

The Israeli Mediterranean Style: Origins, 1930s—1950s

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The term Mediterranean style, as it has been used in Israel, originally referred to selected versions of European Mediterranean styles in art music that Jewish composers—the founders of Israeli music, among them the Israeli Five: Paul (Frankenburger) Ben-Haim (1897-1984), Oedoen Partos (1907-1977), Alexander U. Boskovich (1907-1964), Mordecai (Starominsky) Seter (1916-1994), and Josef (Grünthal) Tal (1910-2008)—developed first in British Palestine in the late 1930s throughout the 1940s, then in Israel mostly until the early 1950s, denoting an emerging national identity through local color in music. It was also qualified as *signon Mizrahi* (Eastern or oriental style, i.e., of the Middle East, the cradle of Judaism, rather than East Asia) or *signon Mizrah-yam tikhoni* (Eastern-Mediterranean style), referring to the preferred ethnic sources: often derived from the liturgical and para-liturgical musical traditions of Yemenite, Persian, and Moroccan Israeli Jews (i.e., the musics of local and regional Arab and Persian Jews) and other Mizrahi and local, Palestinian musical heritage. These traditions inspired the founders who, following Bartók in particular, and other European and East-European national schools, wished to create a national style based on local traditions, some of which presumably had remote resemblance to the music of the Temple or ancient Israel. The Mediterranean style embodied, first and foremost, a collection of styles imagined and constructed to convey nationalism in music during the pre-statehood decade. During the last few decades, the term has acquired additional meanings, relating to popular Israeli musics influenced by regional musical elements, which have transformed and redefined the original meaning. As we will limit our discussion to Israeli art music composed through the early 1950s, this entry will focus on the original concept.

Originally—and often today—presented as uniquely local and even un-European, the Israeli Mediterranean style was simply modeled after European composers who conveyed Mediterranean styles, most obviously the style of Spanish-influenced compositions by Debussy and Ravel; it also integrated the techniques that Bartók created to incorporate

Eastern-European folk tunes and their melodic, rhythmic, and structural elements in his music. Leading Jewish composers of the time, almost all raised and educated in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, or Russia, developed the Mediterranean style in their music mainly during the 1940s in Palestine: Paul Ben-Haim (originally, Frankenburger), whose music has been considered emblematic and best representative of this style; Alexander Uriyah (Uria, Uriya) Boskovich (Boscovitch, Boskowitch), one of the first Mediterranean composers who most likely coined the term locally, and who not only expressed it in his music but also theorized it in his writings; Oedoen Partos, the first Israel Prize laureate in composition, best known at the time as an equally superb violist, musician, and composer; Marc Lavry, whose light-classical Mediterranean style captured audiences; and Menahem Avidom, the only Mediterranean composer whose oriental style was shaped by his studies and teaching in Arab countries, Lebanon and Egypt. Finally, Josef Tal and Mordecai Seter were the two composers of the Israeli Five whose early style during the 1940s and early 1950s had not been considered as part of this style until the 1980s, but recent reception and scholarship have shifted. Tal, known as the pioneer of electronic music in Israel in the early 1960s, downplayed the integration of local and Mizrahi tunes in his music of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which was an attempt to contribute to the creation of national music. Seter, the youngest among the founders, used his selection of Mizrahi religious tropes within densely polyphonic, expressive settings, much unlike the pastoral, impressionistic Mediterranean vogue of the time. His highly influential music was especially appreciated by his peers Boskovich, Partos and composers of the second generation who studied with the Five, notably Tzvi Avni, Ben-Zion Orgad, and Noam Sheriff.

According to oral histories, the Mediterranean Style was mentioned first during a discussion between Boskovich and the renowned poet Avraham Shlonsky (Bresler 1985, p. 138); it appeared first in scholarly writings in Max Brod's *Die Musik Israels* (1976 p. 58, originally published in 1951). Brod credited the term itself to Boskovich, but he prefaced the discussion of the style with an original and enthusiastic appreciation, rare at the time, not to a composer but rather to a singer, whose "influence was decisive" on the creation of the style: Bracha Zephira. Zephira, somewhat a chanteuse no less than a

singer (although she rarely sang in solely popular settings), specialized in authentic ethnic songs, specifically melodies originating in the oral traditions of Yemenite Jews and other Mizrahi and Sephardi local communities. Her intentional desire to participate meaningfully in the creation of local art music on the one hand, and her deliberate pursuit of elite audiences on the other, led her to approach concert-music composers, rather than popular arrangers, to arrange her songs. The scope of her project, and especially its timing, mostly during the 1940s and the early 1950s, ideally overlapped with the fervent search of composers for local ethnic sources to create what they saw as an authentic Hebrew or Eretz-Israeli music. Zephira approached the leading composers of the time, first Ben-Haim, and later Lavry, Avidom, Boskovich, Partos and others. Several of the compositions they wrote based on, and inspired by, her selected *melos* not only created the Israeli Mediterranean style, but also formed an Israeli canon. It is unsurprising that Max Brod, given his past work, had a historian's perspective of Zephira's significance at the time (his book was first published in 1951). He prefaced his discussion about characteristics of the Mediterranean style describing Zephira's contribution to its creation, first in the music by Ben-Haim, and then explaining her broader impact:

Das übrige Repertoire von Bracha Zefira setzt sich aus Bearbeitungen zusammen, die Lavry, Boskovich, Partos, Amiran, Avidom, u. a. für sie geschrieben haben... Die von ihr vermittelten Melodien sind in vielen Israel-Kompositionen (z. B. im Mittelsatz von Lavrys *Erstem Klavierkonzert* wörtlich, in dem von Ben-Haims *Erster Symphonie* in freier Anlehnung) benützt worden, ihr Einfluss war bestimmend für jenen neuen Musikstil, für den Boskovich den Namen "Mittelmeerstil" (mediterraner Stil) erfunden hat—dies ohne Zusammenhang mit Nietzsches Ausdruck "mittelländisch" in "Jenseits von Gut und Böse."

Was ist das Gemeinsame der in diesem Stil geschriebenen Werke? Ihre Musik ist südlich, von hellem Licht durchdrungen wie die Luft der Mittelmeerländer, durchsichtig, nach Klarheit strebend—der Rhythmus liebt die Härte, die unregulären Takte, die obstinate Wiederholung, aber auch die vielfältige, nie stillstehende Variation, die in ihrer scheinbaren Regellosigkeit und freien

Impulsivität mitreisst. Der Satzbau ist oft linear, stellenweise unisono, ohne polyphone Überladenheit. Deutlich wird der Einfluss, den das Melos der jemenitischen Juden ausübt, die Aufhebung von Dur und Moll, das Zurückgriehen auf alte Tonarten, die Vernachlässigung der für die Diaspora charakteristischen übermässigen Sekunde—von hier ergeben sich Verbindungslinien auch zur arabischen Musik, ja zu dem besonders konsonantischen Bau der semitischen Sprachen. Klima und Landschaft, das Hirtenlied, die Oboe und die Klarinette wirken herein.

The remaining repertoire of Bracha Zefira consists of transcriptions made for her by Lavry, Boskovich, Partos, Amiran, Avidom and others... the melodies transmitted by her have been used in many compositions written in Israel (for example, in the middle movement of Lavry's First Piano Concerto – [where her tune appears] literally, or in the middle movement of Ben-Haim's First Symphony – in free adaptation), and her influence was decisive for that new musical style for which Boskovich invented the name "Mediterranean Style" – this with no connection to Nietzsche's term "of the middle lands" ["mittelländisch"] in his "Beyond Good and Evil".

What is common to the works written in this style? Its music is southern, permeated with bright light as the air of Mediterranean countries, transparent, striving for clarity – its rhythm prefers some hardness, irregular meter, obstinate repetitions, but also the manifold, never stopping variation, fascinating by its seeming lawlessness and free impulsiveness. The structure is often linear, at times unison, without polyphonic intricacy. One observes clearly the influence by the melos of Yemenite Jews, the abolition of major and minor, the reinstated use of old tonalities, the omission of the augmented second which was so typical for the [east-European Jewish] Diaspora – and lines may be drawn from here to Arabic music as well, and even to the specific character of Semitic languages, so rich in consonants. Climate and landscape, the shepherd's song, oboe and clarinet – all these had their influence. [Translated by Benjamin Perl.]

Brod had no doubts about Zephira's role in creating a style so synonymous with early Israel composition. Indeed, most compositions written in other styles at the time were often sidelined. The composers themselves, however, rarely shared this view of Zephira far beyond lip service, and even that was long after they worked with her. Most of them ascribed to the high-low division in art, and often viewed her as no more than an informant—however prolific and industrial—for their sources of authentic *melos*, a mere source for creating their high art (for Ben-Haim's attitude to Zephira, see Ronit Seter, 2012). While they believed that local music must acquire local signifiers, none of them was willing to embark on a work akin to Bartók's. And she criticized them for that orientalist attitude in her book, *Kolot Rabim* (Many voices, 1978, p. 21-22). Bitter about the lack of sincere appreciation of her project, she argued that all they were able to create were

Mizrahi songs in clumsy Western clothes, Western music that adopted something from the Mizrahi exotic. ...Moreover, the composers held jealously unto the materials which I brought for them, but did not see the need to establish a direct contact with the community which sang [the original] songs. ...the composers were satisfied with my interpretation only. Even if I was faithful to the original [melody], I could not replace the various communities, not even one community's complete [musical heritage].

It is thus easier to understand why for her own book, a collection of the songs she shared with the composers she worked with, she chose Brod to preface her book, and none of the composers who benefited from her music. She also argued in her book that no real synthesis of Mizrahi tunes and Western compositional techniques—the goal of many composers—was ever created. Still, notwithstanding Orientalism, many of the compositions based on Zephira's tunes by Ben-Haim, Partos, and other composers of that time became part of the Israeli canon and are still widely performed.

