

Staging Cultural Interaction: New Concepts of Representing Arab Music in the Israeli Cultural Arena

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THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES THE REPRESENTATION OF ARAB MUSIC produced and played by the Arab minority in Israel, on the cultural stage of the Jewish Israeli Society. The article discusses the representation of Arab music in certain cultural institutions in two major cities in Israel: Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Institutions in these two cities are considered influential and important for the Israeli cultural arena as they represent a number of socio-cultural groups of the Jewish-Israeli majority. The central issue of this article deals with the changes in representation of Arab music in Israel during the 1990s and a significant change in the dialog between Arab music and Jewish Israeli society in the 21st century. The role of individuals in this development is further on presented as a significant factor in the process of change.

INTRODUCTION

The article examines the process of change in the place of Arab music in Israeli culture. The article focuses on the representation of Arab music as the musical culture of the Arab minority in Israel, on the cultural stage of the Jewish-Israeli majority. We examine the representation of Arab music in some central cultural institutions in two major cities in Israel: Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. These institutions are considered as influential and important in the Israeli cultural arena since they represent a number of socio-cultural groups of the Jewish-Israeli majority.

The Arab minority in Israel, whose music is the main topic of this article, accounts for approximately 20 percent of the Israeli popula-

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tion and is located in three main geographic regions: the Galilee (60 percent), the East-Central rural area (20 percent), the South (10 percent) and in mixed cities (10 percent). This minority differs from the Jewish-Israeli majority in their mother tongue (Arabic) and in their religion Islam, Christianity and the Druze religion. In this article we use the term 'Arab Israelis' to define members of the Arab minority in Israel. The term is a cultural definition and not a political one, having in mind the complexity of identities of Arab citizens in Israel.

The study described here is based on a theoretical framework of the qualitative research and the data was from 2000 on gathered from a number of sources like field-work, including the observation of musical events described in this article. Further on there were interviews and conversations with Arab-Israeli musicians, interviews with two central Jewish-Israeli figures involved in presenting Arab music to Jewish audiences; systematic collection of various data, for example, newspaper reports, performance reviews, concert programs, music materials such as CDs, DVDs and music scores.

THE PLACE OF ARAB MUSIC IN THE STATE OF
ISRAEL UNTIL THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the field of the national culture studies there is a general agreement that in the modern nation states hegemonic national cultures have developed which are based on the properties that provide the national collective self-definition. Here belong a shared national language and cultural practices, believed to represent the true (traditional and new) character of a nation (Ram 1995, 91–124; Regev and Seroussi 2004, 3). Thereafter some modern nation states have excluded the culture of other regional, ethnic or religious groups from their homogenized national culture, and nowadays in many cases these (now excluded) cultures struggle for inclusion, recognition and representation within the nation-state culture (Hall 1996, 441–49).

This theoretical framework enables us to explain the situation of Arab music in the State of Israel in the second half of the twentieth century. In the newly created State of Israel, a deliberate process of the creation of a new national Israeli culture based on the Hebrew language and a national ideology deriving from European culture took



place. From the 1950s on, Israeli popular music was written in the Hebrew language and its style definitely imitated that of the popular music of the West (Perlson 2006, 47–51; Regev and Seroussi 2004, 53–89). The aim was to create a homogeneous Israeli society with a uniform culture (Regev and Seroussi 2004, 15–25, 236–47).¹ The culture of the Arab minority in Israel did not represent a part of the new national Israeli culture, which means that Arab music was not included in the popular Israeli music of the Jewish majority. This was not a declared policy of the Israeli government but the decision of hegemonic Jewish-Israeli educational and cultural institutes; mainly media and recording companies and the Ministry of Education and Culture who did not grant access to the Arab culture of the Arab minority and of the Jews from Islamic countries (Perlson 2006, 33–70; Regev 1995).

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During the 1970s, Israel underwent social change in which groups whose cultural heritage was from Islamic countries began to demand social and cultural legitimization (Shitrit 2004, 119–95). As the result of this development, a musical style arose in the 1980s known as ‘Mediterranean’ or ‘Mizrakhi’ (meaning Eastern). The style was characterized by a mixture of Greek, Turkish, Arab, Jewish Yemenite, Persian, Moroccan, Kurdish, and other musical elements (Shiloah and Cohen, 1983). The genre was predominantly associated with the population originating from Islamic countries, a large number of which belonged to lower and lower-middle classes (Halper, Seroussi and Squires-Kidron 1989; Regev 1996; Regev and Seroussi 2004, 191–235). However, despite this change in Israeli-Jewish music, the Arab music of the Arab minority in Israel was still not present in the Jewish-Israeli cultural arena (Regev 1995, 19–24).

