"Sing us a *Mawwal*":
The Politics of Culture-Brokering Palestinian Israeli Musicians[1]

Galeet Dardashti

Early one morning during the summer of 2003, I caught a ride to Nazareth from Tel Aviv with Moti,[2] the producer of the "Culture of Peace" Festival. Moti was accompanying the Israeli pop singer Sigal[3], a singer he managed at the time, for an audition with the Arab Orchestra of Nazareth, which he also managed. I had interviewed Moti on his work, producing performances of Arab music in Israel, and he invited me to come along for the day trip to Nazareth on condition that I only observe and not ask any questions until after the audition. He didn't want to make Sigal nervous — she was nervous enough. "They know I'm not an Arab, right?" she asked as we drove along the way. "I'm sure that I might make some mistakes in the Arabic or something." "Yes, they know," said Moti. "I told them that you are my friend and that you are a well known singer among Israelis."

The Arab Orchestra of Nazareth[4] is comprised almost exclusively of Palestinian Israeli[5] male musicians from Nazareth. They work with a number of Palestinian Israeli singers, depending on the repertoire they are performing in Israel or abroad. Amidst the recent popularity of Arab and Middle Eastern-infused music in Israel, Sigal, a Jew of Iraqi and Moroccan background, had become interested in performing classical Arab music with the Orchestra, following the path of the more well known Moroccan-descended Jewish Israeli pop sensation Zehava Ben. Like Ben, Sigal had recently started

[1]This article draws from the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted on Middle Eastern music in Israel both for my master's thesis and doctoral dissertation through the University of Texas at Austin from 1999–2004. I am grateful for the fellowships I received to support my research and writing from Fulbright-Hays, The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, and from the University of Texas at Austin. Many thanks also to the numerous musicians who took the time to tell me their stories during my fieldwork. I would also, posthumously, like to thank Dr. Galit Saada-Ophir for the helpful insights she offered me months before her tragic and untimely death.

[2]A pseudonym.

[3]A pseudonym.

[4]The Arab Orchestra of Nazareth was also called "Haifa's Arab Orchestra" in earlier periods.

[5]All of the Palestinians discussed here are citizens of Israel (not residents of Gaza or the West Bank, Israel's Occupied Territory). For the most part, the Jewish population of Israel and the Israeli mainstream refer to this group as Arab Israelis or simply "Arabs" (*Aravim)*. Some Arab citizens of Israel, however, object to being referred to as "Arabs" since it obscures their national aspirations as Palestinians. Therefore, although most of my informants referred to themselves as "Arabs" when speaking with me (an outsider), throughout this article, I refer to this group as Palestinian Israelis.

studying Arabic language and singing, wanting to connect more with her Arab roots.

When we arrived at the Orchestra's rehearsal space in Nazareth, the musicians wanted Sigal to sing every Arab song in her repertoire. The atmosphere was casual and relaxed, and although Sigal didn't know all of the Arabic lyrics some of the musicians would chime in and help her when she forgot the words.

After the audition was over, Moti talked to the Orchestra leader, Suheil, in private. According to Moti, Suheil liked Sigal's voice but was concerned that she didn't sing the songs in an authentically Arab way, as they were "meant to be sung." Suheil wasn't convinced that the audience would respond well to her. Moti, however, conveyed to me that he had managed to convince Suheil that having Sigal, a Jewish Israeli, collaborate with the Palestinian Israeli musicians on a few songs at Tel Aviv's "Culture of Peace" Festival would be a big hit with those in attendance.

Over the last fifteen years, Palestinian Israeli musicians have participated in an increasing number of high profile performances featuring the music of classical Arab musical legends such as Oum Kalthoum, Mohammad Abdul Wahab, and Farid Al-Atrash that have packed prestigious Israeli concert halls for diverse Israeli audiences. This is notable since, although over half of the Israeli population consists of Mizrahim (Jews of Middle Eastern and North African background) and Arabs, until recent years Arab and Middle Eastern musical traditions were marginalized, and therefore largely absent from the Israeli public sphere.

While Palestinian Israelis are pleased that Israelis have finally begun to embrace Arab music and their performance of it, they are not always happy with how their promoters require that they present it. In this article, I will discuss some of the ways in which Palestinian Israeli musicians must negotiate their identities and careers by way of Jewish culture-brokers, and within the parameters of Israeli cultural discourse. Like all musicians, Palestinian Israelis and their promoters must choose their repertoire carefully, considering seriously what will sell to their audiences. As I will demonstrate, however, because of the global interest in the Arab/Israeli conflict, the political and cultural framing of this repertoire is often key to the music's appeal to potential funders, both domestically and internationally, and determines its success in the marketplace.

Embracing Arab Culture

The gradual popularity of Arab classical music in Israel is part of the larger Israeli interest in Arab and Middle Eastern culture that has occurred over the past twenty years as a result of both local and global shifts. The mainstream success of Mizrahi singers in the 1990s with *muzika mizrahit*[6] — a Mediterranean-tinged style of Israeli pop music — made the sounds of Arab music begin to sound less foreign to Israelis. In the transnational realm, beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, music from marginalized communities emerged from its second-class status to the forefront of the globalized music market in the form of "ethnic" and "world" music. Israelis were very influenced by these global trends; many Ashkenazi (European-descended) Israelis began to view the Arabic, Turkish, and Persian music cultures of their Mizrahi brethren — which they had long disparaged — with interest. A handful of formal and informal schools opened in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, offering courses covering a range of classical Eastern instruments, and many young Israelis — primarily Mizrahim and Palestinian Israelis — became students of Middle Eastern music and formed bands (Dardashti 2001; 2007; 2008).

The signing of the Oslo Accords was a watershed event for the receptivity of Israelis to Arab culture. Israelis had already become notorious international travelers decades earlier, but, with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Israeli tourists were ready to traverse a previously forbidden frontier right in their backyard — the Middle East; following new diplomatic agreements with its neighbors, Israelis traveled to Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt in unprecedented numbers. Historically, Israel's Palestinian citizens have experienced years of State-sanctioned discrimination, underdevelopment, and political disenfranchisement. In the context of this increased exposure to Arab cultures and optimism for peace, however, official Israeli policies toward Palestinian Israelis became more inclusive and tolerant. In turn, Israeli tourists began to explore the cultural practices of Palestinian Israelis living in villages just minutes away (Stein 2008 and 2005). Much musical collaboration between Palestinian and Jewish Israelis emerged.

[6]For more on the rise of *muzika mizrahit* see, for example, Amy Horowitz, "Performance in Disputed Territory: Israeli Mediterranean Music," *Musical Performance* 1.3 (1997): 43–53; Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004; Motti Regev, "The Musical Soundscape as a Contest Area: 'Oriental Music' and Israeli Popular Music," *Media, Culture, and Society* 8.3 (1986): 343–355.

