

December 1933 he studied in Vienna with Anton Webern who taught him gratis. Despite the short duration of their encounter, there is ample evidence that Wolpe was deeply influenced by Webern's aesthetics and technique.¹³ He then went with Irma Schoenberg to Romania, and five months later she convinced him that the only place to go was Palestine,¹⁴ where her well-received recital as a guest of the Jerusalem Musical Society in 1931¹⁵ had left her with favourable memories of the Yishuv.

Though born in Riga, Lithuania, Marc Lavri¹⁶ (1903–67) received his entire musical training in Germany, where he studied composition at the Leipzig Conservatory under Paul Graener (1872–1944)¹⁷ and conducting as Hermann Scherchen's private student. In 1926, after having been an opera conductor in Saar-Brücken for two years, Lavri settled in Berlin. He first worked as a musical director and conductor with Rudolf von Laban's dance theatre and composed music for Reinhardt's theatre productions and for films. In 1929 he became the conductor of the Berliner Sinfonie Orchester. The wheel then turned, and his concert in April 1932 was his last with the orchestra¹⁸ which dispersed soon after. In April 1933, two months after the Nazi rise to power, Lavri returned to Riga, which was the target of a Fascist coup a year later, and he made up his mind to emigrate. Lavri was no Zionist and he hesitated between Palestine, Russia, and the United States. Like Ben-Haim two years earlier, Lavri secured a tourist visa and went to Palestine as his first station for preliminary exploration.¹⁹

The other composers from eastern Europe preferred Paris for their advanced studies. Alexander U. Boskovitch²⁰ (1907–64) was born in Cluj, Transylvania, to a deeply religious and highly respected family, whose ancestors were important Hasidic rabbis.²¹ His general educational background was Hungarian, with strong influences of the ethnically hetero-

¹³ M. Zenck, 'Das Revolutionäre Exilwerk des Komponisten Stefan Wolpe—mit kritischen Anmerkungen zur Musikgeschichtsschreibung der dreisziger und vierziger Jahre', *Exilforschung*, 10 (1992), 134–5.

¹⁴ Austin Clarkson's interview with Irma Schoenberg-Wolpe, 4 Oct. 1976 (Stefan Wolpe Archive, Toronto).

¹⁵ *Palestine Bulletin* (11 May 1931).

¹⁶ He changed his original name, Lavritzki, while still in Europe.

¹⁷ M. Lavri, 'Autobiography', *Tatzlil*, 8 (1968), 74–7. Graener was a prolific late Romantic composer, aesthetically close to Richard Strauss and Max Reger. L. K. Mayer, 'Graener, Paul', *MGG* v. 663.

¹⁸ A typed comment by Lavri on the programme of the last concert (Lavri Archive (private)).

¹⁹ An interview with Mrs Helena Lavri, the composer's widow, 9 Apr. 1986.

²⁰ The composer himself variously spelled his name Boskovics, Boskowitch, Boskovich.

²¹ 'Boskovitch', *Encyclopedia Judaica*, iv. 1260. J. Hirshberg, 'Alexander U. Boskovitch and the Quest for an Israeli National Musical Style', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 9 (1993).

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geneous and multilingual region.²² He took advanced piano lessons for a short time in Vienna and then went to Paris, where he studied piano with Lazare Levi and composition with Paul Dukas, who strongly influenced his lifelong predilection for French music. Having returned to Cluj in 1930, he joined the local opera as a coach and later as a conductor. He also founded a Jewish amateur orchestra named after the Jewish composer Karl Goldmark (1830-1915). In 1936 Boskovitch joined a young group of Jewish Zionist and communist intellectuals who strove to revive the Jewish national identity in Transylvania. He undertook a fieldwork expedition to remote Jewish villages in the Carpathian mountains which inspired him to compose *Chansons populaires juives*, a suite of arrangements of Yiddish folksongs.²³ In 1937 he collaborated in a volume of essays on Jewish topics, contributing his first study of Jewish music,²⁴ which reflected the young composer's thorough knowledge of recent achievements in Jewish music, such as Engel's group, and the music of Ernst Bloch, as well as the proceedings of the Cairo Conference of 1932.²⁵ Boskovitch concluded with practical recommendations to develop research, publication, instruction, and the dissemination of Jewish folksongs among the Jews of Transylvania, but made no reference whatsoever to immigration to Palestine.

