

JEWISHNESS, JEWISH IDENTITY AND MUSIC
CULTURE IN 19TH-CENTURY EUROPE

AD PARNASSUM STUDIES 12

General Editor

LUCA LÉVI SALA

JEWISHNESS, JEWISH IDENTITY AND MUSIC
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edited by

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PREFACE

*To the memory of my grand grandparents'
Sephardic and Mizrahi heritage*

THIS BOOK DOES NOT OFFER ANY SUBDIVISION of the eleven chapters here presented on purpose, and for a specific reason. Indicating reading guidelines, content summaries or research categories would have meant reducing, in my opinion, the complexity of the work presented here as a multifaceted discussion and as a whole. My attempt to aggregate the various texts aims in fact at not deflecting or reducing the expectations of the reader, or encapsulating the topics under artificial structural limitations. The multilateral nature of the topic which, despite the diversity of the subjects dealt with, summarizes and retraces common themes, deserves to be seen as a whole. How can we reduce or schematize an archetypical topic such as 'Jewish identity', which encompasses in itself all the following components: conversion, liturgy, synagogal chanting and cantillation, musical form, opera, textuality, entrepreneurship and individuality? Or explain how much these structural components were direct or corollary to musical composition — to the creation of the works addressed and to the role played by the European Jewish world within a social system in fervent change such as occurred during the long 19th century. What remains of the Jewish identity within such a complex and delicate process as the conversion of a composer to another rite, in particular the Catholic one? What remains of the tradition of synagogal music entrenched in the process of rapid secularization? What is the 'political' role of Jewishness as displayed in the context of European opera, in the works of a composer such as Halévy?

Cataloging such delicate processes from composer to composer within prefabricated structures would have meant underestimating them. The literature on the matter is quite modest and mostly limited to the study and analysis of these issues for individual composers¹. Important and pioneering studies such as those of Edwin Seroussi and Ruth HaCohen² have

¹. Just to name a few: HALLMAN, Diana R. *Opera, Liberalism, and Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France: The Politics of Halévy's «La Juive»*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002 (Cambridge Studies in Opera); KNAPP, Alexander. 'The Jewishness of Bloch: Subconscious or Conscious?', in: *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, xcvi (2009), pp. 99-112; KROLL, Mark. *Ignaz Moscheles and the Changing World of Musical Europe*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2014.

². SEROUSSI, Edwin. *Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue Music in Nineteenth-century Reform Sources from Hamburg: Ancient Tradition in the Dawn of Modernity*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press-Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996; HACOEN, Ruth. *The Music Libel Against the Jews: Vocal Fictions of Noise and Harmony*, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 2011 (Yuval Monograph Series, 11). See also DRAUGHON, Francesca – KNAPP, Raymond. 'Gustav Mahler and the Crisis of Jewish Identity', in: *ECHO: A Music-Centered Journal*, III/2 (Fall 2001), <http://www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume3-issue2/knapp_draughon/draughon-knapp.pdf>; HARRÁN, Don. 'Barucaba as an Emblem for Jewishness in Early Italian Art Music', in: *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, xcviII/3 (2008), pp. 328-354; GILMAN, Sander L. 'Are Jews Musical? Historical Notes on the

PREFACE

had the opportunity and the merit to place the problem of musical production and Jewish identity together, stressing and focusing on the concept of Jewishness within the social context and in the network of the European criticism³.

However, to describe 19th-century Jewish musical production *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Music*⁴ is increasingly a complex and worthwhile field for further study when put in the context of major historical events. Within these events occurred such revolutionary processes for the Jewish world such as European secularization, the right of citizenship in France, the waves of pogroms which affected both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish worlds. These in turn were followed by a massive diaspora towards Europe and the United States, up until the eve of the first international Zionist congress of 1897, and not least, the ferment caused by the integration of the Jewish world in the larger process of European secularization, which ultimately ended up driving the fragmentation of Jewish religious identity into distinct liturgical currents, such as the progressive, the conservative and the orthodox, each with its own understanding of the concept of 'assimilation' which lasts to this day.

I extend my grateful acknowledgment to all of the authors who agreed to take part in this project, and who cheerfully and patiently complied with the huge amount of queries I asked them during the copy-editing process, and to Tony Lévy (CNRS-Université Paris 7) and Rivon Krygier (Rabbi of the Parisian Synagogue Adath Shalom), who offered the incentive for envisioning the present work.

New York, September 2020

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Question of Jewish Musical Modernism and Nationalism', in: *Modern Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience*, xxviii/3 (2008), pp. 239-256.

³. REITER, Andrea. 'A Literary Perspective on Schenker's Jewishness', in: *Music Analysis*, xxxiv/2 (2015), pp. 280-303; BURGSTALLER, Georg. 'Ideological Currents in Heinrich Schenker's Post-War Polemics against Paul Bekker', in: *Journal of Music Criticism*, II (2018), <<https://www.music-criticism.com>>.

