

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE ISRAELI VIOLIN SINCE 1948

Netanel Draiblate, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2015

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The focal point of this project is researching the role of key Israeli composers through compositions written during the first two decades of the State of Israel. The dissertation explores the influences that led the composers to write a specific piece, whether it served as a personal dedication or perhaps reflection on current events happening in Israel contemporaneous to the times.

Key questions include:

Where are the origins of each composer and what brought them to Israel?

Was there a connection between the Israeli composers and prominent violinists during the compositional process?

THE ISRAELI VIOLIN SINCE 1948

By

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Introduction

The violin is one of the most revered instruments in Jewish culture and played a significant role in the development of Israeli music in a country full of cultures, religions and influences.

During the 1930's, shortly before the State of Israel's Declaration of Independence a remarkable group of composers and musicians immigrated from troubled European nations. Their contribution to the development of the Israeli folklore proved to be instrumental in defining twentieth century music in Israel and its exposure abroad.

Each composer brings to the table a combination of past lives in Europe as well as the future of music in Israel at times of incredible hardship and war. A large portion of Israeli music is greatly influenced by the different motifs, rhythms and sounds of the Middle-East countries surrounding Israel as well as the Near-Eastern countries: Yemen, Iran (Persia) and Iraq.



Illustration: Map of the Middle-East, Near-East and Africa.

Internationally acclaimed violinists were also instrumental in the writing process of some of these pieces, coupled with the fact that Israel was known to be a breeding ground for young violinists in the 60's and 70's (Pinchas Zukerman, Itzhak Perlmann, Shlomo Mintz and Miriam Fried), this furthermore strengthens the connection between the composers and the violin.

Mordechai Seter – Immigrated to Palestine in 1926
Menachem Avidom – Immigrated to Palestine in 1928
Erich Walter Sternberg – Immigrated to Palestine in 1932
Paul Ben-Haim – Immigrated to Palestine in 1933
Ben-Zion Orgad – Immigrated to Palestine in 1933
Marc Lavry – Immigrated to Palestine in 1935
Herbert Brun – Immigrated to Palestine in 1936
Eden Mordechai Partos – Immigrated to Palestine in 1938
Alexander Uriah Boskovich – Immigrated to Palestine in 1938
Abel Ehrlich – Immigrated to Palestine in 1939
Yehuda Engel – Immigrated to Palestine in 1939
Arthur Gelbrun – Immigrated to Israel in 1949

The purpose of this research is to highlight the close connection between the composers, the multi-cultural Israeli folklore and the violinists for whom some of the pieces were composed by presenting a short biographical statement on each of the composers followed by the stories behind their compositions.

Compositions and key event in Israel's history

1947 - Ben-Zion Orgad - Ballade for Violin

- Declaration of Independence

1948 - Oedon Partos - Four Israel Melodies

- 1948 Arab-Israeli War: Israel confronted with five surrounding Arab nations

1949 - Oedon Partos - Yizkor

- Jerusalem proclaimed as Israel's capital

1949 - Menachem Avidom - Concertino for Violin and Piano

- Israel becomes the 59th member of the United Nations

1950 - Herbert Brun - Sonatina for solo Violin

- Israeli parliament (Kneset) signs the law of return, encouraging a large wave of Jewish immigrants from Europe and Near-East countries

1951 - Paul Ben-Haim - Sonata in G for solo Violin

1951 - Marc Lavry - Three Jewish dances

1951 - Mordechai Seter - Partita for Violin and Piano

1952 - Alexander Uriah Boskovich - Lamentation

1952 - Erich Walter Sternberg - Sonata for Violin and Piano

1953 - Abel Ehrlich - Bashrav

- 1956 - Sinai War - Israel, assisted by France and Great Britain conquers the Suez canal

1957 - Yehuda Engel - Elegia for solo Violin

1959 - Artur Gelbrun - Sonatina for two violins

1960 - Paul Ben-Haim - Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

- Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann was executed in Tel-Aviv; it was the only execution in Israel's history

1962 - Paul Ben-Haim - Berceuse Sefaradite

Paul Ben-Haim

July 5th, 1897 – January 14th 1984

Paul Ben Haim was born as Paul Frankenburger in Munich, Germany. He started playing the violin under the guidance of Goetfried Klosner and later made piano his main instrument under the direction of Berthold Kellerman (a former student of Franz Liszt). Although he had started composition studies with Anton Ber-Walbrun at a younger age, his composition career took off shortly after returning from service in the German Army in 1916. Freidrich Klose, a former student of Anton Bruckner became his composition teacher and mentor. As a conductor Frankenburger assisted Bruno Walter in the Munich opera house and later studied with Hugo Rohr who conducted the opera house orchestra as well. In 1933 upon immigrating to Israel Frankenburger changed his name to Ben-Haim.

Sonata in G for solo Violin

Recorded December 4th, 2014. Tracks 6-8

Composed in 1951 and dedicated to one of the most famous Jewish violinists of the twentieth century Yehudi Menuhin, the piece was premiered in 1952 at Carnegie Hall, alongside the rediscovered *Mendelssohn Concerto in D minor*.¹ Ben-Haim was approached by Menuhin following a recital in Tel-Aviv, the violinist commended Ben-Haim for his compositions after mentioning the rave reviews Ben-Haim received earlier that year in the United-States. The correspondence between the violinist and composer following their first meeting in Tel-Aviv brought the *Sonata in G* to fruition. When Menuhin commissioned Ben-Haim to write the

¹ Rediscovered by Menuhin alongside several other works by Felix Mendelssohn.

sonata, he was asked whether he had any preference regarding the piece, the violinist's only comment was that the composition would be hard to perform. The piece itself poses many challenges to the performer and is indeed quite hard to perform, a fact that did not seem to affect Menuhin who learned the piece in just two weeks.

