

Cover Art

Music of Dance

A MESSAGE FROM THE MILKEN ARCHIVE FOUNDER



Dispersed over the centuries to all corners of the earth, the Jewish people absorbed elements of its host cultures while, miraculously, maintaining its own. As many Jews reconnected in America, escaping persecution and seeking to take part in a visionary democratic society, their experiences found voice in their music. The sacred and secular body of work that has developed over the three centuries since Jews first arrived on these shores provides a powerful means of expressing the multilayered saga of American Jewry.

While much of this music had become a vital force in American and world culture, even more music of specifically Jewish content had been created, perhaps performed, and then lost to current and future generations. Believing that there was a unique opportunity to rediscover, preserve and transmit the collective memory contained within this music, I founded the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music in 1990.

The passionate collaboration of many distinguished artists, ensembles and recording producers over the past fourteen years has created a vast repository of musical resources to educate, entertain and inspire people of all faiths and cultures. The Milken Archive of American Jewish Music is a living project; one that we hope will cultivate and nourish musicians and enthusiasts of this richly varied musical repertoire.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lowell Milken".

Lowell Milken

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



The quality, quantity, and amazing diversity of sacred as well as secular music written for or inspired by Jewish life in America is one of the least acknowledged achievements of modern Western culture. The time is ripe for a wider awareness and appreciation of these various repertoires—which may be designated appropriately as an aggregate “American Jewish music.” The Milken Archive is a musical voyage of discovery encompassing more than 600 original pieces by some 200 composers—symphonies, operas, cantorial masterpieces, complete synagogue services, concertos, Yiddish theater, and folk and popular music. The music in the Archive—all born of the American Jewish experience or fashioned for uniquely American institutions—has been created by native American or immigrant composers. The repertoire is chosen by a panel of leading musical and Judaic authorities who have selected works based on or inspired by traditional Jewish melodies or modes, liturgical and life-cycle functions and celebrations, sacred texts, and Jewish history and secular literature—with intrinsic artistic value always of paramount consideration for each genre. These CDs will be supplemented later by rare historic reference recordings.

The Milken Archive is music of **AMERICA**—a part of American culture in all its diversity; it is **JEWISH**, as an expression of Jewish tradition and culture enhanced and enriched by the American environment; and perhaps above all, it is **MUSIC**—music that transcends its boundaries of origin and invites sharing, music that has the power to speak to all of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neil W. Levin".

Neil W. Levin

Neil W. Levin is an internationally recognized scholar and authority on Jewish music history, a professor of Jewish music at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, music director of Schola Hebraica, and author of various articles, books, and monographs on Jewish music.

▩ About the Composers and their Works



For nearly a half century **LEON STEIN** (1910–2001) was an esteemed figure in the musical life of his native Chicago, enriching the community's cultural vibrancy as a composer, conductor, teacher, author, champion of humanitarian causes, and devoted friend to many young and up-and-coming musicians. His was a career and a

steady contribution in which both the Jewish and the general musical spheres of the city took great pride.

Stein's parents had immigrated to Chicago in 1903 from Bratslav, in the Ukraine. That year saw a marked upsurge in immigration from the Czarist Empire, fueled in part by the infamous Kishinev pogrom (in Bessarabia) and its aftermath. His father, a tailor and furrier by trade, was also an amateur singer who sang on occasion in synagogue choirs. The young Stein, too, sang sporadically as a boy chorister in local synagogues. That experience surfaced later in his academic Jewish musical interests as well as in many of his Judaically related compositions. Though his family, which followed mainstream observances and celebrations of Jewish life, was not orthodox in orientation, Stein later recalled the positive and permanent emotional imprint of the ethnically as well as religiously Jewish "feel" of their neighborhood, which always remained a part of his identity and consciousness as a creative artist.

Stein's principal musical activity in his youth centered around the violin, and he studied that instrument and music in general at the city's American Conservatory of Music. After high school, by which time he had become interested in composition, he attended Crane Junior College, where one of his teachers was Robert Gomer Jones—a graduate of London's Royal College of Music, an accomplished organist, and the director of Chicago's Welsh Male Choir.

Following a year during which Stein devoted himself to self-study in composition, he was given a scholarship at DePaul University, where he received his bachelor's degree in only a year and, upon graduation, was awarded first prize in composition for his Suite for String Quartet. He was immediately engaged as an instructor on the faculty of DePaul's School of Music. Until his retirement, he remained there without interruption for forty-seven years, rising to the rank of full professor, then serving as chairman of the department of theory and composition, and ultimately becoming the dean. He also earned his master's and Ph.D. degrees from DePaul. In addition to those formal studies, during the 1930s he continued studying composition privately with Leo Sowerby and conducting with Frederick Stock. During the Second World War he served as a petty officer in the United States Navy, and he composed and arranged music for its regularly and internationally broadcast radio programs *Meet Your Navy* and *On the Target*. In that capacity he also directed the concert band at the Great Lakes Training Station.

One of Stein's most memorable achievements was his tenure as the conductor of the amateur Community Symphony Orchestra. It was one of several similar local amateur orchestras, composed of businessmen, doctors, lawyers, tradesmen, teachers, and other nonprofessional musicians who enjoyed weekly opportunities to play much of the standard symphonic repertoire as an avocation. Most major and many medium-sized American cities could boast of at least one such amateur orchestra in those days, but this particular one in Chicago had an additional mission. It was founded specifically to create the first interracial local orchestra. It was an effort to offer theretofore unavailable opportunities to "nonwhite"—viz., mostly black at that time—amateur classical musicians in an era when it was usually, but erroneously and sometimes conveniently, assumed that there were none.

Under Stein, the Community Symphony Orchestra served another important role by sponsoring annual auditions to give high school (and sometimes younger) music students

opportunities to make solo concerto appearances at its concerts. Later, he conducted other amateur ensembles as well as the professional City Symphony Orchestra, sponsored by the local union, the Chicago Federation of Musicians.

Stein's catalogue contains more than one hundred published works, ranging from his five string quartets (all recorded by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra String Quartet) and much other solo and chamber music—including seven pieces for saxophone and various ensembles, which are among his most frequently performed works—to four symphonies and many other orchestral works; concertos for violin, cello, and oboe; a *Rhapsody* for flute, harp, and string orchestra (notable for its nine-part division of the strings); liturgical as well as secular choral settings; two one-act operas; and two ballet scores.

Stein refused to align himself with any particular musical movement in vogue at any one time, and he preferred to steer a "middle ground" between conservatism and progressive invention. "The term 'pantonicity' best defines my musical language," he explained in an interview, and he expanded upon how it applies to his music:

This is an inclusive idiom that combines 20th-century treatments of modality, tonality, synthetic scales, and post-serial dodecaphony; uses a harmonic-contrapuntal chordal structure of seconds and fourths as well as triads; and is indebted to this century's emancipation of the dissonance and liberation of rhythm.... My music is generally linear, notated traditionally for traditional (acoustic) instruments, and uses forms ranging from established patterns to a free continuum of motion, density, tension, and color.

Stein was also a keen thinker about the nature of music in relation to aesthetics in general and with regard to its communicative priorities, as he outlined in 1963 as his "composer's credo":

I believe the most important function of music is meaningful communication. Musical composition is

the *transmutation of experience*, in its broadest sense, into auditory patterns. The content of music, however, is neither emotion nor experience, but the aesthetic equivalent of both, achieved through its transmutation. A composer is, therefore, an individual who thinks creatively in terms of sonic symbols.... A musical composition as a work of art is a revelation of a reality beyond direct experience ... the composer is simply the medium through which the idea is given embodiment in palpable form.

For a few years during his early university days Stein directed the youth and children's choruses at Camp Kinderland near South Haven, Michigan, the children's summer camp of the Chicago branch of the cultural Yiddishist and labor- and socialist-leaning fraternal order known as the Arbeter Ring—the Workmen's Circle. There, he prepared the children for biweekly presentations of song and dance, and he taught them Yiddish songs. Much of that repertoire was new to him, and those summers broadened his own Jewish horizons. He also directed Workmen's Circle youth choruses in town for a while, but he never became actively involved with the organization or its perspectives. Rather, he began to engage in his own research into synagogue music and the varieties of Jewish sacred musical development. Over the years he wrote a number of articles on Jewish musical subjects, ranging from contemporary assessments to the work of the late-Renaissance/early-Baroque Italian Jewish composer Salamone Rossi, and from a summary examination of Hassidic music to deliberations on the work and outlook of Ernest Bloch. Stein developed a particular interest in the musical and emotional dimensions of Hassidic life, lore, and practice, and his article on that subject constituted an important contribution to its appreciation by the layman. He also turned to the melos of Hassidic song, prayer, and dance as a source for a number of his compositions.

In 1950 Stein's doctoral dissertation was published as a book, *The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner*, a subject he addressed in journal articles and frequent lectures. He also directed local synagogue choirs for a number of years,

and he served twice as consultant to the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem.

Among Stein's works, quite a few pieces have Jewish themes or are related to Judaic or Jewish historical and literary perspectives. Apart from his *Three Hassidic Dances*, recorded here, these include *Aria Hébraïque*, the slow movement of his oboe concerto, which is also arranged for other instrumental combinations; *The Lord Reigneth* (Psalm 97), a cantata for women's chorus, tenor solo, and orchestra; *Kaddish*, for cantorial tenor solo and strings; *Invocation and Dance*, for violin and piano; *Dance Ebraico*, for cello and piano; *Adagio and Hassidic Dance*, for flute and optional tambourine; several synagogue choral settings; *Songs of the Night*, on poems by Hayyim Nahman Bialik (also recorded by the Milken Archive); and *Exodus*, a ballet. One of his most arresting Jewish-related orchestral works is *Then Shall the Dust Return* (a title taken from Ecclesiastes), inspired by the story of Janusz Korczak [Henryk Goldszmidt]. Korczak was a pediatrician who ran an orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto, and despite offers of rescue for himself, he refused to abandon the 200 children in his care. Instead he accompanied them to the Treblinka death camp, where he was murdered in 1942, as he knew he would be, along with all the children.

In a series of "Reflections" for an issue of the *College Music Symposium*, Stein proposed that "originality is not so much newness as genuineness." Indeed, it is a spirit of "genuineness"—of straightforward, direct communication without a trace of artificiality or pompous display for its own sake—that permeates Stein's music, whatever its form and whatever its particular style in any one piece.

THREE HASSIDIC DANCES

Leon Stein

Three Hassidic Dances (1941) was Stein's first successful orchestral work, and it remains one of his most admired expressions—even though he wrote it initially almost as an exercise for a conducting class in which there were opportunities for orchestral readings.

With forceful syncopations, enticing rhythms, alluring repetitive patterns, and quasi-improvisational passages, it reflects the mystic fervor, intensity, and ecstatic states of self-induced joy for which Hassidim typically strive—not only in daily life and prayer, but especially during celebrations that involve a mixture of song and dance. The composer's own subtitles are *Dance of the Joyous*, *Dance of the Enraptured*, and *Dance of the Exultant*. The melodic, modal, and rhythmic material of the first and third movements is traditionally derived from tune prototypes in Hassidic repertoires and from fragments of known melodies. The second movement is entirely original and does not draw on any specific folk material. It calls forth the meditative parameters of Hassidism, with its mood of spiritual searching and clinging to God as well as its deliberate contemplation and even, in the composer's interpretation, brooding.

The piece, which was not intended originally for staged dance production, received its world premiere in Chicago in 1942 by the Illinois Symphony Orchestra conducted by Izler Solomon, and it has been performed in various other cities, including Jerusalem. In 1960, however, it was choreographed and danced by the Pearl Lang Dance Group, with the NBC Symphony of the Air conducted by Warner Bass, at a Jewish Music Festival at Madison Square Garden in New York—an event that featured the Jewish Ministers Cantors Association (Hazzanim Farband) Choir of more than one hundred cantors (the typical exaggeration in the broadside of "200 famous cantors" notwithstanding) and "guest stars of opera and concert hall," with the most powerful television mogul and variety show host of the day, Ed Sullivan, as master of ceremonies.

—Neil W. Levin



DARIUS MILHAUD (1892–1974), one of the 20th century's most prolific composers, belongs historically to the coterie of French musical intellectuals and composers who, loosely bonded by their initial embrace of Jean Cocteau's aesthetic ideas and their allegiance to composer Erik Satie's spiritual-musical tutelage, were known as *Les Six*. That group also included

Francis Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, and Louis Durey. Milhaud belongs as well to the significant number of European Jewish émigré composers who took refuge in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s from the Fascist-inspired anti-Jewish persecution that emanated from Germany and culminated in the Holocaust.

Milhaud was born in Marseilles but grew up in Aix-en-Provence, which he regarded as his true ancestral city. His was a long-established Jewish family of the Comtat Venaissin—a secluded region of Provence—with roots traceable at least to the 15th century, and perhaps, as Milhaud wrote, even to the 10th century if not earlier. His paternal great-grandfather, Joseph Milhaud, was one of the founders of the synagogue at Aix, where he gave the inaugural address in 1840. He also wrote exegetical works on the Torah and conducted the census of Jews who had returned to France after the Revolution.

On his father's side, Milhaud's Jewish lineage was neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi (i.e., stemming neither from medieval German-Rhineland areas nor from pre-16th-century Iberian Jewry), but rather, specifically Provençal, dating to Jewish settlement in that part of southern France as early as the first centuries of the Common Era. Like its Ashkenazi and Sephardi counterparts, Provençal Jewry had developed a distinct musical tradition. Milhaud's mother's family tradition, however, was partly Sephardi through her father. This may have lent an additional musical perspective to his internalized Jewish musical repertoire.

