



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Hasidism and Mitnagdism in the Russian Empire: the (mis)use of Jewish music in Polish-Lithuanian Russia*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/76279/>

Version: Published Version

Article:

Muir, S orcid.org/0000-0002-1622-651X (2013) Hasidism and Mitnagdism in the Russian Empire: the (mis)use of Jewish music in Polish-Lithuanian Russia. *Journal of Synagogue Music*, 38. pp. 193-212. ISSN 0449-5128

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

The image shows the interior of a synagogue, characterized by a series of overlapping arches and columns. The architecture is reminiscent of Moorish or Islamic styles, with intricate carvings on the capitals of the columns and decorative elements on the walls. The lighting is warm and dramatic, casting long shadows on the floor. The floor itself appears to be made of stone tiles with some decorative patterns. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and architectural beauty.

JOURNAL OF
SYNAGOGUE MUSIC

NON-ASHKENAZIC TRADITIONS

FALL 2013 ▲ VOLUME 38
ISSN 0049-5128



Journal of Synagogue Music
Vol. 38 • Fall 2013

EDITOR: Joseph A. Levine

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Richard M. Berlin

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rona Black, Shoshana Brown, Sanford Cohn, Gershon Freidlin, Geoffrey Goldberg, Charles Heller, Kimberly Komrad, Sheldon Levin, Laurence Loeb, Judy Meyersberg, Ruth Ross, Neil Schwartz, David Sislen, Sam Weiss, Yossi Zucker

The *Journal of Synagogue Music* is published annually by the Cantors Assembly. It offers articles and music of broad interest to the hazzan and other Jewish professionals. Submissions of any length from 1,000 to 10,000 words will be considered.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING MATERIAL

All contributions and communications should be sent to the Editor, Dr. Joseph A. Levine—jdlevine@comcast.net—as a **Microsoft Word document** using **footnotes** rather than endnotes. Kindly include a brief **biography** of the author. Musical and/or graphic material should be **formatted** and inserted within the Word document. Links to **audio** files may be inserted as well, along with a URL for each.

Footnotes are used rather than endnotes, and should conform to the following style:

- A - Abraham Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy* (New York: Henry Holt), 1932: 244.
- B - Samuel Rosenbaum, "Congregational Singing"; *Proceedings of the Cantors Assembly Convention* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary), February 22, 1949: 9-11.

Layout by **Prose & Con Spirito, Inc.** Cover Design by **Replica**, based on the interior of the *Synagogue of Santa Maria La Blanca*, 12th century, Toledo, Spain.

Copyright © 2013 by the Cantors Assembly. ISSN 0449-5128

FROM THE EDITOR

**The Issue of Non-Ashkenazic Musical Traditions:
Sephardic Dream Time** 5

MUSIC THROUGHOUT THE JEWISH WORLD

The Song of the Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews
Edith Gerson-Kiwi 9

Sephardic Musical Repertoire
Susana Weich-Shahak 27

**A Competition for the Office of Hazzan in the “Great”
Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam in the 18th Century**
Israel Adler 31

Leitmotifs in Sephardic High Holiday Liturgy
Maxine R. Kanter 34

On the Trail of Mizrahi Music
Johanna Spector 54

The Middle Eastern Roots of East European Hazzanut
Edward W. Berman 72

Hazzanut in Iran a Generation Ago
Laurence D. Loeb 85

**Grandeas and the Rest of Us: Sephardic and Ashkenazic
Self-imagery through Ladino and Yiddish Folksong**
Joseph A. Levine 89

Jewish Music in the Italian Renaissance
Joshua R. Jacobson 105

**Back to Life, Twice: The Revivals of Ladino Song in
20th-Century Italy**
Francesco Spagnolo 109

A LITERARY GLIMPSE

Ever Since Babylon: Granada

Samuel Rosenbaum 121

D'VAR K'RI'AH

Popular Tradition and Learned Knowledge: Sephardic and Ashkenazic Biblical Chant

Hanoch Avenary 129

MAIL BOX

A Serbian Weekend Set to a Sephardic Beat

Daniel S. Katz 135

A Sephardic Community *S'lihot* Service in London

Eliot Alderman 136

From the Yizkor Book of Staszow, Poland

Helen Winkler 139

D'VAR N'GINAH

The Uniqueness of Sephardic Prayer Melodies

Gleaned from various sources 141

RECENT ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL RESEARCH

***K'riat ha-torah* in the Maroka'i Community of Brooklyn:**

Negotiating New Boundaries of Diaspora Identity

Samuel R. Thomas 146

The Provenance, Dating, Allusions and Variants of *U-n'taneh tokef* and Its Relationship to Romanos's *Kontakion*

John H. Planer 163

***Hasidism* and *Mitnagdism* in the Russian Empire: the (mis)use of Jewish music in Polish–Lithuanian Russia**

Stephen P. K. Muir 193

REVIEWS

- Daniel Halfon's CD—*Kamti Lehallel*—The Musical Tradition of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Communities of Amsterdam, London and New York**
Charles Heller. 213
- Italian-Jewish Musical Traditions*—a CD from the Leo Levi Collection (1954-1961)**
Gerard Edery 215
- Judean-Caribbean Currents: Music of the Mikvè Israel-Emanuel Synagogue in Curaçao***
Judith Naimark. 217
- David Muallem's *The Maqām Book: A Doorway to Arab Scales and Modes***
Mark Kligman 223
- Shmuel Barzilai's *Chassidic Ecstasy in Music***
Shoshana Brown 225
- Va'ani t'fillati: Siddur yisraeli***
Geoffrey Goldberg. 228
- Stuart Joel Hecht's *Transposing Broadway: Jews, Assimilation and the American Musical***
Robert S. Scherr. 235
- The CD—*Rabbi Isaac Algazi Singing Ottoman-Turkish and Ottoman-Jewish Music***
Alberto Mizrahi 239
- IN MEMORIAM**
Macy Nulman (1923-2011). 247

Hasidism and Mitnagdism in the Russian Empire: the (mis)use of Jewish music in Polish–Lithuanian Russia

