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The Dilution of National Onomatopoeias in Post-Statehood Israeli Art Music: Precursors, Contiguities, Shifts

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Israeli art music penned from the late 1930s to the early 1960s unfolds early serial practices in Mandatory (British) Palestine that had come to the fore during the early post-statehood years, when growing disillusionment with romanticist nationalism loomed large. Abandoning peripheral native masks, composers responded to the post-statehood shift by either adapting the linear properties of non-Western Jewish music, which they aligned with local readings of serial devices, or through the destabilization of folk-like dances and exotic musical markers. Shifts in Israeli poetry parallel the emerging attitudes of the first cohort of native Israeli composers and the gradual fading of the nation’s unisonality from their music.

They unloaded the gold of Ophir in the harbor.
A band was playing beyond the shutters
And I knew it was forbidden.
Forbidden.

(Nathan Zach, “The Gold of Ophir”)

Conventional wisdom concerning Israeli art music embraces Paul Ben-Haim as one of its main protagonists. An emigrant to Mandatory (British) Palestine in 1933 following the Nazi ascent to power, Ben-Haim was part of a cohort arriving from central and western Europe in unusually large numbers (nearly 70,000 emigrants during the first eight years of the Third Reich) that

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2 Yoav Gelber, New Homeland: Immigration and Absorption of Central European Jews 1933–1948 (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1990), 61 (in Hebrew). All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
brought with it a critical mass of instrumentalists, composers, musicologists, and audiences. These emigrants not only permeated musical life in Palestine but also institutionalized art music in the emerging community of the yishuv; Russian Jewish composers who emigrated during the 1920s, former members of the St. Petersbourg Society for Jewish folk music, had previously suffered from a lack of infrastructure. In Palestine Ben-Haim’s idiosyncratic style complemented the Zionist project, which imagined the yishuv as a European enclave on the shores of the Mediterranean. Writing in a musical style that overlaid exotic frills onto a postimpressionist musical vocabulary still current in the European mainstream, his music communicated to audiences worldwide while at the same time appealing to the various Zionist institutions that promoted these types of desirable nationalist portrayals. The best musicians in the country would include his works in their repertoire, as would world-renowned artists such as Leonard Bernstein, Itzhak Perlman, Zubin Mehta, and others. By sheer force of national inertia, such codified ideologies were rewarded by subsequent historiography. By 1951 Max Brod identified Ben-Haim as the ideal synthesis between East and West, and in effect laid the foundation for a hierarchy that placed him at its top. Concomitantly, Peter Gradenwitz, who founded the Israel Music Publication in 1949 and remained at its helm until 1982, published the majority of Ben-Haim’s postemigration works while centering the latter’s oeuvre in his publications. As early as 1948 Gradenwitz viewed Ben-Haim as the “acknowledged leader” of what Brod called the “Mediterranean school,” although Gradenwitz replaced this misnomer with “eastern Mediterranean”; a year later Gradenwitz remarked that Ben-Haim’s “Palestinian compositions show a stronger influence of the rural, pastoral atmosphere of the countryside.” In the conclusion of the third edition of his monograph on Ben-Haim, Jehoash Hirshberg writes that the composer’s music “is not part of a process of striving for an Israeli style, but it is this very style.” Given the relatively euphonic sound of Ben-Haim’s music (suggestive at times of Ravel or de Falla) and his lucid quotations of the musical traditions of Near-Eastern Jewry, it seemed only natural that he would embody the master narrative of Israeli art music. To demonstrate his use of exotic paraphernalia, one need only cite his 1960 Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra: Phrygian allusions,
chromaticism, and a quasi-improvised piano part are deployed over a beautifully laid-out tonal infrastructure (with B♭ and C as subdominant and dominant, respectively) that renders even the harshest dissonances as merely part of the bucolic ambiance (see Example 1). To the outsider, the result may be heard as Noches en los Jardines de Tel Aviv—or at least those gardens from which Tel Aviv’s Mediterranean seaboard was visible.

By 1960, however, Ben-Haim’s approach had become rather anachronistic, because many active composers during that period—both sabras (natives) and some immigrants—began to contest the Eurocentric acoustic signifiers that portrayed the nation during the pre-statehood years before 1948. Ben-Haim’s Capriccio sounded more like a summary of the yishuv’s pre-statehood aesthetic than a reflection of more than a decade of sobering experience after the intoxicating moment of statehood. Most composers active in the early 1960s projected the transformation of pre-statehood values through either the localization of Schoenbergian serialism or through the textures and sounds of its post–World War II formulations; some even maximized their teachers’ Eurocentric exoticism by incorporating linear principles found in other, non-Western, Jewish music available in the country. Realizing the problems inherent in the mutual natures of citation and identity within a national context, these composers had consciously destabilized the meanings acquired by exotic musical markers within the romanticist framework of Hebrew culture—hereafter, Hebrewism. Hebrewism has been defined as “a set of cultural practices and works in various fields of art invented during the formative years of Israeli society . . . with the manifest purpose of comprising the cultural material through which the new Jewish entity in Israel would be experienced and practiced”; it was enacted through “adaptations and reinterpretations of Jewish religious and traditional elements, rituals invoking a mythic connection to the landscape and biblical history.”

Composers who adhered to this practice drew on folk dances (authentic, borrowed, or newly invented), marches, pastorals, and non-Western Jewish musical traditions, thereby establishing some leeway between European art music and the musical markers that endowed the yishuv with Mediterranean roots. Yet what was perceived as Mediterraneanism has been called one of the “escaping routes from [the] inherent contradictions of the Zionist enterprise,” which, according to Edwin Seroussi, had to address “the location of a European-oriented Jewish secular nation-state in the midst of the Islamic Arab Middle East and eventually . . . the fact that half of the Jewish population of Israel originates in Islamic countries.” The term Mediterraneanism thus mirrors two paradigmatic contexts through which the country’s eastern European

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EXAMPLE 1  Paul Ben-Haim, *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra* (1960), mm. 35–47. Used by Permission of the Israel Music Institute.
(Ashkenazi) political and cultural elite perceived Jewish immigrants from North Africa and the Near East. As Yehouda Shenhav notes, they were at once “seen as Arabs, and hence as an ‘other’ of Europe and Zionism . . . [and] as ancient Jews, hence as exalted holy objects of the Zionist national-religious discourse.”

By focusing on compositions from the late 1930s to the early 1960s, I aim to illustrate a process rather than to reproduce earlier chronological partitions of Israeli art music. The works included here therefore demonstrate the cultural precursors, contiguities, and eventual shifts that triggered and accelerated the dilution of Zionist musical onomatopoeias—citations of Jewish folk or liturgical music filtered through a post-romantic musical vocabulary under the purview of nationalism—and the deconstruction of the paradigms by which Arab Jewish music had been perceived. Representing a dense cultural-historical development signaling the emergence of antiromantic counternarratives, the following examples cut across the generational divisions of this musical habitat that have rendered the phenomenon discussed here nonexistent. Moreover, romanticist national portrayals were contested by more than the mere importation of Schoenbergian serialism following the emigration of modernists in the 1930s, or the dissemination of post–World War II serial devices. Social vicissitudes equally affected Israeli art music after the founding of the state in 1948, as the

new Jewish Commonwealth was jolted out of the heady atmosphere of victory into a mundane and problem-ridden day-to-day existence as a poor, struggling state that had taken upon itself the formidable task of absorbing within a few years a mass of destitute Jews, a mass larger than its own indigenous Jewish population.
The dynamism triggered by the historic declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, was therefore indissoluble from contiguous stylistic precursors, whose growing visibility after statehood was far more prominent than new radical transformations or intergenerational antagonisms.

