

16 Warren Street
New York, N.Y. 10007
December 19, 1976
Kislev 27, 5737

Prof. Israel Adler
Jewish Music Research Center
Hebrew University
P.O. Box 503
Jerusalem
Israel

Dear Prof. Adler,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of several people. First Prof. Johanna Spector of the Jewish Theological Seminary here in New York suggested several months ago that you could be extremely helpful in enabling me to record (and then to transcribe and study) cantillation of the Torah as practiced within the communities of Jews from Bagdad, Kurdistan, and Yemen as well as other oriental Sephardic communities. Then my agent in London, Mr. Andrew Rosner told me that he had contacted you and that you were interested in my presenting a lecture about my own compositions at the Hebrew University during the period February 9-21 when my wife and I will be in Jerusalem. Lastly, when we were recently performing in Paris with my ensemble I had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with Mr. Simha Arom whose work in African Ethnomusicology is probably well known to you, and he suggested also that you would be an enormous help in my studies of cantillation.

My wife and I are flying from London on February 8th to Tel Aviv and will come directly to Jerusalem. We are scheduled to stay at the American Colony Hotel on Nablus Road, tel: 28-24-22 until February 22nd when we are scheduled to fly back to London and from there, back to New York.

My primary reason for coming to Jerusalem is to record the oriental Sephardic cantillation mentioned above. I would particularly be interested in recording several members of the same and different communities chanting the same passages; specifically Bereshith 1-13, the Shema, and perhaps parts of Shir Ha Shirim. My own background in Judaism was almost non-existent as a child having been given a Reform Transliterated Bar-Mitvah. This led to non-association with all things Jewish until about 3 years ago when, through intuition, I felt that my religious inclinations could perhaps best be satisfied within the religion I had been born into. This led to making inquiries about study which led to Lincoln Square Synagogue here in New York which is closely associated to Yeshiva University and is led by Rabbi Steven Riskin. Their various evening course in adult education in Chumash and Hebrew have been extremely helpful and important to me in the last year. In the spring of 1976 I visited Dr. Spector for the first time, after looking through the Idelsohn one volume "Jewish Music" and this led, after some time out for European performances with my own ensemble, to my first lessons in practical cantillation within the Western Ashkenazic (Lithuanian) tradition with Cantor Edward Berman, a student of Dr. Spector's. Cantor Berman was a student of Rosofsky, and his teaching methods are practical and to the point. I have been able to work through the first 13 verses of Bereshith plus the Shema in the month or so that I have been meeting with him once a week, or once every two weeks. I felt that some basic familiarity with the Ta'amim was necessary if I was going to be in a position to make sensible studies of oriental cantillation. I sincerely hope you will be able to arrange meetings where I can record people reading these passages mentioned within the Bagdadhi, Kurdistan and Yemenite community where these people, hopefully

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older, will not have become 'Ashkenazified'.

My purpose for making these studies is two fold - at least - firstly I am interested in my own roots as expressed in musical terms, and secondly I am interested in the musical structure (arrangement) of the ta'amim independent from any particular realization of them in particular notes, scales, etc. That is, I am interested in the basic musical structure of cantillation more than the particular modes used in this or that community or for one part of Tanach in contrast to others. However, it seems to me that the only way to become familiar with this structure is to in fact learn the practices of several communities and I have started with my own.

As to my own work, which I would be extremely interested in presenting in Jerusalem, I am sending under separate cover by air-mail a 3 record boxed set on Deutsche Grammophon of my ensemble performing Drumming (1971), Six Pianos (1971) and Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ as well as an Angel recording of Michael Tilson Thomas, myself and others performing my Four Organs (1970). Also enclosed is a little book of essays entitled Writings about Music published by New York University Press which I hope you will find of some interest. While in Jerusalem I will also have with me several tapes and scores, particularly to my newest and largest work, Music for 18 Musicians which we also recently recorded for Deutsche Grammophon for release this coming spring. I would be very happy to play a tape of this work - it is 55 minutes long - pass the score around, and then answer any and all questions about that work or any of the others which I had an opportunity to play on recording or which you might have circulated before my arrival. Although I am a great believer in the importance of live performance I have no solo works for myself or any one else. I would, however, be pleased to rehearse my Piano Phase (1967) for 2 pianos while I am in Jerusalem if there is a pianist interested. I enclose the score along with the other materials. There is also my Clapping Music for 2 musicians clapping that might even be more practical.

I hope that you will find some time to be able to help me with both my studies and my presentations. Dr. Spector suggested that I write also to Avigdor Herzog and Amnon Shiloah in connection with the former and I will do so. As to my lecture which Andrew Rosner spoke to you about it will consist first of all in playing a tape of my music and for this I would need a Revox Stereo tape recorder that operates at 7½ ips (19 cm/sec.) and takes large 10½ inch reels. Another machine that performs the same functions will do. Also needed would be a stereo amplifier and two concert quality loudspeakers and that's all. The 2 piano piece would need rehearsal first and after that we could see. The clapping piece can be done without need of instruments.