By Stephen P. K. Muir

Music and the Politics of Religious Power

The title of the recent conference ‘Music and Power,’ where the ideas that follow were first muted, typically engenders discussions of political censorship, theatrical politics, musical propaganda, and similar such things.¹ However, in this article I address the topic from a different perspective, namely how music and power interact when different identities—in this case religious identities—collide. There have been few times in the modern era when music and religious dogma have not come into conflict in some manner, often reflecting a deeper power struggle over religious and political identities. The place of music within Islam, for example, is fraught with controversy, even if the common perception that music is forbidden to Muslims is, broadly speaking, inaccurate and exaggerated.² For some composers, such as William Byrd (1540–1623) in Tudor England, music was a means of expressing a deeply-held religious identity (a crypto-Catholic one for much of Byrd’s life) otherwise forbidden by the prevailing religious and political powers. For others, such as the reforming synagogue composers of the nineteenth century (figures like Louis Lewandowski (1821–94), music was one agency in forging a new religious identity, openly challenging the status quo, and both reflecting and helping shape the contemporary cultural milieu. In most instances, opposing musical identities come into direct confrontation, mirroring the wider social and political conflicts that threaten underlying religious identities.

Such was the case with the intra-communal battle for supremacy that played out among the Eastern Ashkenazi Jews of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, the territory that was once the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth had been divided between the surrounding powers of Prussia, Russia and Austria; for large numbers of Jews, at times treated with some tolerance in the Commonwealth, this brought great suffering and confinement to the Pale of Settlement initially established by order of Empress Catherine II of Russia

1 Havighurst Center for Post-Soviet Studies, Miami University, Oxford Ohio, 28 February–2 March 2013.

2 For measured assessments of music in Islam see, for example, Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi, ‘Music, Musicians and Muslim Law,’ *Asian Music* 17.1 (1985), 3–36; Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

in 1791.³ Amidst this political turmoil emerged two principal sub-branches of Judaism. On one hand, under the magnetic leadership of Israel ben Eliezer (1698–1760), a new charismatic branch of mystical Judaism, *Hasidism* [literally ‘piety’, ‘loving-kindness’], began to make headway, initially in the southern part of the former Commonwealth.⁴ On the other hand, the so-called *Litvaks*—Jews who traced their roots back to the former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, by then absorbed into the Russian partition—fiercely defended what they saw as a more traditional Judaism.⁵ The most celebrated of these Lithuanian *Mitnagdim* [literally ‘opponents’ to Hasidism] was Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman (1720–97), commonly known as the Vilna [Vilnius] Gaon.⁶ So great was the opposition of the *Mitnagdim* towards their Hasidic rivals that by the end of the 18th century they would denounce Hasidic leaders to the Russian government as politically subversive and heretical, though something of a rapprochement was reached during the nineteenth century in common opposition to the Reformist Jewish *Haskalah* [enlightenment], whose most prominent advocate was the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86).

In this article I examine the musical manifestations of this struggle for power between competing religious identities, focussing on the music of prayer and religious learning. A brief contextual outline of Jewish life and music in the period leading up to the rise of Hasidism provides a backdrop against which to view the development of Hasidic religious and musical practices, and to address a number of questions: How was music employed in the spread of Hasidism and the development of Hasidic identities, and what role did it play in broadening the power base of its leaders, the *Tzaddikim* [‘righteous ones’]? What was the consequent musical impact of *Mitnagdic* attempts to hold onto what they considered the ‘traditional’ Jewish identity? And how did the Jew-

3 For a general introduction to the Pale and its development, see Richard Pipes, ‘Catherine II and the Jews: The Origins of the Pale of Settlement,’ *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 5 (1975), 3–20.

4 Israel ben Eliezer is commonly referred to by the term ‘Baal Shem Tov’ or its contraction ‘Besht’, meaning ‘Master of the [Divine] Name.’

5 The opposite of *Litvak* is *Galitzianer* (both Yiddish), though the term is less commonly encountered today than *Litvak*. Both can be used to denote broader religious and cultural features and adherences, and do not always automatically have purely geographical connotations. The non-Jewish corollary is *Litvish*, denoting a Lithuanian Gentile. For a discussion of the origins and connotations of the term *Litvak*, see Dovid Katz, *Seven Kingdoms of the Litvaks* (Vilnius: Vilnius Yiddish Institute; Lithuanian Ministry of Culture International Cultural Program Center, 2009).

6 ‘Gaon’ is variously translated as ‘pride,’ ‘splendour’ and ‘genius’. The original Geonim were distinguished Jewish scholars, primarily based in Babylonia and Baghdad during the sixth to eleventh centuries (see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven CT; London: Yale University Press, 1997)). The term’s application to Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman is thus a mark of the highest respect and honour.

ish identity politics of the day shape Jewish musical phenomena within this Russian Imperial context? Finally, I conclude with a brief assessment of how other recent research suggests that these conflicts have surprising musical consequences in a variety of contexts even today.

Jewish society in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

Whilst a comprehensive survey of the development of Jewish society in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth is clearly beyond the scope of this article, a broad and necessarily simplified picture of the period leading up to the appearance of Hasidism is helpful to frame the developments, both musical and societal, that were to follow.⁷ By the middle of the eighteenth century the Jewish population of Poland–Lithuania had been swelled by eastward migrations of Jews fleeing persecution primarily in Germany and Bohemia, from ‘just a few tens of thousands’ around the year 1500 to approximately 750,000 by 1764.⁸ Initially, Jews found themselves far more secure in the region than they had in western Europe, largely owing to the *privilegia* [charters] issued to them granting essential rights of habitation, occupation and security, even if these were motivated by pure economic self-interest on the part of the Polish and Lithuanian monarchy and magnates, and not generally by philanthropic sentiments or grand notions of tolerance. From the mid-1500s, Jews had attained a relatively high level of communal autonomy, with a system of administrative *Kehillot* [literally ‘communities’] overseeing nearly every aspect of life, alongside (and very often intricately intertwined with) a powerful rabbinate that controlled all religious activities and education. What Jacob Katz describes as ‘super-*kehillah* organisations’ also emerged in the sixteenth century,⁹ the most prominent of which were the *Va’ad arba aratzot* [Council of the Four Lands] in Poland and the *Va’ad medinat lita* [Council of the Lithuanian Land] in Lithuania. Between them, these organisations were responsible for communal administration, and on occasions for liaising between *kehillah* and civic authority. As Adam Teller informs us, more than half of the Jewish population lived on private estates,

7 Unless otherwise stated, information from this section is gleaned from Allan Nadler, ‘The Practice of Judaism in Eastern Europe,’ in Jacob Neusner, Alan Avery-Peck and William Scott Green (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*, vol. 1 (first edn., Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2000), 213–224.

