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Artistic Control and Partnership:

Jewish Studies Programs and the Incubation of New Musical Works

On May 14, 2018, I took my seat in the Robert Moss Theater, a small, well equipped performance space in Greenwich Village across from the New York Public Theater, to watch a performance of Or Matias's new musical *The Wave*. Sitting among actors, creatives, and friends and family of the cast, I witnessed a dozen Indiana University musical theater students present the latest version of the powerful work, directed by Chloe Treat. To the undergraduate cast and musicians, the performance culminated a dream workshop year. They developed the work with the artists in two three-week stints at Indiana University before being flown into the epicenter of the musical theater world to help the artists transition the work to the next level. Their New York experience was rigorous, involving three days of twelve-hour rehearsals and the regular incorporation of new changes (including a new opening). In the end, however, their dedicated and nuanced performances showed a year's growth with their characters, as they dramatized with naturalness and depth the story of a Palo Alto teacher's social experiment with his class. I had seen and been moved by the show in the six previous performances at Indiana University, but watching the students enact their roles on a professional stage offered a poignant example of how successful artistic collaborations can mutually elevate a work, its creators, and its participants.

The performance also represented the latest venture in a string of new artistic works supported by Indiana University's Borns Jewish Studies Program, made possible through a combination of personal connection, funding, and strategic campus partnerships. None of the student performers held an affiliation with the Program. Yet the experience enhanced a personal research project in ways that also resonated with the Jewish Studies Program's goals: the story

has appeared in Holocaust education programs globally, as well as a number of psychology textbooks.<sup>1</sup> Supporting Matias and Treat's work, then, brought a new angle to my project, while also helping to bring a new musical into the world.

In this essay, I approach the topic of Jewish music as a dynamic study of institutional initiatives—a perspective, I believe, as useful to understanding the field as the sound itself. Dig deeper into many musical works, and what at first appears as a freestanding flight of creativity becomes an entity that emerges from support by communal groups, organizations, and foundations—most of which carry benevolent if conservative ideological agendas.<sup>2</sup> A classic work of Jewish music such as Ernest Bloch's 1932 *Sacred Service* could not exist without a commission from San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El, and its cantor Reuben Rinder's program of engaging respected composers to elevate the American Reform movement's *Union Prayer Book* ritual.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Galeet Dardashti has shown that the recent popularity of communal *piyyut* (Jewish devotional poem) singing came directly from a campaign to invigorate religious discourse among the country's secular Jews by the private American-Jewish philanthropy The Avi Chai Foundation.<sup>4</sup> Even what we acknowledge today as the academic field of Jewish music scholarship relied heavily on decisions by the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Hebrew Union College to include music in their curricula around the turn of the twentieth century, and on

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Joan Hewes, "Introduction," in Ron Jones, *No Substitute for Madness: A Teacher, His Kids, and the Lessons of Real Life* (Covelo, CA: Island Press, 1981), v-viii; Jack Horn, "The Third Wave: Nazism in a High School," *Psychology Today* 10, #2 (July, 1976), 14, 16-17; "Warten auf den Führer," *Der Spiegel* 31/1976 (July 26, 1976), 128; Stewart Brand, ed., *The Next Whole Earth Catalog* (New York: Random House, 1980), 374-377. Additional details about the history of the story's dissemination appear on <http://www.thewavehome.com/chronology.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Judah M. Cohen, "The Institutions of Jewish Musical Meaning," in Joshua Walden, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 41-55.

<sup>3</sup> Tina Frühauf, *Experiencing Jewish Music in America: A Listener's Companion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 98-104.

<sup>4</sup> Galeet Dardashti, "The Piyyut Craze: Popularization of Mizraḥi Religious Songs in the Israeli Public Sphere," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 32 (2007), 142-163.

the instrumentalization of research by scholars as Abraham Z. Idelsohn and Eric Werner a few decades later to revitalize communal interest in synagogue worship.<sup>5</sup> As scrutiny of academic funding sources and their influences on the shape of scholarship becomes a topic of increasing interest, we must also acknowledge the complex ways that institutions and their agendas have historically developed “Jewish music,” its innovations, its (re)definitions of sonic tradition, and, most significantly for this essay, musical production itself.

While I have explored such dynamics within Jewish musical institutions, here I turn my attention to the college- or university-based Jewish Studies program as an incubator of musical works, addressing this matter through a kind of autoethnography. Many fields have recently engaged in conversations about the nature of “applied” work, described by ethnomusicologist Tai Sooi Beng as “a methodology that aims at solving concrete problems rather than hypothetical ones.”<sup>6</sup> Jewish Studies, which often exists at the boundary of theoretical ideas and community building, faces a particular variant of this more practical approach. Scholars seek to pose meaningful scholarly questions, but often find themselves in the middle of communal conversations about cultural preservation, continuity, and “heritage” learning.<sup>7</sup> Successful “application” of research in this setting often requires a healthy balance between the academy’s non-sectarian approach to Judaism and the personal beliefs that often support the field.

I come to this topic as a participant-observer and admitted “culture-broker.” As the holder of an endowed chair in Jewish culture and the arts at Indiana University, with access to a

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<sup>5</sup> Judah M. Cohen, “Whither Jewish Music?: Jewish Studies, Music Scholarship, and the Tilt Between Seminary and University,” *AJS Review* 32.1 (2008), 29-48; Cohen, “Rewriting the Grand Narrative of Jewish Music: Abraham Z. Idelsohn in the United States,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100.3 (Summer 2010), 417-453.

