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JEWISH AND ARABIC MUSIC

Hebräisch-Orientalischer Melodienschatz. I. Band: *Gesänge der Jemenischen Juden.* Zum ersten Male gesammelt, erläutert und herausgegeben von A. Z. IDELSOHN. Leipzig: BREITKOPF UND HÄRTEL, 1914. pp. xi + 158.

JEWISH music, despite its detractors, has a long and uninterrupted tradition. Whatever its origin may have been in antediluvian and mythical times, it emerges in the Bible as an essential and well-organized practice affecting the religious and social life of the nation. Its characteristics, though not well marked and defined, may be inferred from the nature of the musical instruments enumerated in the Bible and their orchestral arrangement; and from the immutable fact of interrelation between the arts of all Oriental nations it is safe to assume that Jewish music was minor and plaintive, limited to the tetrachord or hexachord, and hence what modern Europeans would style monotonous. So much is certain, even if we do not know whether its succession of sounds was diatonic, chromatic, or enharmonic, or whether it possessed a multiplicity or paucity of modes and scales. However, the point to be emphasized is that the music of the Jews did not cease with the conclusion of the Canon or with the annihilation of the Jewish State. On the contrary, it continued to develop along certain lines in the Diaspora, and was a living force until our own days, as may be seen from casual statements made here and there in Rabbinic literature. This development, which in its synagogal aspect has been traced by Francis L. Cohen (comp. *Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition Papers*, I, 80 ff.), was merely melodic as distinguished from the harmonic development of European music, but its great potency and dynamic influence was nevertheless felt within the walls of the ghetto, where the murky and crepuscular air was always permeated with the plaintive strains of suffering Israel, who in weal and woe poured out his heart in song, both within the synagogue and outside of it. But unfortunately these very

pathetic and truly beautiful songs were propagated by rote only and were never noted down, giving rise to the frequent dictum of music historians that the Jews have no music of their own, but, like parasites, feed on the music of other nations among whom they happen to live. It remained for our modern age, with its marvellous mechanical contrivances, to record these popular tunes and melodies with scientific precision; thus resulted the great collections of liturgical chants by E. Aguilar (*Ancient Melodies of the Liturgy of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, London, 1857), S. Naumbourg (*Recueil de Chants religieux des Israélites*, Paris, 1874), A. Marksohn and W. Wolf (*Auswahl alter hebräischer Synagogal-Melodien*, Leipzig, 1875), A. Kaiser and William Sparger (*A Collection of the Principal Melodies of the Synagogue*, Chicago, 1893), E. Pauer (*Traditional Hebrew Melodies*, London, 1896), and also folk-song collections like that of S. M. Ginzburg and P. S. Marek (*Jüdische Volkslieder in Russland*, St. Petersburg, 1901), and Platon Brunoff (*Jüdische Volkslieder für Mittel-Stimme und Piano*, New York, 1911).

The present collection by A. Z. Idelsohn, which is subsidized by the Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna, the Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judenthums in Berlin, and the Zunz-Stiftung in the same place, is on a much larger scale, and truly deserves to be styled monumental. As the main title implies, this is to be a corpus of all the Jewish melodies in the Orient, both synagogal and non-synagogal. The present volume on the songs of the Yemenite Jews is to be followed by one each on the songs of the Persian, the Babylonian, the Syrian, the Sephardic, and Moroccan Jews—six volumes in all. Besides, this is the first truly scientific attempt at an appreciation of the musical system of the Oriental Jews, and as such deserves the highest praise of all music lovers. Very few outside of professional musicians realize the difficult task involved in noting down for the first time the music of a people without any written records as a guide. The pitfalls are many, particularly if the recorder, as in this case, was brought up on the Occidental harmonic system, which is totally different from the Oriental

melodic system. Fortunately, Idelsohn employed the only scientific apparatus which, since the days of B. J. Gilman (1891), has been used in such undertakings. Through the agency of the Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna he obtained a phonograph apparatus with plates for melodic impressions, and through double and triple tests and measurements he was able to arrive at tolerably exact results as to the diapason and tonic succession of the various voices.