THE CHANGES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF ARAB
MUSIC IN ISRAEL IN THE LATE TWENTIETH AND
EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

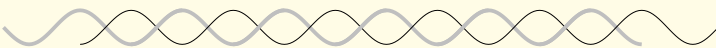
Nowadays, the music listened to by the general public in the Arab minority in Israel consists mainly of the music from Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.² Two major genres listened to by the Arabs in Israel are ‘the great twentieth century Arab music’ and new Arab pop music.³ A closer look into the research findings has shown that the music per-

formed by professional Arab musicians in Israel consists mainly of the Arab art music based on the Maqam system and improvisational forms, 'the great twentieth century Arab music', and new original Arab music created by Arab musicians in Israel.

[94] In the 1990s Arab music (mainly the above-mentioned 'great twentieth century Arab music') was recorded by Jewish-Israeli musicians who belonged to the above mentioned musical genre called 'Mediterranean Music' or 'Eastern Music'. An important point is that the audience of this Arab music genre were mainly the members of the so-called 'Eastern Jews' (Jews from Islamic countries and their descendants) and their music did not reach the mainstream Israeli culture and society.

During the 1990s, another change took place, when Jewish-Israeli musicians together with Arab-Israeli musicians created a new and distinctive style – a combination of Arab, Turkish, and other Near Eastern musical elements. A large part of this repertoire was instrumental and so this feature helped in overcoming the issue of language, the main distinction mark between the Arabs and Jews in Israel. The new style was identified by media and audience as 'ethnic music' or 'world ethnic music' and it represented a musical style that appealed to a wider audience in Jewish-Israeli society, including intellectuals and the members of the middle- and upper-classes. This was the first successful attempt to introduce Arab-Israeli musicians and a music style with Arab elements into the mainstream Jewish-Israeli cultural arena. The dominant figures in this genre were the Bustan Avraham Ensemble, Yair Dalal, East-West Ensemble, Ziriab Trio, and the singer Esthy Keinan-Ofri.

A significant change in the representation of the Arab music in Israel took place at the beginning of the new millennium. A surprising finding of this research was that the man responsible for the introduction of Arab music into the mainstream and elite Israeli culture was in fact an individual named Eli Grunfeld. Mr Grunfeld is neither a musician nor an artist; he is a producer and impresario. Mr. Grunfeld was born in Israel in the city of Haifa in 1955 into a Jewish religious family with European origin. Interviews and discussions with him revealed that before his thirties he did not have any contact with or knowledge of Arab music. As a producer he specialised only in popular Israeli music and Western popular music. Under the influence of the harsh



experiences of the first Lebanese War (in the early 1980s) he started to study Arab culture, particularly Arab music, which all together brought him to a personal ideological decision: 'I shall devote my knowledge of production and the provision of entertainment to promote peace and understanding by the help of Arab music' (Tel Aviv, 20 December 2007). His decided to study Arab culture, particularly its music, and to devote his knowledge in productions and entertainment to introduce Arab music to Israeli-Jewish society as a way of promoting peace. In 1988 he successfully introduced to Israeli audiences the French-Jewish singer Sapho of Moroccan origin. The concert consisted entirely of a genre called 'Arab rock' music that had not been known in Israel at the time. At the same concert the singer also performed two songs of Umm Kulthum.⁴ The concert took place at the most important venue in Israel at that time: the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv. This was the first time that any kind of Arab music had been presented on the cultural stage of the Jewish-Israeli elite. Thereafter Grunfeld went to Morocco and France for two years where he studied Arab music from Arab musicians. On his return to Israel in 1990, in his role as a producer and member of official cultural establishments, he began to strive for the introduction of Arab culture – music, theater, and film – to the Jewish-Israeli cultural scene.