⁴. *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Music*, edited by Joshua S. Walden, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015 (Cambridge Companions to Music).

HARMONIC PRACTICE AS *BILDUNG* IN SELECTED JEWISH CHORAL WORKS OF SALOMON JADASSOHN

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SALOMON JADASSOHN (1831-1902), a musical prodigy from Breslau, enrolled at the Leipzig Conservatory in May 1848; the following year, he would study privately with Franz Liszt in Weimar, and remain there until 1852. Amid his years thereafter as a freelance composer and teacher, his ascent into the musical life of Leipzig's Jewish community occurred on September 10, 1855 at the inaugural concert for the Großen Gemeindesynagoge, a newly built edifice in the Moorish style. The concert took place just days before Rosh Hashanah, 5616, in the Hebrew calendar. That occasion marked Jadassohn's debut in Leipzig as a conductor where he led his own choral setting of Psalm 24: *Des Herren ist die Erde und was sie füllt*, a composition unmistakably German in language and style¹. Psalm 24 affirms God's possession of all creation. It was chanted by the Levites in Temple times to inaugurate the week. For these and other reasons, it was a most befitting selection for the occasion². Jadassohn's setting was published ten years later when he became director of the choir of the selfsame «jüdischen Tempel zu Leipzig», as he referred to it³. Serving as its choir director from 1865 to 1900, he cemented his reputation and became identified with the musical life of the Leipzig Jewish community.

¹. GROBORZ, FRANZ. Notes to *Salomon Jadassohn: Symphonies 1-4*, CD, Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester Frankfurt, conductor: Howard Griffiths, Classic Produktion Osnabrück 777 607-2, 2015, p. 19.

². *Tamid* 7:4 This Mishnah lists the daily psalms chanted by the Levites in the Temple; Psalm 24 was chanted on the first day of the week. The psalm is also indispensable for the weekday Torah service. Presumably, these factors made it the best choice for this inaugural occasion.

³. JADASSOHN, SALOMON. *Lied zur Todtenfeier*, no date, Eduard Birnbaum Collection, Microfilm (US-CIhc, Blaue Hefte No. 345). In the handwritten copy of the score, the dedication, signed by Jadassohn, is to the «...jüdischen Tempel zu Leipzig».

The scope of Jadassohn's activity in Leipzig includes the composition of at least sixteen Jewish liturgical works, as listed by his biographer, Beate Hiltner⁴. Many of these works were first performed by the Psalterion Choral Association, a mixed chorus Jadassohn founded in 1866. Psalterion's *raison d'être* was the promotion and furtherance of Jewish choral singing and composition in the Leipzig Jewish community⁵. Beyond the precincts of the Jewish community, Jadassohn composed two sacred choral works on nearly identical texts for Arion, the Leipzig academic choral society: *Herr Gott, Dich Preisen Wir*, Op. 38, which is not included on Hiltner's list, and *Gott ist gross und allmächtig*, Op. 45, which is. These works affirm Jadassohn's standing as an eminent composer in Leipzig, as well as his commitment to expressing a Jewish outlook through the techniques of German music. The texts he set for Arion would be as proper in a Jewish setting as in an academic one. And today, thanks to the newly constituted Leipziger Synagogalchor, Jadassohn's identification with the Leipzig Jewish community's music has been revived. On March 7, 2015, in the hallowed Thomaskirche, the Leipziger Synagogalchor presented the program, *Rekonstruktion eines Synagogenkonzertes vom 14. März 1926*. The single work on the program by Jadassohn — the only Jadassohn score available to the ensemble — was his *Motette für Chor und Orgel, ad lib*, Op. 128 on Psalm 121: *Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen* (verses 1-4, 5a, 6b) from 1896.

While Jadassohn is indisputably a Jewish composer with a Jewish institutional affiliation, the question arises: are his musical works, specifically those that set Hebrew texts in German translation, shaped by a recognizably Jewish identity, musical style and religious outlook? Can the analyst engage these compositions in terms of Jewish values, constraints, or aesthetics that would show them to be more than what they ostensibly are: conservative, academic, mid-19th-century derivatives of the styles of J. S. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Wagner, based on 18th-century compositional musical schemata, and crafted for non-Jewish vocalists serving a Jewish milieu? Indeed, Jadassohn's use of mixed choirs, double mixed choirs, organ, and brass, in compositions without a trace of a traditional *musach* (characteristic melodic turns for specific prayers) for use in either synagogue or general settings, may obscure consideration of Jewish musical identity altogether.