Milhaud's parents both came from middle-class families who had been engaged successfully in respected business enterprises for generations, and both were musicians as well. His father founded the Musical Society of Aix-en-Provence; his mother had studied voice in Paris. Darius began violin studies at the age of seven, encouraged by his cultured home atmosphere, and he started composing even as a child. In 1909 he commenced studies at the Paris Conservatoire, where one of his teachers, Xavier Leroux, immediately recognized that his student had discovered a new harmonic language of his own. His other teachers included Vincent d'Indy, Paul Dukas (for orchestration), and André Gedalge, whom Milhaud later credited as his greatest influence.

In his memoirs Milhaud wrote that when he first began to compose, he was already aware of the path of Impressionism, which he viewed as the end of an artistic current whose mawkishness he found unappealing. He became profoundly affected by literature, as well as by Satie's commitment to a concept of artistic totality, exploring and including the various art forms in complementary expression. Eager to avoid what he perceived to be the "mist of Symbolist poetry," he felt himself "saved" by some of the poets and playwrights then new to the literary scene, such as Francis Jammes (whom he called a "splash of cool water on my face"), Paul Claudel, and his close friend Léo Latil. Milhaud's first opera was a setting of Jammes's *La Brebis égarée* (composed between 1910 and 1915 but not performed until 1923); and between 1913 and 1922 he wrote several sets of incidental music to Claudel's works based on Aeschylus: *Agamemnon*, *Protée*, *Les Choéphores*, and *Les Euménides*. Milhaud's stylistic development and his evolved musical individuality have been traced in part to his association and collaborations with Claudel.

When the First World War began, Milhaud was still at the conservatory. Medically ineligible for military service, he worked for a while at the Foyer Franco-Belge, a hostel for refugees. When Léo Latil was killed in action on the Western Front in 1915, Milhaud wrote his third string

quartet in memory of the poet, and he set Latil's words for dramatic soprano in the second of its two movements.

In 1917, Claudel, who was also a statesman, went to Brazil to take up a post at the French Consular Mission there, and he invited Milhaud to accompany him as his secretary for a two-year period. Apart from the music he had heard and sung in the synagogue in Aix as a youth, this was Milhaud's first experience with "ethnic" (i.e., non-Western or non-classically oriented) music. His first two ballet scores drew directly upon the Brazilian experience.

In the 1920s Milhaud began his association with Jean Cocteau, who had published a seminal aesthetic attack on the contemporary direction of "serious" or "classical" music and its high-flown "romantic bombast." That publication immediately attracted elements of the Paris artistic avant-garde. Encouraged by Satie and his own musical models, a group of French composers including Milhaud embraced aspects of this aesthetic principle, especially with regard to simplicity, directness, avoidance of excess sentimentality, sounds related to nature and everyday life, and, perhaps above all, that attribute so prized by certain French poets of a previous era: *la clarté*—clarity. Milhaud's designation as one of *Les Six*—in fact, that very identification of such a group—is owed to Henri Collet's review of a concert at which Milhaud's fourth quartet was played, though the label itself became irrevocably attached only afterward. The designation, however, has been frequently dismissed by many critics and music historians as artificial. In reality, *Les Six*—the composers and their individual approaches—turned out to have little in common, and each eventually went his separate way. But Satie's love of the music hall, the circus, and other unelevated forms of entertainment was in tune with Milhaud's own adoption of popular material—French folksong, Latin American dance rhythms, Jewish secular and sacred melodies, and one of the most important discoveries of his circle: jazz.

Milhaud first encountered jazz in London in the early 1920s, where he heard the Billy Arnold Jazz Band from New York,

and then during his visits to Harlem dance halls when he made a concert tour of the United States in 1922–23. He was instantly engaged, and he created a bit of a stir when he was quoted as saying that jazz was "the American music," according to it the same validity as classical repertoire. His first product of this newfound source was another ballet score, *La Création du monde* (1923), on a scenario by Blaise Cendrars. He was later quoted as observing that jazz could only have sprung from the experience of an oppressed people. After Vichy and his escape to America as a Jewish refugee, as well as the German murder of more than twenty cousins, that must have had additional significance for Milhaud. It is no accident that, notwithstanding several prewar Jewish-related works, it was in his American period and afterward that he turned even more frequently to his Jewish roots for musical sources.

After his return to Paris from his American tour, Milhaud wrote another opera on a text by Cocteau, *La Pauvre matelot* (1926); three short operas that were all premiered in Germany; and his grand opera, *Christophe Colomb*, also with a Claudel libretto, performed in Berlin in 1930 under Erich Kleiber's baton.

In 1929 Milhaud wrote the first of many film scores, which included music for Jean Renoir's *Madame Bovary*, and during the 1930s he wrote cello and piano concertos; orchestral works on folk themes, such as the *Suite provençal* and *Le Carnaval de Londres*; cantatas; chamber music; songs; and his first music for children. He also followed Edgard Varèse, one of the earliest composers to make use of the newly invented ondes martenot, in his incidental music for André de Richaud's play *Le Château des papes* (1932).

In 1940, Milhaud's one-act opera *Médée* (to a text by his wife, Madeleine) had just reached the stage of the Paris Opera when the German invasion resulted quickly in France's surrender and the creation of the Vichy government. The occupation of Paris was a clear sign to Milhaud and his wife that it was time to leave with their son while they still could. The Chicago Symphony had invited

him to conduct a new work it had commissioned, and that invitation enabled him to receive visas from the consulate in Marseilles for himself and his family. They made their way to neutral Portugal and to the United States. Their friend, the French-Jewish conductor Pierre Monteux, then conducting the San Francisco Symphony, organized a teaching position for Milhaud at Mills College in nearby Oakland, California. There, while continuing to compose incessantly, he influenced a number of American composers, including Dave Brubeck, Peter Schickele, William Bolcom, and Simon Sargon. Beginning in 1951, Milhaud taught every summer at the Aspen Music School and Festival for twenty years. Though he returned to France two years after the end of the war to become a professor at the Paris Conservatoire, he continued to teach alternate years at Mills College. Milhaud is known to have cautioned his students against what he called "overdevelopment" as a pretension to the profound. "It is false," he told them, "that the profundity of a work proceeds directly from the boredom it inspires."

Over the course of six decades Milhaud produced a vast amount of music, with a catalogue of nearly 450 numbered works. His Provençal heritage has been observed, on a broader level, in his overall approach to sonority, which commentators have associated by analogy with Cézanne's color palette. Tellingly, Milhaud's first quartet (1910) was dedicated to the painter's memory.

Milhaud is often perceived as the champion of polytonality. Though of course he neither invented the technique nor was the first to employ it, he consistently found ingenious ways to use its potential to the advantage of his expressive goals, and often to the service of melody. Perhaps because he so clearly understood its possibilities, it became the harmonic language most commonly associated with his music. In the 1920s, although Milhaud was considered a revolutionary and an enfant terrible of music, his actual approach owed more to the French composer Charles Koechlin than to Satie, and it built upon a particular concept of polytonality derived from Stravinsky's early ballets. Ultimately Milhaud believed not in revolution, but in the development (and extension)

of tradition—in a sort of musical *stare decisis* where, as he postulated, "every work is not more than a link in a chain, and new ideas or techniques only add to a complete past, a musical culture, without which no invention has any validity." Indeed, whether or not he realized it, this respect for continuum was and is a manifestly Judaic concept—one that has proved indispensable to any reconciliation of Jewish identity with natural inclinations toward innovation and the demands of modernity.

Both Milhaud's personal Judaism and his heritage informed a number of his prewar works, beginning with his early *Poèmes Juifs* (1916), although these did not incorporate the Provençal tradition upon which he later relied. Between the end of the First World War and the French surrender to Germany, in 1940, he wrote three Psalm settings in French; *Six Chants populaires Hébraïques*; *Hymn de sion Israël est vivant*; *Prières journalières à l'usage des Juifs du Comtat-Venaissin*; *Liturgie Comtadine*; *Cantate nuptiale*; and two Palestinian-Hebrew song arrangements for an experimental and innovative compilation instigated by German-Jewish émigré musicologist Hans Nathan. After Milhaud's move to America, in 1940, his Jewish identity and roots became even more significant parts of his overall expressive range. Milhaud's Judaically related pieces during a thirty-four-year period include *Cain and Abel*, for narrator, organ, and orchestra; *Candelabre à sept branches*; *David*, an opera written for the Israel Festival; *Saul* (incidental music); *Trois psaumes de David*; *Cantate de Job*; and *Cantate de psaumes*. His final work, *Ani maamin* (subtitled *Un Chant perdu et retrouvé*), on a text by Elie Wiesel, received its premiere in 1975 at Carnegie Hall by the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the New York University Choral Arts Society, conducted by Lukas Foss, with soprano Roberta Peters and several narrators, including Wiesel. But perhaps his magnum "Jewish" opus is his *Service Sacré*, a Sabbath service for cantor, chorus, and full symphony orchestra, commissioned in 1947 by Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco and recorded for the first time in its entirety by the Milken Archive.

—Neil W. Levin

STEFAN WOLPE AND HIS MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

A guest biographical essay by Austin Clarkson



Born at the turn of the 20th century, **STEFAN WOLPE** (1902–1972) belonged to a generation of composers in the German cultural orbit who believed that modern art was a means of transforming both the individual and society. Wolpe was imbued with the idea that avant-garde art can serve the man on the street *and* the audience in the

concert hall, and he dedicated himself to forming an entente between new music and the ordinary listener. He sought to incorporate elements of the vernacular and traditional musics of his successive homelands in an inclusive language. His forceful personality and transgressive music perplexed many listeners, and he remained an outsider for much of his career, but his deeply held optimism sustained him through a continual struggle for livelihood and for recognition of his wide-ranging gifts. In 1951 he affirmed in his diary: “The world has to get conscious of my way of making music ... a thoroughly organized but proud, erect, hymnic, profoundly contained, human evocation.”

On his father’s side Wolpe descended from Sephardi Jews who settled in Kovno, Lithuania (Kaunas). His father was born in Moscow, and as a young man he emigrated to Berlin, where he built up a successful business manufacturing leather goods. Wolpe’s mother, née Hermine Strasser, was born in Vienna to a Hungarian-Jewish family from Trieste. The Wolpe family was living in comfortable circumstances in Berlin’s upper-middle-class district of Charlottenberg when Stefan, the youngest of the four children, was born.

He began piano lessons at a young age and at fourteen had theory instruction with the distinguished pedagogue Alfred Richter. Wolpe spent the summer of 1920 in Weimar, where he became friends with students and teachers

of the Bauhaus, the progressive art school founded by Walter Gropius, which stressed an egalitarian dynamic and dialogue between students and teachers. From then on, Wolpe’s ideas about new music were colored by the concepts of design and form, construction and expression of the Bauhaus masters. In the autumn of 1920 he entered the diploma course in composition at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, but after the experimental atmosphere of the Bauhaus, the Hochschule seemed irrelevant to him. He quit the school in the spring of 1921 and applied to enter the master class of Ferruccio Busoni. Though he was not accepted, Busoni invited him to attend his student gatherings. Wolpe regarded Busoni as his most important mentor and always kept a photograph of the master on his piano.

During the 1920s Wolpe was fascinated by the Dadaists, whose artistic credo attacked coherence, order, and the bourgeois structures of modern society and instead embraced uninhibited creative processes—an art of collage, chance, and provocation fueled by primal instincts, doubt, and irony. Wolpe’s interpretation of the Dada spirit led to experimental combinations with, in his own words, “extreme innovations, suddenness, contradictions, shocks, simultaneities, and dissociations” as concepts that were as valid for contemporary art in the 1960s as they had been for the original Dadaists. Wolpe had been in Weimar for the Dada Congress in 1922, where he witnessed a performance by Kurt Schwitters during which the artist released several white mice from his pockets onto the stage, to the consternation of the audience. Later, in 1929, Wolpe set Schwitters’s poem “An Anna Blume” as a theatrical scene for a singer in clown costume riding a bicycle.

Wolpe was also a member of the Novembergruppe, an association of communist as well as other left-wing artists and writers, so named after the Bolshevik Revolution (October on the Julian calendar in use in Russia, but November on the western, Gregorian calendar). He was active as a pianist and composer in their concerts. In 1924 he began a new set of opus numbers with a cycle of *Songs on Friedrich Hölderlin*. Further settings on poems by Kleist, Rilke, and Tagore

indicate that, for Wolpe, composing was a spiritual quest. His next works were for the musical stage, with chamber operas that favored the fantastic world of puppets, clowns, and political satire. In the 1920s he earned money from time to time playing the piano for silent films, fairs, and cabarets, and he enjoyed improvising in the latest dance styles. His first marriage was to the Viennese painter Olga Okuniewska. Their daughter is the British pianist Katharina Wolpe.

In 1929 Wolpe, allied with the composer Hanns Eisler, an overt Communist, joined the Workers' Music movement. During the next four years he supplied dozens of songs, marches, and anthems for labor unions and agitprop groups. In 1931 the director and playwright Gustav von Waggenheim formed a group of communist and communist-leaning actors and actresses into Die Truppe 1931 and invited Wolpe to direct its music and compose for its productions. When the National Socialists emerged victorious from the elections of 1932 and 1933 that led to Hitler's appointment as chancellor, Die Truppe 1931 was banned. With the help of the Romanian pianist Irma Schoenberg, Wolpe left Germany. Eventually he made his way to Vienna in the autumn of 1933, where for a brief time he studied with Anton Webern, the ardent serialist composer and one of the leaders of the so-called Second Viennese School. When Wolpe was threatened with deportation, Irma took him to her home in Bucharest. By that time he was single again, his first marriage having ended in 1933. In 1934 he and Irma emigrated to Palestine and settled in Jerusalem, where they were married.

