

MUSIC: Concert Music. Jewish involvement in concert music includes two distinct but overlapping kinds of modern Jewish music-making. The first category refers generally to Jewish professional musicianship—consisting of Jewish composers and performers—while the second designates a specific, modern genre within Jewish music.

Concert music (often referred to as *art music* or *classical music*) arrived relatively late in Eastern Europe. Only by the mid-nineteenth century had public performances of opera, symphonic music, and chamber music begun to spread widely in Eastern European society, spurred on by



Jascha Heifetz as a child prodigy, Russian Empire, ca. 1907. (Courtesy YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

such bourgeois entities as new musical societies, music publishing firms, and conservatories—the last of which produced a new, modern class of professional concert musicians. Just as in the West, Jews in Eastern Europe played an active, highly visible role in this cultural process—both as composers and performers and by filling the ranks of a variety of other vital musical professions, such as critics, teachers, musicologists, concert producers, and publishers.

Origins. From the early nineteenth century on, traditional Jewish performers, both klezmer musicians and cantors, began to have more and more contact with the emerging European urban concert-music culture of the day. Yekhiel Mikhl Guzikov (also Michal Jozef; 1806–1837), a klezmer from the town of Shklov (now Belarus), achieved great fame with a series of concerts across Western Europe in the late 1830s. Playing on a homemade version of a cimbalom (a type of dulcimer), Guzikov performed traditional klezmer music and light classical works in European concert halls, earning the keen interest and admiration of many notable composers, among them Felix Mendelssohn.

As a result of Guzikov’s performances and those of other path-breaking virtuosos, individual Jewish instrumental musicians began to attract the attention of European audiences, prefiguring a process that accelerated rapidly over the course of the nineteenth century. Many non-Jewish Eastern European composers of the mid-nineteenth century also grew interested in traditional Jewish music, both folk and liturgical. Hungarian composer Franz Liszt, for example, raved about the singing of the legendary Viennese cantor Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890), while Russian composers such as Mikhail Glinka and Modest Mussorgsky went even further, transcribing and incorporating traditional Jewish melodies into their own compositions.

Europe's discovery of Jewish music and Jewish musicians was but one part of a two-way cultural exchange. As the forces of acculturation and embourgeoisement gathered steam in nineteenth-century East European Jewish society, Jewish musicians began to study and perform European concert music. These activities were initially concentrated in the small but growing Jewish middle class of cosmopolitan Eastern European cities such as Odessa and Warsaw. Following the example of Central European Jewish society, the Jewish middle class there embraced amateur music study and chamber performances, particularly the widespread practice of bourgeois Jewish women playing the piano. Then, during the 1850s and 1860s, a small number of Jewish instrumentalists from Eastern Europe achieved international fame in concert music circles as star soloists, conductors, and teachers. These figures included the Russian virtuoso concert pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein, the Hungarian-born violinists Leopold Auer and Joseph Joachim, and the Polish violinist Henryk Wieniawski, all of whom spent long careers of performance and teaching crisscrossing the length and breadth of Europe.

Most of these early pioneers were discovered as child prodigies and were then paraded before European concert audiences in city after city. The ongoing spectacle occasioned by the search for and celebration of child virtuosos continued steadily in Eastern Europe through World War I, resulting in a stream of precociously talented young Jewish musicians, mostly violinists and pianists.

The relationship of these Jewish musicians to their Jewishness varied considerably. Some converted to Christianity—for a variety of reasons, ranging from greater professional opportunities to outright religious conviction. As a group, however, the major East European Jewish concert musicians, including converts, tended to maintain active social and cultural links with local Jewish communities. Furthermore, the high visibility of successful Jewish concert musicians often precipitated an antisemitic backlash—especially after the rise of modern antisemitism, best expressed in the musical world through the notorious writings of the German composer Richard Wagner. The cumulative effect of this modern antisemitism was to serve as a constant reminder to artists of their Jewish origins, forcing them to respond in different ways to the ideological charges of alleged Jewish predominance and negative influence in the concert music world.

Jewish Musicians and Composers in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The true starting point for considering modern Jewish concert music in Eastern Europe is the figure of Anton Rubinstein (1829–1894). Widely regarded as the greatest pianist of the second half of the nineteenth century, Rubinstein played a major role in European musical life as a performer, composer, conductor, and educator.

