3 The institutions of Jewish musical meaning

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Western aesthetic traditions often present musical encounters as immaterial acts. Presented in a manner that emphasizes the purity of experience, these moments promote sound's ability to raise humanity into unencumbered, transcendent realms. Music, stripped of physical constraints, becomes its own basis for "appreciation" to listeners, critics, and many scholars. What you hear, in other words, serves as a starting point for discussions of musical identity, form, genre, and quality. As a practical consequence, we tend to prioritize the abstract concept of sound – massless pulses traveling through space – over the social, economic, and physical conditions that make such sounds possible.

The sounds and performances variously interpreted as "Jewish" music face similar criteria: religious services and concerts, combined with a well-maintained canon of melodies, styles, and compositions, parlay the immediacy of "the music itself" into more general claims about Judaism, tradition, and communal identity. Such claims stand as a founding premise for the scholarly study of Jewish music. Abraham Zvi Idelsohn (1882–1938), credited as a father of the modern field, saw his work as a means of recreating the original music of the Jews, thereby offering a new/ancient soundtrack for revitalizing Jewish life in Palestine, Europe, and America. Cantors similarly used academic rigor to establish their ability to present Jewish sound to the lay public. Alongside composers, conductors, and others who linked Jewishness to specific sounds, these figures saw value in the idea that the Jew who hears "Jewish music" should resonate with it, and reconnect with an internal sense of Jewish heritage, while those who did not resonate immediately could be taught to do so.

Yet this approach presents only a part of the picture. Just as important as the moment of sonic encounter is the institutional framework that makes such encounters possible. As collective entities created to define, transmit, and/or conserve values and identities through the collection and distribution of resources – such as synagogues, schools, Jewish community organizations (such as Federations), and "Jewish identity organizations" funded by private philanthropies – institutions typically devote resources to self-interested agendas. At the same time, these groups in aggregate create an ecosystem that supports artists and exposes their work to targeted populations. The forces that make the concert, the religious

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9781139151214.004 Published online by Cambridge University Press

service, or the wedding dance possible, therefore, also tend to direct listeners in how to interpret music in the first place. Viewed from this perspective, music's qualities become quite different: paradoxically, institutions must devote substantial material resources in order to manifest music's immaterial status. Training and support, as well as appropriate instruments and venues, become *prerequisites* for musical activity. Performance sites, moreover, impose cultural expectations on the music presented therein; and the criteria for access to those sites, such as ticket purchases, help to define both the audience and the values of music listening. Advertisements, sheet music, and recordings require the services of skilled individuals as well as meaningful distribution outlets, all of whom need funding to operate. As with other performance-based modes of expression, music exists in large part because someone *pays* for it to exist.

Some streams of scholarship view the financial and artistic dimensions of music as incompatible or even antithetical, particularly if institutional concerns are seen to compromise romanticized notions of music's cultural integrity. Yet recent, and expanding, literature on musical genres and the music industry show significant advantages to exploring the two in tandem, revealing that creativity rarely takes place in a true vacuum.[1] The multivalent category of "Jewish music" provides a particularly salient example, since institutions have been heavily involved in constructing, disseminating, and mediating ideas about Jewish musical tradition for at least the last two centuries, even as they have excelled at erasing their efforts from the historical record.[2] By reintroducing them into the discussion, we open a world of negotiated expectations that complicates the way we think of aural tradition. Rather than just accepting "Jewish music" as an artistic conceit, in other words, we can see how changing socioeconomic conditions, combined with communal needs, have shaped the ways that people define and encounter it.

A discussion of the brief but ubiquitous melody to the prayer known as the *Shema* (Hear O Israel, Deuteronomy 6:4) serves as a useful way into this mode of thinking. Illustrated in Example 3.1, the tune emerged from several triple-time variants between the 1830s and 1920s; but the exact melody used today appears to have gained popularity on or around 1932, when the American Reform Jewish movement published its new edition of *The Union Hymnal*.[3] This new hymnal, the movement's first since 1914, reflected renewed attempts to find a musical style that would attract Jews to religious services by appealing to ancient Jewish tradition. Seemingly consistent with this mission, editor Abraham W. Binder (1895–1966) added the tune to the book more than once, calling it "Traditional" or leaving out attribution altogether.

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Example 3.1 The "Sulzer" *Shema*, harmonized according to the 1932 *Union Hymnal* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis), 433.