In addition to the bold discussion of Zephira's significance, Brod also raised a controversial topic in these modest paragraphs cited above. Had the Mediterranean style, as Brod argued, "no connection to Nietzsche's term 'of the middle lands' ['mittelländisch'] in his *Beyond Good and Evil*"? Since Brod did acknowledge certain similarities between the local version and its European origins, we might rephrase the question: why did Brod try to distance the style from Nietzsche and German thought about the music of "the south"? A key to the answer may be found in core concepts, locally interpreted: nationalism, patriotism, and probably some lack of critical distance. Brod, also a composer (who wrote wrote *La Mediterranee*, a rhapsody for piano), was Ben-Haim's composition student (and so the distance that he did show in his appreciation of Zephira was quite impressive, considering the time frame; Ben-Haim adopted part of this appreciation more than a decade later, and even that, probably for political reasons). A Zionist, Brod also believed in the creation of an original local style, not merely a branch of European art music, and, since he himself was a Czech refugee, certainly not a product of German thought. However, the lack of connection to Nietzsche's ideas, which has been commonly accepted as a fact for decades, has been academically challenged decades later, in Bresler's work.

Liora Bresler was probably the first scholar to wonder, in an academic article, about the parallels between the ideology of local composers and that of Nietzsche. She expressed astonishment by the similarities between the views of Alexander Boskovich, considered the ideologist of the Mediterranean style in particular and national style in Israel in general, and those of the German philosopher. Unlike hardly anything the young scholar has seen in the literature at the time of her 1985 article, Bresler revealed that Nietzsche's description of French music in particular, and the music of the "south" in general, bears many similarities to the music that Ben-Haim and other Israeli composers wrote based on Zephira's songs; moreover, it is similar to Brod's and Boskovich's descriptions of the desired local style.

Brod's discussion of Bracha Zephira and the Mediterranean style begins, prior to the paragraphs cited above, with her work with Ben-Haim: the first composer she approached

for arranging her songs in the late 1930s, and the composer who has been best known abroad as an Israeli composer, before and well after his death in 1984. Ben-Haim's style has been considered not only as the ultimate representation of Mediterraneanism in Israel; in fact, he created the style, then still nameless, beginning with the first composition written after his immigration to Palestine, the *Nocturne* (1935) for piano. Two interrelated biographic details from the past four years before the composition of *Nocturne* illuminate the sea change in his style: first, in 1931 Frankenburger lost his last post in Germany as a *Kapellmeister* and choir conductor of the Augsburger Stadttheater (where he conducted about forty operas) and while it was not clear whether the termination was due to budgetary concerns, anti-Semitism, or both, there was no doubt that as a Jewish musician he would not have secured future full-time work in Germany or the other German-speaking countries. Second, during the last two years prior to his 1933 immigration, having more time for composition and deeply inspired by the operas he conducted, he completed a German oratorio, his magnum opus to date: *Joram* (1933). Its style was post romantic, heavily Germanic; one can hear Mahler, Strauss, and some Hindemith traits. Obviously, there were no prospects of performance (the premiere took place more than four decades later), and seeing no professional future in his homeland, he chose to relocate in 1933 to the pre-public radio and pre-professional orchestras British Palestine. (The first local Jewish-British radio station was founded in 1936, as was the Palestine Orchestra, renamed in 1948 as the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.) The foundations for a new Zionist culture, however, filled the minds and hearts of local intellectuals of all fields, and the *Zeitgeist* was clear: you may not recreate your art as you have done in Munich (or Berlin, Moscow, Warsaw, Paris); the new locale requires local color in arts and letters. And Zionism in music meant, for Ben-Haim, creating the local version of a Mediterranean style.

Diametrically opposed in style to Frankenburger's 1933 proudly German oratorio *Joram*, far beyond genre's considerations, the 1935 *Nocturne* is quasi modal and not Mizrahi in any sense. Right from the outset, Frankenburger internalized the idea that music composed in Tel Aviv should sound—and convey meanings—different from those in Munich, his hometown. The *topos* he chose for *Nocturne* fits a pastoral better than a

nocturne, and the open fourths and fifths as an accompaniment of a slow theme in octaves are frequent in Debussy's *Préludes*, of which the closest to Ben-Haim's *Nocturne*, in its style more so than the programmatic spirit, is *Le vent dans la plaine* (Book 1, no. 3). This exquisite *Nocturne* is of special importance to the Israeli Mediterranean style as it shows, possibly for the first time in local music and earlier than any other leading Israeli composer, how Ben-Haim has embraced the musical turn around a tonic as an *Urmotif* that years later became a central signifier for Israeli music, and that I have defined as the Israeli motif, essential to the Israeli Mediterranean style common until the early 1950s. Less often, this turn appears around other structurally significant tone of the piece, but the tonic has often been Aeolian/Dorian or Phrygian (in *Nocturne*, for example, it is A-G-A-B-A, with variations on the theme as a Phrygian turn or a harmonic minor one).