Born near Berdichev and converted to Christianity as an infant, Rubinstein's Jewish origins were a source of much controversy during his

lifetime. Both his musical compositions and his efforts to improve Russian music education and the social and legal status of Russian musicians drew strong praise along with harsh criticism. His greatest lasting legacy was as the founder of Russia's first conservatory in Saint Petersburg (1862) and of the Russian Musical Society, a network of professional music schools and conservatories throughout the Russian Empire. Through these institutions, Rubinstein effectively created both an entirely new class of professional concert musicians and a new cultural network for the spread of concert music as a whole in the empire.

One effect of the new system of Russian conservatories and music schools was to provide a prime avenue of opportunity for Russian Jews seeking entrance into higher education and social integration into the small but significant urban musical culture of late tsarist Russia. Beginning in the late 1880s and continuing through World War I, thousands of Jewish musicians flocked to the conservatories, leading to exceptionally high pre-World War I enrollments in cities such as Saint Petersburg (where Jews constituted roughly 50% of total enrollment and Odessa (where they made up nearly 80%). A sizable minority of these students came from backgrounds in traditional Jewish music as the children or former child apprentices of cantors or klezmer musicians. But most hailed from the nascent Russian Jewish urban middle class, were at least partly educated in gymnasium, and spoke Russian. As in Central Europe, a huge percentage of Russian Jewish musicians were also female, a fact best explained by the strong cultural associations between music, education, and amateur musical performance in European bourgeois culture. All benefited from the important legal privileges awarded to Jewish conservatory graduates, including exemption from severe restrictions on physical mobility and residential rights—and from onerous military service, in the case of Jewish males.

These conservatory-trained Jewish musicians had a direct and diverse impact on music in Russia and around the world throughout the twentieth century. For decades, hundreds of Jewish graduates of Russian and Soviet conservatories went on to fill the ranks of music school faculties and symphony and theater orchestras, and to play a variety of other roles in the international concert music world in Europe, Israel, and the United States. More dramatically, from the end of the nineteenth century and continuing throughout the entire twentieth, Russian and Soviet Jews became a major collective force in the international concert music world as star instrumental performers. Already before World War I, a string of young virtuosos emerged from Russia, as artists such as violinists Adolf Brodsky, Mischa Elman, and Jascha Heifetz and pianists Josef Lhévinne and Josef Hofmann took European and American concert halls by storm. They were soon joined by an extraordinarily long list of twentieth-century virtuoso performers, including Gregor Piatigorsky, Nathan Milstein, Efrem Zimbalist, Vladimir Horowitz, David Oistrakh, Emil Gilels, Leonid Kogan, and Mstislav Rostropovich.

Beyond their Jewishness, many of these virtuoso musicians also shared common backgrounds as descendants of klezmer musicians, a fact that has led some scholars to speculate about a distinctive Russian Jewish school of violin performance style derived from klezmer violin playing. In general, however, these performers were defined as a group less by any single trait of performance style and more by a shared experience as students of certain key master teachers from the pre- and postrevolutionary periods. Figures such as Leopold Auer at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, the Odessa violin teacher Pyotr Stolyarsky, and the Moscow Conservatory violinist Abram Yampolsky and pianist Alexander Goldenweiser are credited with creating the massive Russian Jewish musical dynasty that eventually spawned generations of world-class performers—with musical descendants in Western Europe, the United States, and Israel—and drew tremendous acclaim for Russian concert music in Eastern Europe and beyond.

Czech, Hungarian, and Polish Jewish Musicians and Composers. Beyond the borders of Russia, music became a prime professional destination and cultural passion for Jews elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Jews came to constitute an extraordinary number of major figures in modern Hungarian, Czech, and Polish concert music, particularly as composers, musicologists, and performing musicians. Beginning with the important figure of Márk Rózsavölgyi (Rosenthal) (1789–1848), a violinist and composer responsible for much of Hungarian national music, Jews played central roles in Hungarian concert music as prominent composers, performers, music publishers, and scholars, including the likes of world-famous violinists Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973) and Carl Flesch (1873–1944), musicologist Bence Szabolcsi (1899–1973), and major twentieth-century composers like Egon Wellesz (1885–1974), György Kurtág (1926–), and György Ligeti (1923–).