The bulk of my own ethnographic fieldwork, conducted primarily between 2003 and 2004 — the height of the second *intifada* — occurred during a very different political climate than that of the Oslo euphoria of the 1990s. Though the Israeli economy took a major hit during this period, these performances of Middle Eastern music set in motion in the 1990s continued to flourish during this turbulent and violent period.[7] In fact, though the government and local municipalities withdrew some of their support for arts programming due to budget cuts, some new financial sponsors entered the Middle Eastern music scene; it became even more important to these sponsors, government representatives, and music producers that these performances continue amidst the constant warfare, for they represented glimmers of hope for peace to audiences in Israel and abroad.

In *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*, George Yúdice argues that one of the striking effects of globalization is the broad invocation of culture as a resource for social change. Unlike past decades, when culture was administered and wielded on a national scale, in today's global era culture is coordinated on many levels, both locally and supra-nationally, by corporations, private foundations, and the international non-governmental sector (Yúdice 2003). Israel conforms to this model. Although the Israeli state continues to sponsor some cultural activities, both governmental indifference to the arts and the need to increase government spending on security have led to a dwindling of state-sponsored cultural arts programs within Israel (Ben Ami 1996).

Thankfully for artists and art programmers in Israel, many private organizations locally and globally have decided to invest in culture. As violence between Israelis and Palestinians increases, Israelis and many international parties have deployed Middle Eastern music — seen by many as the ideal bridge-building tool between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis — quite significantly. Since the disintegration of Oslo, for example, some of the financial supporters of Israel's biggest Middle Eastern music festival, "The Oud Festival," have included UNESCO, the European Union, and the Beracha Foundation (a Jewish-American funded philanthropic organization that promotes coexistence in Israel),

[7]Though this was true in Israel, many opportunities for performance abroad disappeared for Israeli musicians during the second *intifada*, as I explain later in the article.

in addition to the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture. The State has lost its status as arbiter of cultural programming and has become merely one of many players.

Yúdice views as dangerous this "globalization of culture," in which these types of organizations fund the specific cultural programs they deem "worthy" and "ethical," because such "cultural practice runs the risk of responding to performative injunctions … that are at least partly scripted" (Yúdice 2003: 156). As I will illustrate below, because of the volatility of the political scene in Israel and the world's attention on it, there are often particularly big payoffs (and big losses) for those who openly pursue specific political agendas in their music-making.

Musical Education and Performance Opportunities for Palestinian Israelis

Though Christians comprise only about 9 percent of the Arab population in Israel,[8] all of the prominent Palestinian Israeli musicians are Christians who live, or recently left, the northern Galilee area of Israel. Because Islam holds an ambivalent view toward music, it has historically been left to minority groups (Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians) to maintain the musical traditions throughout the Muslim world. In contrast, music has generally been highly encouraged in Palestinian churches.[9] Another explanation for this musical discrepancy is that, from a financial standpoint, Israeli Christians have a higher socioeconomic status than Israeli Muslims, and have fewer children on average. Christian Palestinian citizens of Israel, therefore, have more disposable income to educate their children musically than Palestinian Israelis of the Muslim faith.

With the establishment of the State in 1948, the small group of high-caliber Palestinian Israeli musicians from northern Israel who performed Arab classical music fled[10] Israel to live and perform in neighboring Arab countries (Radwan 1997: 35). The few high-level musicians who remained performed to a very limited extent and taught students privately, as there was very little time or funding allotted for music education in Arab schools. In 1963, the Israeli government opened the Department of Arabic Music at

[8]See Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (May 2003). Muslims, including Bedouins, make up 82 percent of the entire non-Jewish Arab population in Israel, with around 9 percent Druze, and 9 percent Christians.

[9]In the Eastern Christian tradition there is a prominent modal framework that some connect to the Arab *maqam* framework. See Cohen and Katz's *Palestinian Arab Music.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 35.

[10]I have no knowledge of the individual stories of these musicians and whether or not each was forced to leave.

the Rubin Academy of Music in Haifa. This small two-year teacher's certificate program closed in 1972 due to lack of funding, but the seventy teachers trained through this program went on to teach Arabic music in small villages where no music curriculum had previously existed. Another musical venture supported by the State was a musical school begun in 1965 through the founding of Beit HaGefen, the Arab/Jewish Center in Haifa. The school was founded and led by Hikmat Shaheen, and, in later years, under his direction, some of the school's best students formed an orchestra through Beit HaGefen.[11]

Until the 1990s, none of the Hebrew radio stations included Arab music in their programs or playlists.[12] Only the Israel Broadcasting Authority's (IBA) Arab-language radio station "the Voice of Israel (*Kol Israel*) in Arabic" aired Arab music. Its Arabic language programming was primarily intended as public diplomacy toward Israel's Arab neighbors across the borders. Its secondary target was the Palestinian population of Israel. The Arabic-speaking Mizrahim within Israel were its last priority. The station established its Arabic Orchestra in 1948. Composed of the recent Jewish Iraqi immigrant musicians and — after 1957 — some Jewish Egyptian immigrant musicians, the IBA's Arabic Orchestra served a valuable political function for the State by attracting its listeners to the propaganda programming that followed its high-quality Arabic musical interludes. The music programming mainly featured the classical Arab hits from Egypt and Lebanon recorded between 1930 and 1970, and heavily influenced the musical tastes of Palestinian Israelis. In the 1970s, the Orchestra increased its size and added two Palestinian Israeli violinists from Nazareth. The Orchestra also periodically employed Palestinian Israeli singers to sing at festivals (Dardashti 2008; Perelson 2000; Regev 1995; Warkov 1986).

Historically, Palestinian Israeli musicians have earned their income mainly from performing at weddings and other celebrations, as very few opportunities for public performance existed. At these festivities, musicians are typically asked to play the well-known classical Arab favorites from Egypt and Lebanon, or the most current Arab pop music from Egypt and Lebanon. There is very little demand for original local music at these events (Regev 1995).

[11]Simon Shaheen, Hikmat's son, was one of these students. He later left Israel to become one of the prominent performers and teachers of Arab music in the United States today.

[12]Even today there is very little Arabic music programming. Only a few radio hosts, such as Dubi Lenz (on IDF National Radio) make an effort to play Arab music. There are, however, a number of pirate radio stations in Israel today airing various types of Arab music.

