

"Guteism": Facilitating Jewish Joy

An Ethnographic Study of an Israeli Wedding Ensemble

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Abstract: The current study focuses on a group of graduates of Israel's musical high school for Jewish National Religious boys who have reunited as an ensemble called *Gute Gute* (Yiddish for "Good, Good"). The purpose of this study is to explore group members' experience and conceptualizations of making a living and making music, and to learn how the members of the ensemble work to design, plan, manage, and perform Jewish wedding ceremonies and celebrations. Findings present the ensemble as enacting a marriage between Slobin's (1993) notions of "banding" – business, material, functional and practical aspects of communal music making – and "bonding" – transcendental aspects of ensemble member's experience and phenomenological ensemble rationale. Ensemble member's phenomenological reasoning reveals mystical underpinnings as instrumental in conceptualization of rationales that balance their experience of making a living and making music, and synthesizes ritual with transcendence. Ensemble members envision themselves as facilitators of a triumph of spirit over matter that I interpret as *Guteism: Facilitating Jewish Joy*.

Keywords: community music ensemble; ethnography; Jewish Israeli music; music education

"Guteism" in Action: Opening Vignette

As I make my way from the parking lot to the garden I can hear live music playing. As I get closer I spot the ensemble standing under a tree in a semicircle facing the bride. Meir is geared with a marching-band snare with one cymbal. They are playing acoustic with no microphones. The bride looks excited: she is clapping and dancing, pulling friends into a circle to dance with her. I can't help but smile and share in the joy of the moment.

The groom is far away in a side room at the other side of the garden, surrounded by men. The ceremony will begin with a procession of men leading the groom to the bride's garden chair. There he will cover the bride's face with her veil. The men will then walk the groom to the canopy where the ceremony will take place. The bride will stay in her chair, whisper a special prayer, surrounded by women, and wait for the men to come back and lead her to the canopy.

As they play, ensemble members talk between them, negotiating what to play next. Meir breaks the rhythm, and Yehuda follows by changing the bass rhythm and harmony. Ira notices Yehuda's change of harmony, watching Yehuda's hand maneuver along the neck of the double bass. Ira

follows Yehuda's harmonic queues on accordion. Akiva joins in on guitar and voice. Amitai is last to join, but when he plays he punctuates the melody on his clarinet by jumping up and down. With both hands firmly set on his huge double bass, Yehuda's feet leave the ground too, as he answers Amitai, with some jumps of his own.

They have moved to "Od Yishama" and this hints to the crowd that the groom will be coming soon to cover the face of the bride. The crowd responds, singing and dancing along with the ensemble. Excitement rises and falls as the women anticipate the groom's procession, but he lingers. The ensemble fades out and they break their position. They split up and start walking fast towards the groom's room. They have a job to do: the musicians are the ones who are going to signal to the groom that it's time.

The men seem calmer than the women. They are dancing slowly in a well-organized circle. Someone motions to the groom, and the musicians quicken the rhythm and tempo. A group of young men line up in front of the groom - facing him, they dance backwards leading the procession. Behind the groom the musicians follow. The men sing along and dance as they walk. I tag along from a distance, trying to avoid the video camera.

Mid way the tempo slows down and the procession switches to a sentimental mood. An air of seriousness envelops the men, and they walk slowly now. From afar we can see the bride's chair and I hear the women singing, clapping and dancing in a quick and excited tempo that now contrasts with the men's slow seriousness. Yehuda has stayed next to the bride, and he accompanies the women's singing with his bass and voice. The mixed sounds of the mens' procession and the womens' anticipation creates a moment of cacophony: The women shout, jump and cheer; the men sing a melodic niggun. As they approach, the mens' solemn niggun overrides the womens' cheerful excitement. Yehuda's bass falls in line with the niggun that the rest of the ensemble are playing behind the groom: The ensemble has been re-united; The groom's procession has arrived at the bride's garden, and his music takes over.

Men and women in the crowd shout and cheer as the groom lowers the bride's veil over her face. The music picks up and the second mens' procession begins as the groom is lead away from the bride towards the canopy. The musicians follow the groom, and as they move away the bride's garden is left to silence. This time Yehuda walks along with his tremendous double bass in hand. Akiva breaks away from the mens' procession and returns to face the bride's chair.