After the founding of the Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music in 1948, the *Shema* tune's fortunes changed somewhat. Cantors, seeking partly to model their training after music conservatories, sought to reestablish a culture of authorial and compositional attribution in the Western art music tradition. Consequently, when Gershon Ephros (1890–1978), a cantor and instructor at the School of Sacred Music, included the tune in the fifth volume of his *Cantorial Anthology* (1957), he gave it a stylistic attribution to renowned Vienna cantor/composer Salomon Sulzer (1804–90). Because of the book's centrality to a renewed cantorial education, the tune's new attribution spread. By the end of the twentieth century, cantors made Sulzer's authorship of the *Shema* a major teaching point for congregants. By linking it to Europe's best-known synagogue music reformer, they reinforced a strong sense of Reform Jewish heritage, while tying themselves to the figure they credited with founding the modern cantorate.

Although this shift had an organic appearance, institutions in fact made it possible: they necessitated and funded the creation of new reference materials (*The Union Hymnal*, *The Cantorial Anthology*), centralized their use (through new cantorial schools), and established communal distribution networks. The result, even on this small scale, shows the power that financial and institutional support has to direct conversations about "Jewish" music. While scholarship has typically dealt with this phenomenon glancingly, it is impossible to overstate its importance. So much of the literature has been connected with these institutions, moreover, that it has become, in many cases, an inextricable yet unstated part of the conversation.

This example also reveals the fundamentally fragile nature of the term "Jewish music" itself. Rather than accepting the term at face value, we must assume that the decision to designate sound as Jewish ultimately resides somewhere between the efforts of the individual and the collective. Yet concerns for the collective tend to set the agenda, determining through the allocation of resources and institutional support the identity of sounds, note patterns, and "Jewish" qualities. While it might be too strong to claim

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that financial support *makes* "Jewish music," in other words, it remains important to incorporate into the conversation the considerable, deep, and invested relationship such support has had in shaping the field's history, trajectory, and contemporary concerns. Exploring who supports Jewish music, and why, opens us up to an alternate Jewish music "tradition" that exists in counterpoint with more standard sound-based and practitioner-based studies.

Studying the physical products that have come out of this support – known among scholars as "material culture" – offers one important window into this phenomenon, as Philip V. Bohlman and others have shown in central Germany, or as James Loeffler has discussed in relation to the "An-sky Expeditions" (funded by Vladimir Gintsburg in memory of his father Baron Horace Gintsburg) of 1912–14.[4] In a number of cases, these objects, from songbooks to monographs, were created for a specific purpose, and then resignified over time into touchstones of Jewish music history. Education, the institution-based drive to establish a sense of tradition through communal, centralized pedagogical methods, provides a second angle for understanding the development of different Jewish music paradigms. Communal Jewish music training programs such as cantorial schools typically set agendas for the groups those schools represent, while setting the parameters of knowledge and authority for their graduates. The relationship between music and community-based Jewish outreach, a third area, has had particular relevance in the wake of warily received Jewish population studies in the late twentieth century. Often borne from the anxiety of Jewish institutions and their funders to ensure relevance in future generations, these initiatives have given us such phenomena as Matisyahu (b. 1979) and the Jewish hip-hop scene. All these areas ostensibly rely on each other. Students in a "school" of Jewish music, for example, typically use printed and recorded materials as part of their education; those materials in turn change their meaning over time as a result of their usage; and the institution itself becomes a center for airing anxieties about the Jewish future and remedies for its amelioration. Ultimately, they together highlight a communal process by which the sonic conferral of identity (in this case, a Jewish identity) is highly contingent, complementing music-centered models that emphasize the intergenerational transmission of musical figures and qualities.

The remnants of music

We construct both history and heritage around what remains, using artifacts to create narratives of the past. An inexact science to begin with, history