The sonata was composed in three days and was sent to Menuhin for editing. In a letter dated January 23rd, 1952 Menuhin writes: "*This piece is laid out and planned in such perfection it barely needs any editing*".²

It was not the first piece dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin: Hungarian composer Bela Bartok dedicated his Sonata for Violin (1944) to the famous performer, and that same sonata as well as Bach's solo sonatas and partitas were used by Ben-Haim as reference during the composition process of this sonata.

The piece presents Ben-Haim's tonal writing. In the first movement he uses the repetition of the theme to establish new keys while transitioning between the themes using episodes of new music. The movement resembles a toccata due to its virtuosic yet imitative nature.

The clouded view of the Major and minor modes prevails in the first movement, and Ben-Haim uses the sub-dominant as the tonal center rather than the dominant. He also alternates the third, sixth and seventh notes of the chord throughout the movement.

² Hirshberg, Jehoash. *Paul Ben-Haim: His Life and Works*. (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1983)



Example 1: Excerpt from the middle of the first movement highlighting the return of the main theme, followed by a new episode (marked *leggiero*). Note the chromatic interplay in the second measure: G#, G, G sharp as well as the first measure of the new theme in the seventh measure: E, Eb, E. These half step motives are commonly used by Ben-Haim throughout the entire Sonata.

The second movement represents freedom, vastness and the never-ending desert song. It contains slowly changing structural notes embellished by various ornaments. The movement is based on short sentences built of a pair of seconds: Bb to C and Eb to F, augmenting the half step intervals commonly used in the first and third movements .

The third movement is a dance-like rondo. Its main features are chromatic progressions and the use of Middle-Eastern rhythmical patterns. The main theme of the movement uses fifths and tritones in different inversions slightly changing each iteration of the theme.



Example 2: The above excerpt highlights the use of syncopated rhythms imitating Arabic music.



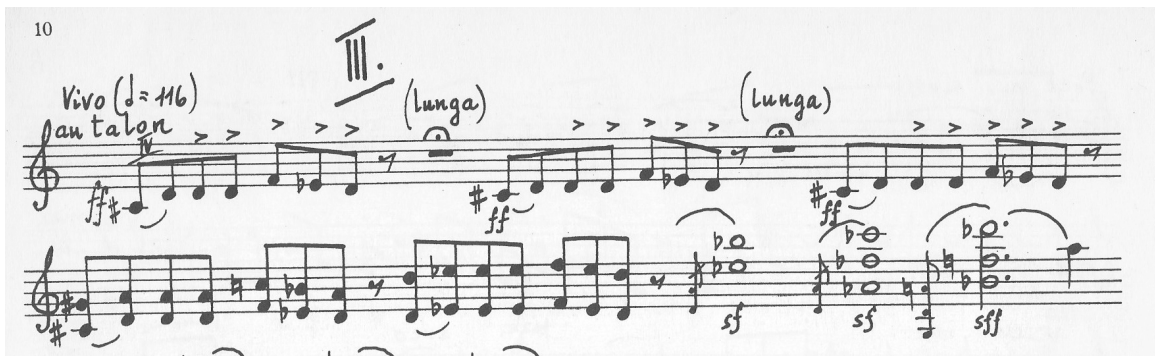
Example 3: This excerpt showcases the technical challenges of the piece. An ascending fast passage written in fifths ranging from the violin's bottom position to one of its highest.

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
Recorded January 27th, 2015. Track 10-12

The concerto was commissioned in 1959 by Mrs. Lionello Perera (New York) for the Israeli violinist Zvi Zeitlin, through the America Israel Cultural Foundation. It was premiered in Tel-Aviv with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in 1962. Violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz attended Zeitlin's performance of the concerto in 1968 in Los Angeles, and following that performance Heifetz requested that a copy of the score be sent to him.

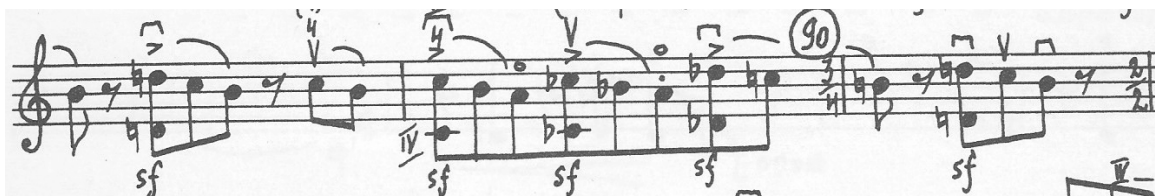
Mr. Zeitlin agreed to perform the concerto for Heifetz's students who applauded the concerto greatly. In a letter from 1969 Heifetz writes to Ben-Haim :
*"The piece is very pleasant and direct, it got the warm welcome it deserves here in Los Angeles".*³

The concerto has three movements and is scored for a small orchestra, leaving the leading role to the soloist. Ben-Haim uses some of the themes from the first two movements in the finale. The third movement starts with a violin cadenza highlighting the movement's main motive. Israeli music in the mid twentieth century was full of quartal and quintal intervals, and that compositional technique was common amongst the composers immigrating from European countries.



Example 4: The opening of the third movement. A short motive developed in fifths and octaves.