The bride is silently reciting her special prayer. Akiva stands before her with his guitar and begins a slow, sentimental tune. Women join in humming. Now the tables are turned – the men shout, cheer, dance and jump in the distance, and the women maintain melodic lyricism. They are singing "Let this hour be an hour of grace and goodwill before you, O Lord". Akiva looks as if he is not just singing: he is praying for her; praying with her; praying for himself. He stands before the bride: eyes closed, swaying back and forth, immersed in song and unaware of talking and noise around him. He proceeds to another song, singing the words "Great Love, Lord, you have given them". Finally, he continues to "Come in peace, O bride", starting slow, and picking up the pace. Akiva is trying to make a gradual shift of tempo, but as soon as she hears the opening of this song the bride perks up, starts clapping, and singing. Pushing the tempo ahead, the bride is anxious to be lead to the canopy ceremony where the couple will be married.

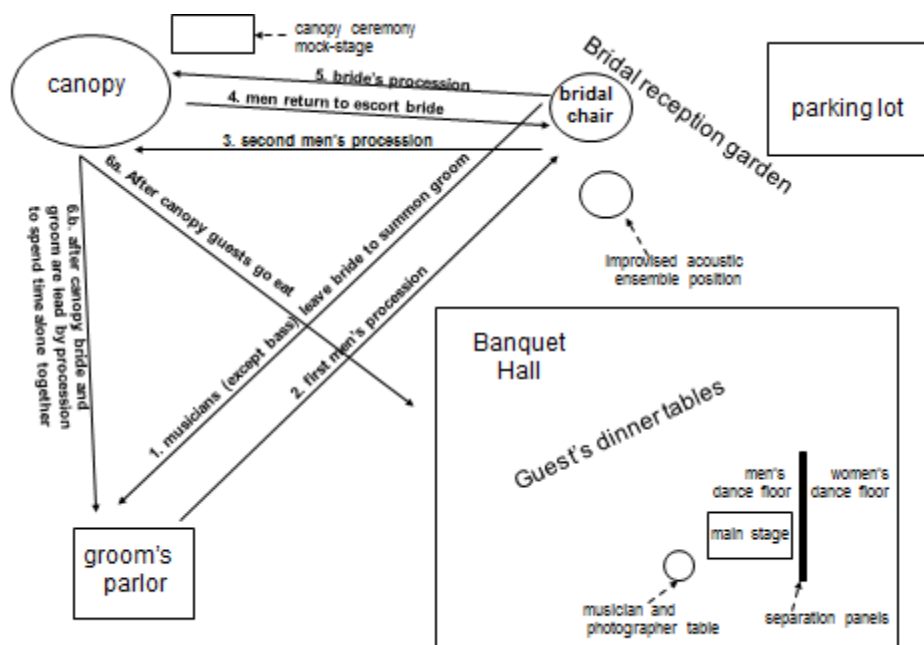


Figure 1: Wedding procession diagram

1. Background, Purpose, and Design

1.1 Why a Wedding Ensemble?

A recent research collaboration between Muslim and Jewish music educators in contemporary Israel described the common tendency of Jewish and Arab male religious music education high school graduates to work in wedding ensembles (Badarne & Ehrlich, in print). Badarne & Ehrlich explained this line of work as appealing to young musicians as a way to ensure an income without leaving music, while maintaining religious and cultural affiliation. Some of the young musicians studied expressed tensions between playing at functional community events and personal fulfillment of artistic inclination. As they establish themselves as a wedding ensemble, group members continue to contemplate, and sometimes pursue, parallel musical activities and higher education studies. At the same time, members of such ensembles often work to find creative outlets of originality, musicianship, and professionalism within the framework of community wedding ceremonies and celebrations.

1.2 Making a Living; Making Music

The purpose of this study is to follow-up on post-school musical lives of graduates of Israel's musical high school for Jewish national religious boys. The current study focuses on a group of graduates who have reunited as an ensemble called "Gute Gute" (Yiddish for "Good, Good"). Although formed as a professional artistically inclined group, "Gute Gute" ensemble made a name for themselves by performing mostly at community events and Jewish weddings. In this study I explore group members' experience of making a living and making music. Exploring how the members of the ensemble work to design, plan, manage, and perform Jewish wedding ceremonies and celebrations.

Many students graduating from Israel's national musical high school for Jewish national-religious boys choose to work as wedding ensemble musicians. Deeper understanding of the ways in which young Jewish wedding ensembles work together, design, plan, practice, and perform can inform a re-thinking of the musical high school's curricular outline and pedagogical approach. Furthermore, insight can be gained into constructs of professional identity of young musicians working to bridge the gap between income and creative outlet, within the situated social context of the national religious sector of contemporary Israel.

The current study explores these aspects of the chosen musical wedding ensemble through two main research questions:

1. How do this high-school graduate ensemble's group members interact in planning, creating, and facilitating Jewish wedding ceremonies and celebrations?
2. How do these young musicians negotiate between making a living and making music, as individuals and as a group?

