JEWISH MUSIC 101

STUDENT WORKSHEET

סיפורי מוסיקה STORIES OF MUSIC



A PROGRAM OF THE LOWELL MILKEN CENTER FOR MUSIC OF AMERICAN JEWISH EXPERIENCE AT THE UCLA HERB ALPERT SCHOOL OF MUSIC **Note:** This worksheet will provide you with an overview of the lesson, and will provide you with the materials that will help you to understand and integrate the lesson's major points. These materials include lyrics to songs that will be explored in depth, questions to consider while listening to some pieces of music, and more. This is not meant to be comprehensive, and your instructor may modify this lesson to enhance the learning experience for your particular class.

Introduction

In this lesson we are going to explore Jewish music in a way that we hope will reinforce what you already know about Jewish music and tradition, but will also challenge some of your conceptions about the topic. When we finish this lesson, we hope you have new insights into what constitutes Jewish music, and how it relates to the American Jewish experience. We include music written for and used in sacred Jewish spaces but also music written by Jewish composers or songwriters for secular settings and general audiences.

Lesson outline

Part 1: Music in Jewish Religious Settings
Part 2: Differing Sounds of Jewish Culture
Part 3: Western Art Music in American Jewish Culture
Part 4: Music in Communal Jewish Experience
Part 5: Jewish Music in Popular Culture

Part 1 — Music in Jewish Religious Settings: Kol Nidre

You will be listening to different settings (musical versions) of Kol Nidre. With time permitting, the class might entertain a discussion of the role of the music (the melody) vs. the text (the words). As you listen to the music, you may wish to follow along and/or read the English. As you take in these various versions, you may wish to consider the following:

- What relationship, if any, do you see between the music and the text?
- Two versions did not use the written text. Does hearing Kol Nidre without words affect your experience? If so, how so?

כָּל נְדְרֵי וֶאֱסָרֵי וַחֲרָמֵי וְקוֹנְמֵי וְכָּנּוּיֵי. וְקְנּוּסֵי (ושבועות) דְּנְדְרְנָא. וּדְאִשְׁתַּבַּעְנָא. וּדְאַחֲרִימְנָא. וּדְאָסָרְנָא עַל נַפְשָׁתֶנָא. (מִיּוֹם כִּפּוּרִים זֶה עַד יוֹם כִּפּוּרִים) הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה. (בְּ)כֵּלְהוֹן אִחֲרְטָנָא בְהוֹן. כֵּלְהוֹן יְהוֹן שֶׁרָן. שְׁבִיקִין, שְׁבִיתִין, בְּטֵלִין וּמְבֵשָּׁלִין, לָא שְׁרִירִין וְלָא קַיָּמִין: נִדְרָנָא לָא נִדְרֵי. וֶאֱסָרְנָא לָא אֵסָרֵי. וּשְׁבוּעָתָנָא לָא שְׁבִיקִין, שָׁבִיתִין, בְּטֵלִין וּמְבֵשָּׁלִין, לָא שְׁרִירִין וְלָא קַיָּמִין: נִדְרָנָא לָא נִדְרֵי. וֶאֱסָרְנָא לָא אֵסָרֵי. וּשְׁבוּעָתָנָא לָא

Kol nidre ve'esarei vacharamei, v'konamei,	А
v'chinuyei, v'kinusei (ush-vu'ot)*.	Р
Dindarna, u-d´ishtabana, u-d´acharimna, u-	t
d'asarna al nafshatana.	u
(Mi-Yom Kippurim ze ad Yom Kippurim	Y
haba)** aleinu l'tova.	V
Kul'hon ichratna v'hon; kul'hon y'hon	Р
sharan.	V
Sh'vikin, sh'vitin, b'teilin, u-m'vutalin, la	lo
sh'ririn v'la kayamin.	C
Nirvana la nidrei, ve-esarana la esarei, u-	Р
sh'vu-atana la sh'vu'ot.	0

All vows, prohibitions, consecrations, pledges, promises, asseverations, and oaths that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves from this Yom Kippur until next Yom Kippur--may it come to us propitiously--We regret having made them; may they all be permitted, abandoned, eradicated, nulled and voided, and may they not be valid or exist any longer.

