

UNIT 9

**JEWS, JAZZ, & JEWISH JAZZ**

**PART 2: JEWISH JAZZ**

(Jeff Janeczko and Lorry Black)

סיפורי מוסיקה  
STORIES OF MUSIC



### **Setting the context—a reminder of the introduction to Part 1 of the lesson:**

Since the emergence of jazz in the late 19th century, Jews have helped shape the art form as musicians, bandleaders, songwriters, promoters, record label managers and more. Working alongside African Americans but often with fewer barriers to success, Jews helped jazz gain recognition as a uniquely American art form, symbolic of the melting pot's potential and a pluralistic society. At the same time that Jews helped establish jazz as America's art form, they also used it to shape the contours of American Jewish identity. Elements of jazz infiltrated some of America's earliest secular Jewish music, formed the basis of numerous sacred works, and continue to influence the soundtrack of American Jewish life. As such, jazz has been an important site in which Jews have helped define what it means to be American, as well as Jewish.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- Jazz has been an important platform through which Jews have helped shape the pluralistic nature of American society, as well as one that has shaped understandings of American Jewish identity.
- Jews have played many different roles in the development of jazz, from composers to club owners.
- Though Jews have been involved in jazz through virtually all phases of its development, they have only used it to express Jewishness in a relatively small number of circumstances.
- Jazz has acted as a conduit for the development of relationships between the African American and Jewish communities.
- Because jazz is, at its core, an improvisatory art form, it is very adaptable and particularly well suited to writing one's story into it.

### **Essential Questions**

- Why have Jews been drawn to jazz?
- In what ways is Jews' involvement in jazz similar to or different from Jews' involvement in other genres of music?
- How has jazz facilitated the interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures?
- How have Jews' relationships to jazz changed (or not changed) over time?

## Color Codes Used in the Lesson

This color is used to indicate suggested talking points for the instructor. Feel free to use the text as it is written in the lesson, or to paraphrase as you desire.

 These are questions to be asked of the students.

 Texts highlighted like this are points of information and/or suggestions for the instructor in teaching this lesson.

**THE LESSON**

JEWS, JAZZ, & JEWISH JAZZ  
PART 2: JEWISH JAZZ

## The Lesson

Slide 1

### Recap Part 1

In part one of this lesson we explored how Jewish involvement in jazz music helped to shape a pluralistic society in which Jews would be accepted, as well as how it formed part of the relationship between the Jewish and African American communities. In part two, we'll look at how Jews' relationship with jazz evolved from the 1960s through the present, specifically as it relates to Jewish identity.

### Alternative introduction:

In part one of this lesson we explored Jewish involvement in jazz music.

**? Let's compile a list of the significant ideas discussed in Part 1**

### Part I: Jazz Sacred Services of the 1960s

Introduce Gershon Kingsley

(Biographical information in appendix)

<https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/gershon-kingsley>

Slide 2

Slide 3

The openness of the 1960s led to a lot of musical experimentation, and this extended into the realm of Jewish liturgical music as well. Composers of sacred services and liturgical settings delved into popular music and jazz in search of expressive possibilities. Let's listen to one setting by Gershon Kingsley that uses Moog synthesizers with jazz and rock idioms.

Play "Vay'khullu" from Kinglsey's *Shiru Ladonai* from the Milken Archive

<https://soundcloud.com/milkenarchive/vaykhullu>

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Ask for responses to this music.

**? What do you think?**

**? Is this "liturgy" as you think of the word? Why? Why not?**

**? How do you think a community of worshippers might respond to this piece?**

Introduce Charles Davidson

(Biographical information in appendix)

<https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/charles-davidson/>

Another composer who worked at this time was Charles Davidson, who combined jazz and blues with cantorial and chant traditions. Unlike Gershon Kingsley, Davidson was trained as a cantor and taught for decades at the Jewish Theological Seminary. One of Davidson's first attempts at creating a jazz sacred service was titled *And David Danced Before the Lord*.

**☰ If you have taught Lesson 2: The Art of Prayer, your students have previously met Cantor Davidson and have heard selections from this work. Feel free to mention this and skip playing the example if you like.**

Play "L'kha Dodi" from *And David Danced Before the Lord*

<https://youtu.be/qVQmyYaOBr4>

<https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/swing-his-praises/work/and-david-danced-before-the-lord/>

**☰ Kingsley and Davidson were part of a broader trend of composers exploring jazz's potential as sacred music. Lalo Schifrin composed his Roman Catholic *jazz Mass, Jazz Suite on the Mass Texts* in 1964. Its recording won the 1965 Grammy for best original jazz composition. Duke Ellington wrote the first of his three *Concerts of Sacred Music*, also in 1965. Later in the 1960s, Cantor Raymond Smolover (Charles Davidson's brother-in-law) composed rock services inspired by the music of Bob Dylan.**

Around this same time that Davidson and Kingsley had composed their services, a teen-aged composer and rabbi's son named Jonathan Klein was asked to compose a piece for a Boston Jewish youth convention--the New England Federation of Temple Youth.