Wolpe suffered greatly from the trauma of exile. He composed incidental music for a production of the Habima theater, but he was otherwise unable to compose for several months. He was uninterested in Zionist political activity, but he responded deeply to the landscape, cultures, and musics of the Near East. Rather than adapt folklore to European styles of concert music, the so-called Mediterranean style, he adapted "oriental" concepts, such as the *maqam* of classical Arabic music, to counter the rhetoric of European modernism. Theodor Adorno remarked on Wolpe's

nonsubjective, "oriental" *espressivo* and described him as "an outsider in the best sense of the word. It is impossible to subsume him." Wolpe's settings of Hebrew texts from the Bible and by contemporary poets contributed to the creation of the modern Hebrew art song. But the music community in Jerusalem did not appreciate his radical music and politics, and he decided to emigrate to the United States.

After the Wolpes settled in New York City in late 1938, Stefan felt homesick for Israel, which he had come to regard as his ancestral homeland. In his music of the 1940s he demonstrated that diatonicism, octatonicism, and dodecaphony are not mutually exclusive systems, but belong to a continuous spectrum of resources, as illustrated in *The Man from Midian. For Battle Piece*, Wolpe looked to Picasso's *Guernica* mural as the model for an epic protest against war that was on the cutting edge of modernism. Critics found it difficult to place Wolpe's powerful and variegated music, for it eluded the categories of twelve-tone and neoclassicism, folklorism and experimentalism.

Wolpe became an American citizen in 1945. During the later 1940s he composed numerous studies that are collected as *Music for Any Instruments*. One of them bears the title *Displaced Spaces, Shocks, Negations, A New Sort of Relationship in Space, Pattern, Tempo, Diversity of Actions, Interactions and Intensities*. This sets the agenda for replacing traditional thematic space with a constellatory, abstractionist space in which nonfigurative shapes, masses, and planes of sound move freely and independently. To achieve this objective, Wolpe developed the techniques of spatial proportions and organic modes. To demonstrate these techniques, he composed *Seven Pieces for Three Pianos*, which he dedicated to his friend, the composer Edgard Varèse.

Many jazz musicians came to Wolpe to learn how to compose concert music—among them Eddie Sauter, George Russell, and Tony Scott. As a result, his ideas circulated in the New York jazz community, when Gil Evans and Miles Davis were exploring new paths. John Carisi, whose *Israel* is on

the pathbreaking recording *Birth of the Cool*, gives Wolpe credit for helping with the piece. In turn, Wolpe modeled the scoring of his Quartet for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion and Piano on Carisi's *Counterpoise no. 1*.

With the poet Hilda Morley (who became his third wife), Wolpe began in 1950 to attend meetings of the Eighth Street Artists' Club, where he became close friends with Franz Kline, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Jack Tworokov, and Esteban Vicente. As music director at Black Mountain College (1952–56), Wolpe enjoyed a milieu of artists, craftsmen, and poets that reminded him of the Bauhaus. While at the rural campus in North Carolina, he composed several of his most important scores—*Enactments for Three Pianos; Piece for Oboe, Cello, Percussion and Piano*; and the *Symphony*—in which he said he aimed for “a very mobile polyphony in which the partials of the sound behave like river currents and a greater orbit-spreadout is guaranteed to the sound, a greater circulatory agility (a greater momentum too).” These works of exuberant complexity mark the high point of musical actionism.

During the 1950s Wolpe wrote a series of lectures in which he discusses music in the imaginative and constructive manner of the Bauhaus masters. He proposes that the theory of music should be concerned with fantasy as much as with technique, because the material is as much a product of the creative imagination as it is of the rational intellect. At the Summer Course for New Music at Darmstadt in 1956 he presented a survey of current trends in the United States. After tributes to Varèse and Copland he discussed the music of Milton Babbitt, Earle Brown, John Cage, Elliott Carter, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolff. Wolpe responded to the Webern revival by studying closely the later scores of his former teacher, and he became greatly interested in the music of Boulez and Stockhausen. He summed up his poetics in the lecture “Thinking Twice,” in which he presents his ideas on serialism, organic modes, and the interplay of complementary qualities as the basis for a nondevelopmental discontinuum—“the ever-restored and ever-advancing moment.”

After the exuberant and extensive scores of the Black Mountain period, Wolpe began to refine and focus his means, as in his *Form for Piano*, and like some painters of the period, he titled many works simply as *Piece* or *Form*. Images, shapes, and gestures are succinct and sharply contrasted in fully notated yet intuitively composed moment form. Many of the pieces from the 1960s are in two parts, thus projecting complementarities on both the micro and macro level. One part is generally slower, with a gathering centering action; the shapes are well formed; the exposition is sometimes reprised; and the mode of thought is directed, orderly, and stable. The other part, however, is generally faster, with the action scattering and dispersing, and the mode of thought disruptive and dissociated. Disorder is included as the limiting case of order, but the chaotic passages are written out and not left to chance. In his last pieces Wolpe revisited historical forms. *From Here on Farther*, subtitled *Concerto*, has a ritornello design, and *Piece for Trumpet and Seven Instruments* includes elements of the solo concerto form.

For Wolpe, composing was a process of discovery. Precompositional charts prepare for the spontaneous outflow of the creative imagination. His music thus evades rational criteria of form and style, for he engages varied types of syntax and “levels of language”—from the colloquial to the poetic, from the quotational to the personal, and from the orderly to the dangerously chaotic. He trusted his unique form-sense to combine disparate images into structures that have an intuitive coherence.

Wolpe, like Busoni and the masters of the Bauhaus, regarded teaching as an obligation, not merely as a livelihood. In Palestine and thereafter in America he passed on his unique vision of music to succeeding generations of composers. Some had careers in radio, television, film, and musical theater (Stanley Applebaum, Elmer Bernstein, Kenyon Hopkins, Mike Stoller); others in modern jazz; and still others in concert music (Herbert Brun, Morton Feldman, Ralph Shapey, David Tudor). In 1957 Wolpe took up the position of professor of music at C. W. Post College,

Long Island University. On returning to New York City, he was “discovered” by a younger generation of composers and performers as a vigorous and masterly practitioner of a radically modernist tradition. His music was championed by the Group for Contemporary Music, founded in 1962 by Harvey Sollberger and Charles Wuorinen, as well as by several other New York ensembles. Wolpe at last received many long-overdue awards and honors, including two Guggenheim fellowships and membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The final decade of his life was clouded by Parkinson’s disease, which hampered his ability to notate music, and by a fire that damaged his papers and destroyed his collection of paintings. Despite these adversities, he continued to compose, completing his last piece only a few months before he died.

Austin Clarkson is one of the foremost authorities on Stefan Wolpe, professor emeritus at York University in Toronto, director of the Stefan Wolpe Archive, and author and editor of several books and monographs, including On the Music of Stefan Wolpe.



STEFAN WOLPE AND MODERN JEWISH IDENTITY

As an artist of Jewish birth for whom the Zionist dream became the unsuspecting midwife of Jewish historical-spiritual identity, **STEFAN WOLPE** was hardly unique. For some Jews who had no religious affiliation, that type of awakening could begin with Zionist activity in the Diaspora. For others, including Wolpe, who had little if any family exposure in Germany either to Judaism (apart from a perfunctory bar mitzvah) or to secular Jewish perspectives such as Zionism, that realization awaited arrival in the *y’shuv*—the Jewish communal settlement in Palestine under the British Mandate. In that heady environment, Wolpe’s previously established commitments in Germany to social and economic ideals of the left found ready resonance in the nonreligious collective orientation of the kibbutz

movement and in the pervasive, often infectious optimism of the settlers who were struggling to fashion a new society based on rethought values. On an aesthetic level, he seems to have been gripped almost instantly by the allure of the musical exotica—Near Eastern musics, as well as aural parameters of Hebrew and even Arabic, all of which he first encountered in Palestine and which contributed in no small measure to his new sense of cultural, ethnic, national, and mythical identity.

Paradoxically and unexpectedly, Wolpe’s sojourn in the Jewish homeland during its ebullient rejuvenation and ascension toward statehood also became an inner journey from his former, exclusively universalist worldview to one that could accommodate and assimilate strong Jewish national sensibilities. Still, he never abandoned wider concerns for universal social progress, justice, and proletarian causes. During his subsequent American period, while he continued to write music based on both modern and biblical Hebrew and even Yiddish texts, as well as on Jewish historical subject matter, he also continued to write politically engaged music—including settings of words by known Communists; and he retained his political and “class” consciousness through affinities for, and contacts with, internationalist-oriented leftist circles and efforts. Wolpe scholar Austin Clarkson, for example, has revealed that Wolpe even acknowledged privately that he wrote his 1950 Quartet for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion and Piano to celebrate the founding of the People’s Republic of China—at a time in America when it would obviously have been unwise to dedicate it thus in print. He also set to music excerpts from Albert Einstein’s address opposing the hydrogen bomb project, which, in the context of cold war politics and Soviet ambitions, Clarkson rightly assesses as “an act of almost reckless defiance.”

In Berlin, the national perspectives and aspirations of Zionism would have found little sympathy within the framework of the universalist and antinationalist leanings with which Wolpe had aligned himself. Like many intellec-

tuals and artists in interwar Germany (and, for that matter, in France and elsewhere in western Europe)—for whom the moral high ground in terms of social conscience and world peace was perceived as inseparable from allegiance to the left, for whom ethical virtue was uncritically and synonymously linked to organized workers' causes, and who at the same time recognized a growing danger on the political right—Wolpe had become attracted to radical elements of socialism, and even to outright communist circles.

To many creative people of that period, and especially to much of the artistic avant-garde, the left and its repudiation of nationalist orientations appeared to offer the only intelligent remedies for inequities supposedly fostered by capitalist societies, and also appeared to offer the sole protection against further wars of national or imperial ambitions. Many in that avant-garde naively accepted the manipulated rumors and reports from the Soviet Union, looking on that new system and its putative social progress as the model for a new progressive world order.

Whether or not Wolpe actually joined the Communist Party as an official member—and what, precisely, differentiated membership in public perception from fellowship—remains in some question. One account by a fellow Bauhaus adherent and future émigré (to Palestine), the painter Mordechai Ardon [Max Bronstein]—with whom he shared a patron at one time—asserted that Wolpe in fact joined the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) in 1925. But the consensus among scholars now seems to challenge that recollection. Their refutation is supported by the observation of the Austrian painter, actor, and Communist Party member Franz Boensch—with whom Wolpe did collaborate for performances at communist gatherings—that Wolpe was “for the Party,” in contrast to certain other composers of similar but more radical bent, such as Hanns Eisler, to whom he referred as having been “of the Party.”

Yet the question concerning Wolpe’s “membership” is probably irrelevant to the course of events in his life and to the sentiments that guided his artistic path. For his leftist

sympathies during the Weimar era, which might have begun as benign liberal proclivities during his teen years, are unmistakable. His membership in Novembergruppe from 1923 on may have been more a matter of creative and artistic attraction to the “spirit” of the revolutionary cause than an intellectually driven agenda of reasoned political ideology, philosophy, or action. Nonetheless, as the vanguard of Fascism grew louder, uglier, and more palpably dangerous by the end of the 1920s, as violent incidents were increasingly instigated by Fascist groups, and as the specter of their goals galvanized a countercampaign of resistance, Wolpe, along with colleagues and friends of various shades of socialist affiliation, gravitated even further to the left. His work with Die Truppe 1931, many of whose members were avowed Communists and whose initial stage production clearly reflected communist doctrines, might be viewed as more politically transparent.

A 1928 stage work by Wolpe mocked Hitler in the character of a thinly veiled would-be god of antiquity, bent on European domination, who inadvertently confuses his love object with a prostitute. And by 1930 Wolpe’s evolved solidarity with the radical left led him to attend the Marxist Workers’ School (*Parteischule*) of the KPD. Moreover, his artistic association with the politically inclined cabaret scene and with elements of the musical theater of the absurd; his interest in newly fashionable non-European dance forms and popular genres with association in American Negro culture (blues and jazz influences), perceived American decadence (the Charleston), and Latin American expressions (the tango); and, ironically, his embrace of advanced modernist European-based techniques in his sophisticated art music—all eventually placed him in or close to the camp of those whom both the Nazi ideologues and their party hacks indicted for polluting German society with “degenerate art” and “cultural Bolshevism.”

Between 1929, when he allied himself with Eisler and the Workers’ Music movement, and 1933, Wolpe expended considerable creative energy on music for “the cause”—not only for theatrical and cabaret settings and agitprop groups, but

also for more mundane contexts such as meetings of communist-affiliated union organizations and rallies. Some of the very titles of his pieces from that period—*Vier Lieder auf "Texte von Lenin,"* including *Eine unterdrückte Klasse* (On a Text by Lenin) and *Decret nr. 2: An die Armee der Künstler; Politische Satyren* (including a movement titled *Hitler: Neunzehnhundertdreiundzwanzig*); *Vier Antikriegslieder* (including *Rote Armee und Rote Soldaten, rote Kolonnen*); *Couplet der Kapitalisten* (from the first theatrical revue of *Die Truppe* 1931); *Links den Kurs*; and *Arbeit und Kapital*, among many others—are revealing about the passion of his alignment and the thicket of future danger into which he had cornered himself by the time Weimar's collapse became the National Socialists' triumph.