<sup>6</sup> Tai Sooi Beng, “Cultural Engagement and Ownership Through Participatory Approaches in Applied Ethnomusicology,” in Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titan, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 109.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Riv-Ellen Prell, “A Forum on the Jewish Studies Undergraduate Major: What Do We Learn About the Field from How we Educate Our Undergraduates?” *AJS Perspectives*, Spring 2006, 8.

separate donor-endowed fund for “Jewish Arts and Culture,” I recognize my own elite status in this ecosystem. As with the larger academic scene, however, working from this position also allows me to reflect on the broader place of art in academic settings.<sup>8</sup> Most significantly, it allows me to explore artistic collaboration as a form of “applied” scholarship that comprises a substantive part of my research agenda. In situations where a Jewish Studies program offers resources to artists to develop works-in-progress, such a strategy can bring nascent but promising creations to the next level while aiding their survival in a crowded and uncertain marketplace. Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt, in a similarly privileged experiment, interrogated the idea of “cultural mobility” by commissioning various theater groups to create their own version of a lost Shakespeare play, under the expansive premise that Shakespeare himself never expected that his works would ever be forced to take a definitive form.<sup>9</sup> Jewish Studies programs, I argue, can approach music in a similar fashion, facilitating musical creation that activates Jewishly significant narratives, contributes to discussions of cultural production, and opens a meaningful conversation about the nature of creativity, the “work,” and the very field of “Jewish music.”

New arts support is no stranger to Jewish Studies, as seen in projects by Hebrew University’s Jewish Music Research Centre and scholar/artists such as Hankus Netsky, and Philip Bohlman, among many others.<sup>10</sup> In this essay, I add to this discussion by reflecting on my own involvement with artists-in-residence and their creations: Deborah Haber and Casey Filiaci’s musical *Moses Man* (2014), Deborah Yarchun’s play-with-music *And You Shall Be a Blessing* (2016), and Or Matias’s musical *The Wave* (2017-18). Chronicling these processes

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<sup>8</sup> See among other works *AJS Perspectives* Spring 2006 (“A Forum on the Undergraduate Jewish Studies Major”) and Fall 2008 (“Traversing the World of Jewish Studies”).

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, “Theatrical Mobility,” in Greenblatt, et al., eds. *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75-94.

<sup>10</sup> See Hankus Netsky, “Epilogue,” in *Klezmer: Music and Community in Twentieth-Century Jewish Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016), 137-42; recordings by the New Budapest Orpheum Society; The Jewish Music Research Centre (<http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il>, accessed September 15, 2018).

raises questions about the production of new “Jewish music,” from matters of artistic worth and creative autonomy to larger logistical and economic considerations. When does a work *matter*, and how does it gain its significance, both locally and nationally? And how can a Jewish Studies program embrace the creativity and risk inherent in artistic works—including trusting the artists to identify and solve their own challenges—as a part of their scholarly activities?

More pointedly, in this essay I openly challenge subtle hierarchical divisions between theoretical scholarship and practical artistic activity, opting instead to look at academic-artistic partnerships as a central scholarly pursuit that has historically generated both the secondary *and* primary texts that we subject to scholarly analysis. Doing so also recognizes our obligations as scholars to understand the real entanglements that arts-focused fields have with scholarly pursuits, including the axiom that the subjects of scholarly attention consequently can generate communal legitimacy as a result. By shifting perspective to see musicians—and indeed all artists—as intellectuals in their own right who rely on extratextual yet complementary forms of expression to explore complex ideas, Jewish Studies can gain a more realistic view of its role in a longstanding and multi-mediated discourse bridging academic and communal structures.

### Jewish Arts: Funding Cultural Sustainability

In a Jewish communal world that often sees social engineering as a means of alleviating anxiety over the future of Jewish peoplehood and commitment, the arts occupy a complex site for “reimagining Jewishness,” in the words of Sylvia Barack Fishman.<sup>11</sup> On the one hand America’s small, segmented Jewish population means that organizations rarely take on arts-related expenses

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<sup>11</sup> Sylvia Barack Fishman, with Rachel S. Bernstein and Emily Sigalow, “Reimagining Jewishness: Younger American Jewish Leaders, Entrepreneurs, and Artists in Cultural Context,” in Jack Wertheimer, ed. *The New Jewish Leaders: Reshaping the American Jewish Landscape* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 159-213.

because profits from such productions usually do not cover costs. On the other hand, Jewish organizations often turn to art as a public statement of peoplehood, whether to debate the identity of a Jewish nation-state such as Israel or to promote discussions about Jewish identity within larger host populations. Jewish communal professionals, moreover, have come to see “the arts” as a particularly useful mode for hearing and serving the needs of “young people”—an ambiguously defined demographic that sociologists identify as both central to the future of Judaism and authors of a “major paradigm shift” in Jewish identity who “perceive cultural expressions—rather than tribal identification—as the core of their ethnic connections.”<sup>12</sup> To take one example among many, the Covenant Foundation, a major fund devoted to “Celebrating Excellence and Innovation in Jewish Education,” awarded more than \$1.66 million to arts-based projects between 2013 and 2017.<sup>13</sup> Many of these programs promote “Jewish Culture” as a means to an end, presenting the arts as a democratic process that improves the richness of Jewish life or the Jewish commitment of its target population.

