Haim (originally Heinz) Alexander has composed more than seventy works for a wide variety of media, including many arrangements of folk songs. He also collected more than two hundred traditional Jewish melodies that have been the basis of many compositions by Israeli composers. Stylistic diversity is a hallmark of Alexander’s music, which draws on modes, the twelve-tone method, folklore, jazz, and improvisation, and combines elements of neoclassicism, expressionism, Eastern Mediterranean pastoralism, and polyphonic textures recalling the compositions of Bartók and Hindemith. Alexander has received awards from the Israel Music Institute, the Society of Authors, Composers, and Music Publishers (ACUM), and the Zimriya choral festival, as well as the Yoel Engel Prize (1951) for his Six Israeli Dances, one of the most often heard contemporary Israeli works. He is well known as a pianist, with a special interest in improvisation. Alexander taught at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy of Music and Dance from 1945 to 1981, and continued to teach part-time thereafter.

Michael Wolpe has described three stylistic phases in Alexander’s work: from 1945 until 1958 he participated in the Eastern Mediterranean style dominant during the period, employing modal materials with elements of folklore and jazz; from 1958 until 1969 his work was freer, with a greater affinity to the avant-garde, specifically in
employing the twelve-tone method; during the 1970s and 1980s still more freedom in the choice of form and material was evident.²

I first met Haim Alexander at a concert during the Israel Festival. Our interview took place at his home in Jerusalem on July 7, 1986.

I was born the ninth of August 1915, in Berlin, Germany. I remember Berlin as a vibrant city, culturally as well as politically and socially. I personally had little share in its bustling life. My family was not well off. My father died when I was seven. I was sent to the Auerbach orphanage for several years. At the orphanage I made many friends, some of them musicians. They had a reform synagogue, with a big harmonium. I played regularly, at Friday evening and Sabbath-day prayers, and on festivals—works by Louis Lewandowski, Salomon Sulzer, and others.

Private lessons with various tutors, singing in the Berlin Boys Choir, one of the best children's choirs of the day—these were my initiation into the world of music. We sang in many places, mainly sacred music. I may have been the only Jew in the choir. I could not afford to go to concerts or the opera, yet I vividly recall attending concerts. I had the good fortune to hear Otto Klemperer and Bruno Walter, and to sing in a children's choir at a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, conducted by [Wilhelm] Furtwängler. I was even at the premiere of [Kurt] Weill and [Bertolt] Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* with the unforgettable Lotte Lenya. Before I was five I began improvising on the piano and composing little pieces with relative ease, and in this natural way I learned the basics of harmony and counterpoint.³ I now know my teachers in Germany were, I would say, quite mediocre. And I had one teacher for piano who was an accompanist of Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender, then a quite famous singer. But he didn't give me much. He was also my theory teacher, and I had some other teachers. But it was at the time the Nazis came.

I left Berlin when I was twenty-one, in 1936, for Palestine, as a student of music. Emil Hauser, the violinist, was then in charge. He was the director of the Palestine Conservatory and Academy. I would say he rescued me from the Nazis, at the time. I had been in Berlin from 1915 to 1936 going to school, then going to the Stern Conservatory. And I wanted to enter the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin but this was impossible because in the meantime everything was *Judenrein*. [In 1934 I was expelled from the Musicians Union, and
then, together with the other Jewish students), they also threw me out of the Stern Conservatory, and I found that I had nothing more to do there. Germany was now forbidden for Jews, and for artists as well, so I waited for my chance to leave the country.

{A wealthy uncle who later perished in the Holocaust knew I was desperate to leave Germany.) He told me that there was an advertisement in Die jüdische Rundschau, a newspaper for Jews in Berlin, that Emil Hauser comes later that week to Berlin to look for talented young students—boys and girls—to take them for two years to study at the Jerusalem Academy—Palestine Academy and Conservatory for Music. {This is how Yohanan Boehm, Herbert Brün and many others came to Jerusalem. It was a two-year course, but for many of us it became a lifetime—there was no way back.) He was the husband of the then quite well known children's physician, Dr. Helena Kagan, one of the founders of many things here, artistically. {He organized chamber music concerts at his and his wife's home. Through him I got to know the quartets of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms and others.) Emil Hauser could have done nothing without her. She gave the money. He went abroad and he listened to students. He was also, together with [Bronislaw] Huberman, one of the founders of the Philharmonic Orchestra, because Huberman alone could not listen to all of them. They were friends, and one went here, the other one there.