In pursuit of these research questions, I pursued an ethnographic approach, allowing me to attend to personal and group constructs of individual and group professionalism and musicianship. Through observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and artifact collection, I hoped to learn as much as possible about the work habits, conceptualizations and perceptions of "Gute Gute" ensemble members.

All research interactions took place in Hebrew. Translation into English I embraced Liamputting's (2010) "interpretative flexibility" (p. 11) approach to language in cross-cultural research. This entailed a general avoidance of literal translations and in preference of equivalences of meaning rather than linguistic parallels. I further recognized translation as an integral part of data analysis because of the act of interpretation that it involved. Final member checks included participants reading and responding to the English versions of data.

1.3 Interfaces of Music, Religion, Spirituality, and Education

I chose this particular ensemble for study as an example of Patton's (2002 in Glesne 2011) notion of "information-rich cases" (p. 44). The sampling considerations included convenience and networking, alongside an intuitive speculation that this group embodies some theories of local music making that are relevant to my continuing theorizing and study. Previous personal knowledge and experience of "Gute Gute" lead me to believe that the group would provide ample and interesting scope for the current study that can tie into other studies of mine on interfaces of music, religion, spirituality, and education in contemporary Israel. In preparation for this project I utilized my on-going friendship with core "Gute Gute" members, whom I taught music when they were in high-school.

At the time of the study, group members were all young male Israelis ages ranging between 21-29, three of whom were married, and three single. The ensemble included: Meir on drums; Akiva on guitar and voacls; Ira on accordion; Gershon on violin and vocals; Amitai on clarinet; and Yehuda on Double bass. Four out of six were enrolled in various forms of higher education in music, and also working in formal or informal music education alongside playing in ensembles. Data was collected throughout the March-April 2014 Jewish wedding season. The study entailed observations, interviews, and collection of artifacts. Observation included one three- hour practice session and three five- hour weddings.

1.4 The Academic Interloper: Crashing Weddings for Research Purposes

Acting as a kind of interloper to community ceremonies of this sort, I took care to adhere to appropriate dress codes, and worked to avoid disrupting or disturbing any traditions of gender segregation and modesty. Finding an appropriate stance for full observation of ensemble interactions during rituals and dancing ceremonies, I logged observations in my hand written field notebook. Occasional video, audio or visual photographs supplement recorded data.

Throughout the observation process, I considered any documents that could enhance the study. Thus, event contracts, ensemble business cards, playlists, and any other relevant printed materials were scanned or photographed. E-mail correspondence between ensemble members and the researcher was saved and copied into an additional data file. Sample videos, photos, and sound recordings of ensemble interactions in performance and practice were logged as additional material.

As I analyzed and coded data, I e-mailed transcripts to study participants for member checks. All data was thus verified and confirmed. I also shared my data and initial analyses with non-Israeli and non- Jewish friends who provided external perspective in

commenting on findings, interpretations and conclusions. These perspectives were especially crucial due to my own personal involvement in the cultural context of the study, in order to verify comprehension and coherence of data and analysis to cultural outsiders.

My role as researcher interacted with my own cultural identity – socially and religiously speaking I belong to the same social circles as the "Gute Gute" ensemble members. My interaction with core ensemble members was influenced by past teacher - student, and current collegial and friendship, relationships. Technically functioning as a non-participant observer, this stance was sometimes complicated by occasional emotional moments of flow, joining in by singing along to myself or out-loud, even dancing before the bride at one point.

In order to keep track of these complexities of researcher interaction, elements of my process in the study were logged in a computer typed reflective journal. Responses aroused by field note and recording transcriptions, and reflections on interactions of self-embedded in the study were thus tracked. Emotional responses and suspected enactments of bias were confessed for further attention in data analysis. Finally, a theme coded as "researcher involvement" emerged as evident in the triangulation of all data sources. This theme was integrated into the emerging ensemble philosophy, where the role of researcher interacted with the notions of reception of musical performance, participation through audition, and performer – audience interactions.

2. Philosophical Framework

2.1 Joy as Religious Dictate

Ethnographic understanding of the experiences of Jewish wedding ensemble musicians begins with the recognition of the Jewish law behind some of the wedding traditions (e.g. Diamant, 2001; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Rosmarin et al, 2009; Van Praag et al, 2010). Jewish law – *halacha* – defines the bringing of joy to a bride and groom on their wedding day as equivalent to the re building of the Jewish nation; and to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.¹ The rationale of this dictate is that in every new union of marriage the Jewish nation is indeed being built and rebuilt. Joy – particularly through music and through dancing – at a traditional Jewish wedding is not just a courtesy, or a spontaneous expression of emotion, but actually a religious decree.