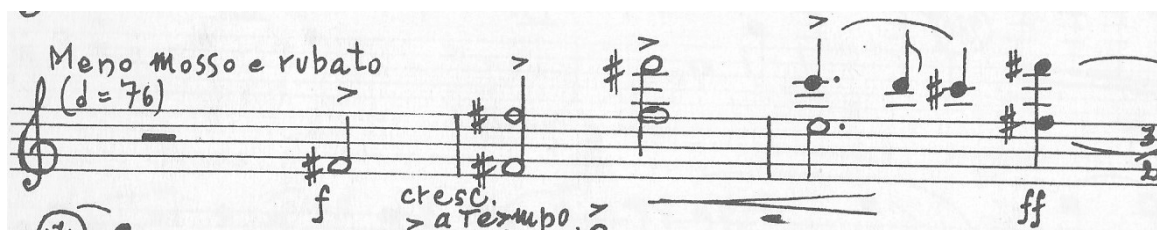
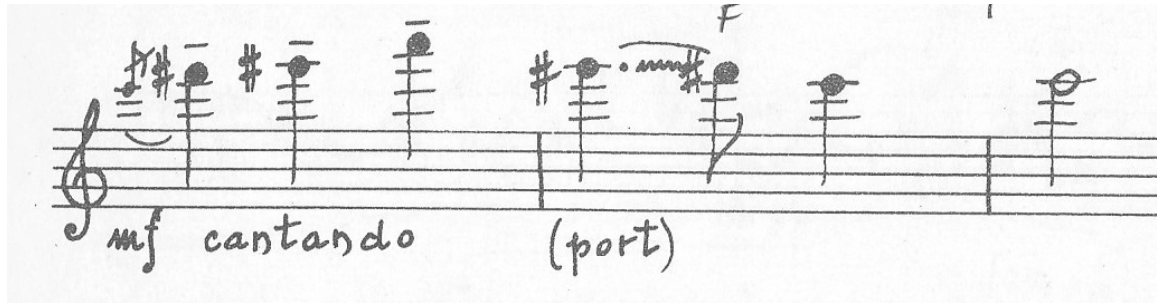
Throughout his compositions Ben-Haim favors the interplay of Major and minor seconds, as show in this following excerpt:



Example 5: The alternating use of Major and minor seconds in the first movement.

³ Hirshberg, Jehoash. *Paul Ben-Haim: His Life and Works*.

The following two excerpts show the use of similar thematic materials in the second and third movement of the concerto:



Example 6.

Berceuse Sepharadite
Recorded March 31st, 2015. Track 1.

This piece was originally composed for voice and piano in 1939 and later arranged for string quartet and chamber orchestra. In 1962, following a request from Itzhak Perlman who was very fond of the piece, Ben-Haim wrote an arrangement for violin and piano. It is the most popular version of the piece to date.

The composition resembles a lullaby and showcases one of the main characteristics of Israeli music: the use of ornamentation. Both Ashkenasi and Sepharadic Jews use different melodies and embellishment techniques, and the vast majority of compositions depicting a particular stream or origin of the Jewish people will employ ornaments in one way or another.



Example 7: Use of embellishments specific to the Sepharadic Jewish tradition in Berceuse Sepharadite.

Oedon Mordechai Partos

October 1st 1907 – July 6th 1977

Partos was born to an upper-middle class family in Budapest, Hungary. His mother, an amateur pianist insisted that he follow up on his music studies when it was apparent he had considerable talent. Oedon started playing the violin at the age of nine, and his greatest influence was the notable conductor Eugene Ormandy (Oygen Blau) who also served as his first teacher. At the age of twelve Partos was accepted to the studio of Jenő Hubay, a great violinist and composer of the Hungarian school. Studying under Hubay after only three years of playing the violin was considered an astonishing achievement.

Violinist Andrea Gertler, Partos's colleague in Hubay's studio, shares his memories of Partos in a letter dated January 1980: *"We met at the violin studio of Jenő Hubay in Budapest and became attached immediately. I recall admiring the exceptional talents of my friend who already then had an excellent spiritual and musical maturity. We played a lot of chamber music. Partos played piano as well and was an excellent sight reader"*⁴

⁴ Bahat, Avner. *Oedon Partos: His Life and Works*. (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1984)

Partos started composing as soon as he mastered the piano. At the age of twelve he co-composed an opera alongside Mathias Scheiber and Antal Dorati called “Ship in Mid Seas.” The young aspiring composers filled a tub with water, floated a toy boat and sang the entire opera through.

Zoltán Kodály immediately noticed the boy’s talent and invited his mother for a meeting in which he offered to accept young Oedon to his composition class despite his very young age.

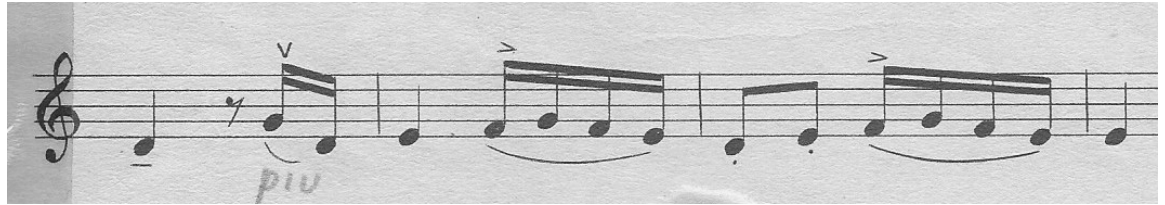
Partos received the Concertmaster position in the Luzern Orchestra at the age of seventeen. He was one of the founders of the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) in Hungary and in 1929 moved to Berlin. Upon Hitler’s rise, Jews in Germany were systematically fired, and the only group Partos was allowed to play in was the Kulturbund (the name derives from the need for culture in what seemed to be an incredibly hard and dark time, with more to come). After his experience in Germany, Partos moved to Azerbaijan for a short while, where he was teaching and researching the local music as well as music from Armenia and Georgia.

In 1938 Partos immigrated to Palestine joining some of his Hungarian colleagues in the Palestine Orchestra, known today as the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1953 he became the head of the music academy in Tel Aviv. Following his experience in Azerbaijan, Partos was very interested in researching the local Israeli folklore, namely the Near-Eastern melodies.