Other initiatives have focused on the specific support of Jewish artists. In these cases, the allocated funds sought to support a community of Jewish creatives who would design projects reflecting new ideas about contemporary Jewish life, in turn reinforcing broader Jewish conversations about community. One such approach during the 2010s, the Artist Lab, linked cohorts of local artists with Jewish institutions in such places as Minneapolis, Kansas City, Chicago, Madison, and Milwaukee and supported them as they worked on a group show, which

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<sup>12</sup> Fishman, “Reimagining Jewishness,” 160.

<sup>13</sup> Covenant Foundation, “About the Foundation,” <https://www.covenantfn.org/about/#mission> (accessed September 4, 2018). The numbers in this essay were determined based on a perusal of awarded grants that prominently mentioned artistic media from the Covenant Foundation website (<https://www.covenantfn.org/grants/covenant-grants/>, accessed September 4, 2018). While admittedly a rough estimate, this number does not include grants that mention the arts in service to larger “STEAM” (“Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math”)-focused and computing focused initiatives. Totals varied widely from year to year, with 2016 at the lowest (\$111,000) and 2014/15 at the highest levels (c. \$485,00 each year).

in turn jumpstarted community dialogues.<sup>14</sup> Initiatives in larger Jewish population centers, especially the Six Points Fellowships in New York and Los Angeles, have relied on sizeable outlays from well-off Federations to give successful applicants both a forum for new project creation and professional career management consultation.<sup>15</sup> Throughout, the programs sought to redirect artists toward Jewish identity—and therefore public recognition as “Jewish” artists—through small grants seen as contributing to the fabric of Jewish life.

Yet these Jewish foundation-funded initiatives also come with expectations, based on funders’ giving principles, that arts serve to enrich the vitality of Jewish life in a kind of battle against complacency or entropy. While programs such as the Six Points Fellowships sought to strike a balance between Jewish-focused activity and professional artistic standards, they nonetheless did so based on internally commissioned research that young Jews (age 18-30s) “are drawn to events that promise to cross boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, Jews and Jews, Jewish space and non-Jewish space, and distinctively Jewish culture with putatively non-Jewish culture.”<sup>16</sup> “Crossing boundaries,” in these frameworks, became a recognized means of reinforcing the center of Jewish identity, and thus identifying a meaningful investment in Jewish community.

### The Jewish Studies Program: Building Toward Collaboration

In this context, the Jewish Studies programs that proliferated in colleges and universities from the 1970s onward occupy a complicated space. Many such programs gained footing by balancing

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.covenantfn.org/sightline/news/109/78/The-Creation-of-an-Artists-Beit-Midrash-A-Jewish-Artists-Lab> (accessed September 14, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20100326050117/http://sixpointsfellowship.org:80/> (accessed September 14, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y Kelman, *Cultural Events and Jewish Identities: Young Adult Jews in New York* (National Foundation for Jewish Culture/the UJA-Federation of New York, 2005), 6. This is one of a number of such studies from the early 2000s funded by culture/arts-based engagement organizations, including Reboot.

broader trends toward academic expansion with the same Jewish communal concerns for “survival” that saw higher education as an alternative space for Jewish students to explore their identities.<sup>17</sup> While Jewish Studies in this period relied on expanding curriculum and faculty, developing programs’ continued interface with motivated donors also led to a public presence through endowed lectures and events. By the turn of the twenty-first century, favored Jewish-identified artists could conceivably construct tours of campuses through combined funding from Jewish Studies centers, Hillels, and other campus groups.

Jewish Studies Programs’ interest in serving a general campus audience could open opportunities for new, often multimillion dollar endowments that emphasized the serious study and documentation of the arts among Jewish populations. Frequently these programs combined the academic accoutrements of conferences, publications, and archives creation with studio-based artist-development activities. During the 2000s, programs such as the Jewish Artists Initiative (University of Southern California), the Conney Project/Conference in Jewish Arts (University of Wisconsin-Madison), the Institute for Jewish Creativity (American Jewish University), and the Schusterman Program for Visiting Israeli Artists (established through partnership with willing campuses) highlighted the university’s role as a viable ground for artistic development that could mitigate the “special interest” nature of Jewish organizations. The University of Wisconsin Madison’s Conney Project on Jewish Arts (founded 2006), for example, led to several years of renewal; and its involvement with klezmer pioneer Henry Sapoznik paved the way for a \$1.5 million endowment creating the Sherry Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture in 2010.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Paul Ritterband and Harold Wechsler, *Jewish Learning in American Universities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 216-236.

<sup>18</sup> <https://conneyproject.wisc.edu>, <https://mayrentinstitute.wisc.edu> (accessed September 14, 2018). Sapoznik directed the Mayrent Institute between 2010 and 2017.

Jewish arts initiatives often received attention as investments in a community's welfare that occupied a second tier under more proper intellectual discussions. The erosion of Jewish "culture" organizations after 2006—exemplified by the 2014 closing of the Foundation for Jewish Culture after more than half a century—opened the door for a shift toward universities' expanded roles in developing theatrical, literary, and musical work. In an era of increasingly conservative programming, universities' willingness to support the arts in a manner independent of financial success made it an attractive option.

