Philip V. Bohlman

THE MUSIC OF JEWISH EUROPE

The Paradoxical Presence of a Non-minority Minority

Paradox haunts the identification of Jews as a minority or migrant culture in Europe. It pushes them to the cultural peripheries and marks them as foreign and transient in the centres of European politics. Jews do not so much build and occupy the cities of modern Europe as pass through them. They remain *shtetl*-dwellers [lit. 'little city'], denizens of the border regions and ghettos. The paradox of the minority establishes their status as powerless, dependent by definition on the majority and its hegemony. Rather than contributing to the culture of Europe as modern, global, and cosmopolitan, migrant and minority, Jews take their presence only as a subculture, surviving by adapting, compromising, and accepting influence from the majority. Only as a minority could Jews become the victims of Richard Wagner's mid 19th century invectives against "Judaism in Music" (Wagner 1995). Only as migrants could Jewish musicians be relegated to the historical role of non-creative performers, accompanying European history rather than making it. As a minority, Jews lived in a Europe that was not really their own. They automatically constituted an otherness measured against the majority's 'selfness'. In Europe's modern sense of historical progress, Jews in Europe too often find themselves relegated to a "people without history" (Bohlman 1997).

This chapter tells a different story and seeks to understand a different history about Jewish musicians in Europe and musicians in Jewish Europe. The concept of 'Jewish Europe', as embraced in the chapter title, resists the conditions of minority status. In Jewish Europe, centres and peripheries are realigned, and music histories accumulate different canons. The musicians of Jewish music make audible a different Europe, and in so doing they also contribute to the larger goal of the present volume, understanding through diverse musics what the authors consider to be a Europe of difference.

The chapter unfolds as a counterpoint of explorations of ontologies and chronotopes – times and places in European history – in which Jews and

Jewish musicians were central, not peripheral. In the broader history of European art music, for example, Jewish contributions to Renaissance and Baroque early-modern styles in Italy were crucial. Musical modernism in the first half of the 20th century is unthinkable without a powerful Jewish presence. European popular music and film music emerged from Jewish music history at the urban centre. The historicism and hybridity that transform European music today into a mix of styles and soundscapes in vertiginous transition are inseparable from the massive tragedy that befell Europe's Jews in the 20th century.

The Jewish musics the reader encounters in this chapter are therefore not only the sounds of remote villages or minority settlements at the edge of the city. They are not the symbols of others or strangers, sojourners from elsewhere. Jewish music was and is the everyday music, that of history unfolding in the presence of all Europeans.

THE VIRTUAL JEWISH MUSIC OF POST-HOLOCAUST EUROPE

Revival, renaissance, return: On the surface, it would seem that Jewish music is back again, rising from the destruction wrought by the Holocaust, moving from the peripheries of postmodern diaspora. Musically, no 21st century revival has exerted a greater presence in Europe than that of *klezmer*, the ensemble of Eastern European Jewish dance and popular music that has won over audiences across the continent with its mixture of the sonic shtetl – the village sound of East European Yiddish culture – and American jazz and popular music. Klezmer music mixes the Old World with the New, and it does so by joining traditional musicians, who presumably came of musical age with Jewish folk music and younger musicians who transform the sounds of an earlier generation to produce dialects of popular music they claim for themselves and for Europe today. The historical mix of past and present is crucial to klezmer, so much so that its reception is referred to as *the klezmer revival*. To the traditional complement of a quartet of string instruments (two violins, one melodic, the other rhythmic, a viola, and a small bass violin) have been added a more modern, popular contingent, sometimes pulling the klezmer sound toward Eastern Europe (e.g. with the *tsimbalom,* or large hammered dulcimer), sometimes toward America (e.g. with the clarinet and saxophone).

So prevalent is klezmer on Europe's festival and recording scene that many regard it as the symbol for healing the wounds left by the Holocaust. Klezmer in 21st Europe thrives in the West no less than the East, even though it was largely unknown outside of Yiddish-speaking Europe prior to the Holocaust. Urban Germans flock to klezmer concerts and passionately

Fig. 1 – The Klezmer House *Restaurant and Hotel, Kraków.*

Photo by Philip V. Bohlman

Fig. 2 – Advertisement for the Belgrade performance of Kroke on 27th May 2008, following the European Song Contest 2008.