Four Israeli Melodies
Recorded January 27th, 2015. Tracks 1-4

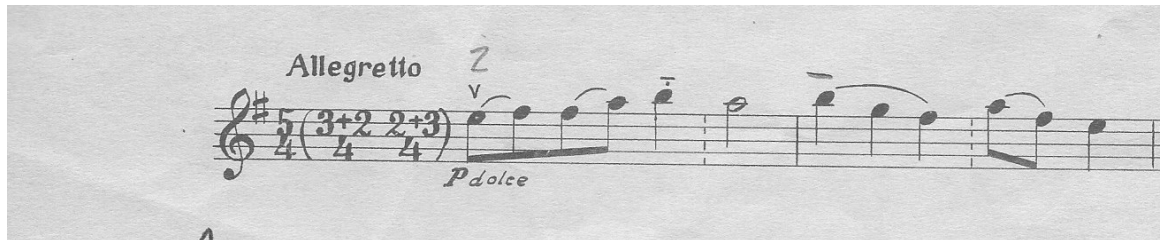
These short pieces were written in 1948 during the peak of the Israeli-Arab war, and some of the composition process took place in a bombing shelter during Egyptian air raids.

- 1) “Yemenite song” – This song was borrowed from a Yemenite Diwan,⁵ and transcribed by Partos after hearing it sung by the famous Israeli-Yemenite singer Bracha Zfira. Many Yemenite-inspired compositions employ the usage of accents on weak beats, thereby destabilizing the rhythmical structure of the song.



Example 8: Displacement of beats by accenting the second beat of each bar.

- 2) “Theme and Variations” – Written in 5/4 meter with alternating subdivisions as shown in example 9. The movement is written in E minor and utilizes the Aeolian mode also known as a natural minor scale. The natural minor is a trademark of Israeli music, alongside the harmonic minor that is prevalent in Jewish and Arabic music.



Example 9: Alternating subdivision in a 5/4 meter.

⁵ Diwan – Anthology of liturgical poetry, similar to divan.

- 3) “Yemenite dance” – A loose transcription of a Yemenite women’s song.

Derived from the song “Ya Habibi”⁶ written By Sara Levi-Tnai.



Example 10: The main motive of the song “Ya Habibi”, also written in the Aeolian mode.

- 4) “Sepharadite Song” – Instrumental version of the “Hamavdil”⁷ song earlier transcribed by Partos for Bracha Zfira. This song had been used in a prior composition by Partos: the Rondo on Sepharadite theme written in 1939.



Example 11: “Hamavdil” theme in its Sepharadic version, sung in synagogues during the end of Shabbat.

Yizkor (In Memoriam)
Recorded January 27th, 2015. Track 9.

Yizkor was originally composed for viola and string orchestra in 1946 and received its violin transcription in 1949. The piece was premiered by Partos himself in 1947. In his biography of Partos, Avner Bahat writes: “*It is probably Partos’s most performed piece, played hundreds of times in its many different versions...*”⁸

The piece was commissioned by Deborah Bertonoff, a dancer and pupil of Partos with whom he had a profound friendship.

⁶ Ya-Habibi - “My loved one” in Arabic.

⁷ Hamavdil – Jewish prayer highlighting the separation of Shabbat from the rest of the week.

⁸ Bahat, Avner. *Oedon Partos: His Life and Works*.

The music was first performed in a solo dance recital, and was dedicated by Bertonoff to the memory of the Jews who died in the Holocaust. The piece is based on a Lithuanian Jewish tune. It was sung to Partos by Deborah Bertonoff's father Yehoshua Bertonoff, a famous theatrical actor in Israel. The dance was very short, accompanied by cellist Yehoyachin Stuchevsky and pianist Chanan Winternitz.

Oedoen Partos (born in Budapest 1907, since 1938 in Palestine) wrote his "Yiskor" to accompany an expressive mimic dance conceived by Deborah Bertonoff; it is dedicated to the memory of the victims in the war of extinction led against the Jews in Central Europe during the Second World War. The main theme of the composition is sounded by the viola in the very beginning: it is derived from a traditional chant of Eastern-European Jewry and serves as basis for the entire piece. Five different themes may be discerned in the development of the work, each of them based on one of the germ cells of the basic melody. The work was awarded the "Engel Prize" of the Tel-Aviv Municipality in 1948.

Illustration: The original dedication of *Yizkor*.

Following the recital, Partos decided to orchestrate the piece leading to the aforementioned viola and orchestra 1946 version. The main theme of both pieces sounds as if the text was originally a part of the tune (which was the case in the original song).



Example 12: The main theme of Yizkor, taken from a Jewish Lithuanian melody.

Although it is not composed as a theme and variations, the main motive repeats in different variations throughout the entire piece. Shortly before the end of the piece there is a short cadenza for the soloist; it is full of dissonant intervals and chords, highlighting the pain and suffering the piece stands for. This composition is regarded in Israel as a pillar of the viola repertoire of the twentieth century.



Example 13: A short excerpt from the cadenza. Note the use of dissonant intervals as well as performance instructions for the violinist depicting great pain and suffering.

Menachem Avidom

January 6th 1908 – August 5th, 1995

Born Mendel Mahler-Kalkstein⁹ in Stanislau (Stanyslaviv), Russia (formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian empire), Avidom started playing the violin at the age of five. He was frequently found improvising with his harmonica and was heavily influenced by Slavonic dances that later worked their way onto his compositions. Avidom acquired most of his early musical knowledge on his own before starting his musical studies at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon.

⁹ Avidom's mother was Gustav Mahler's cousin.

In 1925 following his graduation, Avidom moved to Palestine where he spent the next six years before leaving for Paris to study composition and counterpoint with Henry Rabaud, becoming heavily influenced by French impressionism. In 1931 Avidom had the rare opportunity to give music lectures in Egypt. During his time there he researched and collected a lot of folk music and incorporated it into some of his compositions. Sadly these works were amongst a large number of his compositions that were destroyed as a result of his extreme self-criticism.

The following five years between 1934 and 1939 were focused on atonal polyphony. Many have assumed Avidom was influenced by Schoenberg; however the composer himself denied the claims, claiming that he had never heard of Arnold Schoenberg. In 1939, Menchem Avidom entered his Middle-Eastern period in which concertino for violin and orchestra was composed. Menachem Avidom received the prestigious “Israel Prize” in 1961 following the composition of the Opera in three acts: *Alexandra Ha’hashmonait* (1959).