During the period from 1974-83, the government also funded some Arab music programming for Israeli television.[13] As a result, many Arabic songs were composed and recorded during that period (Radwan 1997). Once cable and satellite television became available in Israel in the early '90s, however, government-funded Arabic television disappeared.[14]

The tide changed in the 1990s, a time when several institutional programs began offering musical instruction for Middle Eastern music. In addition to the School for classical Arab music in East Jerusalem, which opened its doors to many Palestinian and Palestinian Israeli musicians in the late 1990s, a few Palestinian Israeli musicians began teaching at the newly opened Center for Classical Oriental Music and Dance in West Jerusalem[15] (Brinner 2009). One of the most important developments for Arab music for Palestinian Israeli musicians occurred in 1995, when Taiseer Elias, one of Israel's most renowned musicians of Arab music, was offered the opportunity to found and head the Arab Music School at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. This was Israel's first formal music conservatory teaching Arab music. The school primarily attracts outstanding Palestinian Israeli students (at most, 10 percent of each class is Jewish). All of the teachers there are also Palestinian Israelis.[16]

Many of the students and graduates of the Arab Music School have become members of the Arab Orchestra of Nazareth, founded in 1990; the Orchestra receives a large portion of its funding from Israel's Ministry of Science and Art. A few Arab cultural performance locations opened for the first time in the early '90s to specifically serve the Palestinian Israeli community, including Al Midan in Nazareth and both Al Midan and Al Soraya in Haifa; all of these were heavily subsidized by the Israeli government.[17]

Official Israeli discourse shifted in the 1990s, encouraging Israelis to pursue

[13]Arab TV programming was broadcast on Israel's Channel One usually from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Scheduling varied slightly over the years, alternating between 5:00-7:00 p.m. and 6:00-8:00 p.m.
[14]Today, in spite of the numerous television channels offered on cable, there is still no Palestinian Israeli television channel.
[15]Very few Palestinian Arab students have chosen to study at that school, however. The student populations at the newly opened Middle Eastern music schools tend to self-segregate.
[16]Most Jewish students studying Arab and Middle Eastern music study in more informal Arab music programs in Israel, with private teachers, or in other music programs described abroad.
[17]Government subsidies for these performances were heavily cut during the second *intifada*.

"coexistence" (*du-kiyum*) with their Palestinian co-nationals (Stein 2008: 5). Indeed, this period marked the height of Middle Eastern musical collaborations between Palestinians/Palestinian Israelis and Jewish Israelis, such as those of the bands *Bustan Abraham*, *Alei Hazayit*, and Yair Dalal's many Palestinian collaborations.[18] These ensembles performed mainly for Jewish Israeli audiences in Israel and diverse audiences abroad. By the time I began the bulk of my dissertation fieldwork in 2003 and 2004, however, all of the above collaborations had already disbanded.[19]

Brokering Culture

Moti, the manager of the Arab Orchestra of Nazareth, grew up in Israel in a religious, right-wing, Ashkenazi Jewish family. However, when he became a soldier during the Lebanon war in the 1980s, he "couldn't believe what a lie it all was — what propaganda." Since his army service, Moti has considered himself a politically active leftist. For over thirty years, he has worked as a music producer and manager for top Israeli pop and jazz musicians. He also became one of the first to produce large-scale concerts of classical Arab music at high-brow venues in Israel in the late 1980s. As he explained:

> My goal is to bring the quality Israeli Arab musicians to perform at big festivals for the Jewish public … the racism that has gone on in Israel is terrible. A catastrophe. But the revival of Arab music in Israel is as big as the catastrophe.… The "Culture of Peace" is what I decided to do.… My stance is very political. That's how it started. It started from a desire to create a humanization of the enemy.… That was my decision." (Interview with author, 2003)

[18]See Ben Brinner's forthcoming book: *Playing Across a Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters*. Interestingly, Brinner notes that the impetus for these collaborations was the first *intifada* in 1987, when the Palestinian leadership declared a ban on live music at weddings and other celebrations, and Palestinian musicians needed to seek out other performance opportunities and income.

[19] Those collaborations involving Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and Israeli Jews (such as *Alei HaZayit* and some of Dalal's collaborations) were no longer physically possible due to border closures. Members of *Bustan Abraham*, a group comprised of Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel, cited both economic problems and artistic differences for breaking up. As I explain later in the article, many groups faced economic hardship during the *intifada* when European venues boycotted all Israeli groups (including *Bustan Abraham*). A new collaborative group, however, *Yussif ve-Ehad* (*Joseph and One*) was performing both locally and abroad during my fieldwork. That group has also since disbanded.

[21] Richard Kurin, *Reflections*, p. 18.

This is how Moti's work as a culture broker — one engaged in the public representation of culture[21] — began. Moti began producing "The Culture of Peace" Festival in Tel Aviv in 2002. One of his self-proclaimed goals for this festival (and others he produces, such as the Oud Festival of Tel Aviv) is to bring Arab musicians and Arab music to reputable concert halls for the Jewish public as a political statement. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) explains:

> Folkloric troupes attempt to find middle ground between exotic and familiar pleasures and to bring these forms (and their performers) into the European hierarchy of artistic expression, while establishing their performances as national heritage. The more modern the theater where the troupe performs the better, for often there is a dual message: powerful, modern statehood, expressed in the accoutrements of civilization and technology, is wedded to a distinctive national identity. The performance offers cultural content for that identity. (65)

Although Moti would likely not refer to himself as a nationalist, he clearly chooses the high profile auditoriums for his festivals in order to imbue them with cultural capital and help to establish Arab music and the Palestinian Israelis who perform it, in particular, as a crucial part of Israeli national heritage.

Moti has helped bring about the recent wave of interest in Middle Eastern and Arab music in Israel that continues to gain intensity even today. In the early 1990s, he brought the music of the legendary Egyptian Oum Kalthoum (the Arab world's diva from the 1930s to late '60s) to a broad Israeli audience at the Israel Festival, Israel's most prestigious annual festival. The concert featured Sapho, a Jewish French-Moroccan singer, performing Kalthoum's songs in a concert with the Arab Orchestra of Nazareth.

The concert was a great success, with a diverse range of Israeli audience members — older Israeli Mizrahim who were nostalgic for the music they had grown up listening to in their native countries; young Mizrahim seeking to connect with their Arab roots; Palestinian Israelis of all ages, proud that Arab culture was finally being respected in Israel; and curious and typically left-leaning Ashkenazim interested in Arab or world

music. After the success of this concert, many Israeli Mizrahi musicians expressed interest in performing the music of Oum Kalthoum, most notably Zehava Ben, who went on to perform many Oum Kalthoum songs, including a shortened version of *Inta Oumri*.[22] Between 1995 and 1996, Ben recorded three albums of Arabic songs featuring many of the most beloved hits of the Arab world, made famous by such singers as Farid Al-Atrash, Fairuz, and of course Oum Kalthoum.

