

# TZEDEK, TZEDEK (TASHIR V') TIRDOF:

Music in Doing Justice,  
Part 2

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סיפורי מוסיקה  
STORIES OF MUSIC



## Introduction

The introduction to this lesson is [found at the beginning of Part 1](#).

## Enduring Understandings

- ◆ Peaceful protests for a worthy end, in all forms (marches, sit-ins, etc.), are embedded within American life. Jews have often supported the goals of these marches, and have supported these marches in various ways; music has often been a major component of peaceful protests.
- ◆ Many rituals in Jewish life express hope for a better day wherein human dignity will be upheld. Some of these rituals go further, and give examples of social injustice to motivate us to consider social justice needs today. Many of these rituals include music to educate, inspire, and/or galvanize a wider public.
- ◆ In the entertainment world, Jews have often sought to raise important issues of social justice, educating the public and even galvanizing them to act. Music is often part of this experience.

## Essential Questions

- ◆ What factors and events have helped propel a concern for dignity and civil rights in the United States? What factors and events have weighed against this?
- ◆ What factors and events have helped propel a concern for dignity and civil rights within the American Jewish community? What factors and events operated against this concern?
- ◆ How can the Passover haggadah and seder be reenvisioned in light of specific civil rights (and other social justice) concerns?
- ◆ How does music support and propel social justice efforts?

## Lesson Outline

### [Part 1]

- I. **Prelude/Introduction: The Prophetic Voice (“*Olam Chesed Yibaneh*”;**  
***The Gates of Justice*, IIIb. Chorale)**
- II. **Music and Protest**
  - A. The Women’s Suffrage Procession of 1913 (“*She’s Good Enough to Be Your Baby’s Mother and She’s Good Enough to Vote with You*”)
  - B. Yiddish Culture, Workers Rights, and Economic Justice (“*Arbeter Ring Himnen*”)
  - C. The 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (“*Blowin’ in the Wind*,”  
“*When the Ship Comes In*”)

### III. Ritual and Protest

- A. The Role of Ritual in Doing Social Justice Work
- B. The Freedom Seder (“We Shall Overcome”)
- C. Seder Sisters: The Women’s Seder (“Miriam’s Song”)

### IV. What We’ve Learned Today: Weaving Our Threads Together

### V. Coda/Conclusion of Part 1 (“Freedom: Mi Chamocha”)

#### [Part 2]

### VI. Entr’acte/Introduction (“Somewhere”)

### VII. Performance and Protest

- A. The Concert Stage (“It Ain’t Necessarily So” from *Porgy and Bess*; *The Gates of Justice*, excerpts)
- B. The Broadway Theater (“Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” from *Americana*; “No More” from *Golden Boy*)
- C. The Jazz Venue (“Strange Fruit”)
- D. The Folk Music Revival Performance: Phil Ochs (“Here’s to the State of Mississippi”)

### VIII. Music and Social Justice Havruta

- A. *The Gates of Justice* (excerpts)
- B. “The Eagle and Me” (from *Bloomer Girl*)
- C. “Long Ago, Far Away” (Bob Dylan)

### IX. Contemporary Jewish Music of Social Justice


- A. The Concert Hall (*I Will Not Remain Silent*, Mvt. 2 by Bruce Adolphé)
- B. Broadway (“I Know Where I’ve Been” from *Hairspray* by Marc Shaiman)
- C. Reggae (“Go Down, Moses” by Alan Eder and Friends)
- D. Experimental Hip Hop (“Chapter 319” by clipping.)
- E. Klezmer (“Mermaid Avenue” by Woody Guthrie and The Klezmatics)
- F. Hanukkah (“Light Is Returning”/“*Banu Choshech*” performed by Noah Aronson and Banot)

### X. What We’ve Learned (Weaving Our Threads Together)

### XI. Outro (“One Day” by Matisyahu, performed by Koolulam)

## THE LESSON (continued)

### TITLE SLIDE

**PLAY:** “Somewhere”  (M: [Leonard Bernstein](#) [1918–1990], L: [Stephen Sondheim](#) [1930–2021]) as students arrive and get settled. [**NOTE:** The video is embedded in the second screen.]

Welcome back to this unique, *Stories of Music* exploration of the intersections among Jews, music, and the centuries-long fight for justice for all peoples in the United States. In our first lesson, we explored how Jews and music, through marching and through ritual, played a role in the fight for:

- ♦ womens’ equality (“She’s Good Enough to Be Your Baby’s Mother and She’s Good Enough to Vote with You,” “Miriam’s Song”) and
- ♦ the rights of African Americans (“Blowin’ in the Wind,” “We Shall Overcome”)


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## VI. ENTR’ACTE/INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

### SLIDE 1



As we were settling in, we saw [Ben Platt](#) (b. 1993), accompanied by [Justin Goldner](#) on guitar and [Adele Stein](#) on cello, singing the iconic song “Somewhere,” from 1957 Broadway musical, *West Side Story*, and perhaps known from either the 1961 or the 2021 film versions. [**NOTE:** To explore [Ben Platt’s commitment to Judaism and Jewish values](#), see [here](#).]

### QUESTION:

-  **What makes this song a social justice song?** [**NOTE:** Take 2–3 responses. Some might note the nature of the Broadway show, or that the 1957 Broadway show and the 1961 film version came at a time of the growth of the CRM, et al.]

*West Side Story* is the story of two rival gangs in New York, the immigrant Sharks from Puerto Rico (people of color), and the New York-born Jets (white). The theme of ethnic and racial tension is clear from the opening of the show (the rival gangs’ incursions escalate until the police break it up) and remains so throughout. Choreographer [Jerome Robbins](#) (né Jerome Rabinowitz, 1918–1998) originally proposed in 1949 that the story line present the Irish Catholic Jets against the Jewish Emeralds, highlighting the theme of antisemitism. Indeed, [Arthur Laurents’](#) (1917–2011, né Arthur Levine) original book for the musical was titled, *East Side Story*. [**NOTE:** [On the dynamic between Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein leading to \*West Side Story\*](#), see [here](#).]