¹ See: *Mishna, Brachot, 6:2; Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer, 65.*

2.2 "Banding and Bonding"

While working through the major themes that emerged throughout study I organized the themes into a working model expressive of the suggested ensemble philosophy – what I interpret "Gute Gute" is all about, and how it works. My main framework became that of Slobin's (1993) conceptualization of "banding" and bonding". My model thus presents the ensemble as enacting a marriage between "banding" – business, material, functional and practical aspects of communal music making – and "bonding" – transcendental aspects of ensemble member's experience and phenomenological ensemble rational.

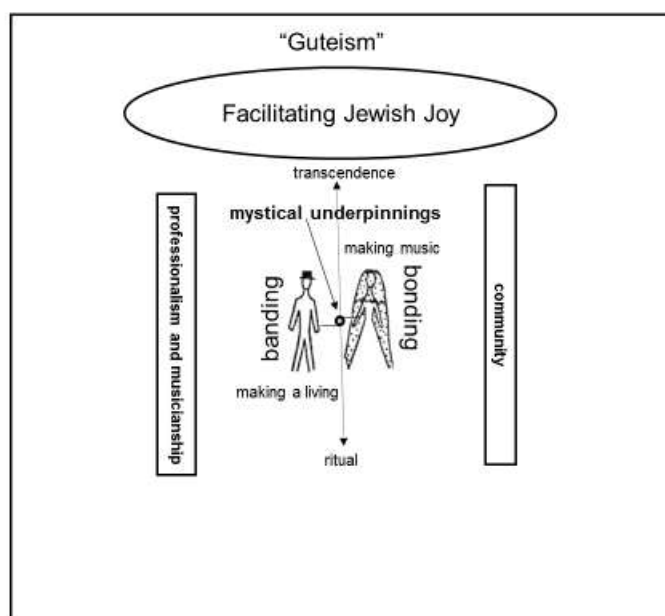


Figure 2: *Guteism* working model and major themes

Typical social stereotyping applied in suggesting "banding" as male and "bonding" as female may be a potential locus for postmodern dispute. Nevertheless, such stereotyping can be deeply grounded in gender paradigms of music and music making (e.g. Green, 1997; Koskoff, 1989), and may furthermore be appropriate in the religiously conservative context of the study.

Mystical underpinnings are represented in the diagram as the ring – a symbolic token used to enact the union. Ensemble member's phenomenological reasoning revealed mystical underpinnings as instrumental in conceptualization of personal and group rationales that balance their experience of making a living and making music. This union of the material and the spiritual takes place on an axis that combines ritual with transcendence. Ensemble members envision themselves as agents of transformation, core constituents in establishing the transcendent aspect of the ceremony and celebration ritual.

In interview, Yehuda insisted that "Musicians serve holiness in their service". Akiva later explained how this works:

Any religious framework you can look at it as a circle of repetitive rituals: From the morning prayer straight through to weddings: If you've got to repeat everything with no alteration.... rituals are hard. You can get bored...Rituals are an invitation to something deeper. It can't be that anyone really intends everyone to stand and recite the very same words, time after time. No one man can repeat, no two people can say the same word and mean the same meaning. Everything is super subjective: the meanings behind the words and actions are what make the words and the actions. If you live in the external dimension of things it's very easy to get bored.

Negotiations of inner meanings through application of mystical underpinnings emerged as an evident common means for ensemble members to transcend the problems of functional repetition. Indeed, conversation with ensemble members often became immersed with terminologies from Jewish mysticism and *Kabbalah*. Speaking of his overall take on life and religion, Akiva summarized:

At the end of the day it's all *light and containers*: the containers don't change and we don't expect them to, because our bodies don't change - your eye color doesn't change and we didn't choose how to be born, and we didn't choose how the world around us should change. But the essence - we can change that every morning.

When asked to elaborate on the unique quality he finds in the ensemble, Meir falls into Kabbalistic language:

It's hard to explain. You know it's like the *external of the internal* verses the *internal of the internal*. Other bands are about the *external of the internal*. "Gute Gute" is about the *internal of the internal*.

In response to these expressions, I titled what ensemble members actually perceive themselves as doing as Facilitating Jewish Joy – enabling and enhancing the enactment of the commandment of joy traditionally associated with the ritual of Jewish marriage. Figure 2 thus presents my conceptualization of "Guteism" as a graphic working model that combines structure with content.