Amongst his many positions were Director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Professor of music theory at the Tel Aviv Conservatory, and head of the Israeli Composers Society as well as the director of ACUM.¹⁰

Concertino for Violin and Orchestra
Recorded January 27th, 2015. Track 6-8.

The *Concertino for Violin and Orchestra* received two editions, 1949 and 1968. It was commissioned, edited and premiered by Jascha Heifetz. The first edition was premiered in 1952 by Heifetz in Indianapolis. The second edition was premiered

¹⁰ ACUM – Association of Israeli composers, authors and music publishers.

by Miriam Fried in 1968 with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. The concertino has three movements:

- 1) Moderato
- 2) Andante quasi adagio
- 3) Allegro vivace

The first movement focuses on imitation between the soloist and the orchestra, both themes receiving the same imitative treatment. The work is tonal and makes extensive use of dissonance as well as quartal and quintal sonorities.

The second movement begins with an orchestral ostinato immediately followed by a lyrical theme moving in stepwise motion. It is a relatively short movement concluding with a cadenza foreshadowing the third movement. The use of augmented second intervals often symbolizes Jewish music and is evident throughout the concerto. Avidom being well aware of Mr. Heifetz's virtuosity composed a demanding final movement.



Example 14: A fast and challenging passage from the third movement, note the use of augmented seconds. The augmented intervals were foreshadowed in the cadenza leading to the third movement.

Abel Ehrlich

September 3rd, 1915 – October 30th, 2003

Abel Ehrlich was born in Cranz, East-Prussia (now Zelenogradsk, Russia). He studied composition in Zagreb under Semyon Rozovsky (a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov). Ehrlich was banished from Yugoslavia in 1938 because of his religious beliefs and immigrated to Palestine shortly thereafter in 1939. He composed more than two thousand five hundred pieces and served as professor in the composition department of the Tel-Aviv Academy for Music. Ehrlich was also famous for his electronic music. He won the prestigious Israel Prize in 1997.

Bashrav

Recorded December 4th, 2014. Track 14.

Bashrav is one of his signature compositions, completed in 1953 and premiered in the Royal Festival Hall in London by violinist Avraham Melamed. *Bashrav* is a Rondo like piece, with eastern influences. Each iteration of the theme returns in a different variation. The *Bashrav* is a form commonly found in Persian and Turkish music however this particular version of the *Bashrav* originated in the Israeli-Arab community of Akko, a community Ehrlich frequently visited. Another prominent trademark of Arabic music showcased in *Bashrav* is the use of quarter and three-quarter tones.

Notes for the Performer :

Quartertones are noted as follows :

\flat = a $\frac{1}{4}$ -note lower
 $\flat\flat$ = $\frac{3}{4}$ -notes lower
 \sharp = $\frac{1}{4}$ -note higher
 $\sharp\sharp$ = $\frac{3}{4}$ -notes higher

Illustration: Quarter and three-quarter tone instruction as it appears in the score.



Example 15: Use of $\frac{3}{4}$ tones at the end of *Bashrav*.

Ehrlich, unlike most other composers who appreciated the Near-Eastern folklore invested considerable amount of time learning to play the Arabic instruments. Ehrlich developed a system based on the *Bashrav* containing rhythmical patterns, micro-tonality and melodic frames, all of which later becoming became evident in his serial music. The piece was arranged for violin and string orchestra in 1956 and symphonic orchestra in 1958.

Yehuda Engel

October 25th, 1924 – May 9th, 1991

Born in Vienna, Yehuda Engel decided to immigrate to Israel at the age of fifteen with his accordion. The rest of his family immigrated to China shortly thereafter. China was considered one of the only safe places for Jews at that time. Engel was very active in creating choral groups, first among which was the Ein-Gev choir.

His first piece was written for that group. Engel composed two hundred sixty four pieces as well as numerous choral transcriptions of existing Israeli music.

In 1943 he started a three year study period at the Jerusalem music conservatory. At the age of twenty eight, Yehuda Engel founded the United Kibbutz Choir and served as its music director for twenty five years. Engel returned to Vienna in 1959 for a short period of time to further his orchestral and choral conducting skills.

Elegia for Violin Solo
Recorded December 4th, 2014. Track 1.

The *Elegia for Violin Solo* was written in 1957 and premiered by Shlomo Mintz in Kibutz Ma'agan Michael, Israel. It is a short dissonant work focused on developing a descending minor third presented in the third measure of the piece.

The two-note minor third interval develops into a fourth towards the middle of the composition and diminishes back towards the end. The excerpts below demonstrates the evolution of the interval throughout the piece as well as the repetitive motivic use shortly before the composition ends.

The image displays three musical excerpts from 'Elegia for Violin Solo'. The top left excerpt shows a single staff with a descending minor third interval (Bb to Ab) marked with a '3' and a slur. The top right excerpt shows a similar interval in a different context, also marked with a '3'. The bottom excerpt is a larger section of the score, featuring two staves. It shows the interval evolving into a fourth (Bb to D) and then back towards the end. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte).

Example 16: The intervallic and thematic evolution of the two-note motive.

Herbert Brun

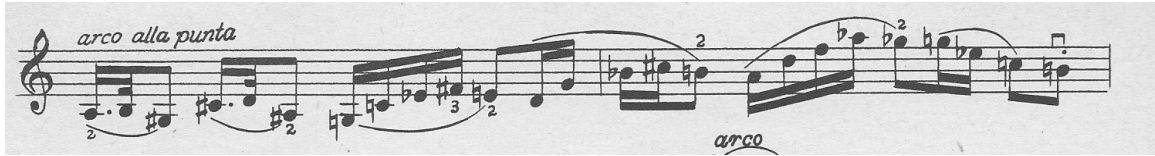
July 9th, 1918 – November 6th, 2000

Herbert Brun was born in Berlin, Germany. The piano, his main instrument prompted his relocation to Israel at the age of eighteen. He studied at the Jerusalem conservatory and began composing shortly thereafter. Amongst his teachers were Stefan Wolpe, Eliahu Friedman and Prank Pelleg. At the age of thirty, Brun received a scholarship to attend Tanglewood which led him to continue his studies at Columbia University graduating in 1950. Brun was widely known for his electronic music, that side of his career prompted an invitation to teach composition and computers at the University of Illinois. He founded the Performers Workshop Ensemble and was active lecturing about the social and political significance of music.