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At this point we would like to refer to two institutions for culture and entertainment which have a significant role in the representation of Arab music in Israeli culture today. The first is the Tsavta Club (Together Club) in Tel Aviv, which is one of the cultural and artistic institutions in Israel with the longest tradition. It was established in 1958 under the name of the Club for Progressive Culture by a left-wing political movement in Israel (the Mapam Party). The management defines it as 'a center of progressive culture' and it represents a leading force in art and culture, and is at the same time also a form of political protest. The club represents a bridge between different sectors of Israeli society, and supports the cooperation between Jews and Arabs. The institution serves as a platform for entertainments, theatrical and musical productions, including other cultural and artistic activities that take place in it. Tsavta is considered to be the center of the Jewish cultural elite of Israeli-Jewish society.

The second cultural institution linked to the representation of

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Arab music is the Confederation House: the Center for Ethnic Music and Poetry situated in Jerusalem, on the border between the Old and New City, between Jewish and Arab neighborhoods. It was founded in 1984 by Calman Soltnic, who was at the time the head of the International Zionist Confederation. According to its founders and directors, The Confederation House aspires to initiate and promote a dialogue between cultures, traditions and people with the help of a written word, theater and music. This institution has attained a leading role in the sphere of ethnic music in Israel. It hosts leading artists from abroad, as well as local cultural groups. The major figure of this institute is Effi Benaya, the head and artistic manager who worked together with Grunfeld in promoting Arab music on the Israeli stage.

In 2000 Grunfeld succeeded in initiating and producing a concert of Arab music on the most prestigious stage in Israel: the Israel Festival in Jerusalem. The performers were Sapho, Lubna Salameh (an Arab-Israeli singer) and Zehava Ben (an Israeli-Jewish singer). They were accompanied by the Nazareth Orchestra, the members of which were all Arab Israelis. This concert, which was very successful, meant a breakthrough in the representation of Arab music in Israeli-Jewish culture; it included the repertoire of the above-mentioned 'great twentieth century Arab music'.

In the same year Mr Grunfeld initiated, produced, and took the role of artistic director for a project called the Oud Festival in the Confederation House in Jerusalem. The objective was to bring Arab music to Jewish-Israeli audiences by emphasizing the fact that the 'king of all instruments' in Arab music was once common to all Near East cultures. A group of musicians that represented the core of the first Oud Festival consisted of the same Jewish and Arab musicians that were a part of intercultural musical activity during the 1990s.

Thus the first cultural institution that regularly started presenting Arab music on the Israeli-Jewish stage was the Confederation House in Jerusalem. Grunfeld's partner in this enterprise was Effi Benaya. They worked together until 2002, however, ideological differences forced Mr Grunfeld to leave Jerusalem. Since 2002 Benaya has been the sole producer and manager of the two-week Oud Festival in the Confederation House in Jerusalem in November every year. The main theme of the



Jerusalem Oud Festival is the emphasis of the musical cultures of the Near East, combined with intercultural encounters. Arab music is included in the festival as one of the important musical cultures in this region.

Ever since 2002 the Tel Aviv Tsavta Club has also hosted another Oud Festival where Arab music is one of the central elements. This festival originally took place once a year in November and lasted a week, however, since 2006 on it has been, due to public demand, held twice a year in November and August. In addition, as the introduction to the Tsavta Club, an event known as The Culture of Peace Festival is held in spring every year. Here, too, Arab music plays a central role.

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There are certain differences between the ways in which Arab music is presented in the two cultural centers. In Jerusalem the festival is presented as one of the musical cultures of the Near East, and as a part of a complex of musical culture in the region. Another concept underlying the Jerusalem festival is the creation of a bridge between East and West. The declared ideology of the Tsavta Club is much more political than that of The Confederation House in Jerusalem. This was also the main reason for the differences of opinion between Benaya and Grunfeld mentioned before. The main aim of the Culture of Peace Festival is to promote peace and understanding between Jews and Arabs by representing Arab music to Jewish-Israeli audience. The differences between the two institutions lead to some differences between the two concepts of Arab music the festivals present on stage. We shall illustrate this by describing the repertoires of the most recent festivals: in Jerusalem in 2007 and in Tel Aviv in 2007/08.