A similar phenomenon could be observed in the Czech lands, epitomized by such major figures as musicologists Guido Adler (1855–1941) and Paul Nettl (1889–1972) and composers Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), Ignaz Brüll (1846–1907), Ignaz Moscheles (1794–1870), Max Brod (1884–1968), and Leo Fall (1873–1925). Polish music counts among its major figures the composers Michael Bergson (1820–1898) and Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986) and a long line of virtuoso instrumentalists, including pianist Artur Rubinstejn (1887–1982), violinist Bronislaw Huberman (1882–1947), and cellist Emanuel Feuermann (1902–1942).

Jewish Musicians and Jewish Music. As a general rule, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Eastern Europe, being Jewish did not necessarily mean that a given musician pursued a specific, direct involvement with Jewish music. In practice there was a range of participation in Jewish music, depending on levels of acculturation and social integration. For some, Jewish music constituted an explicit, almost total focus of composition, research, or performance; for others it was virtually

absent as an aesthetic or cultural concern. The great majority of Jewish musicians fell into a more ambiguous gray area, wherein Jewish themes functioned as a kind of musical subtext, sometimes but not always appearing as a theme in compositions, writings on music, and performance repertoires, depending in particular on the social and political climate of their respective countries of residence.

Scholars continue to debate the Jewish musical content of many works by important composers of Jewish origin from Eastern Europe, such as Gustav Mahler, Karl Goldmark (1830–1915), Anton Rubinstein, and Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998). Some cultural historians and musicologists have asserted that Jewish musicians played a specific, critical role in the creation of European musical modernism. The evidence generally cited for this theory varies. Some scholars cite particular aesthetic tendencies of clusters of composers and performers, while others emphasize in a more abstract, sociological sense the role of Jews as social newcomers and generally forward-looking agents of cultural change in European concert music.

Jewish Concert Music As a Musical Genre. Jewish concert music as a particular musical genre dates from the late nineteenth-century Russian Empire. It was then that isolated individuals began to try to create a musical style that would express Jewish themes and Jewish national identity through deliberate, self-conscious use of traditional Jewish musical material, often using historical or religious themes within European concert-music forms. The context and immediate inspiration for Jewish national music was the late nineteenth-century Russian Jewish nationalist movement led by figures such as Simon Dubnow and the writer S. An-Ski; also influential in this regard were many leading non-Jewish Russian musical figures, especially the music critic Vladimir Stasov and the composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who was a professor at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory.

Jewish ethnographic efforts to collect Yiddish folk songs and klezmer pieces from shtetls during the late 1890s soon gave way to concert-lectures on this material, followed in 1908 by the formation of the Society for Jewish Folk Music in Saint Petersburg. This organization, led by an energetic young group of Jewish musicians primarily from the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, quickly began to arrange Jewish folk melodies in formal musical settings. Through the society's efforts, several Jewish composers successfully employed folkloric source materials in compositions of original modern Jewish concert music.

Several collections of works were published before and during World War I in Russia, including vocal settings of poetry by Hayim Nahman Bialik, Shimen Frug, and other major Hebrew and Yiddish poets; choral works; and chamber music. The composers varied in their musical style, some embracing an older, late romantic harmonic model, while others boldly employed modernist and even avant-garde aesthetics.

The activities of the society included public concerts and concert tours throughout Eastern Europe and the publication of folk song collections along with theoretical works on Jewish musical history. Following the revolution, many of these composers remained in the Soviet Union, continuing to compose, perform, and publish Jewish concert music well into the early 1930s. Several of these Russian Jewish composers rose to major prominence in Soviet music as pedagogues and leading artists, including Aleksandr Krein, Mikhail Gnesin, Moyshe (Mikhail) Milner, and Aleksandr Veprik. Others carried the mission of Jewish national concert music abroad to Central Europe, Palestine, and the United States. In the 1930s and 1940s, the modernist folkloric model of Jewish concert music influenced efforts to create modern concert music for various other national minority groups in parts of the Soviet Union, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.