I don't know if my memory is so good now, but I think my main studies started when I was twenty-one. I was a student of Stefan Wolpe and his then second wife, Irma Schoenberg, who was not a relative of Schoenberg but a very good pianist and teacher. She died also a few years ago, I think, in New York, like Wolpe, who died much earlier. I've got here some material written by him, also some letters from him. He was at that time the most important person, and his teaching was like a shock to me, because my education was on the classical-romantic side. My compositions were like a continuation of Mendelssohn. When he saw this he said, "Now this is very good, throw it into the dustbox, throw it away—now we start making music!" And he meant, by music, certainly only serial music.

So my first acquaintance with dodecaphonic music came through Stefan Wolpe. {Wolpe was a powerful, acerbic extrovert who did not suffer detractors easily. He was energetic, temperamental and super-impulsive. He would leave a lesson in the middle if the muse called. Studying with him was a unique experience. As a pupil of
Arnold Schoenberg and an exponent of the dodecaphonic school, he considered it the only method for modern music. His wife was very different from him. She was reserved, a highly gifted pianist with a unique technical and musical approach. I think she was her husband's intellectual superior. Her playing and teaching method were carefully calculated.}

Wolpe was also a conductor, and I sang in his choir. He taught us conducting as well, not only composition. So I had all my experience here. But I must say that Wolpe left the country because he didn't feel well here. There were other reasons he went to the States. The general trend at that time was much more focused around the Mediterranean style of Marc Lavry and Ben-Haim. And the funny thing is that Wolpe was not completely unaware of this. He wrote several works, which I possess, mainly for a cappella chorus. They are also more or less Mediterranean, but his instrumental works were completely different and nobody wanted to listen to them. So he left the country, together with other musicians like [Wolf] Rosenberg and Peter Jona Korn. The latter is quite well known in Germany. Korn went afterwards to Schoenberg to study with him.

{My first years in the country were an intensive intellectual debate on all levels, including music. First, two schools dominated: Wolpe, and Lavry and Ben-Haim. I personally was torn between my modal, Mediterranean tendency and Wolpe's aesthetic-dodecaphonic demands. Then, like today, symposia were held to deal with questions concerning the nature of new music, whether there was a Jewish music, an Israeli music, and so on. Each school was totally dictatorial. The Wolpians heaped scorn on the Ben-Haimites in the most vitriolic terms, while the Lavryites waved the Zionist banner and believed fervently in the folkloristic approach. To Ben-Haim's credit, he granted legitimacy to everyone and stayed out of the fray. His works spoke for themselves, in a clear Mediterranean voice.

For Wolpe, Ben-Haim was anathema to his universal style. Wolpe rejected Hebrew as a language of expression and opposed the folkloristic, simplistic approach. His departure from the country was an act of despair; broken-hearted, he fled the recriminations and begrudged the recognition gained by his rivals and the damning judgment of his "Zionist" critics. Wolpe's departure left me and other young composers facing a stylistic dilemma: whether to assume the "burden" of the Mediterranean style, or to undertake a fervent examination of the European avant-garde. Lavry preached an "authentic" Israeli music
while in effect perpetuating the Russian nationalist school. Many of
the German composers were influenced by him and artificially grafted
the Mediterranean style to their work, sometimes with grotesque
results. The dodecaphonists turned to Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg.
Hindemith was studied with fervor by the Mediterraneanists. Bartók
became known in Israel later—largely thanks to Oedoen Partos, but
he has, I think, become a very influential composer here.

There was a strong German clique, and we spoke German—even
the Czechs among us. But we slowly learned Hebrew. This group was
the standard bearer of music in the country. Later the Hungarians
came, bringing with them new ideas and new material. Gradually
new blood was added, from Eastern Europe, and the “Yekke mafia”
blended into the new Israeli reality. The composers who had come
from Germany had no interest in nationalistic trends, even scorned
them. I was searching for a personal way, far from the German culture
which in the war years for me became the embodiment of evil. What
some of the Yekkes could not apprehend in the Hebrew language
found expression in music. No wonder Jacoby, Avidom and Ben-Haim
were so avidly Mediterranean. Only in the sixties did I begin to listen
to folk music, and I transcribed two hundred songs for adaptation.
But actual quotation is very rare in my works.