Two main developments were therefore at work. On the surface level, changes were marked by continuities involving the political constellation and its official ideology, as well as the proto-governmental institutions established during the British Mandate, whose continuity and stability were personified and symbolized by David Ben-Gurion. Beneath the surface, the entire social, ideological, and political infrastructure, as well as the demographic basis of the nation, was shifting tectonically, driven by palpable factors arising from the aftermath of war and the mundane and problem-ridden reality of the postwar era. The 100,000 new immigrants who had arrived during the War of Independence (1947–49) amounted to an overwhelming total of 690,000 immigrants within the first forty-two months of the state’s existence (a number larger than the indigenous Jewish population); together with the more than 100,000 people who had been mobilized since the summer of 1948 (and subsequently could not contribute to the country’s economy), they exhausted the state’s treasury. The State of Israel emerged from the war elated and (as poet Nathan Alterman had prophesized) “torn at heart but still breathing.”

Six thousand Israelis were killed in the war between November 1947 and January 1949 (nearly 1 percent of the Jewish population), fourteen Jewish settlements were destroyed, and some 60,000 Jewish refugees left their homes. In the words of Tom Segev:

Tens of thousands were wounded, and tens of thousands of others, demobilized soldiers, now had to reenter society. Between shell shocks and the shock of returning home, they had difficulty adjusting; many felt alienated from the society they had just fought to defend.

These early years were marked by severe shortages, low foreign currency reserves, and almost no stocks of food and fuel. Unlike former waves of immigrants who brought with them capital, means of production, skills, and

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18 Nearly one-third of Jerusalem’s Jewish population left the city despite orders to the contrary, and thousands of Jews who lived on the margins between Jewish and Arab neighborhoods chose to move to safer locations. See Shapira, *Israel*, 158–59. On the Palestinian emigration during the war, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
education, early post-statehood independence saw the arrival of destitute emigrants whose level of education was lower than that of the established populace, making the burden of absorption fall on the public through the government and the Jewish Agency. The government, which had been skeptical of economists’ recommendations and even more suspicious of the free market, initiated an austerity policy in 1949. As Segev notes, the policy included

strict price controls, rationing of food and services, raw materials, and foreign currency. . . . The austerity program reflected a measure of puritanism, a profound dislike of shopkeepers and all that they stood for, and an almost mystical belief in the power of bureaucracy to solve problems.²⁰

The black market grew as a result of printed money that the public had no way to spend and as an expression of consumer disenchantment and refusal to accept austerity.²¹ A 1950 public opinion poll showed that most Israelis felt that their economic conditions had worsened since the creation of the state.²² Or, as Amos Oz expressed in his autobiographic novel: “Now that the years of euphoria were over, we were suddenly living in the ‘morning after’: gray, gloomy, damp, mean, and petty.”²³

PRECURSORS

The gradual abandonment of vertical harmony, and in turn the dissolution of national musical onomatopoeias, was a direct result of composers working with sets, collections, and series during the early post-statehood years. Such an approach had been signaled and catalyzed by the works (and occasionally, the writings) of Stefan Wolpe, Josef Tal, and Alexander U. Boskovich. Notwithstanding stylistic differences, their works attest to alternatives that consciously diverged from what had been perceived as national musical markers. Of the three, Wolpe, whose short stay in Palestine occurred between 1934 and 1938, may seem liminal in the annals of Israeli art music, yet his presence within the circle of German-Jewish expatriates in Jerusalem catalyzed the output of those composers who simultaneously fused and interrupted the Hebrewist discourse to the point of spelling out its demise. Boskovich’s music, too, anticipated a turn to horizontality, as he shifted from ostinati, quasi-improvisatory musical lines and thin heterophonic textures in

²⁰ This was the same bureaucracy that was feeding new Arab Jewish emigrants living in transit camps and shantytowns. See Segev, 1949, 297, 299; see also Shapira, Israel, 210.
²¹ Shapira, Israel, 211.
²² Segev, 1949, 303.
the 1940s to melodic layering and the synthesis of the linear and textural properties of non-Western Jewish liturgies, which he perceived in collectivist historical terms, while at the same time incorporating a localized reading of post–World War II serial techniques. Tal, contrarily, remained adjacent to the Hebrewist discourse, which he both internalized and criticized by means of his Schoenberghian toolbox. We begin with Wolpe.

Wolpe’s experiences and affiliations with the intensely communal and experimental Bauhaus school, agitprop theater groups, political cabarets, and the montage works of George Grosz assisted him in crystallizing (according to Brigid Cohen) a “belief in the potential efficacy of avant-garde art, which endured as the ideal to which he aspired throughout his life.”24 Austin Clarkson notes that the socialist songs Wolpe composed in Berlin already suggested that “the revolutionary new musical art might be founded on twelve-tone principles,”25 an idea that had most likely emanated from the Bauhaus ethic of amalgamating “found objects” through estrangement, formalization, and reclamation. Montage would illuminate the unrealized potential of objects by the very presence of added materials whose formal connectedness, balance, and movement gave birth to new transformative modes of perception.26 In Palestine such mixtures of object and commentary would recur in his settings of modern Hebrew poems and choral works in the spirit of the kibbutz’s voluntary collectivism,27 with the difference that textures would draw on the non-Western musical surfaces Wolpe had been exposed to in Palestine. Setting up house in Jerusalem, whose shad-owy alleyways and mystical light (according to Gideon Ofrat) “sat well with the expressionist spirit of theosophy of Bauhaus graduates,”28 Wolpe found himself in the intellectual climate of the Hebrew University and the political scope of tiny dovish circles whose advocacy for binationalism had proved untenable in the face of the Arab Revolt (1936–39; paradoxically, this was partly as a result of the German aliya).29 Wolpe’s concerns regarding the victimization of Arabs in Palestine were hindered by unfamiliarity with the

