

# The Vision of the East and the Heritage of the West: Ideological Pressures in the *Yishuv* Period and their Offshoots in Israeli Art Music during the Recent Two Decades

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At the end of February 1946, the Symphony Orchestra of the Federation of Workers, conducted by the prolific Frank Pollack,<sup>1</sup> premiered the *Semitic Suite* by Alexander U. Boskovitch (1907-64). This turned out to be one of the cornerstones of Israel's young history of art music during the *Yishuv* period.<sup>2</sup> Born in Cluj, Transylvania, Boskovitch settled in Tel Aviv in 1938 following the premiere of his *Chansons Populaires Juives* by the newly founded Palestine Orchestra (later the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra). This was a suite of folk songs of the Jews of the Carpathian Mountains that Boskovitch had arranged first for piano and then for orchestra in 1936.<sup>3</sup> After his immigration, Boskovitch effected an immediate change in style and the *Semitic Suite* rejected the tonal language of Europe and turned to heterophony and textures that emulated the Arabic *Ud* or *Kanun*.<sup>4</sup> The veteran music critic of the *Ha'Aretz* daily, David Rosolio,<sup>5</sup> wrote:

Boskovitch explicitly strives to the creation of a new musical style that is purely Eastern. He rejects all Western harmonic and melodic elements, and he creates tunes that suit the world of Arabic Eastern music; the harmonic development and the structure follow this music. Boskovitch has recognized the problem that one cannot continue in this country to compose works that are based on genuine Western music: the scenery, the life style, the environment, all call for a change of direction and another basic conception. But it seems to me, that Boskovitch's manner constitutes a quantum leap. The main problem is the synthesis of the two styles, which problem requires a solution not only in music and painting, etc. but in almost all aspects of our lives. This problem cannot be solved by being ignored. Boskovitch composes in a purely Eastern style. The Western element is eliminated in his music altogether. This is undoubtedly an interesting solution, but it is not complete and it is not satisfactory.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pollack (who later Hebraized his name to Pelleg), was a harpsichordist and a brilliant solo and chamber pianist who specialized in Bach and in contemporary music, a conductor, a composer of incidental music, and a fascinating radio commentator and lecturer.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, "settlement"; this term designated the semi-autonomous Jewish community in Palestine under the British Mandate (1919-48). See Jehoash Hirshberg, *Music in the Jewish Community of Palestine 1880 - 1948 A Social History* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> The suite was later published as *The Golden Chain*.

<sup>4</sup> J. Hirshberg, "Alexander U. Boskovitch and the Quest for an Israeli National Musical Style," in Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Modern Jews and their Musical Agendas, Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, IX (1993): 92-109. The *Semitic Suite* has been published by Israeli Music Institute (IMI). A very fine recording of the *Semitic Suite* by pianist Liora Ziv-Li is included in the anthology *Psanterin: An Anthology of Israeli Music for Piano* (Tel Aviv: The Israeli Composers' Association, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> *Ha'Aretz* was the first Hebrew daily in Palestine, first published in 1919. The German-born Rosolio (1898-1963) was the *Yishuv*'s first music critic. Although he was forced to make his living as a civil servant, with his serious, sincere, and pedantic approach to his duties, he excelled as a critic.

<sup>6</sup> *Ha'Aretz*, 1 March 1946.

In his sincere manner, Rosolio expressed the complex system of internal conflicts that dominated the heated ideological debate conducted between composers, performers, critics, columnists and listeners in the *Yishuv* after the decade of the so-called Fifth *Aliya*<sup>7</sup> (Immigration, 1931-39). This wave of immigration brought more than thirty professionally accomplished composers to Palestine within a short period, a huge number for the size of the *Yishuv* (about 400,000 individuals).<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that the immigrant composers did not know one another prior to their immigration, and no “School” headed by a widely recognized “Master” ever emerged in the country. The only one who started a group of loyal disciples with a common ideology was the creative and powerful Stefan Wolpe (1902-72). Wolpe immigrated in 1935 and made a lasting contribution to musical life in the *kibbutz* movement, which—as a socialist—he admired, as well as to the newly founded Palestine Conservatory in Jerusalem. However, his avant-garde style and uncompromising temperament created a chasm between him and his colleagues at the Conservatory and, in 1939, he returned to Europe, from where he emigrated to the United States.<sup>9</sup>