3. Findings

3.1 "Banding"

Gigging weddings is a business. During the focus group discussion, Yehuda acknowledged this business as "a good way for a musician to a secure income". Akiva, one of the married group members, expressed the difficulty of working nights, telling me that he tries to save

one night a week to be with his wife. Akiva further expressed financial tensions in priding himself in his commitment to public transportation:

It took me about two hours to get here! But on the other hand it only cost me 12 NIS. You're talking to a man committed to balancing income with expenses. I sold my car. I had to. But at the end of the year I'm going to buy a car. My wife and I will move somewhere where rent doesn't cost so much.

Meir's own financial considerations were expressed in a story he told me about his wife forcing him to employ a personal business coach. Nevertheless, Meir balances business interests with personal inclinations:

There are gigs that I refuse. Actually, just today I said no to a gig offer: I was offered a job playing a wedding with another ensemble that you know – let's not mention names – anyways, I just said no... It's funny. At the end of that conversation I apologized to that band leader, saying I was sorry that I couldn't help out. He replied: `What do mean help out? I was trying to help *you* out with the work offer`. I assured him that I'm doing just fine. He's in it for making a living. I'm not there anymore.

Yehuda acts as the main business administrator for "Gute Gute". At both weddings I witnessed him negotiating with future potential clients. At one event I overheard Yehuda negotiating with a couple that came to observe the ensemble in action. During the reception Yehuda "talks business" with them, describing possibilities for ensemble engagement:

We can play background for the reception, and sometimes couples want us to accompany the processions and canopy ceremonies. Now, even if you plan to have a DJ for the dancing, sometimes couples ask us to stick around and open the dancing with a few more traditional Jewish dances before the DJ takes over. In any case the overall cost comes to about 7 or 8 thousand. For you guys we may be able to bring it down to around 5 thousand.

While Yehuda works to secure potential clients, Amitai is busy with ensemble advertising and PR. During the dinner break at one of the weddings, I overheard Amitai complaining about "inconsiderate waiters who throw away our magnets when they clear tables. I don't mind about business cards, but magnets are expensive". Dinner conversation then continued to a debate between the prominence of "ears or eyes" in capturing future potential clients.

3.2 Mystical Underpinnings

Conversation with ensemble members often became immersed with terminologies from Jewish mysticism and *Kabbalah*. Speaking of his overall take on life and religion, Akiva summarized:

At the end of the day it's all *light and containers*: the containers don't change and we don't expect them to, because our bodies don't change - your eye color doesn't change and we didn't choose how to be born, and we didn't choose how the world around us should change. But the essence - we can change that every morning.

Describing the timeliness of his invitation to join "Gute Gute", Meir expressed a belief that life itself "has a musical rhythm to it". When asked to elaborate on the unique quality he finds in the ensemble, Meir falls into Kabbalistic language:

It's hard to explain. You know it's like the *external of the internal* verses the *internal of the internal*. Other bands are about the *external of the internal*. "Gute Gute" is about the *internal of the internal*.

During the focus group discussion, Yehuda recalls high school and pre-army seminar teachings about the sanctity of music:

Musicians serve holiness in their service: it's not just like every other type of human occupation and service. Maybe some plumbers also serve holiness, but musicians have it built in. It's not the same.

3.3 Musicianship and Professionalism

Mysticism and individual and group philosophies further assist ensemble members in negotiation of professional identity. Amitai is adamant, and repeatedly expressed a deep tension between his own creative ownership in "Gute" and the fact that the ensemble is currently focused on gigging weddings:

In no way is playing at weddings the artistic goal of my life. But it is something that when I'm a part of it I can say: I am doing what I am meant to do. But that is specific to "Gute Gute" and not when I play at other weddings. With other ensembles when I play weddings I feel I'm filling in a spot.

Yehuda agrees that "Weddings are no more than a means for making a living". Yehuda is critical of the way that the ensemble functions during wedding ceremonies. During the one of canopy ceremony I noticed some problems:

This is the song that the couple requested for this moment but that the ensemble neglected to practice last night. Gershon and Ira are barely playing, just ornamenting here and there: they don't really know the song.... After the blessing the ensemble looks hesitant. Amitai tries the opening of a melody, but no one joins in. Amitai stops and whispers to Akiva. The rabbi continues the ceremony and Amitai and Akiva go on whispering. It looks like they're not sure what to do. There is a break in the ceremony and a tense silence. Amitai tries to start the melody again. The others join in. Between the ceremony blessings the ensemble looks tense. They are not sure and don't always agree when to step in. The result is some tense moments of silence

in between stages of the ceremony, and an uncomfortable tenseness fills the air. At one point someone under the canopy mistakenly knocks a bottle of wine to the floor and it shatters and breaks. The crowd responds by calling out "Mazal Tov! Mazal Tov!" to cover up the embarrassment. Akiva picks up on this and starts a rhythmic tune and the ensemble joins in. This music releases tension.