Oedoen Partos (1907-77) was born in Budapest. His grandfather was a devout Jew but his parents were completely assimilated in the Gentile society and as a young man he was indifferent to Jewish matters, whether religious or national. He studied violin with Jenő Hubay and composition with Zoltan Kodály at the Franz Liszt Academy during the heyday of this venerable institution. A brilliant instrumentalist, he graduated at the young age of 17 and for the next two years was the leader of the Lucerne Symphony. After an interim period in Budapest he settled in Berlin in 1929 where he performed as a violinist with orchestras and

²² Transylvania passed from Hungarian to Romanian rule after World War I. The region was populated by Hungarians, Romanians, Germans, Gypsies, and Slavs. Most Jews spoke Hungarian, and the extreme orthodox used Yiddish. Romanian was spoken by only about 5 per cent of the Jews.

²³ Boskovitch used the transcription as presented in F. M. Kaufmann, *Die schönsten Lieder des Ostjuden* (Berlin, 1920). The suite was later published under the title *The Golden Chain* by the Israeli Music Institute.

²⁴ (Sandor) Boskovics, 'A Zsidó zene problémái' (The Problems of Jewish Music), in *Kelet és Nyugat Kozott* (Between East and West) (Cluj, 1937: a publication of the Jewish Students' Relief Society), 31-7. The essay also included the music of Boskovitch's arrangement of the Jewish folksong 'Yismach Moshe' (Moses will rejoice). Only two copies of the limited edition have been located in Israel. A photocopy of Boskovitch's essay is kept at the Boskovitch Archive, JNUL.

²⁵ The Cairo Conference where Middle Eastern musicians and European scholars met for discussions and recordings was a landmark in the history of ethnomusicology. See Ch. 11, below.

① Lazare Levi - Conservatoire National } piano
 Alfred Corbi - École Normale }
 Paul Dukas, Nadia Boulanger - composition
 Scola Cantorum - Vocal & choir music

EX 15.10. Sternberg, *The Story of Joseph*, 'Hymn'

Sternberg avoided the interpolation of Eastern motives. Despite the biblical subject he departed from an individualistic approach with no compromise with that which is considered modern Eastern. This has been his wish as a composer. But if this is so, he should not have depicted 'The Rise of Joseph' as the procession of a European sovereign into a Christian church, as in the chorale that ends the work (see Ex. 15.10).¹⁷

A similar polarity obtained in the reviews of the première of Sternberg's *The Twelve Tribes of Israel*. Rosolio observed that the composition incited in him a 'deep emotional satisfaction—since we have reached a work permeated by a deep Jewish feeling and put together with fine and perfect spiritual and technical tools,'¹⁸ whereas Peter E. Gradenwitz hailed the mastery of the composer without alluding to the Jewish issue at all.¹⁹

Boskovitch and the Collective Ideology

None of the composers in Palestine could ignore the uniqueness of their historical position as the founders of a new national style. From the vantage point of ideologically committed musicians, the heavy burden of the European training on the one hand and the vagueness of the concept of national music on the other, threatened their ability to meet the historical challenge. The composer Alexander U. Boskovitch took the initiative and made a valiant attempt to formulate a comprehensive platform for the Jewish composer in Palestine. Shortly before his immigration Boskovitch had published a paper entitled 'The Problems of Jewish Music'²⁰ which provided the point of departure for his extensive

¹⁷ *Davar* (23 Feb. 1939).

¹⁸ *Ha'Aretz* (11 May 1942).

¹⁹ *New York Times* (16 Aug. 1942). The musicologist Peter Emanuel Gradenwitz (b. 1910) came with the German immigration of the 1930s having completed an extensive research of the Stamitz family. *Stamitz, das Leben* (Prague, 1936) and several articles in *Musica Divina*, *Music and Letters*, and *Musica*. See 'Stamitz', *MGG* xii. 1162.

²⁰ 'A Zsidó Zene Problemai', *Kelet és Nyugat Kozott* (Between East and West (Cluj, 1937)). The book was published in a limited edn. by a group of Zionist students in Cluj. Only two copies are known in Israel. See Hirshberg, 'Alexander U. Boskovitch', 95.