But it was only ten years after his emigration, that Ben-Haim composed the piece that was “considered one of my greatest successes to this day,” as he reported in 1974 in one of his biographical essays. *Five Pieces for Piano* Op. 34 (1943) has become emblematic of the Mediterranean style, especially its last movement, *Toccata*, often played separately. Along with Boskovich's *Semitic Suite* (1945) it became one of the two most performed Israeli piano pieces of all times. Other Mediterranean style favorites for the piano, like Ben-Haim's *Sonatina* (1946) and *Sonata* (1954), Seter's *Chaconne and Scherzo* (1956), and Braun's and Avni's first piano sonatas (1957 and 1961, respectively), became cornerstones of the Israeli piano repertory, but rarely gained the exceptional popularity of *Semitic Suite* and *Five Pieces*. And while *Semitic Suite* was first received as “too Levantine” for the (almost exclusively) Ashkenazi audience, Ben-Haim's *Toccata* of his *Five Pieces* was both Western “enough”—smooth, elegantly-written, post-impressionistic piece, with more than traces of Ravel's *Toccata* from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, and Prokofiev's *Toccata* op. 11—and it also displayed easily-recognized (not to say clichéd) signifiers of national identity: the Israeli motif (a turn around the tonic and other structural notes), brief undulating moments, the Aeolian, dorian, and Phrygian modes, and the seemingly free rhythm and meter. Or at the very least, this is how the *Toccata* has been traditionally presented. “For Ben-Haim, the model to copy was, of course, the plucking instruments of the Middle East, in particular the

Arabic kanun and the Persian santur” (Peles, 2002). In other words, its reception, encouraged by the composer, has been constructed to express local ties, although the connection to Ravel and Prokofiev, and to the Toccata form in general, was arguably stronger or even its sole stylistic source.

By 1950, following his first and second symphonies (1940 and 1945, respectively), Ben-Haim had been already established as a leading composer of orchestral music. His five-minute *Truah LeIsrael* (*Fanfare to Israel*, 1950), first commissioned for the brass orchestra of the Israel Defense Force, was later arranged for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra upon their request, and this arrangement has been performed hundreds of times, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, mostly in the concert tours of several Israeli orchestras abroad. According to Ben-Haim in his 1975 biographical essay, by that year, *Truah LeIsrael* was the only composition by an Israeli composer that was recorded by the Israel Philharmonic on an LP (British Columbia). Ben-Haim’s best-known work among broad audiences for a long time, arguably the face of Israeli music, it had become the musical signal of a local radio show focused on Israeli music (*Kol HaMusica*, Michal Cohen’s *Assif* programs that were aired weekly during the first decade following 2000). *Truah LeIsrael*’s success might be attributed to the delicate balance between a proud, celebratory march *topos*, most evident at the very beginning and its end, and the *molto calmo, cantabile* main theme, mostly in the dorian mode; to the juxtaposition of stereotypical use of “Western” brass (to accentuate the march quality) and “Jewish” violins (for the *cantabile* theme); and the modal foreground and tonal harmonic background—all signifiers of Ben-Haim’s style, and by extension, the Mediterranean style in general.

Still, the gap between the enthusiastic reception by audiences and the scolding view of Ben-Haim’s colleagues became one of the riddles of Israeli music, partly resolvable easily. On the one hand, this exquisitely written light-classical gem expressed the coveted Israeli identity for large audiences, especially as was seen from abroad; on the other, it strengthened stereotypes portraying Israeli music as a marginal force within international contemporary music, especially when compared against current works by composers

from Boulez and Penderecki to Cage and Reich. Arguably, since its inception, Ben-Haim saw *Fanfare to Israel* as one of his minor works: “not very valuable” was how he referred to this Fanfare in his short biography essay of 1975.

That said, Ben-Haim devoted far more time and energy to his *The Sweet Psalmist of Israel* (Ne'im zmirot yisrael, for harpsichord, harp, and orchestra, 1953) commissioned by Koussevitzky and Bernstein; he saw it, at least at first, as his magnum opus—and unlike *Joram*, it was his Israeli magnum opus, the most prestigious commission an Israeli composer had received that time. Brod wrote a raving concert review following the Israeli premiere in December 1956: “As a man creating his own independent style, Ben-Haim will enter the history of contemporary music, and we should all be proud of him.” Based on a program suggested by his publisher and Peter Gradenwitz, the first movement depicts the story from Samuel I (16, 23) about David playing before Saul; the second, “invocation,” relates to the Samuel II (23, 1-2) praise of the Lord by the Sweet Psalmist; and the third is “A Song of Degrees,” from Psalm CXXXIV. The latter is perhaps the richest music Ben-Haim ever wrote, for his wide range of sonorities and musical ideas. It is a variation movement, modeled after Ravel’s *Bolero*, using a memorable tune: pleasantly puzzling, beginning in the Ionian mode which is gradually “minorized.” It continues as mixolydian, then a minor third and subsequently a diminished fourth are added. The whole movement, however, exhibits the French-Spanish idiom more than in the Middle-Eastern ornamentations, the latter consisting only inner, decorative sections. Is it a clear case of Orientalism? Well, Orientalism, yes; clear—no. Ben-Haim does not present his undulating, melismatic, ornamental melodies as opposed to other, utterly Western, more important tunes; he does not present any significant “other” in his music to make it a clear orientalist work. But the Mizrahi element, as opposed to the Sephardi one, does seem ornamental and subordinate to the latter. Together, through smooth transitions, they do constitute a convincing whole for wide audiences.