The Nazi and Stalinist assaults against Jewish culture led to the repression of many Jewish concert musicians in Eastern Europe during the middle years of the twentieth century. So too did Jewish national concert music become almost a forbidden topic in much of postwar Communist Eastern Europe. At the same time, the prominence of Jewish achievement in concert music remained a source of great cultural pride for Jews—and liberal non-Jews—throughout Eastern Europe. As postwar composers grappled with the great cultural destruction of World War II and the moral challenges posed by both the Holocaust and Communist totalitarianism, Jewish concert music acquired a new cultural status as a potent, defiant symbol of resistance to political repression in general. This trend is perhaps best evidenced by the controversy surrounding the Jewish-themed works of the non-Jewish Russian composer Dmitrii Shostakovich (1906–1975). Since the end of communism, Jewish concert music has experienced a small revival in Eastern Europe as both Jewish and non-Jewish composers, performers, and scholars have begun to explore the East European Jewish musical legacy.

APPENDIX: JEWISH MUSICIANS

[The following list provides brief identifications of Jewish figures of the concert music world who are not the subject of independent biographies.]

Achron, Joseph (Iosif Iul'evich; 1886–1943), Russian-born violinist and composer active in Saint Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music; later worked as a musician and film composer in Hollywood.

Aleksandrovich, Mikhail Davidovich (1914–2002), Latvian-born cantor and opera singer. Leading Soviet opera star; also succeeded in performing and recording Yiddish songs and cantorial selections. Later lived in Israel and Germany.

Auer, Leopold (Lipót; 1845–1930), Hungarian-born violinist and master violin pedagogue; settled in Saint Petersburg. The most important violin teacher of the early twentieth century.

Brotsky, Adolph Davidovich (1851–1929), Russian-born violinist and teacher; premiered Tchaikovsky's violin concerto in Vienna in 1881. Later settled in England.

Elman, Mischa (Mikhail Shaulovich; 1891–1967), Russian-born violinist; later settled in the United States. One of the leading disciples of Leopold Auer and a prime exponent of late romantic violin style.

Gilels, Emil Grigor'evich (1916–1985), Russian pianist. Native of Odessa; one of the great concert pianists of the twentieth century. Taught at the Moscow Conservatory.

Gnesin, Mikhail Fabianovich (1883–1957), Russian composer and musicologist; leader in the Society for Jewish Folk Music; prominent in Soviet musical life as professor at the Leningrad and Moscow Conservatories. His many famous musical siblings include his sister Elena Fabianovna Gnesina (1874–1967), long-time head of Moscow's Gnesin Musical Institute.

Heifetz, Jascha (Iosif Ruvimovich; 1901–1987), Russian violinist. Born in Vilna; taught for many decades in the United States. Renowned for his technical perfection and virtuosic performance style.

Horowitz, Vladimir Viacheslavovich (1903–1989), Russian pianist born in Kiev. A leading young Soviet pianist before leaving for the West in 1925 to pursue a long career as one of the most outstanding twentieth-century pianists.

Joachim, Joseph (1831–1907), Hungarian-born violinist, composer, conductor, and teacher. Major figure in nineteenth-century music; close to Mendelssohn and Liszt; very influential as a violin teacher and chamber music performer throughout Europe.

Kogan, Leonid Borisovich (1924–1982), Russian violinist and teacher. Leading Soviet concert soloist; frequent chamber music partner of Gilels and Rostropovich.

Koussevitzky, Serge (Sergei Aleksandrovich; 1874–1951), Russian-born conductor and double bass player. Founded his own orchestra and a major music publishing house; then settled in the United States. Hugely influential as conductor of Boston Symphony Orchestra and founder of the Tanglewood Music Festival.

Kurtág, György (1926–), Hungarian composer. Leading twentieth-century composer; has acquired an international reputation. Considered a musical heir to Bartók and Webern.

Ligeti, György (1923–), Hungarian composer; great-nephew of Leopold Auer. Achieved prominence as a young composer before fleeing Hungary in 1956. A noted figure in European avant-garde music.

Milner, Moyshe (Mikhail Arnol'dovich; 1886–1953), Russian composer. Acclaimed composer in the Society for Jewish Folk Music; in Soviet period wrote music for Hebrew and Yiddish theater and opera.