Suheil (the Orchestra's founder) and his son Nezar (the orchestra's conductor) have benefited from the recent Israeli interest in the classical Arab music made famous decades ago in the Arab world. According to Nezar, who is also a composer, however, there is very little interest or financial support for new compositions of Arab music. In the early 1990s, the government did commission new Arabic musical works from two Palestinian Israelis,[23] and most of the works were performed in two concerts in 1994. The texts of almost all of the songs expressed hope for peace and coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis in Israel (Radwan 1997: 40-41).[24] Even this type of support for the commissioning of new Palestinian works, however, is very rare.

This was corroborated by Amal Murkus, a Palestinian singer, "Whenever I was asked to sing on Arab TV, they wanted me to sing old Egyptian songs, not Palestinian songs — they didn't want any song lyrics with the word 'Biladi' ['my country'] or songs like that. This is censorship" (Interview with author, 2004). In spite of the strong interest in Arab music in Israel, this interest is still limited to non-threatening modes of expression. "Old Egyptian songs" are highly nostalgic for many older Mizrahim who grew up listening to them in their native countries, and even for young Israelis who grew up in Israel hearing these songs in the old Egyptian films aired on Friday nights.[25] Particularly since the signing of the Oslo Accords, nostalgic Arab music of the past, shared culturally by Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, has become of interest and garners financial support in Israel. Israelis have conditionally opened their arms and ears

[22]For more on this, see Amy Horowitz's article, "Dueling Nativities: Zehava Ben sings Oum Kalthoum." In *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Stein and Swedenburg. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.
[23]The musicians were Nezar Radwan and Michael Dermelkonian.
[24]Although I have not confirmed this, it is very probable that the theme of "coexistence" was a requirement for the government funds.
[25]Since there was only one television channel during Israel's first four decades, all Israelis are familiar with the television programs from those years.

to Arab music, but anything overtly "Palestinian," viewed as a nationalist threat, is still taboo.

The Peace Train

"Ask yourself when Yair Dalal's career took off — it was when [Shimon] Peres took him to Oslo and there he started his work and caught 'the peace train.'… I took a complicated path and I'm satisfied." (Amal Murkus 2004)

In vogue — particularly since the early 1990s, when Israelis were highly optimistic about the peace process — are artistic projects that demonstrate coexistence between Jews and Arabs. Almost all these projects, however, are initiated or encouraged by Jewish musicians, producers, or programmers for a Jewish audience in Israel or for audiences (Jewish and non-Jewish) in the United States and Europe. The above quote comes from the Palestinian Israeli singer , describing this trend. In 1994 Dalal, who was barely known in Israel at the time, was invited to perform in Oslo to mark the one-year anniversary of the Oslo Peace Accords and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Israeli and Palestinian leaders. He took a choir of Palestinian and Israeli children with him and they performed a song he composed called "Zaman es-Salaam" ("Time of Peace") together with another Norwegian children's choir. This launched his career, and today he is Israel's best known international emissary of Arab music.

Most of the Israeli music exported to audiences abroad as "Israeli," with support from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is music with a clear Middle Eastern flavor. The Ministry only rarely supports the big stars of Israeli pop music — Rita, Shalom Chanoch, Yehuda Poliker, Shlomo Artzi — who play non-stop on the radio and sell thousands of CDs in Israel. Instead, it is groups such as Yair Dalal's, *Bustan Abraham*, *Ha'Breira Teeveet*, *Sheva*, *Esta*, etc., all of whom are much lesser known to Israeli audiences but have an "Eastern" sound (either through pop music or an East-West fusion with jazz), who emphasize a message of coexistence or shared culture in their promotional materials — whether they are comprised exclusively of Jewish members or of Arabs and Jews together.

The all-star band, *Bustan Abraham*, was one of the first and certainly the most

successful of the Jewish-Arab coexistence bands.[26] Avshalom Farjun, a successful Jewish Israeli producer and musician, and now head of Israeli's primary ethnic label Nada Records, founded the group in 1991. The ensemble was comprised of eight highly esteemed Palestinian Israeli (two) and Jewish Israeli (six) musicians hand picked by Farjun. The band's instrumental East-West fusions include scales, rhythms, and instrumentation representing classical Arabic music, classical European music, jazz, Turkish, Persian, and Indian music, flamenco, and American folk music. Originally, the group had fittingly decided on the name "Bustan" (Hebrew and Arabic for a garden of fruits and essences). Farjun sought funding for the group from The Abraham Fund,[27] a non-profit organization funded by an American Jew in 1989 to promote coexistence between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. The Abraham Fund agreed to fund the group on the condition that the group added "Abraham" to its name in order to emphasize the common ancestor of both Jews and Arabs, and also to underscore the source of the funding.[28]

Fig. 1. *Bustan Abraham* band photo, 2000

Audio sample 1: "Shazeef" From the 2005 *Bustan Abraham* album *Ashra: The First Decade Collection*.

Taiseer Elias, one of the members of *Bustan Abraham*, is perhaps Israel's most virtuosic performer of the *oud*. As a Palestinian Israeli born in 1960, he was one of the first non-Jewish Israelis to study classical Western music at the Music Conservatory of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance after completing high school. At that time, there was no place for him to study more professionally the Arab music he had learned in his village. According to Elias, it was always his goal to advance his Arabic musicianship

[26]See Ben Brinner's forthcoming book for an in-depth analysis of the band *Bustan Abraham*.
[27]See www.abrahamfund.org for more information on the Abraham Fund.
[28]Miguel Herstein conveyed this information to me in an interview in 1999.

through his study of classical Western violin. But, along the way, he fell in love with classical Western music. At the age of twenty-five or so, however, he felt that he had more to contribute as a musician with mastery of Arab music and "returned to his roots."

Having been trained in a Western conservatory, Elias felt that there were no teachers of *oud* who could provide him with the methodological training he wanted, so he taught himself. He became so proficient as an *oud* player, both in Israel and abroad, that in 1995 he was offered the opportunity to found the Arab Music School at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. Elias is also the head of the IBA's *Kol Yisrael* Music Department in Arabic today.

I asked Elias about the new Arab bands forming in Israel.

> Most are composing fusion — East/West. And forgive me for saying this — most are not good — but they play on the Jewish/Arab coexistence thing and it's so kitschy. So many people want this. But this isn't important to me. What is important is good music. I mean, Miguel Hershstein[29] plays flute with me — not because he's a Jew but because he's a great musician — and with Zohar Fresco[30] it's the same thing. And I play *oud* not because I'm an Arab but because I'm a good *oud* player. If there is a better *oud* player who is Jewish, it's possible they would take him instead. There is nothing wrong with coexistence but that's not the reason we formed the group [*Bustan Abraham*]. Unfortunately, there are many groups that formed specifically because "Oh, you're an Arab and I'm a Jew ... hey, let's do something." You get it? Only afterwards they check and see if you're good enough or I'm good enough or the music is good enough or if it's appropriate or not for you and I to make music together. It's enough that it's Arab and Jews and they begin to sell it and that's really bad.… It's fantastic that we are living in such an open world of globalization and people respect each others' cultures, but I always warn that you must know how to distinguish between good and bad. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and it gives the public the wrong idea about Arab music.