All the other immigrant composers remained in the country and, despite severe economic difficulties and the trauma of absorption, they soon renewed their creative activities. Each of these composers reacted to the new environment in his or her individual way, responding to the internal commitment to the challenge of creating a completely new high musical culture as well as to the external pressures on them. With a few isolated exceptions, no art music was created in the *Yishuv* prior to the Fifth *Aliya*, and the immigrant composers found no existing musical culture to absorb them. Quite the reverse was true. They had to create the new culture, which included the inauguration of the Palestine Orchestra (December 1936), and the British-run Palestine Broadcasting Service (founded March 1936), which transmitted alternately in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Music played an important role in the programs, and the small music department included a performing ensemble that soon became the radio orchestra, and the Palestine Conservatory with its high-level professional academy classes (founded 1933).

Each performance of a new composition evoked an ideological critique that evaluated the extent to which it would contribute to the desired emergence of a new, national Jewish style. There was no clear notion of the properties of the desired national style, save for the vague vision of an Eastern style, different from that of European music. The critics often came up with contrasting views, as in the case of the large-scale orchestral piece, *Joseph and his Brethren*, by Erich Walter Sternberg (1891-1971), the oldest of the immigrant composers. Menashe Ravina (Rabinowitz, 1899-1968), the music critic of *Davar*, the Federation of Workers’ daily (founded 1925), wrote:

The composer Sternberg refrained from any Eastern motives in his work, although it is based on a biblical subject. He composed it in an individual style, without accepting that which is considered to be modern Eastern. This is his right as the composer. However, he should not

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<sup>7</sup> Literally, “ascend”; this qualitative term designated the Jewish immigration to Palestine from 1919 as a progressive act of personal realization.

<sup>8</sup> Philip V. Bohlmann, *“The Land where Two Streams Flow”, Music in the German-Jewish Community of Palestine* (University of Illinois, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> About Wolpe, see the large-scale compilation of essays ed. Austin Clarkson, *On the Music of Stefan Wolpe* (Hillside, NY, 1997).

have depicted “The Ascent of Joseph” as the entry of a European monarch into the church, and this was the spirit of the final movement.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, David Rosolio pointed out the “salient Jewish language. Sternberg did not quote any folk tune, neither of the Jewish Diaspora nor of the Land of Israel. This work is completely free, a flight of the imagination, and its melodies and harmonies consist of elements that fully correspond to the biblical text on which the work is based.”<sup>11</sup>

The two critics regarded the link between “Eastern” and “biblical” as a given fact, yet they were in disagreement about the musical semiotics that this link signified. The principal reason for the blurring of the ideals of “Eastern” and of “Jewish” was the status of Arabic music, and the traditional music in Palestine of the Jewish ethnic communities from the East. A rich musical culture of performances of Arabic music—artistic and folk—had existed in the country for many decades in total separation from the Western music that dominated the concert stage. The two cultures co-existed in the situation known in anthropology as “compartmentalization,” by which “peoples tend to absorb and use two culture systems which are kept separate from one another.”<sup>12</sup> The first attempt to bridge the two cultures was made in the field of the research that had started with the pioneering work of Abraham Zvi Idelsohn between 1907-21.<sup>13</sup> Idelsohn’s work was followed by that of Robert Lachmann<sup>14</sup> and Edith Gerson-Kiwi, who started their research in 1935, and their principal followers Hanokh Even-Ari, Ruth Katz, Dalia Cohen, and Amnon Shiloah. This work was limited, however, to a small circle of scholars.

The first pioneering attempt to build a bridge between the two cultural worlds was the unique project of vocalist Bracha Zefira (1910-90), the first performer of Arabic and Jewish ethnic song on the country’s concert stages. Born in Jerusalem to a poor Yemenite family, Zefira was orphaned at the age of three and raised by several volunteer foster families of different ethnic origins. From these different backgrounds she learned a large repertory of traditional songs. After studying at the Jerusalem Conservatory and a brief period in Berlin, she began a sensational run of performances with improvisatory pianist Nahum Nardi. In 1939, they broke off the performances, and Zefira commissioned arrangements of the songs from nearly all the composers in Palestine at that time, insisting on Western orchestral instruments.<sup>15</sup> In her numerous performances in Palestine and in Egypt, she was accompanied by members of the Palestine Orchestra, where her career reached its zenith. Yet, in her autobiography, Zefira wrote about the frequent conflicts she had with the instrumentalists over

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<sup>10</sup> *Davar*, 23 February 1939.