After this ceremony Yehuda voluntarily confessed his disappointment to me: "None of us really know the profession. Our timing was off, we didn't fill in the quiet spots like we should have".

During rehearsal Meir was critical of musical standards of the group, complaining about tempo changes:

Speaking up for the first time tonight, Meir addresses the group: "Look, every time we make a transition into a new song you either speed up or slow down. It's never exactly in time".

Ira didn't sympathize with Meir's criticism and asked: "Why complain about that?". Amitai insisted that "there's nothing to do about that, it's good enough. This is not a performance", and finally claiming: "You know what, Meir? You're a professional!!! God bless you!".

When asked about professional standards, Yehuda is quick to admit that "rehearsals aren't even that professional". In conversation with Meir, Yehuda summarized:

Yehuda: The vibe of live performance is where something special happens .

Meir: Oh yes! Tremendous! I am always amazed at the enormous gap between rehearsal and actual performance!

Yehuda: It's what we were saying before. The whole "Gute" thing happens when there is an audience. It's amazing when you think of it: the professional side of it actually emerges only in live performance.

As they gig weddings, Meir dreams of "quiet space and time to compose" his own music. Meir runs a percussion department in a local community center, and plays with several avant-garde ensembles for music, poetry, and dance. Amitai is a classical clarinet major Academy undergraduate, dreaming of international Klezmer festivals. Yehuda is debating his future, "torn between performance and music education". Akiva defines himself as a "student of music", but goes on to question: "but what does that mean anyways?". To a certain extent their lack of wedding expertise is indicative of alternate aspirations.

3.4 Repertoire

The mixed musical lives of ensemble members is evident in their chosen repertoire. Dancing celebrations are organized into two song sequences. I witnessed these sequences

in rehearsal, and on stage, and compiled on print-out playlists. It was easy to notice the predominance of sophisticated more authentic Hassidic *niggun*s in both sequences. Amitai commented during rehearsal, citing one of these songs:

You see all other ensembles would either not play this or save it for the second sequence. 'Gute Gute' play it in the first sequence, and that's what we're about!

Later during the same session, Amitai was less convinced, asking Yehuda: "So we have two *niggun*s in this sequence that we don't all know great. Is this a good idea?". Yehuda is certain:

This is exactly what this couple is looking for. This is their style! We have to do it! This is an important wedding – an important circle in the national religious community. These are *Dosim*² that we need on our side!

Akiva understands and interprets Yehuda's words:

Dosim who appreciate *good* music. Who can *pay* for good music. Who *pay money* for *music* – not for Hassidic pop trash.

During the actual weddings I witnessed incorporation of American, British, and Israeli pop tunes and some light jazz standards as background music during receptions. Canopy ceremonies combined Ashkenazi – European based melodies, with Sephardi – Oriental rhythmic tunes.

In rehearsal Yehuda described the second dance sequence as a time "when only close friends of the bride and groom are left, and everyone's already got some alcohol working on them". Nevertheless, stylistic eclecticism and high and more difficult musical standards are evident in their compliment of Hassidic *niggun*s, Eretz Israeli songs³, Klezmer classics, pop songs, and even an original composition called "Gershon's Gigue". I reflected in my journal on the similarity of repertoire (especially in the second dance sequence) to "Gute Gute" professional performances I had attended in the past:

Israeli "Zemer" folk-like songs alternate with Hebrew Pop music alongside more traditional Jewish - Hassidic melodies. As I listen, names of songs and melodies no longer come to mind, but are all familiar to me from "Gute Gute" community performances I have attended when the ensemble worked weddings less and focused on performing on small stages and venues around Jerusalem.

² *Dosim* is a common Israeli colloquial word used to describe religious Orthodox Jews.

³ Eretz Israeli song, as defined by Shahar (1993).

3.5 "Bonding"

Cooperation and collaboration evident in teaching and learning is only part of the communal music making experience of "Gute Gute". Amitai confessed that for him a major factor of the "Gute" experience is "first of all about friends and sharing and partnership". Regarding the joint management of the group, Amitai laughed as he admitted that his and Yehuda's relationship includes "some aspects of couplehood". I witnessed this at one of the weddings, when Amitai asked Yehuda "who's drinking tonight?", explaining that they always decide on a designated driver so one of them can drink. After settling that issue, Amitai returned from the bar with two glasses of white wine. Yehuda, disappointed, later went and got himself a glass of red. "Amitai is worried about staining his shirt", he explained. This exchange reminded me of married couples.