[29]A Jewish Israeli musician who is a long-time collaborator with Elias, and a founding member of *Bustan Abraham*.
[30]Zohar Fresco, a Jewish Israeli, is a master percussionist and a founding member of *Bustan Abraham.*

In spite of Elias' critique of bands forming on the basis of coexistence, there is no question that Avshalom Farjun set out to create an Arab-Jewish band when he formed *Bustan Abraham*. While Taiseer Elias is one of the best *oud* players in Israel and the musicianship of most of the other members of *Bustan Abraham* is unparalleled, the Arab-Jewish makeup of the band was key from the start. The support that *Bustan Abraham* received from the Abraham Fund in enabling the group to achieve success and to record its seven CDs can also not be overemphasized. Aside from a few annual music festivals (the Israel Festival, the Oud Festival, the "Culture of Peace" Festival) and some large-scale museum concerts where there are significant budgets from donors, most Israeli venues do not provide enough support for musicians to make a living. It is not difficult to imagine why other bands would attempt to replicate *Bustan Abraham* after seeing their success through the support of the Abraham Fund.

Yussif ve-Ehad (*Joseph and One*) is a musical ensemble comprised of both Palestinian Israelis and Jewish Israelis. The fact that there are both Jewish Israelis (five) and Palestinian Israelis (two) in the group (almost the same ratio of Palestinian Israelis to Jewish Israelis as *Bustan Abraham*) is not an accident. Nitzan Peri, a Jewish Israeli, founded the group in 1996 after being inspired by the signing of the Oslo Accords and prospects for peace in Israel.[31] The fiery stage presence and rapid and ornate improvisatory solos of Tareq,[32] one of *Yussif ve-Ehad*'s new ensemble members, made him one of the most exciting to watch and listen to in the band. When I interviewed him at his friend's house in Jerusalem, he asked me not to record the interview.[33]

[31]cdbaby.com/cd/josephone.
[32]A pseudonym.
[33]Since I did not record the interview, and took only very minor notes, I relied on my memory and wrote more extensive notes the next day.

Fig. 2. *Joseph and One*'s CD cover.

Audio sample nr. 2: "Kadima" from *Joseph and One*'s 2001 album *Kadimah.*

Tareq is a musician affiliated with the Arab-Hebrew Theater in Jaffa — a shared theater that emphasizes coexistence. He also works with a Jewish-Israeli theater called Mekomi and Al-Sorriya Theater, a Palestinian Israeli theater that performs in Arabic. He prefers to work with the Jewish-Israeli theater though, as they are much better funded — and don't expect him to work without receiving compensation. He referred to The Arab Theater as primarily "charity work." According to Tareq, however, since the *intifada*, it is difficult for him to get work with Jewish Israelis. He felt that people stared at him, suspecting that he was a terrorist.

In spite of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's interest in promoting their ethnic musicians abroad, European festivals and venues — the primary financially sustaining venues for successful musicians like Yair Dalal — blackballed Jewish Israeli musicians during the second *intifada*, regardless of their commitment to peaceful existence. Only certain groups with Palestinian Israeli members (such as the Nazareth Orchestra) were immune to the boycott and continued performing in Europe successfully during that time. *Yussif ve-Ehad*'s two Palestinian Israeli musicians were the group's ticket to Europe during the *intifada* since, as Tareq put it, "Europeans like the Arab-Jewish peace thing." Ironically, because of the political climate of the time, Tareq would not talk politics with the band, specifically informing his band members that political discussions were off limits during rehearsals.

It is quite difficult, however, for Palestinian Israeli musicians to escape issues of politics, as they are key to what the Israeli public expects from them musically. Many Palestinian Israeli musicians explained that, because of their Arab identity, they are often type-casted as "the Arab" by Israeli society in terms of the roles and genres of music they are expected to perform. Mira Awad, a successful young Palestinian Israeli singer and actress of half-Palestinian Israeli and half Bulgarian background grew up listening to some of the lighter, more Western-sounding classical Arab music from Lebanon, such as that of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers. From the age of fourteen, Awad composed songs in Arabic and English, but her vocal style in the ballads she composes has much more of a jazzy and sometimes a Balkan feel than Arabic. Born and raised in the northern Galilee, she now lives in Tel Aviv and refers to herself as "apolitical." She explained to me:

> Listen, because I'm an Arab woman, I get a lot of offers from people for work because they want to do something with Arabs and Jews on coexistence, something nice that will show that we can live happily together…. So there are a lot of roles that I haven't been willing to take…. I don't always feel like playing the part of the Arab woman. *Ya'layli ya'layli* [she sings mockingly in an Arabic style and we both laugh]. They all want *mawwallim*[34] — [she sings again] *ya layli ya layli.*[35] I don't do *mawwallim* [we both laugh] — what do they want from me? So, only recently I actually learned how to do *mawwallim* since everyone wanted it. I mean if I'm an Arab woman I have to have an Arab sound, right? I mean, what's the point of an Arab woman without an Arab sound? I mean, come on! I'm asking you!… But it's a bit of a problem for me because I'm kind of between East and West. I hope that my time will come as a musician. I feel that it won't because it's such a roots period and my roots are not roots of *layli layli*. (Interview with author, 2003)

[34]A *mawwal* is a genre of Arabic vocal art music in which the singer sings poetic texts while improvising melodically.

[35]Here Awad uses *mawwal* and *layli* interchangeably, as the colloquial usage of the terms is quite loose in Israel. Technically, the two are distinct. A *layali* is a genre of improvised vocal music in which the singer uses combinations of the words *ya layl*, *layli*, *layali*, *and ya 'ayn*. See Scott Marcus's *Music in Egypt: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Idan Raichel's second CD, "From the Depths" (2005), features Awad. Idan Raichel, an Ashkenazi Israeli, became a sensation in Israel and abroad in 2003 as a result of his first album, which gave mostly Ethiopian Jewish music a popular worldbeat sound. In this second album, Raichel presents Yemenite music in addition to Ethiopian Jewish music. As the only Palestinian Israeli featured on the album, however, Mira Awad does play the part of Arab woman with the love song "Azini" ("Comfort Me"), in which she sings her own Arabic lyrics to a Middle Eastern-tinged melody Raichel composed and arranged for her. Utilizing some of her recently honed skills singing in an Arab style, Awad succeeds in delivering some short and tasteful Arab ornaments at the ends of phrases to give the pop song a touch of ethnic flavor.