26 “We had to combine things,” Wolpe recounted, “a spiral at the bottom, with an artificial eye, with a shoelace—and we had to use these things independent upon their subjective meaning.” See Austin Clarkson, “Lecture on Dada by Stefan Wolpe,” Musical Quarterly 72/2 (1986), 205 (emphasis in original); and Cohen, Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora, 88–104.
28 Gideon Ofrat, One Hundred Years of Art in Israel (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 90.
yishuv’s political dynamism, his lack of command of Hebrew, and, according to Cohen, an inability to fit within either communist or labor party machines. Channeling his efforts into composition, pedagogy, and institutional reform led Wolpe to a rejection of Arab orientalism and attempts to redress questions of social equality.30 While the kibbutzim may well have reminded him of his stays at the Bauhaus, just as his collaboration primarily with people who were young and socialist in outlook in many respects recaptured his involvement with the Berliner agitprop theater groups,31 his more popular arrangements already marked an emigrant composers’ proclivity for writing for two kinds of audiences: in the words of Philip V. Bohlman, “the first, a more general audience not particularly interested in unraveling complex works; the second, a smaller audience willing to plumb beneath the surface responses to undertake more critical analysis of the works.”32 Defying the doubly separatist Hebrewist discourse, aimed at both the Arab community of Palestine and Diasporic Jewish culture,33 Wolpe’s additive and permutative principles from the 1920s,34 with its magnetic fields of the symmetric and the asymmetric, were now enriched by his visits to Sephardic synagogues and his studies of Arab music through informants such as oud player Ezra Aharon or immigrant musicologists Robert Lachmann and Edith Gerson-Kiwi.35 Wolpe let the properties and principles of those musics percolate into his syntax, affecting the activation of melodic cells that now functioned like maqamat (Arab melodic modes). The common denominator between his importations and the non-occidental soundscape of the East was linearity, which enabled Wolpe to attribute symbolic meanings to a compound (rather than a mixture) that put the Western toolbox on par with the Eastern and served as a political outlet. Compositionally, therefore, he stepped beyond amalgamation for the purpose of estrangement, formalization, and reclamation, as he let the properties of Eastern music steer his horizontal and vertical permutations.

Resistance to Wolpe’s brand of modernism in Palestine should therefore be seen as embodying a certain cultural unease. Lacking nationally

50 Cohen, Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora, 152.
53 Regev and Seroussi, Popular Music and National Culture in Israel, 16.
appeasing texts (as in his folksongs’ settings), the activation of melodic cells that drew from Arab or Arab Jewish musics threatened to destabilize the binaries constructed in the yishuv between Zionism and Arab nationalism; equally, his avant-garde zeal undermined the alleged authenticity of local exotic images. But Wolpe never bothered with Mediterraneanism; in fact, “he hated this,” according to an interview with composer Haim Alexander, who studied under Wolpe at the Jerusalem Conservatory between 1936 and 1938. Wolpe’s response to Arab music, Alexander confirms, differed significantly from the occidental formulations prevalent in Palestine in the late 1930s. A similar opinion had been voiced in an anonymous review of Wolpe’s art songs: “It is worth pointing out specifically that the Eastern atmosphere in Mr. Wolpe’s music is neither vague nor superficial and he never forgets to remain modern.” In Wolpe’s own words, such principles expressed a deliberate “renunciation of popularity” and a turn toward “subjective history.” The 1936 Suite im Hexachord for oboe and clarinet records this approach. Assigning each of the conversing instruments a hexachord of five half-steps ranging from G to C, Wolpe opens the suite by situating the oboe and the clarinet a minor third apart, immediately unfolding the hexachord as if it were a maqam (literally, an area, or place) and experimenting with inversions, augmentations, and displacements (see Example 2). The duo stages the convergence of East and West beyond the mere juxtaposition of the oboe (a Western surrogate instrument enacting the role of the conical oboe, the zurna) and the clarinet; rather, its common linear denominator brands the modern compositional present as a metaphor of the Eastern past. In a lecture on his compositional practices given shortly after his departure from Palestine, Wolpe distinguished between the trends then in vogue in Palestine (“‘quotation’ music with the wrong notes”) and his “intervalic groupings, their inversions, variants, and transposition,” which feature “deliberate dislocations and transition in transpositions” and strive to invent the piece “out of itself.” The material we find in folklore, he remarked, is not “stronger than the technic [sic] which it requires.” Yet whereas local English newspapers praised Wolpe’s music, his colleagues at the Jerusalem Conservatory, scandalized and alarmed on hearing his instrumental works,

36 Interview with Haim Alexander (April 26, 1985), transcript by Austin Clarkson, Haim (Heinz) Alexander Collection, MUS 227, D29A, NLI.
38 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Else Schlomann (March 19, 1938), quoted in Zimmermann, “Folk Song versus High Modernism,” 278.

rejected his iconoclastic socialism. Concomitantly, an anonymous review in *Ha’aretz* paired Wolpe’s *March and Variations* and “Passacaglia” (the third movement of *Four Studies on Basic Rows*, 1935–36) with postwar western European decadence, which the reviewer contrasted with the “air of revival that surrounds us here.”

Another dimension in the cultural power relations of the 1930s becomes evident in interviews with Alexander: “Avant-garde of that time was not in favor of the people ruling the music in Israel ... [Marc Lavry, then] in charge of the radio station ... wrote *Emek* ... in a style he thought he invented ... And then there is a man who is much better, Ben Haim ... he would never accept anything of Wolpe’s.” A later interview with Alexander further reveals that “Lavry preached an ‘authentic’ Israeli Music while in effect perpetuating the Russian nationalist school. Many of the German composers were influenced by him and artificially grafted the Mediterranean style to

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44 Interview with Haim Alexander (April 26, 1985), transcript by Austin Clarkson, Haim (Heinz) Alexander Collection, MUS 227 D29A, NLI. Brod verifies that Lavry “headed the musical department of Israel’s broadcasting services to the Golah [Diaspora].” See Brod, *Israel’s Music*, 49.
their work, sometimes with grotesque results.” 45 Lavry’s music was indeed a marketable art achieved by exoticizing the yishuv and its culture within exotic relationships to European centers of power. 46 An emigrant of Latvian birth who arrived in mandatory Palestine in 1935, Lavry advocated the popularization of art music through melodiousness, deliberately attempting to blur the demarcation between art and folk music. 47 His symphonic poem Emek (Valley, 1937), mentioned by Alexander, was one of the first symphonic works to be written in the yishuv and one of the composer’s most performed and recorded works. The apotheosis of the work features a bora section that showcases the main acoustic signifiers of what was then perceived as the national folk dance (see Example 3): “crescendo in tempo and tone volume from beginning to end, with provoking syncopations and virile accents,” 48 and “short symmetrical phrases in common time, regularly repeated syncopated rhythms, square phrases, short melodic motives in small range, avoidance of leading tones, and a simple diatonic harmony with open fifths substituting the major-minor triads.” 49 Imported by the political and cultural Ashkenazi hegemony, the bora (modeled after the Romanian doina) was reflective of this elite’s desired national portrayal. 50 Lavry’s onomatopoeic


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45 Interview with Haim Alexander (April 7, 1986), transcript by Austin Clarkson, Haim (Heinz) Alexander Collection, MUS 227 D27, NLI.