In his interview Yehuda described the ensemble as originating as "a joint creative effort of three friends". Addressing the current state of the group, Yehuda added that "'Gute Gute' is about Amitai, me, Meir and Akiva: Akiva is in on it too.". Friendship, partnership, and bonding thus function as part of the ensemble experience. On stage this translates into Swayer's (2006) notion of "group flow":

Yehuda is not playing his bass. He is singing with eyes closed, and hand gestures that imitate melodic nuance. It looks like he is praying. Akiva turns his back on the audience and makes eye contact with Meir and Yehuda, as he jumps and dances...Most guests have left by now. I feel a drop of energy, but the musicians go on playing with much fervor and enthusiasm as before. Akiva, Amitai, and Yehuda jump as they play, and all the musicians sing along as they play.

3.6 Community

This sense of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) often spilled over into the audience. During the first course of dinner at one wedding the ensemble ran a sound check on stage. I noted how "the wedding guests eat and do not notice the music, but two small children stop and stand opposite the stage looking mesmerized". Towards the end of the second dance sequence I noticed the groom alone on an empty dance floor, "standing to face the ensemble, he claps in rhythm like a devote fan". Throughout the rituals and the dancing I noticed the subtle interactions between ensemble and audience in the timed and appropriate response to shifts in musical tempo, rhythm and style:

The second dance sequence is more varied in style than the first. Israeli "Zemer" folk-like songs; Hebrew Pop music; traditional Jewish - Hassidic melodies. The crowd is responsive to these stylistic changes, singing along and dancing slightly differently to each style.

During the focus group discussion Yehuda explained his philosophy on the function of audience:

I've known this for years, and you've probably heard me say this: part of the creative flow is the interaction with the audience. Sometimes, especially when things don't work...like if there's something that I feel doesn't really work, with an audience it may very well work! My happiness is in seeing the audience happy – that's great! That's the goal!

Asked to share a particularly significant moment Amitai described a "Gute" community of active listeners, in a story about a spontaneous neighborhood performance:

We thought of setting up in the neighborhood shelter and playing. Thursday night we posted on Facebook and invited friends to come join us for some singing and playing Saturday night. 70-80 people showed up that night at the shelter and filled every spare spot on the carpet. No big commercial advertisements, no PR, no production, just some candles and some beers, coffee, and a load of people thirsty for the simple and good "Gute" spirit.

As he spoke, I identified myself in his words. Later, I reflected on my own affiliation with this community:

Before I began my doctorate studies I was much more available, and had an active night life that included hanging out with dear musician friends. "Gute Gute" was an ensemble I must have heard at least five times in live performance back then. Now that I have selected them as an object of study, I am still emotionally involved. I am still part of the "Gute" community Amitai was talking about. Perhaps this study is also an excuse for me to hang out with them again, on research time. Perhaps me being a part of it enables me to tell their story?

Throughout the wedding events, guests approached the musicians to congratulate them. Many of them have a personal acquaintance with group members, and a community affinity is evident in the ensemble's participation in these events: they are not strangers. Akiva addressed this merging of community affiliation and business in the phone conversation to his wife: "Being at the wedding of a friend, making the bride and groom – a friend – happy, and getting paid for all that: what more could one ask?".

3.7 "Guteism"

Original research questions address "how" the ensemble works, and "how" these young musicians define themselves. During data collection a very big "what" emerged – the aspect of what it is that ensemble members perceive that they are doing. "Guteism" is the framing

term suggested by Amitai during the first focus group discussion that took place in the Academy cafeteria:

Music History professors of the future will teach about *Guteism*. *Guteism* is not just a style of music, it's a personality, an inclination of spirit. It means: I'm here to make you happy. This is my role in the world. This is what I know how to do. Even if you don't pay me. Even if you don't feel like it!

Yehuda laughed at Amitai's description, but immediately complemented his partner's words by adding: "Even if *I* don't feel like it!". Without missing a beat, Meir picked up on Yehuda's addition:

What motivates me to play even when I don't feel like it? The message I am passing on through playing music. If you have a message that you want to get across it doesn't matter how you play, you get it across. But why is it special with "Gute Gute"? Very often you know and feel that the message is in your own heart. Or in his heart. Or his. But in "Gute Gute" it's in the heart of the group – *the heart of "Gute"*. I feel this inside of me.

Even in conversation the three core group members seemed to pick up on each other's riffs and fell into a groove-like sync. In later separate individual interviews, they were given a chance to solo. Echoing agreement, they added tones of personal nuance when individually asked to expand on what "Gute Gute" means to them:

Yehuda: "Gute" is my home for creativity aimed at making people happy. Less a home for deep personal creativity from the heart. More a place for me to do simple good in the world through music.

Amitai: "Gute Gute" is first of all about friends and sharing and partnership. It is a home for creativity and for a soul based inner working with music.