Photo by Philip V. Bohlman

learn in regular jam sessions and workshops, and yet klezmer was virtually unknown in the cosmopolitan and modernist Jewish culture of German-speaking Europe. Klezmer serves as the umbrella for everything that Jewish music is and can be. It can be old-timey or jazzy, folk-like or avant-garde. It can draw musicians from other traditions of world music into it – the African, Celtic, South Asian, and Middle Eastern sounds of other European minorities.

In so doing, klezmer translates the Jewish into the global, reinstating and remembering the diaspora that also came to an end with the Holocaust. Klezmer becomes the most powerful symbol of what Ruth Ellen Gruber calls 'virtually Jewish,' identity made ephemeral and illusive through electronic transmission. As Jewish music in contemporary Europe, klezmer musically marks an aporia, a time and place of absence and emptiness.

Other modes and practices of Jewish music-making also accompany the announcement of what some European cultural organisations call the 'Jewish Renaissance.' The UK magazine adopting that name (*Jewish Renaissance: Quarterly Magazine of Jewish Culture,* vol. 1, 2002) charts a European cultural landscape of rebirth and renewal. The three musical articles of volume 6, number 4, include a study of the Swiss-American-Jewish composer Ernest Bloch (Knapp 2007), the *shofar* in religious and classical music (Miller 2007), and 'hip spirituality' (Eiseman 2007). Academic articles, theatre and the arts, and extensive reviews join a special section devoted to the 'Jews of Denmark.' Most notable is the very comprehensiveness of Jewish renaissance in European culture and the arts. Jewish music in contemporary Europe depends no less on rediscovery than on renaissance (cf. the classic study of the 20th century Jewish music renaissance, Weisser 1983).

The song traditions of Europe's two largest Jewish regions – *Ashkenaz,* in which Jews spoke the numerous dialects of Yiddish, and *Sepharad,* in which Jews spoke Ladino after the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the 15th century – both enjoyed rediscovery at the end of the 20th century. Yiddish song became the repertoire of Eastern European Jewry during the post-1989 processes of European reunification. Sephardic song relocated Jewish history to Mediterranean Europe, historically connecting the Sephardic diaspora to the Age of Discovery that also began in 1492 to the war sweeping across the Balkans, where Sephardic Jews had built new communities at the onset of early modern Europe. Wherever one searched in Europe's past, there was Jewish music to rediscover. I myself, as the Artistic Director of a Jewish cabaret ensemble, the New Budapest Orpheum Society, must admit to participating actively in the rediscovery of Europe's Jewish music (see New Budapest Orpheum Society 2002).

If revival and renaissance signal rebirth and renewal, they also draw our attention to the place of death and silence. It is critical to recognise the

silence of Europe's Jews – and of Europe's other minorities – as an historical condition that the present does not cover with festivals and celebrations. Jewish music remains absent from the soundscapes of many 21st century European musics. Goffredo Plastino has critically revealed the extent to which Italian jazz and popular musicians have pushed Jewish music from the repertories and recordings they compile to represent the Mediterranean (Plastino, forthcoming). Sephardic music is silent once again in the Balkans, failing to survive the wars of the 1990s (see, however, *Shira u'tfila* 2006). Entire national communities, such as that in Romania, struggle to retain their distinctive liturgical musics because of the total unavailability of musical specialists, especially cantors, for their synagogue services. In many places in Eastern Europe it is difficult to worship as a Jew and as a Jewish community (see Bohlman 2000).

It is important to remember that silence resounds also in the revival of anti-Semitism, which has swept across many areas of Europe and European society. The silencing of anti-Semitism may be local, expressed through the unrelenting willingness of neo-fascists to vandalise synagogues and cemeteries. It is also present on national and international levels, for example, in the repeated calls for boycotting Israeli academics and cultural organisations, or through public censorship of Jewish books and other media, as at the 2008 Turin Book Fair. The silencing of music, too, is part and parcel of what marks a religious and cultural community as minority, forcing them to choose migration as a means of survival. The celebrating and silencing of Jewish music at the beginning of the 21st century remain inseparable.