The first volume, as stated above, contains the results of his experiments in the field of Jewish-Yemenite music. His standard for measurements was derived from immigrant Yemenite precentors of Palestine, who preserved their musical traditions intact. For corroboration two impressions were taken for each song, sometimes from two different precentors. These songs, whose text first became known to us through the late Dr. Bacher (*Die hebräische und arabische Poesie der jemenischen Juden*, Budapest, 1910), are of two varieties, synagogal and non-synagogal. The former are divided into fifteen different motives, one each for the recitative parts of the Pentateuch, the lyrical elements of the Pentateuch, Zemirot, Prophets, Psalms, Canticles, Esther, Lamentations, Job, Mishnah, Tefillah or Common Prayer, Seliḥah, Taanit, Azharot, and High Festivals. The latter consists of six motives, covering (1) Halēlot or songs with 'wehaleluya' at the beginning and end, (2) Zāfat or hymeneals accompanying the bridegroom on his way to the bride's house, (3) Ḥidduyot or joy songs testifying to the betrothal, (4) Neshid or popular songs at wedding festivals, (5) Shirot or artificial songs (usually *muwaššah* or double-rhymed poem) for the wedding, and (6) Shirot for Sabbath celebrations. All these motives, which look formidable at a first glance, may, after careful analysis, be reduced to but a few modes of an infinite simplicity, consisting of an ascending, descending, and levelling (modulating to the tonic) phrase. Especially is this true in the case of synagogal chants, which are largely recitative and do not admit of progressive melodic intonations. The non-Synagogal songs, on the other hand, are mostly melodic, especially the Neshid

and Shirot, which are based on the Oriental *makamat* in their succession of sounds, and are, moreover, accompanied by dances and instrumental music, yielding a harmony *sui generis*, a kind of rhythmic harmony, but no harmony or polyphony in the modern sense of the word. But even in the tripartite Shirot (and be it remarked that very often these are really bipartite, the third element being a repetition of the first), the elemental character of the melodic succession is so marked and conspicuous that we feel intuitively that we are dealing here with primitive music such as must have existed in Palestine during the First and certainly during the Second Temple. This impression is further enhanced by the limitation of this music within the tetrachord and hexachord, its binary form, its minor strain, and, last but not least, its unisonous and antiphonal character. This is an important consideration on which the author fails to dwell in his learned introduction. Needless to say, it is supported by the fact that the Jews of Yemen, according to their own tradition, came to Southern Arabia after the destruction of the First Temple, and remained there ever after in utter seclusion and without any influence from without (comp. Jacob Saphir's account in *אבן ספיר*, Lyck, 1866). While the Sephardic chant was influenced by Oriental and the Ashkenazic by Occidental music, the Yemenite chant led a comparatively pure existence. What Villoteau said of the Egyptian Jews: 'Nous avons la certitude que les Juifs d'Égypte n'ont pas cessé, jusqu'à ce jour, de donner à chacune de leurs diverses espèces de chants une vérité d'expression qui ne permet pas de douter qu'ils n'aient apporté les plus grands soins à leur conserver le caractère qui leur est propre' (*De l'état actuel de la musique en Égypte*, 2^{me} partie, chap. VI, art. iii), may be said more forcibly of the Yemenite Jews. Indeed, Idelsohn arrives at the conclusion that the musical system of the Yemenite synagogal chant is entirely at variance with both the Oriental and Occidental systems. The chromatic and enharmonic successions of the former, as well as the diatonic gradation of the latter, are foreign to the Yemenite Jews, whose system is based on augmented intervals, and whose scales fluctuate

between two, three, four, five, and six tones. We observe in this primitive music what Villoteau observed in the synagogues of Cairo and Alexandria, and what Fétis puts down as the primary characteristic of all primitive Oriental melodies, viz. a scale of a minor sixth both ascending and descending.

Another omission is the discussion of the relation between this primitive music and the chant of the early Christian Church. It is a well-known fact that both the Ambrosian and Gregorian chants which lay at the foundations of Christian music, in spite of being based on the Greek modes, are Jewish in character, and must have had their origin in Temple music (comp., e. g., Fétis, *Histoire générale de la Musique*, I, 166). Not alone their antiphonal character (theme and counter-theme), which closely resembles the principle of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, but also their affinity and predilection for minor modes like the Phrygian and the total eclipse of the Lydian major, point as support to this assertion. If, therefore, as we have reason to suppose, there is a continuity between the Temple melodies and those of the Yemenite synagogue, a comparison between the latter and the so-called *cantus planus* of the Church should be instructive in establishing once for all the degree of influence of the Temple on the early Church in the field of music.

For such a comparison Idelsohn offers us rich material, 127 numbers of the synagogal and 76 of the non-synagogal variety. These are all properly classified and arranged in a way to suit the taste of the European peruser. Thus, among other things, the time and rhythm had to be changed. The words are transcribed in accordance with the peculiar pronunciation of the Yemenite Jews, every shade and nuance being reproduced. Idelsohn made a thorough study of this phase of his work, devoting the first chapter in the introduction to its explanation, for which philologists and grammarians will be indebted to him. Good taste is also shown in the appropriate form and excellent mounting of the book. May the author have the courage to continue his very useful and excellent work, the coming parts of which every music lover will impatiently await.