### DISCUSS:

-  **What makes Ben Platt’s performance effective?** [**NOTE:** Take 2–3 responses. Answers might single out his phrasing, the sparseness of the instrumentation, most people there understand the provenance of the song, et al.]
-  **Why might Ben Platt or the Grammys have chosen that particular song for performance at the 60th Annual Grammy Awards (January, 2018)?** [**NOTE:** Take 2–3 responses. Answers might include the growing public face of hate in this country (exemplified and accelerated by [the Unite the Right Rally, a white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia in August of 2017](#)), having an openly gay Jew sing the song enhances the message of the song, et al.]

## VII. PERFORMANCE AND PROTEST

Today we focus on the power of performance in social justice work. We will explore how different musical genres and performance modalities have offered composers, performers, and lovers of music an avenue through which to express support and take action in the fight for civil rights.

Entertainment forums have long been vehicles to teach about, advocate for, and galvanize public opinion around issues and concerns of social justice. Whether the audience is invited to participate (for example, by singing along) or not, performances can provide visceral experiences for the attendees.

We will explore four such entertainment arenas: the concert stage, the Broadway theater, the jazz venue, and the American Folk Music Revival (AFMR) concert, and Jewish involvement within each.

### VII. A. The Concert Stage

Social justice, through performance, happens in a number of ways. One is through representation, making sure that groups are not only served, but have a voice. Another is through collaboration, ensuring more factual story-telling and deeper artistic work.

#### VII. A. a. *Porgy and Bess* by [George Gershwin](#) (1898–1937)

*Porgy and Bess* is often considered the first great American opera, and helps begin our conversation about representation and collaboration. George Gershwin (né Jacob Gershwine) approached [Dubose Heyward](#) (1885–1940) about adapting his 1925 novel *Porgy* into an opera. He received a commission in 1930 by the [Metropolitan Opera](#) (New York City) to write a grand American opera. He wrote much of the opera in South Carolina (the story’s setting), drawing inspiration from [the Gullah people](#). The work premiered on October 10, 1935.

- ◆ Gershwin frequented the Yiddish theater in his youth, running errands and appearing on stage as an extra. He took to playing the piano at age 10. While far from halachically inclined, his mother always considered the household Orthodox. [**NOTE:** For more on this, see [Resource Guide](#), Works Consulted, Gurock: 2000.]
- ◆ Gershwin spoke on multiple occasions on the Jewish quality of his music. [**NOTE:** For an [exploration of the Jewishness of Gershwin’s music](#), see [here](#).]
- ◆ *Porgy and Bess* “represents Gershwin’s most effective mixture of musical elements: folk (blues, spirituals, gospel), popular (blues, jazz, Tin Pan Alley), and classical (the recitatives, the use of the academic fugue and canonic techniques, the aria, the leitmotif).” [**NOTE:** Standifer, James. “[The Complicated Life of Porgy and Bess](#).” *Humanities* 18:6 (Nov–Dec, 1997).]
- ◆ Gershwin (and Heyward) insisted on having African American characters, from lead roles to the chorus, be portrayed only by African American performers, a brave artistic choice and demand, given that the Metropolitan Opera’s doors themselves were closed to black performers at the time, and given that this would be the first major production on Broadway so casted. Indeed, Al Jolson had previously sought to gain the rights to Heyward’s novel *Porgy*, with actors in blackface, to be written by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

- ◆ The original production ran for 124 performances and starred [Todd Duncan](#) (1903–1998), a baritone who was the first African American to sing with a major American opera company ([New York City Opera](#)), and [Anne Brown](#) (1912–2009), a 20-year old student, the first African American vocalist admitted to Juilliard.)

### DISCUSS:

Gershwin risked a great deal in his career and life for *Porgy and Bess*. One might argue that he had everything to lose and nothing to gain. Surely this was a case not just of passion, but his commitment to telling the story of a subcommunity that had no voice and no representation.

- ❓ **When is it “worth it” to risk everything to help promote *tzedeK*, justice in the world?**

### Pair Share:

- ❓ **Have you ever taken a risk for a social justice cause? If so, please share that moment, its circumstances, and how it may have shaped you or transformed you. If not, is there a cause for which you might be willing to take some amount of risk? What might that be? If you feel you just could not take a risk for a cause, please share your major concerns that might lead you to this choice (e.g. my family needs me).**

- ◆ Many theaters at the time did not have mixed seating. Performers insisted that they would not perform unless this changed, helping move the theater community toward integration.
- ◆ The opera has also historically received a mixed reception among African Americans, some of whom found the depictions of African American life stereotypical, even demeaning. This perspective grew during the years of the CRM.
- ◆ *Porgy and Bess* has been reevaluated. Its stature and status have continued to gain broad acceptance and acclaim for its sympathetic slice-of-life portrayal of a certain subcommunity; its use of a variety of African American musical traditions, its synthesis of European operatic traditions; and its insistence on sharing and shining the spotlight on African American classically-trained singers. [For a thoughtful perspective [on the delicate racial issues involved, see here.](#)]
- ◆ The opera is also notable for its three dimensional portrait of Porgy as a disabled person who takes in and cares for Bess, a fallen woman. They are redeemed through love, only to have it slip away. The realism here derives from Heyward, who contracted polio at age 18 (his right arm and hand were permanently affected), typhoid at age 20, and pleurisy one year later. Nonetheless, many productions have shied away from the depiction of a disabled person living with independence, ingenuity, and power, who finds love with a beautiful woman. [For more [about this under-discussed element of ability in \*Porgy and Bess\*, see here.](#)]