Audio sample nr. 3: "Azini" sung by Mira Awad, from Idan Raichel Project's 2005 album *From the Depths.*
Audio-video sample: Noa and Awad performing at the 2009 Eurovision Song.

Most recently, Awad and the internationally renowned Israeli pop sensation Noa represented Israel at the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest, viewed by approximately 450 million people. The duo made it to the finals singing a saccharine song of longing for peace entitled "There Must Be Another Way" in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. The two were selected for Eurovision in January, just after Israel had launched a major offensive in Gaza, killing many civilians in the process. Awad, who is the first Palestinian Israeli ever to represent Israel in the Eurovision competition, was under heavy pressure to withdraw from the competition from a number of Palestinian and Jewish artists and intellectuals in Israel from the political left. They argued that her collaboration with Noa amounted to propaganda, portraying a false image of coexistence to the world. Noa, a peace activist for many years, and Awad ultimately decided to participate in the competition, in spite of the controversy, citing peace as the rationale in newspaper interviews.[36] Although Awad has expressed her desire to position herself as "apolitical," her primary opportunities for fame in Israel thus far have required that she take a clear political stance, serving as the stand-in peace-loving Palestinian, demonstrating to the

[36] www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/15/israel-eurovision-interview, and Ha'aretz.com, 16 January and 14 May 2009.

world that coexistence is still possible.

Others, however, are less willing to conform to the categories set aside for Palestinian Israeli musicians in Israeli society. Amal Murkus, a prominent Palestinian Israeli singer, grew up in a small village in northern Israel on the Lebanese border. From a young age, she was raised in a very political climate, attending leftist demonstrations for peace on her parents' shoulders. According to Murkus, her father was fired for his political writings against the government, and, as a teenager experiencing discrimination, she was attracted to and inspired by the protest songs of the 1960s from the United States. At home they listened not only to Abdel Wahab and Fairouz, but also to classical Western music and to Joan Baez. According to Murkus, her impetus for performing was not money, but as an act of cultural identity to show, as she put it, "that I have a nation, that I possess a language, that we have Palestinian poets" (interview with author, 2004).

Murkus expressed her frustration at the way Palestinian Israeli musicians are labeled:

> I wanted my album to be an album of identity and things that I feel personally, and things in which my country can find solidarity and to show that I can make an album with Palestinians and Jews together and *not* because of peace but instead because music does good things for people. And if we're in another country people won't know that Amos is a Jew or that Amal is a Palestinian. They would just say, "What a great group!"… but in my world, everyone always needs titles and symbols and it's tiring…. I don't put up signs professing coexistence — I don't believe in that. There are Jews and Arabs on stage but I don't discuss that. I don't play that game. (Interview with author, 2004)

Although Amal does consistently perform with Jewish Israelis, her career has suffered as a result of her unwillingness to market herself and her music as a collaboration of coexistence. Dan Golan, a Cultural Attaché at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, told me in 2003 that he had decided that the Ministry would no longer fund her performances abroad since she had referred to herself as "Palestinian," as opposed to "Israeli" during tours supported by the Ministry.

Murkus, a musician who took a “complicated path,” recorded a full album in Arabic in 1996 entitled “Amal” (literally meaning “hope”). The songs feature compositions of other Palestinian poets and composers, Palestinian folk songs, and a love song made famous by the Lebanese diva, Fairuz. Her songs speak of hope, desperation, peace, homeland, and freedom. The arrangements contain a mix of Western and Eastern instrumentation: piano, *oud*, guitars, keyboards, *daf*, Arab-style violin. In spite of the mix of instruments, the songs have a “traditional” Arab feel. Murkus’s vocal style and ornamentation is clearly Arabic, ranging from folk to lightly classical in the style of Fairouz depending on what she sings, and the instrumentation gives her Arab sound a contemporary and sometimes jazzy flair. Each person who participated in the album, including the well-known Jewish Israeli musician Alon Oleartchik, volunteered his time and talent.

According to Murkus, none of the record labels knew exactly how to label her album. After not finding a record label, Murkus released it independently with her husband Nizar Zreik, who composed the lyrics and music for some of the songs. Eventually, it was picked up by the Israeli NMC label, categorized “Israel/Palestine,” and released in 2000. The album received almost no air play on any of the mainstream stations, however, and since Murkus no longer receives government funding, she has had fewer opportunities of late to showcase her music abroad. Because Murkus largely refuses to follow Israeli government policies or the unspoken rules of international co-existence marketing, her musical endeavors have had limited success.

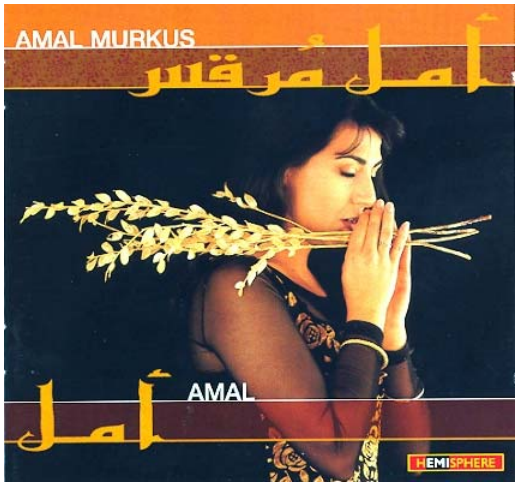

Fig. 4. Amal Murkus CD cover

Audio sample nr. 4: "Hulum" — from Amal Murkus's 1996 album *Amal.*

The Other Others

In 2002, Amir Benayoun, a well-known Mizrahi pop performer, released a song featuring lyrics in both Hebrew and a Moroccan dialect of Arabic entitled "Ve'at Einech" ("Now You're Gone"). It was summer time, the Israeli army had recently resumed military activity in areas of the West Bank under Palestinian Authority control, including the city of Tulkarem, and there was much public debate as to the appropriateness of these incursions. The Israel Army radio station *Galei Tzahal*[37] aired Benayoun's song immediately before an interview with Tommy Lapid — head of the centrist Israeli political party *Shinui* ("Change") — about the government's recent actions. As the interview began, Lapid made the now infamous comment, "I heard this song and I reached the conclusion that it was not us [Israel] that conquered Tulkarem, it was Tulkarem that conquered us" (Saada-Ophir 2006).