Introduce Jonathan Klein

## ☰ Biographical information in appendix

Introduce Jonathan Klein's *Hear O Israel*

<https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/swing-his-praises/work/hear-o-israel/>

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☰ Additional background reading about Klein's *Hear O Israel* may be found through the two links here:

<https://www.herbiehancockhearoisrael.com/>

(Also note: An abridged version of this article originally appeared on Tablet posted April 11, 2018, and may be found in the appendix:

<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/music/257216/making-and-remaking-a-jewish-jazz-masterpiece>)

Play "Blessing Over the Candles" from 1992/2011 recording

<https://youtu.be/p7CkgV8T0mw>

<https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/swing-his-praises/work/hear-o-israel/>

Play "Mi Khamokha" from 1968 recording

<https://youtu.be/ZB-gr5kgMgk>

Play Intro and "Sh'ma" from the 1992/2011 recording

<https://youtu.be/Qa1p-U2oaU0>

<https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/swing-his-praises/work/hear-o-israel/>

☰ The transition from the old recording to the new one occurs at around 1:50. You may want to point this out to the participants.

**Discussion:** Now that we've had the chance to listen to the services written by three different composers (Kingsley, Davidson, and Klein), let's talk about them.

- ❓ Among the different services we listened to, did you think any one of them “worked” best? Why?
- ❓ What did you think of the way the music portrayed the text? Did you find it natural and flowing, stilted and awkward, somewhere in between?
- ❓ What did you think of *Hear O Israel* in comparison to your experiences with Jewish liturgical music more generally?
- ❓ Did you feel the music had a spiritual quality that seemed appropriate to a sacred context?

## Part II: Jewish-inspired Jazz of the 1990s and 2000s

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### Introduce

While Jews remained active in jazz throughout the 1970s and 80s, Jewish jazz remained largely the province of the synagogue. Among the few exceptions are drummer Shelly Manne’s *My Son the Jazz Drummer* (1962) and vibraphonist Terry Gibbs’s 1963 album, *Jewish Melodies in Jazztime*. Both albums featured jazz arrangements of Yiddish and Israeli songs.

- ❓ If we accept Hersch’s argument shared in part one of this lesson that Jewish involvement in jazz in the 1940s and 50s represented attempts to resist complete absorption into the American mainstream, how might we understand the jazz sacred services of the 1960s and early ‘70s?

☰ On one level, they hearken back to the 19th century and the music of the Classical Reform period, when synagogue music was oriented toward demonstrating the compatibility of Jewish and American culture. On another level, they foreshadow the folk-oriented liturgical music of the 1970s that sought to entice young Jews to join or remain engaged with synagogue life through music that spoke to their identities.

Continue By the late 1980s and early 90s Jewish jazz entered a new



phase, one in which the expression of Jewish identity was at its core. One of the primary figures in this phase has been John Zorn.

Introduce John Zorn, Tzadik Records, and Radical Jewish Culture  
(See appendix for further biographical information)

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John Zorn is a contemporary composer and musician of many talents and abilities. He has been one of the most important figures on New York's new music scene for many decades, and is the founder of the Tzadik record label, which he started in the early 1990s to support avant-garde music. In 1995, he started a series on that label called Radical Jewish Culture, which he has described as an attempt to take Jewish music "beyond klezmer." Zorn has also composed a collection of 613 melodies utilizing Jewish modes or scales like *Ahava Raba* and *Misheberakh*, that are used like jazz standards—melodies with a harmonic structure that form the basis for musical improvisation.

Let's listen to some of these more recent examples of musicians incorporating Jewish music into jazz. First, let's hear a song called "Sippur" from Zorn's Masada project.

Play Masada "Sippur" from 'Live in Middleheim'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27EQ3YYYAgc>

Next, we'll hear some traditional folk and liturgical melodies performed by some contemporary jazz musicians.

Introduce Steven Bernstein  
(See appendix for more information from:  
<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/steven-bernstein-evaluating-the-diaspora-series-by-john-kelman.php>)

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Steven Bernstein is a trumpet player and arranger known for forming eclectic groups that bring music of many genres and time periods together. His projects perform music by artists like Stevie Wonder, Prince, Sly and the Family Stone, and James Bond soundtracks in styles

that range from pre-Swing jazz to free improvisation. Between 1999 and 2008, Bernstein put out four albums on John Zorn's Radical Jewish Culture series. Each album explores different aspects of Jewish music through a creatively imagined diaspora lens. This example is his take on the traditional "Chusen Kalah Mazel Tov" performed in a laid back bluesy, soul style.