49 Hirshberg, *Music in the Jewish Community*, 258.

50 Choreographer and dancer Sara Levi-Tanai recalled: “In the small yishuv, in a land nearly desolate, the pioneering spirit reached to the stars. The Hora was not only a folk song but a revelation and outpouring of love, transcending and extending out over the quandaries of hunger and malaria.”
formulation complemented the choreography of the round dance in which the participants’ clasped shoulders stood for the collectivism of the yisbuv. Using an accessible musical vocabulary while constantly drawing on recognizable musical templates and extra-musical national topoi (Emek was a cognomen for the Jezreel Valley), Lavry’s music defined the individual only through his place in the collective, thereby portraying an organic view of the individual’s relation to the larger constellation in which he served a function. And whereas this kind of congruity had given voice to the nation’s unisonality, Wolpe’s arrays of Western and Eastern linearity were prematurely individualistic. Aware of these tensions, Wolpe considered emigration as early as February 1938.51

Wolpe may have appeared too soon on the scene, yet his approach anticipated the consolidation of antiromanticism in the early post-statehood climate and the commensurate usurping of linearity in local art music. Despite having been politically and culturally encumbered by his lack of command of the Hebrew language, Wolpe’s music infused the activation of melodic cells with behavioral patterns and forms drawn on local non-Western music. Yet the relatively younger age of Tal and Boskovich, and their acculturation into pre-statehood culture, allowed them to destabilize Hebrewism from within. Concomitant with the tectonic shift summoned by the founding of the state, both used linear compositional devices to weaken Eurocentric national formulations and their embedded hierarchies; whether from Paris, Berlin, or Darmstadt, serial importations were now contingent on Israel’s ethnic proximities, the relegation of which was made possible by mere tonal constructions. In this context Tal embodies both historical and historiographical interference, given that even his most maximalist formulations always interacted with the Jewish past or the Zionist present, while drawing on biblical and postbiblical texts, modern Hebrew poetry, folksongs, and non-Western Jewish liturgical music. Yet he always questioned the connection between the two ends of the symbolic Zionist bridge and never ignored the middle period of Diaspora that was so bluntly reduced by Hebrewist rhetoric.52 Persistently refusing easy appropriations and national teleologies, Tal never aligned past and present into a redemptive trajectory resonating with the Zionist allegory.


51 Wolpe’s upsetting of the yisbuv’s separatism was manifested in the pedagogical plans he had presented in the summer of 1938 at the World Center for Jewish Music in Palestine, where he advocated the urgent national need to teach new techniques so as to increase students’ compositional choices; in keeping with his dovish political views, he also suggested a comparative study of Jewish music in relation to the non-Jewish region. See Cohen, Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora, 180–83.

Music critics chronicled Tal and Wolpe in February 1938 at the premiere of the latter’s *March and Variations* (1933–34) for two pianos. In his autobiography Tal recalls how the Jerusalemite elite that gathered at the YMCA auditorium “cheered the acrobat pianists, but treated the work with an astounding lack of understanding.” Since then, Tal continues, “Wolpe has been considered an *enfant terrible*, the spokesman of extreme musical ideologies. His uncompromising political views and the somewhat condescending decisiveness of his behavior have only strengthened this image.”

The two composers had known each other earlier. Living in Jerusalem since 1936, Tal recalled observing the composer of *March and Variations* walking “past the parade of rows and permutations” hung on his studio walls, and recounted how Wolpe’s systematic “destroying of healthy forms” influenced his work. Still, Tal did not arrive in Palestine devoid of cultural and artistic preferences of his own. Having graduated from the Staatliche Akademische Hochschule in Berlin, where his teachers included Curt Sachs, Heinz Tiessen, Paul Hindemith, and Friedrich Trautwein, he imported Schoenberian serialism (mainly due to Tiessen’s teaching) while being fully aware of both the tonal gestures that had breathed life into this syntax and its dogmatic pitfalls. Growing up in an orthodox home in Berlin, from which he slowly defected during his late teens, Tal maintained proficiency in (and sensitivity to) Jewish *topoi*, allowing them to seep into his music, while sifting out binary modes of representation. Following Wolpe’s departure, he was offered the former’s position and became the head of composition and music theory at the conservatory. In his autobiography Tal writes that he continued the work of his predecessor in at least in one aspect: “the ‘modernity’ of my compositions.”

Tal’s preoccupation with traditional forms and linear devices is discernible already in the first works he penned in Palestine. The *Chaconne* (1936) for solo piano displays a series of melodic permutations drawn on a basso ostinato the symmetry of which the composer determinedly breaks. More often than not, asymmetry was embedded in the ostinato itself, thereby creating further shifts and changes of emphasis in thematic reentries. The unison introduction of the *Chaconne*, for example, is already shifted in its second cycle (see Example 4a, m. 4), making it unclear which opening of

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the first two entrances is the anacrusis, given that the first measure is in \( \frac{5}{4} \) time and the closing of the second entrance is in \( \frac{3}{4} \) time (see Example 4a, m. 7). Furthermore, the third entrance condenses the former entries into just one cycle by reintroducing the \( \frac{5}{4} \) time at its beginning (see Example 4a, m. 9) and punctuating it by a short unison on F at the close of a \( \frac{3}{4} \) time measure. Were three rounds of the basso conceived as one cycle, then? This seems unlikely, as the unison ending of measure 12 is a mere comma after which Tal leaps into an already developed round of the basso with a texture whose chromatic flow breaches the four-measure span of the theme. A flux of sixteen measures in \( \frac{6}{16} \) time is cued by a thirty-second triplet, triggering streams of mainly minor and major seconds that are the building blocks of the basso (see Example 4a, mm. 13–20).

Tal’s polyphonic branching makes use of the intervallic information of the basso, allowing him to extend several motives from the basso without committing to their melodic cells. Two opposing forces are therefore groping for balance: the linear cyclical form of the chaconne, on the one hand,

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EXAMPLE 4b Josef Tal, Chaconne, mm. 168–72. Used by permission of the Israel Music Institute.

and Tal’s constant shifting, prolonging, and condensing of thematic reentries, on the other, as seen in one of the concluding reentries of the theme (see Example 4b). Allowing harmony to proliferate from the intervallic content of the theme, Tal resisted linear matrices on the micro level, while postponing or pausing thematic unfolding on the macro level, in favor of developments that transgress symmetric cyclic repetitions. And while sustaining cyclic repetitions, Tal signals out those variants that echo noticeable segments from the basso (see Example 4b).

Still, even if such a composition could be deemed nationally indifferent, by 1949 Tal consciously alludes to the national dance in his Hora for cello and harp. Far from the symphonic solemnity of Lavry’s Emek, Tal’s modest and rather unusual duo attempts to animate the bora through a triple meter (instead of the original common time) with occasional alternating asymmetric meters. As if “tongue in cheek,” juxtaposed triads are submerged in the chromatic context to the point of deactivating their functional pulls, while melodies with tonal directionality are rhythmically refracted (see Example 5). Its irony notwithstanding, the Hora follows the same recognized folkish

Syncopations used by Lavry and many other composers in the *yishuv*; the striking difference, however, is Tal’s interruption to the *hora*’s choreographic gestures and its filtering through an atonal syntax. Written during the first year of independence, Tal’s *Hora* already marks the exhaustion of national musical onomatopoeias and the contiguous presence of their subversive silhouettes, upsetting the mutuality of citation and identity.