8 Shaul Stampfer, ‘Jewish Population Patterns in Pre-partition Lithuania,’ in Adam Teller (ed.), *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland in Honour of Jacob Goldberg* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1998), 190.

9 Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 122–134.

where they fell under the authority of the local non-Jewish nobility as well as the *kehillah*; in order to ensure a regular supply of tax revenue from Jewish tenants, ‘the local [Jewish] community and its officials became more and more part of the estate administration.’¹⁰

Despite this level of localised administrative cooperation, on a day-to-day basis Jewish society was almost completely cut off from its surroundings, ‘excluded from general European learning and culture [and] virtually untouched by outside, non-Rabbinic influences,’ as Nadler summarises.¹¹ This led to a focus on, and level of, Talmudic scholarship and cultural achievement quite unparalleled in the Jewish world of the day, based around the *yeshivot* [religious seminaries];¹² the Lublin and Kraków *yeshivot* became world centres for rabbinical scholarship, Lublin being known as the ‘Jerusalem of Poland,’ a title later mirrored in the nineteenth century by Vilna as the ‘Jerusalem of Lithuania.’ The term ‘Golden Age’ has often been ascribed to this period, and even if this is a slight exaggeration, scholars nevertheless speak of ‘eight or nine decades of material prosperity and relative security experienced by Polish Jews’ and ‘the appearance of a galaxy of sparkling intellectual figures [...] who among others produced enduring contributions to the canon of high culture.’¹³

There was, however, still significant hostility towards Jews, especially from the church, often in tension with the economically-driven leniency of civil authorities and landowners. Anti-Jewish hostility came to a head from 1648 during the Khmelnytsky Uprising that ultimately became a Ukrainian Cossack war of independence against Poland.¹⁴ Statistics vary among historians, but all agree that over a period of nearly twenty years whole Jewish communities were routed and massacred, Katz speaking of ‘the slaughter of tens of

10 Adam Teller, ‘Radziwiłł, Rabinowicz, and the Rabbi of Świerz: The Magnates’ Attitude to Jewish Regional Autonomy in the 18th Century,’ in Teller (ed.), *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland*, 247.

11 Nadler, ‘The Practice of Judaism in Eastern Europe’, 215, col. 2.

12 Talmudic scholarship involves the interpretation of the Talmud, the oral law and commentaries thereon, second only to the Torah, recorded in writing from around the year 200. It was created in two versions, translations of which can be found in Jacob Neusner (ed.) *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, 28 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), and Jacob Neusner (ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, 22 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010).

13 Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 11.

14 See Zenon Kohut, ‘The Khmelnytsky Uprising, the image of Jews, and the shaping of Ukrainian historical memory’, *Jewish History* 17.2 (2003), 141–163.

thousands.¹⁵ In the period following these upheavals, communities recovered remarkably quickly, though the great Jewish institutions of learning in Poland never quite regained their former eminence and broad influence. The result was a stark division between an aristocratic and wealthy elite comprising the most important rabbis and members of the *kehillot*, who pursued the tradition of Talmudic scholarship, but remained distant from the mass of Jews whose beliefs were ‘dominated by a variety of primitive folk-beliefs and superstitions.’¹⁶ Fuelled by the successive hope and disappointment of a series of false Messiahs, particularly Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76) and Jacob Frank (1726–91),¹⁷ this population was particularly susceptible to the lure of the new mystical brand of Judaism already on the rise, Hasidism.

Jewish music in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

In the context outlined above, music played an important if little documented role. As James Loeffler has observed, ‘for a society that placed enormous value on recording and analyzing religious laws, rituals, stories and customs, traditional Ashkenazi Jews devoted remarkably little time to documenting their own music.’¹⁸ But we know that since biblical times, music has been central to Jewish prayer, learning and synagogue ritual to some degree or another. In simplified terms, Jewish liturgical music is generally divided into three main categories.¹⁹ *Nusah* describes traditionally un-notated modes around which the prayer leader—sometimes but not always the *Hazzan* (cantor)—improvises the majority of prayers in services. In addition, related modes were used in the process of Talmudic study.²⁰ *Leyning* is the term given to the highly-skilled execution of quite complex melodic formulae indicated by neume-like symbols within the text, used for the cantillation of the Torah

15 Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 214. Shaul Stampfer estimates casualties at around 18,000–20,000 (‘What Actually Happened to the Jews of Ukraine in 1648?’ *Jewish History* 17.2 (2003), 165–178).

16 Nadler, ‘The Practice of Judaism in Eastern Europe,’ 217, col. 1.

17 See Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

18 James Loeffler, *The Most Musical Nation: Jews and Culture in the late Russian Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

19 For a more comprehensive introduction to the music of Jewish worship, see Jeffrey Summit, *The Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially 23–32 (‘An Introduction to Jewish Worship’).

20 See Sholom Kalib, *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*, vol. 1, *Introduction: History and Definition* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 43–49.

and other books of the Hebrew bible. The final category includes composed music of varying types that has become popularly or traditionally associated with particular prayers and passages in the *siddur* (prayer book) and other texts. These include *misinai* tunes [literally, though rather misleadingly, ‘from Sinai’] mostly linked with festival prayers, the cantorial and choral music of the nineteenth century by such composers as Salomon Sulzer (1804–90) of Vienna and Louis Lewandowski (1821–94) of Berlin, and *niggunim* [literally ‘melodies’] generally linked to the Hasidic tradition, which will be further discussed later in the article.