I listened to the Schoenberg school sometimes, but I always started
laughing. I didn't understand; it didn't mean anything to me. [I was
more familiar with Hindemith when I came from Germany. My initial
relation to Wolpe was one of a pupil's respect for a teacher. In fact,
it was much later that I began to implement some of Wolpe's ideas,
after I had been to Darmstadt. While studying with Wolpe, I earned
my living as a cocktail pianist in Jerusalem bars. This may account
for lighter, more humorous elements that appear in my music.]

So from 1938 onwards I had no more teachers like Wolpe, and
I went to somebody you've probably heard about, Hanoch Jacoby.
I studied five years with him, and he gave me more insight and
understanding of the work of Hindemith, because he was a Hin­
demith student. [Jacoby's influence was immediate and our friendship
instantaneous, as between peers. He helped me publish my first com­
positions, which had strong intimations of Hindemith and modality. I
eagerly adopted a personal modal style, with neo-modal leanings, and
an occasional folkloristic bent. I composed a lot for choir, mainly in
Hebrew, and piano.] Then I had some lessons from Partos, but I was
not really studying with him. I had also some discussion with Josef
Tal, and after this I was on my own. I had three times a grant from the DAAD, and I went to Freiburg.

{I returned to Germany in 1958.} I couldn’t do it before. The first time I went back to Germany it was awful. I couldn’t look at people because my whole family went into the gas chambers. And so it was for me an awful experience to see the old people who looked at me and said “we never did anything.” So I said “I didn’t ask you if you did anything.” They started, they’d say “Are you from Israel? You have to know that we had nothing to do with it.” Never mind, these are things I said so often, and it always hurts me. {The reason was an invitation to a conference in Darmstadt. I felt the time had come to see what was happening musically in the world. To this day I believe the time we were shut into the borders of our country created a kind of cultural ghetto that gave birth to the Mediterranean style that dominated in Israel in the forties and fifties. On the 1958 trip I could not yet face Berlin, but I did go there at the end of the sixties. The wall had already been erected, and I went to see my sole remaining kin—Jews who were saved thanks to Christians who had hidden them in the city’s netherworld.}

I went three times to Darmstadt, and there I met Wolpe again, who taught there, and people like Stockhausen, Boulez, [Henri] Pousseur, and other avant-garde composers. By the way, Wolpe did not succeed there as well, could not get through. Stockhausen had two hundred or more students; to Wolpe came three or four, nothing. They were not interested in this style. He said his music was too old-fashioned for Darmstadt and too new in Israel. He was also a very individualistic man, and with all his extrovert appearance he couldn’t make friends. I met Ligeti there, and other people. Then I went to Freiburg for further studies, and I learned the harpsichord with Neumeyer and I listened to lessons from Wolfgang Fortner. He wrote many operas. I went to Freiburg twice. And then I had a third opportunity to visit Germany as a guest. Many other Germans also had the opportunity. I was in Hannover, Essen, and Munich.

I met other musicians there, heard their students, and I started writing real dodecaphonic music after the second visit to Darmstadt. I like very much Alban Berg, he’s my favorite. But I like Bartók as well. And I wanted to make some experiments with these two styles. I wrote four or five works, really completely dodecaphonic works. And later I became more or less a composer of post-serial music. I wrote one work which I liked very much. It’s very short, a piano work called
Patterns (Tavniyot), which sounds really serial but it is not. But I never would have written that without going through the serial work. Now I'm very much interested, more or less, in styles like Messiaen. I wrote three pieces, songs, which were performed a few months ago by the Sinfonietta, with Lili Tune, a very good singer, and I think this will be on the radio this month. Whatever a composer writes, even if this is completely tonal or even if it is rubbish, it is certainly a part of his output. So, for better or for worse, you can say it is my work.

What it means to be an Israeli composer is a difficult question, but I'll try to answer it. Perhaps you don't know that I'm also a quite good, they say, a very good improviser. I wrote a book on improvisation, and just two weeks ago it came out in Germany, not yet in English. So if you ask me what is Israeli music I would say, first of all, there comes my intuition as an improviser. So I have an idea—I don't care if this sounds Israeli or not, because I never heard a correct answer concerning what is really Israeli or not. I just care if it's good music or not.