Lapid's comment met with public outrage (mostly from Mizrahim), underscoring the uneasiness that Mizrahim feel about being equated with Palestinians.[38] Although it might seem logical that Mizrahim and Palestinian Israelis would form natural alliances musically due to their shared culture, in many instances the two groups clash. The desire to have their music and culture legitimized as truly "Israeli" and seen as separate from Palestinian cultural forms is of crucial import to working-class Mizrahi Israelis in particular, many of whom still feel marginalized in Israeli society[39] (Dardashti 2001). Similarly, some of the Palestinian Israelis to whom I spoke found it much easier to build alliances with Ashkenazi Israelis than Mizrahim. As one Palestinian musician told me in 2003, "I prefer to perform with Ashkenazim. Mizrahim have their own problems — they too are discriminated against." Although there are certainly Israeli musicians of Mizrahi background performing Arab music who collaborate with Palestinian Israelis, such

[37]*Galei Tzahal* (literally "IDF waves"), commonly known in Israel by its acronym Galatz, is a nationwide Israeli radio network operated by the Israel Defense Forces and funded mainly by the Ministry of Defense. The station broadcasts news, music, traffic reports and educational programs to the general public as well as some entertainment and informational programs for soldiers.

[38]For an interesting parallel example of the ways in which the media has linked Ethiopian Israeli Jews to Palestinians, see Don Seeman's 1999 article. "One People, One Blood: Public Health, Political Violence, and HIV in an Ethiopian-Israeli Setting," in *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 23 (1999): 159-195.

[39]See Dardashti 2001 for an elaboration on how class politics play a role here.

tensions are prevalent among Mizrahi and Palestinian Israeli musicians.

The Arab Orchestra of Nazareth has certainly struck a chord with the aging Arab Jewish community — in particular the Iraqis — in the Tel Aviv area, however. They are smitten by the Palestinian Israeli , the Orchestra's star singer, who performs all of their favorite classical Arab hits. These Iraqi immigrants — nostalgic for the music of their youth — keep the Orchestra in business, supporting concerts at Tel Aviv's prestigious Tzavta concert hall. , who does not perform with the Orchestra, mocks these concerts:

Fig. 5. Lubna Salame rehearsing with the Nazareth Orchestra, Nazareth 2003.

> I don't just look to make more money — it's not what's most important to me. I don't look to be the nice Arab. If I thought it would make a difference, that it would help — if packing a crowd with [Jewish] Iraqis and Egyptians at Tzavta would get them all to vote for *Meretz*[40] tomorrow — I would do it. If tomorrow they would give us a Palestinian state, *ya'alah.*[41] But why should I go and sing there? So they can cry and miss the Baghdad that they left? That's what I want to do with my life? No. It doesn't interest me. They can go home and listen to an Abdul Wahab album.

[40]*Meretz* is a left-wing social democratic political party in Israel that has historically advocated for peace.
[41]Arabic slang for "let's go."

As Murkus is well aware, the majority of these aging Arab Jews, who religiously attend the Arab Orchestra's performances, have very right-leaning political views, and vote predominantly for the Likud party. For her, there is a troubling discord on the part of audience members between the nostalgic music, which is adored, and the Palestinian Israeli performers, whose political rights are not valued.

The Audience

Most Palestinian Israeli musicians perform more frequently for Jewish Israeli audiences than they do for the Palestinian Israeli community, largely due to the latter's lack of infrastructure, and funding. Although most Palestinian Israelis live in small villages in the north of Israel, the majority of the concerts take place in the city centers of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Wassim Odeh, a talented young Conservatory student of the *oud* at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance and a member of the Arabic Orchestra of Nazareth, explained to me that he prefers Jewish audiences for other reasons as well:

> The Jewish population is more interested and they are accustomed to paying for concerts. Arabs here are mostly happy listening to recordings of Farid Al-Atrash. They are not accustomed to paying to come to concerts. If there is food and drink they will come and listen to the music, but to pay to come to hear the music — and sit silently for an hour and a half and to concentrate only on the music, not just hear it as background music — it isn't really part of their culture. Our concerts for the Jewish (Israeli) community are always successful — it doesn't matter what material we play. There is a lot of openness.

Sameer Makhoul, a teacher of Arabic music theory, *oud* and singing, and a performer of Arab music, expressed similar sentiments about preferring to perform for Jewish Israelis:

> The truth is that performing for a non-Arab audience is something different. It hears you a little differently — it has a different ear. So the reaction is a little different.… I don't know, I've always felt that they [Israeli Jews] really liked me. It's not that I'm the absolute best — but they liked me and I could feel it. With the

Arabs, it's similar but I guess they are already used to hearing this type of musician or singer … so maybe it's less interesting to them.

Fig. 6. Sameer Makhoul playing *oud* and singing in Jerusalem.

Audio sample nr. 6: "The Patridge Run" Sameer Makhoul from his 2004 album *Athar*.

Similarly, Taiseer Elias performs very little for the Palestinian Israeli community, since he prefers not to have to haggle about his compensation for performances; instead, he is invited by the Jewish Israeli establishment to perform at Israel's best concert halls. Like a few of the other Palestinian Israeli musicians to whom I spoke, Elias complained that while the warm reception of Arab music in Israel is heartening, he sometimes feels patronized by his mostly Jewish audiences:

> There is a large portion of the Jewish Western audience here that knows well how to appreciate good music. But there are also those who engage in "Corrective Discrimination" [affirmative action]. What do I mean? They want so much to be good and open and liberal and pro-Arab, and even though they don't really understand what is happening on stage they say 'Bravo! What a great *oud* player he is! Wow!' I can't stand that.… This is what I'm always trying to convey to journalists: I don't want you to say it was "nice." I want you to respect me as a musician and as a performer, just as you would a classical Western musician.

> Don't give me any compliments, OK? Don't say what a nice, cute, sweet Arab, OK? But to our dismay, this is a big trend so there are lots of mediocre groups that are successful. Not just in Israel, but throughout the world.

Although the Jewish Israeli audience may sometimes exhibit its enthusiasm for Arab music a bit too fervently for the comfort of Elias, he and some of the other successful Palestinian Israeli musicians have the opposite problem in their own communities. Although Elias has performed abroad for audiences of over 50,000 people, he doesn't feel that the Palestinian Israeli community is proud of his accomplishments. Elias has been written up in all the major Israeli mainstream newspapers as well as the *New York Times*, yet although he sends press releases to the local Arab newspapers the journalists do not write about him. He suspects that many Arabs are critical of him for being too cozy with the Israeli establishment and collaborating with Israeli Jews.

Another barrier for Palestinian Israeli musicians is their denied access to audiences in the Arab world. Israel seals its borders to most Arab countries for all its citizens (regardless of religion), due to constant hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors. Similarly, these same Arab governments deny Israeli citizens travel to their countries. Viewed as Israeli collaborators by their Arab brethren, Palestinian Israeli musicians have been largely unwelcome in Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq, where they might have found broad audiences. Nassim Dakwar, a prominent Palestinian Israeli Arab violinist and past member of *Bustan Abraham*, did succeed in bringing his Arab choir and ensemble to perform at Cairo's Opera House in 1990, as a group representing the country of Palestine; Israel was denied participation (Radwan 1997: 39). 2004 was an exciting year. For the first time, two Palestinian Israelis— both students of Taiseer Elias—were invited to compete in a prestigious student *oud* performance competition in Egypt. The two students received first and second places in the competition, demonstrating the potential of Palestinian Israeli musicians.