### Indiana University, Jewish Studies, and the Arts

In 2006, I came to the Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University to occupy an endowed chair in Jewish culture and the arts. During my first years, while creating new courses that could integrate the arts and ethnography into the curriculum of the program's major (while also expanding enrolments), I began to work with other Jewish Studies faculty to support a recently funded institute for Jewish Culture and the Arts. Up until that point, most of the institute's spending had emphasized one-time visits by internationally celebrated scholars and artists that charged hefty fees. At a midwestern university with a large Jewish studies presence but a small local Jewish population, such speakers brought measurable returns both in the number of attendees and in their connection to our program. Yet these speakers also presented a conundrum for more intensive engagement. While perhaps engaging in meaningful conversations with faculty and attendees during their visits, these speakers' public appearances largely hewed to a variant of a generic talk. Coming to Indiana University brought us exposure, but rarely changed the course of their work.

Around 2010, then-Jewish Studies Program director Jeffrey Veidlinger discussed with me the idea of using Program resources to bring artists to campus for longer periods, giving them a platform for developing their own works in the process. Models of this type already existed locally in a number of other Jewish Studies programs, and nationally through widely heralded Jewish-interest foundations. The Schusterman Foundation's Visiting Israeli Artists program (2008-) heavily subsidized two-to-four-month visits by approved Israeli artists to willing educational institutions.<sup>19</sup> The competitive Six Points Arts Fellowships (2006-13), a partnership between the nonprofits JDub Records (2002-11), Avoda Arts (1999-), the Foundation for Jewish Culture, and the UJA-Federation of New York (and eventually replicated with the Los Angeles Federation), offered \$40,000 two-year grants and professional assistance for "developing" artists (i.e., known but not mainstream) with Jewish-themed projects.<sup>20</sup> Recognizing our status as a nonsectarian institution, rather than the explicitly Jewish community-centered missions of these other funds, we began to seek out our own projects to support their projects, not as an investment in further communal Jewish activity, but rather as an opportunity to expose students on campus to the creative process. Consequently, over the course of several seasons, we devised a flexible residency program that allowed young artists the space and resources they needed to develop their own projects, while working directly with students in some way.

The challenge of this approach, we quickly realized, involved building a meaningful model that could involve existing campus programs toward an outcome that could benefit both campus and artist. As with many Jewish Studies initiatives, the challenge lay less in funding than practicalities: finding housing, rehearsal space, buy-in from other campus units, and student investment on a campus that already produced far more culture than it could consume. In an

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<sup>19</sup> <https://israelinstitute.org/programs/visiting-israeli-artists>;

<sup>20</sup> <http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/six-points-arts-fellowship-closes-as-ujafed-ny-declines-to-renew-grant/>

early iteration, Veidlinger invited Yiddish music luminary Michael Alpert to the campus for a semester to teach a klezmer ensemble through the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. The end-of-semester concert, with four students and a much larger number of local musicians, presented a complicated resolution for a campus event.

In a subsequent year, we refined the process further by requiring artists to identify a specific project and linking Jewish Studies funding to an existing visiting fellowship at an arts-focused residence hall on campus. When a call for applications did not pan out, I turned to an artist/scholar/colleague's recommendation and made arrangements with director Annie Levy and actor Franny Silverman for a nearly monthlong residency. During the week, the director/actor pair collaborated on a devised theatre piece called "The Latvia Project," which drew on Levy's own family history. On weekends, they taught an intensive theatre course for undergraduates. By the end of the month, they had expanded the original fifteen-minute work into an hour-long multimedia piece, which premiered under Jewish Studies' auspices in a local black box theater. Leveraged in part by the Indiana University fellowship, moreover, the one-act work "Daughter of the Sun: The Latvia Project," received two additional performances and development opportunities in New York City over the next year.<sup>21</sup>

While both the artists and the Jewish Studies Program found this model beneficial, we faced the paradox of high expectations. In contrast with campus units that trade in artistic development, such as studio art, design, and theatre, Jewish studies tends to focus on artists and completed works that could claim a canonical place in Jewish identity or history. One-off lecturers with recognized accomplishments could thus satisfactorily present variants of generic speeches. Their mere presence on campus, often removed from the extensive creative processes

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.annieglevy.com/latvia>

that had brought them fame, justified the expense. A developing artist residency, in contrast, required both patience and regular discussions about the meaning of work-in-process, while emphasizing the value of the resulting conversation (rather than the production of an award-winning or enduring work). Scholars unfamiliar with the arts often overlooked such a process, even as it paralleled scholarly discourse. Connecting these two parallel lines of discourse ultimately required both a faculty advocate/translator and partnerships that could emphasize the community-based frame of the endeavor.

As a scholar who engages deeply with the arts, the responsibility for communication fell to me. Consequently, when I sought to identify meaningful projects that could benefit from time at Indiana University, I built off my own interests. While self-serving on the surface, this decision mirrors the advice of theater producer Susan Quint Gallin, who perhaps obviously notes “For me to be interested in spending at least the next year of my life involved in the work, it needs to have resonance with me personally.”<sup>22</sup> This decision ultimately proved crucial, since it allowed me to explain each visit as a study of process that could aid personal research, while reducing the need to emphasize metrics of “success” in the public component. Each artist, moreover, came to my attention through people I had consulted or interviewed for my own research, thus allowing me to see the development of new artistic work as a crucial part of my deepening knowledge—in essence generating in each residency a bridge to the “real world” from a that both enhanced and embodied a previously abstract idea. The resulting residencies proved rewarding as opportunities for mutual learning and dialogue, bringing both me and the Program intimately into the artists’ lives and facilitating a unique view into musical works’ shifting and unpredictable trajectories. The ethnographic quality of these encounters, meanwhile—in essence

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<sup>22</sup> Susan Quint Gallin, with Ben Hodges, “Other People’s Money,” in Frederic B. Vogel and Ben Hodges, eds. *The Commercial Theater Institute Guide to Producing Plays and Musicals* (New York: Applause Books, 2006), 70.

a case of *creating* a familiar field at home as a place for scholarly/artistic interaction—helped the Jewish Studies program refine its role as a “patron of the arts” while refining a language of direct and sustained personal interaction with artists that proved a significant adjustment from more distanced roles of humanistic criticism and lecture hosts.