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finds particular challenges when facing matters of Jews and music. On one level, we can attribute these challenges to questions of institutional support. Our existing history of "Western" music, for example, relies on centuries of Catholic church-related groups' efforts to develop systems of adopting, notating, reproducing, and storing the music accompanying their regular rituals. In contrast, we currently know of only one Jewish equivalent before the sixteenth century: the work of the Masoretes, a relatively mysterious group of people dedicated to preserving the text and sound of the Hebrew Bible. Their efforts led to the creation of the tenth-century Aleppo Codex, which codified the system of cantillation symbols ("trop/trope") still in use today (for more discussion, see Chapter 6 in this volume). Yet in contrast with medieval neume notation with which they are strenuously compared, the cantillation symbols do not indicate specific pitch levels, thus limiting our ability to parse the sound of the past. The other musical notation we have dates from a twelfth-century convert to Judaism named Obadiah the Proselyte who, by his own account, learned musical notation during his monastic education.[5] Obadiah's music, discarded, survived only because it resided in a genizah – a storage place for discarded documents – whose rediscovery in the late nineteenth century transformed it into a treasure. Both of these efforts relied on communal support networks: the first to preserve a key document for Jews, and the second from the Catholic institutional system. Their stories, conversely, highlight the long-term absence of Jewish institutional support for written musical preservation and dissemination. Music undoubtedly played a significant role in Jewish worship and leisure activities, but, like so much of the world's music, it has not been preserved. We tell history from what survives.

When we view the publications that emerged later through a similar lens, we gain a different understanding of music's place in the local culture. The creation of Salamone Rossi's 1622/3 compilation *Ha-shirim asher lishlomo* (Songs of Solomon) – one of a few Jewish liturgical works printed in seventeenth-century Venice, though the only one to survive in full – happened because of patrons. Rossi's employment in the Gonzaga court in Mantua brought him to prominence; Venetian rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648) issued a religious opinion that made Rossi's use of polyphony in synagogue singing communally acceptable; and Rossi likely composed his music for the private synagogue of patron Moses Sullam. The collection's introductory material includes Modena's opinion, as well as Rossi's dedications to his patrons. But it also includes Rossi's explicit mention of the cost of such an undertaking, and his hope that his patrons might pick up the tab. No wonder, then, that the front matter radically redefined "Jewish music" to include Rossi's work, advertising his mastery of the "science" of melody and music, and (via a different introduction by Modena) spiritually

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tracing his technique to Biblical times. More than just a neutral outcropping of Jewish music tradition, *Ha-shirim asher lishlomo*, like other published works both Jewish and non-Jewish, represented a pooling of resources that reflected the institutional configuration in which Rossi worked.

The completion of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth saw a sharp increase in Jewish communal interest in musical programs. Across Italy, Europe, and the United States (and probably elsewhere), a renewed effort to create bridges between Jews and their host populations flowered. In addition to theological efforts facilitated by a new generation of seminaries and spiritual leaders, Jewish communal groups increasingly supported the creation of original compositions and musical styles in both public worship and private leisure. Musicians and composers achieved significance through their training in mainstream conservatories; and in a number of cases, synagogues started to hire dedicated musical personnel. Vienna's Reform Jewish community, for example, accompanied the building of their new sanctuary in the 1820s with a stepped-up music-commissioning program and the hiring of Salomon Sulzer (1804–90) as their new musical leader. Sulzer, in turn, refined the musical performances, raising the status of the synagogue; and he commodified his efforts by mid-century, having the new repertoire compiled, printed, and distributed as both a testament to his leadership and an exemplar to other congregations – not to mention a teaching tool for Jewish leadership academies arising in central and western Europe. It can be assumed that the budgets for supporting such elaborate Jewish musical programs ballooned in Vienna, as well as in Berlin, Paris, London, Königsberg, New York, and elsewhere where music became highly valued as a public face for Judaism. Communal initiative thus made the music possible, ensuring an outlay to hire singers and music specialists. In doing so, moreover, the communities had the opportunity to extend their philosophical spheres of influence. Their music became a surrogate for their theological agendas; and, through circular logic, the definition of Jewish music changed accordingly.

Similar movements can be followed through the rest of the twentieth century, with pooled resources both creating and defining the nature of "Jewish music" on large and small scales. The infrastructure of eastern European Jewish life supported both a traveling network of prayer leaders (*ḥazzanim*) and a class of wedding musicians (*klezmorim*) that extended into the United States from the 1880s onward, while the emerging recording and sheet music industries helped to preserve their sounds across time and space – even if they were literally forgotten to history. Chabad Lubavitch, after World War II, initiated a centralized project to collect and preserve their holy melodies, resulting in the three-volume *Sefer HaNigunim* (The Book of Melodies), and numerous recorded music albums; yet their preservation

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project could also be viewed as a redefinition of the Hasidic dynasty's sound in the United States. Musical "revivals," in turn, relied on existing materials to help musicians recreate the world of the past in ways that spoke to the resources and funding patterns of the present.