Our vows shall not be valid vows; our prohibitions shall not be valid prohibitions; and our oaths shall not be valid oaths.

Part 2 — Differing Sounds of Jewish Culture: Genesis 1:1-5

You will be listening to the chanting in Hebrew of the opening five verses of the Torah. As you do so, you may wish to follow in the Hebrew here or read the English. Among the items you might consider as you listen is the following:



How does this particular melody or style help tell the story?

א: הְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרֵא אֲלֹהֵים אֵת הַשְׁמַיִם וְאָת הָאֶרָץ: ב: וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחֻשֶׁרְ עַל־פְּנֵי תָהָוֹם וְרָוּחַ אֶלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְנֵי הַמֵּיִם: ג: וַיִּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵים יְהִי אֶוֹר וְיְהִי־אְוֹר: ד: וַיְרָא אֱלֹהֵים אֶת־הָאוֹר יּוֹם וְלַחֻשֶׁרְ קָרָא לֶיְלָה ה: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהֵים ו לָאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֻשֶׁרְ קָרָא לֶיְלָה

- 1: When God began to create heaven and earth—
- 2: the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—
- 3: God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.
- 4: God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.
- 5: God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

Part 3 — Western Art Music in American Jewish Experience

Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 1: Jeremiah (Jeremiah Symphony) hearkens to the

biblical Jeremiah. In doing so, Bernstein plays musically with the haftarah trope/cantillation that is used when Jeremiah is chanted in the synagogue. To have that trope/cantillation in mind, we will be reviewing the blessing chanted before the Haftarah, as it is set to that trope/cantillation. As this is chanted in class or an audio is played, you may wish to refer to the blessing.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר בחר בנביאים טובים ורצה בדבריהם, הנאמרים באמת. ברוך אתה יי הבוחר בתורה ובמשה עבדו, ובישראל עמו, ובנביאי האמת וצדק.

Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-	Praise to You, Adonai our God, the
olam, asher bachar bi'n'vi-im tovim,	universe's monarch,
v′ratza v′divreihem, hane′emarim be-emet.	who has chosen worthy prophets and willed
Baruch Ata Adonai,	them to speak messages of truth.
Habocher baTorah uv′Moshe avdo,	Praise to You, Adonai, for the gift of Torah,
uv'Yisrael amo, uvin'vi-ei ha-emet	for Your servant Moses,
vatsedek.	for Your people Israel, and for prophets of
	truth and justice.

Part 4 — Music in the Community: Independent Discovery

Your instructor may break you into groups/breakout rooms...experience. In some cases, your instructor may choose only two groups or may choose to do this section with the entire class.

Songs are hyperlinked to the underlined title where it states "**PLAY** (**D**)," found after the bulleted background information. Groups will discuss provided questions, as well as any other points you find interesting or important.

The three groups are:

Group 1 — "Mayn Rue Platz" by Morris Rosenfeld, below pp. 2-3
Group 2 — "Shir Lashalom" by Yaakov Rotblit and Yair Rosenblum, below pp. 4-6
Group 3 — "Cuando el Rey Nimrod," below pp. 7-9

Group 1 — Song of Communal Angst

Mayn Rue Platz — Yiddish transliteration and translation (Morris Rosenfeld)

Nit zukh mikh vu di mirtn grinen Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats. Vu lebns velkn bay mashinen Don't look for me where myrtles grow, You will not find me there, my beloved. Where lives wither at the machines,

Dortn iz mayn rue-plats.

Nit zukh mikh vu di feygl zingen Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats. A shklaf bin ikh vu keytn klingen Dortn iz mayn rue-plats.

