

AN INSTITUTE OF JEWISH MUSIC IN JERUSALEM*

[1] We hereby appeal to all Jewish musicians and singers in Jerusalem and in Erez Israel, to the Sephardim and also the Ashkenazim, Jews of Yemen and likewise the Jews of Persia and Babylonia, and to all the Jewish musicians and cantors in the entire world, from the Jews of [Western] Ashkenaz to the Jews of Poland and from the Jews of Morocco to the Jews of America, Australia and Africa, and call to them: Ye musicians of Israel and its singers, and lovers of your people's music, that are dispersed through all the corners of the earth! Who amongst you senses the sanctity of his people's music? Who amongst you believes that his music is the music of his people Israel? Who amongst you agrees that music in Israel did not cease in the diaspora and that unto this day it is the saved remnant preserved to us of the high estate of our people? Who amongst you feels and believes that the people's music is an echo of the people's soul? Who amongst you believes to hear in the singing of the Jews today the echo of the song of Moses the Man of God, the psalms of David the King of Israel, and the chant of the Levites in the Temple? The soul of whom amongst you trembles to hear the voice of the prophecies of the great prophets, voices striking sacred flames?

[2] Ye makers of pleasant song in Israel! Wake to the voice calling from Zion, bestir yourselves to the honour of our people!

[3] For prophecy is lost from amongst us, and no vision comes to Israel, because its spirit has been polluted and sunk low, and there arose the sons of the "mixed multitude" and proclaimed their creed and brought a foreign spirit into our midst and polluted the soul of Israel, and turned us into slaves in body and mind, and with flesh and soul the people is sunk in the worship of the idols that the assimilationists made for it. And the spirit of Israel has become impoverished and it is hovering between life and death.

[4] There is no prophet and no seer, there is no hero and no sage, who would arise and revive the cast-down spirit of the people, who would rouse and enflame our spirit to a mighty storm, to a whirlwind like to the voice of God that breaketh the cedars and is like the roaring of the sea in its wrath – to gain strength like a surging stream and to break the chains of our benefactors–deluders, to cleanse the altar of our people from the abominations and to set up a new heart and a new spirit within our people.

* Translated by Bathja Bayer.

- [5] Forasmuch as our present generation does not possess such mighty men of the spirit, nothing remains to us but our national song. This, only this, still has power to arouse the spirit of Israel from its lowly condition, for in it there has still remained a spark of the soul of our people Israel, a flash of Moses the Man of God and of Isaiah the genius of prophecy. Yet has that spark the power to burst into flames and to become a flaming fire that will warm the frozen heart of our people. Yet does that spark have the power to flash lightning and roar thunder and to shatter the rock of our heart, so that we may feel what we have lost and that we are lacking, to open the eyes of our mind so that we may perceive our condition. Prophecy has ceased, vision passed away and our prowess has languished, but one consolation has remained to redeem us – the Song of Zion!
- [6] And already we see the alien mockery on the lips of the men of the new doctrine, the doctrine whose principles are set on foundations of silver and plinths of gold, a doctrine exchangeable and marketable for common coin, and on whose gates there are engraved in cold golden letters the words: “The redemption of Israel will be by silver and gold.” O, but false prophets are these that have arisen in Israel! Not thus does Israel’s Torah declare and say: “Not by might and not by power but by My spirit.”
- [7] And therefore to the egregious men of spirit do we address these words. To the men of soul who have set astir the Spirit of Israel always; these being the flag bearers of Hebrew song from generation to generation. Go ye and enquire unto the first generation and see, study the history of our people and note, if it be not thus as we have said, if it was not the song of Israel that did wonders amongst our people; if it was not song that roused the prophecy of our prophets; that enflamed the heroism of our heroes; that lifted up the spirit of our sages; if it was not Hebrew song that became our consolation in our misery in the bitter *galût*; if it was not the Song of Israel that gave strength to Israel, to lighten the heavy work which the Evil Kingdom imposed on us; if it was not the Song of Israel that made the death of our sainted martyrs for the Sanctification of the Name a “Death by Divine Kiss!”
- [8] Ye Hebrew musicians, singers, cantors, and instrumentalists! Though you be small in your own eyes, nay but yet the heads of Israel and the bearers of its spirit are you! Within yourself you bear one of the treasures most precious to the people of Israel, and still you are faint-hearted? Heirs of the singer-Levites, know that it is in your power to save the spirit of the people from complete assimilation. Arise ye all, those that your people’s music hath touched their heart, to imbue thereby the spirit of your people. Come ye together in one place, unite into one great choir; and there shall not be preferred the [Western] Ashkenazi Jew above the Persian, and the Sephardi above the Polish and the Yemenite above the

Babylonian. Put off your "shell," the "shell" of the diaspora and the evil and impure spirit. And cleanse your spirit and address your heart to the Song of Israel, whose spirit hath not ceased from Zion and which still resounds in the air of the mountains that crown Jerusalem all around. For the echo of the voice of Hebrew song, which was daily heard on Mount Moriah, in the Temple, from the mouths of the Levites the singers of the Highest, during hundreds of years, that echo still resounds in the air above the place of the Temple. But only the ear of a Hebrew singer hears it, and [only] the heart of a Jewish musician feels it.