**DISCUSS:** [Instructor should choose from the questions below which discussion(s) to have.]

- ❓ **Gershwin and Heyward were white and, therefore, outsiders to the experience of African Americans, even if empathetic. Can artists properly represent communities outside their own adequately? Should artists attempt to do so? Does it matter what form of art (e.g. is composing different from painting)?**

- ?** The Broadway musical *Hamilton* had colorblind casting. Can (and should) people of one race portray people of another race? Does it matter if the character they portray is historical or not? [Sarah Silverman](#) recently used the term “Jewface” for the practice of casting non-Jews in roles of Jewish characters [e.g. Felicity Jones as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg]. Can (and should) only Jews play Jewish roles? [See here for [a counter to Silverman’s usage by MaNishtanah, an African American Orthodox rabbi and activist.](#)]
- ?** How often have you seen strong disabled characters depicted in the performing arts? If so, what was the work? Was the character realistic, an archetype, or a stereotype? If you have not, why do you think this is?

**Song:** “It Ain’t Necessarily So” (M: George Gershwin; L: [Ira Gershwin](#) [1896–1983])

**SLIDE 5**

- ◆ This cynical song is sung by the character Sportin’ Life (based on the persona of Cab Calloway) at the picnic on Kiawah (spelled “Kittiwah” in the opera) Island. Sportin’ Life tests the reactions of the church-going residents of Catfish Row with this irreverent number that suggests that some stories in the Bible may not be true.
- ◆ The ensemble joins Sportin’ Life in the scat-sound responses, giving the effect of a mock-revival number. The music alternates from a blues tempo to a rousing gospel one.
- ◆ In the original 1935 production, Sportin’ Life was played by [John W. Bubbles](#) (1902–1986), father of rhythm tap and one-half of the “Buck and Bubbles” duo. The duo became the first African Americans artists to appear on television anywhere in the world (November 2, 1936, for the BBC).
- ◆ In the context of the libretto, doubt is cast on the Bible’s veracity by the lyrics. Yet, let us consider that, in the context of the performance, doubt on the Bible’s veracity is directed to the audience, most often composed of white Americans. While no evidence proves an intent by the writers, consider that racism has often been religion-based (with the Bible wielded as a proof-text). Perhaps this song challenges opera-goers’ (and those listening to recorded versions) own beliefs, including those about race.

**PLAY:** [It Ain’t Necessarily So](#)  (0:00–3:23)

This version is from the 2019 Metropolitan Opera production. The character Sportin’ Life was played to great acclaim by [Frederick Ballentine](#).

#### DISCUSS:

- ?** How would you describe the music? [What genre? What culture?]
- ?** How do the words interact with the music?
- ?** Sportin’ Life’s musical sermon questions the veracity of stories in the Bible. What do we do with texts that we find inaccurate? To what degree is faith built upon historical facts and scientific evidence? What purpose might the Tanakh have in presenting these stories? How do we moderns glean meaning — spiritual, moral and psychological — from them?

## VII. A. b. *Gates of Justice* (1969) by [Dave Brubeck](#) (1920–2012)

SLIDE 6

Many western art music (classical) and jazz composers have taken on the challenge of supporting intercultural dialogue and the fight for equality. In a fascinating example of intercultural collaboration, Dave Brubeck, under commission from the Central Conference of American Rabbis, sought to reignite dialogue that had once existed between the Jewish and African American communities by blending both musical genres in a single epic piece.

The perceived bond between Jews and African Americans, long lauded by the Jewish community, had frayed and was starting to break down by 1969. This became palpable after the assassination of MLK, in 1968. Leadership in both communities became increasingly fragmented, antisemitic intimations started emerging from some Black groups; and mainstream Jewish commitment to the CRM appeared to be fading, especially as the focus of the struggle spread from the South to encompass northern cities (where many more Jews actually lived). The pursuit of common goals and mutual support could no longer be assumed. With a clear leadership vacuum, a wedge emerged between elements of the Jewish and African American communities.

Jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck was known for his anti-racism. In 1960, he famously turned down a lucrative offer to tour colleges in the South because they required that he replace his black bassist, Eugene Wright, with a white musician. And Brubeck's musical *The Real Ambassadors* had Louis Armstrong, Carmen McRae and others singing lyrics by [his wife, Lola](#) (1923–2014), that pointedly tackled racism and imperialism. [**NOTE:** For more on this episode, see Keith Hatschek, *The Reel Ambassadors: Dave and Lola Brubeck and Louis Armstrong Challenge Segregation*, University Press of Mississippi, 2022. For a [reappraisal of Brubeck's legacy](#), see [here](#).]

Both Dave Brubeck and Lola (who worked alongside him on the text) expressed a deep desire to demonstrate musically the concept of a “*Brotherhood of Man*”; a universal humanity through which we are all connected. [**NOTE:** [Lola speaks more about this here](#).]

- ◆ According to Brubeck, in this work the cantor, a tenor, sings melodies rooted in a Hebraic mode, and represents the prophetic voice of Jewish tradition.
- ◆ The African American lead, a baritone, sings melodies that stem from the blues and spiritual traditions, and symbolizes contemporary humankind and a reminder to members of all faith traditions that hopes and mandates are yet to be fulfilled.

While the commissioners of the work had the best of intentions, it is important to note that the initial reception in the African American community was, at best, lukewarm, indicated by the lack of coverage in any African American press. Consider why this may have been the case: all indications were that this was an endeavor of the Jewish community and Dave Brubeck. While musically this may have been an experiment in hybridity, the African American community was less a part of the creation of the project, and more a musical consideration by including the African American soloist and African American musical styles.