Brod was not the only voice of support; Ben-Haim’s appreciation among composers soared as the piece was perceived as a true synthesis of East and West, at a time when nationalism was ascendant in arts and letters in Israel. For several decades later, the

rarely-performed *Psalmist* was still studied by composers and their students as one of the best examples of the desired synthesis.

During the last thirty years of Ben-Haim's career, past *The Sweet Psalmist of Israel*, he continued to elaborate on his Mediterranean style, being true to his conservative inclinations. Some of the pieces he composed that period, while not much appreciated by his peers, are performed frequently. However, his best performed works, which became canonic in the Israeli repertory, were composed before *The Sweet Psalmist*. Among them are most of his piano works, notably *Five Pieces* (1943), *Sonatina* (1946), and *Sonata* (1954); *Akara* (The barren, text by Rahel) for voice and piano or string quartet, 1939; *Songs without Words* for voice and piano or orchestra, which he arranged for various ensembles, 1951; *Sonata*, for violin, 1951; *Serenade* for flute and string trio, 1952—all of which created and prescribed the local style. Indeed, it took decades for the “tyranny of the avant-garde” to wane until the 1990s, when local composers, Noam Sheriff, Oded Assaf, Rachel Galinne and Michael Wolpe, among others, honored Ben-Haim with compositions dedicated to, and partly based on, his highly influential style. Selected by Michael Wolpe, artistic director of the annual festival Israeli Music Celebration, and Paul Landau, chair of the Israel Music Institute (Israel's publishing house of contemporary music), Ben-Haim became the first composer chosen as composer of the year for the annual Israeli Music Celebration in 2011-2012. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's performance of Ben-Haim's *Joram* in April 2012 was the climax of that year.

If this entry focuses more, arguably disproportionately so, on Ben-Haim, it reflects the reception of his music, first and foremost. No other composer of his generation has been both identified with the Mediterranean style *and* produced such a large number of compositions which became favorites in the concert halls, on the radio—and abroad, representing Israeli music. However, Ben-Haim's reception as the creator of this style is only partially accurate. Several of his colleagues shared a similar style; he was well aware of their compositions (as we know from his public lectures), and he then pursued further his version of a common style in the 1940s. His version, however, influenced younger composers more than most of his colleagues'.

One of Ben-Haim's early colleagues was Marc Lavry (Riga, 1903-Haifa, 1967). A prolific composer who conducted the Berlin Symphony Orchestra between 1929-1933, he immigrated to Palestine in 1935, when it became clear that such work was no longer possible for a Jewish conductor. Many of his works await repeated performances, but his symphonic poem *Emek* (valley, 1937), similar to Ben-Haim's later favorite *Fanfare to Israel*, became a light-classical music symbol of Mandatory Palestine. Based on his own popular song, *Shir Ha-emek* (song of the valley), it has been performed extensively through the 1960s. *Emek* begins, like many Israeli works of the time, with a whimsical solo flute fragments, clearly alluding to the stereotypical, Palestine postcard view of an ancient-desert caravan of camels and shepherds leading their goats with their flutes. It ends with a hora dance, possibly one of the first Israeli compositions which inspired many composers during the 1940s and early 1950s to end their Mediterranean works with a hora finale. Lavry also authored the first opera which was composed and produced in Palestine, about a love story in a Kibbutz: *Dan the Guard* (1941-45). In his short, composer-credo essay written in 1967, at a time when Israeli composers turned to serial and other avant guard techniques, Lavry explained his accessible Mediterranean style: "I compose for the audience and I would like to be understood by the audience."

Menahem Avidom (nee Mahler-Kalkstein, Stanislaviv, 1908-Tel Aviv, 1995) was also a leader of the early Mediterranean style. Like Ben-Haim and Lavry, he also worked with Bracha Zephira, arranging her tunes for small ensembles, integrating them into his chamber and orchestral works. He was among the four composers (with Ben-Haim, Lavry, and Partos) the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra chose to represent local music in its first major tour of the US in the early 1950s. Unlike his peers, who all were interested in Mizrahi music, he actually spent seven years of his early adulthood in Arab countries, Lebanon and Egypt. Avidom was one of the organizers of the 1932 Cairo Congress of Arab Music, where he worked as a head of the Cairo music education system, to where he was sent by his teacher, Henri Rabaud (director of the Paris Conservatoire). Avidom composed ten symphonies, among them three explicitly Mediterranean: the first, Folk

Symphony, the fourth, *David* composed four years before Ben-Haim's *The Sweet Psalmist*; and the third, which is indeed titled Mediterranean (yam-tikhonit) Symphony.

