

Joachim Stutschewsky (1891-1982): Overview of Writings

In the preface to his 1946 book *Musika Yehudit* [Jewish Music], the composer, cellist, pedagogue, and Jewish music scholar Joachim Stutschewsky stated that "An artist's mission is not to speak, but rather to create... for many years I have refused to talk about music... and only here, in Eretz-Israel, under the pressure of several colleagues, I took upon myself to do so...". Despite this, Stutschewsky began to voice his opinion in print about twenty years earlier, while forming his identity as a fervent proponent of Jewish music and continued to do so for several decades.

His corpus of writings focuses on historical, social and analytical aspects of Jewish music. It includes five books, an autobiography and over 380 articles published in various newspapers, journals, and magazines in Europe, Palestine, and Israel. Drafts for speeches, program notes, concert reviews and his widespread correspondence provide a wider perspective. Also included are six methodological volumes for the cello which are still in use today. *Das Violoncellspiel*, accompanied by *Studien zu einer neuen Spieltechnik auf dem Violoncell* and *Neue Etüden-Sammlung* in continuous volumes, were published by Schott between 1927-1938, with several renewed editions in the 1960s, all with added commentary. Several collections of Jewish and Israeli melodies and folksongs compiled and edited by Stutschewsky with introductory texts include the collaborative work *Zemer Am* [Community singing: A Collection of Jewish Musical Folklore] (1945) and the later *120 Chassidic Melodies* (1950) and *Chassidic Tunes* (1970).

In his 1977 *Memoirs* the author reflects on his childhood in Romny, Ukraine, where he was born to a family of Klezmer musicians. He then describes his studies in Leipzig that led to a career as a classical cellist in Europe with an increasing inclination towards composition. His adult life in Palestine, following his immigration from Vienna in 1938 shortly after the *Anschluss*, was characterized by a continuous, relentless struggle for the dissemination, knowledge, appreciation and use of Jewish music. Together with the description of day to day life often expressed in a subjective emotional tone, the *Memoirs* testify to his rich and varied musical world. One conspicuous example is a detailed portrayal of his encounter with several composers of the Second Viennese School as a member of the Kolish Quartet in the 1920s.

Stutschewsky's immersion in social and historical issues began when his stay in Zurich was prolonged due to the outbreak of World War I. Though he still continued his performances with his companion, the violinist Alexander Schaichet (1887-1964), the dramatic events of that period, together with meetings with local Jewish social groups, aroused within him a fundamental dilemma between his identity as an international artist versus Jewish nationalism. The increasing interest in Jewish nationalism among Russian Jews, which led to the establishment of the Society for Jewish Music in Saint Petersburg in 1909 by composers such as Joseph Achron, Alexander Krein, and Yoel Engel, encouraged him to define himself first and foremost as a Jewish musician. This had greatly influenced not only his work as a composer, which was still in its infancy, but also the vast majority of his writings.

While in Vienna, (1924-1938), Stutschewsky began to publish articles about diversified aspects of Jewish music including texts about Jewish publishing houses and several articles devoted to founders and members of the Society of Jewish Music. His tone of writing often sounds like a manifesto, and it is clear that he tries hard to convince his readers of the importance of his subject matter. He was, however, still hesitant about the directions that should be taken, stating in his 1935 "Mein Weg zur jüdischen Musik" that the 'path' is at the moment, only a line, that will hopefully lead towards paving the desired road. He gradually delved further into Jewish music history, specifying various types of folk songs with original texts, translations and musical examples in his 1958 book centered on Musical Folklore of Eastern-European

Jews; but his magnum opus is undoubtedly his book about the lives and music of Jewish folk musicians, the *Klezmorim*.

Upon receiving the prestigious Engel Prize for *Klezmorim*, Stutschewsky explained that his main goal in writing it was to refute the common belief that notable Jewish musicians emerged only at the end of the 19th century. Conversely, he claimed that Jewish musicians were active for hundreds of years in several continents and based his assertion on various sources. He also fiercely objected to past classifications of Klezmer musicians as primitive or dilettante and elaborated on specific musical characteristics and topics such as melodic types, rhythmic patterns, improvisation and ornamentation. Another aspect of the book is the portrayal of notable Klezmer musicians such as the violinists Podhocz (Aharon Moshe Cholodenko) and Stempenyu, who became a protagonist in Sholem Aleichem's famous novel. In his biographical novel on another Jewish musician, the cantor Joel David 'Baalhabes' - *Der Vilner Balebesel* - written ten years later, historical facts and folk legends intertwine.

Stutschewsky's vast correspondence with colleagues, music publishers and music institutions, serve as extremely valuable documents, not only by supplying specific, detailed information about various events, but also by allowing a more personal, intimate portrayal of his life. Most interesting are those letters exchanged with several friendly musicians who shared similar beliefs and were written in an informal tone. Such are the letters between Stutschewsky and his close companion Alexander Schaichet and his wife, the pianist Irma Schaichet in Zurich, or his correspondence with Joseph Achron, who immigrated to the United States in 1925. Stutschewsky and Achron not only exchanged their experiences as contemporary Jewish composers and helped one another to publish musical and verbal texts, but they also debated fundamental questions regarding Jewish music, which they saw as vital for the progress of the Jewish people and the development of cultural life in Eretz-Israel.

Anat VIKS

28/01/2024

For further information:

Stutschewsky's entire estate and the archival collection, including music manuscripts and original texts, mostly in German, are stored at the *Felicja Blumental Music Center & Library*, 26 Bialik St., Tel Aviv.

Published editions of Stutschewsky's research books on Jewish music include:

Mein Weg zur jüdischen Musik, Vienna: Jibneh Musikverlag, 1935.

Musika Yehudit: Mahuta ve'Hitpathuta [Jewish Music, its Essence and Development], Tel Aviv: Newman, 1946.

Folklore Musikali shel Yehudei Mizrah Eiropan [Musical Folklore of Eastern-European Jewry], Tel Aviv: Hemerkaz le'Tarbut ve'Hinuḥ, 1958.

Ha'Klezmerim, Toldotehem, Oraḥ Hayehem vi'Yezirotehem [Klezmorim: Their History, Lifestyle, and Compositions], Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1959.

Der Vilner Balebesel (1816-1850): Legende vegn a Yiddishe-muzikalishn gaon, biographishe derzeilung [The Cantor of Vilna: Legends about a Jewish Musical Genius, A biography], Tel Aviv: Peretz, 1968.

His Autobiography:

Korot Hayav shel Musikay Yehudi: Haim bli Psharot [Memoirs of a Jewish Musician: Life without Compromises], Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1977.

New German editions:

Der Wilnaer Balebessel: Texte und Briefe, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013, edited by Silja Haller, Antonina Klokova, and Sophie Zimmer.

Jüdische Spielleute („Klezmorim“): Geschichte, Lebensweise, Musik, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019, edited by Joachim Klein.

Also, for a selection of his articles, see: *Be'Ma'agalei ha'Musika ha-Yehudit* [On Jewish Music], Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988.

To quote this article: Anat Viks, "Joachim Stutschewsky (1891-1982): Overview of Writings", Dictionary of Composer's Writings, Dictéco [online], ed. E. Reibel, last edited: 28/01/2024, <https://preprod.dicteco2.ihrim.fr/person/64394>.