The central figure around which most of this synagogue musical activity focussed was the Hazzan, an office that began to emerge in its current form around the year 600.²¹ Hazzanim were (and are) more than just singers; rather, they were often the true spiritual leaders of a community, the Rabbi being more of an authority in Jewish legal matters than spiritual ones. But *Hazzanim* occupied somewhat contradictory positions in society, often poor and mistrusted because of their necessarily nomadic lifestyles, and with exceptions sitting at the bottom of social strata. Recounting the early life of the great Ukrainian Hazzan Zavel Kwartin (1874–1953), Mark Slobin reports that

these men [*Hazzanim*] were based in a town but assembled a group of *meshoyrerim* (“choirboys”) and toured the provinces to make a living, because their home synagogue provided minimal support. [...] Despite the great praise showered on a local Hazzan he was very low on the social scale. The fact that he was dependent upon handouts seems to have played a part in this evaluation.²²

Mistrust was also engendered by the feeling among some in Jewish communities that ‘the sensuality of the voice [should not] take precedence over the understanding of sacred text.’²³ Yaffa Eliach informs us that ‘because many *Hazzanim* were given to showmanship and self-display, the Council [of the Four Lands] made a point of restricting the number of prayers the Hazzan could chant during Sabbath services.’²⁴ The prominent liturgical scholar Lawrence Hoffman summarises this ambivalence:

At its best, *Hazzanut* [the art of the Hazzan] expresses sublimely religious sensitivity, even if the style is suspected of deteriorating into a display

21 Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 5.

22 Ibid., 14–15.

23 Ibid., 8.

24 Yaffa Eliach, *‘There Once was a World’: A Nine-Hundred-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1998), 139, col. 1.

of cantorial vanity and of opening the back door through which foreign melodies may infiltrate sacred worship. Severe criticisms of *Hazzanut* abound in the rabbinic literature of many countries and various periods from the ninth century to this day.²⁵

On the other hand, some *Hazzanim* attained the status of near-celebrity, as Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, doyen of Jewish musical research, explains:

The Hazzan—artist of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Eastern Europe [...] reached the highest degree as artist, casting from himself all those tasks associated with his office which drew him down to the station of beadle and servitor of the community.²⁶

By the period under consideration here, then, the main protagonist in synagogue musical activities occupied a somewhat contradictory position. And while the larger synagogues of the major urban centres described above could afford to employ professional musicians of considerable expertise, the less wealthy rural communities generally lacked such resources, and either lacked a Hazzan completely, or else relied upon itinerant Hazzanim to provide occasional musical contributions.

Hasidism, music and the propagation of power

The rise of Hasidism has been discussed and debated at length in the scholarly literature, and there is neither space nor purpose in providing extensive detail here.²⁷ In brief, a combination of factors led to the spread of the movement. Hanoch Avenary asserts that 'disastrous persecutions were often followed by a withdrawal of the Jews into an inner life beyond grim reality [...] the unbearable suppression of the Russian diaspora gave birth to Hasidism.'²⁸ Whilst important, however, Russian imperialism was not the only factor,

25 Eliyahu Schleifer, 'Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism', in Lawrence Hoffman and Janet Walton (eds), *Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience*, Two Liturgical Traditions, vol. 3 (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 29.

26 Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992; first published New York: Schocken Books, 1929), 181.

27 For the English reader, notable contributions on Hasidism (among very many) appear in Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, trans. Israel Friedlaender (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916–20); Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, especially pp. 213–274; Bezalel Safran (ed.), *Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988); Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), *Hasidism Reappraised* (London: Littman Library, 1996); Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, trans. Saadya Sternberg (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004).

28 Hanoch Avenary, 'The Hasidic Nigun: Ethos and Melos of a Folk Liturgy,' *Journal of Synagogue Music* 34 (2009), 48.

and the broader political, religious and social disturbances described above together rendered large parts of the Jewish population predisposed to a less scholarly, more evangelical and mystically-oriented type of Judaism, particularly in the impoverished rural *shtetls* of the southern Commonwealth. In truth, the Judaism that preceded Hasidism already had a strong mystical element, in particular relating to the sixteenth-century Kabbalistic doctrines of Isaac Luria,²⁹ but Hasidism placed far greater value on the individual's ecstatic experience, emphasising 'emotion and devotion in the observance of the commandments rather than piling up heaps of regulations on them.'³⁰ These factors, combined with the power vacuum created by external political interventions such as the abolition of the Council of the Four Lands in 1764, made Hasidism both a religious and a socio-political phenomenon—a 'double revolution.'³¹

Although he was not the first to advocate the Hasidic approach to Judaism, from around 1740 Israel ben Eliezer established a small but highly dedicated following, based in the Ukrainian town of Mezhebozh.³² His influence spread with phenomenal speed, as Adam Teller explains:

It is widely agreed that at the death of the Baal Shem Tov (who is often still regarded as the founder of the movement) in 1760, his circle numbered no more than a few dozen initiates, but by the 1820s, the movement had become dominant in the Jewish society of large swathes of eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine and Galicia.³³

Teller's article relates how, starting with Israel ben Eliezer's personal followers, early Hasidic leaders (*Tzaddikim*) used a variety of means in which to propagate their message, notably employing emissaries who 'moved out of [their] immediate sphere to found their own courts throughout Ukraine and Poland generally.'³⁴ By the end of the eighteenth century, Hasidic Judaism

29 For an overview of Kabbalah, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); also Lawrence Fine, Aron Rodrigue and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds), *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

30 Immanuel Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and his Image*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 74.

31 *Ibid.*, 75–76.

32 For a comprehensive account, see Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht*.

33 Adam Teller, 'Hasidism and the Challenge of Geography: The Polish Background to the Spread of the Hasidic Movement,' *AJS Review* 30.1 (2006), 1.

