

Review

Garment and Core: Jews and their Musical Experiences, edited by Eitan Avitsur, Marina Ritzarev, and Edwin Seroussi. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2012

Among the books published in the last decades in the Bar-Ilan University Press on musicological topics, the book *Garment and Core: Jews and their Musical Experiences* has an important place. First of all, it is a bilingual (Hebrew and English) volume that appropriates the lingual framework of Israeli musicology as represented nationally and internationally. On the other hand, the book is a collection of essays edited by the scholars who joined Israeli musicology at different stages, coming originally from different locations and various professional and cultural backgrounds, which in itself enriches the multi-domain scope of a single book. The volume itself born as a full-size-paper conceptualization of the most essential presentations at the Conference *Lebush and tokh* (roughly, *Garment and Core*) held in 2003 in Bar-Ilan University, as one of the first attempts to embrace into one scientific continuum the different aspects of a phenomenon referred to, in general, Jewish music. The name and concept of the book undoubtedly hint to one of the dichotomies of the Kabbalah—Jewish teaching that, unlike the Bible, is not shared with other religions or national cultures—and, hence, symbolize a kind of “Jewish approach to Jewish music.”

Generally, ethnomusicological approach towards the Self is quite a new trend. As an invention of Western musicology, the ethnomusicology until recently was primarily dealing with culture of the Other. Researchers of Jewish origin, who have traditionally been part of the Western academic society and, as such, had to deal with “Western’s Other,” found themselves at some point on the fork between remain among Western scholars and study everybody’s culture but not their own, and become scholars aiming to explore a range of Jewish musical expressions and experiences accompanied by a plethora of relevant socio-cultural issues. *Garment and Core* is of the latter staff. The material selected by the editorial board reveals two basic ethnomusicological platforms: the pure ethnographic approach, intended to document the musical heritage as such, and the anthropological method, which tends to see social and cultural background behind specific musical expressions. In addition, many disciplines are employed throughout the book, including archeomusicology, organology, and comparative linguistics. As a result, the picture of Jewish music across time and space is represented in a three-dimensional way showing the details and historical perspective of Jewish culture from ancient time to the present day.

The structure of the book follows an idea of the four main sections called “gates” (or “gateways”), each of which contains several chapters, associated with the space into which leads a particular gateway. English chapters follow the English cover; Hebrew chapters follow the Hebrew cover. The *Contents* page brings all the chapters in one sequence, both in English and in Hebrew parts of the book. The editor’s *Preface*, which also has two lingual versions and follows the *Contents* from both sides, gives a very clear idea about concepts, topics, and methods associated with the material constituting the book. Two introductions, by Izaly Zemtsovsky (in English) and by Dov Schwarz (in Hebrew), provide a general ethnomusicological basis and historical panorama of Jewish thought in its relation to music.

The researchers who contributed their essays for *Garment and Core* belong to different academic schools and disciplines, but at large they represent either Jewish philosophy or

various wings of musicology. A variety of research methods, apart from the difference of disciplinary context, includes also work with artifacts such as Jewish manuscripts of the Renaissance age (for restoring the music of the Temple, in the chapter by Daniel Sandler), or commercial audio-recordings (to follow the journey of a particular song between the continents, in the chapter by Edwin Seroussi). Research toolkit that includes several disciplines in one particular case study is shown, for example, in the chapter by Rabbi Zev Gotthold, who uses the tools of comparative linguistics and organology, as well as his knowledge of Jewish customs in the eighteenth century *shtetl*, to reveal the meaning of the name of a song in Yiddish. The Ashkenazi musical landscape is continued in the essays by Judit Frigyesi (post-Holocaust Jewish music in East Europe) and Rafi Ben Moshe (Chabad melodies). Jewish musical culture of the Mediterranean is presented in the essays by Francesco Spagnolo (Italian Jewish music of nineteenth century) and Rivka Havassy (popular songs of Jewish communities of Saloniki between the two world wars).

Some essays follow quite “traditional” topics (as those by Elena Reikher and by Evan Rapport on music of the Bukharian Jews in Israel and New York, respectively, or the chapter by Rachel Kollender on Karaite music). Other articles tend to present a traditional topic from rather unusual point of view. Such are, for example, the chapters by Talila Eliram (Songs of the Land of Israel—SLI, presented through the lens of the Jewish question), by Edwin Seroussi (Sephardic songs survived thanks to the numerous recordings of non-Sephardic or non-Jewish performers), or by Essica Marks and by Komiko Yayama (Arab and Turkish music in Sephardic synagogues of Jerusalem as “a musical dialogue with the enemy,” as defined in editor’s Preface, p.10*). Among the discoveries and original ideas, the chapter by Haviva Pedaya deserves attention. While today, the word *night music* is more associated with Christian night service (or Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*), it appears that in Judaism of the sixteenth century, night was the recommended time for learning the Torah and singing. Another article to be mentioned here is the chapter by Marina Ritzarev, which is not just another look at the SLI in this book. A comparison between Soviet songs of the 1930s and SLI (all of which were written by Jewish composers coming from the same place and cultural background) shows to the reader how the Jewish “otherness” becomes “selfness” of the Soviet or Israeli identity.

Closeness and distance, otherness and selfness, Jewishness and Israeliness—these are the layers of *Garment and Core* addressed through music. Well, Jews are so different, that for studying themselves they apply the experience of studying the Other. Global relocation of the Jews, affected by the two world wars, which led to the reconfiguration of the Jewish communities, has received an expression in various musical styles and genres (often not recognizing each other) characteristic of Jewish musical culture in our day. Documentation and conceptualization of music associated with the Jewish cultural heritage, Jewish modernity, and Israeliness is a valuable contribution of the authors and editors of this volume to create a new vision of the Jewish musical culture as a living multicultural space. This vision aims to reflect the history and the current stage of the Jewish communities scattered throughout the world and the Israeli nation reunited in the State of Israel where the people, land, and language come together to a new historic, socio-cultural, and acoustic reality.

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