Sonatina for Solo Violin

Recorded December 4th, 2014. Tracks 10-12.

The *Sonatina for Solo Violin* was composed in 1950 as a part of a three-sonata set and edited by violinist Lorand Fenyves. The composition contains three movements. The first movement uses a metronome marking as its title. The movement is written in A-B-A form with slight variation during the return of the A section. The use of dotted rhythms and hemiolas, as well as short thematic materials lend the movement a very brisk character. The second motif shown in the following example demonstrates these characteristics.



Example 17.

The middle movement (Adagio) follows the same structure as the first movement. It starts with a very strong rhythmic statement written in 7/8. The first two measures are inversions of the same material, a technique used throughout the entire movement. The middle section of the movement poses a technical challenge to the performer, the composer increases the tempo and displaces beats by employing different meters while transitioning rapidly between arco and pizzicato.



Example 18. A fast, technically challenging passage from the second movement.

Following that passage Brun transitions back to the first section by presenting fragments of the main theme while slowing the tempo down. The main statement re-emerges to close the movement with a sudden stop.

The final movement (Allegretto) showcases a virtuosic triplet-based theme. Similarly to the previous movements, a middle section appears and breaks the triplet motive; it is represented by three descending notes. The meters in the middle section vary between 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 (not necessarily in that order) in very short proximity. The closing section of the piece returns to the triplet-driven perpetual motion; it is chromatic in and incredibly virtuosic.

Ben-Zion Orgad

August 21, 1926 – April 28th, 2006

Ben-Zion Orgad (Buschel) was born in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. He immigrated to Palestine at the age of six. Orgad studied violin with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's concertmaster at the time Rudolf Bergman. He later studied composition and theory under Paul Ben-Haim and Yosef Tal in the Music Academy in Jerusalem. During the Israel-Arab war of 1948 Orgad served as a combat soldier in the Givati¹¹ infantry brigade. The unit had a small orchestra for which Orgad wrote his "Prayer" for baritone and orchestra.

After the war Orgad travelled to Tanglewood to study with Aaron Copland. He received his Master's degree from Brandeis University, Boston in 1961. Orgad wrote poetry alongside his compositions. Orgad had a personal composition style that did not necessarily belong to any specific school.

Ballade for Violin solo

Recorded December 4th, 2014. Tracks 3-4.

The *Ballade for Violin solo* was premiered by David Volcan in 1947 and is considered one of Ben-Zion Orgad's more lyrical compositions. Its four movements share a common thematic material, a three-note motive. The composition is cyclical as the first and last movements are almost completely identical. The layout of the piece is slow-fast-fast-slow.

The middle two movements, Allegro and Allegro vivace are played without break. The second movement starts by stating a variation on the three-note motive

¹¹ Givati – One of the Israeli army's elite brigades formed before the 1948 war.

established in the first movement, followed by a fast-moving, chromatic sixteenth-note passage. The second theme is an interplay of two different time signatures, 4/4 and 6/8 highlighting a two-against-three rhythmical interplay. The motive consists of an obsessive four note pattern similar to that of a contemporary composer Dmitri Shostakovich. The notes C, Db, Bb, A are developed throughout the movement and used again at the end.

The third movement is a dynamic, fast-moving virtuosic composition. It opens with a series of descending fourths and tritones. Different motivic cells are presented throughout the movement lending it a minimalistic character (minimalism emerged during the 1960's, roughly thirteen years after the *Ballade* was composed). Contrary to other pieces discussed, the *Ballade* presents neither Jewish nor Israeli elements; however, it provides the context from which Israeli music emerged.

Marc Lavry

December 22nd, 1903 – March 24th 1967

Marc Lavry was born in Riga, Latvia and lived most of his early years in Leipzig, Germany. He studied in Leipzig with Paul Graener as well as majoring in architecture. Marc Lavry served as the music director of the Berlin Symphony, and during those years he composed (and later conducted) ballet music for the Rudolf Von Leban's theatre in Berlin. Lavry was very active in the film score industry. Having planned a relocation to Russia and following serious hesitation, Lavry chose to immigrate to Palestine in 1935.

To this day Lavry is considered one of Israel's most prolific composers. He wrote symphonies, songs, chamber music, oratorios and operas. His composition style was folk-like, focusing on works that are easier to listen to, and his efforts towards accessibility gained him a very wide range of audiences in Israel.

Marc Lavry wrote in his autobiography: *"The Israeli landscape is easily detectable in most of my compositions as I believe they express Israel well. I do not want to argue whether or not there is an Israeli style in music but rather consider myself to be an Israeli composer because I am part of this country. I wish to sing this young country that is struggling, being built, the country that is also ancient, biblical and a romantic land....."*¹²

Three Jewish Dances

Recorded January 27th, 2015. Tracks 13-15.

Three Jewish Dances is a reflection of Lavry's desire to make music accessible to all audiences. The piece was composed shortly after the 1948 Israeli-Arab war and published in 1951. Lavry borrowed melodies from two of his earlier works: *Hora for Orchestra* (1939) and *Israeli Dances* (1947).

In his book *Music and Musicians in Israel* Peter Gradenwitz writes about Lavry's music: *"Though his forms and style are conventional and his melodic strains seem rooted in the Eastern-European Jewish tradition, he has found a more characteristic way of expressing the unique experience of living in Israel than many antoher Israeli composer."*¹³

¹² "Autobiography." *Marclavry.org*. The Marc Lavry Heriage society, 24 Apr. 2011.