CONTIGUITIES

Other structural vicissitudes were taking place on the threshold of statehood. Noah Lucas identifies a transformation in the mode of socialism practiced by the *yishuv* and the ensuing state: a reversion from a third-world twentieth-century mode of socialism, occurring outside of the capitalist sphere, which it bypasses to become an alternative agent of modernization and industrialization, to a nineteenth-century mode, which had emerged as a revolutionary critique of capitalism and was eventually incorporated into the fabric of capitalist politics as an agent of reform. The young revolutionaries who had arrived in Palestine in the early twentieth century, Lucas remarks, had quickly shed their foreign socialist vocabulary and within twenty years “realized that they were building a new society along new lines, bypassing rather than vanquishing and replacing capitalism.”58 By the 1920s the pioneers had come

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to realize that they were inventing new routes to modernize and industrialize an underdeveloped society and “understood that their socialism, which they called constructivism, was potentially a method of building a new society.”\textsuperscript{59} Through improvisation they stumbled on new innovative cooperative principles of organization in the form of the kvutza, the moshav, the kibbutz, the bistadrut and myriad various applications of social and economic forms of organization that matched the conditions in which they were living. “By dint of cooperative ownership and self-management,” Lucas argues, “the pioneers were willing to work for the future, voluntarily. The future was theirs to manage, and the lure of autarchy, economic self-sufficiency, was their promise that they could build in their own image.”\textsuperscript{60} During the Arab revolt, however, as the national movement under Ben-Gurion had adopted statehood as the immediate goal and embraced accordingly an anticolonial model that necessitated driving out the British, socialists (mostly on the left) ceased to innovate and, according to Lucas, increasingly “reverted to their nineteenth-century fetal defensive posture of protest and defiance against what they perceived as the petit-bourgeois threat to their economic sector, which now became more vulnerable in the shadow of imperative nationalist strategies.”\textsuperscript{61} Past the cusp of statehood, the state and its army upstaged the cooperative socialist network as the pioneering force molding a new nation, and socialist creativity was replaced by defensive conservative approaches through its cooperative network. Socialists felt secure in their values as long as they controlled the government but, according to Lucas,

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the dynamism of the state as the instrument of absorption of masses of immigrants on the one hand, and the necessity to import masses of private capital in order to make possible their rapid absorption, on the other, determined that instead of socialism what was established was a capitalists economy run by a labor bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

Thus, as statism became the core of national inspiration, “socialism paid with its life in the new cause of nation-building.”\textsuperscript{63}

Considered alone, therefore, the moment of statehood—unprecedented in Jewish history since the demise of the Second Commonwealth—is a mere abstract. The dynamism triggered by the declaration of independence relied on precursors and former practices that together allowed for contiguity and change rather than revolutionary transformations. Featuring an ongoing individualization of Israeli society (which was commensurate with the relative decline of voluntary collectivism), the emergence of centralized

\begin{footnotes}
\item Lucas, “Israeli Nationalism and Socialism before and after 1948,” 306.
\item Lucas, “Israeli Nationalism and Socialism before and after 1948,” 306.
\item Lucas, “Israeli Nationalism and Socialism before and after 1948,” 306.
\item Lucas, “Israeli Nationalism and Socialism before and after 1948,” 309.
\item Lucas, “Israeli Nationalism and Socialism before and after 1948,” 309.
\end{footnotes}
bureaucratic collectivism (represented de facto by the state), and the massive immigration of Arab Jews after the 1948 war that interfered with the cultural space in which the veteran society and its governmental institutions had consolidated.\(^6^4\) Statehood had progressively fragmented and dismantled the visionary core that characterized Hebrewism in its pre-statehood phase, giving birth in the 1950s to hybrid patterns that rendered former Hebrewist components blurred and inoperative. The composers involved in destabilizing the meanings that Hebrewism had acquired prior to statehood were therefore less impressed with the musical innovations and iconoclastic rhetoric spilling over from Darmstadt, whose \textit{stunde null} the young State of Israel interpreted differently as the influx of Holocaust survivors was arriving in a country that still fought for its existence. Gradual abandonment of romanticist models had been replaced therefore with serial devices devoid of dogmatic matrices and attentive to the linear properties found in non-Western Jewish music. Converged, these confluences brought to the fore and amplified stylistic alternatives practiced during pre-statehood years, catalyzing various stylistic hybrids ranging from serial textural imitations and melodic layering to cell harmony and permutations à la Schoenberg. No one saw the need to proclaim the latter dead.

One of the few musicological voices discussing these transformations was Alexander Boskovich, who in the early 1950s addressed the problems of Israeli art music in the literary journal \textit{Orlogin}. A visitor-turned-immigrant, Boskovich had arrived in Palestine in 1938 for the premiere of his suite \textit{Chansons Populaires Juifs} (1937), an arrangement of eastern European Jewish folksongs partly based on previously transcribed material.\(^6^5\) Although the suite did not transgress the tonality offered by the folksongs, Boskovich soon sought to free Israeli art music from the spiritual colonialism he found in the \textit{yishuv}'s musical culture. To a certain extent his critical writings in the 1950s and 1960s, a project abruptly cut by his untimely death in 1964, documented the way he destabilized his own romanticist model. Consequently, what had begun with an argument for the need to abandon Eurocentric colonial templates led in practice to a localization of post–World War II serialism in the early 1960s.

Boskovich’s publications in \textit{Orlogin} witnessed the crystallization of the composer’s arguments in both language and academic grounding. The first article prepared the groundwork philosophically; it surveyed various


aesthetic approaches to art and music, relying on cross-disciplinary theories ranging from Aristotle to Leonardo da Vinci and from Cassirer to Ortega y Gasset and Susanne Langer. Drawing on the latter’s discursive symbolization, Boskovich determined that music was the incomplete implicit symbol, possessing all symbolist qualities yet devoid of concrete signification.\textsuperscript{66} His next article appeared in the same journal more than two years later and has since become a milestone in the annals of Israeli art music. Qualifying his 1951 philosophical introduction, Boskovich now argued that abstract definitions of art require a social basis the dialectical tension of which is generated by the “where” and “when.” Considering concepts such as \textit{Zeitlose kunst} (timeless art) and \textit{Raumlose kunst} (nonspatial art) absurd, he remarked that artists’ social agency is fed by and reflective of the “spiritual attitude of a given collective.”

This kind of social validation sets up a centrifugal movement that moves progressively from the parochial to the universal, allowing the composer to absorb foreign elements without losing his or her social coordinates; movement in the opposite direction was seen as an “artistic Esperanto devoid of collectivist reality.”\textsuperscript{67} The “when” and “where” in Boskovich’s thought drew on a territorial perception of the nation (“individual musical creation in a national spirit is impossible without a Jewish homeland”), which, accordingly, colored the history of western European Jewish composers as tragic, succumbing to an “ethnographically foreign environment.”\textsuperscript{68} Any reproduction of this vanishing exilic world, therefore, would be out of sync with the two dialectically intertwined landscapes encountered by composers in the country: the geographical and the human. Boskovich maintained that the static “eastern Mediterranean” geographical landscape, whose climate, light, and hues differ significantly from their European counterparts, demands the recognition that such stillness cannot be expressed using the European toolbox. In terms of human acoustic landscape, he referred to the “semitic ring” of the intense native eastern speech-sound and to the socially dynamic human landscape—costumes, manners, social organization—that often contradicted what the European emigrant composer had come to know in his country of origin. The static and the dynamic therefore formed a dialectical conflict—two opposing axes capable of producing a dramatic tension by sheer recognition of the realistic “where.” The tasks of the period, then, necessitated identifying, sifting, and shaping the spiritual-collective image of the nation and the articulation of “our” reality in a symbolism that aspires toward collectivist expression “understandable to all.” Using terms such as

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
“return to” and “revival of” a collective reality, Boskovich spoke of a process of transvaluation of values.\(^{69}\)