### Between Commission and Creation

Like the classic relationship between music and the church that contributed to the trajectory of European art music, the history of music in Jewish life benefits from interwoven strands of artistic independence, commission (composition induced by an institution or individual’s agenda), competition (the promise of resources and exposure for the “best” piece or project), and commercialism (music as a [hoped-for] self-sustaining commodity). In most cases, artistic independence and commercial success proved rare commodities; even compositions by employed cantors and choral directors often had to fit the needs of an ensemble or community. Rather, synagogues, Jewish community centers, and Jewish identity organizations such as the [National] Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Six-Points Fellowship have long relied on the middle two categories to revitalize the sound of Jewish ritual and commemoration. Among many examples, The National Council of Jewish Women commissioned a collection of music as a souvenir for the 1893 Jewish Women’s Congress at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition; cantors David Putterman and Reuben Rinder commissioned contemporary composers to create new music for their services at New York’s Park Avenue Synagogue and San Francisco’s Temple Emanu-El respectively; much of songleader/composer/liturgist Debbie Friedman’s early music came about through commissions from Chicago’s Temple Sinai; and music competitions from the Society for Advancement of Synagogue Music (1920s), the Israel-based Hassidic Song

Festival (1969-1980s), and Ramón Tasat and Natasha Hirschhorn's more recent organization Shalsholet: The Foundation for New Jewish Liturgical Music (2004-) gave rise to a wide variety of compositions, both known and forgotten.<sup>23</sup> These works addressed a balance of aesthetic and ideological interests, specifically to enhance Jewish settings. Even the Six Points Fellowships, a competition for which I had served as a judge one year, was geared toward Jewish communal organizations.

As an academic program with an intellectual ideological mission, we sought a different angle, casting about for works with interesting historical and philosophical narratives, music that brought new insight to particular figures or events, or projects that provided unique reflections on music's aesthetic qualities as vessels of meaning and memory. In contrast to Greenblatt, we aimed to provide artists the resources to complete their own projects rather commissioning a new work of our choosing. Yet we also recognized the need for political, intellectual, and resource-based boundaries that would limit our range of options.

### Example #1: *Moses Man*

During Spring 2013, while on a fellowship at Harvard University to write about Nazi-era narratives in musical theater, a colleague sent me information about a new work called "Moses Man," slated to premier in Rochester, New York. Created by longtime Rochester Children's Theater director Deborah Haber and composer Casey Filiaci, the work chronicled the journey of

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<sup>23</sup> Alois Kaiser and William Sparger, comp. *A Collection of the Principal Melodies of the Synagogue from the Earliest Time to the Present* (Chicago: T. Rubovitz, 1893); Jonathan L. Friedmann, "Cantor Reuben Rinder, Frederick Jacobi, and Temple Emanu-El San Francisco," in *Jews, Music and the American West: Portraits of Pioneers* (Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2016), 59-71; David J. Putterman, ed. *Synagogue Music by Contemporary Composers: An Anthology of 38 Compositions for the Sabbath Eve Service* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1951); Judah M. Cohen, "Higher Education: Debbie Friedman in Chicago," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 10.1 (2017), 10-18; Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music & National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 126-129; <http://www.shalsholet.org> (accessed September 8, 2018).

Haber's family as they took several paths out of Nazi-occupied Vienna—through Cypress, southern Africa, Palestine, and Italy, and ultimately (for the survivors) to the United States. Excited about seeing the work-in-progress, and grateful for the privilege of time that the fellowship provided, I drove out to Rochester, saw the work, heard audience reactions in a talk-back format, and interviewed the creators. Trained as an ethnographer, I sought to hear about the creative process on the creators' own terms. Haber and Filiaci did so by turning the mirror on my own position as a university professor. Might Indiana University, they asked openly, provide them a space to continue developing the work? As professional artists, used to the complexities of securing resources in a highly competitive arts marketplace, they taught me the significance of personal connection as a prerequisite for effective artistic development.

Back in Bloomington several months later, we weighed options for the next year's visiting artists. After some discussion *Moses Man* became our choice, buoyed by my previous familiarity with the project and its creators at the moment when we needed to make a decision. As with much arts production, we learned, scheduling a fellowship required artists' trust, availability, and readiness with the piece—a much more involved matter than a visit or presentation, since artists often juggled several projects at once and worked on each in turn as funding and time materialized. Knowing Haber and Filiaci's needs beforehand eased that scheduling hurdle, while ensuring that the residency would indeed help the piece in development. They responded enthusiastically, and we negotiated a several-week period during Spring 2014 for their visit.