<sup>11</sup> *Ha'Aretz*, 2 January 1939.

<sup>12</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL, 1964), 315.

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For a comprehensive study of Idelsohn's life and work see Israel Adler, Bathia Bayer, and Eliyahu Schleifer, eds., *The Abraham Zvi Idelsohn Memorial Volume, Yuval 5* (Jerusalem, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Edith Gerson-Kiwi, “Robert Lachmann, His Achievement and his Legacy,” *Yuval 3* (Jerusalem, 1974): 100-108; Ruth Katz, *The Lachmann Problem: An Unsung Chapter in Comparative Musicology* (Jerusalem, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> The full compilation of the song appears in Bracha Zefira’s autobiography, *Kolot Rabim [Many Voices]* (Ramat Gan, 1978; in Hebrew). See also Gila Flam, “Bracha Zephira – A Case Study of Acculturation in Israeli Song,” *Asian Music* 17 (1986): 108-125; J. Hirshberg, “Bracha Zephira and the Process of Change in Israeli Music,” *Pe'am*, 19 (1984): 29-46 (in Hebrew).

matters of playing style and sound production.<sup>16</sup> The inter-ethnic collaboration with Yemenite singers branched off in different directions, such as the short-lived activity of Sarah Osnat-Halevi on the one hand, and the sensationally long career of Shoshana Damari on the other, specifically in the latter's numerous performances with composer Moshe Wilensky at the piano.

The curricula at the conservatories and academies of music were based fully on the European model, which had been transplanted with the founding of the first music school in the country by singer Shulamit Ruppin in 1910. The professional syllabus consisted of individual instrumental or voice lessons, classes in chamber music, choral work, various fields of music theory, ear training, and the history of music. There was only a single class called "Non-European Music," which provided a review of other musical cultures. A single attempt by dancer Yardena Cohen to appear with three amateur Iraqi Jewish musicians, playing the *Ud*, *Darbouka*, and Arabic flute, soon failed due to a total lack of communication between the dancer and the musicians.

## The Three Trends and the Fourth that Followed

The confusion and the lack of a clear goal notwithstanding, three ideological trends can be discerned among the first generation of composers in the *Yishuv*.

### 1. Collective Nationalism

Alexander U. Boskovitch, who was the most articulate ideologist of early Israeli music, shaped this approach. A detailed discussion of his doctrine has been published elsewhere,<sup>17</sup> and will only be summarized here:

a. Any conscientious composer would react in his work to the dialectics of "time and place."

b. The "time and place" of the Israeli reality are expressed in the scenery, the "static landscape" that he observes around him, and the "dynamic soundscape" that he grasps through his ears. This consisted of Arabic and the sounds of spoken Hebrew in the preponderantly Sephardic accent. It was in the early twentieth century that the leaders of the *Yishuv* officially adopted the Sephardic accent, although many Jewish immigrants from Europe continued to speak with the Ashkenazic accents in their daily lives. The Sephardic accent as spoken by Ashkenazic Jews in the *Yishuv* and in Israel lacked the subtle distinction between the guttural consonances *aleph* and *ain*, as well as between *het* and *khaf*. For this reason, Boskovitch, like other composers, admired the pure Yemenite accent as practiced by singers such as Bracha Zefira and Shoshana Damari. In the 1930s and '40s, Tel Aviv was still a small town adjacent to the bustling harbor of Jaffa and the many neighboring Arab villages; Arabic was heard all over. This was even more the case in cosmopolitan Jerusalem.

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<sup>16</sup> See Amnon Shiloah & Eric Cohen, "The Dynamics of Change in Jewish Oriental Ethnic Music in Israel," *Ethnomusicology* 27 (1983): 227-52.