theoretical formulations. Although his first comprehensive presentation was not published until 1953,²¹ Boskovitch had begun to disseminate his ideas and ideology about ten years earlier through public lectures and numerous informal discourses with young students and friends. A handwritten brief lecture to a gathering of Jews from Hungary in Tel Aviv on 16 December 1943 has provided the first documentation of such presentation.²² Boskovitch's point of departure was that music was a function of its time and place, contradicting the romanticized view of music as a universal language. Music created at one period would be a total anachronism in another period. Hence writing in the most perfect Palestrina style in the twentieth century would amount to no more than a composition assignment. Likewise, music appropriate for the misty seclusion and melancholy of northern Europe would be out of place in the Mediterranean countries 'where everything is sharply delineated'. Consequently the cantorial liturgy and folk songs of the Jewish Diaspora would not fit the spirit of the Yishuv in Palestine. Boskovitch made a distinction between the 'static landscape' which was the visual scenery of each country, and the musically more viable 'dynamic landscape', namely the soundscape of the spoken languages and the rhetoric of their utterance. In this respect Boskovitch resembled Wolpe and Ben-Haim in their strong emotional responses to the scorching Mediterranean sun, the sand dunes of Tel Aviv, the scenery of the dry mountains of Jerusalem, and the excited vocal gestures of spoken Arabic and Hebrew in Palestine.²³ Boskovitch appears to have followed Nietzsche's ideas as presented in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, especially in his concept of 'dynamic landscape' which directly derives from Nietzsche's distinction between the German 'who reads not with the ear but merely with the eye' and the 'ancient man' who delivered his speech 'in a loud voice: that means with all the swellings, inflections, and variations of key and changes of tempo in which the ancient *public* world delighted'.²⁴ It is therefore unclear why Max Brod has denied the existence of any link between Boskovitch's use of Mediterraneanism and Nietzsche's line of thinking.²⁵

²¹ 'The Problems of National Music in Israel', *Orlogin*, 9 (1953), 28–93. Boskovitch's premature death halted the final stages of his work on a comprehensive book on the problems of Israeli music. The MS has been edited by Herzl Shmueli and is due to be published in the Hebrew language in H. Shmueli and J. Hirshberg, *Alexander U. Boskovitch, his Life and Works*.

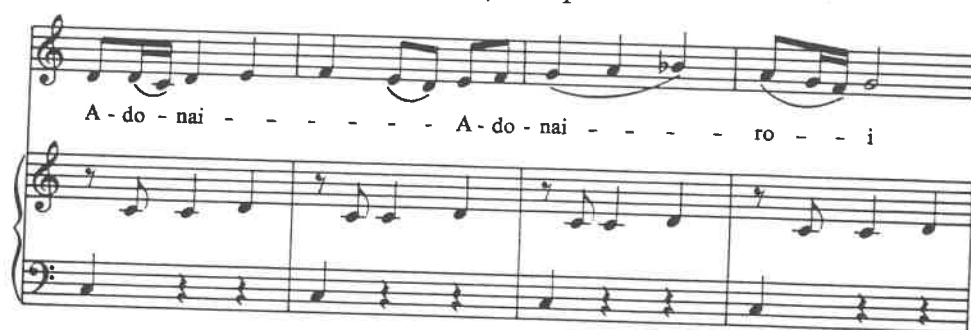
²² In Hungarian, (Boskovitch Archive, JNUL). I am indebted to Avigdor Herzog for his generous help in the translation of the handwritten MS.

²³ See Ch. 10, above. Ben-Haim's reactions have been preserved in his extensive correspondence 1933–4. See Hirshberg, *Paul Ben-Haim*, 102–10.

²⁴ *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) trans. M. Cowan (Chicago, 1955), #247, p. 183. The topic is discussed all through the Eighth Article, 'People and Fatherlands' (#240–54).

²⁵ A passing comment in Brod, *Die Musik Israels*, 58.

EX 15.11. Boskovitch, 'The Lord is my Shepherd'



Despite the sharp oppositions of time and place, Boskovitch acknowledged the factor of the deeply ingrained national identity which he illustrated through a hypothetical example of two shepherds, one Arab and the other Jewish, who would play their flutes on adjacent hills in the northern mountains of Palestine. Though acting in identical time and place, their reactions to their surroundings would be different because of their dissimilar backgrounds. Such a qualification was of crucial importance since it forestalled any seemingly easy solution of the problem of the national style through an unqualified emulation of Arabic music.

Boskovitch rejected the avant-garde view that the composer was ahead of his time, claiming that the artist was nourished by the spiritual attitude of his own time. He requested that the Jewish composer in Palestine act as spiritual leader, in a way similar to that of the celebrant in the synagogue,²⁶ and as such the composer must express and represent the emotions and thoughts of the entire collective and suppress any urge to use his music as an outpouring of his individual inner feelings. The direct derivation from the static and dynamic landscape implied that only composers living in Palestine would be able to create the national style, whereas Jewish composers living in Europe would always identify to a certain extent with the surrounding society.

Boskovitch's compositions of the 1940s were directly related to his platform, especially the second movement of the Oboe Concerto (1943), the *Semitic Suite* (1945), and the four songs written for Bracha Zefira.²⁷ The orchestral song 'Adonai Ro'i' (The Lord is my Shepherd) is based on an austere ostinato pattern with no modulation (see Ex. 15.11).

²⁶ The celebrant is named in Hebrew *Shlich Tzibur*, lit., 'sent by the congregation'. Any knowledgeable layman may be 'sent' to lead the service. It is both a duty and a measure of honour conferred by the congregation.