The Music and Musical Instruments of the Arab, with Introduction on how to appreciate Arab Music, by FRANCESCO SALVADOR-DANIEL, Director of the Paris Conservatoire of Music under the Commune of 1871. Edited, with Notes, Memoir, Bibliography, and Thirty Examples and Illustrations, by HENRY GEORGE FARMER. London: WILLIAM REEVES, 1914. pp. xii + 272.

Salvador-Daniel's work appeared in Algiers in 1863 under the title *La musique arabe, ses rapports avec la musique grecque et le chant grégorien*. Having become very rare, it was republished in 1879, and now appears for the first time in an English translation. The importance of this small book lies in the fact that its author advanced a novel theory with regard to the nature and origin of Arab music. Heretofore La Borde, Villoteau, and Kiesewetter, studying Arab music from obscure treatises of mediaeval Arab philosophers such as Khalil, El-Kindi, Ibn Khaldoun, and Al-Farabi, maintained that Arab music is based on the so-called Messel or Octave of seventeen third tones, and as such was purely Oriental and fundamentally different from the Greek diatonic system, which is based on tones and semitones. They proceeded, therefore, to seek the origin of Arab music in Persia, where we find a scale of semitones, demi-semitones, and even semidemi-semitones, their theory being that Persia, after being conquered by the Arabs, had imposed its music upon the conquerors. This was deemed the more evident since the most important musical instruments of the Arabs, such as the *rebab* and *kemendjah*, were actually derived from Persia. Against this view Salvador-Daniel, on the basis of a practical investigation of nine years among primitive Arabs, came to the conclusion that Arab music, at least that of the Moors, stands in close relation to Greek music and its offspring, the Gregorian chant, and that in the long chain of development of our modern musical structure the apparently primitive music of the Arabs represents the same state of evolution as that prevailing in Europe before the memorable discovery of harmony by Gui d'Arezzo and Jean

de Muris. This, according to the author, was quite natural. With the conquest of Spain the Arabs adopted Greek culture in all its phases, including the art of music. They are known to have established musical academies in Cordova, Seville, Granada, Valencia, and Toledo, where both the theory and practice of this art were fostered in accordance with the Greek pattern. But with the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, and the consequent decay of Arab art and culture, the music of the Arabs, which was then on a mere melodic plane, became petrified and mummified for centuries, while Greek music proceeded through the Church monody to the glories of polyphony and harmony. To prove his point, the author sets forth the striking similarity between the Arab and Greek diatonic modes: thus, the serious and grave Irak mode corresponds to the Dorian, the sad and pathetic Mezmoum to the Lydian, the impetuous and diabolic Edzeil to the Phrygian, the grave and martial Djorka to the Aeolian, the minor L'Sain to the Hyper-Dorian, the effeminate Saika to the Hyper-Lydian, the terrible Meia to the Hyper-Phrygian, and the sublime Rasd-Edzeil to the Hyper-Mixo-Lydian. In addition to these eight diatonic modes, the Arabs, like the Greeks, also have chromatic modes, notably the L'Sain-Sebah, corresponding to our minor scale with G sharp, and the famous Asbein derived from the Mezmoum or Lydian, which, being conducive to indolence and effeminacy, was banished by Plato from his Republic and by the Church from the Gregorian chant. Thus the Arabs possess twelve practical scales or modes (in theory there are fourteen, but two are unknown even to professional musicians) based on various combinations of whole tones and semitones, without a semblance of third and quarter tones. The latter, according to Salvador-Daniel, are the invention of theorists who failed to understand the overtones due to the nasal style and drawled scale of the Arabs, the *portamento* in singing and playing, considering them as independent tones. Accordingly, the Arab *tabaka* or scale is based on the diatonic and chromatic succession of the Greeks, and follows the same line of development as the Gregorian chant in its system of authentic and plagal or

derived modes. In support of this statement it may be observed that the chants of the Greek Church, which are essentially Ambrosian as opposed to the broader lines and increased modes of the Gregorian system of the Latin Church, are still Oriental in character, and resemble the Arabic chants in their monotony and universal trill. As a further proof for his theory of a Greek influence on Arabic music, Salvador-Daniel adduces the fact that the gradual development of European music from the tetrachord to the hexachord, and then to the octave, may be exemplified also among the Arabs through an examination of their musical instruments. Thus the *gosba* or flute consists of a reed pierced with three holes, and therefore yields only four tones (tetrachord); likewise the *kuitra* or guitar with eight strings is tuned by fourths, every two strings emitting the same tone; the *rebab* or primitive violin, on the other hand, has a range of six notes (hexachord); while the *kemendjah* or violin has the range of a complete octave, likewise the *kijaouak* or flute of six or seven holes, and the *raita* or *raica*, a kind of musette with seven holes. The highest range is reached by the *kanoun* or *ganoun*, Heb. *kinnor*, a harp of seventy-five strings covering three octaves. The *dof*, Heb. *tof*, of various sizes and shapes is used for rhythmic harmony only.