The organized collective, in other words, often set the agenda in which the individual could operate within the world of Jewish music. Musicians and scholars who adopted that agenda gained access to communal resources, an interested population, and a platform for amplifying their messages. In return, supporting institutions produced musical materials that complemented and shaped their own communal missions.

Jewish music and education

Education, a process that speaks to core concepts of Jewish continuity, serves a complementary role to institutions in determining the nature and use of music in Jewish life. "Classical" visions of music education emphasized one-to-one transmission from teacher to student, focusing on personal care and individual artistry. Since at least the early nineteenth century, however, this model has coexisted in Jewish life with a communal "extended conservatory" model that emphasizes curriculum and a uniformity of knowledge. And this second system has arguably been the more influential of the two: not only in producing Jewish musical figures in significant numbers, and in publishing and collecting musical materials, but (paradoxically) also in preserving the moral value of the one-to-one model in modern society.

At the same time, Jewish music-based educational initiatives have allowed institutions to reinforce what David Roskies has called a "usable past": a connection with select historical events that justify an institution's mission and promotes a common set of identity tools.[6] Music, in its immateriality, has played an important public role in expressing these philosophies efficiently; and music curricula, crafted jointly by musical and non-musical authorities alike, helped disseminate those messages.

We do not know if Jewish music "schools" existed before the late eighteenth century. As Jews became increasingly accepted in modern society, however, they sought mechanisms for balancing their Jewish identities with their civic and national identities. Geoffrey Goldberg has written extensively on the *Lehrerseminar* (teaching academy) model that arose as a result. More prevalent in central and western Europe than in eastern Europe, the *Lehrerseminar* conformed to governmental requirements for teacher certification, under which rabbis and cantors qualified. Just as they did with rabbis in a parallel track, authorities determined to integrate Jews into general society complied by creating specific courses and requirements for

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achieving mastery of cantorial skills. To assist in their education, some of the instructors created, published, and distributed curricular materials (*Hilfsmittel*, or learning aids), making the process more uniform. Students who enrolled in these multi-year programs consequently gained state recognition for their expertise, participated in a communal musical experience, and earned membership in a growing professional role. Several of these institutions continued to operate into the mid-twentieth century, when the Nazi era obliterated most of them and erased their memory.

The United States became the center of this practice after World War II, even though they did not openly acknowledge their European predecessors at the time. Between 1948 and 1954, the three major American Jewish seminaries, representing the Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox movements, created their own schools of Jewish music. Overseen by rabbis, scholars, and cantors, the schools reissued some of the *Lehrerseminar* materials, while creating new ones at the hands of their own respected cantorial authorities. Significantly, each cantorial school used music to reinforce its supporting institution's theology; and each, while claiming to prepare cantors for any religious setting, overwhelmingly directed its graduates to its movement's congregations. Graduating hundreds of cantors since the 1950s, these schools have regularized the cantor as a presence in liberal (and some orthodox) synagogues, and created networks of practice and communication that tie closely to broad scholarly discussion. Just as importantly, however, the spread of cantors to congregations across the country has helped each movement coordinate national music-based identity-building initiatives, from music commissioning programs, to the announcement of special musical Sabbaths (such as the events surrounding Shabbat Shirah, the Sabbath associated with the biblical reading of Exodus 15 in January/February), to the central development of lay education campaigns for scriptural chanting. Cantors, moreover, have substantially expanded the market for music scholarship, both as readers and contributors, thereby giving the field a particular shape.

Music also plays an important role in religious education curricula. A. Irma Cohon, for example, created the first American Jewish music textbook in the 1920s as a synagogue-focused adult education course distributed by the National Council of Jewish Women.[7] Young people, however, received particular emphasis as Jewish musical vessels. Viewed as a separate demographic category from adults, particularly after the turn of the twentieth century, youth came to embody a test of institutional success. Throughout Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas, and across the religious and political spectrum, the adult leadership of Jewish youth groups crafted songbooks for their members, on the premise that participation

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in singing equaled ideological commitment. Similar institution-sponsored efforts aimed to create music for youth-oriented religious services ("Junior Congregation"), Day Schools, and forms of supplementary Jewish education including after-school Hebrew schools and summer camps. The songs young people sang in these contexts often became a soundtrack for inclusion in Jewish life, inspiring many to continue their engagement with the sponsoring institutions, and fulfilling institutional hopes of renewed leadership.