ON THE MEANING OF JEWISH MUSIC IN EUROPE

Historically, Jewish music has had many meanings in Europe, some reflecting the distinctiveness of Jewish culture and identity, others representing the interaction between Jewish communities and the larger societies of which they were a part. When Jews began extensive settlement in Europe after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD, religious musical practices accompanied ritual and liturgy in the synagogue and everyday practice in the family and community life of the diaspora. Diaspora musical practices were dynamic, not least because of the ways they expressed the geographic separation from Jerusalem and the historical Land of Israel, *Eretz Yisrael*. In contrast to the centrality of sacred music in the Temple, the ritual and liturgy of the synagogue responded to the distinctiveness of the culture encountered by a diaspora community. We witness the responsiveness of sacred music historically in the almost two-

millennium presence of Jews in Europe through the formation of local and regional musical rites and traditions, or *minhagim* (sing.: *minhag*). Anchored in traditional responses to sacred texts, the musical dimensions of minhagim were open to the influences of musical specialists in a Jewish community – a cantor/composer such as Solomon Sulzer (1804–1890), who created the Viennese Rite [*Wiener Ritus*] in 19th century Austria-Hungary (see Avenary 1985) – and musical styles, secular and sacred, from elsewhere. Because of the responsiveness of sacred music and musicians Jewish music became fully European, reflecting the difference and similarity of European music history until the present (Idelsohn 1929).

The meanings of Jewish music in Europe also result from religious and aesthetic perspectives on embodied practice. The role of the body as a vessel for music has its origins in biblical and diasporic distinctions between vocal and instrumental practices. Whereas the invention of musical instruments is accounted for by Old Testament narratives in Genesis, the first book of the Torah, and in later books, such as the Psalms, with references to sometimes sonorous ensembles of instruments (e.g. in the 150th Psalm), instruments were consciously removed from ritual practices with the expulsion from Jerusalem and the onset of diaspora. Theologically speaking, vocal practices – prayer, cantillation and recitation, and liturgical and paraliturgical song – were permissible, providing a set of core meanings in European Jewish history. Aesthetically speaking, instruments resulted from and facilitated Jewish music-making in the public sphere, even when that meant intensive interaction with non-Jewish musicians and social settings. The vocal-instrumental dichotomy finds its way into the discourse about Jewish music in Europe, for example, into the term *klezmer* itself – *kleh* = 'vessel' + *zemer* = 'song' – which first appeared sometime in the fourteenth century (Salmen 1991).

Ambivalence, contradiction, and paradox all accompany modern attempts to understand what Jewish music did sound like and what it might sound like. Claims to musical authenticity are at best speculative, but most often grounded on imaginative endeavours to retrieve a past that has been forever lost. Prior to the Renaissance, there is far more evidence about what Jewish music should not be than about what it really was. Writing in the twelfth century, the great Jewish polymath, Maimonides (1135–1204), placed considerable restrictions on what he called "listening to music," even as he opened an aesthetic space for it in medieval Iberia and *al-Andalus*:

> And in reality it is the hearing of folly that is prohibited, even if uttered [i.e. accompanied] by stringed instruments. And if melodised upon them there would be three prohibitions: (1) the prohibition of listening to folly (follies of the mouth), (2) the prohibition of

> listening to singing (*ghina'*), I mean playing with the mouth, and (3) the prohibition of listening to stringed instruments. (quoted in Farmer 1941: 16)

As Jewish music changed in response to the Age of Discovery, the social changes of early modern Europe, and the modernity that followed the Enlightenment – and its Jewish form, the *Haskala* – questions about its meaning and sound multiplied. The compositions for the synagogue and Jewish community (e.g. *Shir asher lishlomo,* or *Songs of Solomon,* ca. 1623; see fig. 3) by the great Mantuan composer Salamone Rossi (ca. 1570–ca. 1628) are stylistically almost indistinguishable from his non-Jewish works. Searching for Jewishness in the music of Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, and Mahler is similarly vexing, all the more so because of the assaults of anti-Semites against them and the attempts in Nazi Germany to silence them. The multiple meanings of Jewish music in Europe are more rather than less critical for the central theoretical argument of this essay, namely that the intensive and extensive engagement of minorities and migrant cultures with music through their many musical traditions empowers them actively to transform themselves from minorities into Europeans.


