PETER GRADENWITZ

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN ISRAEL

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Jerusalem 1952
The Youth and Hechalutz Department of the Zionist Organization

Printed under the supervision of the Publishing Department
of the Jewish Agency for Palestine
at the Jerusalem Post Press, Jerusalem
Printed in Israel

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of the material in the present book has appeared, usually in a rather different form, in the periodicals THE MUSICAL QUARTERLY (Copyright G. Schirmer, Inc., New York), MU-SICOLOGY (Flushing, New York), TEMPO (Copyright Boosey & Hawkes, Limited, London and New York), THE CHESTERIAN (Copyright J. & W. Chester, Limited, London), and MONTHLY MUSICAL RECORD (Copyright Augener Ltd., London), and in a printed lecture "Of Music in Modern Israel" (Copyright National Jewish Music Council, New York). An extensive bibliography is given in the author's book "THE MUSIC OF ISRAEL. Its Rise and Growth Through 5000 Years" published by W. W. Norton & Company Incorporated, New York, 1949 (Spanish Edition "La Música de Israel", Editorial Israel, Buenos Aires, 1949/5709), and in the article "ISRAEL" contributed by the author to the Fifth Edition of GROVE'S DICTIONARY OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS (edited by Eric Blom, London 1952).

The author's thanks are extended to the music publishers who permitted the inclusion of excerpts from their publications

in the music appendix.

P. G. Tel Aviv, Israel, Rosh Hashanah 5712—October 1951

NOTE

While this book has been going through the press, the following additional information has come to hand:—

Music by Israeli composers is now available throughout the world through the following agencies:

GREAT BRITAIN: J. & W. Chester Ltd., 11, Great Marlborough Street, London, W.1

FRANCE: Heugel & Cie., 2 bis rue Vivienne, Paris IIe

SWITZERLAND: Hug & Co., Limmatquai 26-28, Zuerich 22

ITALY: Carisch S.A., Via G. Broggi 19, Milano

Holland: Brockmans & van Poppel, 92 van Baerlestraat, Amsterdam-Z.

U.S.A.: Leeds Music Corporation, 1270 Sixth Avenue, R.K.O. Building, New York 20, N.Y.

N.B. A comprehensive collection of printed music and manuscript scores by Israeli composers is available for study at the Zionist Archives, 41 East 42nd Street, New York.

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words of God's promise to Jacob (Genesis XXVIII:15) "And behold, I am with thee and will keep thee in all places wither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land," while the mourning song (variation 8) is based on the words of Psalm CXXXVII (By the Rivers of Babylon) and the Hassidic dance (variation 5) can be sung to a popular song from Eastern Europe. "King David's Lyre" (Israeli Music Publications) is also available in a version for viola or violin solo solo and piano accompaniment.

Among Jacoby's chamber works are two String Quartets (1937, 1938), songs for contralto with viola solo, and "Variations and Finale for piano, violin, and 'cello" (1942), from which latter work Jacoby derived the material for his Symphony. "Seven Miniatures" for piano were also orchestrated. A fine work is his Wind Quintet (1946), the three movements of which combine romantic melodiousness with strict contrapuntal character. A vigorous Allegro opens the work, a simple Adagio follows, and the Finale consists of variations on a songful and engaging theme. (The Quintet is published by Israeli Music Publications.) Jacoby has also written a number of of songs, among them a collection of songs for children and music for recorders (Merkaz LeTarbut).

VERDINA SHLONSKY

Verdina Shlonsky (born 1905), sister of the poet Abraham Shlonsky, was Israel's first woman composer. Her most successful works are those in small forms: piano music, songs (to French and to Hebrew texts),

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and pieces for violin and piano. Among the piano works there are an album "From my Diary" (Merkaz LeTarbut) and a set of five "Sketches". Of her large-scale works—which include two symphonies, a symphonic cantata, and a suite for string orchestra compiled from her music for the Hebrew theatre—the best is a Piano Concerto (1942—44), a two-movement work in which polyphonic, playful, dramatic, and virtuoso elements are molten together, and in which the main themes are presented in two-part texture but subsequently developed apart.

JOSEPH GRUENTHAL (TAL)

Joseph Gruenthal (born 1910), like Jacoby a resident of Jerusalem, is a pianist and composer of much individuality who has sought inspiration in the world of the Bible and ancient legend and also especially studied the problems of choreographic music. The composer's most important works are a symphonic cantata "A Mother Rejoices" and the choreographic poem "Exodus" (1945/46, Israeli Music Publications) which was inspired by a dance poem on the story of the Exodus from Egypt by Deborah Bertonoff, the mimic dancer, Gruenthal at first wrote the choreographic music for piano and drums only; the symphonic composition is an independent orchestral version of the original work, in which a baritone soloist accompanies the musical scenes by relevant passages from the Bible, sung in their original Hebrew. An orchestral introduction opens the work; it is built on a theme that later assumes importance in the Prayer for Deliverance. The introduction leads straight into the first section proper-

music symbolising the serfdom of Israel under the Egyptian Pharaoh: "And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of services in the field" (Exodus I:14). The Prayer follows as the second section and takes up the theme of the introduction; it is based on the words: "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning Thy servants" (Psalm XC:13). The Exodus itself provides the background for the third section: "And it came to pass the self-same day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus XII:51), and the dramatic passage through the Red Sea is the subject of the following part: "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left . . . And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen . . . and Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared ... and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea ... And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much of them" (Exodus XIV:22-23 and 27-28). The work is deeply imbued with the Biblical spirit and closely follows the dramatic course of events, but it interprets the ancient texts in the contemporary musical idiom and in the frame of a form that is purely musically conceived; its culmination comes with the Orientally coloured Finale, "Miriam's Dance": "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously" (Exodus XV:21).

In the symphonic cantata "A Mother Rejoices" (1948-49) Gruenthal re-creates the Maccabean legend of Hannah and her seven sons. The heroic mother sees all her sons killed by a cruel king, as they refuse to bow before the Christian cross; but she rejoices over their steadfastness and does not want them to renounce their holy ancient belief and she takes her own life in an exalted spirit, praising the one and only God. A piano solo in Gruenthal's composition symbolises the task of narrator and commentator, while the story itself unfolds in a setting for soli, chorus, and orchestra; a jubilant "Hallelujah" concludes the work, at the climax of which two boys' voices join the chorus to intone an ancient Oriental psalm tune.

Among Gruenthal's other works there are a Piano Concerto in four movements (1944), "Visions" ("Mar'oth") for string orchestra, piano works, songs and chamber music. His Piano Sonata (1950) is a concentrated and highly expressive three-movement work, in the second movement of which a popular tune composed by Yehuda Sharett appears in the bass. "Lament and Dance" provide two attractive pieces for violoncello and harp (1949, Israeli Music Publications), while young pianists are cared for in three little pieces for piano four hands (1950), one of which is based on "Miriam's Dance" from the "Exodus" poem. In 1951, the composer produced a short Violin Sonata, the three movements of which treat the thematic material as does a classical first-movement form.