[9] In truth it must be said that during the long *galût*, a foreign "shell" has grown on Hebrew song; a foreign influence from the diverse peoples amongst whom the Jews dwelt, exerted a deleterious effect on the Song of Israel, which thereby acquired an alien form, so that one may hardly discern its essence and its root. And this has enabled many, even amongst our own people, to declare that Israel has no music [of its own], it having already been exhausted during the *galût*. But will a nation change its soul? And especially the people of Israel, a stiff-necked people, a people who preserved all its spiritual possessions with the utmost dedication: is it possible that this people would throw away its song, of all things, and exchange it for alien chants? Truly, a people that did lovingly preserve its "Treasury of Poems," will by the same token also preserve its "Treasury of Music." And if the treasury of poems has been better preserved from destruction, this was because it was included in the sacred writings of Israel, in the Bible, and because it was recorded in writing, not so the melodies handed on from mouth to ear, which hence could not be preserved pure. But nevertheless they have been preserved and do exist unto this day. Witness the folk-tunes of the Jews in all corners of the world, *which resemble each other in everything, and every musician who has a critical ear recognizes immediately that they all derive from a single source and all have a common fundament*. It is only the rust of the *galût* that has encrusted them, and impressed an alien form upon them, and made them as strangers to each other. But similarly the Jews have become strangers to each other through the heavy hand of the *galût*, and therefore everyone who agrees that all Jews are brothers and did issue from one source, if he disregards their external appearance, will also agree that their song is one, if he disregards its diversities of appearance.

[10] However, if we desire the unity of the people *in mind and soul*, we must unify the most potent means which acts upon the mind and the soul, namely – song! To unify and to renew the original song and music of Israel, to develop and to perfect it and to raise its reputation so that it may again become one of the most beloved possessions of our people and one of the strongest possible means of unifying the spirit of our people. To achieve this lofty idea we, the undersigned, having been

ingathered by one idea and one single and precious feeling and brought from the four corners of the earth to the precious place, towards which our soul and the soul of our people did ever yearn, to the immemorial centre of the musicians of our people, to Jerusalem the Holy City, have bestirred ourselves and founded an INSTITUTE FOR THE MUSIC OF ISRAEL, a centre for the assembling of Hebrew song and music, a place where it will put off its diasporal "shell" and rise anew; and on the soil of Israel, in the city that was the source of the Song of Israel, shall the song again take its nourishment from the essence of its parentage, and only then will it flourish and gladden God and the Sons of Israel, and from Zion shall go forth Hebrew song, the national song for all Jews that are in tribulation and in exile, to revive their soul and to renew the love of Zion in their hearts.

[11] We have opened THE INSTITUTE FOR THE MUSIC OF ISRAEL on Passover 5670 [= April 1910] and organized it according to its functions:

[12]a. To collect all the songs and folk-melodies prevalent amongst our people, in all the diverse communities of Israel, such as the Sephardic Jews, the [Western] Ashkenazim, the Aleppines [Syrians] and the Persians, the Arameans [Kurds], the Maghrebines [North Africans], the Yemenites and the Poles, and to gather them into one treasury [archive]. And also to gather all the singers and cantors of all those communities that be in Jerusalem, [since] the Jewish population of Jerusalem which is like an Ingathering of the Exiles in little, comprises all the [ethnic] communities of the Jews from all corners of the earth. From all the singers of each community we shall set up a special choir, a choir that will sing only the songs of the Jews of that community; for example the choir of singers of the Yemenite Jews will sing only the songs and melodies of Yemen, the choir of the Sephardim their [own] songs, the choir of the Ashkenazim their [own] songs, and the Aleppines their [own] songs, etc. In this way we will gather all the songs and the singers into one place common to all, and by this means these will become apparent and discernible the particular spirit [style], the authentic spirit of each and every community, and from this it will become possible to carry out a comparison in what measure the spirits [styles] are near to each other, and in what measure they have a common source. With this we have already come to our second and main aim:

[13]b. To the fostering of the Song of Israel as a living song. In the course of time, by the continued dwelling together of the Jewish singers in one location and by their singing in one centre, it is not possible that one community should not influence the other; and while the one teaches its sister, it will itself learn from her, and the common spirit, the spirit of Israel, will bring the hearts near to each other, and will remove the "shells" which the *galût* has caused to grow on the dispersed of the Sons of Israel, and ultimately the people of Israel will have a

new-old song, and there shall no longer be mention of Ashkenazic song, Yemenite, Sephardic, Aleppine etc., but the *Song of Israel that goeth forth from Jerusalem*.