<sup>17</sup> See n. 4. See also Herzl Shmueli & Jehoash Hirshberg, *Alexander Uriyah Boskovitch, His Life, His Works and His Thought* (Jerusalem, 1995; in Hebrew). This monograph includes a compilation of Boskovitch's writings. See also in Hirshberg, *Music in the Jewish Community*.

c. The music composed in Israel must be totally different from the music of the Jewish Diaspora, and should be integrated into the music of the East Mediterranean. This is the reason behind the title *Semitic Suite*.

d. The renewed Jewish presence in Israel is embedded in the biblical past and in biblical Hebrew.

e. In the reality of an emerging, struggling society, the composer has to be recruited for the collective and act like a *shaliah tzibur*,<sup>18</sup> who guides the society in which he lives toward the crystallization of a musical style that expresses the collective. The composer should shun any expression of personal emotions; for this reason, Boskovitch rejected Romantic aesthetics.

f. Israeli music should not preserve the European heritage, yet it must also be different from Arabic music.

## 2. Individual Nationalism

German-born Erich Walter Sternberg (1891-1974), in a brief preview of his large-scale orchestral work *Twelve Tribes of Israel*, presented the first description of this approach.

What is our situation here? Composers from four corners of the world, of different schools, face a diversified audience, each segment of which has its own taste and expectations. It is my contention that the composer has only one duty. He should not care whether what is required from him is Palestinian folklore, synagogue chants, or melodies decorated with Russian embellishments, but should go his own way and speak his own language from within.<sup>19</sup>

Joseph Tal (Gruenthal, b. 1910) expressed the same view.<sup>20</sup> Tal has always stated that his long residence in the country, his speaking Hebrew and experiencing the Israeli reality of life are sufficient to define his work as Israeli.

## 3. Popular Nationalism

The prolific composer Marc Lavri (1903-67) made his position clear a short time before his untimely death:

As soon as I absorbed the influence of the country, when I felt myself part of it, and as soon as I acquired the language, I started to write naturally in the same style that I have maintained to the present day. I write for the audience and I wish to be understood by the audience. I want my work to evoke in the listeners the same emotions and ideas that provided me with the inspiration for my works. For this reason, I choose a simple and easily understood musical language.... I do not recognize music devoid of melody, even though a melody may be very modern.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Literally, “messenger of the community.” This is the non-professional who leads the service in the Jewish synagogue.

<sup>19</sup> *Music Hebraica* (1938). About this short-lived periodical, see Philip V. Bohlman, *The World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine 1936-1940* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> Robert Fleisher, *Twenty Israeli Composers: Voices of a Culture* (Detroit, 1997), 72 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Marc Lavri, “A Composer’s Creed,” *Tatzli*, 17 (1977): 122.

Common to the three trends was the peculiar situation of the first-generation composers. They had escaped from Europe as refugees. None of them had planned to settle in Palestine prior to the rapid political deterioration in Europe. They found themselves entrusted to a unique challenge of creating a completely new national musical culture. At the same time, the only way they were able to soften the trauma of displacement was to preserve the cultural links with the heritage of the West, assuming that what seemed to them to be a temporary madness would soon dissipate, and that they would be able to return to their musical activity in Europe.

The three trends discussed above emerged during the special circumstances in which the country found itself in the World War II years—the struggle with the British and the War of Independence (1948). The IPO was hardly in a position to invite any international conductor or soloist, and had to rely on local artists. The almost total lack of contacts with the West created the conditions of a greenhouse, which—in a way—encouraged local musical activity.

#### 4. Cosmopolitanism

The fourth trend emerged after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the renewal of links with the West. The second-generation composers joined the “founding fathers” in the early 1950s. All of them had been born in the country, or had arrived with their parents at a very young age. Tzvi Avni (b. 1927), Yehezkel Braun (b. 1922) and Ben-Zion Orgad (Büschel, b. 1926) received their initial professional training under the first-generation composers, and then traveled to Europe and the United States for further studies and festivals of new music. One of the most outstanding of these events was the annual seminar at the heartland of the avant-garde in Darmstadt, Germany, where Pierre Boulez, Karl Heinz Stockhausen, Luciano Berio, Luigi Nono, and their colleagues began their creative and experimental activity.