קאנטו
חשירים
אשר לשלמה
Appresso gli Illuſt. Sig.
Pietro e Lorenzo Brag.

Fig. 3 – Salamone Rossi, Shir asher lishlomo [Songs of Solomon], ca. 1623 (title page).

FROM PERIPHERY TO CENTER, ORALITY TO LITERACY

Synagogues spread across Europe, the sacred sites where Jewish music historically sounded and today resounds. Aesthetically and theologically, the music of the synagogue is the least open to question about its identity as Jewish and local. Woven into liturgy and ritual, cantillation and song in the synagogue convey a language distinctive of Jewish belief, Hebrew. In the course of European Jewish history, however, other languages, usually through a combination of vernacular and literary usage (as in 19th century Reform and liberal Judaism in Central and Eastern Europe), did enter some musical practices, accompanying and embellishing, rather than eliminating, the liturgical presence of Hebrew. Whether textually anchored in biblical tradition or a vehicle for the elevation of religious practices, sacred song powerfully conveyed identity to the Jewish community and provides a crucial text for the interpretation of European Jewish history. The historical power of sacred song in 19th century Vienna was sufficient to convince community leaders to turn to Ludwig van Beethoven to compose a new work for the dedication of their new *Stadttempel* [city temple] in 1826, even if Beethoven failed to complete the *oratorio* or *cantata* by the end of his life. As the canonic compilation of song for the Viennese Stadttempel took shape during the course of the next generation, published in 1841 as *Schir Zion* and edited by Vienna's chief cantor, Salomon Sulzer, it did succeed in attracting other compositions by the leading composers of the day, most notably Franz Schubert, who contributed a setting of the 92nd Psalm in Hebrew (see Sulzer 1865).

In the course of modern European history, the synagogue increasingly generated debate about the identity of both Jewish music and the Jewish community in European society. Would sacred song provide a conduit between the sacred private sphere and the secular public sphere in Europe when Hebrew was supplemented with a local vernacular? Would tensions over the inclusion of women's voices in the polyphonic texture of 19th century synagogue compositions enable new forms of exchange between the sexes? Did the sometimes hotly contested 'organ war' [*Orgelstreit*], in which parishioners and musicians struggled over the admissibility of musical instruments in the synagogue, signal a Europeanisation of Jewish music (see Frühauf 2008)? The historical answers to all these questions reveal that synagogue song was of enormous importance, not because it isolated Jews from European society, but rather because it provided them with new and changing ways to interact with the culture at its centre.

It was from the European synagogue that Jewish sacred musical professionals emerged. The first modern musical professional was the cantor, a modern transformation of the figure if the *chazzan*, who had

traditionally combined prayer leading with other religious duties in the Jewish community. In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the cantor's musical undertakings expanded exponentially as he – or she, by the turn of the 21st century – moved from the solo voice in the sacred service to choir director, composer, and musical director of Jewish musical activities outside the synagogue (Bohlman 1994). The musical professional further expanded the conduits between Jewish and European society, so much so that star singers, such as Joseph Schmidt (1904–1942), acquired fame both for performances on the synagogue stage and appearances in opera and film (cf. *The Musical Tradition of the Jewish Reform Congregation in Berlin* 1997).

In contemporary Europe, the synagogue's symbolism for the centrality of Jews and Jewish culture in European history is growing even as the continent struggles to reunify and heal the fissures wrought by the Holocaust. It was the music of the synagogue that was silenced on *Kristallnacht*, on 9th November 1938, when Nazis burned synagogues, also throwing music and organs into the streets. In former Jewish centres throughout Eastern Europe, synagogues stand empty and silent, the communities they previously served devastated during the Holocaust. The silence of the music in the synagogue serves not only as a reminder of the past but also as an impetus to reconcile through revival and renaissance.