¹³ Gradenwitz, Peter. *Music and Musicians in Israel*. Tel Aviv: IMPC, 1978

The three dances are:

- 1) *Sher*
- 2) *Yemenite Wedding Dance*
- 3) *Hora*.

Sher is a Chassidic-Jewish wedding dance – The aforementioned use of augmented seconds is evident in this dance thereby lending the piece its Jewish identity. Lavry was exposed to Chassidic and Klezmer music from a very young age.

JEWISH WEDDING DANCE "SHER" "שֵׁר"

VIOLIN כינור

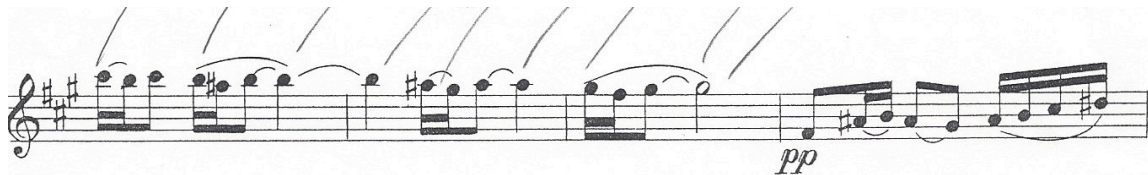
מארק לברי
OP. 192, 1 MARC LAVRY



Example 19: *Sher*'s main theme.

Yemenite Wedding Dance –Lavry was introduced to Yemeni music by the famous Israeli folk singer Bracha Zfira. Unlike most wedding dances, the Yemenite dance is slower, and the bride uses small steps accompanied by round hand motions.

Similar to Oedon Partos's compositions discussed earlier, rhythmical augmentation is present in Lavry's Yemeni-influenced music. In the following excerpt he uses a short rhythmical pattern, placing it on different beats throughout the line as well as reversing it in the last measure.

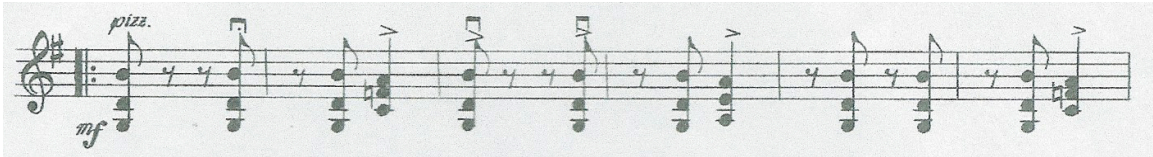


Example 20.

Hora – An energetic and lively dance form, commonly used in Kibbutzs.

Lavry was quoted in a radio show saying: “...*the dance has left a huge impression on me. An endless Hora dance – with shouts and rhythmic legwork...*”¹⁴

One of the Hora’s main traits is the 3+3+2 rhythmical pattern shown in example 21.



Example 21.

Alexander Uriah Boskovich

August 16th, 1907 – November 5th, 1964

Born in Klausenburg, Hungary (now Cluj, Romania), Boskovich had very strong ties to Jewish music and worked throughout his entire life to promote it in his pieces as well as conduct Israeli music abroad. He studied composition in Vienna with Richard Stohr and piano with Victor Ebestein. Boskovich continued his studies in Paris with Paul Dukas and Alfred Cortot. He founded the Goldmark Symphony Orchestra (named after the Jewish-Hungarian composer Karl Goldmark). He immigrated to Palestine in 1938.

The 1950’s proved to be a turbulent time for Uriah Boskovich. He was mainly affected by the notion that his parents did not survive the concentration camps as well as the loss of his friend Nissim Nissimov. His catalogue shows only five pieces written between 1951-1952. Boskovich restarted his composing career in 1959 after a lengthy break caused by internal conflicts and external pressures. Most of the music composed during that period was destroyed by Boskovich himself, who

¹⁴ Gradenwitz, Peter. *Music and Musicians in Israel*

clearly was not mentally stable at the time.

In a letter to his brother it is apparent that he was unable to communicate with the outside world whether by letter or by musical notes: *“For the past year I have been preparing myself to write to you yet after reading through my letter I felt I could not bring myself to send it to you, the memory of our loved parent’s tragedy has left me significantly scarred, to this day I am still sick, in the full sense of the word”*.¹⁵

Lamentation

Recorded March 31st, 2015. Track 12.

This short composition was dedicated to his fellow composer and close friend of Boskovich, Nissim Nissimov who died in Israel in 1951. Nissimov composed mainly choral works, songs and children’s plays as well as establishing a new prize for choral achievements which Uriah Boskovich won for his 1938 piece “Four Impressions.” *Lamentation* was written in 1952, a year after Nissimov’s passing.

Mordechai Seter

February 26th, 1916 – August 8, 1994

Born in Novosibirsk, Russia. Seter immigrated to Palestine at the age of ten. While piano served as his main instrument, his composing career started at the age of thirteen. In 1932, Seter traveled to Paris to study harmony with George Dendelot, later continuing his composition studies with Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger.

¹⁵ Hirshberg, Jehoash. *Alexander Uriya Boskovich, His Life, his Work and his Thought* Carmel Publishing House Jerusalem, Israel: Carmel Publishing House Jerusalem, 1995

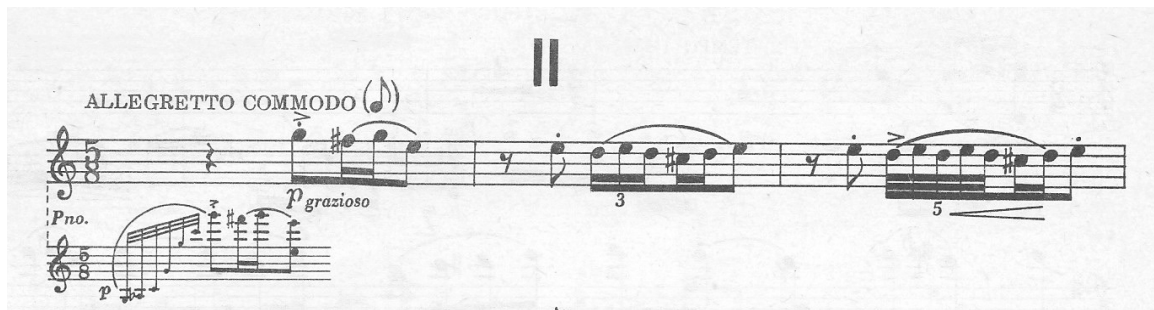
During that period Seter was inspired by Stravinsky's Neo-Classicism. After spending five years abroad Seter returned to Israel. Seter's compositions are divided into six periods. The Partita for violin and piano was written during his third period (1949-1956).