## DISCUSS:

- ❓ Hearing this background, what steps might the Jewish commissioner of *The Gates of Justice* have taken along the way that might have gotten a better response to the project?
- ❓ What might we learn from this in our own efforts to promote *tzedek* by creating an effective intercommunity unification project, music or otherwise?
  - ◆ The work straddles the musical worlds of jazz and Western art music (classical), a style referred to as “Third Stream.”
  - ◆ The work fuses classical and jazz elements.
  - ◆ Additionally, Brubeck makes extensive use of two unique styles not often harnessed in jazz or classical music: traditional Eastern European *chazzanut* (cantorial music) and African American spirituals.
  - ◆ Brubeck uses these styles in conjunction with a variety of texts to tell the story of how African Americans, Jews, and all peoples are interconnected.

## CONSIDER:

- ❓ When do you hear the cantorial tenor (here, [Cantor Alberto Mizrahi](#))? When do you hear the African American baritone (here, [Kevin Deas](#))? How do they relate to each other?
- ❓ Do you hear the interaction between jazz and Western art music?

SLIDE 7

**PLAY:** at least two of the following clips

I, “[Lord, The Heavens Cannot Contain Thee](#)” 

IIIa, “[Open the Gates](#)” 

IVa, “[Except the Lord Build the House](#)” 

IX, “[How Glorious is Thy Name](#)” 

## Pair Share:

- ❓ Discuss your initial reactions to the music. Did anything strike you as interesting? Surprising? Did you feel the different styles went together? Any other observations?

## DISCUSS:

- ❓ How would you characterize the interaction between jazz and Western art music?
- ❓ How would you characterize the relationship of the cantorial tenor to the African American baritone?
- ❓ Do the music and voices help support Brubeck’s stated goal of the work “to re-establish the perceived bond between Jews and African Americans”? Please explain.

## VII. B. The Broadway Theater

SLIDE 8

Broadway served as another area of performance but which reached a different sector of the public. Jews had been involved in Broadway productions on all levels since its early days, perhaps most prominently in the songwriting. [NOTE: For more on [prominent Jewish songwriters in musical theater](#), see [here](#).] Advancing the societal good was not always prominent, but certainly present and noteworthy. Here we look at several examples of the intersection of Jewish songwriting for Broadway and the commitment to social justice concerns.

### VII. B. a. SONG: “[Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?](#)” from *Americana*

SLIDE 9

(Music: [Jay Gorney](#) [1896–1990]; Lyrics: [Yip Harburg](#) [1896–1981])

- ◆ “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” was written for the third incarnation of the Broadway [revue](#) *Americana* in 1932 (the first two were in 1926 and 1928, respectively). It was sung by vaudeville star Rex Weber and a male chorus as they waited in a breadline.
- ◆ Jay Gorney (né Abraham Jacob Gornetzky, in Bialystok) always claimed the melody came from a Russian-Jewish melody, possibly a lullaby, that his mother sang to him in his childhood. [NOTE: Gottlieb: 2004, p. 138 (See [Resource Guide](#), Works Consulted) suggests the Yiddish song “*Lebedik Gevandert*” may be the background.]
- ◆ Gorney and Harburg had grown up in the Yiddish culture of the Lower East Side. As we have seen, that culture channeled Jewish messianic hopes for a better world into one’s economic and/or political life, into the doing of *tzedek*. [NOTE: For more [on the role of Jewish hope and, including how it motivated Gorney and Harburg’s \(and others’\) work](#), see [here](#). Similarly in his TV series *The Story of the Jews*, historian Sir Simon Schama speaks of how the Jewish spirit is embodied in the belief that faith can defeat violence and cruelty.]
- ◆ The song was deemed too serious for the usually escapist nature of revues and was nearly cut, particularly since 1932 was the low point of the [Great Depression](#) (unemployment had soared to over 24%). Yet audiences immediately seized on the gripping number.
- ◆ Attempts were made to ban the song from the Broadway show and, shortly thereafter, from radio play (accounts suggest both the Federal government and major business interests were involved), but people were hearing of it anyway, due to popular recordings of it by Bing Crosby, Al Jolson, and Rudy Vallee (all covered in 1932).
- ◆ It became the unofficial theme song of the Depression era, but managed to retain its potency through the decades, a plea for the dignity of workers and economic justice.
  - In 1985 [Tom Waits](#) sang a slightly revised version of the song as an anthem for the homeless and unemployed.
  - In 1987 it became the theme song for the National Coalition of the Homeless.
  - It was sung by [George Michael](#) in a NetAid (now part of Mercy Corps) concert (10/9/1999) for their [Jubilee 2000 campaign](#) to end world debt by the year 2000.

We shall shortly listen to the song. Here’s what lays behind some of the imagery:

- ◆ “**Once I built a railroad**” — By the 1920s, an extensive network of railroads crisscrossed the United States, symbolizing the country’s industrial strength.
- ◆ “**Once I built a tower**” — In 1931, work on the Empire State building was completed, and was celebrated as symbolic of the country’s engineering and technical prowess.


- ◆ **“A half a million boots went slogging through hell”** — Actually, over 2 million Americans served the U.S. military in Europe during WWI (1914–1918).
- ◆ **“Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”** — Lyricist Yip Harburg went to the bread lines to prepare for this song. This line is what he heard as soon as he approached.

**PLAY:** “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”

[**NOTE:** Instructor should choose one of the following settings.]

[Bing Crosby \(1932\)](#)  is the earliest recorded version.

[Peter Yarrow \(1975\)](#)  is from Jewish activist and member of Peter, Paul and Mary

[The Con Men \(2015\)](#)  is in [barbershop music](#), a style that scholars suggest harks to Black male southern quartets of the 1870s.