- Milstein, Nathan** (Natan Mironovich; 1903–1992), Russian-born violinist from Odessa. A famous student of Leopold Auer and a major international soloist, renowned for his tremendous technical control. Settled in the United States.
- Oistrakh, David Fedorovich** (1908–1974), Russian violinist, conductor, and teacher. Born in Odessa; rose to fame as international concert soloist, greatest Soviet performing musician, and embodiment of the Russian violin school.
- Piatigorsky, Gregor Pavlovich** (1903–1976), Russian-born cellist, teacher, and composer; regarded as the leading cellist of his generation. Left the Soviet Union in 1921, eventually settling in Southern California.
- Rosowsky, Solomon Borisovich** (1878–1962), Russian-born composer and ethnomusicologist. A founder of the Society for Jewish Folk Music; later taught in Riga, Jerusalem, and at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Produced major work on history of biblical cantillation.
- Rostropovich, Mstislav Leopoldovich** (1927–), Russian-born cellist and conductor. Achieved great early fame as soloist in postwar Soviet Union. Active as political dissident; later settled abroad.
- Rubinstein, Anton Grigorevich** (1829–1894), Russian pianist, composer, and conductor and founder of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. His brother Nicholas Grigorevich (1835–1881) was also a noted pianist and the founder of the Moscow Conservatory.
- Rubinstein, Artur** (1887–1982), Polish-born pianist. Child prodigy; became one of the major concert pianists of the twentieth century, especially acclaimed for his eloquent solo recitals. Immigrated to the United States during World War II.
- Saminsky, Lazare** (Lazar Iosifovich; 1882–1959), Russian-born composer, conductor, and musicologist. A founder of the Society for Jewish Folk Music; later prominent in America as a music writer and cofounder of the League of Composers.
- Schnittke, Alfred Garievich** (1934–1998), Russian composer. Leader of postwar Soviet avant-garde; worked extensively on film scores; frequently denounced for his musical experimentalism. Settled in Germany late in life.
- Shor, David Solomonovich** (1867–1942), Russian pianist and educator. Prominent chamber music performer; professor at Moscow Conservatory; active in Society for Jewish Folk Music. Later settled in Palestine and taught at Hebrew University.
- Stutschewsky, Joachim** (1891–1982), Ukrainian-born composer, cellist, and ethnomusicologist. Active promoter of Jewish music in Central Europe; then a major figure in Israeli music as a writer and composer working with Yiddish musical folklore.

- Tansman, Alexander** (1897–1986), Polish-born composer and pianist. After early study in Poland, settled in France; continued to explore Polish and Jewish themes in his compositions.
- Vaynberg, Moisey Samiulovich** (Weinberg; 1919–1996), Russian/Polish composer. Major Soviet-era composer, distinguished by his use of both modernist compositional techniques and Jewish musical themes. Close personal friend of Shostakovich; married daughter of Yiddish theater director Solomon Mikhoels.
- Vengerova, Isabelle Afanasievna** (1877–1956), Russian-born pianist and teacher. Daughter of memoirist Pauline Wengeroff; enjoyed early prominence as a performer; taught at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Later a very influential teacher at both the Curtis Institute of Music and Mannes College in the United States.
- Veprik, Aleksandr Moisevich** (1899–1958), Russian composer, teacher, and musicologist, affiliated with the Soviet-era Society for Jewish Music. Taught at the Moscow Conservatory; purged under Stalin.
- Wieniawski, Henryk** (1835–1880), Polish violinist and composer. Was recognized as a child prodigy; had a career as a traveling virtuoso. A composer and master teacher in Saint Petersburg and elsewhere; influenced much of the Russian violin school.
- Yampolsky, Abram Il'ich** (1890–1956), Russian violinist and teacher. Major pedagogical figure in Soviet music; taught at Moscow Conservatory; considered to be founder of the modern Russian violin school, continuing the legacy of Leopold Auer.
- Zimbalist, Efrem Aleksandrovich** (1889–1985), Russian-born violinist, composer, and teacher. Achieved early fame as one of Leopold Auer's greatest young prodigies. Enjoyed life-long career as a leading international soloist; settled in the United States. Taught at the Curtis Institute of Music and served as its director for 20 years.

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