We began by providing housing, a stipend, and resources to support a reading of the latest version of the project. In contrast with Levy and Silverman, who filled an existing position in another campus housing unit, we left it to Haber and Filiaci to forge their own relationships

with other campus units. From previous experience we knew that units such as the Music School and the Theatre Department, which controlled their own performance venues, preferred to make their own programming decisions organically rather than agreeing to funded requests from Jewish Studies—and that such decisions grew from meaningful professional and interpersonal relationships. Thus, using her experience as a theater professional, Haber appealed to the College Theatre department and received permission to secure a rehearsal/performance space for their April reading. She similarly secured a reading at the Indianapolis Repertory Theatre. In other words, Haber’s continued professional artistic inroads gave the project stability, even as Jewish Studies faculty looked curiously at the developing music. Ultimately, the Department of Theatre and Drama selected the piece for its summer “Premiere Musicals” program, which brought the creators back for further development with faculty directors and student actors, and resulted in a series of staged readings seen by about five hundred people. This independent and positive artistic evaluation affirmed Jewish Studies’ decision.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, when the New York Musical Theatre Festival chose *Moses Man* as one of its 2015 productions, the residency’s value increased. These decisions by theatrical insiders partly supplanted the more conventional reliance on critic-based evaluations, shifting the conversation toward process rather than unwieldy external expectations of aesthetically “great” work.

### Example #2: *And You Shall Be a Blessing*

In 2013, when I began to research the life and works of songleader/songwriter/liturgist Debbie Friedman (1951-2011), I sought and received support from Friedman’s sister and mother in pursuing the topic. A few months later, Friedman’s sister contacted me to let me know that she

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<sup>24</sup> <https://viewpoints.iu.edu/art-at-iu/2014/08/21/new-musical-moses-man-wraps-up-iu-summer-theater-season-with-three-performances/index.html>

had also given permission to a young playwright, Deborah Yarchun, to write a play about Friedman featuring arrangements of her music. I continued my research, and let this knowledge lie fallow for over a year.<sup>25</sup> Then the time came to choose the Jewish Studies program's 2015 artist-in-residence. Again I followed my contacts and reached out to Yarchun, who expressed interest.

With Yarchun coming off of a year-long residency at another theater, we negotiated a semester-long stay at Indiana University. She would live in the same arts-focused dorm as Levy and Silverman, teach a playwriting course, work on the next draft of her play, network with the Bloomington theatre community, and organize a workshop performance. During the semester, I met with her weekly to discuss the most recent draft of her play, exchange ideas about Friedman's life and legacy, help her negotiate Indiana University's administrative systems, and discuss our respective career trajectories. While seeking to help in any way that I could, I avoided giving unsolicited advice or casting judgment on work-in-progress. Rather, trusting Yarchun's own judgment as a professional with her own language of expression, I looked to her to frame her own questions. That interaction was freeing, allowing me to skirt the professorial urge to hold forth on a topic of knowledge and instead ask what I had to learn from an artist with her own deep investment and research on a subject of common interest.

As with the previous artists-in-residence, Yarchun arranged her own reading of *And You Shall Be a Blessing* with Jewish Studies' sponsorship, while involving artists from a number of units around campus and in town. This included musical arrangements by students from the Jacobs School of Music, actors from the Theatre program, space from the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, and a talkback led by the artistic director of a local theater

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Judah M. Cohen, "Sing Unto God: Debbie Friedman and the Changing Sound of Jewish Liturgical Music," *Contemporary Jewry* 35 (2015), 13-34; Cohen, "Higher Education."

company. Artists rely on the reading/talkback ritual—also termed the “29-Hour Workshop” to indicate its professional status as an unofficial “test” performance—as a low-stakes opportunity to see their transitional work brought to life. From there they can plan adjustments and revisions based on personal observations and responses from a live audience. Yarchun’s connection to the Jewish Studies Program yielded a number of attendees who knew Friedman’s work well, and expressed strong opinions about the treatment of Friedman’s character and music in the work—especially as related to Friedman’s known but unemphasized relationships with other women. While the immediate response began awkwardly, it ultimately led Yarchun to pursue additional research that both deepened her own experience and developed new areas of support for the show.

### Example #3: *The Wave*

The same 2013 fellowship also led to another artist-in-residence: Or Matias, whose musical *The Wave* became a two-part collaboration with the Department of Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance in 2017-18. Matias’s name came out of a conversation I had with Ron Jones, the teacher-turned-spoken word artist whose 1967 Palo Alto high school classroom simulation, later known as “The Wave,” had morphed into a broad array of narratives, including a number of local and youth musicals. Jones, during our call, noted that he had granted Matias the rights to create a “Broadway Musical” version of his story. Three years later, when the Jewish Studies Program once again sought an artist-in-residence, I looked up Matias and eventually cold-e-mailed him. Matias, then serving as a Broadway music director, had written some material for the show already; and he responded enthusiastically to a possible residency to take the project to the next level. When I brought the possibility up with the Department of

Theatre, Drama and Contemporary Dance, Matias's New York experience generated interest and the possibility of collaboration.

Music in general requires a team effort; but for musical theater, team-based creativity serves a crucial part of production. Consequently, with Theatre as a partner, the Jewish Studies Program worked closely with Matias on its most elaborate plan to date. We made arrangements for a three-week "twenty-nine-hour"-style workshop with Matias, director Chloe Treat, and music director Wiley DeWeese. Theatre made its musical theater students available for the workshop, and we together arranged for students to submit audition videos months in advance (now an accepted professional practice). After casting, the students received their scripts and musical materials, and learned them in time for the start of rehearsals on October 1, 2017.