As Sameer Makhoul stated:

> As an Arab musician, I feel that I'm stuck in a cave, or in a locked room. I can't participate in Festivals in the Arab World. Why? I can't visit Arab countries.

> Why? I don't feel free as a musician. I would have liked to study, for example, in Iraq, or to have studied *oud* in Damascus — to study with musicians and singers and to think about things. I can't. It makes you burn inside. We — not just me — feel limited here in this country. (Interview with author, 2004)

All of those I interviewed agreed that, with peace, there would be many more opportunities for them. But for now they are doubly limited — as Arabs in Israel, and Israelis to the Arab world. They set their hopes on performances in Europe.

The Culture of Peace

Sigal, the singer described at the beginning of this paper, did eventually perform with the Nazareth Orchestra at the "Culture of Peace" Festival in Tel Aviv. As Nezar and Suheil explained to me, Moti insisted that she collaborate with them in order to produce a coexistence moment. Unfortunately, as Suheil had predicted, Sigal wasn't well received by either the Jews or the Palestinians in the audience. Sigal, a musician accustomed to performing at clubs rather than concert halls, didn't make the transition gracefully. Not only did her overly ornamented vocal rendition of Farid Al-Atrash's "Ya Gamil" fall flat, but her flirtatious dancing during the instrumental sections seemed quite out of place to audience members. Even some of the instrumentalists on stage appeared to be having a difficult time holding back their laughter. Early on in her performance of the piece, some members of the audience began talking amongst themselves fairly loudly — largely ignoring her performance.

The Nazareth Orchestra has performed widely in Europe and in some of the best venues in Israel thanks to the hard work of its manager, Moti. The members of the group are very well aware of Moti's importance to the success of the group and therefore try to accommodate his wishes, despite his lack of knowledge of Arabic music. But both Nezar and Suheil expressed their dissatisfaction with many of the decisions that Moti makes for them, including his insistence that they perform with Sigal.

Many of the other performances at Moti's "Culture of Peace" Festival were, however, very well received by audience members. In one such performance, the Palestinian Israeli singer Lubneh Salmah from Nazareth sang some of Oum Kalthoum's songs accompanied by the Nazareth Orchestra. This concert, in particular, attracted

Israelis of all types. Like most concerts featuring the music sung by Kalthoum, audiences evaluated the singer's performance on her ability to mimic the ornaments that Oum Kalthoum sang and on which she often improvised in her renowned performances of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. Nearly all in attendance greeted Salmah's performance with an enthusiastic standing ovation. At that point, the mayor of Nazareth came to the stage to thank the audience and the concert's benefactors. He began speaking in English, a more neutral language in Israel. When some members of the crowd yelled "*B'arabee*" ("speak in Arabic"), he contemplated this for a few seconds and then switched to Arabic. Some audience members — in particular Palestinian Israelis and some Mizrahim — cheered, proud to have Arabic spoken and sung at such a prestigious concert hall in Israel. The mayor delivered the entire speech in Arabic. Most Israelis do not speak Arabic, however, and my Israeli friend of Mizrahi background, who beamed with glee during the entire concert (which was performed solely in Arabic), was offended when this political figure spoke in a language not spoken by all in attendance, including her. Suddenly, a perfectly enjoyable concert of entertainment and cultural pride posed a nationalist threat.

Fig. 7. Lubna Salame with The Nazareth Orchestra at the 2003 "Culture of Peace" Festival in Tel Aviv.

Audio sample nr. 7: "Enta Omri" from the 2003 album *The Nazareth Orchestra, soloist Lubna Salame, Oum Kolthoom — The Anniversary Tribute*.

In his book, *The Festive State*, David Guss explains that as the festival "is transformed into an icon of 'national tradition,' a borrowed image of difference made to

stand for the nation as a whole … the subtle ambiguities of local performance, the layerings of history and context, must all but be eliminated" (Guss 2000: 13). Although, in the Arab world, Oum Kalthoum was viewed as one of the greatest symbols of a highly anti-Israeli Arab nationalism, here in the Israeli context at the "Culture of Peace" Festival, the performance of Oum Kalthoum's "Inta Oumri" (a piece constantly performed in Israel) serves as a means of bringing together Mizrahim, Ashkenazim, and Palestinian Israelis, putting differences aside. But when those on stage began speaking Arabic (as opposed to singing it), the moment of cultural harmony melted away, reminding those present of what divides them.

Concluding Thoughts

As some scholars have argued (Turino 2000; Guss 2000), in order for a specific style to become "nationalized," it must adapt so that it appeals to a wide variety of individuals within the society. In the process, however, some of the local forms become appropriated or distorted in ways that are offensive to those who claim ownership of these cultural practices. As investing in Arab culture in Israel is increasingly viewed as one of the gateways to peace, Palestinian Israeli musicians and their representatives have to navigate diverse interests in order to appeal for funding from the government, international NGOs, and private sponsors in Israel and abroad.

My intention is not to implicate culture brokers, especially in a place as fraught with cultural complexity as Israel. For the most part, their intentions are well meaning. In their quest to mainstream Middle Eastern and Arab music in Israel and appeal for available funding, however, culture brokers like Moti do sometimes offend and co-opt some of the very Palestinians they are attempting to support. Nevertheless, Moti continues his mission, believing that when his work is effectively executed, "the culture broker can facilitate participatory cultural transformation and change — both between and within culture groups" (Kurin 1997).

Moti is not alone in this belief. This article illustrates what I argue is an increasingly common phenomenon today: the deployment of music by a multitude of local and transnational players to solve the world's problems. Though it is tempting to cite all musical collaborations between Palestinian Israelis and Israeli Jews as evidence of

political prophecy or as the transcendence of conflicting ideologies, my analysis underscores the necessity of examining some of the external factors involved in shaping these musical innovations and encounters.

The Oslo process began a marked curiosity and openness toward Arab culture among Israelis that continues today. Only "desituated 'Arabness,' stripped of the threatening traces of Palestinian ethnonationalism" (Stein 2005: 268), however, is attractive to the majority of Israeli Jews. In light of the recent interest in Arab music in Israel, therefore, Palestinian Israeli musicians have much to gain in Israel, as long as they are willing to play by the rules dictated to them. They must maintain a delicate dance — convincing Israeli audiences that the Arab culture they showcase is "Israeli" rather than "Palestinian" — a potential threat to Israeli national culture.

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