34 *Ibid.*, 11.

had been widely adopted in a ‘widespread network’ across Ukraine, Galicia, central Poland, Belorussia, and parts of Lithuania.³⁵

The spread of Hasidism was almost entirely a function of the charismatic appeal of the *Tzaddikim* and their promise of a more immediately appealing, emotionally-charged religious experience. *Tzaddikim* were perceived as the ‘intermediary between the individual Hasid and God,’³⁶ and developed almost cult followings. Their family descendents in turn inherited the position of *Rebbe* [master, teacher], leading to Hasidic dynasties with distinctive identities, usually named after their founder’s town of origin.³⁷ Inevitably, the power of these figures soon became more than purely religious, and took on a social and even economic basis, as David Assaf’s reveals:

Given the competition that often governed relations between neighbouring Hasidic courts, the *Tzaddik*’s ability to extract more funds from his followers, to enhance the visible wealth and opulence and improve its ‘services’ were seen as evidence of the *Tzaddik*’s greatness on a spiritual level, increasing his prestige in the eyes of both his own Hasidim and his colleagues.³⁸

By and large, religious music for its own sake was viewed with ambivalence as an art form by the older rabbinical tradition, even if *Hazzanut* was extremely popular among individual Jews. Hasidism, on the contrary, valued music above almost all other forms of expression,³⁹ even to the extent that whilst the hierarchical worship structure implicit in a *Hazzan*–congregation arrangement is not traditionally associated with Hasidism, many later *Tzaddikim* in fact employed a *Hazzan*, ‘an accomplished cantor/composer steeped in the secrets of musical art.’⁴⁰ One anecdotal account even suggests a broader attraction to such ‘forbidden fruits’:

35 Ibid., 11. Resistance to Hasidism in Lithuania is discussed further below.

36 Ibid., 1.

37 One can therefore speak of, for example, the Karliner Hasidim, Lubavitch Hasidim, Chernobyl Hasidim, and many others.

38 David Assaf, ‘“Money for Household Expenses”: Economic Aspects of the Hasidic Courts,’ in Teller (ed.), *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland*, 26.

39 See Moshe Idel, ‘Conceptualization of Music in Jewish Mysticism’, in *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World’s Religions*, ed. by Lawrence E. Sullivan (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions; Harvard University Press, 1997), 160. For recent detailed investigations of Hasidic music, see (among many others) Ellen Koskoff, *Music in Lubavitcher Life* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Abigail Wood, ‘Stepping across the Divide: Hasidic Music in Today’s Yiddish Canon’, *Ethnomusicology* 51.2 (2007), 205–237; the entire 2009 volume of *The Journal of Synagogue Music*.

40 Akiva Zimmermann, ‘Point/Counterpoint: 1) The Hasidic World’s Attitude towards

Mitnagdic Litvaks [...] have enjoyed Hazzanut at least for the last two centuries [...] Zavel Kwartin made it clear that the 'naughty' temptation for the ultra-Orthodox to listen to Hazzanut was not uncommon [...] They chose Maariv (evening) services when it was dark so no-one would see them going in.⁴¹

On one level, musical ostentatiousness was congruent with the display of wealth and impressiveness that Assaf describes above, contributing to the movement's exciting and appealing image, as he explains further:

There are numerous accounts of [the arrival of a Tzaddik in some remote settlement]: The entire colourful cortège was accompanied with music played by a full band. The ordinary Jew of the time was unused to such spectacles, and the emotional impact left by such visits was translated into a tremendous popular admiration for the Tzaddikim and the rapid spread of Hasidism.⁴²

But I propose that the power and influence of the *Tzaddikim* and Hasidic identity were propagated and consolidated through another more subtle and intimate musical agency—through the genre of the niggun. This form of (usually) textless melody, vocalised to sounds such as 'lai lai' or 'dai da dum', was one of the significant innovations of Hasidism. Avenary provides the succinct explanation that 'the Hasidic niggun is most often sung without words, in short filler syllables interrupted by exclamations of joy or grief: it aims to express the unexpressible, to give voice to that which is too intimate to be uttered.'⁴³

No single niggun can be considered representative in form, style or content, since they encompass emotions ranging from the mournful to the elated; nevertheless, by way of illustration for those less familiar with the subject, Example 1 gives one of Avenary's printed examples, in this case a niggun by Rabbi Michal of Zlotchov, one of Israel ben Eliezer's immediate circle.

Moshe Idel's assessment of music's place within the mystical tradition speaks of the 'transitive power of music, related to its energetic quality.'⁴⁴ For the Jewish mystical tradition, he argues, music is not simply enjoyable,

Hazzanut," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 34 (2009), 148.

41 David Prager, "The Hasidified World of Hazzanut Seen through the Eyes of an Analytical Cantorholic," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 34 (2009), 105. Kwartin was a Russian-born Hazzan who achieved enormous fame (and consequently wealth) throughout Europe and America in the early twentieth century (see Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, pp. 13–21).

42 Assaf, "Money for Household Expenses," 35–36.

43 Avenary, 'The Hasidic Nigun,' 49.

44 Idel, 'Conceptualization of Music in Jewish Mysticism,' 160.

but ‘also implies the possibility of transmitting power from the source to the object.’⁴⁵ Expanding upon this, Idel remarks that

Music is seen [in many Jewish mystical texts] as influential. [...] the power of music is more closely connected to an energetic sense that, by either descending or ascending, exercises different influences on the respective realms.⁴⁶

But this power exchange can surely work, on a more physical and less esoteric basis, in another direction—from human to human. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772–1810), a great-grandson of Israel ben Eliezer and a famously musical Tzaddik, was of the opinion that ‘music [has] a great deal of importance as a real, rather than [a purely] metaphoric, tool or medium for spiritual transformation’⁴⁷ and that music ‘brings a person nearer to serving the Almighty and to the joyful experience of aspiring to ecstatic fulfilment.’⁴⁸

Example 1: Niggun by Rabbi Michal of Zlotchov (1721?–1781)⁴⁹

Eliyahu Schleifer informs us that of the different classes of niggunim that exist, ‘the highest [class] melodies are those created by the *Tzaddikim*, Hasidic

45 Ibid., 160.

46 Ibid., 185.

47 Chani Haran Smith, ‘Music as Spiritual Process in the Teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav,’ *Journal of Synagogue Music* 34 (2009), 16.

48 Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 77.