I write really in many styles. In younger years I wrote many a cappella choruses for the Zimriya. I got first prize for the first Zimriya, I got the first prize for the second Zimriya, and then they said, "Please don't participate anymore," so I stopped. But the Bible text inspired me. The accent of the Hebrew words inspired me too, to write not only modal but also according to the Hebrew accent. And this inspired me also in the instrumental music. For instance, one of my works, called Six Israeli Dances, for piano, which is my best-known work, was inspired by these elements. I've made two orchestrations, the latest a year ago. Aaron Copland, who heard it in '45, said to me, "This is a good experiment to be called Israeli music." So this gave me a push to continue, but I did not continue that way.

We had a composers' session for one week. He came over from the States in 1945; Frank Pelleg invited him. Pelleg was an excellent musician, a very good man. He died too young. So he called Copland to come here, and we sat and Copland listened the whole day to some of our music. And I was then quite a young man, thirty years old. He was very friendly to me. I sent to him later another work of mine that I thought was a good one, but he didn't like it. He said there was too much influence of Prokofiev. Now I know he was right, this was not my best work. It was a big orchestral work, forty minutes I think, done with the Philharmonic, and also here with the Symphony Orchestra of the Jerusalem Broadcasting Service.
TWENTY ISRAELI COMPOSERS

{From 1945 to 1958 the Mediterranean style ruled, in the spirit of the Zionism that fired the young stage. Those were busy years for me: I began teaching at the Academy in Jerusalem. I loved it and made it an integral part of my life in music. Those were happy years, of personal and professional progress, of walking in the streets and hearing music—in harmony with the creative atmosphere that infused the country. Then I would go home to my room and compose. I used many of the techniques taught me by Jacoby. Some days were dull and expectant but later on the muse would return. My army reserve duty afforded my first practical work in light music, as composer and arranger for an army entertainment troupe. I set texts to music, taught them, and adapted my own and others’ works. Some of my songs even reached the hit parade.}

You asked about the influence of Israeli music. I wrote not only on Bible texts but also a work called Artza—that means “homeland.” This is a symphonic overture. And then I wrote another symphonic overture, and both of these have a connection to something I thought then to be Israeli music. If I look at it now, I would say it is a little Russian and a little Mediterranean. {I studied the Bible fairly intensively. That was at the time when the Song of Songs and Psalms were set to music. In And I Gathered You In (Vekbatzti Etchem) I was assisted by one of my pupils, who suggested integrating texts from Ezekiel and Psalms. The style of my choral works of that period is purely modal.}

In Let’S Praise His Name in the Dance, I encountered the conflict between traditional form (the sonata) and the quasi-Israeli melodic material. I think sonata form presents a problem for the composer using this kind of material, and this spurred me on to seek another form. I am particularly partial to variations. Already in 1947 I composed piano variations I am very proud of, using several chords in a style far from both the dodecaphonic and the Mediterranean styles. I wrote a number of works in the personal modal style, but in the fifties I gradually began to feel the need to learn new things and change in order to emerge from the ideological Mediterranean ghetto we had built in Israel.} But the real Israeli style, which perhaps you could find in some of Ben-Haim's work, is more or less absent. I didn’t like that too much. I felt that if you do that too much it becomes a cliché. Then, anyway, I went to dodecaphonic works.

I met Wolpe again in Darmstadt twice. It took a long time to understand what he said to me in 1936. In 1936 I couldn’t understand
him, but in 1958 I understood him. I liked him more, I understood him. I started to think that maybe tonal music is over, which I don't think today. But then I thought so and I wrote four songs on Omar Khayyám's Rubaiyat, which is perhaps one of my better works. And I wrote a piano work that won the first prize from the Israel Music Institute for the best piano work of the year in 1964. This was all after two visits in Darmstadt. (Even though I was shocked by what went on there, and skeptical about its quality, I went regularly for years. I watched the deep ebb and flow of fashionable trends. Often the explanations were longer and more interesting than the works themselves. But there were also fine moments that gave me the inspiration for new creativity, beginning in 1958.)

