Music has played an important role in the development of modern Israel, as a vehicle of social unification and as a link to the traditions and cultural histories of its many ethnic communities. The enthusiasm of Israeli audiences is well known to performers throughout the world, and one perceives it is due at least in part to the extramusical implications of a guest performance within the nation’s borders. During the 1991 Gulf War, violinist Isaac Stern performed on an Israeli concert stage in the middle of an air raid before a sea of gas masks, and Israel Philharmonic Orchestra music director Zubin Mehta stepped through SCUD missile wreckage in a Tel Aviv neighborhood after canceling a scheduled appearance with the New York Philharmonic. Frank Pelleg, a prominent musician who immigrated to Palestine in 1936 from his native Czechoslovakia, described a similar episode from the dawn of the nation:

I remember the day after the proclamation of the State of Israel. The unprepared and—then—defenceless citizens of Tel Aviv were exposed to incessant, murderous air raids, and the radio had announced the first casualties. But there was not a single empty seat at the regular subscription concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra. Earlier still, during the fighting on the border with Jaffa, a Bach recital had to wage a desperate battle with the clatter of the machineguns.
around the Municipal Museum, and the large audience, ordered to wait for the “All clear” to disperse, were granted a repeat of the programme, item by item, as an encore.¹

These scenes from the past attest to the special place of music and musicians in modern Israel. Soloists and ensembles from other countries continue to be very much in demand in Israel, just as in the 1920s, when the visits of such artists to British-mandate Palestine attracted considerable attention.²

For the Israeli composer, the environment has been somewhat less than propitious, and the contemporary art music of Israel has yet to find a place within its own society. Writing in 1963, Pelleg observed that Israelis did “not respond enthusiastically to local talent.”³ Elie Yarden has noted that Israeli audiences are generally more interested in the performance of music than in the music performed, a condition less than conducive to the reception of new works: “In the cult of celebrity which dominates the Israeli concert world, music is the unavoidable concomitant noise present in the significant experience of contact with the aura of the performer. Sounds which are not thoroughly familiar are an unwelcome disturbance of the valued audience-performer relationship. At best, music is the vehicle whereby the expectations generated by the performer’s reputation are fulfilled.”⁴ Despite the historical importance of music and music education in Israel, many Israeli composers have responded to the allure of European and American cultural centers and educational institutions and pursued advanced training abroad, where many have also found greater chances of success and a livelihood than at home. Though music is everywhere in Israel, the wealth of contemporary music to which the nation has given rise remains largely unknown, even among its potentially most appreciative audience. Though the lack of enthusiasm of concertgoers for contemporary music is a phenomenon with which composers elsewhere are familiar, it may seem ironic, given the context that gave birth to this nation, that Israelis have been unreceptive to expressions of the new in the arts.

The special pressures that social and political circumstances have exerted on Israel’s artistic community have challenged its composers perhaps above all others. The generalized local indifference to contemporary Israeli art music is contrasted by the significantly greater

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value that has been traditionally accorded writers and visual artists.\textsuperscript{5} Benjamin Bar-Am has stated that the pioneering generations, “not blessed with a great understanding of musical values,” considered the composer “strangely removed,” while in the writer they saw “the personification of the spirit of the people.”\textsuperscript{6} Despite living and working in a country known for its love of music, Israeli composers have been increasingly active outside of Israel because of limited local opportunities for education, audiences, support, and professional advancement.\textsuperscript{7} Many Israeli composers have felt isolated at home but continue to engage in a dialogue between self and society through the language of music, reflecting and representing their native or adopted culture in the outside world.

The time and place in which artists create form the cultural subtext of their individual expression. The myriad influences found in Israeli art music reflect the many ethnic and national origins of its population, as well as the impact of regional, Jewish, and Arabic musical traditions, and the international milieu of contemporary music. Awareness of the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which they live affects most Israeli composers deeply, including Ami Maayani, who remarked: “The mere fact of our being here, from the spiritual point of view, directs the trend of musical creativity. This creativity reflects the untiring search for typical expression of a people renewing its life and existence.”\textsuperscript{8} The arts and artists of Israel originate from and interact with those of other cultures. The interviews in this book, however, also suggest that the artistic output of Israel bears the imprint of this society’s unique and complex social and cultural history. Tzvi Avni has observed that “what characterizes life in our time, in the spiritual sense, is that this is the age of questions, a generation that wonders and searches for ways.”\textsuperscript{9} Yinam Leef recently articulated other aspects of life in present-day Israel that influence its creative artists: “Our society and its needs bear little resemblance to that of the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s. But I live and create in a society still torn by contradictions. It embraces and rejects its heritage at the same time. It is ethnically diverse, but tensions overflow daily. A deeply rooted sense of personal responsibility is mixed with egotism, impatience and lack of tolerance. Unconsciously, these contradictions must find their way into my work.”\textsuperscript{10}