49 Music example taken from Avenary, ‘The Hasidic Nigun,’ 50.



Example 1: Niggun by Rabbi Michal of Zlotchov (1721?–1781), Continued

leaders and saints.⁵⁰ The identification of a Tzaddik with a particular niggun is recognised elsewhere. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog describe how ‘each dynasty and therefore each Tzaddik has a special *derekh* [manner], a special way of dealing with God and with the Hassidim, and this *derekh* is

expressed in prayers, melodies, teachings, everyday behaviour.⁵¹ They continue with a colourful description of joyous occasions in a Hasidic court:

Frequent celebrations mark the life at the court, always accompanied by drinking and often by dancing. [...] The more [the Hasidim] drink the more joyful and happy they are, for great is their Rebbeh. They are drunk partly from alcohol and partly from their love and devotion. They begin to dance and sing, the ‘Rebbeh’s niggun,’ the special melody of the Rebbeh composed either by or for him.⁵²

The *Tzaddikim* encourage the dissemination of their melodies among the Jews who attended their court for the High Holy Days and beyond. According to Schleifer ‘different melodies and difference performance practices developed under the various Hasidic dynasties,’⁵³ echoing Idelsohn’s earlier account:

Almost every ‘court’ had its original style in music, its preferred mode, or at least a special tune, expressing the individuality and train of thought of the ‘reigning’ Tzaddik. [...] The songs were first rendered at the public meals of the ‘court,’ The Hassidim present would memorize them and carry them into their homes, teaching them to the pious ones until the tunes became widely known.⁵⁴

Thus the communicative and evangelical power of the Tzaddik resides, in part at least, in his distinctive niggun and its ability to communicate with and inspire potential followers. New adherents to the Hasidic way, drawn to its freshly direct and immanent nature, must surely have been attracted also

50 Schleifer, ‘Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism,’ 47.

51 Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, International Universities Press Inc., 1952), 169.

52 Ibid., 175-176.

53 Schleifer, ‘Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism,’ 48.

54 Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, 415–416.

to its radical musical approach; what better way, then, for a Tzaddik and his emissaries to perpetuate and embed his power than through popularizing his unique niggunim, alongside tales of mystical wonders such as healing and other miracles ascribed to the Hasidic leaders. Thus, a movement that forged a radical new identity in Judaism, within a context of religious and political turmoil, spawned a new musical form that became both a distinctive musical identifier for the movement (and, indeed, for an individual Tzaddik), and a key agency in the spread of the movement's power and influence.

Mitnagdic reactions

The reaction of non-Hasidic Jewish leaders in Poland–Lithuania was slow to begin with, but was extreme and vehement when it came.⁵⁵ Like the developments described above, it involved agencies both within and without the Jewish community, and had a bearing on Jewish musical phenomena, though of a less overtly dramatic nature than Hasidism.

The centre of opposition to Hasidism was in Vilna, where Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman (the Vilna Gaon) organised a concerted effort to expunge Hasidism from Jewry. His famous letter of 1796, circulated to communities around Belorussia and Podolia in response to rumours that his opposition towards Hasidism had softened in semi-retirement, makes his views unequivocally clear:

In the Torah of Moses they have established a new covenant, working out their evil schemes with the masses in the House of the Lord [...] interpreting the Torah falsely while claiming that their way is precious in the eyes of God [...] They call themselves Hasidim—that is an abomination! How they have deceived this generation [...].⁵⁶

Emmauel Etkes, leading biographer of the Vilna Gaon, explains that prior to 1772 the opponents to Hasidism expressed themselves merely through

55 Detailed considerations of Mitnagdism and its proponents (often drawing upon the collection of primary sources published in Mordecai Wilensky, *Hasidim u-mitnagdīm: l'tol'dot ha-pulmus beineiheim*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1970)) can be found in Allan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdīm: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997); Jacob Hisdai, 'The Origins of the Conflict between Hasidim and Mitnagdīm,' in Bezalel Safran (ed.), *Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 27–46; Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna*; Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Let the Old Make Way for the New': *Studies on Hasidism and Its Opponents, Haskalah and the Musar Movement* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2009); Arie Morgenstern, *The Gaon of Vilna and his Messianic Vision*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem and Springfield NJ: Gefen Publishing House, Ltd, 2012).

56 Quoted in Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdīm*, 11.

'criticism or mockery',⁵⁷ but when Hasidim tried to infiltrate the Vilna Jewish community in 1772, 'the rabbis in Lithuania were aroused to go to war.'⁵⁸ Etkes continues by describing the extreme nature of the reaction, including the treatment of one Rabbi Issar, who had been tempted into the Hasidic fold:

They struck him with a rubber whip in the *kahal* room before the welcoming of the Sabbath. And then they burned [Hasidic] writings before the pillory [...] And afterwards they banned [excommunicated] him. And all that week he sat in prison in the jail of the citadel that they call 'Schloss'. And on the Sabbath night he was held in the *kahal* room.⁵⁹

The aim of the Mitnagdim during this period was quite simply to eradicate Hasidism entirely; compromise was not an option initially, though it came later to some degree (and especially after the Vilna Gaon's death in 1799) in the wake of the perceived common threat of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment).⁶⁰ Eventually the conflict drew in the civil Russian authorities, as Dubnow reports:

Among the contemplated means of warfare was included the plan of informing against the leaders of the sect to the Russian Government. It did not take long for the disgraceful scheme to be put into action. Soon the Prosecutor-General in St. Petersburg, Lopukhin, received a denunciation directing his attention 'to the political misdeeds perpetrated by the chief of the Karliner [Hasidic] sect, Zalman Borukhevich,' and his fellow-workers on Lithuania. Under the influence of the denunciation, Lopukhin, acting in the name of the Tzar, ordered the local gubernatorial administration, early in the fall of 1798, to arrest Zalman, the head of the sect, in the townlet of Lozno.⁶¹

But the political wind ultimately blew against the Mitnagdim with a series of Russian decrees, following the Partitions, that prevented them from placing the *herem* [ban] on Hasidim,⁶² and although in his 1804 Jewish Constitution, Alexander I sustained and even redoubled restrictions on land-owning, expulsions from villages, and 'preserved precisely those structure of Jewish life which, in the first place, prevented the integration of Jews into Russian

57 Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna*, 79.