### DISCUSS:

- ❓ How does the singer sound to you? (Bitter? Proud? Confused? Desperate? Something else?)
- ❓ Who is the implied person telling their personal story and asking for a dime? [The singer could be your fellow citizen in America, where citizens could live out their dreams. Yet the “every person” worked hard, won praise, went to war, saved the world, and is left resorting to begging even to get one dime to feed a family.]
- ❓ Yip Harburg’s lyrics develop from a distant “they” to the personal “I” to a connection with the listeners directly — “you.” What purpose might he have had in mind?

### Pair Share:

- ❓ The protagonist of the song was someone feeling left out or left behind during the Depression. In a twenty-first century context, who might be the protagonist? How do you discern this from the words?

[**NOTE:** If the instructor asked the class to share a Jewish prayer or passage from our tradition that speaks in some way about a current social justice concern, this might be a good place to show the list, or have a pair share, and/or sing/chant one of the prayers together.]

### VII. B. b. SONG: “No More” from *Golden Boy*

**SLIDE 10**

(1964, Music: [Charles Strouse](#) [b. 1928]; Lyrics: [Lee Adams](#) [b. 1924])

Background on *Golden Boy*:

- ◆ Brooklyn-born Jewish producer Hillard (“Hilly”) Elkins sought out [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) (1925–1990) to star in a revised version of the socially conscious [Clifford Odets’](#) play, *Golden Boy*. Odets’ earlier play *Awake and Sing!* has been described as “the earliest quintessential Jewish play outside the Yiddish theater.” [**NOTE:** Odet’s father changed the family surname from Gorodetsky. Both parents were Russian Jewish immigrants.]
- ◆ Davis was a popular African American performer who had converted to Judaism in 1961.)
- ◆ In the original play, the protagonist Joe is an Italian-American from an immigrant family on his way to becoming a surgeon, so he could save the lives of African Americans that white doctors routinely ignored. He turns to boxing to pay his way through college. In the musical version, Joe is embittered due to the constant prejudice he encounters. His relationship with Lorna

develops into an affair with a full-blown kiss. His brother works for [CORE](#) (the Congress of Racial Equality).



- ◆ The interracial relationship depicted, particularly with a kiss, created quite a stir. *Golden Boy's* star, Sammy Davis, Jr., was married to Swedish movie star May Britt (b. 1934, also a convert to Judaism) at the time. Davis and the show received numerous bomb and death threats due to its themes as well as the interracial kiss.
- ◆ The show ran for 569 performances, yet lost money, since the producers had to pay for security to protect the leading performers.

On Sammy Davis, Jr.:

- ◆ Davis served in the U.S. army in WWII. He was constantly bullied by white comrades. His nose was permanently flattened due to the abuse. In his career, he often was forced to stay at “Black-only hotels.”
- ◆ As a child, Davis was enthralled by the Yiddish theater. In 1953, due to Davis’ interest in Judaism, [Eddie Cantor](#) (1892–1964, né Isidore Itzkowitz) gave him a mezuzah. The one time he did not wear it, he got into a car accident, in which he lost his eye. Davis began studying Judaism, finalizing his conversion in 1961. His conversion was often denigrated by both Jews and blacks. [**NOTE:** For more [on the hate his conversion generated, see here.](#)]
- ◆ Nonetheless, Davis remained committed to Judaism. He asserted that he found in it “strength and dignity.” [**NOTE:** For more [on Davis’ commitment to Judaism, see here.](#)]
- ◆ When he married Britt the threats to the couple were such that the venue was changed from Temple Israel of Hollywood to Davis’ home in Las Vegas. A 1958 poll showed that only 4% of Americans approved of interracial marriage. Indeed, due to the marriage Davis’s invitation to perform at JFK’s inauguration was withdrawn.
- ◆ Davis experienced both racism and antisemitism throughout his career. He was an activist in responding to both.
- ◆ His civil rights activism brought him to the March on Washington in 1963. He was given time off from *Golden Boy* for various civil rights activities, including to join the successful March from Selma to Montgomery (March 21, 1965). At that march hundreds of African Americans donned kippot, which they called “freedom caps,” in solidarity with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and other rabbis marching.
- ◆ When Sammy Davis, Jr. returned, he hosted [Broadway Answers Selma](#). The event raised over \$150,000 for the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith to support the families of those targeted by white supremacists, as well as the [SCLC \(Southern Christian Leadership Conference\)](#), [CORE](#), and [SNCC \(Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee\)](#).

Here is “No More,” a song influenced by gospel music that comes late in the second act.

**PLAY:** Play one of the following versions of “No More”:

- 1) [Audio of Sammy Davis, Jr., and the original cast.](#) 
- 2) [Video of a 2007 Carnegie-Mellon production.](#) 

## DISCUSS:

- ❓ How would you summarize the message or theme of this song?
- ❓ How does the music contribute to the message?

## Pair Share:

- ❓ Here the struggles of the protagonist Joe seem to overlap with the struggles of African Americans. To what degree do you think the political is personal and the personal is political?

## Summary

Our time for this session is running out. When we return next time, we'll talk about Jews in jazz and the AFMR. Let's take a few moments to reflect. [**NOTE:** Instructor may wish to invite the cohort to bring in next session, send to the instructor, or place on a prepared class Google doc a Jewish song, prayer, or quote that aligns with our prophets' vision of a better day and a better world, perhaps accompanied by a short 2–3 sentence explanation of why they chose that song (i.e. what it means to them). The instructor could then display and discuss these next time. Alternatively, class participants could do this as a pair share.]

[**NOTE:** The instructor should catalog responses to the following in a place where all can see, and then add to those responses from the following bullet points, particularly when it was a focus of the instructor. Instructor may wish to have students take a few minutes to write down their thoughts before having students offer responses.]