²⁷ 'Adonai Ro'i' (The Lord is my shepherd), 'Tephila' (Prayer: poem by Avigdor Hameiri), and 'Two Hitulim' (Two Jokes: poems by the medieval Jewish poet Alharizi). The *Semitic Suite* (piano version) and the songs were published by IMI. An autograph and copies of the Oboe Concerto and of the orchestral score of the *Semitic Suite* in Boskovitch Archive, JNUL.

EX 15.12. Boskovitch, *Semitic Suite*, 'Toccata'

While on tour with the Palestine Orchestra in Egypt, the oboe-player Bram Blez, who had played the première of the Oboe Concerto, was strolling with the violinist Lorand Fenyves in the Cairo market when they stopped to get a shoeshine. Blez hummed one of the tunes from the Oboe Concerto and the Egyptian boy repeated the tune immediately. Fenyves took it as an indicator of Boskovitch's absorption of the aesthetics of Arab music.²⁸

The title of the *Semitic Suite* was an ideological declaration in itself, stressing the region of the Near East rather than the Jewish people, the Arabs being Semitic as well.²⁹ Though a relatively short work, its composition spanned four years of painstaking revisions and rewriting. Four of its seven movements are in heterophonic style devoid of any tonal directionality, and they emulate the sound of Arabic orchestras, especially the second 'Toccata' (see Ex. 15.12).

As could be expected, the *Semitic Suite* called for a purely ideological review. David Rosolio was in accord with Boskovitch who

recognized the problem that one cannot continue in this country writing works which are based on purely western concepts. The landscape, the lifestyle, the environment, all require a change and a fundamentally different approach. But it seems to me that Boskovitch's method jumps overboard. The central issue is a *synthesis* of two styles . . . and one cannot solve a problem by ignoring it. Boskovitch writes in an undiluted eastern style and discards the western style altogether. It is an interesting but an unsatisfactory solution.³⁰

Rosolio's reservation represented an absence of consensus concerning the extent of proximity to Arabic music as a gauge of progress towards the desired genuine national style. Moreover, it reflected an apprehension that the quest for a new style in the East might sever the links with the great western tradition.

The Mediterranean Style: A Myth or A Reality?

Summing up the brief history of art music in Palestine, Max Brod has credited Alexander Boskovitch with the concept of a Mediterranean

²⁸ An interview with the violinist Lorand Fenyves, Jerusalem, 31 Dec. 1976.

²⁹ An earlier version of the suite was named *Seven Experiments in Semitic Style*.

³⁰ *Ha'Aretz* (1 Mar. 1946).

Ex 15.13. Boskovitch, *Semitic Suite*, 'Folk Dance'

Folk Dance



style.³¹ Brod characterized the style both positively, through a list of recurrent patterns including harsh rhythms, irregular metres, ostinato repetitions, abundant use of variation techniques, linear and frequent unison textures, and negatively, enumerating rejected devices, such as elaborate polyphony, major-minor tonality, and the interval of the augmented second which had been semiotically loaded with the connotations of the Diaspora. The list is by no means free of contradictions. For example, while it is true that irregular metres were frequently employed in the music he has referred to, the opposite was true as well since regular metres and short square phrases characterized the horra-like dances. The *Semitic Suite* which must have been one of Brod's paradigms contains both metrically irregular (Ex. 15.12) and regular movements (Ex. 15.13).

Moreover, Brod has acknowledged the fact that none of those devices was unique to the early music of Palestine and that they had been part and parcel of the European Orientalism since the nineteenth century.³²

Brod was Boskovitch's close friend and for a while took composition lessons with him, so that the concept must have come up in the course of their frequent discussions. Yet Boskovitch himself neither spelled out the specific term in any of his writings, nor did he use it in titles of any of his works. After the completion of his *Semitic Suite* which was the closest manifestation of the regional ideology, Boskovitch entered a long period of nearly fourteen years during which he produced no major work in the field of concert music. Though partially caused by an array of personal and professional reasons, his long 'silence' was interpreted in professional circles as an artistic crisis and soul-searching.³³

Other composers hardly used the term either. Paul Ben-Haim inscribed the heading 'Mediterranean Concerto' in the title-page of his long and elaborate Piano Concerto (1949) but he must have had second

³¹ Brod, *Die Musik Israels*, 58.

³² Ibid.

³³ None the less, *Shir Hama'alot* (Song of Ascents, 1959) his first composition which marked the end of his 'silence', retained most of the devices of his early period, with a sudden stylistic shift to a serial technique occurring only a year later with the *Concerto da Camera* of 1960. See Hirshberg, 'Alexander U. Boskovitch', 95.