Nit zukh mikh vu fontanen shpritsn Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats. Vu trern rinen, tseyner kritsn Dortn iz mayn rue-plats.

Un libstu mikh mit varer libe, To kum tsu mir, mayn guter shats, Un hayter oyf mayn harts di tribe Un makh mir zis mayn rue plats. There is my resting place.

Don't look for me where birds sing, You will not find me there, my beloved. A slave am I, where chains clang. There is my resting place.

And if you love me with true love, Then came to me, my good beloved, And light up my gloomy heart, And make sweet my resting place.

And if you love me with true love, So come to me, my good beloved, And cheer my gloomy heart And make sweet my resting place.

"Mayn Rue Platz" by Morris Rosenfeld

- *"Mayn Rue Platz"* is a poem that maintains a simplistic structure that only serves to further underscore its depiction of the bitter workplace conditions of the sweatshops. Each verse begins with an idyllic possibility that gets displaced by the reality of the implied speaker's plight.
- *"Mayn Rue Platz"* is an example of how a song can act as a conduit for communal grieving, as well as the creation of collective memory. This song is still often performed at memorial programs in the Ashkenazi Jewish community.
- This song is also an example of how music can be used in the fight for social change and *tikkun olam*. It became an anthem in the fight to change sweatshop conditions for individuals who were otherwise voiceless in the fight for change.

Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923)

- Born Moshe Jacob Alter in the village of *Stare Boksze* (now part of Poland), he finally settled in New York in 1886 with his wife and two children, finding work as a tailor in the sweatshops.
- He also began publishing his Yiddish poems, many of which focused upon the pain and suffering of work in and the conditions of the sweatshops. Thus he was one of the "sweatshop poets."
- Many of his poems were set to music, some by Rosenfeld himself, and while he was sometimes ignored and later forgotten by the Yiddish literary establishment, he was never forgotten by the people whose lives he honored. The masses sang his poemsongs while working, while marching, and at rallies.

Play <u>"Mayn Rue Platz"</u> (performed by the Klezmorim) 🕖

Consider the following

- What seems to be the main theme of the text of *"Mayn Rue Platz"*? How does the music approach the theme?
- Provide the poem could be explaining their feelings to someone, such as a spouse/significant other, who is nearby, or, alternatively, someone far away--perhaps someone who has yet to emigrate to the United States from Eastern Europe. aIndeed, perhaps the implied speaker is speaking from beyond the grave. Which of these possibilities resonate with you? How might the music enhance your interpretation?
- Phis song is often played at commemorations such as the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire on March 25, 1911, and also at protests and rallies for the rights of the common worker and for economic justice. What does the song (and not merely the text) evoke and mean at such occasions?
- Some associate this song with the Holocaust. Why might people make this connection? Does the song carry a different message in that context?
- *"Mayn Rue Platz"*, importantly, reflects on the conditions that young women experienced in the sweatshops. This rendition features a woman as lead singer; how do you think this effects the meaning of the song? Consider:
 - that poor working conditions generally affect women more than men.
 - that the majority of the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire were women.

Group 2 — Song of Communal Peace

Shir LaShalom — Hebrew transliteration and translation (Yaakov Rotblit and Yair Rosenblum)

T'nu lashemesh la'alot	Let the sun rise in the east,
laboker l'ha'ir	and light the morning sky
Hazaka shebat'filot	The finest prayers will not revive
otanu lo tach-zir	the ones who had to die.
Mi asher kava nero	Those whose flames have been put out,
u-v'afar nitman	lie buried in the earth,
Bechi mar lo ya'iro	Bitter wails won't wake them up,
Io yach-ziro l'chan	cannot give them rebirth.
Ish otanu lo yashiv	No one can restore us now,
mibor tach-tit afel -	return us from the grave.
kan lo yo'ilu -	And here there is no use
lo sim-chat hanitzachon	for songs of victory
V'lo shirei hallel	and praises for the brave.