- ❓ **What is something you have learned today about the Jewish community, music, and/or social justice — or the intersection of any of these?**
  - ◆ Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* was important for bringing one African American sub-community's culture to light.
  - ◆ *Porgy and Bess* and Dave Brubeck's *The Gates of Justice* presented a variety of African American musical forms.
  - ◆ *Porgy and Bess* also pioneered a positive lead role for a disabled person.
  - ◆ Jewish music served as the background for compositions and performances that told stories of African Americans ("It Ain't Necessarily So") or promoted social justice directly (Lena Horne's performance of "Now").
  - ◆ Reacting to the murder of MLK, *The Gates of Justice* was an important response to the decline in the relationship between Jewish and African Americans.
  - ◆ The experience of *The Gates of Justice* may provide an object lesson for having parties represented at the creative table if we're telling their stories in performance.
  - ◆ "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" (by Gorney and Harnick) remains a plea for workers rights and economic justice.
  - ◆ "No More" from *Golden Boy* is a startling cry to the American white community that equality cannot be symbolic or assumed — all relationships must be based on mutual worth.

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## OUTRO:

SLIDE 11

As we conclude this session, we leave you with a song you know well but haven't heard quite like this. Singer, actress and civil rights activist [Lena Horne](#) (1917–2010) wanted to bring her activism into her performing, especially after taking part in the August, 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Musical theater legends [Jule Styne](#) (1905–1994) and the team of [Betty Comden](#) (1917–2006) and [Adolph Green](#) (1914–2002) wrote the song “Now” for Horne, taking the quintessential Jewish song, “[Hava Nagila](#).” In doing so, they transformed the song from a joyous song of celebration of life to a stinging protest. Horne premiered the song in a series of benefit concerts at Madison Square Garden in October, 1963, which she co-headlined with Frank Sinatra. Shortly thereafter her recorded version appeared on her album *Here's Lena Now*, with the word “now” in the title hinting at this song, as well as to the idea that when it comes to *tzedek*, social justice, there is no time like now.

**PLAY:** “[Now](#)” (Music: Jule Styne; Lyrics: Betty Comden and Adolph Green)

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## BREAK

SLIDE 12

**PLAY:** “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught” (Music: Richard Rodgers [1902–1979]; Lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II [1895–1960]) as people enter, choosing either

- a) [William Tabbert, accompanied by Richard Rodgers; introduced by Oscar Hammerstein II](#)  or
- b) [Asia Society performance \(featuring Kessay Chan and Ivy Hung\)](#) 

Welcome back! As you entered you heard “[You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught](#)” from the Broadway show *South Pacific*. In the show, when Nellie discovers that Emile’s children are of mixed-race lineage, she decides she cannot marry him. Lt. Cable, unable to overcome his own prejudices and marry Liat, bitterly comments on the racism he and Nellie were raised to internalize. This song comes late in the second act, so the show’s message of acceptance gets anchored in this short (about 1.5 minutes) plea for all of us to examine our own biases, often based on what we picked up in childhood.

[Rodgers and Hammerstein](#) risked a lot by placing racial prejudice and interracial marriage front and center. They were counseled repeatedly in tryouts to remove the song. One legislator who saw the show asserted that “a song justifying interracial marriage was implicitly a threat to the American way of life.” Indeed, a bill was introduced to outlaw any entertainment that had, in their words, “an underlying philosophy inspired by Moscow.” The musical opened in 1949 at the height of the [Second Red Scare](#), in which anti-Communism and antisemitism were often conflated. Rodgers and Hammerstein were both proud Jews and anti-racists. Hammerstein, for example, was a fundraiser for the Jewish Federation and a vice-president of the NAACP; Rodgers chaired a United Jewish Appeal fundraiser. They knew that they would receive pushback, but as they carefully explained at the time, they decided that *tzedek*, justice, had to trump profits. They both combatted bias and stereotyping, and envisioned the U.S. more as a “salad bowl” (multiculturalism) than a “melting pot” (unicultural homogeneity). So, in *South Pacific*, they elevated the limited theme of racial acceptance in James Michener’s eponymous novel and placed it front and center. [**NOTE:** See the video offered here, sung by [William Tabbert](#) (1919–1974), who originated the role of Lt. Cable on Broadway. For [the antisemitism of the U.S. government’s anti-Communist activities, see here.](#)]

For Hammerstein, combatting racism was personal. His brother-in-law, Jerry Watanabe, was interned as a Japanese national at Ellis Island after the U.S. entered WWII. The Hammerstein's took in Watanabe's wife and daughter, who could not get into a school until they enrolled her under the surname "Blanchard." The Hammerstein's join with James Michener and Pearl Buck in helping to create Welcome House, the country's first interracial, international adoption agency, begun specifically to place Amerasian children in American homes. [NOTE: For more on this, see Purdum: 2018, 159 in [Resource Guide](#), Works Consulted.]

The song still retains its potency. The song title has been a popular entry in the [Race Card Project](#), which invites people to consider the word "race," and write a six-word sentence that distills their thoughts, observations, and/or experiences. The Asia Society, which works to bridge cultural differences, reworked the song on the one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd, using black-and-white backdrops to promote understanding here in the United States [NOTE: See the video offered here.]

### DISCUSS:

- ❓ [If using the Asia Society performance] Notice the change of words (approved by the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization). How do these words affect the song's emphasis? How do the background images affect the message of the song?
- ❓ The song reminds us that all of us picked up the messages we heard and saw as children. How do we recognize and overcome our own prejudices? [NOTE: For an analytical approach, see [here](#). For some practical suggestions, see [here](#).]
- ❓ Take the race card challenge. What six-word message might you give? [NOTE: Instructor could assign this at the end of the previous class, and have students present here.]

