan’s claims that his melodies dated back to the time of the Temple. Composers of Jewish birth, including Meyerbeer, Moscheles and Mendelssohn, were keen to have a copy. But it was Byron, an early example of the international superstar, who enabled the fame of the texts to spread beyond Britain. Many of Byron’s lyrics were translated or adapted by Mikhail Lermontov. The Russian poet and dramatist Lev Mey wrote his own ‘Hebrew Melodies’ inspired by the “Song of Songs”. These translations were set by Balakirev, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Rimsky Korsakov, Rubinstein and others, where they were treated more as examples of Russian Orientalism than out of interest in their origins. In Germany a raft of Byron translations, and at least one early edition of the ‘Hebrew Melodies’ with Nathan’s settings, caught the attention of composers, amongst them Marschner and Schumann. Joseph Joachim wrote three Hebrew Melodies for viola and piano inspired by Byron. Among the many others who set translations of the ‘Melodies’ during the 19th century was Friedrich Nietzsche. Paradoxically, it may have been the interest the lyrics aroused in Russia which gave some incentive to the first serious attempts to study Jewish music, when the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music was founded in the early 20th century. One of those who inspired this movement was Rimsky Korsakov, who had allegedly claimed that the time would come for “a Jewish Glinka” and whose pupils included stalwarts of the Society such as Mikhail Gnessin and Lazar Saminsky. David Conway outlined the influence of what was essentially a commercial venture by Nathan in setting a marker on perception of Jewish melody, by both Jews and Gentiles, in the nineteenth century.

12.30-13.00: Norbert Meyn (Royal College of Music, London)

“The legacy of Jewish musicians who emigrated to the UK from Nazi-Europe”

Norbert Meyn discussed practical challenges of representing the history and works of Jewish refugee musicians from Nazi-Europe in the world of concert promotion and public performance. Reflecting on his experience as a practice-based researcher at the Royal College of Music and director of Ensemble Émigré, Norbert spoke about recent projects

featuring music by Robert Kahn (1865-1951), Hans Gál (1890-1987), Egon Wellesz (1885-1974) and Peter Gellhorn (1912-2004) and explored themes including ascription of identity, national “ownership” or belonging, transcultural processes and loss.

13.00-14.30: Lunch break

14.30-15.30: Session 4: Interpreting sacred texts through music – Art music and popular expressions

Chair: Deborah Rooke (University of Oxford)

14.30-15.00: Elam Rotem (Profeti della quinta, Basel)

“New Early Music inspired by Salomone Rossi”

Performing the Hebrew music of Salomone Rossi, of which only one printed collection survived, one may wonder what other musical ventures might have taken place in Mantova, where a talented group of Jewish musicians were active. This background, along with Elam Rotem’s interest in early opera, led him to the idea of using the musical language of that period - the early 17th century in Italy - to set Biblical stories to music. This practice of reviving and delving further into the context of early music is an inevitable consequence of deep involvement with early music performance. Rotem argued that a possible way to transcend “style copying” is to adopt the very criteria used by past composers in order to generate original works. Instead of attempting to imitate external stylistic features, if one aims to understand and use rhetorical structure, contrapuntal process as well as period-sensitive criteria such as the mollum/durum dichotomy, one is in a better position to reach a faithful reconstruction of past creative ventures.

15.00-15.30: Alexander Knapp (SOAS London)

“From folksong to artsong: Inspiration or appropriation”

This discussion focused upon the legitimacy of creating “art music” arrangements out of traditional melodies, and of utilizing folk songs and liturgical chants as the “raw materials” for original compositions. Taking examples from works by established Jewish composers - as well as from my own repertoire - and with the benefit of interviews and other anecdotal evidence, Knapp explored some of the ethical, philosophical and musical problems and challenges that arose in this controversial field of activity in past centuries which continue to make an impact in the present day.

15.30-16.00: Coffee break

16.00-17.00: Panel discussion: Jewish Music between oral and written traditions

Chair: Diana Matut (Halle-Wittenberg/Heidelberg)

Mark Kligman (UCLA)

Alan Bern (The Other Music Academy, Weimar)

Elam Rotem (Basel)

This panel was the closing discussion of a conference that was mainly concerned with the various relations between oral and written traditions in Jewish music. The three invited discussants brought their very own, significant and unique approach to the question of the art of in-between orality and writing. Mark Kligman, as an expert in liturgies of various Jewish cultural centres explored the transferal of musical material into the synagogue realm. Alan Bern participated in order to explore the context of Jewish vernacular musical expressions, particularly with regard to Yiddish music and their modifications and alterations to and from

written form while Elam Rotem presented the (re-)construction of the written and unwritten in Jewish Music of the Renaissance and Baroque. Their very different fields of specialisation made for a fulminant debate about the various strategies and practices adopted in the span of over four hundred years that were part of an ongoing process of negotiation by a culture that is essentially embedded in the oral as well as the written.