I much appreciate the opportunity you are affording me to present my music in Jerusalem even if, at first, only on recording, hopefully in the future my ensemble may be able to perform there. In the meantime I would stress that I am looking forward to my studies in cantillation at least as much as presenting my own work and appreciate any help you can give me with either.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. On January 20th I take off for our European tour which will precede my visit to Jerusalem. I hope you will find time to drop at least a short note before that. - I thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Steve Reich
Steve Reich

P.S. Andrew Rosner mentioned the fee you were paying in a recent phone call but I forgot to write it down. Could you tell me how much it is?

E X P R E S

January 23, 1977

Mr Steve Reich
c/o Mr Andrew Rosner
Allied Artist 36
Beauchamp Place
London
England

Dear Mr Reich,

I just received your cable with your European mailing address, and I hasten to write to you. I shall be eagerly looking forward to your visit here. Of course, you will get all our help in your endeavors to make the recordings of the Biblical cantillation, that you mention in your letter. I have informed my colleagues (Messrs. Herzog, Sharvit, Mazor) of your visit, and you will have access to the collection in our Sound Archives; you will also be able to draw on the experience of the aforementioned in field recordings. I would also suggest that you meet people such as the composer and ethnomusicologist André Hajdu.

I am also trying to make preparations for your lecture. There will be no problem of adequate listening facilities. The main problem, as I have pointed out to Mr Rosner, is the ridiculous fee which the Hebrew University allows to offer for a lecture (less than 200 Israeli lirot). I am really ashamed even to mention this, but these are the regulations, and I wonder whether you would be ready under these circumstances to give a lecture at the University. On the other hand, I am trying to arrange interviews for the radio, and if possible, also an illustrated lecture at the Targ Music Centre, in Ein Kerem. There, of course, it would be very good if you were able to perform the work for two pianos that you mentioned in your letter.

Unfortunately, you forget to include the score of this work (I received only the records and the book which you were kind enough to send us, and which I transferred to the Music Dept. of our Library so that it will be available to the general public here). I think if you bring the score with you here, there will be a possibility of finding a pianist to work on the piece and play it together with you at one of your public appearances here.

Looking very much forward to meeting you and your wife here in Jerusalem,

Very sincerely yours

Prof. Israel Adler
Director

As I mentioned to you my ensemble will be returning to Europe for concerts January 23 at the Westdeutsche Rundfunk-Köln, on the 25th at the Sudfunk in Stuttgart, on the 27th at Geneva and then on the 30th at the Roundhouse in London then a week of touring England and a second London Roundhouse concert on ~~January~~^{February} 6th. My wife Beryl and I will then fly to Israel on February 8th and stay exactly 2 weeks returning on February 24th. We will spend all of our time in Jerusalem and it is my exclusive interest to make recordings of Yemenite, Bokarhik and other 'oriental sephardic' cantillations of the Torah. - And I mean specifically Bereshith Chapter verse 1-13 (the first Aliyah) as well as the entire Shma (Shema) (in Devarim). I wish to record precisely the same material cantillated by different sephardic singers so as to compare their realization of the taamim. I'm sure you can well understand. I am not interested, at the moment, in other matters of folkloric nature but in Pentateuch cantillation exclusively. In two weeks one can hardly do anything so I wish to zero in on an extremely precise area with no time for anything else - that can happen on latter visits if we are so fortunate. I am writing this in the sincere hopes that you will ~~XXXX~~ write right away to Dr. Isreal Adler at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem since I have been told by everyone that he is the contact to make for this. You can mention to him that I have been in contact with Dr. Johanna Spector at the Jewish Theological Seminary here in New York and she recommended his name as well. She also mentioned the name of an elderly Yemenite Rabbi she felt would be an excellent contact. His name is: Rab. Josef Kaphah, Rehov Lud 14, Nachlat Ahim, Jerusalem. Perhaps Dr. Adler will contact Rabbi Kaphah on my behalf and ask if he could be kind enough to find an elderly Yemenite singer who represents the oldest remaining tradition to sing these opening verses of Bereshith and the Shema for me. You can add that I have been studying for 3 weeks and will continue to study with a local New York Chazan by the name of Edward Berman who is teaching me a simplified version of the S. Rosofsky cantillation (Lithuanian tradition) which I am progressing slowly at. I am learning these same opening verses of Bereshith and will therefore be familiar with their taamim as realized in at least one Ashkenazic version. I am anxious to make contact with Dr. Adler as soon as possible since February 8th is not so far away.

Lastly, do you have any suggestions for hotels for my wife and I that would be centrally located either in the old city or new city midway between the wall and Hebrew University? We could pay about \$20-\$25 per night for the two of us, not including meals. Naturally we could happily pay less but we would like a place with bath and clean, etc. Someone mentioned the 'American Colony' Hotel on Nablus Road in the old city. Let us know what you think.

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