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## VII. C. The Jazz Venue

SLIDE 13

Jazz was one area of entertainment which pushed hard to promote and model racial harmony. While at its core jazz comes from the heart of the African American experience, Jews were highly involved in all types of roles, in a proportion higher than their numbers in the population. [Sophie Tucker](#) (1887–1966), a Jewish vaudeville star, was close friends with singer and actress [Ethel Waters](#) (1896–1977) and [Mamie Smith](#) (1891–1946), the first African American singer to make blues recordings. Tucker incorporated jazz into her performances, and was one of the first entertainers to bring jazz to white audiences. Waters, in turn, brought Jewish music, like "Eli, Eli" to black audiences. [NOTE: For more on how "Eli, Eli" became an anthem for African Americans, see [here](#).]

Later, in the eras of swing and bebop, Jewish and African American band leaders and musicians worked together. So, for example, in 1938 band leader and clarinetist [Benny Goodman](#) (1909–1986) hired arranger Fletcher Henderson, pianist Teddy Wilson and vibraphonist Lionel Hampton for his quartet. Also in 1938, [Artie Shaw](#) (1910–2004, born Arthur Jacob Arshawsky) became the first white bandleader to hire an African American singer, Billie Holiday, full-time to tour the segregated U.S. South. When Shaw's family moved from New York's Lower East Side to New Haven, Connecticut when he was seven, he experienced antisemitism. He recalls then, at age eight, being committed to being Jewish, and not "othering" others. As he wrote, "From that moment on...I was a Jew, whatever that meant, and a Jew I would remain until the day I died." [NOTE: For more on [Goodman's 1938 concert at Carnegie Hall, the first integrated performance](#), see [here](#). For an analysis of [Shaw, including his anti-racism as opposed](#)



to Goodman's, [see here](#). For Shaw's epiphany on his Jewish identity, see his memoir, *The Trouble with Cinderella* (McKinleyville, CA: Fithian Press, 1992, p. 25; quoted in Sidran: 2012, pp. 115–116 (See [Resource Guide](#), Works Consulted). Holiday is discussed below in connection with "Strange Fruit."]

### DISCUSS:

- ❓ When Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw hired African Americans, many may have thought they were engaging in "affirmative action." They certainly were aware that hiring African Americans was not culturally sanctioned. Should one's minority status be considered in hiring (or in other areas)? If so, when and to what degree?
- ❓ We often find contemporary discussions of [cultural representation](#). When cultures are represented, they are seen, and gain not merely exposure but power. How does a minority get represented in the culture at large? At which point do such efforts become exploitative or otherwise ill-considered?

### Pair Share:

- ❓ In your own Jewish communities to what degree are all sub-communities represented and have a voice?

**SONG:** "Strange Fruit" by [Lewis Allan](#) (pen name of [Abel Meeropol](#)) (1903–1986)

**SLIDE 14**

- ◆ Meeropol grew up in the Bronx (NY), absorbing the Yiddish environment where progressive and radical social and political ideas were widely espoused. He saw a connection between antisemitism and racism, and it formed the subject of his first poem, entitled "I Am a Jew." He particularly saw lynching as anathema.
- ◆ The [Equal Justice Initiative](#) has documented 4,075 lynchings of African Americans between 1877–1950. (**NOTE:** For the [EJI's full report on lynchings in America](#), [see here](#).) The years 1933–1936 actually saw an uptick in the number. Many lynchings were tolerated and/or ignored by law enforcement, and, shamefully, many of them were events when white Americans gathered to celebrate.
- ◆ In 1936, a Jewish high school teacher named Abel Meeropol saw a [photograph of the lynching of African American teenagers Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith](#) in Indiana. [**NOTE:** More than 300 lynchings took place outside of the South.] Meeropol was deeply shaken and, remembering the pogroms in Europe that his family faced, he wrote the poem, "Bitter Fruit" under his pen name, Lewis Allan. It was published in the teachers' union journal *The New York Teacher* in 1937, and, later, in the Marxist journal, *The New Masses*. [**NOTE:** For a [documentary film on "Strange Fruit," see here](#).]
- ◆ Meeropol set his poem to music. He and his wife Anne sang the song at protest rallies with African American singer Laura Duncan, including at Madison Square Garden.
- ◆ [Billie Holiday](#) (1915–1959, née Eleonora Fagan) was convinced to sing the song at the [Cafe Society](#), New York's first integrated cabaret (founded in 1938 by Barney Josephson, a Jewish immigrant from Latvia, 1902–1988). She received a thunderous ovation. "Strange Fruit" became identified with Holiday; she closed every performance with it. [**NOTE:** In 1936, Lithuanian Jewish immigrant Max Gordon (1903–1989) opened the Village Vanguard, a tiny hole in the wall that became the world's most famous jazz club. Both wanted a club that maintained a *heimish* (homey), non-elitist atmosphere, where white and Black artists could play together.]



- ◆ Columbia Records, Holiday’s label, was too fearful to record it, but allowed her to go elsewhere. She recorded the song with [Commodore Records](#), an independent, alternative jazz label. *New York Post* columnist Samuel Grafton wrote: “If the anger of the exploited ever mounts high enough in the South, it now has its ‘*Marseillaise*.’” The 1939 recording sold over one million copies.
- ◆ Lynching did not become a federal crime until March 29, 2022, when President Joe Biden signed the [Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act](#) into federal law.

**PLAY:** [“Strange Fruit”](#)  performed by Billie Holiday

**DISCUSS:**

- ? Why do you think lynchings of people of color persisted into our own day? Why do you think it was so difficult to galvanize support for an anti-lynching law?
- ? How does the music support the text?
- ? How does Billie Holiday’s singing bring out depth to Meeropol’s words?

