

A Response to Ronit's Seter's Review of my Monograph *Paul Ben-Haim: His Life and Works* (Min-Ad 9 [2011], pp. 97-113).

Ronit Seter's review of my monograph is thorough and penetrating, and extends to an overview of my entire lifework research in Israeli art music (soon to be complemented by a monograph by Rotem Luz and myself on Yehezkel Braun). For that, I feel the highest appreciation for Ronit, who is one of the most dedicated scholars of Israeli art music today. It is precisely because of the thoroughness of the review that I have found it necessary to make a few clarifications and observations.

1. Ronit suggests that I could have rewritten the final chapter of the book to take into consideration the vast literature that followed Leonard Meyer's seminal *Music, the Arts, and Ideas* (Chicago, 1967). I have two comments to that. The first relates to the painful history of the publication of the new edition. The shameful demise of Israeli Music Publications, the publisher of the first English edition of the monograph (1990), was followed by the Court confiscating all its property, including the remaining copies of my book. My efforts to recover them hit a brick wall. Mr Paul Landau, the director of the Israeli Music Institute (IMI), eventually agreed with me that, after twenty years, the time had come for a new, revised edition. However, the efforts to receive a grant from the Ministry of Culture's Book Project to meet the costs of publication were long and arduous, and when funds were finally allocated they were insufficient. The IMI therefore agreed to the publication of a scanned version of the 1990 edition with corrections of the many typos and errors, required updates (such as the historical revival of the *Oratorio Joram*), and a complete editing of the full list of compositions. Mr Landau has done a dedicated and meticulous job, for which I am very grateful. There was no possibility whatsoever for any extensive rewriting. I also wish to add that, even now, I believe that I made my point based on Meyer's seminal book, and that any further expansion would have diverted the chapter into a broader discussion of twentieth century tonality, which would have been out of place.
2. Ronit describes the "troika"—Boskovich, Partos, and Seter—as a stylistically unified group. I disagree with her on that. Partos was the only Hungarian who studied in Budapest. Boskovich was not "a Bartok-Kodaly disciple" (p. 105), and he never studied in Budapest. Following his initial studies in Cluj and his brief period of piano studies in Vienna, his personality was shaped in his advanced studies in Paris under Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger. Seter had nothing to do with Budapest. Having immigrated with his family to Palestine at the age of 16, he studied in Paris. They were considered a "troika" only in the political sense, as the leading theory teachers at the Academy in Tel Aviv, where, for personal reasons of their own, they strongly resented Ben-Haim.
3. Ronit mentions Boskovich among the composers who composed arrangements for Bracha Zephira (p. 107), which was not the case. He did not "utilize her melodies" but rather composed four original songs for her, one of which,

*Adonai Roi*, is one of his best works and a superb composition in all respects, including the use of Zephira's magnificent voice.

4. Ronit's most acute criticism of Ben-Haim targets his personal attitude to Bracha Zephira, whom she describes using strong terms like "patronizing" and "racism." Personally, I strongly reject the attitude of the Ashkenazi Jews in the "Yishuv" toward the Yemenites. In my book, I criticized Ben-Haim's behavior—ignoring Zephira at his fiftieth birthday party in Jerusalem organized by his friends. However, I think that Ronit makes a serious mistake, in that she judges Ben-Haim from the vantage point of the present day rather than understanding his state of mind in the late 1930s and early '40s, the peak of his work with Zephira. Ronit describes his first three years in Palestine after his immigration in November 1933 as "years of tranquility" (p. 103) and acclimatization to his new surroundings. Those years were very far from tranquil. His first efforts were directed to making ends meet. He studied Hebrew through daily private lessons, mostly in order to be able to communicate with the young pupils at the Shulamit Music School, his only source of regular if meager income. He then put enormous efforts into arranging for his fiancée, Hely's conversion in Austria and her immigration to Palestine, all by mail and exhausting interviews in Jerusalem. Soon after her arrival, their only child was born in 1935. He then brought his aging father to Tel Aviv, a failed attempt since the ailing Heinrich Frankenurger could not adjust and returned to Munich, where he died in 1937. At the same time, his sister, who had settled in Haifa, died of cancer. Indeed, hardly a tranquil period! His meeting with Zephira coincided with the outbreak of war and his anxiety for his last sister in Munich (she was murdered in Auschwitz), and the frightening advance of the Nazi army through Egypt. For him, the engagement to accompany Zephira as pianist in her performances all over the country was an exhausting effort, traveling by the primitive bus system of the 1930s with the sole purpose of earning a tiny but much needed fee. It is true that he greatly appreciated the opening of the world of the Eastern ethnic song, which he incorporated into his symphonic and chamber compositions. Yet, Bracha Zephira herself told me in my interview with her in the early 1980s that, in her youthful years, her sole interest had been "to sing" and to perform on stage. It was only much later, when her contacts with Ben-Haim diminished to a minimum, that she came to appreciate her own achievement in spreading the Eastern tradition. It is true that this young Yemenite artist with her stormy temperament never became part of Ben-Haim's new circle of friends, most of whom were immigrants from Germany. But this is far from racism!
5. My use of the term "art song" by no means is intended to degrade Ben-Haim's Zephira arrangements. I use the term in comparison with "Lied" in order to distinguish between Ben-Haim's numerous German Lieder and the genre of the Hebrew art song that he himself created.

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