Verdina Shlonsky (Kremenchug, 1905-Tel Aviv, 1990) was the only notable woman composer of founders' generation. She was only appreciated as the first lady of that cohort later in life. Indeed, she was triply marginalized: she as a woman at a time when most composers did not really believe that a woman can compose or become a great composer (and they treated Nadia Boulanger, who taught some of the founders, as the exception that proves the rule); she was reviled as "not Israeli enough" due to both her contacts with European leading composers in Paris between the 1930s and the 1960s and professional embrace of their musical styles; and she did not truly appreciate Mizrahi music (and did not even seem interested in it like other composers)—a pre-requisite for belonging to the leading styles, primarily the Mediterranean strand. Yet, she was deeply involved with the creation of the Israeli folk song, and many of her songs indeed share musical traits, especially in the use of modes and syncopated, hora-like rhythms, with other Mediterranean songs. Among her prize-winning compositions were *Images Palestiniennes* (1930) and 1948 String Quartet. Other notable composers who, like Shlonsky, were marginalized for not sharing the leading ideology, were Eric Walter Sternberg and Joachim Stutschewsky whose pieces, like Shlonsky, still exhibited Mediterranean traits: the use of popular or Mizrahi songs, modes, syncopated rhythms, or original melodies inspired by these sources. Sternberg was an advocate of keeping composers' original style from their formative years in Europe. Still, his orchestral works *The Twelve Tribes of Israel* (1938), and *Joseph and His Brethren* (1939), which were not recognized as part of the mainstream at that time (partly because they were densely polyphonic), belong to it all the same. Stutschewsky, who expressed his deep passion to Klezmer music, which he saw as rich as Bach's cello works (Stutschewsky was a cellist and a cello pedagogue, and his writings on the theme appeared in Schott in the 1930s), was marginalized for just that reason: the passion to Ashkenazi rather than Mizrahi music. The Zionist *Zeitgeist*, against the Eastern-European stetle cultural heritage (shlilat ha-galut, or the anti-exile, anti-diaspora mentality), for the reinvented Orientalism, precluded the inclusion of a composer whose ties to the great Ashkenazi tradition were so

strong. As the Israeli Mediterranean style was created as an antithesis to the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music, Stutschewsky was marginalized as well, despite his superb support of Ben-Haim, Seter, and other composers in their first steps in Palestine of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Still, Stutschewsky's *Landscapes of Israel* (piano, 1950) and *Israeli Suite* (cello and piano, 1977) are arguably no less Mediterranean than Ben-Haim's *Fanfare to Israel*.

During the late 1940s and the early 1950s, the Mediterranean style acquired a new direction. Ben-Haim's style was gradually perceived by Alexander Boskovich—who emulated both the Sabaneyev example (collecting and Jewish folk songs) and the Bartók-Kodály school—as too close to the exotic-orientalistic European tradition. Along with his close friends Oedoen Partos and Mordecai Seter, Boskovich saw Ben-Haim's music as fundamentally flawed, and that was not merely jealousy of Ben-Haim success. The then-called Troika of Partos, Boskovich, and Seter saw the Western, functional-harmonic (or even traditional-modal) arrangements of Yemenite songs, as Ben-Haim pursued, as unfit match (Boskovich, *Orlogin*). Following analyses of Bartók's music, the Troika developed an approach aiming to create what they saw as a true synthesis between the Mizrahi folkloristic and liturgical sources and Western techniques they studied in their formative years in Budapest (Partos, who studied with Kodály) and Paris (Boskovich and Seter, with Boulanger). And true synthesis, they argued, may not be created based on functional harmony or even romantic archaism, a use of the ancient or church modes to create a sense of nineteenth-century Orientalism or nationalist folklorism. It may work, ideologically and musically, so the Troika argued, only with a deep respect to, and thorough study of, the Mizrahi material, transforming its melodies into pitch-sets in the accompaniment, using the irregular rhythms pervasively, not forcing them into the 4/4 or 3/4 time signatures, and opting (as Seter stressed in his 1960 article) the Western forms which correspond with Mizrahi forms, such as the prelude, toccata, cantata, motet, and variation forms.