The final subheading of the article called for stylistic syncretism. According to Boskovich, unlike the uninhabited landscapes of impressionist European pastorals (alluding probably to Ben-Haim’s formulations), Israeli pastorals are anthropomorphic even when they describe a static and objective landscape. Branding this “anthropomorphic impressionism,” he found in it the camel-like rhythm (where the accent falls on the second eight), the narrow melodic gamut with monotonous movements whose form is modal and tetrachoral, and the improvisational mode of performance consisting of variations on melodic patterns (\textit{maqam}) that are often only alluded to.\(^{70}\) While echoing Béla Bartók’s rejection of romanticist “sentimentality and superfluous ornaments,”\(^{71}\) Boskovich’s list of musical properties sheds light on the compositional means of his 1945 \textit{Semitic Suite} (see Example 6). The opening of the suite indeed manifests his dialectical movement, as it carries both the earmarks of \textit{folklore imaginaire} and the harbingers of his later linear approach. Unison settings of melodies that run in and out of sync were designed to produce a two-part toccata-like texture, as melodic movement in mostly major second becomes the harmonic underpinning in lieu of triads. Aggregates in the work consist of perfect fifths and major seconds that determine the range of the short tetrachoral melodies built from them (see Example 6, mm. 24–33). This proceeds dialectically to measures 34–35, where a series of tetrachords, opening with B–C–D–E and its exact sequence a major second below, shift into an octatonic tetrachord, F♯–G–A–B♭, which is a \textit{maqam saba} on F♯ “normalized” through tempered intervals (see Example 6, mm. 33–35). Boskovich sustains these harmonic tensions using meter changes the reset of which reintroduces the symmetric properties of the main theme; its harmony shows the inversion of two pairs of fifths, animating the equivalent of a I–V progression yet devoid of directionality (see Example 6, mm. 38–43).

Requiring the composer to “come in direct contract with eastern chant” and to describe it to the best of his abilities using the procrustean bed of European notation, Boskovich maintained that understanding the Eastern musical mentality should be seen as a “means of correcting historic Hebrewist continuity and a source of unexploited musical material,” which could divert universal music into completely new channels. Boskovich’s linear historic perception, the result of his internalization of Zionist teleological explanations, was now applied on a wider scale, demonstrating his own move from the parochial to the universal. Interest in the non-Western

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mentality is not an isolated Israeli phenomenon, he wrote, but a turn signaled by many twentieth-century composers whose attention to the “where” and “when” breaks away from a “spiritual colonial status.”72 And so a prescription followed: Composers should engage in transcription of Eastern melodies, amplify these transcriptions through accompaniments that resonate with the barren landscape rather than through the “prism of the European salon,” and, finally, utilize the Eastern melody as a constituent, constructive, and organic component within the compositional arsenal. In accordance with Bartók’s arguments to move from citation to invention, and finally to a complete

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absorption of the idioms of peasant music to the point of mastering it as if it were a mother tongue,\textsuperscript{73} Boskovich’s suggestions facilitate an equivalent trajectory toward an abstraction of ethnographic musical sources whose syntactic basis is melodic and linear and its polyphonic formation resulting from melodic layering irrespective of vertical harmonic constraints.\textsuperscript{74} Assuming the role of a spokesman, Boskovich tried to guide composers into transcending musical mixtures—where two different musical vocabularies only underscore the partitions between East and West—and move toward musical compounds that incorporate \textit{maqamat} principles. But no new large-scale articles followed, nor could Boskovich finish the manuscript through which he sought to expand the previously mentioned thesis.\textsuperscript{75} What he left, instead, were his late compositions, which partly reason and partly develop his arguments.

Boskovich offered a final glimpse of his perpetually evolving dialectics in a short article from 1963, “La Musique Israélienne Contemporaine et les Traditions Ethniques.”\textsuperscript{76} Fifteen years into statehood had not led Boskovich to doubt his internalization of the linear national teleology, which moved from destruction, through exile, to redemption (and equally from Jewish ethnomusicological research to composers’ use of Jewish musical traditions), even though his musical dialectics had de facto invalidated the function of Eurocentric musical onomatopoeias through which composers assumed the role of a mouthpiece in pre-statehood years. The gap did not seem to have troubled him, and no records indicate that he was aware of the parallel discourse in modern Hebrew poetry at the time he was developing his theories. Looking back, Boskovich retold the story of Israeli art music in three stages: the first was the “neo-primitivist and optimist period of the pioneers”\textsuperscript{77} (or “Mediterranean music”), which was an attempt to translate the geographical and human landscapes between 1940 and 1950, resulting in either a “dry” \textit{stile secco} sound similar to his \textit{Semitic Suite} (1945) or an impressionist \textit{stile affettuoso} approach, as in Ben-Haim’s music. The second stage, extending from 1950 to 1959, witnessed the gradual downfall of impressionism and neoprimitivism, concomitant with an acclimatization of horizontal (linear) thinking and a preference for short motifs with variants, as well as recitatives free from the “collectivist” simplicity that had been prevalent during the first stage, and tonal ambiguity with melodic tonality and polar notes (rather than triads). Although Boskovich counted Tal, Odeon Partos, and Mordecai Seter

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{73} Bartók, \textit{Essais}, 343–44.
\bibitem{75} Alexander Boskovich Collection, MUS 37 C1-5, NLI. On Boskovich’s professional and fiscal constraints in the 1950s, see Jehoash Hirshberg and Herzl Shmueli, \textit{Alexander Uriah Boskovich: His Life, His Work, and His Thought} (Jerusalem: Carmel, 1995), 73–79 (in Hebrew); and Jehoash Hirshberg, “Recruited Music,” in \textit{The Challenge of Independence: Ideological and Cultural Aspects of Israel’s First Decade}, ed. Mordecahi Bar-On (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1999), 242 (in Hebrew).
\bibitem{77} Boskovich, “La Musique Israélienne Contemporaine et les Traditions Ethniques,” 40.
\end{thebibliography}
among the proponents of this musical stage, the nine-year period he delimited as his second stage in fact marked his own stylistic shift, which was punctuated by his *Song of Ascents* (1960). Finally, the third, contemporary, stage was characterized by an awareness of recent Western art music, leading to a balanced synthesis as a result of the dissemination of serialism, which “terminates the mentality of small cloistered regional units.” Composers should penetrate the ethnic essence, “the noumenon,” Boskovich wrote; they should renounce ethnic melodies and rhythms and develop serialism beyond its rigid orthodox format (i.e., total serialism) toward more “tolerant” directions, especially since the serial technique has ceased to be the exclusive property of a given “regional” school.

**SHIFTS**

Months before his sudden death, Boskovich’s completed *Ornaments* for flute and orchestra (1964), an attempt to paraphrase the Yemenite reading of the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:1–18) while drawing on post–World War II serial practices. The work marked the gaps between musical dialectics whose notions of collectivism become self-invalidated. *Ornaments* was not about the occidental staging of exotic frills; rather, the non-Western importation triggered an unsystematic nondifferential unfolding of melodic cells in thin heterophonic textures using both pitched and nonpitched instruments, thereby defamiliarizing both the Yemenite liturgy and its exotic Eurocentric morphology. In Yemenite-Jewish liturgy, the Song of the Sea is a measured melody consisting mostly of two rhythmic values: Nonstressed syllables are short, while stressed syllables are longer. According to Seroussi, the melody is sung slowly, loudly, and in complete unity by the entire congregation, “creating a ‘pluri-vocal’ effect that results from the gradual transposition of the melody by individuals who decide to lower the pitch by one tone or to raise it by a 5th and thereby cause the singers nearby to follow them.” This dynamism produces the effect of a series of blocks built on the intervals of a second or a fourth. Boskovich’s choice to model his music after the simultaneous paraphrasing of a melodic prototype along with its commuting tonal centers and organum surfaces was not random. In advocating “tolerant” serialism he had probably realized the principles of Yemenite heterophony, which has “no systematics in the simultaneous appearance of the different

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79 Boskovich, “La Musique Israélienne Contemporaine et les Traditions Ethniques,” 42.
pitches,” and whose rhythmic heterophony lacks “synchronization between the performers as to the rendering of time values.”