Lachen rak shiru shir lashalom al til-hashu t'fila lachen rak shiru shir lashalom bitz'aka g'dola

T'nu lashemesh lachador miba'ad lap'rachim al tabitu l'achor hanichu lahol-chim

S'u einayim b'tikva lo derech kavanot shiru shir la'ahava v'lo lamil-chamot

Al tagidu yom yavo havi'u et hayom ki lo chalom hu u-v'chol hakikarot hari'u rak shalom So go and sing a song of Shalom don't whisper timid prayers. Go out and shout a song of Shalom so everyone can hear.

Let the sunshine weave its way through rainbow blooms of flowers. Don't look back towards the past the dead no longer ours.

Lift your eyes with hope of life, not sighting through a gun. Sing a song of love and joy and not of battles won.

Don't just say "A day will come"; go out and bring that day! It's not a dream. In all the city streets and squares, sing "Peace is on its way!"

(Lachen rak...)

(So go and sing...)

"Shir Lashalom" by Yaakov Rotblit and Yair Rosenblum

- "Shir LaShalom", written by Yaakov ("Yankele") Rotblit, and set to music by Yair Rosenblum is a song for peace originally written for and performed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) performance groups (Nahal troupes) in 1969, during the War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt (1967-70).
- The way the song juxtaposes a military ensemble celebrating peace and condemning violence is one of the many reasons this song was controversial from its inception.
- The style of the song was modeled after the aesthetic of "Let the Sunshine In" from the American musical *Hair*.
- The song came back into prominence in 1995 as the left-of-center Meretz Party bought the rights to the song for use as its theme song in the 1996 election campaign.
- More well known is that at a peace rally in support of the Oslo Accords on November 4, 1995, those on the podium, including Yitzhak Rabin, led the crowd in singing this song. He was shortly thereafter assassinated; in his pocket was found a hand-written copy of the lyrics. It is now regularly sung at Rabin memorial gatherings.
- The song has an incredible resonance with the American Jewish community as well, being adopted as one of the many Israeli and Zionist songs and dances that rose to prominence in the US following the Six-Day War.

Play <u>"Shir Lashalom</u>"

Consider the following

- Do you find the words (and music) here wistful, hopeful, demanding--or some combination of these?
- In this arrangement, as in so many arrangements, the music seems to change (in tone, in pace, etc.). Towards the end, a sizable number of voices are singing merely "shalom" (peace) over and over again, underneath the main melody. What, for you, is the effect of this choice in arrangement/presentation? What might be the message of this arrangement of the song?

O The final stanza of the song states:

- אל תגידו יום יבוא--הביאו את היום / Al tagidu yom yavo havi'u et hayom/Don't say, "The day is coming"; bring that day.
- What do these words mean in the context of the song? What do these words mean to you?

Group 3 — Song of Communal Hope

Cuando el Rey Nimrod — Ladino and translation

Kuando el rey Nimrod al campo salia mirava en el cielo y en la estrelleria vido una luz santa en la juderia que havia de naser Avraham Avinu.

Avraham Avinu, Padre querido Padre bendicho, luz de Yisrael. (x2)

Luego a las comadres encomendava que toda mujer que prenyada quedara si paria un hijo, al punto la matara que havia de naser Avraham Avinu.

(Avraham Avinu... x2)

When King Nimrod went out to the countryside He was looking at heaven and at the stars He saw a holy light in the Jewish quarter [A sign] that Abraham, our father, was about to be born.

Abraham our Ancestor, beloved father Blessed father, light of Israel. (x2)

Then he told the midwives That every woman who was still pregnant If she gave birth to a male child at once he will be killed because Abraham our father was about to be born.