Over the next three weeks, under the watch of Theatre, the first act of the musical emerged, and a strong rapport developed between the students and the young professional artists. About a hundred people viewed the three readings of Act I at the end of the workshop, and the feeling all around was so positive that we began to make arrangements for the artists to return in January/February to workshop Act II. (Although we applied unsuccessfully for internal grants from the College to support this return, we nonetheless found additional funding in Jewish Studies, and combined it with funding and administrative support from Theatre to make this happen.) By the completion of the second workshop in February 2018, Matias, Treat and DeWeese had a full and fully functional musical that could only have materialized through the residency. More than 120 people attended the three readings; the cast gained experience working with emerging artists that knew the New York scene; the artists had good recordings of their materials; and parents expressed gratitude for their children's experiences with a meaningful narrative.

### Collaboration and Critique

These residencies all required a strong administrative team, who understood the university's various logistical and financial systems and could work with administrators from other units to process each case's unique needs. Snags occurred, of course. One artist's (reasonable) request that the university go through her union presented complications that required the Theatre department to step in. With these issues resolved, however, each residency proved efficient for the benefits they achieved. At about \$15,000 each, they compared in cost to a short visit by a top name (such as author David Grossman, who came in Spring 2017), but with a different set of benefits.

One of the central questions surrounding this alternate benefit landscape lay with the populations that these residencies served. Very few Jewish Studies majors, even those in our specialized Jewish Sacred Music track, engaged with these artists. Rather, the vast majority of participants for their courses/projects as well as audiences came from our co-hosting units, where students presented a more natural fit with the artists' specialties, and where the practice of mutual student support comprised a strong part of the culture. Part of the situation spoke to the character of the Jewish Studies curriculum, which appealed to a more historical and philological set of discourses. At the same time, during years where we found Jewish Studies degree students, and consequently enrollments, decreasing due to shifting student interests, these projects served as an important alternate mode of engagement by helping other units with an emphasis on the arts to fulfil their missions in publicly and mutually beneficial ways that extended beyond the curriculum. Even faculty that did not particularly understand the new works appreciated the broader recognition that the Jewish Studies Program received as part of each collaboration.

Another aspect to this is the nature of recognizing artists as collaborators with scholars who seek dialogue, both for their own legitimacy and as a way to energize the creative process. All of the artists with whom I interacted actively engaged in research, and looked to me as a meaningful interlocutor who could help them make their own artistic choices. Yet help, in this case, meant facilitation rather than instruction. Artists, after all, are as expert in their craft as scholars are in theirs, and artists' work thus offers scholars opportunities to expand their own vision. Such partnerships must happen through trust, however, rather than hierarchical ideas that sometimes situate faculty as holders of "truth." This approach contrasts with the unintentionally patronizing tone that Jewish Studies programs can take in treating artists as uninformed individuals who could benefit from the faculty's "wisdom." When Stanford University described its "Jewish Engagement with the Arts" project in its 2018 newsletter, for example, it framed its 2017 interaction with artist-in-residence Saar Magal as an opportunity to impart knowledge, to "bring the most recent insights gained within the academy into the world outside."<sup>26</sup> In reality, the residency may have been more of a partnership than the account suggests. Yet the public framing of the interaction as an opportunity for the artist to "learn" from those who know, rather than to benefit from the university's resources, fits my own experiences with the current treatment of scholars in Jewish Studies Programs. The true potential of these experiences, I have come to believe, can happen only when scholars and artists learn to trust each other as equals, who occupy different but intersecting intellectual circles—and when the artist can feel comfortable consulting with scholarly interlocutors without risk of patronizing (and often irrelevant) historical humanistic criticism.

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<sup>26</sup> Stanford University Taube Center for Jewish Studies Newsletter 2016-17, 6.

### Aftermath: Patronage and the Extended Creative Process

In all three cases (and others), I have remained in touch with the artists, continuing the conversations started while in residency. Extending these relationships added new dimensions to both artist and the work, enhancing my views about musical creation, its transformation over time, and its sustained imprint from benefactors.

When the creators of *Moses Man* left Bloomington for the second time in late August 2014, they invited me to join an “advisory board” of trusted interlocutors who might consult on the work into the future. And when I attended a performance of *Moses Man* at the 2015 New York Musical Theatre Festival, Haber asked me to give an impromptu endorsement at the afterparty. Since then, moreover, as international politics have shifted, I have seen the piece transform into an allegory on the plight of refugees, gaining the title “Finding Home” in the process. In Spring 2017, Haber came back to Indiana University to help present a transformed work with the Center for the Study of Global Change, collaborating with a photographer of Syrian refugees, and shifting the focus of her work to a documentary about art and the refugee experience. I served as one of the coordinators of this event, which returned to Bloomington in an enhanced version in early 2019 as “Art & Refugees: Shine the Light.”

After completing the semester at Indiana University, Deborah Yarchun moved to New York City, where she continued to work on *And You Shall Be a Blessing* among a host of other theatrical projects. We remain in touch through our mutual interests; and a result of my time with Yarchun’s project we continue to talk about the play’s future, whether to discuss Yarchun’s (ultimately successful) efforts to obtain the rights to use Friedman’s music, to discuss the latest draft of the piece, or to navigate opportunities for further development.

Matias and Treat, as described in the introduction, brought their student cast and musicians to New York to give two exhibition performances of *The Wave* for a number of industry insiders. Matias's work on the piece continues apace. I receive regular updates on the piece, and continue to consult with Matias on finding resources for future opportunities. Both artists seek to continue their connections with Indiana University as a kind of artistic home away from home.