Shifts in tempi and pitch therefore occur while participating congregants remain conscious of the common recitation of the text by their fellows, and so desynchronization does not exceed the limits of the textual verse. Additionally, performance of a melody in two or more voices does not depend on the size of the interval in each voice, nor does it rely on the concept of completing the unfolding of the two voices, as in the diatonic system.

In attempting to emulate these pulsating textures, Ornaments displays proportional (metrical) and differential (a-metrical) flux and accordingly, two opposing kinds of times that, navigated by the conductor, “increase the feeling of improvisation among the performers,” as described in Boskovich’s introductory notes to the work. “It would be erroneous to look for folklore or exoticism in this music,” Boskovich continues: “Ornaments is a contemporary interpretation of the Yemenite nusach [style] . . . focusing on the characteristic possibilities offered by the rhythmic and melodic structures of the Hebrew text.”

Drawing on these sonic possibilities, however, required textless musical verses, lest the composer found himself competing with the text whose musical properties and implicit symbolism he was attempting to paraphrase. Boskovich’s commentary was therefore given through orchestral streams of various densities that reinterpreted the tonal commuting and textural flux of the Yemenite reading in the form of thin heterophonic proliferations and timbral exchanges, and most notably by juxtaposing the xylophone and the celesta’s icy sounds against assonances produced by nonpitched percussions (conspicuous among them are the clochettes orientales, which according to Boskovich are five vertically aligned bells Arabs hang on their camels).

Timbral exchanges and assonances were also the result of Boskovich’s inner division of the forty-eight-member orchestra into four internal chamber ensembles (indistinguishable by the ear), each of which was seen by him as proportional in size to an Eastern orchestra, which he then used to trigger an inner dynamism of groups paraphrasing other groups’ paraphrases.

Ornaments is arranged to match the intervallic contingencies of Yemenite heterophony. The completing of the chromatic spectrum in the seventh measure, for example, indicates no organizational matrices; rather, the work is animated by a musical metaphor whose human soundscape was centered and at the same time distanced from immediate linguistic and musical markers that connote exoticism or other significations. Boskovich, instead, splinters notes within which he wishes to saturate the score: The opening

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[85] Boskovich, Ornaments, 6.
[86] Boskovich, Ornaments, 7.
shows a fragmented B–B♭ cell ricocheting from one instrument to the other while being echoed by intervallically equivalent cells (see Example 7, E♭–D in m. 3 and E–E♭ in m. 5) as well as nonpitched assonances in the percussion. By the seventh measure the cell and its echoes proliferate across the instruments, disclosing simultaneous ascending and descending projections from common tones and an additional emphasis on a major second in the first violins, which unfolded in the opening of the work through the contrabass, piano, and harp (see Example 7, m. 2). Despite these particular emphases, other notes are inserted into this glistening surface to buttress an athematism that relies on their presence to neutralize alternative tonalities and on the interjections of nonpitched instruments to further blur centers of gravity.

Looking back at the opening of the work, one notices that the two half-step and whole-step cells dissolve what on paper seems like a heavy emphasis on a bare fifth (see Example 7, m. 2); was Boskovich recontextualizing what in another context would have been a “Mediterranean” acoustic signifier? Were projections and multiplications of the cell the equivalent of tonal commuting? The design of the work suggests that Boskovich may have also paraphrased Pierre Boulez’s textures, given the latter’s conception of the biological organicism of melodic cells rather than a goal-directed

EXAMPLE 7 Boskovich, Ornaments (1964) for flute and orchestra, opening. Used by permission of the Israel Music Institute.
tonal trajectory, which in *Pli Selon Pli* (1957–62) gave vent to his experience with oriental musics.\(^{87}\) One wonders, additionally, whether Boskovich had read Boulez’s 1958 article on music’s contact with poetry, where the latter argued that rather than choosing a poem as a “frame for the weaving of ornamental arabesques,” Boulez does so “as an irrigation source for my music and thereby center an amalgam in which the poem becomes ‘center and absence.'”\(^{88}\) Other than obvious sonoric resemblances, Boskovich also centered the text from Exodus, allowing the instrumental paraphrases to consume it. And while Boskovich could not relate to the new paradigms transmitted by modern Hebrew poetry, his defamiliarization of Yemenite liturgy had a similar effect: Serialism became an outlet for Yemenite heterophony, but in turn offered an emphasis on interrelatedness and a self-invalidating dialectic that could no longer serve as the articulator of the collective’s spiritual attitude. The composer was thus found rendering his national collective absent.

In a colossal anticlimax characterized by rage and an ugly mood of disillusionment, most of the established poetic styles had been undermined by the mid 1950s, as statehood and independence actualized in a struggling reality lost their charm and could no longer support the rhetoric and pathos that had had been justified in the 1940s. Figurative language and evocative rhythms collapsed, their euphony and musicality giving way to impotence and fragmentary rhythmic patterns. Orphic and otherworldly symbolisms were rejected in favor of anti-ideological, antihistorical messages, reaching a climax in the early 1950s, as poetry had become more receptive to antiromantic decadent influences from which Hebrewism sought to be healed.\(^{89}\) Decadence threatened the very validity of collectivism as a subject of art: its influence was diminished and displaced in the years leading to statehood, yet its antiromanticist attitude to political nationalism and the national allegory loomed large in the 1950s. Dismissing the chief bastions of a literary criticism that licensed the mood of the young poets of the 1950s, the poems of Nathan Zach project passivity in the face of entropy and decomposition, existential gloom, an Israeli reality lacking in historical depth, and individualism experienced “within the boundaries of a sequestered and fragmentary self.”\(^{90}\) Zach’s poem “The Gold of Ophir” (the first stanza of which is presented as the epigraph to this article) demonstrates his violation of biblical tonalities,

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\(^{90}\) Miron, *The Prophetic Mode in Modern Hebrew Poetry*, 476, 484–86.
rootedness, and autoexoticist appropriations. The poem locates the speaker at the port, the liminal space between the sea and the territory; rather than a mere point of transfer for newcomers who enter the land, what partitions the sea and land enables a double negation of both sides. In contradiction to the Zionist teleological flow that emptied the coastline of its many details, Zach underscores what has been an insignificant, almost transparent, area in the Zionist discourse by lowering the romantic panoramic view to include limited and small items on the seashore while distancing them from the spaces of the national territory. Disengaged from its surroundings and devoid of historical, cultural, and identical contexts, Zach’s speaker resides only in his corporeality. Public acts are therefore beyond his poetic range; the unloading of the gold from Ophir (a biblical country of unknown location) and the penetratingly daunting music (Zionist musical onomatopoeias?) define the speaker’s subjectivity by means of negation: Lacking coordinates of identity and attempting to discard signifiers, he can only embody what is forbidden.91

In another poem, “The Quiet Light of the Flies,” Zach inverted Eurocentric autoexoticism by means of German expressionism, evoking mystical comfort and disgust by combining the repulsive and the refined, the aesthetic and the macabre:92

Silk scarves
sway from the spines of cactus
...
Springs well up
springs with their white stone
Springs with their musty death
one bucket
another
and another
they shiver in the wind like hanged men.93

Anthropomorphizing buckets into third-person-plural carcasses reverses the imageries of both the exotic Eastern landscape (whose springs were now the source of death) and more effectively the national first-person plural through which the nation speaks. Zach’s existential malaise mutes both.