The program of the Confederation House in Jerusalem in November 2007 included fourteen performances, six of which included Arab music. Two of the six concerts presented 'the great' Arab music (Um Kulthum and Mohamed Abdel Wahab), while three featured contemporary Arab music in Israel and one was a concert of Bedouin folk music. The other eight concerts were ethnic Jewish Rock, modern Sufi song and dance, music and Hebrew songs from Ottoman Lands, Ara Dinkjian and Friends, David Broza and Yair Dalal – ethnic Israeli music, mystical music of the Middle East, Bass and Oud, Ladino songs from Turkey.

[98] The repertoire of the Tsavta Club Festival in 2007–2008 included the music of Farid el Atrash and Mohamed Abdel Wahab, a concert of Arab belly dance, a concert of Iraqi music performed by Jewish-Israeli musicians of Iraqi origin, a concert of Greek Rebetico Music, and a concert of Bedouin, Jewish, and Israeli music performed by Jewish and Bedouin musicians. One of the principles of Tsavta Club and of Eli Grunfeld as the producer is that Arab music presented to Jewish-Israeli audiences should be performed by Arab musicians and not by Jews.⁵ In the most recent Festival of Peace and Culture in Tel Aviv (in May 2008), for the first time the audience was able to enjoy a performance of new compositions by Arab-Israeli composers Wassim Ouda and Sukeina Darwish.

Our research has shown that the inclusion of contemporary Arab-Israeli music in the two festivals was not a result of the initiative from the part of the organizers, who insisted on presenting ‘the great’ Arab music, but it was demanded by the Arab-Israeli musicians themselves. The change was first featured in the 2006 festival in Jerusalem, with the concert of the musician and composer Kamil Shajrawi (13 November 2006). At this concert Mr Shajrawi presented his original compositions, as well compositions of some well-known musicians of the 20th century like Abdel Wahab, Farid Al Atrash, Um Kulthum and others. When asked about the choice of musical material for his concerts he explained: ‘This is the first time I present my music to an Israeli audience, and Effi Benaya, who did not know any of my original music at the beginning, was not sure how the audience would accept it, therefore he suggested to mix some Arab music people know well together with my own songs’ (5 October 2006). In conversations with the Arab-Israeli musician Eimad Dalal, who performed at the 2007 festival devoted to his own Arab music, he told us that originally Mr Benaya had demanded that the concert consisted of mainly other great musicians like Umm Kulthum, Abdel Wahab and others. In Mr. Dalal’s words: ‘Effi approached me and invited me to give a concert at the Oud Festival in November 2007. When we met in Jerusalem he suggested that the concert should be based on the old music, he was not aware that I could play my own original music. When I told him that my own music was the material I wanted to present at the concert,



he refused. Finally Benaya agreed but at the same time expressed his opinion that people would come to the concert solely to hear well-known Arab music' (Zefat, 29 November 2007). The interviews with M. Dalal revealed that he felt frustrated with the situation of the new generation of Arab-Israeli musicians: 'We are people without faces. Nobody really notices us, they see us as performers of other people's music, as if our own music was not as good as the old music' (Zefat, 2 December 2007). Our own observation at the concert of Imad Dalal in the 2007 Oud Festival (Jerusalem, 20 November 2007) showed that the hall was almost full, although conversations with people (Jewish Israelis) revealed that the audience indeed wondered why there were no well-known pieces of music, such as that of Umm Kulthum or Abdel Wahab, included in the program: 'I thought we were going to hear the old music, I was surprised that the program did not include songs of Abdel Wahab. I have many of his records and we sing his tunes even in the synagogue. Some of the music presented at this concert was too modern, I don't feel it as true Arab music' (Israel Levi, 43, a religious Jew who serves as a cantor in a Sephardi-Jerusalem synagogue).

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Another important figure in the representation of Arab music in Israel is the female Arab-Israeli singer and composer Lubna Salame (37). She claims that she respects and loves the 'old' music: 'I love the music of some great musicians of the past, especially Um Kulthum's songs, since this music suits my voice, and I am always happy to perform it but I feel that we have so much more new music of our own and I cannot really bring it to the Israeli audience, since my producers insist on putting on a concert of the old music.' Ms Salame told me that she does not fight this tendency because she agrees with her producers that Israeli-Jewish audience still prefer the old music to the new.