Then I was much involved with all this. I mean I thought over which kind of music would suit me. I didn't care if it suited Israeli style. I didn't believe in that, I mean in the way, for instance, Ben-Haim believed in it. With every work I found myself thinking about how I could really overcome the first difficulties of writing it. It was always a new experience for me starting a work on a grand scale like a piano concerto. I had an idea that pushed me forward, but I didn't mind the dodecaphonic method, which I left later. I started serial composing about 1962, I think, and I stopped it about 1970. I did not stop it exactly, but little by little, going over to the scales of Messiaen. The three songs I mentioned earlier are based exactly on the Messiaen mode number two. (Modality and serialism are only techniques. My own personal expression—the strong connection to the text, the sometimes nearly jazz-like rhythms and the humor, things that cannot always be expressed in words—these are, I hope, constant throughout my work.)

I just finished, for four young musicians, a quartet for four trombones that is also a work in a modern folklore style, with lots of clusters in it. It is based on an Israeli song. I thought, if I write for young German people, then I will give them Israeli music. I dedicated it to them, it is called At adamah (You Are the Earth), and it is a song about the Negev desert. It starts with the song. I heard it's a Bedouin song really. Everybody knows it. What I did—I didn't even say variation or metamorphosis—I said Betrachtungen, it's histaklut in Hebrew. It means I look at it—it's an observation. I always use some of the motives, but it is through a way of meditation, I would say. It goes from one extreme to the other. But anyway, even then it remains folklore in a way, in a modern way.
I worked more than three years at the Hebrew University when Recha Freier asked me to collect songs in two books. These two hundred songs I collected were used by many composers who even now use the book. I heard thousands of songs, but I chose only the ones that I thought are possible for youngsters. I mean I didn't take, for instance, music of the Samaritans—this is a special sect who sing microtonally.

I teach improvisation on a serial basis, on whole-tone scale, on Messiaen scales, on Purcell style, on the Bach style, on Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert. It's called “Improvisation at the Piano.” I even go now next month to teach improvisation at the Jeunesses Musicales, which is an international group, for young musicians and students who meet once a year in a summer course. This time it is near Haifa. There I also give improvisation courses for whole groups with different instruments, I don't mind if it's not only piano. So I'm flexible, you see. This comes perhaps out of my long experience as a piano teacher and harpsichord teacher. For the harpsichord I taught mostly baroque music. At the piano I taught also lots of modern music and the classical-romantic style. {Ever since I wrote songs for my sister, the singer Lili Alexander, when I worked the cafe circuit in Germany of the Thirties and Forties and went on to do jazz improvisation, and even recently in my Teyko, I have loved jazz and been intrigued by popular music. In my analysis course at the Academy we dissected Beatles songs. Clearly, some of this involvement is evinced in my works.}

Maybe it would be better if I would have a certain “narrow” way. And I know my friend [Ben-Zion] Orgad very well, he chooses such a way. He's a very clever man and he's a philosopher. He also writes lyrics. Orgad is a man with much thought, he thinks a lot how to develop. Orgad is much nearer to Seter, so he writes in a way modal. He is not a serialist. He is serious, and we like each other very much. But as much as I'm a man of humor, he's a man without humor. So sometimes I think it's quite strange if you listen to that too much. I mean it's just a little bit one-sided. I don't know his whole output, but anyway he's an interesting man.

Lavry, whom I knew very well, was a man with a special talent for melody. There was a joke that would explain everything about Lavry, that somebody called Lavry at his home on the telephone, and Mrs. Lavry lifted the receiver. The man said, “Could I speak to Marc Lavry?” and she answered, “How could you dare to telephone now,
he's just started an opera!” So the man said, “Excuse me, I won’t do it again.” She said, “Now wait a little bit, if you wait a few minutes, he will finish it.” So he had an amazing speed of writing. He could sit in the middle of an orchestra concert and write a cantata. I don’t understand it, how he did it. His music was on the light side. I mean if Ben-Haim was a folklorist then Ben-Haim and Lavry perhaps had something in common. But Ben-Haim was a giant and Lavry was, in my opinion, inferior to him. Anyway, he has some memorable melodies that up to now are played. But funny as it is, after his death, almost everything stopped. Before that he had a great influence on other musicians.