Between 1923 and 1925 Wolpe also arranged a set of eastern European Yiddish folksongs. It can be tempting to ascribe his motivation to a moment of Jewish cultural identification, especially since those particular songs stemmed from traditional Jewish life in the small towns and outlying regions of the former Czarist Empire, and not from revolutionary sentiments. But the catalyst was obviously political rather than ethnic or spiritual. To some on the left in Weimar Germany who were unfamiliar with the stratifications of eastern European Jewry and the differences among Yiddish song categories, Yiddish folksongs (or perceived folksongs) could, without regard to their literary content, simplistically symbolize a previously disenfranchised people whose liberation had supposedly come with the Revolution. Wolpe's arrangements were probably conceived simply as an ode to fellow revolutionaries to the east—even though those were not the Yiddish songs of protest sung by Jewish socialists, anarchists, Communists, and other revolutionaries at their rallies.

Throughout the years of the Weimar Republic, the political and quasi-political leanings of artistic avant-garde circles such as Wolpe's invited the contempt of those elements among Germany's conservative old guard that saw not only avowed Communists but also pacifists and social reformers as betrayers of the imperial cause during the First World

War and therefore the agents of Germany's disastrous and humiliating defeat. As economic conditions descended to utter havoc, as fear of communist envelopment mushroomed to expanded echoes of a "red menace," and as political factions and adversarial groups grew increasingly polarized, those biases were easily fueled and exploited by the National Socialists. Once they achieved exclusive power in 1933, one of the first items on the agenda of the new regime was the annihilation of communist and perceived communist organizations—with which Jews could conveniently be associated. Wolpe now faced exposure on three counts: his political brand, the nature of his music, and his Jewish birth. The imminent danger in which he naturally felt himself was brought to a peak of panic when his brother, during a roundup of Communists, was brutally beaten. But Wolpe's rapid exit from Germany at that early stage of the Nazi party regime was probably less as a Jew and more out of fear related to his political taint.

After going first to Zurich via Czechoslovakia with the help of Irma Schoenberg, who also managed to retrieve his manuscripts in Berlin, Wolpe went with *Die Truppe* 1931 to Moscow in May 1933 to attend the International Workers' Olympiad. He stayed for the summer, and he is said to have considered settling there, although he had to return to Switzerland to renew his passport at the German consulate. But after four intervening months of study with Webern in Vienna and then his refuge in Irma's home in Bucharest, Irma—who had given a recital in Palestine in 1931 as a guest of the Jerusalem Music Society and had retained positive memories of the *y'shuv*—convinced him that Palestine presented the wisest option.

It can be telling in terms of Wolpe's revised post-1934 national-cultural identity to keep in mind some of his earlier politically oriented piece titles. By contrast, one may consider some of the works (arrangements as well as original compositions) that flowed from his pen in Palestine: *Olam hadash* (A New World), *Tz'daktem habonim* (You Were Right), and *K'vish* (Road), from his *Hebrew Choral Songs*; *We Are One Driven Tortured Flock* (the original Hebrew

setting of which has not survived), from his *Hebrew Solo Songs*; *Ali b'eir* (Ascend My Well, on a poem by Ḥayyim Nahman Bialik); *Al admateinu* (In [on] Our Land) and *Haḥayalim tz'u lilhom* (Soldiers Going to War)—*On This Our Blessed Land and Know How to Fight*, in their English versions, respectively—from his *Four Songs* from “*Ballad of the Unknown Soldier*”; and songs about rebuilding the land, such as *Saleinu al k'tafeinu* (Our Baskets on Our Shoulders), *Lamidbar* (To the Desert), *Tel Aviv hi ir y'hudit* (Tel Aviv Is a Jewish City), and *Ra'inu amalenu* (We Behold Our Toil), included in the collection *Folk Songs of the New Palestine* (1938), solicited and edited by Hans Nathan.

Although they do not necessarily imply political involvement or action, these pieces and their freely selected texts suggest Wolpe's new receptivity to the Zionist enterprise and its premise of a dispersed nation now reclaiming and rebuilding its legitimate ancestral homeland in socially collective and egalitarian contexts. For one already drawn to the vision of a new world order as a remedy for entrenched injustice and subjugation, we may imagine the initial appeal of that radical “new Jewish world order,” in which selfless idealism, common spirit, labor organization, and collective agricultural endeavor were viewed as replacing individual material quest. And for Wolpe the artist, there was also a newborn sense of identification with the aesthetic aura surrounding the fashioning of that new society.

Nor did that adopted, expanded identity dissolve with Wolpe's departure from Palestine. To the contrary, various pieces from his subsequent American years underscore its transcendence, such as *Zemach Suite* (inspired by and dedicated to the celebrated Jewish dancer Benjamin Zemach, who was instrumental in developing a new genre of modern Jewish choreography), in which an Arabic modal cell influences the two fugues, and whose final movement is based on the rhythm of the Israeli hora dance (notwithstanding its title, *Dance in the Form of a Chaconne*); *Three Time Wedding*, which comprises movements such as *Yiddish Wedding Dance*, *Yemenite Dance*, and *Hora*; *Two Songs of Bialik*; *Seven Arrangements of Palestinian*

[Hebrew] *Folksongs*, which include an early Zionist song, *Lo nelekh mipa* (We Will Not Go Away from Here); biblical settings in English, Hebrew, and even Yiddish (on Yiddish translations from Jeremiah by the well-known Yiddish poet Yehoash [Solomon Blumgarten]); *Piyutim k'tanim: “Shahar a lei,”* to words by the medieval Spanish Hebrew poet Solomon Ibn Gabirol; fragmentary or uncompleted works and sketches such as *Israel and His Land* (a cantata); *The Prophets*, a cantata on a text by Saul Tchernikowsky; *Molad'ti*; and *Palestine at War*, music for a film for the Palestine Labor Committee composed jointly with German-Jewish refugee Trude Rittman (in which the number *Jewish Soldier's Day* was recycled and adapted from his earlier song *Rote Soldaten*, written in Germany from a different perspective as part of his *Four Antiwar Songs*). One of his most arresting completed Judaic works is *Yigdal Cantata*—a hymn summarizing Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith, believed to have been penned in the 14th century by Daniel ben Yehuda of Rome but sometimes alternatively attributed to his contemporary, Immanuel ben Solomon, also of Rome. Though the hymn appears in the prayerbook at the beginning of the morning service, it is also frequently recited at the conclusion of Sabbath and High Holy Day evening services. The complex setting of the hymn was commissioned by Cantor David Putterman for the third annual service of new music at New York's Park Avenue Synagogue in 1945 (although only portions of the piece were performed then).

Once in Palestine, Wolpe immersed himself in local Jewish and other indigenous folk cultures. He explored with enthusiasm Arabic and Turkish music traditions, as well as the musics of oriental (viz., Mediterranean and Near Eastern) Jewish communities that had resettled in Palestine. He was soon intrigued by a subjective feeling that his own ethnic roots somehow lay in the Near East. That self-discovery, of course, was more emotional reaction and adopted cultural perception than historical reality for a Jew with so firmly rooted a European heritage. But it might have satisfied some dormant spiritual instinct, almost as a realization of a theretofore missing link. In Jaffa, he is

said to have reacted to his initial exposure to the sound of Arabic, exclaiming, "This is my sound!" And according to Irma, it was not only—or even so much—the "Jewishness" that he loved at first as it was the "native atmosphere" of Palestine, the sum total of its natural aesthetics. He also soon envisioned a potential productive synergy between the local folk cultures and the advancement of a serious concert music.

Writing about what was then perceived as an emerging "new Palestinian music," he observed: "To the professional composer whose material is the European art music, the Jewish and Arab Palestinian folklore opens up a fertile and rejuvenating world." Israeli music historian Jehoash Hirschberg has identified Wolpe as among the first European composers in Palestine to emulate, for example, the plucking sounds of Arabic instruments such as the *qānūn* and the oud through clashes of major and minor seconds. And Hirschberg has interpreted as Wolpe's response to the Near Eastern melos his use of heterophonic techniques in certain pieces from that period.

In later comments on the Hebrew songs he composed during those four years, and on the overall imprint of the experience on his artistic direction, Wolpe noted:

When I was in that country, I felt the folklore which I heard there to be profoundly latent within me. To this day I cannot forget how the cadences of the language there struck me, how the light of the sky, the smell of the country, the stones of the hills around Jerusalem, the power and the sinewy beauty of the Hebrew language, all turned into music which suddenly seemed to have a topographical character to it. It seemed new to me, and I felt it as an old source within me.

In his earlier creative life in Germany, Wolpe had experimented with assimilating new cultural and aesthetic influences from outside the European classical mold, incorporating and refining those influences into an evolving, eclectic, multifaceted, and personal idiom. In his new environment he continued those procedures with

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different materials. His self-discovery of Judaic roots with perceived Near Eastern seeds now broadened his penchant for eclectic musical language.

However, as Clarkson and other Wolpe scholars have emphasized, Wolpe diverged from the path of many colleagues in his insistence that advanced artistic expression should provide the framework for constituent folkloristic elements, rather than bow regressively to the domination of more conventional concert music styles to which folklore is merely adapted. In that approach, he can be said to have rejected the much more widely accepted development of a so-called Mediterranean stylistic umbrella in classical music, as promoted by some of the most famous modern Israeli composers of that era such as Marc Lavry, Paul Ben-Haim, and Alexander Boskovich.

Wolpe's undiminished socialist worldview seems not to have come into conflict with the nationalist underpinning of the Zionist endeavor. To the contrary, that view found mutual encouragement and expression in his music for kibbutz ensembles, his work with choirs, and his tutelage of kibbutz composers such as Sholom Postolsky and Mordecai Zeira, who were among the leading creators of *ḥalutz* (pioneer) songs and thus the progenitors of an Israeli folk music idiom. Some of the music he provided for kibbutz groups even included new Hebrew translations of earlier German songs of social protest and struggle from his Berlin days. And he contributed to socialist-oriented kibbutz events, such as the May Day celebration in the Jezreel Valley, for which he also wrote music.

In a farewell letter to students, Wolpe recalled with fondness his travels among kibbutzim (especially Merhavia, Usha, and Kiryat Anavim) to organize and direct choirs—often with a harmonium strapped to his back—as "the happiest hours" of his activities in Palestine.

Among the European émigré composers in Palestine, Wolpe is generally considered the first to have arrived already substantially influenced by the serial techniques of the Second Viennese School and its advocates—an imprint that

met with considerable resistance. Throughout his stay there he refused to bend to pressures to mediate his musically progressive path in his serious concert music. Instead, he continued to confront artistic modernity and to further flesh out his personal response to twelve-tone procedures and other contemporary departures from conventional aesthetics. Whether from his Berlin, Palestine, or American periods, Wolpe's music is often characterized as "transgressing" boundaries of popular, folk, and cultivated art genres and their respective languages. Although his music for amateur groups in Palestine found appreciation, the audience for the music he infused more rigorously with dodecaphonic and other avant-garde manifestations was small, and this was a constant source of frustration for him. In fact, Wolpe's experience may illustrate the boundaries of artistic sophistication and acceptance at that stage in the *y'shuv*. In this regard the supposition of musicologist Philip Bohlman, in his concentrated study of that musical community with respect to the confluence of Central European and local traditions, seems apt: "It is with Stefan Wolpe that one sees, perhaps, the stylistic limit that the musical environment of Palestine in the 1930s would or would not tolerate."

Nonetheless, as the most ardent representative of the avant-garde among the young composers who had come from Europe, and as the most advanced practitioner of serialism there, Wolpe soon attracted a circle of devotees and students in Jerusalem, which, apart from his kibbutz activity, was the principal habitat of his work. He introduced his students to the most progressive techniques and developments of the time, urging them to navigate the extended possibilities inherent in a liberation from tonality, and then to forge—as he did himself—individual creative paths. He was appointed to the faculty of the Palestine Conservatoire of Musical and Dramatic Art (founded in 1933 by the violinist Emil Hauser) as the first—and the only—teacher of composition. Wolpe's home in Jerusalem also served as a gathering spot for students and other receptive musicians and aficionados—in some ways

as an informal school separate from the conservatory. Each month they presented a program of new music. Wolpe came to understand his work in Palestine, and especially his role as a teacher, almost as a mission of one who, as he described, "educates young musicians, guides older ones, and writes a kind of music which, through the dialectics of its effect, shocks, influences, and teaches people to think." And he participated actively in the work of the short-lived World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine.

By 1938 a trickle of recognition by the more entrenched establishment had begun to come his way, and the Palestine Broadcasting Authority devoted a radio program (*The Hebrew Hour*) to Wolpe's songs on biblical texts and modern Hebrew poems. But by that time his patience seems to have worn irreversibly thin. His failure to gain wider acceptance, manifested in his disappointment at the refusal of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra to program his music, remained more indicative of his general disillusionment and feeling of artistic alienation. (In all fairness, Wolpe's expectation was probably unrealistic. He was a young, unapologetically avant-garde composer who, despite the loyalty of his inner circle, had not established an international reputation in Germany; and at that early stage in the orchestra's development, its founder-director, Bronislaw Huberman, had to focus on standard repertory to solidify an audience base.) Together with Wolpe's growing personal fear for safety in the wake of the 1936 Arab revolt against both the *y'shuv* and the British administration, a fallout and polemical collision with the conservatory—partly personal, but in the main artistically ideological—was probably the culminating factor in his decision to abandon ship and leave for America in 1938.