[14] Not only the melodies shall we collect but also the poems and the *piyyûṭîm*, for the *galût* has also imposed a *galût*-like form on Hebrew poetry, a form alien to the spirit of the original poetry, as every Hebrew knows, and apart from that – poetry and music have always adhered to each other as body and soul.

[15] All this is the theoretical aspect of the “Institute for the Music of Israel,” but there is also a practical aspect, namely: to create Hebrew singers and musicians worthy of this name, that shall honour the song of Israel and will be an honour to Israel, and the singers and musicians and instrumentalists issuing from the Institute for the Music of Israel will become awakeners of the spirit of the sons of Israel in the diaspora when they sing the *Song of Zion*, will refresh the soul of the people and its emotions, will arouse it towards its spiritual and national centre, towards Jerusalem. And therefore the aim of the Institute is: to develop cantors of all the communities of diverse styles, cantors that are cognizant of the value of their mission, which is to arouse and to refine the emotions of their community, and who will know that they replace the High Priest and the levitic singers in the Temple, and so strong should be the influence of these cantors that the Jews shall forget the conventional meaning of *ḥazzan* [cantor] as “beadle,” *keli qodeš* [Holy implement] *keli šaret* [serving implement], and *ḥazzan* will obtain a new meaning of *ḥôzeh* [seer].

[16] In the cantors’ class there will be taught the laws of the Hebrew tongue and its style, the history of song, of *piyyûṭ* and of the prayers, the theory of music in general and preeminently that of oriental and Jewish music, cantorial style and the traditional ordinances of prayer and of the cantorate.

[17]c. The purpose of the Institute is [also] to present pageants [plays] based on Jewish history, accompanied by music, pageants that will show to the eyes of the people its “great past,” the figures of its heroes and sages, how the fathers of the nation lived and acted in this land, and pageants like these will captivate the minds of the people so that the people will be borne on the wings of their imagination to the ancient and wonderful past, and arouse in them the will to know the way of life of their forebears during the time when they lived here in their own land.

[18] In order to achieve these aims we have adopted the following means: we have founded

a. A “Treasury [archive] of Folk Songs and Melodies,” to assemble therein all the songs and melodies of our people in all the lands of its dispersion; in this

Treasury there have already been assembled about eight hundred songs and melodies;

b. A "Treasury of Musical Instruments," to assemble therein the oriental instruments, ancient and contemporary;

c. A "Treasury of Song and Music Books," to assemble therein all the books of song and music and books about oriental song and music in general and particularly about Jewish music, be they printed or in manuscript;

d. A "Treasury of Costume," to assemble all the sources about the ancient costumes of Israel, and to strive to reproduce their design and form, in which the singers in the Institute shall dress when performing.

[19] We have also set up from each community a particular choir, with a leader to teach it the traditional songs and melodies; until now an Ashkenazi choir having forty singers has been organized, a Yemenite choir of about twenty singers, and an Aleppine choir of about fifteen singers, and choirs of the Sephardis and the Persians are about to be set up.

[20] And we hereby appeal to everyone who cherishes the idea of the renaissance of Hebrew song, to come to our aid *and to be a member of the Institute, in heart and with material support*. In heart, by aiding the development of the Institute in the collecting of songs and melodies, books and booklets and other writings about music, and musical instruments, for the appropriate "Treasures"; and we also request the singers of Israel, and especially the musicians and the cantors, to help us by propagating this idea and to join in the "Institute for the Music of Israel" through spiritual effort, by giving us of the fruits of their creativity or by collecting folk music.

[21] Materially [we ask them] to tend their contribution to the upkeep of the Institute; and the member's contribution is of three degrees: ten francs a year, twenty francs a year, and forty francs a year. (The member's privileges are set out in the Institute's constitution, from paragraph 7 to paragraph 11.)

[22] And it shall be that when all the lovers of the "Song of Zion" shall respond to the call of the "Institute for the Music of Israel" and come and aid it with their capacities and their generosity, then the day will not be far off and on one of the mountains of Zion there will be elevated a WONDERFUL EDIFICE, the possession of the INSTITUTE FOR THE MUSIC OF ISRAEL, a TEMPLE for the glory of the song of the people of Israel!

In the name of the choirs of all the Jewish communities in Jerusalem

The founder of the Institute and its director, Abraham Zv'i Idelsohn

The secretary, Shlomo Zalman Rivlin

We agree with the noble idea of the "Institute for the Music of Israel", and with much volition and love, and in gratefulness to the founder, we have joined it, to achieve the holy purpose by the Help of God, blessed be He.

For the community of

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For the community of

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