The reunification of Europe after 1989 unleashed a wave of synagogue restoration, not only in the communities destroyed through pogrom and the Holocaust, but also in the metropolitan centres of Western Europe and Mediterranean Europe (see Bohlman 2000). Whether in Jewish communities without Jews or in those with new and growing communities (such as those in Central Europe providing spiritual homes to Jews migrating from the former Soviet Union and today from Russia), music again provides the focal point for expressing Jewish identity. As in the renovation of Europe's 'largest synagogue,' Budapest's Dohány utca Synagogue, in the 1990s, considerable effort and expense were invested in restoring the organ. Synagogues provide a space for concerts and a stage for Jewish choirs on tour. Synagogue musicians also produce CDs of Jewish music, often juxtaposing the local minhag with the sounds of revival, and offering them for sale in street kiosks and museum shops alike (e.g. *Shira u'tfila* 2006). The resounding of European sacred song in the restored synagogue reminds us not only of virtual and real Jewish musical traditions, but it sustains the historical struggle of Jews in Europe seeking to reclaim the centre of a European society that has so often pushed them to the periphery.

BETWEEN EAST AND WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH, SACRED AND SECULAR

Jewish music in Europe resonates, historically and at present, across a landscape formed of many complex levels. Jewish musicians and those making music in Jewish communities have by necessity moved across that landscape, following journeys motivated at times by sacred goals – shrines and pilgrimage sites attracting them – and at other times forced because of prejudice and pogroms – danger and devastation repelling them. Until the 19th century, when Jews in many areas of Europe were permitted to own land for the first time only, Jewish Europe appeared to a large degree as the result of spaces formed only by dynamic movement. The great migration from the Jewish centres along the Rhine River, especially in the imperial seats of the Holy Roman Empire (Speyer, Worms, and Mainz, for instance), was the result of widespread pogroms in the 14th century. It was this attempt to expel Jews from Central Europe that led to the Jewish settlement of Eastern Europe and the eventual efflorescence of Yiddish culture and music by the 19th century. Similarly, the *reconquista* and the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the 15th century led to the spread of Sephardic culture and music across the European coastal areas, not only along the Mediterranean, but also in the Netherlands and the British Isles.

As a condition of European Jewish settlement, diaspora has both Jewish and non-Jewish causes, and therefore the musical response to the various processes of diaspora shape music in different ways. In the *longue durée* of Jewish history in Europe diaspora may give physical, even geographical shape to Jewish music. The synagogue, for example, is 'oriented' toward the East, and all vocal practices within it are directed toward the altar, designated as *mizrakh* [Hebrew, 'East'], symbolically the location of the destroyed temple in Jerusalem and the place of eventual return from the diaspora. In related but also different ways, the return from diaspora leaves a spatial imprint on the music of pilgrimage. In the annual cycle of sacred holidays, for example, *Sukkot*, *Shavuot*, and *Pesach* [Passover] all enact through music and song the return from diaspora to Jerusalem (e.g. in the injunction at the end of the Passover meal, or *seder, "ba-shana ha-ba be-yerushalayim"* – "next year in Jerusalem").

Jewish Europe also contains musical landscapes that reveal the distinctive histories of the Jewish communities along East-West and North-South axis. In the modern era, the East-West axis, with Central and Western European communities at one end and Eastern European communities at the other, reflected divergent histories – and music histories – between large regions of Ashkenazic culture. Just as Yiddish marked a more traditional

culture in Eastern Europe, maintained through a language spoken almost exclusively by Jews ('Yiddish' translates as 'Jewish'), so too were and are the folk song and folk music of the East regarded as more traditional. At historical moments when Jewish communities in Western Europe sought to revive ethnic and religious identity – at the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 21st – it was therefore Yiddish folk song and klezmer music, both musics of the Eastern Ashkenaz that provided the ideal models for renaissance and revival (see Bohlman 2005).

The North-South axis developed over several millennia during which the differences between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewish traditions expanded. In both traditions such differences resulted from the patterns of cultural exchange with the surrounding non-Jewish communities as well as with Jewish communities in Europe and in the Eastern Mediterranean. Liturgical practices developed their own linguistic and musical dialects in both North and South. Secular music, too, unfolded along distinctive historical paths in North and South, for example, the narrative, ballad genre of *romance* in the Ladino tradition of the South, which has become emblematic of Sephardic song.

