

Mizrahi Music, Piyyut and Israeli Identity

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Office Hours:

- Sde Boker on Thursdays, as well one other day of the week, the day and hours TBD
- The rest of the week in Jerusalem, by appointment, and with pleasure

Course Overview

Culture is a dynamic arena in which various artistic genres often reflect and articulate contrasting notions of communal and national identity. In this course we will examine what the rise of Israeli "Mizrahi" music during the 1970's – 90's, as well as the popular turn to *piyyut* at the beginning of the twentieth century, can teach us about Israeli identity, in general, and the Arab dimension of Jewish-Israeli identity, in particular.

Course requirements

- Active class participation
- End of semester writing assignment

Syllabus

Session 1, October 24th: General Introduction

As preparation for the opening session, and in order to begin thinking about the "Arab-in-the-Jew," students will be asked to read the following texts:

- Almog Behar, "Umm Kulthum in the Men's Section." *Haaretz*, 2009
- Albert Memmi, "Who is an Arab Jew?"
- Lee Smith, "City of Dreams." *Tablet*, 2008. An Interview with Sasson Somekh
- Ronny Sommeck, "In Response to the Question: When Did Your Peace Begin?" (Poem)

Session 2: Establishing the Foundation - From Political Philosophy to Ethnomusicology

- J.J. Rousseau, "Essay on the Origin of Languages: In Which Melody and Musical Imitation are Treated"

Session 3: Setting the Stage - The New Jew

- Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea*. Essays by Ahad Ha'am, Micah Joseph Berdichevski and Joseph Hayyim Brenner, pp. 251-55, 290–313
- Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, ed.'s, *The Jew in the Modern World*, pp. 453-456
- Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*, pp. 133 -154

Session 4: Setting the Stage - The Great Immigration

- Avi Picard, "Soft Religiosity: The Identity of North African Youths in Israel in the 1950's." In *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*, pp. 132 – 168
- Shapira, *Israel: A History*, pp. 222- 247
- Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, pp. 91-97

Session 5: The Songs of the Land of Israel and Israeli Rock

- Motti Regev and Edwin Serroussi, *Popular Music & National Culture in Israel*. pp. 1-14, 49-113, 137 -191

Session 6: The Rise of Mizrahi Music

- Amy Horowitz, *Mediterranean Israeli Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic*, pp. 33 – 84
- Regev and Seroussi, *Popular Music & National Culture in Israel*, pp. 191 – 235

Session 7: The King - Zohar Argov

- Horowitz, *Mediterranean Israeli Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic*, pp. 85 - 128

Session 8: Loving Umm Kulthum - Zehava Ben

- Horowitz, *Mediterranean Israeli Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic*, pp. 129 – 154

Session 9: Neither Here nor There - The Brothers Al-Kuwaiti

- Al-Jadid Staff, "Iraqi Traditional Music Revisited in a War Era." *Al-Jadid*, Fall, 2005.
- Shlomo Al-Kuwaiti's Speech presented at the, "Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Saleh Al-Kuwaiti: Iraq's Greatest Composer." 2008.
- Ahmed Mukhtar's Welcoming Speech at the, "Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Saleh Al-Kuwaiti: Iraq's Greatest Composer." 2008.
- Erez Schweitzer, "From the king's palace to a "ghetto" of Oriental music." *Haaretz*, June, 2009.
- Aryeh Tepper, "The Brothers al-Kuwaiti," *Jewish Ideas Daily*, March, 2011

Session 10: Piyyut

- Basmat Hazan Arnoff, "The Piyyut is Jewish Soul Music." In *Zeek*, 2008.
- Edwin Seroussi, "Politics, Ethnic Identity, and Music in Israel: The Case of the Moroccan Bakkashot." In *Asian Music*, pp. 32-45
- Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews*, pp. 104-134

Session 11: Mizrahi Music and Andalusian Piyyut Elaborated into High Art

- Haim O. Rechnitzer, "Haim Guri and Rabbi David Buzaglo: A Theo-Political Meeting Place of Zionist Sabra Poetry and Jewish Liturgy." In *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*, pp. 37 - 62
- Edward Seroussi, Liner Notes to The New Jerusalem Orchestra's *Ahavat Olamim (Eternal Love)*
- Aryeh Tepper and Omer Avital, "Jazz, Piyyut and Jewish Identity." *Jewish Ideas Daily*, Feb., 2012
- Aryeh Tepper, "No Greater Love." *The Jewish Review of Books*, Fall 2012

Session 12, January 9th: The New Jew - the Vitality of the Arab-Jewish Dimension of Israeli Identity

- Concluding discussion

Please note that in addition to reading the assigned texts, students will be asked to listen to audio files and/or to view on-line links that will be provided by the instructor.

Recommended Additional Reading

- Ammiel Alkalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (1993)
 - A pioneering work of literary criticism and history that was the first book in English to devote serious attention to the 'Arab-in-the-Jew'
- Erik Cohen and Amnon Shiloah, "The Dynamics of Change in Jewish Oriental Music in Israel." In *Ethnomusicology*, 27:2, pp. 227-252 (1983)
 - A helpful, if partial, history of "the dynamics of change in Jewish Oriental Music in Israel."
- Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military* (2005)
 - On the emergence of cultural plurality in Israel
- Shmuel Moreh and Zvi Yehuda, *Al-Farhud: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq* (2010)
 - A collection of scholarly essays on the Farhud, the 1941 pogrom in Baghdad
- Alexandre Nocke, "Israel and the Emergence of Mediterranean Identity: Expressions of Locality in Music and Literature." In *Israel Studies*, 11:1, pp. 143-73 (2006)
 - On the use of the term 'Mediterraneanism' (Hebr. Yam Tikhoniut) as a model for identity formation in Israel since the early 1980's.
- Ali Jihad Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of Tarab* (2003)
 - A detailed and helpful examination of the social contexts and cultural meanings of music-making in the Arab world.
- Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (2007)
 - A series of autobiographical vignettes describing the coming-of-age of a young Jew in Baghdad, now a distinguished professor of Arabic literature at Tel Aviv University