

# Modern Jewish Music.

By Boris Canin.

After the beginning of the 19th century with a gradual loosening of the social restrictions which had hitherto hindered their development, Jewish musicians began to play an increasingly important part in the specifically European world of music.

Musicians of Jewish extraction attained eminence in their respective fields as creators of music in all branches of musical composition as virtuosos on various instruments, as teachers, musical critics, theoreticians, publishers and musical impresarios. As composers of music in the idiom of European art music, it is to be remarked that Jewish musicians acclimatised themselves to the artistic conditions and spirit of the particular country within which they lived.

Thus, a Jewish musician residing in England, Russia or Germany created musical works hardly distinguishable from those of native composers. The works of Mosheles Rubinstein and Goldmark retain the national spirit of the native lands from which they come. A song by Mendelssohn differs very little from works in like species by other German composers.

Towards the end of the 19th century, a movement arose among some Jewish musicians to establish a Jewish national school of music. The efforts of these Jewish musicians were directed to the collecting, investigations, and arranging of Jewish folk-songs, and the creation of original compositions in the usual classic forms inculcating the character of Jewish melos.

Among the first collectors of Jewish folk-songs were I. Kieselgoff, J. Engel, Leo Wentz, Baron G. Ginsberg, H. B. Golomb, Bogumil Zelper and Platon Brunoff.

H. B. Golomb, of Vilna, issued ten Jewish folk-tunes for weddings (*Kol Yehuda*) in a piano arrangement (1887). J. Engel, a pupil of Taneief and Ippoliton-Ivanow, came to Moscow in 1900 with a great number of Jewish folk-songs which he had collected and harmonised. He devoted his attention to writing articles concerning his investigations and arranging concerts devoted to Jewish music. Engel wrote the music to the "Hadibuk" which was favourably received when it was produced at the Habima Theatre.

A. Z. Idelsohn contributed studies of a scholarly nature, the results of his research into the history of Jewish music.

## JEWISH FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY.

A Jewish Folk Music Society was started by schooled musicians at St. Petersburg in 1908. Branches of the society were then established in Moscow (1913, D. Shor, president) Kiev and Kharkov. A collection of songs for school and home containing a number of Jewish songs was published in 1911.

## CHAMBER MUSIC ENSEMBLE "ZIMRO."

A group of musicians, including G. Mistechkin, G. Besrodny, K. Moldavan, I. Cherniavski, I. Bellison and L. Berdichevsky

organised a "Chamber Music Ensemble" (Zimro) at St. Petersburg in 1918. This society was motivated by the desire to propagate Jewish folk music artistically cultivated. The Ensemble gave concerts devoted to Jewish music in Siberia, China, Japan, America, Palestine and various parts of Europe.

## COLLECTORS OF JEWISH FOLK-SONGS.

Contemporary collectors of Jewish folk-songs are Janot S. Roskin, Henry Gideon (from the Cradle to the Chuppe, Boston 1923), Lazar Saminsky (ten Hebrew folk-songs and folk-dances, New York 1924), Sarah Pitkowsky-Schack (fifty Yiddish folk-songs arranged for piano by E. J. Cohen, New York 1924), Efrem Zimbalist, Joseph Cherniavsky and A. W. Binder.

## COMPOSERS OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL SCHOOL.

The creation of original art music in accordance with the character of Jewish folk melodies was undertaken by a number of East European musicians at the beginning of the 20th century. These musicians, highly trained in the technique of European music and Jewish tradition, created music based on the conventional art forms. The more prominent composers of the Jewish national school include Alexander Krein, Mikhail Gnessin, Joseph Achron, M. Milner, Lazar Saminsky, I. Rosovsky, A. Veprik, Grigory Krein, L. Streicher, J. Aisberg, Samuel Fainberg, P. Lvoff and L. Zeitlin.

Some of the compositions by these musicians which are heard in concert performances are Alexander Krein's Jewish Sketches for string quartet and clarinet; A. Veprik's Song of the Dead for viola and piano; Gnessin's The Song of Gaitan and his operatic work Abrahams' Youth; Mikhail Milner's Suite Asmodeus; L. Saminsky's Ballet Choreo-drama in four acts; Rachel's Lamentations; Solomon Golub's songs, Tauchum and Bwukes, of Pessach; Milner's song, In Cheder; Joseph Achron's Hebrew Melody for violin and piano; and Solomon Rosovsky's Fantastic Dance for piano, violin and cello.

One must particularly emphasise the deep national character of these composers. Having absorbed the creative methods of the European composers, the roots of the modern Jewish music extend deep into national soil, into Jewish folk music. The art, while always and everywhere remaining distinctly individual, represents a remarkable example of the organic and artistic transformation of Jewish musical folklore which, only with a conscious striving, inspired towards a genuine artistic expression of folk life and its history fully asserted itself in Jewish music.

The rich heritage of Jewish music with its beautiful melodies, its bold harmonic innovations and curious specific folk rhythms has its roots in the living music of the Jewish

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## A Commentary on the Book of Numbers.

JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY ISSUE.

The third in the series of commentaries on the Bible, and the second on the books of the Pentateuch, "The Commentary on the Book of Numbers," by Julius H. Greenstone, Ph.D., D.H.L., Principal of Gratz College in Philadelphia, has been published by the Jewish Publication Society of America. In this commentary Dr. Greenstone had the general reader in mind, whom he aids to perceive more clearly the message contained in the book and the lessons to be drawn from its pages. He goes first to the fountains of Jewish tradition and draws liberally from the wisdom of the sages of old as well as of the comments of the medieval Jewish exegetes who have been so much closer to the source and whose understanding of the text was of necessity much more intimate and accurate. At the same time, the labours of more recent Jewish and Christian Bible students are taken fully into account and their great contributions properly utilised. Geographical names and places are identified in so far as the latest scholarship and archaeological discoveries make such identification certain. Jewish religious institutions mentioned in the book are elucidated and their development in Jewish history indicated in every instance. The author approached his task with deep reverence and with a clear vision as to the purpose which the book should serve and was in the main eminently successful in his undertaking.

Printed from a clear type on a superior kind of paper, the volume contains the complete English text of the book in the standard rendering of the Society's Bible translation. At the bottom of the page the commentary is given following the text verse by verse and sometimes overflowing the page in longer or briefer notes elucidating words, phrases, institutions or events. Every section is preceded by a summary of its contents. References are given in every instance, and a list of works which the author consulted is included in the introduction, which also deals with the various problems that the book presents and its historical and religious significances. Two illuminating maps that appertain to the events described in the book are appended at the end of the volume and will serve as a valuable guide to the student. It is printed and bound uniformly with its predecessor, "The Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy."

Greenstone's "The Commentary on the Book of Numbers" (373 pp.—xxxviii—two coloured maps) retails for \$2.50, and can be included as one of the three books which members of the Jewish Publication Society receive annually for the membership dues, which are \$5.00 per year.

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people which run the whole gamut of human emotion with indescribable clarity—love, suffering, hope, disillusionment.

The folk-song—that is the corner-stone of the art of the Jewish composers which gave it such an inimitable national colour.