In conversations two leading promoters of Arab music for the Jewish-Israeli stage, Eli Grunfeld (Tsavta Tel Aviv) and Effi Banaya (Confederation House, Jerusalem), claimed that the Israeli cultural establishment, whose patronage they need for financing their musical projects, does not have real knowledge of Arab music. In their opinion, the concept of Arab music remains within the framework of 'the great' Arab music and its famous representatives of the 20th century. Therefore, Grunfeld and Banaya feel obliged to offer these institu-

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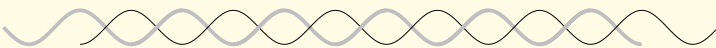
tions such programs where a significant part is dedicated to ‘the great’ Arab music, in order to receive financial support. Furthermore, they pointed out that the Jewish-Israeli audience has the same expectations and that the new Arab music is as not popular with the audience as ‘the great’ Arab music is. Our research has shown that in the last two or three years, however, there has been a change in the perception of the new Arab-Israeli music. Today, contemporary Arab-Israeli music constitutes an important part of the Jerusalem festival, and has been presented at the festival in Tel Aviv as well.

Another transformation concerning the canon of Arab music in Israel includes performances of Arab music beyond the two Oud festivals and the two institutions described in detail above. Eli Grunfeld produces and manages performances of Arab music in areas other than Tel Aviv. However, the repertoire of these concerts continues to consist mainly of ‘the great’ old Arab music. The program of 2008 in The Confederation House in Jerusalem includes concerts of new Arab music by Arab-Israeli musicians and composers.

In addition to the musical activities of the two institutions mentioned here, there has been an additional expansion of the exposure to Arab music in the Jewish-Israeli audience. In 2005 a musical ensemble known as ‘The Ensemble for Classical Arab Music’ was created. Its members, who are between 20 and 30 years old, are all graduates of the Music Academy in Jerusalem. Nine artists are Arab Israelis, seven are Jewish Israelis, and one artist is from Turkey and another from Germany. The founder and conductor is Prof. Tayseer Elias, an Arab-Israeli musician, who was involved in the development of the musical cooperation between Jewish and Arab artists described above during the 1990s. The ensemble repertoire consists of classical Arab music from Turkey to Egypt, since the 19th century until today. Through follow-ups of the ensemble performances, it is evident that most of its concerts are attended by Jewish Israelis in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

THE AUDIENCE

The audience of the concerts of Arab music discussed here can be divided into three main groups.⁶ The first consists of Jews of the Islamic region that consider Arab music to be a part of their own cultural her-



itage. This music was once an integral part of the musical culture of the Jewish communities in the Middle East and it is still an important component of liturgical and paraliturgical music in Israel. From conversations and interviews with people who come from Islamic countries or whose parents held or regularly go to Arab music concerts, a recurring feedback was that they finally feel a sense of legitimization to enjoy, publicly and officially, 'their' Arab music, since Arab music is nowadays performed in recognized cultural institutions of Israeli society. Conversations and interviews have also revealed that the majority of those who have left Islamic countries, including younger generations, strongly prefer 'the great' Arab music performed by famous musicians like Abdel Wahab, Umm Kulthum, Abdel Halim Hafaz, Farid al Atrash and others.

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Another group of Israeli Jews is interested in Arab music as a part of their pluralistic world-outlook which results in an attempt to be acquainted with and to understand the culture of the Arab minority in Israel, and that of the Arab environment in the Middle East. This group of concertgoers, who also regularly attend performances of Arab music, consists of well-educated people, that put themselves to the left of the Israeli political map. Most of them are Israeli-born and Arab music has never formed a part of their culture or cultural heritage. They are usually active in social and cultural initiatives to promote Arab-Jewish understanding and peace.

The third group sees in Arab music part of the genre known as 'the world music' which is very popular among young members of Israeli-Jewish society who are interested in the music which is not 'Western'. This group includes young people in their twenties and thirties, and seasoned travelers to the Far East or South America who have discovered 'the other' non-Western musical cultures and have become enthusiasts of different forms of 'the world music'. The Arab music presented on the Jewish-Israeli stage is for them a genre of the world music as well: 'I spent two years abroad and discovered so many kinds of music that I had not even heard of before. When I came back in 2005, I searched for ethnic music and I found out about the Oud Festivals, especially the one in Jerusalem, and since then I have attended most concerts, including the Arab music ones because for me they are

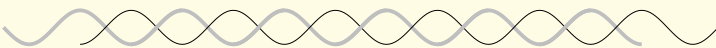
[102] a part of all “world music” of today’ (Eran Katz, 26, Jerusalem, 13 November 2007). In interviews with young people it became clear that these young people travel the four corners of the country in search for ‘non-Western’ music, and Arab music, old and new alike, has become an integral part of their cultural repertoire.