With all gates to the neighboring Arab countries locked and sealed, and with hardly any cultural collaboration with the large Arab minority inside Israel, many of the Israeli composers adopted the cosmopolitan approach that dominated Western music in the 1950s. This approach called for the rejection of the search for a genuine Israeli style as provincial, and for the exploration of Western innovations.

A review of the four trends indicates that the concept of a “Mediterranean School,” which has been frequently mentioned in relation to early Israeli music, is totally misleading. Even the four trends themselves should not be taken at their face value, since, in most cases, Israeli composers were involved in more than a single trend at the same time. Such was the case of Paul Ben-Haim (Frankenburger, 1897-1984), one of the leading Israeli composers. His *Lullaby for Miriam* (1945) retains the best tradition of the German Lied, and its Hebrew text is a translation of the German poem by Richard Beer-Hoffmann.<sup>22</sup> In the first of the *Songs without Words* (1952), Ben-Haim achieved a well-planned balance between two musical parameters: a purely modal melodic line free of any vertical harmonic support on the one hand, and a Western closed form with exposition, elaboration, and a recapitulation on the other. In 1968, he composed his *Metamorphosis on a Bach Chorale*, a tribute to the composer he adored above all, with a traditional rich polyphonic texture. A few months later, he wrote the brilliant *Sonata a tré* for the rare combination of mandolin, guitar, and harpsichord. This is a striking illustration of his grasp of the conception and sonority

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<sup>22</sup> J. Hirshberg, *Paul Ben Haim, his Life and Works* (Jerusalem, 1990; out of print; new IMI edn. forthcoming), 187.

of Arabic music.<sup>23</sup> Menahem Avidom (Mahler-Kalkstein, 1908-95) and Hanokh (Heinrich) Jacobi (1909-90) made a clear distinction between the folk style of their symphonic works (such as Avidom's *Mediterranean Sinfonietta*) and their chromatic or atonal works for piano. The music of Haim (Heinz) Alexander (b. 1915) displays his intriguing, interesting approach, ranging from the expressionistic atonality of *Songs of Love and Expectation* (1985) to the folk-like simplicity of *Nature Songs* (1988). Yehezkel Braun's works are always dominated by lyrical tunes that he has merged into a wide variety of styles, including the dodecaphony of the *Introduction and Passacaglia* for harp (1965). Even Boskovitch, the most determined ideologist of the regional Eastern style, turned in 1961 to rich tonal texture in his personal-romantic cantata, *The Daughter of Israel*, to Bialik's poem, which he dedicated to the memory of his beloved and adored mother who had been murdered by the Nazis. Merely a year later he made a sharp shift to avant-garde serialism in the *Concerto da Camera* for violin, followed by *Ornaments* (1964). His work was cruelly curtailed by his premature death.

One should stress that the composers mentioned above, as well as others, did not proceed in any directional stylistic change but were, rather, in a state that Leonard Meyer has defined as "stasis." One of the definitions of this is "balance among various forces,"<sup>24</sup> which Meyer has interpreted as "the absence of ordered sequential change... a multiplicity of style in each of the arts, coexisting in a balanced, yet competitive, cultural environment is producing a fluctuating stasis in contemporary culture."<sup>25</sup>

## The Model of Stasis in Israeli Music

The two first trends differed from the second two in that they were based on historical-aesthetic theories. The point of departure for them both was the romantic theory of evolution and progress. The implication for Israeli music was that a process lasting many years would lead to the emergence of a well-defined style. Thus, any listener—or at least any experienced listener—would be able to identify a composition as Israeli after listening to just a few measures; in the same way that any listener who happens to turn the dial to a radio broadcast would soon identify a piece by Fauré or Poulenc as French, by Bartok or Kodaly as Hungarian, by Vaughn Williams as British, and by Gershwin or Copland as American.

But those two first trends ignored three insurmountable obstacles.

1. As a typical immigrant culture, Israel lacked the centuries-old tradition that had created the characteristics of the old European cultures. Any attempt to create a homogeneous Israeli style was *a priori* misleading, since it would have ignored the inherent heterogeneity of Jewish society in Israel.

2. Even in European and American music, only a few of the musical works were characterized by typical national markers. Copland might sound very American

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Haim treated the *Sonata a tré* as a preparation for the *Sonata for Strings*, which features an imaginative integration of Arabic music with the rhythmic and motivic work typical of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. The *Sonata a tré* remained in manuscript form until 2001, when the composer Michael Wolpe edited it; it was beautifully performed and recorded by Yuval and Avi Avital and Yizhar Kershon. The performance encouraged them to form a regular ensemble that commissioned several compositions from Israeli composers.