That departure signaled neither renunciation of the modern brand of Jewish identity he had acquired in Palestine nor rejection of Zionist orientation and its related modern Hebrew melos and literature. Nor did he ever regret the experience. In introductory remarks in the United States at a concert of his works in 1941, he even spoke optimistically

about the possibility of a gradual cultivation of musical tastes and standards in the Jewish homeland through work with, and appeal to, “the people”:

In Palestine there exists a closer cooperation between the composer and the people, as a result of which the composer becomes the guide of the amateurs, gradually heightening the musical values and preventing the stagnation of musical folklore.

Moreover, in the United States he exhibited a logical solidarity with other forced émigré artists and, after the war, with artists who had survived the Holocaust either in Europe or as refugees in America.

At the end of 1954 and the very beginning of 1955 Wolpe composed his *Four Pieces for Mixed Chorus*—settings of three biblical texts and one by a modern Israeli poet, all in Hebrew—for submission to a competition sponsored by the Israeli government for a work for amateur chorus. Taken together, the four texts constitute a quasi-cantata that celebrates the Jewish people as a nation and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. He did not receive the prize, only because the jury—unanimous in adjudging it the most worthy of the entries—thought it too difficult for amateur choruses. (The prize was awarded instead to Haim Alexander, a Jerusalem resident who had been a student of Wolpe’s there.) More significant for our understanding of Wolpe’s developed sensibilities are the words he wrote to his by then former wife, Irma Wolpe Rademacher, upon its completion: “O how my Hebrew music settles in my blood! And how this bloodstream, this remarkably ancient, history-filled stream, deepens, mingles wonderfully and is purified.”

—Neil W. Levin

ONE BALLET AND TWO COMPOSERS

Milhaud’s *Moïse* and Wolpe’s *The Man from Midian*

During the first seven years of Milhaud’s American period, when he resided and worked exclusively in the United States, he collaborated on four ballet projects with important choreographers and companies, including *The Bells*, based on the poem by Edgar Allan Poe; *Jeux de printemps*, with choreography by Martha Graham; *La Création du monde* (Black Ritual), choreographed by Agnes de Mille; and *The Man from Midian*. In August 1940, the fledgling Ballet Theatre (known after 1957 as American Ballet Theatre)—which, in its seven-month existence as an independent troupe under the management of its founder-director Richard Pleasant, was already gaining critical recognition as “the American Ballet”—commissioned Milhaud to compose a score for a one-act (twenty-five-minute) ballet to a choreographic scenario by Winthrop Bushnell Palmer. The work was based liberally and poetically on the life, leadership, and mission of Moses. Palmer had titled her highly personal interpretation *The Man from Midian*, loosely drawn from the narrative account in Exodus in which Moses takes refuge in Midian following his flight from Egypt. After killing an Egyptian taskmaster whom he saw beating an Israelite slave, Moses marries a Midianite woman, sires a son, and lives the life of a shepherd—until he is mandated by God in the familiar “burning bush” incident to return to Egypt to lead his people out of bondage and to the land that will be their own as a free nation.

Milhaud titled his score *MOÏSE* (with the subtitle *Ballet symphonique* in the manuscript), which later, as a concert suite, became his *Opus Americanum no. 2*. But the two ballet titles—*Moïse* and *The Man from Midian*—appear to have been used interchangeably during the contract negotiations and during the preparation and rehearsal period, and the initial billing for the subsequently postponed and ultimately aborted premiere, first scheduled for February 1941, referred to the production as “Eugene Loring’s *The Man from Midian*.” Loring, who had established his reputation as the choreographer of Aaron Copland’s *Billy the Kid* and other

ballets (*Harlequin for President*, *City Portrait*, and *The Great American Goof*) before joining Ballet Theatre, was assigned the role of choreographing Milhaud's score to Palmer's scenario, which was stipulated in Milhaud's contract. As part of its *raison d'être* and its mission to expand American ballet beyond the confines of traditional European classical molds, Ballet Theatre had been organized by Pleasant into various subdivisions—with their own choreographers—that would focus on corresponding styles of ballet repertory: French, American, Russian, English, American black, and other influences. Loring was the director of the American division. The intended production of *Moïse* under its wing may be an indication that some circles in the American artistic world were already ready to “claim” the recently arrived French-Jewish Milhaud as at least partly an American composer.

The dramatic outline that Loring furnished Milhaud specified a three-part structure—two “movements” and a coda—each further divided into what Loring called themes. Each theme was subdivided into tentatively labeled choreographic moments and an uninterrupted flow of mini-scenes of between one and three and a half minutes each. The opening scene was a general prelude depiction of the anguish of the Israelites' slavery, followed chronologically but freely by key incidents in the Exodus narrative—beginning with the birth of Moses and ending with fanciful aspects, drawn loosely from the account in Deuteronomy concerning his final hours, superimposed on the Exodus account of Moses' anger and disillusionment following the “golden calf” regression to idolatry and paganism.

That dramatic outline appears to have been a starting point for the composer. The subdivisions and their scenic references were of course subsequently adjusted, amplified, and refined after the music was composed and as Loring proceeded to work out his choreographic ideas—all of which is reflected in his succeeding choreographic synopsis (labeled simply “Choreography” in the typewritten draft) and in the superscriptive labels in the manuscript of Milhaud's orchestrated score.

Milhaud completed the music in California in less than two months, and after delivering the four-hand piano version, he proceeded to orchestrate it over the next six weeks. As of October of that year (1940), a Chicago world premiere was being discussed, but it was soon established that the premiere would take place in New York, as originally envisioned. When Loring was unable to complete the choreography and other production preparations in time for a 1940 premiere, it was postponed to January 1941, then again to February, and yet again, without an announced date—that last postponement triggered both by financial difficulties within the company and by internal administrative and managerial disputes that resulted in Pleasant's departure. By March, when Ballet Theatre concluded its 1940–41 season, it was clear that the *Moïse* production would have to wait until at least the 1941–42 season.

Meanwhile, Ballet Theatre had formulated an innovative procedure concerning reduced orchestra size for all its productions. It apparently adopted this as firm policy only after Milhaud's score had been completed. That policy, which had the endorsement of a number of major composers, including Stravinsky (though not the frequently disagreeable Virgil Thomson), was born out of a candid confrontation with the budgetary realities and qualitative orchestral standards endemic to ballet production in America. Rather than continue the common practice of arbitrary reductions and on-the-spot instrumental substitutions or even eliminations, especially on tours and nearly always without the composer's involvement or even knowledge, or the employment of inferior players to meet the orchestra size required by a score—all of which risked violating artistic integrity and undermining the composer's intentions—the new policy called for a twenty-one-piece chamber orchestra for all productions (except when conditions permitted the surety of a full symphony orchestra for scores written as such). Under Pleasant's direction, therefore, the company announced its project of soliciting new versions of standard ballet repertory scores in the form of proper reorchestrations, either to be requested

from the composers themselves or commissioned from other serious composer-orchestrators. The desiderata was the accumulation of new versions for Ballet Theatre's entire repertory that would be artistic products on their own merits, not reluctantly diluted patchwork after the fact.

In keeping with that policy, in January 1941, when the premiere of *Moïse* that season was still being held out as a possibility, Pleasant asked Milhaud to reorchestrate for an additional fee not only *Moïse* but also his earlier ballet *La Création du monde*. Ballet Theatre had staged this work in its first season as *Obeah* (Black Ritual), with choreography by Agnes de Mille for sixteen black female dancers—the “American Negro wing” of the company—for its new “model ballet orchestra” of twenty-one pieces.

Milhaud replied that in the case of *Moïse*, such reorchestration would require complete artistic “rethinking.” But he shrewdly offered to reorchestrate not only the two requested scores, but also his ballet *Train Bleu*—all three for a flat inclusive fee. It is not known for certain, however, whether he ever actually did reorchestrate *Moïse*.

In the wake of the fallout from the administrative shake-up and Pleasant's departure, Loring also left Ballet Theatre in late spring or early summer of 1941 and organized his own small company, Dance Players, in which Winthrop Palmer was also involved—possibly in a patronage capacity. Dance Players was in effect a successor to Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Caravan, for which Loring had choreographed Copland's *Billy the Kid*. Both Loring and Palmer were eager for their *Moïse* collaboration to see the light of day. They thus sought to transfer its production to their new company, especially since the Ballet Theatre production seemed increasingly unlikely—at least in the short term. (The future of Ballet Theatre itself was in some question at the time, prior to its rescue and assurance of a major place in American ballet under the new management of the illustrious and star-oriented impresario Sol Hurok.)

Although Milhaud had retained the rights to his music, the separate choreographic rights (viz., to his *Moïse* score) specifically remained with Ballet Theatre. Moreover, under the terms of his contract with Ballet Theatre, Milhaud would have been free to have his score rechoreographed by another choreographer and staged by another company only after the expiration of the time period he had granted to Ballet Theatre, which also declined to abrogate that provision. Loring and Palmer's only alternative was to seek another composer to provide a new and unrelated score, which Loring could then—at least in theory—choreograph anew as an independent work of art. This time they turned to Stefan Wolpe, who had immigrated to the United States three years earlier, and who did indeed write a new score to Palmer's scenario (and, it seems, to Loring's preliminary dramatic outline). That score was staged by Dance Players as *THE MAN FROM MIDIAN* in Washington, D.C., and New York in 1942, presumably with Loring's new choreography.

For Wolpe's new score, all sets and costumes had to be done de novo by Loring's new company, although it is difficult to know—especially in view of Ballet Theatre's retention of the choreographic rights—to what extent Loring relied on elements of his earlier choreographic ideas and movements in creating a work for entirely different music. New sets, designed by James Morcom, were based on paintings by Doris Rosenthal, who was also listed in the program booklet as artistic consultant; and new costumes were created by Felipe Fiocca.

Once it was obvious that Ballet Theatre's production of *Moïse* had in effect been aborted, Milhaud seems to have put aside concerns about its staging in the immediate future, and he focused on its use as a concert suite. The work, in concert form as *Opus Americanum no. 2*, at last received its premiere in 1942 by the San Francisco Symphony conducted by Pierre Monteux. It took another four years for Milhaud to retrieve the manuscript from Ballet Theatre (which claimed to have misplaced it). In 1947 he published it as *Opus Americanum no. 2*, Suite from the Ballet *Moïse*, with the original three movements (two movements plus coda) now spread among nine newly

labeled movements—six of which are excerpted on this recording. Sandra Sedman Yang, whose Ph.D. dissertation on Milhaud's ballets goes into substantial detail, assures us that musically, *Opus Americanum no. 2* corresponds measure for measure to the original piano reduction of the *Moïse* score intended for Ballet Theatre, even though that score—as expected—contains many more stage directions. Whether *Opus Americanum no. 2* represents any orchestral revision of Milhaud's original full score, however, remains in question.

Ironically, *Moïse* was first staged as a ballet in 1950 in an unauthorized production by the Rome Opera Ballet. It was next danced in Milan in 1957—this time with Milhaud's sanction—by the Ballet of La Scala, with choreography by the Hungarian Aurel von Milloss.

The opus number in the title represents an interesting personal decision by Milhaud. Upon his arrival in America in July 1940 as a refugee from German-occupied France, he decided to begin his opus numbering anew, starting with the tenth string quartet (initially written mostly on his transatlantic journey, but completed in New York). The quartet was thus numbered as *Opus Americanum no. 1*, even though his last works composed in France (April 1940)—a *Cours de solfège* and a part song, both with a text by Henri Fluchère—are numbered together as Opus 217 in published catalogues (218 in his own handwritten register). The *Moïse* concert suite therefore became *Opus Americanum no. 2*, which was actually incorporated into its title.

The six movements of the suite excerpted here are:

I. Ouverture (Corresponding to the depictions in the ballet score of the Israelites' suffering under slavery.)

II. Modéré (Corresponding to depictions in the ballet score of Moses' birth, his mother's hiding him along the banks of the Nile in a basket of bulrushes, his discovery by the pharaoh's daughter Bithia [Batya] as she bathes in the Nile, and her summoning the infant's sister, Miriam, to have her organize a wet nurse—his actual mother, Yohevèd.)

III. Animé (Corresponding to the imagined depiction in the ballet score of Moses being brought to court.)

IV. Suple et Animé (Corresponding to depictions in the ballet score of Moses shown as the pet of the ladies at court, and a scene of typical but imagined political intrigue among the pharaoh and his ministers.)

VIII. Lent (Excerpt: from *Introduction et Bacchanale*, corresponding to depictions in the ballet score of Moses' descent from Mount Sinai, his smashing the tablets of the Decalogue, and his anger and anguish.)

IX. Modéré (Divided into two parts, corresponding to depictions in the ballet score of (a) Moses walking among the people and mandating death for the idolatrous generation; (b) Moses gathering the people for their final processional and his solitude at the end of his life.)

The movements omitted here, V. *Animé, Rude*; VI. *Très Lent*; VII. *Marche*; and the remainder of VIII. *Introduction et Bacchanale*, correspond respectively to depictions in the ballet score of (a) Moses killing an Egyptian taskmaster and burying him in the sand, his panic on realizing that his deed has been witnessed, and his flight to the land of Midian; (b) Moses' "conversation" with God (God's voice or angel) in the burning bush incident in Midian; his meeting with Aaron, after agreeing to God's mandate to lead the Israelites out of bondage (despite his speech impediment), when Aaron is appointed as Moses' spokesman; and the gathering of the Israelite leaders to advise them of the impending mission; (c) the parting of the waters of the Sea of Reeds, the Israelites crossing, and Moses' ascent to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah; and (d) the golden calf incident, before, during, and after: the peoples' restlessness during Moses' absence, Aaron's desperation that leads him to buy time by acquiescing to the peoples' demand to create an idol, Joshua's pleading, and the actual pagan ritual.