The songleading phenomenon in Reform Judaism, for example, began in 1939 at the first camping experience of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY, now the North American Federation of Temple Youth). Students were initially unfamiliar with group singing, but eventually the leadership pieced together a repertoire that reflected Reform Jewish "values" – combining songs from the folk revival and German Jewish youth movements with Palestinian/Israeli pioneer songs, Reform hymns, and songs written specifically for Reform Jewish youth. Over the years, campers took up the mantle and began to write their own liturgical and paraliturgical songs, extending the repertoire through movement-sponsored songwriting contests, recordings, publications, regional and national youth gatherings, and songleader training courses. Songleading, as a result, shifted from an educational initiative to a normative sound of the movement as a whole. Similar stories can be told of other movements – both religious and cultural – involving locally appropriate sets of musical strategies.

Education has, in essence, served as an important vessel for the discussion, normalization, and dissemination of Jewish music. Whether for professionals or the laity, it offers a way for religious communities to connect with their constituents while reinforcing their own theological boundaries.

Music and the philanthropy of outreach

Beyond education, music has played a role in culturally-based communal efforts to stave off a perceived sense of Jewish attenuation. Based in long-held perceptions of the arts as vessels for spawning social and emotional attachment, these efforts, while promoted as "new" or "radical," address deep, internally fueled, institutional anxieties.

Jewish groups have periodically turned to the arts as ways of mediating between Jewish communal needs and the attractions of the "outside world," affecting everything from synagogue architecture, to the creation of Jewish museums, to the marketing of Judaica objects. Chabad Lubavitch advocated creativity among some of its members as a form of ministry building after

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World War II; Reform Judaism brought prominent artists to annual retreats at the Kutz Camp Institute in Warwick, New York, during the mid-1960s; and in the 1970s–80s, Yiddishists built a linguistic revival on the performing arts, including the establishment of a retreat later known as KlezKamp. All developed their "artistic turns" as a way to engage a broader variety of people in their respective movements, thus ensuring survival during moments of self-described existential peril.

Another major turn to the arts took place beginning in 1991, when the Council of Jewish Federations publicized the results of its 1990 National Jewish Population Survey – revealing in particular an exogamy ("intermarriage") rate of between 40 and 60 percent, depending upon interpretation. Alarm at the potential of Jewish self-extinction spread among Jewish federations and other institutions, leading to broad-based efforts to "engage" young people in Jewish communal activities – the better to ensure Jewish-Jewish marriages, and, subsequently, Jewish babies. Jewish institutions joined with philanthropists, using the arts as one of several social engineering strategies.

To understand how music factored into this funding cycle, which lasted from the late 1990s through about 2010, we can turn to the career of Matisyahu, a figure initially connected with both the Hasidic Chabad Lubavitch community and "new" Jewish culture initiatives. Raised in a liberal Jewish household as Matthew Miller, Matisyahu turned to Chabad during college, where he began to develop his career as a performer.

Appearing in "standard" Hasidic dress during his concerts – black hat, coat, and pants, white shirt and fringed undershirt, beard, and sidelocks – Matisyahu inspired a broad landscape of American, and American Jewish, discourse. Yet an analysis of Matisyahu himself addresses only a part of this performer's complex cultural topography. Just as important is the "back end" of that topography: the producers who noticed, mediated, and marketed Matisyahu as part of a broader artistic and philanthropic effort to engage young American Jews in discussions about Jewish identity and authenticity.

Like almost every other commercially successful musical artist, Matisyahu did not become a figure of public interest on his own. Rather, he was the first major promoted artist for the JDub record label, which was created to "push forth a new understanding of how one can connect to Judaism."[8] Co-founded in December 2002 by NYU Music Business program graduates Aaron Bisman and Benjamin Hesse, JDub received its seed funding from the Joshua Venture, one of the earlier Jewish venture philanthropy organizations to arise at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Joshua Venture's "primary goal [was] to strengthen a new generation

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of leaders who are launching innovative projects and organizations that contribute to a vibrant, just, and inclusive Jewish community."[9]

Bisman's selection as a 2003–5 fellow after a competitive application process ensured that the label – provocatively named after a derogatory Syrian Jewish term for Ashkenazic Jews – would follow a similar agenda. Along with other recipients, including Amichai Lau-Lavie (who founded Storahtelling, a theater troupe devoted to dramatic and sometimes radical reenactments of Jewish scripture) and Idit Klein (Keshet, an LGBT organization for Jews in greater Boston), the label took on an explicit agenda of Jewish cultural transformation by actively seeking alternate, generation-specific modes of Jewish belonging.