Together with composers Joachim Stutschewsky and Verdina Shlonsky, Alexander U. Boskovich (Cluz, 1907-Tel Aviv 1964) was one of the most prolific writers about local

music in general. His writings about the Mediterranean style, however, became seminal, most prominently his 1953 article “Ba‘ayot ha-musica ha-mekorit be-Israel” (The problems of original music in Israel), which was published in *Orlogin*, one of the best literary journals of the time, and edited by Avraham Shlonsky. Boskovich’s long and dense article was different from many of his colleagues’ writings (notably, Partos and Seter) in its fervent tone. Most importantly, it was *prescriptive*, not merely descriptive, telling composers how to approach a real East-West synthesis, and strongly opposing Ben-Haim’s style, without mentioning his name. There, for the first time, one can find the most detailed characteristics of the desired Israeli style, the Eastern Mediterranean style, as Boskovich saw it, and he shared many of his ideas with Brod: the importance of irregular beats; emphasis on unison, monophonic lines (Brod thought that dense polyphony did not fit the Mediterranean style, while Boskovich supported it, perhaps following Seter’s *Sabbath Cantata* and *Motets* of 1940); Aeolian, Dorian, Phrygian, and Mixolydian modes for the harmony; melodies based on Mizrahi, preferably Yemenite tunes (because the Yemenite Jewish community was considered the most isolated, and thus possibly closest connection to the music of the Temple), avoiding the interval of augmented second (which was most identified with Ashkenazi and klezmer music); the use of woodwinds and small percussion instruments—all making the music slightly monotonous, less “Western.”

One of the first substantive criticism on Boskovich’s *Orlogin* article was, again, that of Liora Bresler (1985, p.142). In addition to her critical view of the similarities between Nietzsche’s ideas of music of the “south” and Brod’s description of characteristics of local music, she noted—no less—the similarities between Boskovich’s premises and Wagner’s assumptions in his *Das Judenthum in der Musik*:

“Wagner and Boskovich share the assumption that a real work of art expresses the society of the artist who created it. They both see the Jew as foreign, alien entity in the European society. Both present Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer as examples to a tragic conflict between their origin and their local habitat. Both argue that ancient Jewish [Hebraic] music, at the time when the people of Israel lived in their

homeland, might have been pure; but years of exile and separation [from homeland] made it [the music] meaningless. They both find parallels between the music and the language—between the Yiddish and Jewish music in Europe. Both detest the Jewish figure who does not partake in productive labor... and they both reach a similar conclusion about the lack of value of the Jewish [music] in Europe.” (My free translation from the Hebrew original.)

Boskovich was clearly not aware that he had internalized European anti-Semitism. Fundamentally, he followed nineteenth-century ideas on nationalism in European music as a model to create national music in Israel. On the one hand, he was very careful not to use the term national or nationalist because of its WWII connotations; instead, he preferred “original Israeli music” or “Eastern-Mediterranean music.” On the other, his ideas clearly prescribed the ways, especially similar to Bartók’s and Kodály’s, to create local national music. His own compositions were perceived as bold in their attempted synthesis between the Mizrahi sources which inspired his works, but he rarely cited these melodies in his music. Unlike Ben-Haim’s gentle Orientalism, Boskovich’s Oboe Concerto (1942, rev. 1960), was far more daring in its integration; he appreciated a bit less his own Violin Concerto (1942) for the same reason (probably, not Mizrahi enough for him). His *Semitic Suite* (piano, 1945), however, became staple of the Israeli repertory like Ben-Haim’s *Sonatina* and his *Five Pieces*. Oedoen Partos’s (Budapest, 1907-Tel Aviv, 1977) status at the time, however, was far more established than Boskovich’s. The first among Israeli composers to receive the Israel Prize (before Ben-Haim, Avidom and Seter), he was as known as a superb violist, the first violist of Huberman’s Palestine Orchestra (and later Israel Philharmonic), as a composer. He headed the Tel Aviv Israel Academy between 1951 and 1977 and led classical musical life in Israel in his many institutional posts. He shared most of Boskovich’s ideas about how Israeli music should be written, and his Bartók-influenced 1932 *Concertino* was performed often, as were his 1947 *Yizkor*, 1957 *Visions*, 1959 *Makamat*, and 1960 *Psalms*.

Mordecai Seter (Novorossiysk, 1916-Tel Aviv, 1994) was not considered part of the Mediterranean style for several decades, at least until the 1980s, and for good reasons.

Unlike Ben-Haim's quasi-impressionistic style, Seter's was highly dramatic and expressive; unlike most of the light and highly accessible Mediterranean works, including his friend Boskovich, his were often reserved, demanding, dramatic, densely polyphonic and highly intricate. Seter was the composers' composer of his generation, appreciated by his peers (notably Boskovich and Partos, but also Ben-Haim and Tal, who hardly appreciated each other) and especially the second-generation composers. However, it has been rarely noticed that his music shared the same ideological bases and biases as his peers Boskovich and Partos, and consequently, elements of the Mediterranean style, too. Seter deeply appreciated Mizrahi music and used Yemenite and other Mizrahi tunes not only as sources for tunes for his Western works, but also as models for melodic intricacies and rhythmic richness, which he acknowledged in his 1960 *Bat-Kol* article as far more developed than in traditional Western music. His 1940 *Sabbath Cantata*, based on Sephardi melodies from Idelsohn's *Thesaurus* (volume four) has been appreciated by composers a cornerstone of the Israeli repertory: Ben-Haim and Seter shared the first Engel Prize (1945, Tel Aviv), Ben-Haim for his Symphony No. 1 and Seter for his *Sabbath Cantata*. His Partita for violin and piano (1951), Sonata for two violins (1952), and especially his prizes-winning Ricercar (1953), which were performed extensively during the 1950s and 1960s, also share common Mediterranean traits such as free and intricate rhythms and melodies and modal or maqam-influenced writing, which all serve dramatic expression and polyphonic textures (the latter, however, were rare in Mediterranean pieces). At the peak of his career in the 1960s, Martha Graham commissioned from him music for three of her ballets. Seter's oratorio *Midnight Vigil* (*Tikkun Hatzot*, 1961) has been singled out in several reviews from the 1960s until 2013 as an Israeli masterpiece. It was originally based on Yemenite tunes that the composer heard from choreographer Sara Levi-Tanai, who commissioned the first twelve-minute version of the composition for her Inbal dance theater. The extended, radiophonic version of this oratorio was issued on one of the first LPs of Israeli music (CBS, 1962, available online; final, forty-three minute version, on a Capriccio CD, 1990). *Midnight Vigil* was chosen to be performed along with Beethoven's Ninth and Bach's B minor mass for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's Millennium celebration on 1.1.2000.