The premiere of Wolpe's *THE MAN FROM MIDIAN* in April 1942 at the National Theater in Washington, D.C., coincided with Dance Players' debut as a company. Wolpe's unorchestrated score was performed in its two-piano version by Walter Hendle and Arthur Gold. Loring danced the role of Moses. Also on the program that evening was a revival of Loring's *Harlequin for President*, with music by Domenico Scarlatti, and another new ballet, *Prairie* (cited in the press, as was *The Man from Midian*, as a "choreographed poem"), based on a poem by Carl Sandburg with a score by Norman Dello Joio. Later that same month, *The Man from Midian* was danced several times in New York, when Dance Players made its first appearance there—coincidentally at the National Theater on West Forty-first Street, in the Broadway theater district.



Eugene Loring's Dance Players in the 1942 production of *The Man from Midian*. Janet Reed as Miriam, Bobbie Howell as the mother of Moses, and Michael Kidd as Aaron.

More than musical content differentiates Milhaud's *Moïse* and Wolpe's *The Man from Midian*. The structure and the choice of depictions differ as well. Whereas *Moïse* has two movements and a coda, the program booklet for *The Man from Midian* (from a 1942 New York performance) simply divides the ballet into seven scenes: 1) At the Wailing Wall; 2) Along the Nile; 3) Pharaoh's Court; 4) A Work Field in Egypt; 5) The Fields of Midian; 6) On the Way to the Red Sea; and 7) The Camp in the Desert. No overture is listed. Wolpe's published two-piano score, however, is divided into two movements, with seventeen scenes or numbers preceded by an overture, that are titled loosely after Loring's preliminary dramatic outline from the original Milhaud collaboration, although Wolpe's titles for numbers 12–14 are not identified as such in that outline. The individual numbers in Wolpe's published two-piano score are, for the first movement (after the overture):

1. Serfdom—Lamentation
(the same title used by Milhaud)
2. Mother Conceives [*sic*] Child
3. Pharaoh's Daughter Bathes in the Nile,
Finds the Baby
4. Procession
5. Pet of the Court—Political Intrigue
6. Moses Among the Workers
7. Moses Buries the Taskmaster in the Sand

and for the second movement (without recommencing the numbering): 8) Conversation with God; 9) Moses Meets Aaron; 10) March Through the Red Sea; 11) Restlessness; 12) Aaron's Desperation; 13) Joshua's Pleading; 14) Bacchanal; 15) Return of Moses; 16) Moses Walks Among the People; 17) Gathering of the People

Wolpe subsequently orchestrated the first movement as a concert suite—which could of course be used for dance should the opportunity arrive—under the title *The Man from Midian*, Ballet Suite no. 1, which received its world premiere in 1951 at Carnegie Hall by the New York Philharmonic (then known as the Philharmonic Symphony Society of New

York), conducted by its musical director, Dimitri Mitropoulos. Notwithstanding the complete recording of the two-piano score with Cameron Grant and James Winn for the Group for Contemporary Music, this Milken Archive release is the world premiere recording of the orchestrated suite. Seven of its eight movements (excluding the overture, which does not appear in the orchestral suite) correspond to those of the first movement in the actual ballet score. Wolpe added a new piece as a finale to this suite, *The Portrait of Moses*, which does not appear anywhere in the actual ballet. Although it draws on musical materials from the second movement, it appears to have been constructed expressly for this concert suite as a kind of programmatic summation of Moses' persona as it developed in the balance of the ballet according to Loring's dramatic outline.

Winthrop Palmer described this *Portrait of Moses* as a musical unfolding of Moses' "huge stature," an "epic incantation" in which "the music, in waves of motion, allows the air to reverberate with the voice of *The Man from Midian*." (In her comments in the program notes for the world premiere of the suite, however, she referred to this piece as "originally the overture"—which it is not, at least not in the published two-piano version, unless it was played as an overture in a two-piano reduction for the danced production, without mention in the program.) The flow of the numbers in the present suite can be seen here in the track listing.

The entire ballet score can be understood as comprising sets of continuous variations—not on a single theme in the conventional sense of "theme and variations," but on musical ideas and cells contained in the overture and the first danced number ("Serfdom—Lamentation"). The musical language throughout illustrates Wolpe's idiosyncratic eclecticism—perhaps even a bit of his "transgression"—in its blurring of procedural boundaries and its reliance, to various degrees and at moments among the individual pieces, on octatonic, enriched diatonic, and nonserial but overtly chromatic components.

Although the dissonances and textural densities in certain passages and sections bespeak complexity, the music is actually infused in its overall arch with a straightforward and cohesive evocation of the progressive scenic action and its symbolism. And those evocations provide a quasi-folk character in many places, despite simultaneous technical and artistic sophistication. The tune of No. 4 ("Procession"), for example, has—apart from its meter—the modal flavor and general feeling of a typical *halutz* (pioneer) marching song from 1920s or 1930s Palestine, artistically elevated here with ingenious imitative counterpoint (with an incipit even reminiscent of one such well-known tune, *Na'ale l'artzenu b'rina* [We Will Go Up to Our Land with Joy]). The drama inherent in the ballet's episodes is achieved by correspondingly powerful, if sometimes appropriately momentary, motivic gestures; skillfully manipulated and compounded layers of juxtaposed sonorities; tone clusters that dissolve to thinned-out chords; and forceful motivic rhythms. Musical means range from long, unfolding, chromatically expansive melodic lines (No. 3, "Pharaoh's Daughter") to a double fugue (No. 5, "Pet of the Court").

Some of Palmer's scene labels, as well as the more detailed indications in the scenario and choreographic outline, can seem both a bit odd and dated—partly the result of historical Judaic and biblical naïveté, and partly a matter of period style. "Serfdom," which has the connotation of a rather different feudal system, doesn't quite convey the reality of slavery, which is the correct term for the Israelites' bondage. "Lamentation" suggests sorrow, in the sense of mourning or grieving over some unalterable incident in the past (as in the biblical Book of Lamentations, which mourns the destruction of the Temple and the captivity) rather than over a current condition; "suffering," or "groaning"—as the corresponding Hebrew word in Exodus (*na'akatam*) is conventionally rendered in English—would be more apt. "Pet," to describe Moses being fawned over by the ladies at court (Palmer's completely invented parameter with neither reference nor basis in the biblical account, although understandably useful for choreography under

the doctrine of artistic license) may sound passé, but was probably not so in 1941 (the film *Teacher's Pet* and the Joe Lubin song of the same title date to 1958), although Moses is a grown man during that scene. In any case, the scenario and choreographic documents reveal that the title is unintentionally misleading: it should at least have been "Pet of the Ladies at Court." And the phrase "political intrigue" has nothing to do with Moses or the Israelites. Like the "pet of the court" element, it was invented simply as another choreographic opportunity to portray typically romanticized and "orientalized" moments of an imagined Egyptian palace scene—in this case, the pharaoh and his ministers (and/or magicians: references in the choreographic drafts vary). Fortunately, both Milhaud and Wolpe were astute enough to avoid the region-linked trap into which a Saint-Saëns would likely have fallen: there is no artificially romanticized Arabian snake charmer music in either composer's score. If anything, Wolpe's movement has fragmentary hints of a Hebrew Palestinian *halutz*-type tune in the statements of the second subject of the fugue—in the initial semi-quaver phrase, before it gives way to chromatic extension.

"Workers" (in "Moses Among the Workers") is also a strange, though perhaps deliberate, word choice—charged as it was with 19th/20th-century proletarian class connotations. The Israelites whom Moses witnessed suffering under brutal oppression were slaves, not merely disadvantaged workers at low wages; nor was their subjugation a matter of capitalist economic policy.

The scene label "Mother Conceives Child" presents a question of scenic, and therefore musical, intent. True, the verb "conceives" appears in the drafts of the scenario, the dramatic outline, and the choreographic synopsis, although it is not clear from those documents whether what it really meant to signify was the *birth* of Moses. Milhaud and Wolpe and their publishers followed the terminology given them. It is nonetheless difficult to imagine just how conception, as an internal feminine physiological event, might have been choreographed, much less costumed. Alternatively, it

is unlikely that the word was a euphemism for the related, necessary causal activity. Indeed, the title in question here is listed and then discussed (by Palmer) in the program of the Carnegie Hall world premiere of Wolpe's suite as "Mother Conceals Child," which makes more sense. That should most likely be the title of the movement; "conceives" should be considered a perpetuated error.

The selection, identification, and delineation of scenes, the unfolding of the story, the interpretation and free reworking of events and personalities in the biblical narrative, and the symbolism must all be considered the product of a collaboration between Palmer and Loring. (Milhaud's and Wolpe's participation appears to have been confined to composing music for the scenes and scenic moments that were stipulated and preassigned to them.) Apart from Loring's exclusive role as choreographer, it is impossible to gauge the degree to which each one contributed to—and is responsible for—the final, jointly approved scenario and dramatic content for Wolpe's *The Man from Midian* by the time it saw the footlights in 1942. It is clear, however, that Palmer's involvement did not end with Loring's and Ballet Theatre's acceptance of her original scenario prior to the Milhaud commission, and she was even involved with the premiere of Wolpe's concert suite.

Palmer's scenario entitled *The Man from Midian* is preceded by her own unpublished sprawling poem—a highly fanciful and contemplative excursion, filled with amorphous odes to freedom of the human spirit, anthropomorphic assignments to nature, and modern, liberation-oriented societal sensibilities. Much of this serves as the inspiration for her scenario, which, together with the dramatic outline, the synopsis, and the program notes, are all perplexing and permeated by inconsistencies. Much of the content is sheer invention beyond poetic license; other aspects are confusions of particular characters, incidents, or locations in the biblical narrative; and other elements can only have been the result of biblical ignorance rather than legitimate reinterpretations. Many of the themes and sentiments have, and can have, nothing to do with Moses or the

deliverance of the Israelites from bondage—whether from literary, theological, or historical viewpoints. Particularly absurd is the assertion in Palmer’s scenario—subsequently reflected in the choreography—that Moses’ mission and administration ended in failure and in his being deposed by the people because of his inability or unwillingness to “teach the people self-government” along the lines of modern Western democracy. Some of the ballet’s raw scenic invention might be acceptable as artistic imagination that expands or fills in missing details of the biblical account without countering or interfering with the substance (for example, No. 4, “Procession,” in Wolpe’s concert suite). But a host of other fabrications, although they offered both choreographic and musical opportunities, risked misleading an unsuspecting audience by convoluting themes and chronologies central to the narrative. What emerged was not a new interpretation of the story or its characters, but in essence an entirely new story, resting awkwardly against the purported backdrop of the Exodus narrative, with the imposition of a modern political-social agenda. These and other related matters are discussed and analyzed in detail by this writer elsewhere in a published Milken Archive article on this ballet.

It can be tempting to seek the source of Palmer and Loring’s departures in Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* (*Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion*; 1939), in which a non-Israelite Moses is also rejected—murdered in this case, as a collective oedipal act—by the Israelites. In that speculative hypothesis, the biblical account of Moses’ life and of the Israelites’ wanderings in the wilderness, as enshrined in the Pentateuch, amounts to a cloak of prevarication devised by rabbinical tradition to eclipse the historical truth. Conscious monotheism, as espoused and propagated by the post-Mosaic biblical prophets, would have emerged only later from a collective Israelite unconscious. Certainly, there was some buzz of awareness about Freud’s work in New York intellectual-cultural circles of the time. His study, however, was rejected by the overwhelming majority of biblical scholars, as well as by objective anthropologists

and historians, as unwarranted manipulation based on questionable fragments of information and superseded assumptions. Yet the possibility of the book’s influence on the *spirit* of revisionist musings concerning Moses in the ballet scenario need not be dismissed altogether, especially in the context of contemporaneous fascination in the New York artistic milieu with the novelty of Freud’s psychological discoveries—even though this book was not published in English until 1955.

The late 1930s and 1940s was a period in American cultural life, especially in the performing arts, that was witnessing an awakening to Jewish subjects and themes. In the musical sphere, that phenomenon was instigated in part by the many Jewish émigré composers of the time and reinforced by a number of native American composers who became open to addressing their Jewish heritage. Insofar as any work about Moses is inevitably and properly perceived as Judaically related, this ballet—despite the weaknesses and incongruities of its scenario—presented an opportunity for Milhaud and for Wolpe to engage with the New York arts culture and with the Jewish perspectives that it was embracing.

Far more so than Milhaud’s *Moïse* (which is also lesser known), Wolpe’s *The Man from Midian* has often been viewed as a product of a perceived if untenable 20th-century association between the Exodus story and universalistic liberation aspirations. By the end of the ballet, it is not Moses who is celebrated in Palmer and Loring’s creation. Rather, “the people,” having prevailed, have become the real collective hero in place of their unseated leader. However, whether by intention or not, Wolpe’s music may in some ways moderate that radical tilt, not only with the encoded musical references to his Palestine years and his balance of differing musical materials and types, but also by his decision to focus on the composite Moses—not “the people”—for the concluding movement of his concert suite. *Portrait of Moses* is the one label that he contributed on his own.

—Neil W. Levin



LAZARE SAMINSKY (1882–1959) belongs to the school of musicians, ethnologists, folklorists, and other intellectuals in Russia who, during the first decade of the 20th century, attempted to establish a new Jewish national art music based on ethnic as well as religious heritage. Intrigued

and encouraged by both the Russian and the more recent Russo-Jewish national-cultural pursuit of folklore, that coterie formalized itself in 1908 as the Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volksmusik (Society for Jewish Folk Music) in St. Petersburg—of which Saminsky was one of the earliest members.