58 Ibid., 75.

59 See Ibid., 89, quoting from article six of the polemic anthology *Z'mir aritsim v'harvot tsurim* [The Pruning Hook of Tyrants and Swords of Flint] (Alkesnitz, 1772).

60 The most comprehensive modern assessment of the Haskalah is Shmuel Feiner's *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

61 Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 375–376.

62 See David Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995), 18–21.

society,⁶³ the Constitution nevertheless ‘bestowed upon the Hasidim the right of segregating themselves in separate synagogues within the communities.’⁶⁴ Even Zalman Borukhevich, previously arrested by the Russian authorities, was eventually considered ‘politically dependable.’⁶⁵

The immediate musical consequences of this reaction are difficult to establish, but it is reasonable to assume that they were insignificant, if not non-existent. After all, the whole thrust of the Mitnagdic strategy was to maintain the status quo, in opposition to what they saw as the extravagant and un-Jewish excesses of Hasidic theology and worship style. One should not assume that Mitnagdim were totally opposed to music itself; indeed, the Vilna Gaon is recorded as having considered a knowledge of secular music theory to be vital to the deeper understanding of Torah cantillation and other aspects of Torah study.⁶⁶ Instead, the objection was to the form in which Hasidim were perceived to use music irreverently in emotional outpourings of personal ecstasy, rather than for the rational, scholarly appreciation of Torah and Talmud.

The broader cultural outcome of the truce arrived at between Hasidim and Mitnagdim in mutual defiance of the Haskalah, was that Polish–Lithuanian Jewry was divided between an almost exclusively Hasidic Poland and a largely Mitnagdic Lithuania, or more accurately, a Lithuania containing significant pockets of Hasidism, but dominated by Mitnagdic institutions and rabbis. The true glory of nineteenth-century Lithuanian Jewry was the yeshiva tradition, established first in 1803 by Chayyim of Volozhin (1749–1821), a student of the Vilna Gaon,⁶⁷ and then emulated all around the land.⁶⁸ By the 1840s, Vilna had a Jewish population of around 30,000, and was characterised by its ‘large number of “confraternities” for Torah study that populated its study houses, the *yeshivot* that attracted talented young men from both within the

63 Eric Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

64 Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 356.

65 Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 356.

66 Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna*, 55.

67 Gil S. Perl, *The Pillar of Volozhin: Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin and the World of 19th Century Lithuanian Torah Scholarship*, Studies in Orthodox Judaism (Brighton MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 9.

68 For a comprehensive assessment of the Lithuanian yeshiva tradition, see Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning*, trans. Lindsey Taylor-Gutharz (Oxford; Portland OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012).

city and outside, as well as the large number of outstanding Torah scholars who resided there.⁶⁹

A full account of this tradition is unnecessary to the present discussion, but one distinctive aspect of it is worth highlighting as a final point of focus, even if the current state of research on the topic does not permit a full assessment of its musical implications: this is the Musar [moral conduct, ethical behaviour] movement established within the yeshiva tradition by Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin Salanter (1810–83). Salanter's Musar advocated careful study of ethical behaviour, particularly in business and commerce; its students were schooled particularly in self-discipline and restraint, and thorough consideration of the consequences of actions. But what is interesting for our discussion are the glimpses of a distinctive quasi-musical tradition within Musar, a musical stamp of identity, as Stampfer implies:

The Musar curriculum included lectures on ethical issues and analytical study of Musar texts. In an effort to drive home the moral teaching, students used to repeat choice maxims over and over in the *beit midrash* [house of learning], sometimes shouting them out and weeping as they did so.⁷⁰

Whilst this does not promise much initially, other scholars comment on the aspect of 'repeating choice maxims over and over' as an almost musical exploit. Benjamin Brown, a noted scholar of the Musar movement, considers that

the Musar Movement did not introduce music of its own; but it adopted a kind of tune, not very melodic but more similar to weeping, in Musar learning sessions and the *Shmussen* [Musar homilies]. It seems that this type of 'music' varied: fervent musarists (Novardok) used a more fervent and loud tune, while moderate musarists (Slobodka, Telz) used a more placid tune.⁷¹

Dovid Katz also hints that there is a distinctive musical aspect to Musar practice, stating in the midst of a summary of Litvak Jewish society during the nineteenth century that 'to the west [of Lithuania], the Litvak soul rang with the sad chant of the *Musernik*.'⁷² Im-

69 Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 79.

70 Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century*, 267–268.

71 Benjamin Brown (Hebrew University, Jerusalem; study group 'The Jewish Musar Movement: Theory, Practice, and Contemporary Contexts,' Van Leer Jerusalem Institute), personal communication, 5 January 2013 (quoted by kind permission).

72 Dovid Katz, *Seven Kingdoms of the Litvaks*, 27.

manuel Etkes concurs, stating that

Musar study *be-hitpa'anut* [study in a state of emotional excitement, rather than intellectual study] was performed aloud, the power of the voice, the special melody, and the rhythm all serving to arouse the emotions. Interestingly, the special melody, unlike the traditional one used for Talmud study, was characterized by sadness and broken-heartedness, mingled with groans and at times even with outbursts of tears.

Paradoxically, this practice implies a heightened emotionality that might be considered distasteful to Mitnagdim, but Geoffrey Claussen advises that Musar chant was undertaken in 'an atmosphere that was marked by deep self-control at the same time that it was emotionally charged.'⁷³ Salanter, explains Claussen, 'recognized that music can affect one's inner life more deeply than many other modes of study and communication.'⁷⁴ Citing Jewish neurologist Israel Isidor Elyashev (1873–1924), who studied with Salanter's foremost student Simcha Zissel Ziv Broida (1824–98), Claussen presents a vivid account of Musar chanting:

And amidst all the disorder, quiet sobbing would erupt, wavering amidst the shadows. The air was saturated with sighs and wails, the sound of drumming with a middle finger, the sound of a fist beating the heart, voices and echoes wailing [...].⁷⁵

Here, as well as being a tool for imprinting important passages of text on the memory, music, or at least what appears to have been considered a form of musical utterance, can also be seen as a distinct marker of identity, since this tradition was seemingly unique to Musar learning. Again, the power of a Musar teacher is communicated via a number of channels, but one of the most potent must surely have been through this quasi-musical chant tradition.