Many other composers emulated the Mediterranean style. Abel Elich in his early works (notably, *Bashrav*), Haim Alexander in many of his mature works, and even Josef Tal, who built a name for himself as the pioneer of electronic music in Israel, incorporated Mizrahi tunes in his early works, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as in his *Symphony No. 1*, and the piano sonata. Second-generation Israeli composers who studied with Ben-Haim, Partos, Boskovich, Seter, and Tal, often began their careers as Mediterranean composers, first emulating their teachers' styles. Among them are Tzvi Avni (*Capriccio*, two early sonatas, *Summer Strings*, and *Prayer* of the late 1950s and early 1960s; Avni integrated elements of his early style in his late works after 1990), Yehezkel Braun, whose favorites are performed extensively in Israel and abroad, Ami Maayani, Noam Sheriff, and Ben-Zion Orgad.

While in the 1940s and 1950s Israeli composers were considered to be divided between Mediterranean composers, who wished to incorporate Mizrahi tunes, and “cosmopolitans,” who opted to develop their former European styles, in the 1960s, Mediterranean-influenced works were doomed as nationalistic or passé at best, given contemporary voicing as Boulez, Stockhausen, and Penderecki. But since the early 1950s, about fifty percent of the Israeli population has been of Mizrahi origin, so Mizrahi music, so pervasive in Israeli culture, has never ceased to fascinate composers, and since the 1980s, more compositions integrate local Mizrahi or Arab tunes, rhythms, forms, instruments, and performers into the Western concert hall. Many composers of the younger generation, those born in Israel during the 1940s and 1950s and studies in Europe and the US do not hide their love of Mizrahi music and integrate it in their music, among them Betty Olivero, Josef Bardanashvili, and Benjamin Yusupov, to name just a few.

Edwin Seroussi, who wrote generally about Mediterraneanism in Israeli music, art music and far beyond (2002), noted: “The Mediterranean thus became both a location and a cultural utopia in which the Israeli society and its new culture attempted to position itself within larger geopolitical and cultural frames. ... Texts that attempt to define musical Mediterraneanism in Israel present three different approaches. The first approach focuses

on musical Mediterraneanism as a cluster of traits, such as particular scales, modes, rhythms, textures, musical instruments, etc. Following this approach, one may say that Mediterraneanism possesses a particular ‘sound.’ A second approach considers the specific contexts in which music of Mediterranean characteristics or origins is performed, e.g. spaces such as a reconstructed Greek *taverna*.... Finally, Mediterranean music is sometimes defined as all music consumed by ‘Mediterranean taste-publics’, a euphemism for blue-collar Jews of North African and Near Eastern origins. Although different combinations of elements from these three approaches appear in texts about musical Mediterraneanism in Israel, the traits’ list appears to be the most frequently used.” Indeed, if in 2002 we could still conclude that most writings about the style present taxonomy of traits, then they clearly follow Brod’s 1951 book and Boskovich’s approach in his 1953 *Orlogin* article.

But the Israeli Mediterranean style was not merely a style that can be described mainly through musical elements. More importantly, it was an attitude, an ideology that yielded several concurrent styles sharing common concepts about how national Israeli music should be composed. Musical elements, traits, or characteristics were only secondary to, or by-products of, the underlying ideals. While its meaning has shifted from the 1940s to the early decade of the twenty-first century, and dramatically so—the ideology stayed relatively consistent. Composers have aspired to (re)create a (mostly) Western style that either merely hints, alludes to, or seriously integrates, in varying degrees, the divergent musical cultures that are both found in Israel and mirror or correspond with regional cultures.

*A shorter version of this entry was originally translated as “Mittelmeerstil” for a volume of the forthcoming *Enzyklopaedie juedischer Geschichte und Kultur* (Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture), a project of the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Leipzig University, Germany. Many of the ideas encapsulated in this entry are further developed in a long-term book project, to be published with Oxford University Press.

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