Branches followed in Moscow, Riga, Odessa, and other cities. Although the initial phase of its activities centered around harmonizing and arranging Jewish folk music collected from various parts of the Russian Empire, its long-range purpose was more artistic than ethnological. Its second transitory stage involved shaping such arranged folk material for concert rendition, and in its ultimate stage it aimed at original composition of works—based on or inspired by that Jewish heritage—which its members saw as accumulating to become a national Jewish musical art. Musical publication was therefore an important part of the Society's efforts, and it founded its own press.

To some extent, the "Russification" path among Russian composers and in the Russian classical music world became a model for a Jewish counterpart. But the mission espoused by the Gesellschaft composers also had been kindled and bred by a number of deeper forces operating among the Jewish intelligentsia in the Russian sphere—including the awakening of a national consciousness, the modern revival of Hebrew (apart from the language of prayer), the interest in a secular Hebrew as well as Yiddish literature, and, of course, Zionism, with its cultural and historical ramifications. Underlying these currents were the powerful cultural forces of the movement known as the *haskala*—the

Jewish Enlightenment—which had sought to implant secular culture and literature, humanistic thought, and western European-style social liberalism within eastern European Jewry. Indeed, cosmopolitan middle-class intelligentsia's very embrace of "the folk" and its music in the far-flung and often backward regions of the empire was one manifestation of the liberal worldview fostered by the *haskala*.

Saminsky was born in Vale-Gotzulovo [-Hatzulovo], in the Ukraine, some hundred miles from Odessa, to an upper-middle-class family that, on his father's side, had been long-standing residents and successful merchants in that metropolis on the Black Sea. His mother was an accomplished amateur singer who instilled in him a love for music that he later traced to his earliest memories. He was enrolled at the Emperor Nicholas I Lyceum of Commerce at the age of eleven. Although he sang in school choirs (even in a local church choir) and responded enthusiastically to an exposure to classical concert music performances by dabbling in childhood composition efforts, he did not begin piano lessons until he was nearly fifteen—unusually late for any future professional musician. Following initial music theory studies in Odessa, he entered the St. Petersburg (Imperial) Conservatory in 1906, where his principal teachers were Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, Anatoli Liadov, and Nikolay Tcherpnin, and where Prokofiev was among his classmates. Simultaneously, he pursued his other lifelong passion, studying mathematics at the university in St. Petersburg, where he had wanted to enroll earlier but had been precluded as a Jew—until a degree of liberalization following the 1905 Revolution now made it possible for him. In Odessa, he had begun his examination of the "philosophy behind the new geometry," and by the time he entered university, he was already engaged in a philosophical-analytical review of new geometrical concepts.

Midway into the period of his conservatory studies, his induction into the Gesellschaft ignited his theretofore unexplored interests in music of historical, national, cultural,

and religious Jewish connection. Several acquaintances and friends among his fellow-composers and composition students and within his intellectual-artistic circle introduced him to their Jewish cultural mission and initiated him into their gestating but as yet unofficial society. Among them, according to his recollections, were Efraim Shklier (1871–1943), Mikhail Gneissin (1883–1957), Solomon Rosowsky (1878–1962), and Lyubov Streicher (1888–1958), all of them imbued with Zionist sensibilities. It was a turning point in Saminsky's artistic path that he later acknowledged as “an event of the highest importance in my creative life . . . a new field of interest.”

Until that moment Saminsky had by his own admission been “only faintly interested in things Jewish.” He entered the Gesellschaft circle with “dormant musical impressions of my boyhood about to have their sway,” and he became its first secretary, conductor of its chorus, and, intermittently, chairman of its art and publication committee. In its first year of official existence he conducted one of the Society's first public concerts, which included his own choral piece *Ode to Mendelssohn* (in honor of Mendelssohn's centenary), marking his public debut as a composer, along with Shklier's *Jerusalem* and folksong arrangements by some of his colleagues.

Saminsky's career in Russia bloomed following his graduation from the conservatory, in 1910. During the next eight years, in addition to his continuing involvement with the affairs of the Society and military service in the Caucasus, he composed his first and second symphonies; two Hebrew song cycles; *Ch'diddish* (Hassidic Dance), for violin and piano; *Orientalia*, for orchestra; *Four Sacred Choruses*; *Two Hebrew Lullabies*, for voice and string quartet; and a variety of chamber pieces and other songs. He was the assistant music editor of the St. Petersburg daily newspaper *Russkaya Molva*, and he conducted numerous symphonic and choral concerts, which included a performance of his own symphonic triptych, *Vigiliae*, at the Koussevitzky Concerts in Moscow in 1913.

In 1913 Saminsky—along with Society adherents Joel Engel (1868–1927; composer and critic, and head of the music committee or section of the Moscow branch) and Sussman Kesselgof, an ardent collector and arranger—participated in the music section of the watershed Jewish Ethnographic Expedition (1911–14), conducted under the patronage of the Jewish Historico-Ethnographic Society in St. Petersburg in the name of Baron Horace Guinzbourg (1833–1909), whose funds largely financed the project. Directed by the famous author, playwright, and folklorist S[eymon Ankimovitch] An-Ski [Solomon Zainwil Rapaport; 1863–1920], the expedition (later informally known as the An-Ski expedition) collected folklore, artifacts, music, and other documentation of Jewish life from cities, towns, villages, and hamlets throughout the Pale of Settlement of the Czarist Empire—most prominently from Podolia and Volhynia, but from other areas as well. An-Ski, realizing that modernity and urbanization would eventually render that cultural world extinct, described the mission of the expedition in heartfelt detail:

to collect all that has survived of our life, both spiritually and materially, to record tales, historical facts, folk poetry, folk sayings, to notate old Jewish melodies, to photograph old synagogues, tombstones, folk types, folk scenes of Jewish life, to collect photography, documents and old Hebrew holy objects for a national museum.

The fruits of the expedition were brought back to St. Petersburg, where they were to be made available for scientific and scholarly study and for artistic use as well. Saminsky's contribution was the collection of biblical cantillations, prayer chants and melodies, and other sacred music traditions of the Georgian and Persian Jews in Transcaucasia, some of which he later published in simply accompanied and mildly stylized versions in his *Song Treasury of Old Israel* (1951). The experience apparently confirmed his primary attraction to vintage synagogal chant (biblical and prayer) and its perceived aura of antiquity—a lure no doubt reinforced for him by the exotic southwest Asian flavor of what, in later-20th-century

ethnological and psychological terms, might be called “the other.” That interest had been triggered in his imagination during his earlier military tour of duty in the region, when he first encountered those musical phenomena that would have been largely foreign even to regular synagogue worshippers in such cosmopolitan settings as St. Petersburg or Odessa. But now his more formal academic engagement with the subject crystallized the germ cell of his subsequent and persistent—albeit historically naïve and romantically reductionist—belief that *all such “old synagogue song”* and supposedly fossilized cantillations (*viz.*, from a variety of geographical traditions) constituted the purest continuum of Jewish musical authenticity.

In 1915 the Society’s accumulated publication of various items drawn from eastern European Yiddish as well as Hassidic folk material—which Saminsky deemed generically “inferior” to older, exclusively sacred song and, in many cases, qualitatively banal and inauthentic—ignited his now legendary polemic in the press with Joel Engel about what constitutes historical authenticity in Jewish music. As one of the Society’s leaders and chief protagonists, Engel not only endorsed those publications, but relied heavily on such secular folk substance in his own instrumental as well as vocal compositions and arrangements.

As wellsprings of raw source material for cultivation in art music, however, the two musical realms that Saminsky and Engel addressed—like any separate, distinct, or even unconnected genres—need not be mutually exclusive even within a single work. Oddly enough, Saminsky and Engel, both accomplished composers who could certainly imagine the creative potential in such dualities and even in adversarial aesthetics, wrestled in their polemic with each other over issues that pertain more to abstract than to applied theory.

* * *

For a time in 1917–18 Saminsky served as director of the State Conservatory in Tbilisi (Tiflis). But in the wake of the October Bolshevik Revolution, he soon determined to abandon Russia, with America his ultimate destination. He went first to Constantinople in 1919, where he was befriended by a number of influential members of the local B’nai Brith lodge, some of whom were also prominent Zionists who assisted him in acquiring a permit to enter Syria and Palestine under a pretext of “repatriation.” Many years later he described with unfaded enthusiasm his impressions of the land, the optimism and determination of the settlers and pioneers, the historic sites that kindled in him a new level of kinship with his people and its ancient history, the general euphoria that pervaded the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, and his elation upon seeing Jerusalem for the first time. “Standing at the gate of Jerusalem,” he recalled in his unpublished memoirs, “I, too, was overcome by that darkened ecstasy of the wayfarer who has reached the threshold of his beloved old home at last.” But despite his exhilarating experiences there, he was not inspired to remain permanently in Palestine. After a few months, during which time he delivered a concert-lecture (read in Hebrew from a translation prepared for him) in Jerusalem and then Tel Aviv, he was able to obtain a visa for France.

After about five months in Paris he spent a little over a year in London, where he lectured on Russian, Oriental, and Jewish music (in Oxford and Liverpool as well), conducted a ballet season at the Duke of York Theatre, and attempted to organize a chapter of the Gesellschaft. At the end of 1920 Saminsky immigrated to the United States. During his first few years in New York he became active both in new music circles and among the small but dedicated coterie of Jewish intellectuals, composers, and other musicians interested in promoting new Judaic works as well as engaging in historical and analytical deliberations about Jewish music. Within a short time he became recognized as an important personality on both scenes, and in 1923 he cofounded the League of Composers. And with the exception of the American tour of the Zimro Ensemble in

1919–20 (from Russia en route to Palestine, although the group did not proceed past New York), he was probably the first to introduce New York audiences to the music of the Gesellschaft composers.

It was his thirty-four-year tenure as music director of New York's Temple Emanu-El, beginning in 1924, that provided Saminsky with his most potent platform and his most productive base. Emanu-El was one of the first congregations in America established initially as "Reform," well before the official formulation and founding of an actual Reform movement in the United States. By the 20th century, by virtue of a variety of factors—including the historically elite social and economic status of its lay leadership and much of its membership, and the cathedral-like aura of its present sanctuary (built 1926–30)—Temple Emanu-El acquired a popular perception in many quarters as the "flagship" congregation of the American Reform movement, at least in the eastern half of the country. Under Saminsky's musical stewardship it became one of the first American synagogues to embrace goals of Western musical sophistication in tandem with a respectable measure of modernized and stylized Judaic aesthetics.

Saminsky had no tolerance for the strange, artificial music scene he encountered at Emanu-El, which for the most part had characterized the music of American Reform worship from the mid-19th century up to that time. Virtually detached from any manifestations of Jewish musical tradition—western as well as eastern European, Sephardi, or Near Eastern—and isolated even from contemporaneous modernization and historically based musical reforms in Germany, the collective American Reform repertoire reflected a misguided effort to forge a new, patently "American" brand of "temple" music that was to be more compatible with New World sensibilities and free of all connection to European Jewry—including its liberal wings.

But Saminsky was just as repelled by the inroads of Yiddish folk, cheap theatrical, and other entertainment-oriented popular song, as well as pseudo-Hassidic flavors, into

orthodox services in America, a practice that had begun in Europe. It was that state of affairs that gave him the impetus to begin composing for the liturgy, initially for his own choir and then—as his example soon made waves across the country even as it met with its share of resistance to change—for publication and ultimately to the benefit of American Reform congregations nationally. In his programming and selection of repertoire and in his own music Saminsky thus brought his commitment to exalted aesthetic standards and artistic taste to bear upon the musical character of the classical American Reform service, exposing it to long-embedded values in serious Jewish liturgical art.

As Temple Emanu-El's music director, Saminsky ushered in an era of impressive musical accomplishments, liturgical creativity, and higher standards—both for that synagogue and for American nonorthodox synagogue music in general. He used his position to great effect to alter and elevate the course of music in American Reform worship, to enrich the Jewish musical life of New York apart from synagogue services, and to encourage young American composers such as David Diamond and Frederick Jacobi to contribute their gifts to music for the Hebrew liturgy. Beginning in the first decade of Saminsky's direction, Emanu-El sponsored performances of new Judaic works by composers such as Joseph Achron, whom he commissioned to write a full Sabbath eve service in 1932 (probably the first such commission to a classical composer in America), and Ernest Bloch, as well as biblical cantatas by Mussorgsky and Honegger, among others. In 1929 he and the synagogue's Choir Committee established a program whose purpose was "purification and performance of new choral synagogue services by representative composers of the United States—and then possibly also eminent Hebrew [Jewish] composers on the European continent," in order to bring forth a "revival of Hebrew synagogue music in America"—by which was meant, in the main, new compositions.

Later, Saminsky established and coordinated citywide Jewish music festivals. The annual Three Choir Festival,

which he inaugurated at Temple Emanu-El in 1936, was an important event on New York's cultural calendar. For twenty-three years it featured new choral works, including many premieres, by established as well as budding composers such as George Rochberg, Miriam Gideon, Hugo Weisgall, Edward T. Cone, Elliott Carter, Frederick Jacobi, Paul Creston, and many others.