<sup>24</sup> Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary (1984).

<sup>25</sup> *Music, the Arts, and Ideas* (Chicago, 1967), 102.

in *Billy the Kid*, but it is doubtful whether he would be judged as such while listening to his monumental *Piano Sonata*.

3. Western music composed after World War II was dominated by cosmopolitanism rather than by nationalism. After the brief seclusion of the war years, the composers of Israeli music could no longer ignore this powerful trend.

Meyer has pointed out that:

non-cumulative change (in the form either of varied transformation or of a fluctuating stasis) is not necessarily incompatible with stylistic vigor. For artistic activity and audience appreciation do not require—logically or psychologically—that innovation take place, or that successive change be cumulative, let alone “progressive.” Quite the contrary.<sup>26</sup>

Meyer has shown that the concept of “stasis” is not synonymous with “static,” and has demonstrated that his term explains twentieth-century events in the most comprehensive way. He has further observed that the phenomenon of “stasis” stems not only from stylistic pluralism, which implies the co-existence of numerous modes of expression that go through a constant process of change and refreshment, but is also a constant expansion of the options for expressions, analogous to an ever-expanding circle that absorbs new influences and new technologies—as in the case of computer-generated music.

Since World War II, ethnomusicological research has undergone great development. The advances in recording and photography technologies encouraged researchers to issue commercial anthologies of classical and folk music from all over the world. Ethnomusicologists have frequently been politically motivated, and they stand at the forefront of the preservation of ethnic traditions threatened by imperialism, colonialism, and war. One such example was the British John Baily, who struggled to salvage the music of Afghanistan during the dark decades of Soviet and Taliban rule. Ethnomusicologists encouraged the creation of ensembles of refugee and immigrant musicians who performed in the West. Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, and Arab musicians received prestigious positions at important American and European universities, where they promoted performing groups of mixed origins.

While the ethnic groups concentrated on preserving the old traditions, their activities led to the emergence of a conception of World Music—which soon became a category in itself, distinct from classical, jazz, and pop music. World Music differed from the ethnic group, in that it sought to combine composers and performers of different origins into heterogeneous ensembles.

### **Stasis as a Process of Diversification in Israeli Art Music**

Any attempt to map the recent creative activity in art music in Israel might initially look hopeless. The pluralism, which had made its appearance even at the time of the *Yishuv*, has been constantly increasing. According to the Israeli Composers' Association, some 250 composers are active today in Israel, so that thousands of new compositions have appeared during the last decade. Nevertheless, it is striking that the four trends discussed above still dominate the stylistic processes in the country.

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<sup>26</sup> Meyer, p. 107.

## 1. Integration of Arabic Music and the Concretization of the “Vision of the East”

The most significant change during the past two decades has occurred in the field of performance and teaching of Arabic art music. As a result of the dedicated efforts of Prof. Dalia Cohen, The Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem inaugurated the first department of Arabic music in the late 1980s. A full team of instrumental teachers, headed by the violin and *Ud* virtuoso Taisir Elias, embarked on a full curriculum, parallel to the traditional program of Western music. The Musicology Department of the Hebrew University started an ensemble of Gamelan music from Java and Bali with a large array of original instruments. The Department of Musicology at Bar-Ilan University cultivated a mixed ensemble of Eastern and Western instruments, and the newly founded Department of Music in Haifa put an emphasis on the teaching of Arabic music. The enormous wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union—about one million in number—included many musicians from the Asian areas of the FSU, who started a musical ensemble from the Islamic Caucasian countries, such as Ensemble Nava, which has made as its center the Zionist Federation auditorium in Jerusalem. The prolonged state of compartmentalization crumbled within a few years. Professional mixed ensembles of Arabic and Western instruments attracted diverse concert audiences, such as the brilliant *Bustan Avraham* (*The Garden of Abraham*) headed by Taisir Elias.