(Abraham our Ancestor... x2)

"Cuando el Rey Nimrod" ("When the King Nimrod")

"Cuando el Rey Nimrod" is written in Ladino (sometimes referred to as Judeo-Spanish). The text is based upon some version (or versions) of a liturgical poem (called a "piyyut") dating from the 17th century Ottoman Empire. The current musical version seems to date from the late 19th century. (For a brief explanation of piyyut, see here. For a brief overview of piyyutim and pop culture in Israel, see here.)

- The eponymous King Nimrod was a hunter of renown in the Bible (Genesis 10:8-10) who is seen in later midrash (expansions of the biblical text) as the most powerful leader of his time. Abraham, after finding his connection to God, becomes the first to challenge Nimrod by speaking truth to power.
- "Cuando el Rey Nimrod" was written for use at a circumcision, traditionally performed on Jewish male infants in a special ceremony on the eighth day. The song celebrates the relationship between Abraham and God and, in the last few verses, mentions the participants in the circumcision, among whom is traditionally Elijah the Prophet.
- *"Cuando el Rey Nimrod"* is surely one of the most widely known Sephardic songs today. It is included in the repertoire of many Ladino singers. It is often even included by klezmer bands and Ashkenazi singers who wish to incorporate an exemplar of Sephardic music.
- "*Cuando el Rey Nimrod*" belongs to the genre of Sephardic music known as the copla. *Coplas* are Ladino songs that are mainly (although not exclusively) associated with religious festivals and life-cycle ceremonies, are sung in Ladino, and convey an educational message.

Play Nani and Alon Sariel performing it here. 🕖

Consider the following

- 9 How does the music help to tell this miracle tale of King Nimrod and Abraham?
- Why would one evoke this tale at a circumcision (*brit milah*)? How does this music support a family and a community's feelings around a circumcision?
- Much midrashic expansion of this tale took place during the Middle Ages, when the survival of an infant could not be taken for granted, and when the survival of Jewish communities under Christianity and, later, under Islam were themselves threatened. To what degree is "*Cuando el Rey Nimrod*" a song about the infant (and the infant's blood family) and to what degree is it about the larger community? What evidence can you adduce for your position from either the music or the text?

Part 5 — Jewish Music in Popular Culture: Irving Berlin's

We will be exploring Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" as an example of Jewish music in popular culture. One of the questions you might wish to consider as you hear and learn more about this is:

Is there anything in the text of the song that you think connects to Judaism/Jewish values/Jewish identity?

God Bless America — Revised version (1938) (Irving Berlin)

God bless America, land that I love Stand beside her and guide her Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies To the oceans white with foam God bless America, my home sweet home

God bless America, land that I love Stand beside her and guide her Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies To the oceans white with foam God bless America, my home sweet home

From the mountains to the prairies To the oceans white with foam God bless America, my home sweet home God bless America, my home sweet home

Who By Fire?

(Leonard Cohen)

From the mountains to the prairies To the oceans white with foam God bless America, my home sweet home God bless America, my home sweet home

And who by fire, who by water Who in the sunshine, who in the night time Who by high ordeal, who by common trial Who in your merry, merry month of May Who by very slow decay And who shall I say is calling?

And who in her lonely slip, who by barbiturate Who in these realms of love, who by something blunt Who by avalanche, who by powder Who for his greed, who for his hunger And who shall I say is calling?

And who by brave assent, who by accident Who in solitude, who in this mirror Who by his lady's command, who by his own hand Who in mortal chains, who in power

And who shall I say is calling?

Where is it Written

(Lyrics by: Alan and Marilyn Bergman; Performer by: Barbra Streisand)