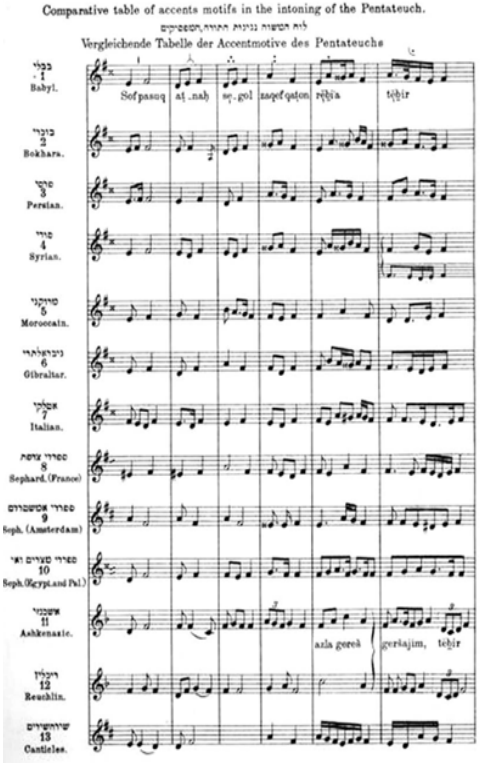

Fig. 4 – "Comparative Table of Accents Motifs in the Intoning of the Pentateuch" (Idelsohn 1923: 44).

It was the dynamic quality of Jewish musical landscapes in the diaspora that inspired the major undertakings to describe and represent Jewish music in Europe in the 20th century, particularly in the lifework of Abraham Zvi Idelsohn (1882–1938). A cantor and musicologist from Latvia, who was educated in Berlin and Leipzig, Idelsohn turned to the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna to sponsor a recording expedition to Jerusalem on the eve of World War I. From 1911 to 1913, Idelsohn made wax-disc recordings in Jerusalem, attempting to capture as many different Jewish traditions as possible at their point of historical convergence in Jerusalem (for modern digitised CDs created from his field studies see Lechleitner 2005). Drawing upon transcriptions from his field recordings and European manuscript and print collections, Idelsohn published his *Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz* [Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies] in ten volumes over a span of some 18 years (Idelsohn 1914–1932). The first five volumes, stretching from the Yemenite Jews (vol. 1) to the Moroccan Jews (vol. 5), broadly included the music of the Eastern and Sephardic communities. The second set of five volumes began with 18th century German synagogue traditions (vol. 6) and concluded with the Hassidic Jews of Eastern Europe (vol. 10).

The significance of the Idelsohn *Thesaurus* cannot be underestimated. First of all, its transcriptions and analysis expansively drew repertories from many Jewish communities – it is safe to say that Idelsohn meant to represent *all* communities to the extent this might be possible – in a single, modern anthology. History and geography, as well as ritual, were drawn together as Jewish. Second, Idelsohn clearly represented the differences within and among Jewish communities in the Mediterranean and in Europe, powerfully asserting the mutual impact and exchange that results from a musical sense of place. The *Thesaurus* and the recordings it represented were nothing less than a musical map of Jewish Europe (see fig. 4 for a table comparing different melodic styles used in the cantillation of the Torah).

MUSICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF IN-BETWEENNESS

European history and cultural geography, and their impact on Jewish cultural and musical practices, have left a significant impact on the vocabulary of modern European cultural history. Metaphors such as the shtetl and the *ghetto,* with their dialectic of tension between the traditional and the modern, between music isolated and music acculturated, between Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities, grew from Jewish forms of settlement in Europe. The shtetl has historically been the designation for Jewish village culture. It was in the shtetl that Jewish folk song and folk music flourished, expressing

the intimacy of a Jewish past and a belief in authenticity. Despite claims of isolation, the shtetl was also the site of a dynamic musical life, for example, the interaction in many areas of European shtetl life between Jewish and Roma musicians. Nonetheless, as a symbol of the past and its traditions, the shtetl frequently symbolises the source for recovering the past. Yiddish song and film idealises the shtetl, just as they mourn its passing with modernity.