Play Steven Bernstein's "Chusen Kalah Mazel Tov"

Slide 11

The instructor may wish to play a more traditional version of this piece first as a point of comparison: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrFVVUM4cPA>).

Bernstein's version is available at the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5osBa1oI5ME>

☰ Depending upon the time available, you may wish to choose from between the musicians listed below rather than introducing each artists)

Introduce Paul Shapiro and/or Anthony Coleman

☰ Brief bios of both in appendix

☰ Option 1

**Paul Shapiro** is a New York saxophone player and bandleader who has worked in many facets of jazz and other related musics. He was a founding member of the Brooklyn Funk Essentials in the late 1980s and has done extensive work as a sideman and studio musician. He performs regularly with his Ribs and Brisket Revue project, which performs Swing era repertoire that connects the Jewish and African American experiences of that era. He has contributed three albums to the Radical Jewish Culture series, two of which explore liturgical melodies and chant motifs in a jazz context.

If Shapiro's "Haftorah Prelude" is played, the instructor may wish

to demonstrate the haftorah chant on which Shapiro’s performance is based found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn5MAKU0Us>

Play Paul Shapiro’s “Haftorah Prelude”  
<https://youtu.be/IRH2C1yDRXg>

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Alternatively, use:



### Option 2

**Anthony Coleman** currently teaches contemporary improvisation at the New England Conservatory of Music and has been an important contributor to the New York avant-garde and jazz scenes for many decades. He has created several projects that explore Jewish music through jazz and the avant-garde. Those include the Selfhaters Orchestra, a solo project on the music of Mordechai Gebirtig, and a jazz trio called Sephardic Tinge. The song included in this lesson is their version of “Morenica” (pronounced *more-a-NEEK-ah*) a popular Sephardic wedding song dating to the 17th century.

If Coleman/Sephardic Tinge’s “Morenica” is played, the instructor may want to play the Savina Yannatou performance on which it is based (note that the video is much longer than the song, which lasts only about three minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99vdpn-QgNM>

Play Coleman/Sephardic Tinge’s “Morenica”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBg3NBCDXAI>

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-  Among these different jazz takes on Jewish music, did you think any one of them “worked” best? Why?
-  Why do you think this latest phase of “Jewish jazz” emerged when it did?

### The Israel Connection

Slide 14

Introduce In an interesting development in the relationship between

Jews and jazz, it is important to note the rise in the role of Israeli jazz artists over the last three decades. This is due to a fascinating, reciprocal relationship that has been building between the music scenes of the United States and Israel. Israel has historically had a well-established infrastructure for the study of classical music, both establishing high level conservatories in the country and sending students to conservatories throughout Europe. Similarly, beginning in the late 1980's/early 1990's and fed (in part) by the strength of the political relationship between the US and Israel, a similar relationship developed in the world of jazz.

This development has been evident in UCLA's own backyard! The Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz Performance at UCLA (Formerly the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance at UCLA), is one of the top jazz graduate/fellowship programs in the world. Each of its fellowship cohorts regularly has at least one Israeli student in it who has been trained by either a Monk Institute alumnus or an alumni of other American jazz programs. They are fantastic musicians and add multitudes to the already rich tapestry of musicians that make up the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

Today, many amazing Israeli jazz artists bring a unique musical perspective to the world of jazz, and continue the lineage of Israeli influence in jazz by teaching at conservatories both in the US and Israel. Artists like Anat Cohen, Avishai Cohen, Rafi Malkiel, Anat Fort, and Eli Degibri all bring their own perspectives, influenced by their Israeli backgrounds, to the music.

Listen to a clip from **(Choose 2 from this list):**

1. Avishai Cohen's "Pinzin Kinzin" from the album *Gently Disturbed*
2. Anat Cohen's "Anat's Doina" from the album *Anat Cohen Tentet*
3. Anat Fort's "Tirata Tirata" from the Anat Fort Trio

Discuss

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- ?** What (if any) sonic elements do you hear that sound "Israeli" or "Jewish"?

- ❓ How does this international music relationship reflect a continuation of the ethos of the collaborations described in the first jazz lesson?
- ❓ Why do you think that jazz music has such an enthusiastic audience in Israel?
- ❓ What about Israeli music and culture may contribute to their excitement about jazz?

In these lessons we have explored just a small part of Jews' engagement with jazz over the past 100 years. It seems important to emphasize that this topic is not one-dimensional. Jews engage in jazz—and other kinds of music—for many reasons. But the question of how Jews helped shape jazz and how this, in turn, might shape Jewish American identity is an interesting one. What do you think?