There's not a morning I begin Without a thousand questions Running through my mind That I don't try to find the reason And the logic in the world That God design The reason why, a bird was given wings If not to fly, and praise the sky With every song it sings What's right or wrong Where I belong Within the scheme of things And why have eyes that see And arms that reach Unless you're meant to know there's Something more If not to hunger for the meaning of it all Then tell me what a soul is for Why have the wings unless you're meant to fly And tell me please why have a mind If not to question why And tell me where Where is it written what it is I'm meant to be That I can't dare to have the chance to Pick the fruit of every tree Or have my share of every sweet imagined possibility Just tell me where, where is it written, tell me where If I were only meant to tend the nest Then why does my imagination sail Across the mountains and the seas Beyond the make-believe of any fairy tale Why have the thirst if not to drink the wine And what a waste to have a taste Of things that can't be mine And tell me where Where is it written what it is I'm meant to be That I can't dare to see the meanings In the mornings that I see Or have my share of every sweet imagined possibility Just tell me where, where is it written, tell me where Or if it's written anywhere

King Without a Crown

(Matisyahu)

You're all that I have and you're all that I need Each and every day I pray to get to know you please I want to be close to you, yes I'm so hungry You're like water for my soul when it gets thirsty Without you there's no me You're the air that I breathe Sometimes the world is dark and I just can't see With these, demons surround all around to bring me down to negativity But I believe, yes I believe, I said I believe I'll stand on my own two feet Won't be brought down on one knee Fight with all of my might and get these demons to flee Hashem's rays fire blaze burn bright and I believe Out of darkness comes light, twilight unto the heights Crown Heights burnin' up all through till midnight Said, thank you to my God, now I finally got it right And I'll fight with all of my heart, and all a' my soul, and all a' my might

(Chorus:)

What's this feeling? My love will rip a hole in the ceiling Givin' myself to you from the essence of my being Sing to my god all these songs of love and healing Want Moshiach now so it's time we start revealing

What's this feeling? My love will rip a hole in the ceiling Givin' myself to you from the essence of my being Sing to my God all these songs of love and healing Want Moshiach now

(Verse 2:)

Strip away the layers and reveal your soul Got to give yourself up and then you become whole You're a slave to yourself and you don't even know You want to live the fast life but your brain moves slow If you're trying to stay high then you're bound to stay low You want God but you can't deflate your ego If you're already there then there's nowhere to go If you're cup's already full then its bound to overflow If you're drowning in the water's and you can't stay afloat Ask Hashem for mercy and he'll throw you a rope You're looking for help from God you say he couldn't be found Looking up to the sky and searchin' beneath the ground Like a King without his Crown Yes, you keep fallin' down You really want to live but can't get rid of your frown Tried to reach unto the heights and wound bound down on the ground Given up your pride and the you heard a sound Out of night comes day and out of day comes light Nullified to the One like sunlight in a ray, Makin' room for his love and a fire gone blaze Makin' room for his love and a fire gone blaze

(Chorus:)

(Verse 3:)

And see, I lift up my eyes where my help come from And I seen it circling around from the mountain Thunder! You feel it in your chest You keep my mind at ease and my soul at rest You're not vexed

When I look to the sky where my help come from And I've seen it circling around from the mountain Thunder!

You feel it in your chest

Eight Days of Hanukkah

(Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings)

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight Days of love Days of eight Days of Hanukkah Everyone of them glows with love

Eight Days of Hanukkah Everyone of them glows with love

Eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two

Day 1

Time to light a candle For those Maccabees whose oil did burn and burn

Day 2 Time to spin the dreidel And hope that gimel shows up on my turn

Day 3 Fry a bunch of latkes with applesauce, sour cream, and all

Day 4 We're cooking up the brisket The kosher butcher sold my Uncle Saul

Day 5 I like it more than PESACH Let's leave the manischewitz on the shelf Day 6 Gifts for the children Five dollar checks from Great Grandma Sel

Day 7 Light a whole bunch of candles Gotta keep that Shamas going right to left All the way until

Day 8 One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight Days of love Days of eight days of Hanukkah

Every one of them glows with love Eight days of Hanukkah Every one of them glows with love (love)

Ooh

Eight days dreidel dreidel dreidel Eight days I made it out of clay Eight days and when it's dry and ready ..yahh Eight days ooh dreidel I will Eight days yay yay yay yay yay hey Eight days Eight days