If the shtetl came to represent a utopian Jewish world, the ghetto came to represent a dystopian Jewish encounter with modern Europe. The word ghetto itself first described the peripheral district of Venice (in Venetian dialect, 'the iron foundry') into which Jews fleeing the expulsion from Spain and Portugal were forced from the 16th century onward. The cultural and musical life of the ghetto was the product of hybridity, different traditions converging in the urban space made available to them. Sephardic, Eastern, and Ashkenazic traditions, therefore, mixed together. The sounds of the non-Jewish city formed a mix from which new popular musics emerged.

By the 19th century, the term ghetto was applied to the urban Jewish neighbourhoods throughout Europe that were forged from migration and industrialisation. The Jewish ghetto, therefore, became the site for styles of popular music that endure until the present. Cabaret in Vienna's Leopoldstadt or London's East End is no less the product of the Jewish ghetto than is Tin Pan Alley.

The modern models of Jewish urban music have been critical for reassessing the ways in which Jewish music is not isolated in Europe, and by extension is not simply the music of a minority or migrant culture. Jewish urban structures enhance rather than hinder the exchange of musical styles and repertories. They provide the economic and social structures that generate new forms of entertainment and musical exchange. They contribute to the ways in which Jews moving into the 19th century could integrate into an urban economy and contribute to nascent forms of multiculturalism, not least in urban musical life.

The European metropolis also contained the conservatoires and cultural conduits upon which Jews moving to the city in the 19th and early 20th century seized, transforming both Jewish and European history in the modern era. Europe, today, would be very different had the shtetl and ghetto not transformed Jewish life in the modern era.

MODERNITY, MODERNISM, AND THE JEWISHNESS OF EUROPEAN MUSIC

How Popular Music Became Jewish. With this provocative title for an article published several years ago (Bohlman 2006), I intentionally attempted to articulate a set of assumptions about the Jewishness of music in 20th century Europe and beyond. Claims about modern music's Jewishness already began to proliferate in the 19th century, not only in Wagner's infamous essay, but also in numerous tracts that expressed both the anxiety and hopefulness that accompany modernity, and found expression through modernism. By the 20th century, especially in the period between the world wars, modernism itself – in music but also in the other arts and the sciences – was attributed to Jewish influence and participation, whether merited by the numbers and importance of individual artists or not (e.g. see the essays in Bohlman 2008).

Far more important than whether such claims are either verifiable or justifiable according to numbers is the extent to which they are emblematic of a modern European sense of self, and whether that sense of self could or did survive the almost total destruction of Central and European Jewry in the mid 20th century. More to the point in this present volume, moreover, the seeming recognition of Jewishness in modern European cultural history reveals a great deal about the ways in which minorities and minority cultures are created, and in which notions of 'selfness' and otherness shape European history.

Popular music entered modernism as an inseparable component of modernity, that is, the modernisation and mass production of sound. It was hardly by chance, therefore, that the first English- and German-language films to employ sound, *The Jazz Singer* of 1927 (directed by Alan Crosland) and *Der blaue Engel* of 1930 (directed by Josef von Sternberg), were notable not only for using popular music but also for the ways they were about popular music that was Jewish. *The Jazz Singer* is a film about the conflict between musical style and family identity in an immigrant Jewish family in New York City, between the pull of Jewish liturgical music in the immigrant generation and the seduction of jazz for Jakie Rabinowitz, the film's main character. The music of the *Blue Engel* cabaret in the filming of Heinrich Mann's novel, *Professor Unrat* (1905), does not so much represent the Jewish metropolis in Germany as fill the stage after mediation by Jewish musicians, whose presence, as the house jazz band, Weintraubs Syncopators, directed by the score's composer, Friedrich Holländer. The music for both films produced several of the most enduring hits of the interwar period and accelerated the fame of their stars, Al Jolson (*Mammy*) and Marlene Dietrich *(Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt)*.

What is critical about the music is not so much its connecting Jewish music and identity as the ways it insisted on the problematic conditions of its hybrid nature, the very problem of Jewishness in European modernity. Jewish identity, in fact, is never alone on the stages from which the films' characters sing, but rather it opens itself to the music of other ethnic and racial groups, as well as to shifting patterns of gender and sexuality. Jewish musicians and Jewish music thus moved to centre stage, and critically, were not isolated there.