Parallel to Zach’s formulation, one can hear the maximization of exotic musical markers penned by Ben-Haim’s students, Noam Sheriff, and Tzvi Avni, for whom linear tools became an outlet for romanticist skepticism during post-independence as well as a point of departure from which

they breached and diluted their predecessors’ pre-statehood edifices.94 In 1961 Sheriff completed his *Music* for woodwinds, trombone, piano, and bass, and Tzvi Avni his *First Piano Sonata*. While utterly different in their styles and attitudes, the two works use similar exotic apparatus: arabesques, obstinate motifs, variants and variations of asymmetric musical themes, and sensual rhythms in ametric constellations. Compositional emphases in both cases fall on the melodic lines, or on the layering of several melodic parts, while paying little attention to the (incidental) harmonic consequences. Instead of stirring the composition through its (vertical) harmony, or at least balancing it with the melody, harmony is the result of the joining of melodic planes overlaid with exotic musical markers.

The first movement of Sheriff’s *Music* uses mainly the woodwinds, alluding to a preromantic sound. Even though no particular musical source is cited in the opening movement, its dense layered melodies push Ben-Haim’s Eurocentrism to its limits, as melodic planes inundated with exotic earmarks (performed by surrogate woodwinds) generate heterophonic areas in which variants of an approximated theme unfold simultaneously. Rejecting vertical (harmonic) constraints, Sheriff’s heterophony is closer to the musical properties and contingencies of Near Eastern Jewish musics than to its Western metaphors of pre-statehood years (see Example 8). *Music* thus manages to abandon first-person-plural formulations in the form of orientalist clichés hung on tonal edifices; in their stead, a disarrayed multilayered plurivocal texture dethrones what could have stood for national unisonality, as a texture overburdened with exotic markers collapses an otherness contingent on tonality.

Similarly, the first movement of Avni’s *First Piano Sonata* (1961) features recognizable exotic musical markers, varying meters, thin heterophonic textures, and a conscious neglect of vertical triadic steering. However, another element emerges in the sonata; transcending exotic over-ripeness, Avni distorts a national musical onomatopoeia, the *hora*. Familiar with its musical earmarks from both folk music and his teachers’ formulations, Avni uses the main features of the dance to simultaneously connote and interrupt it. While alluding to the *hora*’s offbeats, and knowing that the Israeli interpretative community would recognize such projections, Avni stamps them with crisp dissonances and alternating meters that blur the familiar gestures (see Example 9). Interrupting the *hora*’s template thus weakens if not taints its evocative social function. Interestingly, Sheriff’s and Avni’s works

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94 Beyond experiencing the stylistic contiguities of post-statehood, the lure of serialism had filled for Sheriff and Avni a curricular void, given the fact that their musical education (conveyed by the emigrant cohort) ranged from “Gregorian chants to Stravinsky and Bartok, including Jewish and Eastern musical traditions, but excluding the new Viennese school.” See Nathan Mishori, “A Critic Looks at his Generation,” in *Aspects of Music in Israel: A Series of Articles Published in the Occasion of the ISCM World Music Days, Israel, 1980*, ed. Benjamin Bar-Am (Tel Aviv: Israel Composer’s League, National Council for Culture and Art, 1980), 17.
flow into and out of occasional unisons, yet neither one constructs his works from them, as both seem to take pleasure in diminishing their effectiveness through either vertical alignments in the form of aggregates or melodic splits that create heterophonic areas. Maximizing Ben-Haim’s autoexoticism to the point of distortion, Sheriff’s and Avni’s horizontal displays deconstruct national occidental metaphors in keeping with their devaluations in contemporary literary trends.

EXAMPLE 8 Noam Sheriff, Music (1961) for woodwinds, trombone, piano, and bass, first movement, mm. 31–51. Used by permission of the Israel Music Institute.
And so we come full circle with Ben-Haim’s *Capriccio* (shown previously in Example 1) whose chronological proximity to Boskovich’s, Sheriff’s, or Avni’s works camouflages three different dialectical processes each at a different phase. Lacking the ability to dialectically dissolve the pre-statehood Hebrewist core, Ben-Haim could only sustain its templates and transcribe them into the Israeli era, while his students upset the embedded hierarchies of this very same paradigm by means of the hyperbolic signification and distortion that signal its collapse. But it would be erroneous to consider a bifurcation in which emigrant composers advocated a national romanticist approach while native composers reacted in opposition. Boskovich’s dialectical approach, after all, converges with Sheriff’s and Avni’s linearity, as all three negotiated compromises between pre-statehood autoexoticism and the linearity offered both by contemporary compositional devices and non-Western Jewish musical traditions. Wolpe’s precedents, as well as Tal’s compositional attitude, enjoyed a tailwind during the first decade of statehood, inspiring works that understood independence in a nonfestive manner and, accordingly, refracted national musical onomatopoeias. By the early 1950s Boskovich wrote that the *hora*, which became the “*conditio sine qua non* in Israeli art music,”

has significantly dissipated. . . . Its “asthmatic” rhythm has undergone far-reaching changes as a result of the psychological changes [following statehood] . . . [and] it is only natural that the *Hora* is in the process of adaptation to the realities of the Israeli society. If writing a *Hora* marked composers’ Israeli identity, than they should no longer be encouraged to do so. One should rather look for new ways that would free us from the
trauma of the *Hora* and allow for ways of rhythmic-collective expression suitable of the dialectic “time,” which has changed radically.\textsuperscript{95}

Perceptive as he was, Boskovich did not see the gap between his historic collectivist perception of Jewish musical traditions, through which he sought to articulate a collectivist expression “understandable to all,”\textsuperscript{96} and the linearity that consumed its source. Indeed, by 1964 *Ornaments* rendered the properties of Yemenite plurivocality unrecognizable and inoperative as its invalidation of exoticism under the purview of romantic nationalism could no longer speak to a collective whose socialist core had been replaced with a statist one; if the work achieved the goal set by the composer, then it was paradoxically undermined by its own success. Shortly before Boskovich’s remarks on the need to rearticulate the *hora*, Tal would question its social validity through the deformed *Hora* he penned on October 2, 1949 (less than three months after the last armistice agreement had been signed with Syria). More than a decade later, Avni would make the *hora* limp in his sonata, while Sheriff’s disarray of exoticisms formed their own context after having been emancipated from a tonal framework that spelled their otherness. With national narratives undergoing deconstruction, national unisonality would fade into nostalgia.


\textsuperscript{96} Boskovich, “The Problem of Original Music in Israel,” 286.