These developments had an immediate effect on the local composers, some of whom started to compose instrumental and vocal works for mixed ensembles. One of the first to respond to the new challenge was Mark Kopytman (b. 1929), who immigrated to Israel in 1972 as part of an elite group of academics who took advantage of the unexpected decision by the Soviet government to allow a limited Jewish emigration. Kopytman overcame the trauma of resettlement with amazing energy, learned the Hebrew language and became a professor of composition at the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> In 1981, he composed the large-scale orchestral work, *Memory*, which brought him his first international fame. The composition begins with a brief orchestral gesture, and then the Yemenite singer Gila Bashari steps onto the stage and sings a traditional Yemenite song. The orchestra merges into the song, and the singer slowly walks off the stage. After about fifteen minutes of rich and diverse elaboration, the singer returns with a few snatches of the song, that is, the *Memory*. The composition was written expressly for the uniquely rich, warm voice of Bashari, who performed it with several orchestras all over the world as its sole performer.

Not surprisingly, most works that combined Arabic and Western instruments have carried political and social messages. One of the most powerful was *Songs of Memory* by Michael Wolpe (b. 1960), a member of Kibbutz Sede Boker.<sup>28</sup> Elisha Porat, Wolpe's kibbutz friend, wrote the poems on which the work was based, which are a powerful statement against the controversial Lebanon War that tore Israeli society apart in the 1980s. Maureen Nehdar, a wonderful young singer of Iranian origin and a graduate of the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, first performed the *Songs*. As

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<sup>27</sup> See Yulia Kreini, ed., *Mark Kopytman, Voices of Memories* (Israeli Music Institute, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Sede Boker [literally, The Cowboy Field] is situated about thirty minutes' drive south of Be'er Sheva, the largest city in the Negev (the large southern region of Israel). This kibbutz became associated with the powerful figure of David Ben-Gurion, founder and first Prime Minister of Israel, who made an ideological gesture by settling in a small wooden hut in Sede Boker after his deep disenchantment with Israeli politics. The kibbutz houses the important Desert Research Institute of the University of the Negev.

a vocalist, Maureen herself represented two cultures: genuine classical Iranian music as well as western bel-canto singing. She performed the composition mostly, but not entirely, in an Arabic-voice production, with a mixed Western string trio ensemble that played in Arabic style with *Ud* and *Darbouka*.

Another combination performance style appeared in the works of the group of well-trained composers who immigrated to Israel from the Asian areas of Russia, such as Georgia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, in the 1990s. Benyamin Yosupov (b. 1962) integrated the *Santhur* and the *Duduk* into a large symphony orchestra in his *Sins* (2000).

Tsippi Fleisher (b. 1946) took the most decisive step in the direction of concretization of the "Vision of the East." She received a university degree in Arabic, mastered literary as well as spoken Arabic, and established close connections with Arabic musicians in Israel and Egypt. She composed many of her works using Western ensembles, based on poems written by prominent classical and contemporary Arab poets. Especially significant is her imaginative *Hexastichon*, which is a set of six versions of a setting of a powerful lyrical poem by the poet, philosopher, literary scholar, and painter Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (b. 1919). The song is performed by a mixed choir, alto singer, and a baroque ensemble of oboe, cello, and harpsichord, string quartet, harp and string quartet, harp solo, and two pianos, so that the music is differently expressed with each production. The performance held on 17 January 2004 in Tel Aviv reached an unforgettable climax, with the wonderful singer Eti Ben-Zaken as soloist, in an Arabic voice production reminiscent of the legendary Um Kulthum.

## 2. The Continuation of the National-Collective Trend

This trend continued in two directions: composition of works that focused on the expression of the spiritual world of the Jewish collective in general, and of the Jewish collective in Israel in particular. These works no longer display the rejection of the Diaspora culture typical of *Yishuv* Zionism, and include the few functional liturgical works that were composed in Israel. Unlike the large Reform and Conservative congregations in the United States, which, for decades, commissioned scores of liturgical works, their Israeli counterparts were too small and financially strapped for such endeavors. A few Israeli composers were commissioned by American synagogues, among them Ben-Haim (*Saturday Night Service*). Yet other Israeli composers wrote religious works intended for concert performances, such as *Sabbath Cantata* by Mordechai Seter (1916-94) and Orgad's *Mizmorim (Canticles)*. The most significant masterpiece in this realm has been Seter's *Tikun Hatzot (Midnight Vigil)*, a monumental oratorio based on traditional Yemenite songs and a libretto by Mordekhai Tabib, for a narrator, three choirs, and a large orchestra. The leading representative of this trend nowadays is Betti Olivero (b. 1954), who has hit the right balance between a markedly original compositional conception on the one hand, and an expression of the Jewish collective above and beyond any narrow ethnic definition. Most of her works were written expressly for the unique personalities of specific performers, such as Esti Keinan-Ofri in *Juego de Siempre*, Twelve Ladino Folk Songs (1991) and the great performer of Hassidic music, clarinetist Giora Feidman, in *Mizrah (East)*.