One could easily trace the movement of Jewish popular music to the centre of modern film music history in the course of the generation that followed *The Jazz Singer* and *Der blaue Engel*. The English-language film musical was only made possible because of European Jewish emigrants and exiles in the United States. Hollywood film studios built their stables of composers from the exile generation of the 1940s and 1950s. The Jewish contribution to European film music was no less substantial, both before and after Jewish film composers such as Friedrich Holländer and Hanns Eisler immigrated to North America and returned to Europe.

Relatively unknown is the extent to which Yiddish film musicals, in their all-too-brief heyday in the 1930s, remixed the hybridity of popular styles of Jewish Europe, as in *Dem Hazns Kindl* [*The Cantor's Child*] and *Der Purimshpilr* [*The Purim Actor*, usually called *The Jester* in English]. Traditional musical and dramatic themes connect both to Jewish tradition – the pull between East and West, the stage occupied by the cantor and that by the character enacting the biblical play of Purim from the book of Esther. Musically, however, the mix was unremitting, drawing musicians from Vienna and New York for the filming in Kraków. What made popular music Jewish on the threshold of the Holocaust – and after the Holocaust, in the film and cabaret work of Friedrich Holländer (1896–1976), Gerhard Bronner (1922–2007), Hanns Eisler (1898–1962), Georg Kreisler (bn. 1922), Armin Berg (1883–1956), or Hermann Leopoldi (1888–1959) – was that their music transformed the very meaning of what Jewish popular could be in a modern Europe, in which the ideological power of 'selfness' endangered the otherness of its minorities.

THE PRESENCE OF JEWISH MUSIC IN EUROPE TODAY

I deliberately conclude this chapter by entering the ethnographic present, that is, with my most recent moments of encounter with Jewish music in Europe. I do so consciously in order to move beyond the tendency of much research on European Jewish culture to relegate it to the past and to portray its presence only nostalgically, as the vanished world of yesterday. The tragic

history wrought by the Holocaust cannot, of course, be erased, nor should it be forgotten. As minorities – or not, as I argue in this essay – Jews and Jewish music have not disappeared from Europe today. Listening to Jewish music today – and to the music of the other Europeans portrayed in the present volume – is critical to understanding what Europe is and will become, how it will respond to growing diversity and multiculturalism.

In April 2007, while travelling by rail from London to Newcastle upon Tyne in the north-east of England, I happened to take my seat in a carriage occupied by a group of Jewish *yeshiva* (Jewish religious academy) students and a group of young Newcastle soldiers travelling home on weekend leave. Begun at midday on Friday, my journey accompanied contrasting periods of ritual transition for my fellow travellers. As the soldiers approached home, their consumption of alcohol increased, as did their slide into the Northumbrian regional dialect, Geordie, and a repertoire of songs that, at least functionally, fulfilled the conditions of soldier and drinking songs. My young Jewish fellow travellers, returning from Israel, turned to prayer and song to observe the approaching Sabbath, using Hebrew rather than their vernacular Yiddish. Sitting between these two groups of young travellers, I listened to the counterpoint of their styles of recitation, song, and melody. None of the soldiers or the yeshiva students was older than 20, it was fitting that they were all returning to their homes. It may not be well known that Newcastle, especially its southern urban neighbour, Gateshead, is home to a historically important Sephardic community and a growing number of religious academies. The music I was hearing was freshly formed from youthful exuberance and self-identity. Stunningly, the diverse parts of the music all fitted together – as Northumbrian, English and European, as Jewish and non-Jewish.

Such encounters with Jewish music in Europe today raise more questions than they provide answers about what it might mean to make music as a minority or as a European. These encounters reveal that the familiarity with which notions such as 'European music' or 'Jewish music,' 'Europeanness in music' or 'Jewishness in music,' are sometimes employed might well deceive us into confusing them with the diverse musical sounds that have re-charted the European soundscape of the 21st century: The musical mixture of Jewish music is so rich that it seems pointless to relegate it to a postmodern ghetto or ban it to the farthest reaches of diaspora. Listening to Jewish music in that mix, moreover, is critical to understanding why it is so European.

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