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# Russian-Jewish Art Music: The Voice of a People

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Russian-Jewish Art Music: The Voice of a People

by

DeLora Neuschwander  
a BA Project  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of the Music and Art Department  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Bachelor of Arts

Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Faculty Committee

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty member

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Department

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Spring/2013  
Cedarville University  
Cedarville, Ohio

Russian-Jewish Art Music: The Voice of a People

A (lecture-recital) presented to the faculty of the Music and Art Department of Cedarville University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

DeLora Neuschwander

Dr. Sandra Yang  
Assistant Professor of Music History

March, 2013

## Abstract

Russian-Jewish Art Music: The Voice of a People

DeLora Neuschwander, Bachelor of Arts in Music

Cedarville University, March, 2013

Chair: Dr. Sandra Yang

Every culture has a distinct way of communicating their core values, beliefs and history, and for many cultures, music plays a vital role in this communication. The Jewish people have a rich heritage marked by very distinct traditions, values and beliefs which are communicated in what has come to be known as “Jewish Art Music.” This is music composed in the Western-Russian classical idiom which utilizes distinctly Jewish elements. A deeper understanding of this music will give outsiders a better understanding into the culture and heritage of the Jewish people.

This paper explores the characteristics of Jewish music, particularly that music composed in the Eastern European tradition. Much of the traditional music of the Jewish people has had a religious context and is a reflection of their collective culture and its interaction with the cultures of the nations into which they have emigrated. This paper looks directly at the founding and development of the Society for Jewish Folk Music, which was an organization founded in Russia in 1908. It examines the interplay between the creation of a distinctly “Jewish” style and how that has interacted with the Russian classical tradition.

The Society for Jewish Folk Music has an interesting place in Jewish music history. While the society itself had a short life, it had wide-spread effects, moving to Moscow, Poland, Austria,

Palestine, and the United States. The style of music presented by this society is largely representative of a rise in Jewish nationalism which began to grow in Russia near the end of the 1800s. Musical nationalism played a large role in this Jewish cultural renewal. In this paper I examine the interplay between the creation of a distinctly “Jewish” style of music and the idea of Jewish musical nationalism.