## 3. The National-Popular Trend

This trend has returned to the music of the *Yishuv*, largely in nostalgia. It began with radio and television broadcasts that returned to the stage several of the great veterans of Hebrew folk songs, with new arrangements of selections from this enormous repertory. At the same time, Gila Flam, Director of the Music Department at the National and University Library in Jerusalem (JNUL) initiated a systematic collection of archives of folk songs, largely written by composers who had recently passed away. The arrival of each archive was marked by a concert at the library, attended by full houses of excited and responsive listeners. Students of the Vocal Department of the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem performed most of the songs, accompanied by piano. These performances revealed that most of the songs by Sasha Argov, Moshe Wilensky, Daniel Sambursky, and Marc Lavri were strikingly close to the genre of the art song (the Hebrew Lied).

The most dedicated representative of this trend was Michael Wolpe, who has made an extensive study of early Israeli art and folk works, many of which he brought to performance. Nostalgia dominates several of his works, such as his second *Trio* for piano, violin, and cello, which is a set of variations on songs by Sasha Argov, David Zehavi, Yedidia Admon, Moshe Wilensky, and Mordkhai Zeira. His large-scale work, *The Twelve Months of the Year*, is embedded with scores of quotes from folk and traditional Israeli songs that deal with the Jewish holidays in their local, agricultural interpretation.

#### **4. The National-Individual Trend**

This final trend has characterized many Israeli composers, yet it frequently has been merged into the cosmopolitan trend. A case in point is the opera *Dear Son of Mine* (1995) by Haim Permont (b. 1950), to a libretto by Telma Eliagon. This intensive and anguished chamber opera probes the most sensitive and exposed nerves of modern Israel: the main issue is bereavement—the grief-stricken life of a couple living on a small farm after the loss of their son in an unidentified military action. The mother, Rachel, lives only in the past, with the memories of her son, whereas her husband, Yigal, makes desperate attempts to find consolation in his cherished orchard, in his warm feelings towards the young Arab who helps him in his work, and in his love affair with a lonely single mother, an immigrant from America. The opera thus also raises the painful issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the trauma of immigration. Permont's musical language is an individual synthesis of the Italian Verismo of Puccini, Alban Berg's rich harmony and strict formal organization, combined with two outstanding Arabic songs. Zvi Avni (b. 1927) wrote his powerful *Meditations on Drama* and *Program Music 1980* in rich atonal harmony, into which he combined an animated instrumental declamation of Jewish prayer and oriental motifs. Ami Ma'ayani (b. 1936) combined Western harmony with *maqamat* in his concertos for violin and for harp.

### **Two Conclusions**

1. The ideological trends that guided the “founding fathers” of Israeli music between 1930-60 were the points of departure for all further developments in Israeli art music.

This is analogous to the realm of the infrastructure of professional music education and performing ensembles that were formed during the period of the *Yishuv*.

2. I wish to conclude with a far-reaching statement. The main objective of the composers and cultural critics of the *Yishuv*, that is, the crystallization of a style of genuine Israeli music, which would express the inner spiritual world and the reality of life of the local Jewish society, has been achieved. Yet, paradoxically, the result is the opposite to that which had been envisioned at the beginning of the process. The Israeli style is not a synthetic unified entity that enables identification within a few measures. Quite the contrary. It is a rich syncretism of sources, influences and methods of expression, which constitute a superb representation of Israel's extreme heterogeneity. The Israeli style simultaneously strives in three directions: to create a genuine national identity, to further the assimilation into the globalization process, and the continued search for links with the East.