Conclusions, contemporary resonances

Music and power interact in multiple realms. Political repression and censorship, and their impact upon composers, performers and audiences, provide fruitful ground for research. But the aftershocks of those power politics ripple through all levels of society, majority or minority, and have serious implications for the assertion and defence of particular identities, ethnic, religious or otherwise. Just as socio-political events find their way into the *bylina* texts of the Russian folk tradition,⁷⁶ similarly they bear down on minority

73 Geoffrey Claussen, 'Rabbi Simḥah Zissel Ziv: The Moral Vision of a 19th Century Musar Master,' Ph.D. Thesis (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2011), 44.

74 Geoffrey Claussen, 'The Practice of Musar,' *Conservative Judaism* 63.2 (2012), 9.

75 Geoffrey Claussen, 'Rabbi Simḥah Zissel Ziv, 44.

76 See, for example, the tales of Tsar Ivan the Terrible and other historical figures as

communities, and when those communities are already experiencing deep internal conflicts, they are ripe for change. Music operates in dual roles, as both an agent and a barometer of such change.

This article has explored this dual role of music in the struggle between two opposing Jewish identities in the Russian-dominated Poland–Lithuania region of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Increased political repression and social segregation in the lead-up to the partitioning of the Commonwealth coincided with, and in some respects contributed to, the socio-religious convulsions manifest in the breakup of cohesive Jewish institutions and successive waves of Messianic fervour and disillusionment. These factors, combined, rendered a large proportion of the Jewish population susceptible to influence. In this febrile context, Hasidism was able to spread rapidly; the *Tzaddikim* and their followers availed themselves of any means available for this purpose, and music, particularly in the form of the niggunim ascribed to particular *Tzaddikim*, was one of the potent media via which the power and influence of the *Tzaddik* was both spread and consolidated. The subsequent, ultimately ineffective opposition of the Mitnagdim resulted musically in a little-documented but highly charged manner of chanting within the Musar movement. Whilst this tradition is clearly in need of further research from a musical perspective (it has been researched quite extensively from other angles), it represents a distinctive marker of identity for a movement that placed itself at the polar extreme to Hasidism, even if subsequent generations were reconciled.

I will finish with a brief account of recent ethnographic research that demonstrates how such music–power interactions in the past continue to resonate (though devoid of their more antagonistic aspects) through Jewish communities today, but with rather surprising results.⁷⁷ For various reasons, South Africa’s Jews are predominantly of Litvak origin, and, even more specifically, hail mostly from the Kovno [Kaunas] region, coincidentally where Yisrael Salanter founded a yeshiva (the ‘Kovno Kollel’) dedicated to the study of Musar.⁷⁸ The country’s modern Jewish community is acutely aware of this

reinterpreted in the *bylina* tradition, in James Bailey and Tatyana Ivanova (ed. and trans.), *an Anthology of Russian Folk Epics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 357ff.

77 See Stephen Muir, ‘From the *Shtetl* to the Gardens and Beyond: Identity and Symbolic Geography in Cape Town’s Synagogue Choirs,’ in Simone Krüger and Ruxandra Trandafoiu (eds), *The Globalization of Musics in Transit: Music Migration and Tourism* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming, due 10 September 2013).

78 See Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement*, 268ff. For an understanding of South African Jewish history and social dynamics, see (among others) Stephen Cohen, ‘The Historical Background,’ In Marcus Arkin (ed.), *South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey*

cultural and geographical heritage, and some sections of it proudly speak of the east European, Lithuanian roots of some of their synagogue music.⁷⁹ And yet the music ascribed to such roots is unmistakably (and paradoxically) Hasidic in flavour, though often in the shape of the neo-Hasidic music of Shlomo Carlebach (1925–94), who almost single-handedly reinvented the sound-world of Jewish religious music in the 20th century.⁸⁰ This demonstrates the musical and emotional potency embodied in the simple contours of the Hasidic niggun, at least as reconceived by Carlebach: ‘the Hasidic and the Lithuanian—historically polar opposites on the scale of Jewish Orthodoxy—have merged into a re-imagined symbolic Lithuanian geography resituated in a broader, more generically East-European musical locus.’⁸¹ Originally a symbol of a new and radical identity, the genre has become appropriated as a marker of Lithuanian identity. Just as it was in Russian Poland–Lithuania, music continues to be used, and from their individual, personal perspective some might say *misused*, in the continual effort to assert distinctive identities within the context of complex power politics.

Stephen Muir, Senior Lecturer in Music, University of Leeds. < s.p.k.muir@leeds.ac.uk > would like to thank the following for their assistance, freely given, during the research for this article: Jeffrey Agron, Michael Berkowitz, Benjamin Brown, Geoffrey Claussen, David Conway, Dovid Katz, Joseph Levine, Richard Newman, Bret Werb. He is grateful to Nicki Sapiro for her valuable proofreading work, and also acknowledges the financial assistance of the Havighurst Center for Russian & Post-Soviet Studies, the Department of Music, the School of Fine Arts, and the Jewish Arts and Culture Series (Posen Foundation) at Miami University for their generous funding of expenses for the conference ‘Music and Power’, and the Worldwide Universities Network Fund for International Research Collaborations for financing the international research network ‘Music, Memory and Migration in the Post-Holocaust Jewish Experience’ (<http://mmm.leeds.ac.uk>), under whose auspices much of the research for this article was conducted.

(Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1-22; Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn (eds) *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2002); Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience: the Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 2003).

79 Much of the music used in the synagogues involved in the cited study came from the stock of Hazzan–choir compositions common to many Orthodox communities around the world, predominantly (and perhaps ironically) the German Reform music of Louis Lewandowski simply performed by men instead of a mixed choir.

80 For a succinct overview of Carlebach’s achievements and legacy, see Marsha Bryan Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2007), 141–147.

81 Stephen Muir, ‘From the *Shtetl* to the Gardens and Beyond’.



CANTORS

ASSEMBLY