Albert Weisser, the first serious historian of the Gesellschaft episode, was intimately familiar with Saminsky's music. His observations appear even more trenchant in perspective: "[In his] heroic endeavors to bring a vital and dignified musical service to the American Synagogue, Saminsky's unique incandescence has always been felt. It stirred controversy, it unsettled the smug and self-satisfied, it offended the crafty vulgarians and, not the least important, it brought some sorely needed aesthetic standards to an area from which they had too long been absent."

Saminsky's first important liturgical work was his *Sabbath Eve Service* (1926; rev. 1930, 1947, and 1954), in which he incorporated with subtle originality not only biblical cantillation motifs and melodic contours, but also a Galician-Volhynian tune once employed in those regions by beadles, or "town criers," to awaken Jews for morning prayers, and even some restrained Ashkenazi cantorial archetypes. There followed his *Sabbath Morning Service* (1926–29) and *Holiday Service: Hymns and Responses for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur* (1927–29), along with various individual prayer settings. All were intended primarily for Reform services and therefore composed with organ accompaniment and according to the format and texts of the *Union Prayerbook*, which had become the official and, by Saminsky's middle years, virtually the exclusive prayerbook of American Reform. Much of this music has fallen into disuse. But a few of his settings—at one time current in some progressive Conservative synagogues as well—remain standard in Reform repertoires, especially for the High Holy Days, even as much of the mid-20th-century guise of "classical" Reform aura and ambience has been ceded to a more populist, informal sway.

In retrospect, it is largely owing to Saminsky's tenacity, his relentless if occasionally belligerent and quarrelsome demand for higher standards, and his own original musical contributions that the 1920s marked a turning point in the development of American synagogue music outside orthodox and traditional domains. Together with Abraham Wolf Binder (1895–1966) and, to a lesser extent, Edward Stark (1853–1918), who composed for San Francisco's Reform community, Saminsky can be said to have established a second stage in the course of American Reform aesthetics. This served as a kind of bridge to the period between about 1940 and the 1960s, when the Reform musical scene was dominated by western and west-central European émigré composers from the German-speaking cultural orbit, many of them refugees from the Third Reich. But it was Saminsky and Binder who, more than any other individual composers, paved the way for that third stage and for acceptance of further advanced musical levels.

Saminsky's Jewish-related concert works from his American period include *The Daughter of Jephtha*, an opera-ballet, also labeled a "cantata-pantomime"; *Ten Hebrew Folksongs and Folk Dances* for piano; *The Lament of Rachel*, a "coro-ballet" (with soprano or mezzo-soprano solo), which was begun in Russia but completed in America; *King Saul*, a cantata; *By the Rivers of Babylon* (Psalm 137), for chorus, vocal soloists, and instruments; and various solo and chamber pieces. Critics have discerned in many of these works a "Hebraic content" joined with a universalist artistic outlook to form a unified expression. Among his many general works are the five symphonies; *Pueblo*, a ballet; *Julian, The Apostate Caesar*, later retitled *The Defeat of Caesar Julian*, a three-act opera; songs and song cycles on poetry from various sources; several chamber works, including *Rye Septet* for voice and seven instruments; and numerous other choral, symphonic, and solo pieces.

Saminsky perhaps egotistically fancied himself a true Renaissance man—as suggested by the title of his unpublished autobiography, *The Third Leonardo: Illusions of a Warrior of Civilization*. Bloated as the manuscript is

with name-dropping and overseasoned with a peppering of literary titles and references, that image is nonetheless not entirely without justification. In addition to his mathematical pursuits and writings, he delved seriously into several other fields of intellectual and philosophical enquiry. He was at home with the European canon of belles lettres and art, but he also soon became conversant in American literature; and he acquired a knowledge of eastern philosophies and religions. Among his books are *Music of Our Day*; *Music of the Ghetto and the Bible*; *Living Music of the Americas*; *Physics and Metaphysics of Music and Essays on the Philosophy of Mathematics*; and *Essentials of Conducting*.

During his lifetime Saminsky enjoyed a respectable insider reputation in the general contemporary music world in America. For reasons that have yet to be fully and objectively explored, his name has faded from the roster of significant American émigré composers of that era. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, there are unmistakable signs of renewed interest in his legacy. A Saminsky revival seems imminent and promising.

THE VISION OF ARIEL

The Vision of Ariel, identified both as an opera-ballet and a choreo-drama in its published score, was one of several stage works in which Saminsky experimented with combining elements of choral, symphonic, solo vocal-operatic, and dance media within a single unified expression. "In my operas," he reflected in his memoirs, "I have tried a complete absorption of ballet as a self-dependent agent of parallel action. . . . I aimed at reaching out for a new form, sure and self-sufficient." His artistic vision in terms of dance concerned liberating its music from what he saw as "formulaic uses." At the same time, he aimed for music that—as this work demonstrates—is equally viable as absolute music, with sufficient drama of its own.

The Vision of Ariel is set against the backdrop of the Inquisition in Spain and lands under its dominance, and the resultant implications for those Jews who converted under pressure to Christianity but who clung to some Jewish practices or some vestiges of Judaism. Following the fierce persecutions in Christian Spain during the 14th century that culminated in the massacres of 1391, in which an estimated 70,000 Jews were murdered and entire communities extinguished, significant numbers of Jews surrendered to baptism and conversion. That situation was repeated in the early 15th century. Some of these "new Christians," or *conversos*, continued to practice Jewish customs and ceremonies in secret. They were known as "crypto-Jews" or as *marranos* (swine)—the epithet that was originally attached to them but which remains in common usage without its initial aspersion. As Christians, however, the *conversos* were under the authority of the Inquisition—the Congregation of the Holy Office—and they were subject to the same consequences that attended heresy or denial of the faith for any other Christians.

This opera-ballet, even as historical fiction, does not necessarily represent a historically researched effort by the composer (who was also the librettist), who had no difficulty leaning on artistic license. According to the synopsis, the action occurs in Flanders in the latter part of the 16th century, in a large but unnamed city in the part of the Netherlands that, from at least 1584 to 1713, was under Spanish military and political control. Ariel, a *marrano* there, parades under the disguise of Don Diego, presumably a Spanish nobleman. Ariel, which translates literally as "Lion of God," is also understood in Jewish tradition as a symbolic name for Jerusalem, and therefore can represent pre-Diaspora Jewish sovereignty. The name Ariel is also biblically associated with the prophet Isaiah's vision warning the people concerning their iniquities. Here, the vision is removed from that context to become a vision of resistance inspired by a biblical account.

The one-act work comprises a prologue and three scenes; the recorded excerpts here are drawn from the first and

third of those scenes. The prologue has established the Spanish soldiers' suspicion of Don Diego's true identity. The first scene opens on the eve of the festive holiday of Purim, the annual commemoration of the thwarted genocide against Jewry in the Persian Empire—as recounted in the biblical Book of Esther—and the eleventh-hour reprieve through the king's intercession that enabled the Jews to defeat their enemies and pursue justice. In a poor quarter of the city, Ariel and a group of *marranos* have gathered in a corner of a building, clandestinely used as a synagogue, for the annual reading (chanting) of *m'gillat ester*—the Book of Esther in its scroll form. Saminsky's prominent use of dark orchestral colors, featuring the English horn, gives an appropriately ominous sense of foreboding to the opening of Ariel's story, which will end sorrowfully. That entire introductory orchestral section is built on the traditional (albeit Ashkenazi) cantillation motifs for *m'gillat ester*.

Ariel's rendition of the opening passage of the scroll is preceded here by the choir to the same cantillations, representing the assemblage of *marranos*. Ariel's vocal line, while completely faithful to the established cantillation motifs, is of course stylized as operatic performance rather than ethnologically reflective of the less formal and more rapid logogenic lay approach typical of these readings.

In this scene, only the opening of *m'gillat ester* is offered as the orchestra builds to a reflection of the peoples' growing anxiety about the soldiers loitering outside and the fear that they may discover the hidden synagogue. In a kind of trance (his "visions"), Ariel becomes transported back in time to the palace of the king of Persia, which constitutes the second scene: a liberally theatrical depiction of how Queen Esther (her Jewish identity concealed from the king until then) successfully prevails upon her husband to intercede on her people's behalf. The transition at the end of the first scene to Ariel's vision is described in Saminsky's synopsis as a moment when "passing formless clouds, shadows, strange lights efface the synagogue scene."

Ariel's vision in Scene 2 also includes an image of his dead mother "in the mist," praying over a lighted candelabra—presumably Sabbath candles—and then "dim silhouettes of helmeted soldiers and monks transpire through vapors," after which Ariel faints.

Scene 3 returns to the eve of Purim in the secret synagogue, where Ariel, awakening from his trance, utters a lament in the form of a brief vocalise, which heralds the melodic contours of the coming prayer setting.

The congregants hear the crescendo of a commotion in the street outside, which emanates from the jeers of the rabble as a group of Jewish martyrs, probably unmasked *marranos*, are being led as condemned heretics in a procession to their deaths at the auto-da-fé. As they proceed, they sing the elegy for martyrs known as *av haraḥamim* (Father of Mercies), which occurs in the liturgy toward the end of the Torah service (the biblical readings at the end of the morning service) on Sabbaths—in Ashkenazi custom, on all except liturgically special or distinguished Sabbaths. The prayer specifically concerns and eulogizes those Jews who were slaughtered as *Jews*—for being and remaining Jews and for their refusal to renounce Judaism—during the period of the Crusades (through the 12th and 13th centuries). In this scene the martyrs are naturally represented by the chorus. The interplay in the rendition of *av haraḥamim*, between the martyrs' chorus outside and Ariel (now as a cantorial soloist) inside the synagogue as he observes the procession from a window, is theatrically effective.

Although this text has been set by many composers in a variety of styles and modalities (the most elaborate and perhaps best known of which is probably one by Zeid Rovner [Jacob Samuel Maragowsky; 1856–1943]), the melodic material of the first part of Saminsky's interpretation is uniquely drawn from biblical cantillation motifs. These give way to more freely conceived, emotionally evocative vocal lines for the tenor soloist, set against pulsating figures in the orchestra at climactic points. This is not a functional setting suitable for synagogue use, although it could be so

THE VISION OF ARIEL (opera-ballet)**Lazare Saminsky**

Sung in Hebrew

ESTHER*Translation: JPS Tanakh 1999*

It happened in the days of Ahasuerus—that Ahasuerus who reigned over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia. In those days, when King Ahasuerus occupied the royal throne in the fortress Shushan ...

AV HARAHAMIM*Translation by Rabbi Morton M. Leifman*

Father of all mercies, whose presence extends beyond the vast expanses of the universe, remember in mercy those faithful, those righteous, those innocents of the holy communities of Israel who surrendered their souls for the sanctification of God's Name. They were beloved and admired during their days on earth, and were not separated even by death. They were swifter than eagles and braver than lions in doing the will of their Creator and in fulfilling the desires of their sheltering rock.

May our God remember them for good, together with all the other righteous of the world, and render retribution for the spilled blood of His servants; as it is written in the Torah of Moses, that man of God: "Oh nations, acclaim His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants." (Deuteronomy 32:43)

adapted, but a manifestly operatic expression. A powerful orchestral interlude leads to a dramatic choral "sigh," which in turn proceeds to a mood of resignation and faith as the chorus resumes.

The recorded excerpt concludes with this prayer, which Saminsky abridged. In the scene, following its recitation, the congregants attempt to persuade Ariel to escape. But he refuses and instead unsheathes his sword to await the soldiers as the people retreat to the balcony. The soldiers storm the building, and Ariel is killed in battle with them. They then rush the balcony, from which, according to the scenario, "an anguished cry is heard." The scene—and the opera-ballet—concludes with the continuation of the martyrs' procession to their deaths.

Saminsky wrote *The Vision of Ariel* in 1916 in Tiflis, before his immigration to the United States, but he revised it in America prior to a performance of its Finale in New York in 1953. The work received its staged premiere in its entirety the following year in Chicago.

—Neil W. Levin

Jewish Music of the Dance

Leon Stein: *Three Hassidic Dances* (1946)

Publisher: Transcontinental

Recording: Jesus Christus Kirche, Berlin, June 1998

Recording Producer: Wolfram Nehls

Recording Engineer: Henri Thaon

Assistant Recording Engineer: Brigitte Siewert

Recording Project Managers: Neil Levin, Paul Schwendener

Coproduction with DeutschlandRadio Kultur and the ROC Berlin GmbH

Darius Milhaud: *Opus Americanum no. 2, Suite from the ballet Moïse* (1947), excerpts

Publisher: Elkan-Vogel

Recording: Jesus Christus Kirche, Berlin, December 2000

Recording Producer: Wolfram Nehls

Recording Engineer: Martin Eichberg

Assistant Recording Engineer: Susanne Beyer

Recording Project Manager: Paul Schwendener

Coproduction with DeutschlandRadio Kultur and the ROC Berlin GmbH

Stefan Wolpe: *The Man from Midian* (ballet suite) (1942)

Publisher: McGinnis & Marx

Recording: Jesus Christus Kirche, Berlin, July 1998

Recording Producer: Wolfram Nehls

Recording Engineer: Henri Thaon

Assistant Recording Engineer: Brigitte Siewert

Recording Project Managers: Neil Levin, Paul Schwendener

Coproduction with DeutschlandRadio Kultur and the ROC Berlin GmbH

Lazare Saminsky: *The Vision of Ariel* (1916), excerpts

Recording: Centre Cultural de Sant Cugat, Barcelona, July 1999

Recording Producer: Simon Weir

Recording Engineer: Bertram Kornacher

Recording Project Manager: Paul Schwendener

**NOTE: Biographical sketches of the performers on this recording can be found
on the Milken Archive Web site: www.milkenarchive.org**

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