Partita for Violin and Piano
Recorded March 31st, 2015. Track 6-10.

The *Partita for Violin and Piano* was written in 1951 and premiered in 1956 by Lorand Fenyves and Ilona Vinze-Kraus. The composition is tonal and contains Near-Eastern motifs, modality and polyphony.

The first of four short movements is composed in A-B-A form. The first theme is a rhythmic motive very similar to that opening Paul Ben-Haim's *Sonata in G for Solo Violin*, which was also greatly influenced by Near-Eastern motives. The second theme is a lyrical, lightly ornamented stepwise melody reminiscent of Yemenite folklore.

The second movement is a canon and serves as an exercise in embellishing a four note motive (G,F#,G,E). Much like Partos's and Lavry's Yemenite depictions the movement is conceived from a vocal perspective.



Example 22: The motive is presented and embellished.

The third movement continues to embellish a very simple motive based on the note D. The second part of the movement showcases a more polyphonic writing for the violin centered around the main embellished note of the movement.

The closing movement is a classical minuet form, introducing a trio between two identical dance-like sections. Seter was known to use a wide range of compositional techniques varying from renaissance music to twentieth century.

The motive is a basic four note G major scale repeating with slight variations throughout the section. The trio section points back to the third movement by establishing the note G as the main note around which half step embellishments are added. The trio's motive is presented twice, once around G and later around its dominant, D.

Erich Walter Sternberg

May 31st, 1891 – December 15th 1974

Erich Walter Sternberg was born in Berlin, Germany. He studied law and served in the German army. He was injured during the First World War by a bullet that was never removed. Sternberg started composing during the war however only started his formal composition studies at the age of twenty seven. He Immigrated to Israel in 1932 and drew most of his inspiration from Jewish melodies.

Sonata for Violin and Piano

Recorded March 31st, 2015. Tracks 3-4.

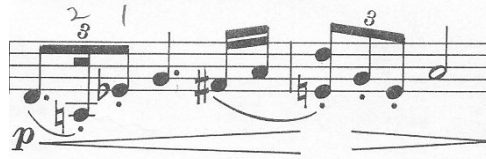
The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* was composed in 1945 and premiered by Lorand Fenyves and Moshe Lustig in 1956.

The work contains two movements. The first movement of the piece presents a quote from a Georg Heym poem: *“We left armed as giants, each one rattled like Goliath.”* The movement opens with a short motive played by the piano and answered by an inversion of the motive in the violin. The main theme is foreshadowed shortly thereafter and is identified by a new tempo marking. Sternberg uses both thematic materials throughout the entire movement differentiating them by two different tempo indications: Allegro sostenuto and Allegro spiritoso.

The second movement is a theme and variations based on Bach’s “Come Sweet Death” (Komm, süßer Tod), originally for solo voice and basso continuo. The following variations are labeled: Canon per motum contrarium, Canon cancricans, Canon, Fuga cancricans interludium, Variation five, Variation six and Variation seven. The word cancricans (cancricanz) originates from medieval Latin, and means “going backwards”. The use of the word alongside the canon and fugue suggest a double themed movement, thereby creating a double canon and a double fugue.

The second, third and fourth variations share the frequent use of stepwise motion. Prior to variation five Sternberg re-introduces the Allegro Spiritoso theme from the first movement in the violin part accompanied by J.S Bach’s theme in the piano. Variation five relates directly to the main theme of the first movement as opposed to Bach’s theme. The seventh variation is accompanied by a note from the composer, indicating that it is based on fragments from the canon in variation one (Canon per motum contrarium), thereby creating an internal variation.

ALLEGRO SPIRITUOSO



Var. 5

L'ISTESSO TEMPO



Example 23: The main theme of the first movement alongside the fifth variation in the second movement.

Conclusion

Some would argue that the first twenty years are the most crucial time in any nation's history. Israel's were defined by struggles, wars, endless conflict but about all hope. Hope stemming from the notion that one country drew onto its borders immigrants from both east and west; Sepharadic and Ashkenasi, European and Middle-Eastern, Jews and Arabs.

The incredible merger of so many cultures can only be highlighted by the music representing the fusion of European-trained composers with the Middle East. Bringing with them strong musical roots passed down by some of the world's famous composers and pedagogues, and having experienced persecution as a result of their faith, a pioneering group of composers utilized the role of the violin as one of the most celebrated instruments in the Jewish tradition to create a new nationalistic musical identity and promote it around the globe. Joined by some of the world's finest violinists, who helped in editing the compositions and for whom they were created, the future of Israeli music after the first twenty years looked very promising.

The violin's ability to produce unique intervals such as quarter tones, the wide range of colors it can achieve and its virtuosic nature allowed the Israeli composers to mimic melodies they had heard growing up or while exploring the wealth of cultures surrounding them. The Yemenite teachings of Bracha Zfira that influenced Marc Lavry and Oedon Partos to explore a wide range of embellishments, The Arabic form *Bashrav* endorsed by Abel Ehrlich allowing him to explore new sonorities and rhythmical patterns, Paul Ben-Haim's close connections with

luminaries such as Jascha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin as well as his Sepharadic influences, are just a handful of examples articulating the never-ending bond between Israeli music and the violin.

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