Like other Jewish media-based organizations coming up at the time (such as Jennifer Bleyer's *Heeb Magazine* and Roger Bennett's *Reboot*), JDub had to figure out how to serve a miniscule and largely unsustainable market (i.e., young Jews) while appearing to maintain a broad presence that would have relevance to a widespread audience. *Reboot*'s record label, Reboot Stereophonic (later renamed the Idelsohn Society for Jewish Music), accomplished this task by engaging in a full-bore, professional media campaign while making a small amount of actual product. Bisman and Hesse, meanwhile, carefully built Matisyahu's career by combining the efforts of a "street team," successful attempts to include Matisyahu in widespread interest stories about the new hipster Jewish cultural agenda, and effectively chosen and marketed events promoting Matisyahu to Jewish young adults and college students as a hip Jewish ambassador. Matisyahu, for his part, also capitalized on resources provided by the media-savvy Chabad Lubavitch, whose leaders pursued a religious outreach agenda for largely the same population with a similarly hip image. Through these actions, Matisyahu often became the literal face of the storied new approach to Jewish identity; and JDub, as a result, became a model for successful Jewish venture philanthropy.

The careful development and marketing of Matisyahu also brought the singer strategically into the reggae scene through creative genre marketing – a flexible matter derived from his jam-band background. Although JDub promoted him from the beginning as a "Hasidic Reggae Superstar," Matisyahu's initial media appearances largely framed him within the much larger hip-hop scene: singing alongside Israeli and Palestinian rap artists in a JDub-sponsored "Unity Sessions" concert in Brooklyn that attracted 3,000 people in summer 2004, emphasizing his beat-boxing skills in 2004 and early 2005 national television interviews on CNN and other national media outlets, and being introduced by Jimmy Kimmel on his first major talk show appearance as "the most popular Jewish rapper since

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MC Hammer."[10] Especially in the latter two cases, Matisyahu benefitted from low expectations – Kimmel, according to a conversation I had with Bisman, initially wanted to feature Matisyahu as a novelty act, and eventually gave in when JDub insisted that the show give him a full musical guest treatment; he then proceeded to surprise his host with an "uncharacteristically" effective performance.[11] JDub thus used the flexible boundaries between reggae and rap/hip-hop in the mainstream entertainment world to its advantage in both introducing Matisyahu and shifting the discourse about his abilities from novelty to "for real."

The reggae scene, in turn, pumped up Matisyahu's popularity: JDub's Jewish-themed concerts generally hosted a few hundred people each at the time; appearances at much larger venues, such as Carifest and Bonnaroo, hosted predominantly non-Jewish audiences. Matisyahu's friable Jewish positioning here – as framed by his management and its mandate – thus joined larger discussions about the presentation of Jamaican and mainstream musical authenticity; but his ability to channel both Jewish and Jamaican musical aesthetics in his performance also became an effective vehicle for bringing Matisyahu to larger and larger stages.

When Matisyahu's album sales began to top the reggae charts, however – an observation that to many artificially connotes both commercial and cultural dominance – the critical tide began to turn, with reggae critics in particular going on the offensive. The 119,000 copies Matisyahu's album *Youth* sold in its first week ranked it #4 on the overall *Billboard* albums chart, just below the 137,000 copies of the *High School Musical* soundtrack (which by then had been out for several weeks).[12] But because Matisyahu's album sales also counted in the smaller reggae market, it became the greatest one-week sale of a reggae album of all time. This level of notoriety (preceded by the success of his *Live at Stubbs* album on the same charts) changed the game significantly: as with other top-ten non-Jamaican reggae artists before him (such as Snow and UB40), Matisyahu became both an important figure for the financial wellbeing of the reggae genre, and a controversial representative of its authenticity.