From this brief review of Salvador-Daniel's thesis it may be seen how important and original his work is, and how replete with valuable suggestions. We may differ with him in some essentials, we may oppose the indisputable fact of Persian derivation of Arab musical instruments and the considerable preponderance of the Oriental minor key in the musical compositions of the Moors, we may even doubt his chief contention for a diatonic succession of sounds among the Arabs in view of the fact that the Indians, Persians, and many Arab tribes in Africa exhibit a fondness for the enharmonic system which, according to Fétis, preceded the chromatic and diatonic divisions in historical development; still the fact remains that his work is refreshing on account of its originality, and the reader will always profit by its perusal. It was natural that he should overdraw his side, just as his predecessors overemphasized the

other side. The truth, no doubt, is that both a Persian and Greek influence may be claimed for Arab music, the former manifesting itself in the musical instruments which are built in accordance with the division of seventeen intervals in the compass of an octave (comp. Carl Engel, *Musical Myths and Facts*, II, 230), and the latter in the subject-matter and form of the musical compositions (comp. e.g. the so-called *nouba gharnata* of the Moors of Spain, which consists of five movements besides a prelude and overture, and in its thematic development corresponds to the European sonata or symphony). After Fétis's application of the principle of evolution to the history of music, tracing our marvellous musical structure back to the hoary Orient and wild deserts of Asia; after Engel's insistent teaching that practically all our musical instruments had their origin in primaeval Asia, we must realize that there is a close interrelation between the musical systems of all nations, and that their influence is mutual and reciprocal. Note, for instance, the Oriental currents which since the days of Félicien David have been flowing so precipitously in the compositions of the modern French and Russian schools; the Gipsy melodies tingling in the rhapsodies of Liszt; the Negro tunes coursing in Dvořák's New World symphony; or the melancholic Jewish strains which, according to Carl Engel, manifest themselves in the compositions of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Even our much-vaunted harmony, despite the universal dictum of music historians as to its modernity, is still traced by some writers to antiquity; comp. e.g. Julius Clauser, late Professor of Music at Harvard University (*The Nature of Music: Original Harmony in One Voice*, Cambridge, 1909), who claims that antiquity knew of homophonic or one-voiced harmony as distinguished from polyphonic or many-voiced harmony first introduced by Bach in his fugues.

The editor's part in this work is considerable and highly commendable. His notes are lucid and conducive to a better understanding of the text, particularly those on the 'History of Arab Music' and the musical examples of the various modes. The Bibliography might have been more complete. It does not

contain, e. g. 'A Treatise on Arab Music', chiefly from a work by Mikhāil Meshāḩah of Damascus, translated from the Arabic by Eli Smith, and published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, I (1847), 171 ff.; nor do we find here Rafael Mitjana's 'L'Orientalisme musical et la Musique arabe', which appeared in *Le Monde Oriental*, I (1906), 184 ff. Besides, the titles are not specific enough, the place of publication and the particular pages of reference being often omitted.

The most noteworthy contribution of the editor constitutes his 'Memoir of F. Salvador-Daniel', which is written with a true artist's fervour and a warm glow of sympathy. It contains the most complete and reliable information about this struggling spirit and restless revolutionary. From it we learn that the artist was born in Spain in 1831, came to Paris at a time when civilized Europe was at the zenith of musical frivolity and artistic persiflage, when *Opéra-bouffe* was the slogan for every young composer, and when, as a timely antidote, Félicien David appeared from the Orient with a new message embodied in his *Mélo- di*es orientales and *Le Désert*. The young artist was overpowered by the spell of the exotic and bizarre, mysterious and distant Orient with its splendour of light and richness of colour, its frenetic passions and exalted emotions; and yielding to its charm he went to Algiers, where he became active as musical director, translator of ancient music treatises of the Arabs, and collector of native airs embodied in his *Chansons arabes* and *Chants kabyles*. Before the Franco-Prussian War he returned to Paris, where he soon became involved in the turmoils of the Commune, and, after being honoured by his appointment as Director of the Conservatoire, was killed while fighting for the Commune.

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