It must be noted that in Jerusalem and also in the Tel Aviv area there is a small group of Arab Israelis that has during the last two years more or less regularly attended the concerts of Arab music described above.

DISCUSSION

The research shows a significant change in the representation of Arab music on the mainstream Jewish-Israeli cultural stage. Originally, there was a complete lack of representation of Arab music on public cultural stages for most of Israeli Jews, that is to say, a total lack of cultural interaction between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel. The reason for this lies in the notion of a modern nation-state where the emphasis is on the dominant national culture. The Jewish majority and hegemonic institutions of the state created a national Israeli culture and popular music representing ‘Israeliness’, and in this way left no room for other musical cultures. Arab music was thus rejected by the cultural establishment. It is important to stress that this was a double rejection: for the first part it was a rejection of the Arab culture shared by the Arab minority and Jewish groups from Islamic countries. However, together with the consolidation of national Israeli-Jewish culture and with the consolidation of popular Israeli music, arose the socio-cultural demand of minority groups in Israel for recognition and representation (including the two groups of Arab-Israelis and the Jews from Islamic countries). The formation of the musical genre of Mediterranean (Mizrakhi) music that began in the 1980s was the first stage in the introduction of non-Western popular music into Jewish-Israeli culture. In my opinion, this was the first step in the shift of cultural attitudes in the Jewish-Israeli society, where a musical culture with an Eastern, non-Western flavor gained legitimate status with a large consumer audience, aided by the spread in electronic media.

Further to this socio-cultural process, during the 1990s changes that



took place at two levels occurred. The first was the rendition of Arab music by Jewish Israeli musicians of the Mediterranean genre. In our interpretation, this stage was more the expression of a need for legitimization by the socio-cultural Jewish groups coming from Islamic countries and their descendants, rather than an expression for intercultural dialog with the Arab minority in Israel. The second change during this period was the process of cooperation between Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Israeli musicians, and the creation of a new style containing many elements of Arab and Turkish music and some other traits that bridge East and West musical cultures. One can undoubtedly find the aspiration for genuine dialog between Jewish and Arab artists in Israel and conscious and avowed attempts for dialog between Jewish and Arab sectors through musical cooperation. In our opinion, this was an important step in the socio-cultural dialog between the Jewish majority and Arab minority for two reasons: firstly, the Arab musicians have in this way become an integral part of the Jewish-Israeli cultural stage, and secondly, the repertoire containing Arab, Turkish and other non-Western musical traits has also become an element in the Jewish-Israeli cultural scene. A significant change in the status of Arab music in Israel occurred at the beginning of the 21st century, with a repertoire based exclusively on Arab music, where the performers of Arab music are professional Arab-Israeli musicians. This, in our opinion, expresses the process of change in the dialog between the two groups – the Jewish majority and Arab minority, in the notion that the Arab minority presents its music directly to the Jewish public.

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An important point arising from the research is the central role of individuals as cultural agents and as promoters of the musical dialog between the Arab minority and Jewish majority in Israel. The initiative for a representation of Arab music in Jewish-Israeli culture did not stem from any activity of the official Israeli cultural establishment or any other cultural or political body but it was rather the initiative of an individual (whom other people later joined). The dominant figure designated in this article as the entrepreneur of Arab musical expression on the central stage of Jewish-Israeli culture (Grunfeld) acted out of ideology: he decided to use the Arab music as a means of discourse within the Israeli society between Jews and Arabs, and, of course, as an

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instrument for promoting peace. However, one of our conclusions is that he and Mr Benaya from Jerusalem succeeded in generating change, since they both understood the official Israeli cultural establishment to which they were connected before, and both of them remained a part of this establishment as its producers and advisers. This connection to the cultural establishment allowed them to understand how to succeed in their endeavor to link their initiative to an official cultural body, as well as to private funds. Their connections and knowledge enabled them to obtain the support of the establishment, a financial support without which these projects would not have come to fruition.