Some younger Israeli composers have continued, revived, or revised the focus on indigenous musical elements earlier associated
with the Eastern Mediterranean school. Oded Zehavi described one of his recent works as having been composed "in a style which I consider neo-Mediterranean." A recent work by Haim Permont that employed a traditional Middle Eastern drum known as a darbukka prompted one writer to describe some of the younger Israeli composers as "post-modernists" who "follow the paths along which their teachers have trodden." These composers, the writer suggested, seek "means for greater communicativity" rather than new idioms, having become "tired of being enclosed in a double 'ghetto': that of modernism and of Israel." The continued interest of Israeli composers in Arabic musical traditions has also been reflected in a number of works. Early examples include works by Ben-Haim and Partos, as well as Orgad's *Taksim* and Ehrlich's *Bashrav*. Other composers whose works clearly reflect the influence of Arabic musical traditions are Betty Olivero, Ami Maayani, and Tsippi Fleischer. In Fleischer's compositions, especially, one also perceives extramusical dimensions to be consciously at work. With her training in theory and composition, Middle Eastern studies, and Hebrew and Arabic philology, Fleischer is committed to expressing Israeli and Jewish traits while evoking the drama of Arabic poetry, an aspect of the broader cultural environment of which she feels a part. The overall form of Roman Haubenstock-Ramati's *Berahot* ("Blessings") is articulated by reflections on a different musical tradition in each of its movements: "Prelude" is based on Indian raga, "Incantation" on the Arabic *maqām*, "Hallelujah" on Byzantine chant, and "Chorale" on Hebrew cantorial song.

Philip Bohlman contends that neither a synthesis of East and West nor a national style has developed in contemporary Israeli music, noting that the younger composers prefer "international styles" to the musical traditions of the region in which they live. Rather, he observes, "Israeli composers continue to write in a number of styles, and their works continue to reflect the international character of the immigrant society that still prevails." Though a single, unified national style has not taken root in modern Israel, and may never, Bohlman has also observed that the diverse musical culture of Israel has nonetheless produced a sizable body of national music: "However one defines 'national music,' whether as explicitly, implicitly, or accidentally referring to something 'Israeli,' the repertory of national music stretches across many genres." The notion of "East-West synthesis" has continued to evolve, and is still discussed by Israeli


Conclusion

composers. Peter Gradenwitz has drawn the distinction between the "genuine impact of Near Eastern music" and the use of "mannerisms" or "stylistic clichés." Zvi Keren predicted three decades ago that "the former type of East-West synthesis in which Oriental music is 'Westernized' may well give way to a type in which Western music is 'Orientalized.'" The aesthetics, techniques, and musical dialects associated with recent works suggest that individually integrated voices, rather than a synthetic national style, will emerge from the present environment, which is still more diverse than that fostered by the early Central European immigrant composers.

In the relative absence of the particular pressures that confronted their predecessors, the younger generation of Israeli composers may find more natural means by which to integrate the disparate elements of their social and cultural environment in a postnationalistic era. Freed of previous generations' concerns with ideology or aesthetic formula, the essential challenge of Israel's present and future composers will be to identify, select, and integrate those elements that represent their individual voices. It seems certain that elements and evocations of East and West will continue to play a role in Israeli culture and the arts, as in the daily life these reflect. What seems equally certain is that new possibilities of organizing sound in time will continually present themselves to composers in Israel, as elsewhere, and that as Israel's society and culture continue to develop, so too will the global and regional dialects of its musical language.

In recent years there appears to have been an awakening of interest among Israelis, and others, in this nation's established and growing art-music tradition. Israeli composers are also increasingly active abroad in ever-widening venues. With each generation, there is perhaps also a growing appreciation of contemporary Israeli music as a literature that documents and reflects the culture and history of its people. It was announced in 1994 that six streets in a new section of Beer Sheva would be named after Israeli composers Yedidya (Admon) Gorochov, Menahem Avidom, Paul Ben-Haim, Alexander U. Boskovitch, Marc Lavry, and Oedoen Partos.

It is hoped that publications such as this one might help draw increased interest and attention, in Israel and elsewhere, to this vibrant and rapidly growing art-music culture, one that has persisted and developed despite an abundance of obstacles. In the twentieth century, art music in the Western world may have experienced both its most
marginal and most essential role in the lives of the general public. The interactions and cross-pollinations linking musics of different cultures and subcultures, genres, styles, and eras in this period has been unprecedented. At the beginning of a new century and millennium, perhaps Israelis and others may discover new ways in which the time and place they live are uniquely reflected in music, as all other arts, from which these are inseparable.