These experiences have brought the Jewish Studies Program directly into the creative process and, more significantly, into the lives of each artist, serving as part of an extended narrative that more accurately reflects the life of a "work" than we can often understand after the fact. In addition to serving as a launching pad for each new piece, the Jewish Studies Program's ability to leverage additional resources for musical development deepens a complex relationship between artist and scholar. And as each visit affected an artist's creative path, so did it provide a new perspective on my own scholarship—and my role as a scholar of the arts. Working with artists on a topic of mutual interest sensitized me to the nature of institutional support in a competitive artistic marketplace, and helped me to reflect more realistically on professional artists' historical strategies for balancing their careers with funding earmarked for "Jewish" programming. Jewish Studies' efforts to flexibly support new music and other arts, with an eye toward the needs of the artist as well as the institution, are more complicated than those of units that organically include arts creation in their portfolios, such as theater, music/ethnomusicology, studio art, and English. But these efforts ultimately shed light on this often neglected angle of study. Alongside studies of style and tradition, ethnography, musical analysis and critical discourse, the pairing of scholarship and art offers its own commentary on the forces that solidify contemporary narratives of "Jewish music."

## Epilogue: “The New Colossus” and “The Diary of Anne Frank: The Opera”

Jewish Studies’ support of new music continues apace, taking different formats based on different artistic trajectories. In Spring 2018, the Program supported both a new recording from campus Jewish a cappella group HooShir (which I founded in 2006 and continue to supervise). Jacobs School of Music vocal student Anne Slovin’s commission of a new setting of Emma Lazarus’s emblematic poem “The New Colossus” by local composer Lauren Bernofsky, which Slovin premiered at her Masters recital, titled “I Lift My Lamp: Musical Reflections on Being a Jew.”<sup>27</sup> Both requests led to consultations: I helped to advise HooShir’s directors on the fiscal landscape of non-profit university-based organizations, and discussed post-recital options for Jewish-themed music programs with Slovin. Both forms of support also contributed to larger conversations—questions of balancing demonstrably Jewish repertoire with mainstream pop music in collegiate Jewish a cappella on one hand, and on the other hand the renewed interest in Lazarus’s poem as part of ongoing discussion of American immigration policy.<sup>28</sup> Both ventures also offered intellectually rich contributions in ways that went beyond more traditional (and slower) written scholarship.

On a more ambitious scale, in 2014 the Jewish Studies Program has also become a core participant in the Jacobs School of Music’s commission of the first full-length opera version of “The Diary of Anne Frank,” a project ported over from the Atlanta opera when it began to retreat from . My experience researching musical settings of the diary, combined with my knowledge of

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<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ2SIG7HRYg> (accessed September 11, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Silow-Carroll, “Your huddled what? White House aide Stephen Miller doesn’t think the Statue of Liberty has much to do with immigration,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 2, 2017. For artistic responses, see among a number of examples, Tim Robbins’s play of the same name, premiered in Los Angeles by The Actors Gang in February 2018 (<http://theactorsgang.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/The-New-Colossus-Program.pdf>).

its extraordinarily complicated historical rights structure, both fascinated and motivated me.<sup>29</sup> I moved forward with others at the Jacobs School of Music to secure an internal grant for the production and later consulted on a successful ArtWorks grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The rights and subsequent artistic negotiations indeed took years, but have now resolved to the point of scheduling the opera's premiere for Fall 2020, with Jewish Studies providing scholarly and programming support.

On a practical level taking a process-focused approach, while more risky and labor intensive than the more common model of the short prominent artist concert/visit, can create extraordinary opportunities for Jewish Studies to build dialogue organically across academic units, while forging longer-term, trust-building relationships with artists. At the same time, alternate artistic models can open spaces in which to look more deeply into the topography of artistic collaboration and evaluation, as well as into the very different modes of activity that can emerge when looking beyond the standard "reviews" of a finished product that scholars and the public often rely upon for determining merit. In so doing, we can recognize artists as full collaborators with scholars, and so recognize the centrality of such collaborations to the history of the field, and as a way to energize the creative process and consequently the field itself going forward.

These experiences also prove crucial to our work as scholars, since they bring us face to face with the real creative processes that we too often approximate from a distance in our research. Forensic studies of literature over the past two decades have shown the importance of understanding the circumstances behind the creation, development, and flexible development of

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<sup>29</sup> Judah M. Cohen, "Sounds from the Secret Annex: Composing a Young Girl's Thoughts," and "Musicography: Anne Frank," in Jeffrey Shandler and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, eds., *Anne Frank Unbound* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 265-290, 377-396.

works such as Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Christopher Isherwood's *The Berlin Stories*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, including several layers of editing as they traversed languages, publication formats, and national borders.<sup>30</sup> From a musical perspective, artist-in-residence opportunities set up conditions behind musical creation that have been in play for centuries, allowing deeper scholarly insight in both the short and long term, and allowing a direct engagement with the creative process in all of its contingencies and complications. In addition to understanding Jewish music through new theoretical angles, moreover, the meaningful relationships Jewish Studies programs and their faculty can establish with musical artists can expand our view of scholarship, while helping to create the works from which, presumably, the next canon of Jewish music can emerge.

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<sup>30</sup> Naomi Seidman, "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage," *Jewish Social Studies* New Series, 3.1 (1996), 1-19; Luca Crispi, *James Joyce and the Construction of Characters in Ulysses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Peter Parker, *Isherwood: A Life Revealed* (New York: Random House, 2004), 569-70.