An interesting point uncovered by the research is that there are differences in the representation of Arab music between the two institutions in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv presented in this article. The ideological orientation of the Confederation House in Jerusalem today is the promotion of intercultural dialog in a broader sense, including that between the East and West, where Arab music is a part of this dialog. On the other hand, the declared ideology of the Tsavta Club in Tel Aviv sees its central purpose in the socio-political dialog between Jews and Arabs in Israel and the surrounding regions, which means that Arab music is seen as a major tool for the promotion of this dialog.

In our opinion, the issue of the style and repertoire of Arab music performed at the two cultural institutions presented in this paper is highly significant. Having examined the two festival programs, it is evident that both institutions place great emphasis on 'the great' Arab music and its central figures. In conversations with both festival directors, as well as in interviews and conversations with the members of regular concert audiences, it became evident that this is in fact a result of the essentialist concept of Arab music constructed during public discourse. The first such discourse is that people at the Ministry of Culture and those responsible for budgeting musical projects do not understand or discern Arab music and have minimal knowledge of 'the great' Arab music, and the famous figures such as Umm Kulthum, Abdel Wahab, etc. In our opinion, the cultural-political establishment in Israel continues to promote a fixed idea of the concept of Arab music which does not include modern Arab-Israeli music. In that respect, the image of Arab music held by the regular Jewish-Israeli concert audi-



ence is similar to that held by the cultural establishment. The audience, too, expects to hear ‘the great’ Arab music of famous performers because it sees it (as many have also confirmed) as the ‘authentic Arab music’.

On the other hand, we also have Arab-Israeli musicians and composers who demand the recognition of their own local modern music and to be considered as Arab music as well. A detailed look into the festival programs reveals that in the last two or three years, mainly at the Confederation House in Jerusalem, there is a wider stage for new music of Arab Israeli composers.

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CONCLUSION

The article deals with the representation of Arab music in Israel. It highlights the process of the slow change observable in the canon of Arab music in Israel during the last two decades. The changes primarily resulted from the activities of individuals adhering to the ideologies of intercultural dialog and to that of peace between the Arabs and Jews, and the activities of two central cultural institutions. Within the official culture policy changes are visible, predominantly in the gradual entry of Arab music onto Jewish-Israeli cultural stage, as a part of the culture interaction between the Jews and Arabs. An important point raised in this research is the emergence of new concepts in Arab music in Israel, and the struggle of Arab-Israeli musicians for the recognition in Israeli society and culture, claiming its distinctive position beside other Israeli musical cultures.

NOTES

- 1 Philip Bohlman addresses the issue of the Israeli tendency toward the West by explaining the importance Israel assigns to the Eurovision Song Contest: ‘Winning the Eurosong Contest provides Israelis with a means of asserting their Westernness on the stage of world politics’ (Bohlman 2002, 91).
- 2 Similar findings were published in the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s by Regev (1993).
- 3 The term ‘the great twentieth century Arab music’ is used by the researchers of Arab music in Israel, and by Arab-Israeli musicians. It refers to the musical oeuvre of a group of singers and musicians ac-

tive from the 1920s until the 1970s. The best known are the composer and singer Mohamed Abdel Wahab, the composer Zakaria Ahmed, the singer Umm Kulthum, the composer and singer Farid al Atrash, the singer Abdel Halim Hafez, and the singers Ismahani and Warda, all from Egypt. In Lebanon there are the singer Fairuz and the brothers Rahabani. The singers Sabah Fakhri from Syria and Wadi A-Safi from Lebanon can be added to this group. Even though many members of this group are no longer alive the group is still extremely prominent in Arab music. New Arab pop music is clearly based on Eastern musical rhythms and scales, and is, due to the electronic media, extremely widespread. Its center is in Lebanon and Egypt.

- 4 Sapho is considered as one of the most significant figures in the new Arab rock music in France.
- 5 This principle is usually honored, but our research found out that in the recent years, Grunfeld and Tsavta have produced a number of performances which included Jewish-Israeli artists. Grunfeld explained that he occasionally includes Jewish artists as a form of 'embellishment' which serves to enhance the cooperation between Jews and Arabs, but in principle he preserves the rule that Arab music should be performed by Arab-Israeli musicians and not by the Jews.
- 6 The information and analysis of the audiences of these concerts was gathered through participation in most of the concerts since 2000 and informal discussions with people during the concerts. Part of the data came from the internet by gathering information from both institutions' online membership clubs.

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