Boskovitch was an excellent composer and teacher. His interest in serial music started toward the end of his life, so there are not many such works composed by him. Partos was a really serious, earnest musician, a very good viola player. He wrote much music for viola. And he was very much interested in Bible cantillation. We had many talks, and one day he said, “Haim, you know that there is a lot of common material between the Bible cantillation and the dodecaphonic method. I’m writing now a piece or two where I combine the cantillation with the method.” It was very interesting. Maybe these talks influenced me to try this out by myself, because the Bible cantillation and some of Bartók’s style are very much related. I mean in his string quartets, you have motives that are not far from cantillations. Later I met Partos again. We had another talk and I asked, “Do you still write Bible cantillations mixed with dodecaphonic method?” He said, “No, no, I left the twelve-tone method long ago.” So, I think this was only a passing thing. He was very much interested in oriental cantillation, not in European—Hasidic—not at all. But only in oriental cantillation, which is, by the way, an influence for Seter and Orgad as well. Orgad told me that he very often went to the oriental synagogue in order to listen to the cantillations. Partos, in my opinion, was one of the best composers here. He was the first principal of the Academy in Tel Aviv, and he had a strong, if not always pleasant, personality. You didn’t dare come to see him without a previous appointment.

Things have improved enormously in the past twenty years. No more dictatorship of schools as in the fifties and sixties. Now there is a greater freedom of expression everywhere. If it will actually take root in Israel I cannot predict. I think the Israeli composer, in addition to his personal or national connection, must find universal expression. People everywhere should be able to enjoy and understand his music,
while being ever aware that it is Israeli. How to achieve this is the question. With a text it is perhaps easier. Without a text the challenge is far more difficult.

I have a personal credo: war prevents artistic rootedness. I left Germany and came to Israel. I had high hopes and even moments of joy. But my elder son was killed in battle. And I wonder time and again—why? The world is marching towards the universal. In the arts, too, techniques are shared, and with the help of mass communication and mobility the world is becoming one unit. Against this background national expression may turn dissonant. Likeness of style began on the technical plane but is becoming quite natural: the same music is heard in Japan, Israel and Poland. Sometimes I think that what was a national Mediterranean expression now appears almost sinful. Almost fascist! The days are over, of the innocent Zionist idealism, that sincerely enabled the spontaneous growth of music drawn from the folk traditions and seeking national expression. It is hard to accept, and this is also the main reason why I do not write grand orchestral music. These are not the times for songs of praise. All this leads to my intimate style, my simple and modest approach. Biblical oratorios have been replaced by love songs for voice and piano.

Haim Alexander continues to compose and receive performances of his music internationally. In 1990 his trio for piano, violin, and violoncello was premiered in a live broadcast, and the Vienna Madrigal Choir performed his composition for mixed choir a cappella, And I Gathered You In, at the Musikverein, conducted by Aharon Harlap. Alexander's Mein blaues Klavier, for eight women's voices and percussion, a setting of a poem by Else Lasker-Schiller, was performed by the Ensemble Bel Canto in Germany in 1990 and the Jerusalem Rubin Academy Chamber Choir in 1991. A 1991 premiere in Jerusalem of his Metamorphoses on a Theme of Mozart, for piano, was broadcast live. Performances in 1992 included his Four Songs for voice, flute, viola, two guitars, and percussion, performed by the Kaprisma Ensemble in Jerusalem; And I Gathered You In, performed by the National Choir Rinat; and Shepherd's Round, for flute and piano, performed in London at the B'nai B'rith Jewish Music Festival. In 1993, recitals of works by Israeli composers held at the Israel House in Chicago included Alexander's Metamorphoses for violin, performed by David Wolf, and his Variations on a Bukharian Song and Variations on a Hassidic Niggun.
performed by oboist Kathryn Pisaro. In 1994, *De Profundis* for organ was heard in a live broadcast performance; a new work, *Questions and Answers* for soprano, flute, and piano, was premiered in a live concert broadcast in Jerusalem; and Allan Sternfield performed Alexander’s *Six Israeli Dances* for piano in Banska Bystrica (Slovak Republic). In 1996, Haim Alexander was awarded the ACUM Prize for Life’s Work.
Abel Ehrlich, photographed in Moscow (1990) by Alexander Gofman. Courtesy of the composer.