The position argued here is that Jadassohn's compositions for both the Leipzig Synagogue and the academic choral society, Arion, represent a

⁴. HILTNER, Beate. *Salomon Jadassohn: Komponist, Musiktheoretiker, Pianist, Pädagog. Eine Dokumentation über einen vergessenen Leipziger Musiker des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1995, p. 56.

⁵. *Ibidem*.

multifaceted enterprise in musically enriched education, elevation and self-formation. In other words, Jadassohn's compositions are emblematic of what a growing proportion of German-Jewry embraced over the course of the 19th century as *Bildung*. As a concept incubated in the minds of Goethe, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Moses Mendelssohn among others in the latter 18th and early 19th centuries, *Bildung* became an instrument of emancipation and entrée to civic life for Jews⁶. *Bildung* formed a person's sense of both individual freedom and civic responsibility, subserved the dual identity denoted by the hyphen linking *German* and *Jewish*, and introduced an opportunity for universalism to the Jewish perspective that had been previously confined to the particulars of Jewish communal life. Scholars of modern German Jewry⁷ have assessed *Bildung* weighing the benefits in modern education and civic opportunity for German Jews, on one hand, against the costs in degrading Jewish communal life and jeopardizing Judaic foundations, on the other. Over the course of the 19th century, extending into the 20th, there was a cost to traditional Judaism as Jews adopted a humanistic, universalistic ethos. But German Jewry found itself in a precarious position as Germans retreated from these humanistic values and turning toward German nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century. However, within the Jewish Reform context of Jadassohn's Leipzig period, his choral compositions appear to have maintained the Jewish and the German, the particular and the universal, the inner self and the civic self in remarkable balance; German language and German musical practice, notwithstanding, the boundaries of Judaism's tenets are neither blurred nor transgressed by Jadassohn's selection and approach to texts.

There is no music-specific definition of *Bildung*, as such, but its global definition includes music education as a fundamental aspect of cultural education; Felix Mendelssohn's upbringing may be the example of *Bildung* in music education *par excellence*. In an attempt to elucidate a music-specific sense of *Bildung* that would comport with Jadassohn's Psalm settings, there are three general aspects that can facilitate the derivation of concrete music-specific criteria from the *Bildung* ideal:

⁶. BRUFORD, Walter Horace. *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: Bildung from Humboldt to Thomas Mann*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

⁷. KATZ, Jacob. *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1973; Syracuse (NY), Syracuse University Press Edition, ²1998. MENDES-FLOHR, Paul. *German Jews: A Dual Identity*, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 1999. SORKIN, David Jan. *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1987 (Studies in Jewish History). Each of these classic studies elaborates the German-Jewish devotion to *Bildung* in the emancipation process.

- A historical consciousness that values development as both a process intrinsic to a musical composition and to the historical processes supporting music across generations of compositional production.

- An emphasis on ethical values such that these values are a subject matter for textual and musical expression.

- A value in self-expression such that a musical composition may intimate a musical persona that reflects the principles of both *Bildung* and Jewish sacred text.

To illuminate Jadassohn's project as one grounded in *Bildung* in a technical compositional sense, the musical details that are emblematic of Jadassohn's acquisition of *Bildung* require attention. Selected passages from Jadassohn's textbook *A Manual of Musical Harmony* (1893) and from two of Jadassohn's compositions, the five-movement *Trostlied*, Op. 65 (1882) and the *Motette* (Psalm 121), Op. 128 (1896) are intended to establish an operational definition of his sense of German-Jewish symbiosis and understanding of *Bildung*.

This study will then seek to engage three works where the social boundaries between Jewish and German identity are problematized. These works were composed for three distinct contexts: (1) the Psalm 24, Op. 29 (1855, published 1865) for the Leipzig Synagogue inaugural, (2) the *Hymnus*, Op. 45 (1876) for the nonsectarian Arion academic choral society, and (3) the *Lied zur Todtenfeier*, Op. 91 (1888), a funerary work dedicated to the Leipzig Synagogue. They will be discussed here as a trio of case studies about how Jewish identity and outlook can be coaxed from the musical details of harmonic language, and the significance of musical reference and quotation.

THE MUSIC-SPECIFICS OF BILDUNG:
THE *MANUAL*, *TROSTLIED*, OP. 65 AND *MOTETTE*, OP. 128

In his *Manual of Musical Harmony* (1893), Jadassohn indicates, with language both emancipatory and developmental, the values of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven he sees evident in the works of these masters:

[...] In these works [by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven] were seen for the first time, musical creations of a pattern and style quite *emancipated from the rigid conventional types* exemplified in the opera librettos and church-music texts till then in vogue, and of the grandest and *most pregnant forms and development*⁸. (Emphasis mine.)

⁸. JADASSOHN, Salomon. *A Manual of Musical Harmony*, translated by Theodore Baker, New York, G. Schirmer, 1893, p. 240.