New York Times reviewer Kelefa Sanneh's withering critique of Matisyahu's race and nationality after a Hammerstein Ballroom concert and album launch in March 2006 reflected the consternation his career had generated among reggae purists.[13] Slate writer Jody Rosen, meanwhile, assailed Matisyahu *because* of his popularity, bringing into play a Jewish cultural studies field that had grown tremendously over the past few years alongside Jewish venture philanthropy's focus on "culture" funding; six months later, notably, Rosen would himself capitalize on the "Jewface" discourse he employed in his article through the release of the *Jewface* album on the Bronfman-funded Reboot Stereophonic.[14] Matisyahu, meanwhile, left JDub

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for more mainstream representation soon after Sanneh's review; and shortly thereafter he left Chabad (and eventually religious Judaism more generally), breaking out of the "Jewish" frames each organization imposed upon him in pursuit of larger markets and a greater (and likely more ambiguous) freedom of self-expression. The Christian music industry was one of these markets (it sold more than 53 million units in 2006, compared with just over half a million units in the reggae industry in 2009).[15] Matisyahu's c. 2006 decision to record with Christian metal group P.O.D. (Payable on Death), a group whose previous two albums had sold more than 6.3 million copies worldwide, became a shrewd career move as well as a "spiritual" collaboration.[16] The authenticity debates surrounding Matisyahu by such scholars as Sarah Imhoff, therefore, did not take place around a static figure.[17] Rather, Sanneh, Rosen, and others engaged with the image of an artist/artiste whose transitioning management was already seeking new identity valences with which to promote him. Matisyahu's rise and subsequent critiques, in other words, derived as much from a reading of the music industry as they did from Matisyahu's own choices.

In essence, then, Matisyahu's early career used discourses of Jewish and black authenticity to construct a self-fulfilling prophecy. On the other side, or "back end," of this period, the conversations Matisyahu engendered in the first phases of his career were ostensibly funded by venture philanthropies, who felt that open questioning of Jewish authenticity and identity would revitalize Jewish life; and the conversations themselves were curated and promoted by a recording company founded on the premise of furthering this transformative Jewish agenda using mainstream discursive techniques. JDub's successful marketing of Matisyahu, in turn, opened a space for the reggae industry to herald the singer's arrival, and, upon his domination of the reggae charts, provided fodder for a backlash. Matisyahu's case thus shows how effectively this back end transparently shaped ideas about Judaism and music, through a judicious and interconnected seeding of the broader entertainment industry, media critics, and – via the conversation sustained in this forum and others – the flows of academic discourse.

Matisyahu existed alongside numerous other musical initiatives supported by philanthropic funds and their related institutions: from the Jewcy festival in Los Angeles to Birthright Israel's sponsorship of mega-concerts and follow-up events. And more recently, initiatives such as the Piyyut Project (sponsored by the Avi Chai Foundation in both Israel and the United States) have used the paraliturgical hymns of Jewish ethnic communities to inject religion into perceived "secular" Jewish populations. Music in this context becomes an instrument that, sponsors often hope, will change statistics of institutional affiliation for the future.

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9781139151214.004 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Conclusion

These examples illustrate the significant historical presence of institutions in the development, promotion, and dissemination of "Jewish music" and its scholarly study – a practice that continues openly today. While rarely hidden, their activities tend to fade with time, leaving us to study the musical artifacts that remain in ways that privilege the music over the forces that brought it into existence. Maintaining an awareness of institutional support presents its challenges. But in complicating the field, it also exposes music's relevance to a wide range of people beyond the musicians themselves, opening opportunities for us to engage well beyond the sound with crucial ideas and materials we might otherwise overlook.

Notes

1 For example, Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
2 Judah M. Cohen, "Modes of Tradition? Negotiating Jewishness and Modernity in the Synagogue Music of Isadore Freed and Frederick Piket," *Jewish History and Culture*, 5.2 (Winter 2002): 25–47; Judah M. Cohen, "Music Institutions and the Transmission of Tradition," *Ethnomusicology*, 53.2 (Spring/Summer 2009): 308–25.
3 Ethan Goldberg has best documented this phenomenon, in "In the Shadow of Sulzer: The Mixed Legacy of Cantor Alois Kaiser," B.A. honors thesis, Brandeis University (2012), 35–7.
4 Philip V. Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2008); James Loeffler, *The Most Musical Nation: Jews and Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
5 Norman Golb, "The Music of Obadiah the Proselyte and His Conversion," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 18.1–4 (1967): 43–63.
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https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9781139151214.004 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9781139151214.004 Published online by Cambridge University Press