**3. Public Key-note Lecture with Musical Illustrations;
in cooperation with the Oxford Jewish Synagogue**

“American Jewish Liturgical Music: A European Legacy and Beyond”

Sunday 14 July 2019, 7.15-9pm

Oxford Jewish Synagogue

21 Richmond Road, Oxford OX1 2J

Lecture by:

Professor Mark Kligman, UCLA

Mickey Katz Endowed Chair in Jewish Music

Director, Lowell Milken Fund for American Jewish Music

Musical Illustrations:

Rabbi Cantor Gershon Silins, Lead Vocal

Joyful Company of Singers

Peter Broadbent, Founder Conductor

Dr. Alexander Knapp, Accompanist

Programme:

Salomon Sulzer “Hine Ma Tov”

Union Hymnal (1897) “Into the Tomb of Ages Past”

A.W. Binder “Festival Anthem: Psalm 135” (1962)

Morris Barash “Un’tane Tokef” (1976)

Max Helfman “R’tseih” (Published 1991)

Max Janowski “Avinu Malkeynu” (1967)

Mark Kligman
University of California, Los Angeles

“American Jewish liturgical music: A European legacy and beyond”

For over three hundred and fifty years Jewish Liturgical Music has expressed a variety of experiences. With the largest wave of migrations from Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Ashkenazic synagogue music is based on its region of origins but has moved in new directions. This presentation will trace the European musical influences of Sulzer and Lewandowski to American and the subsequent developments with A. W. Binder, Max Helfman and Max Janowski. One curious point in history is a turn of events in the 1940s, at the end of era of the Golden Age of the Cantorate, where traditional styles are re-interpreted with a heavy influence from Yiddish theatre. American Jewish Liturgical Music is a dynamic and growing expression of prayer.

Peter Broadbent
Joyful Company of Singers

Peter Broadbent is the founder conductor of the *Joyful Company of Singers* and one of Britain’s leading choral conductors. He has conducted the London Mozart Players, Divertimenti Chamber Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Southern Sinfonia, the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, Apollo Voices and the BBC Singers, broadcasting frequently on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. Engagements outside the UK include concerts with the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra and Kodály Chorus in Hungary, a broadcast with the National Chamber Choir in Dublin and a European tour with the World Youth Choir in 2006. Next year he will make his Bulgarian debut conducting the National Philharmonic Choir in Sofia. He gives workshops and master classes throughout Europe and was the first Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors. In 2007 he was presented with the Pro Cultura Hungarica Award by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture for his services to Anglo-Hungarian musical relations, and in 2017 was presented with the Knight’s Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit.



One of Europe’s most prominent chamber choirs, the Joyful Company of Singers is known for its virtuosity and intensity of spirit, as well as for an astoundingly wide repertoire, ranging from the 16th Century to the present day, including many first performances. Formed in 1988 by conductor Peter Broadbent, the choir first came to prominence when it won the Sainsbury’s Choir of the Year competition in 1990. Since then it has maintained its profile in the music world, winning an impressive list of national and international competitions leading to many invitations to perform. Concert appearances include most of the leading UK festivals and regular concert tours in Europe, broadcasting in many countries as well as on BBC and Classic FM. Most recent tours have included Lithuania and Sweden.

4. Summary/results

The 19th century was explored in its various musical expressions, including liturgy and para-liturgical moments, secular and art music. It was contextualized in light of preceding periods that helped shape the 19th-century-world of Jewish music, as well as succeeding periods which continued as well as consciously shed notions from this period.

Jewish music was defined as a space in which orality and written cultures constantly met (and meet) and which served as an example par excellence for the non-hierarchical response to these two, inherently Jewish modes of transmission.

The varying traditions with regard to terminologies became evident during presentations and made for interesting and enlightening discussions about key-concepts such as ‘harmony’ or ‘theory of music’ in their pre-modern and modern contexts of Jewish thinking.

Of special importance were the panel discussions, especially the first one focusing on *The Future of Jewish Music Collections*. The panel served as a hub for information on current affairs regarding Jewish music collections but also on issues such as accessibility and the need to understand and cater for “different points of access” (Kligman) by scholars, cantors and other performers. This, of course, is also relevant for the future of collections in courses of higher education, including cantorial schools.

An important aspect that directly pertained to the topic of the conference was the “musical loop” – the process through and in which music enters an archive and then re-enters the sphere of practical music making.

Various strategies of digitization were presented and issues of ownership and legal rights discussed. The insight of various scholars who are also heads of archives or active in archival research was extremely valuable for the development of ideas on how to create interactive projects online. Possible forums for Jewish musical archivists were presented.

This conference brought scholars, musicians, Jewish cantors, representatives of Jewish music institutes and archives together, some participants representing different functions as both, scholars and musicians. The exchange was of tremendous importance in order to help facilitate a culture of communication between those active in Jewish-music-making and those researching Jewish music. Thus, both “sides” benefited greatly and the conference will reverberate in the sphere of scholarship as well as practical Jewish musicianship. It was generally agreed and emphasized by all participants as well as by conference guests who serve the Jewish communities, that this is a format should be a model for the future.

It was suggested to set up a “Musica Judaica” mailing list as an international discussion forum for scholars in all aspects of Jewish music and those interested in Jewish music scholarship. G. Auerbach suggested to set up such a list on the academic platform organized by Royal Holloway University London JISCMail.

5. Website links and departments circulated with details about the Conference

Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies: <https://www.ochjs.ac.uk/public-engagement/musica-judaica-conference/>

H-Judaic: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/discussions/4197759/conference-musica-judaica-oxford-14-15-july-2019>

British Association of Jewish Studies:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/JewishStudiesUK/posts/?ref=page_internal

European Association of Jewish Studies (Link no longer active)

Manchester Centre for Jewish Studies: <http://www.manchesterjewishstudies.org/news-blog/2019/6/17/conference-oxford-university.html>

SHGAPE: <https://www.shgape.org/feed-items/conference-musica-judaica-oxford-14-15-july-2019/>