Meir: It's the people, and it's the "how". It's an attitude. It's less about repertoire and more about spirit. It's like a kind of window. An opening to another place, or a beginning of a new place, that place that I was looking for, something that's more "right".

Akiva insisted that "that inner place is what 'Gute' is about", describing the "Gute" ensemble members as "people in motion looking for soul".

Amitai contrasts playing with other functional ensembles to his experience in "Gute", referring to his function in other community gigs as "supplying a service". Having proposed a deep theoretical conceptualization of "Guteism", Amitai also suggested that freindship and creative ownership are at play in this distinction, when he described "Gute" as "a safe space" where he feels "worthwhile, feel where I belong, and feel important".

Meir, a core but not original group member, distinguishes between his experience as a functional music maker before and after joining "Gute":

...before I joined you I really was more of a service supplier. But since I've joined "Gute Gute", even when I play with other groups I feel "Gute Gute".

Describing a gig with a local commercial musician that he knows I don't really admire, Yehuda assures me:

I find that even when the music upsets me, or frustrates me, I can still bring myself to it – I can give it something of me... He makes his audiences happy. It touches them. He doesn't "ask" much of them, but they respond. ...

Meir and Yehuda's testimonies suggest that "Guteism" can be transferred to other functional and non-functional musical contexts.

3.8 Facilitating Jewish Joy

The context of this current study situates "Gute Gute" ensemble in the peak of 2014 Spring Jewish wedding season. Amitai expresses frustration at my timing of this study, wishing I could observe them at what he called a "*real* performance". Always consciously feeding me bits of ensemble history, Amitai reminded me that the group was not formed for the purpose of gigging weddings. In response to this reminder, Yehuda shared a personal hunch that "that's all the magic: that's why it works".

"Gute Gute" member's constructs of musicianship and professionalism complicate the question of what it means to be a professional wedding musician. While they sometimes fail in perfect facilitation of the ceremony aspects, musically speaking they present a unique quality and style. In some respects lack of *wedding* professionalism is testimony to their *musical* professionalism, or at least aspirations.

In our car conversation, Akiva explained his role as wedding musician:

Weddings are serious events. And you ask yourself: What am I doing here? What is all this crap? All this extravagance? And then you stop and think about it: people have put down money to express their love, or some other inner feeling that they want to convey to their son or their relative, something that they can't express on their own. So here they pay a person that they think can express it right, and you are that person who is credited as the one who can express it, who can do it right. So now go and do it right, in a way that connects to the essence of the people and the reason they hired you. Don't just be a court clown. Even if they think that's what they hired you for. Sometimes people who hire you don't even know what they really hired you for. It is about a couple - to them this is the happiest day of their life! Then it can't be a plastic smile. It just can't be a plastic smile. You were invited to smile,

invited to be happy. To make people happy. Being happy is the most difficult ritual of all. When it doesn't come from deep inside.

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

Interpreting ensemble workings and philosophies as a marriage of "banding" and "bonding" applies Slobin's (1993) ethnomusicological framework in the study of the working lives of musical "bands for hire". While "Gute Gute" members expressed tensions between commercial aspects of making a living and musical artistic inclinations, they do not seem frustrated by playing while audiences eat and dance. The philosophy of "Guteism" exhibits a triumph of spirit over matter.

"Gute Gute"'s function in facilitating Jewish joy play upon constructs of happiness underpinned by religious and mystical inclinations, as suggested by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998). These constructs of happiness exemplify Diamant's (2001) interpretation of Jewish wedding folklore as a core religious obligation to bring joy. Van Praag et al's (2010) correlations between Jewish religious notions of family and happiness match the quality of triumph of spirit over matter. The "Gute" approach further acts as a qualitative example to answer Rosmarin et al's (2009) questioning of functions of religion in psychological constructs of Jewish happiness. The contextual combination of music religious ritual and happiness emergent in the "Gute" experience furthers Hills & Argyle's (1998) parallel between musical and religious transcendental experience.

Implications for Further Study

Knowing that wedding ensembles are a likely future for graduates of Israel's National Religious Musical High School for boys suggests re-thinking curriculum design in light of understanding this experience. Balance between "banding and bonding" as a prime constituent of these young Jewish musicians' experience stresses the importance of cultivating awareness of transcendental aspects of music making. Mystic underpinnings of musical practice function as personal advocacy and help balance tensions between making a living and artistic inclinations. Work can be done to raise future musicians' awareness and develop their own underpinnings and philosophies of music making.

Additional thought can be given to developing pedagogies supportive of the cultivation of informal communal music making. Musical and organizational leadership roles can also be incorporated as preparation for future post-graduation aspirations.

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