**EXTENSION IDEA:** John Legend’s (né John Roger Stephens) performed “Strange Fruit” in the 2009 documentary feature film *The People Speak*. It employed dramatic and musical performances of the letters, diaries, and speeches of everyday Americans. In doing so, the film gave permanent voice to those who, by insisting on equality and justice, spoke up for social change throughout U.S. history. Further, the film also illustrates the relevance of this to today’s society. The film is co-directed and co-written by historian [Howard Zinn](#) (1922–2010), and was inspired by his works, *A People’s History of the United States* and *Voices of a People’s History of the United States*. Zinn’s social activism grew out of the immigrant Yiddish culture in which he was raised. Like most Jews of that era, his family kept kosher and major holy days. He considered his Jewish identity as one source of his civil rights and social justice activism and scholarship.

The selection of “Strange Fruit” for this movie and John Legend’s performance demonstrate the enduring importance of this iconic song.

**PLAY:** [“Strange Fruit”](#)  performed by John Legend (b. 1978)

**VII. D. [The American Folk Music Revival Concert](#)**

**SLIDE 15**

Folk music may loosely be understood as music of the folk, music that is rooted in a culture, music with songs the composers of which are unknown, no longer remembered, or seemingly less significant personally than their music. The AFMR, as a commercial phenomenon, is often associated with the career of The Weavers, formed in 1948. It reached its height in the 1960s; by then its music came to focus more on concerns of social justice.

As with jazz, Jews were very involved with the AFMR, and in many ways. To cite just one example, [Kenneth S. Goldstein](#) (1927–1995) was a prime figure in the movement, serving as Folk Music Director for Stinson Records, Folkway Records, and Riverside Records, and also served as Folk and Blues Director for Prestige Records. He also produced over 500 records, some of them still hailed as milestones. His Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania was the first they ever awarded in the field of folklore. He was a special assistant on folklore to the Smithsonian Institution and the National Endowment for the Arts. He served in leading positions of the American Folklore Society, including president.

### **Phil Ochs** (1940–1976)

**SLIDE 16**

- ◆ The self-styled “singing journalist” was the voice of protest for the CRM in his short life.
- ◆ Born in El Paso, Texas, Ochs hails from a middle-class Jewish background. [**NOTE:** No studies to date have assessed the link between his Jewishness and his music, but J.J. Goldberg, author and editor emeritus of *The Forward*, makes some valuable comments in [“Remembering Phil Ochs: the Other Great Jewish Folksinger of the ‘60’s.”](#) See [here](#).]
- ◆ His protest songs, known for their topicality, seem fresh and relevant today.
- ◆ Ochs was involved in the [protests during the 1968 Democratic Convention](#), suppressed by Mayor Richard Daley, so much so that he was a witness during the [Chicago Seven trial](#).
- ◆ Ochs’ music was so charged that the FBI maintained a file of over 500 pages on him.
- ◆ Suffering from what is widely regarded as undisclosed bipolar disorder, as well as alcoholism, he died of suicide.

**SONG:** [“Here’s to the State of Mississippi”](#) by Phil Ochs

Released in 1965, Ochs wrote this following a visit to the state as a volunteer for the Mississippi Caravan of Music, which worked in conjunction with the [Mississippi Summer Project](#), later known as [Freedom Summer](#). The MSP began in June 1964 to register voters in a place where voting rights for blacks were nearly non-existent. Ochs was deeply affected by his time in Mississippi, particularly by the June, 1964 murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Those three were arrested in Philadelphia, Mississippi and, after being released, they were later pulled over as they drove through Neshoba County, Mississippi and abducted by officers working with the Ku Klux Klan. Their bodies, found buried beneath a dam, showed that they were beaten and shot to death. Ochs channels his anger into his lyrics through his signature humor. [**NOTE:** For a PBS [video on Freedom Summer](#), see [here](#).]

**PLAY:** [“Here’s to the State of Mississippi”](#) 

### **DISCUSS:**

- ❓ How does the music support Ochs’ humor and message?
- ❓ Which of the lyrics strike you as still resonant or relevant today? How so?

### **Pair Share:**

- ❓ We have explored social justice on the concert stage, on Broadway, in jazz and in the folk music revival. In these contexts, what other Jewish works or artists have moved or motivated you?

We offer opportunities to explore pieces of music in small study groups. If done virtually, the instructor can decide whether to divide randomly or make a more intentional selection. We recommend that the instructor assign each *havruta* a different piece of music; however, one may choose to have all groups focus on one piece. To save time, instructors could assign the groups to prepare this outside of class, with only the presentation done during class time. Some instructors may decide not to do *havruta* study at all and, instead, do any of the options below with their class. Instructors can find the lyrics in the Student Worksheet.

As you go into your groups, please look at the notes on the music and/or lyrics to your piece.

- ◆ The lyrics are provided on your Student Worksheet. In group #3 (Bob Dylan’s “Long Ago, Far Away”), the highlighted words, along with the music, will be your focus for discussion.
- ◆ After taking in the notes, listen to the musical selection.
- ◆ Afterwards, there will be some guided questions to promote your thinking and discussion. You can use any or none of them to guide you.
- ◆ You will be asked to report back your *havruta*’s response to the following: **How does this work of music react to and/or promote social justice?** You will be given 2–4 minutes to present your thoughts to the larger class when we regather. [**NOTE:** The instructor should decide a specific time frame ahead of time.]

### VIII. A. OPTION #1: *The Gates of Justice* by Dave Brubeck

After the death of MLK, jazz great Dave Brubeck wrote a cantata entitled, *The Gates of Justice*. Among the sources of the work’s libretto are the Bible, the *Union Prayer Book* (Reform Movement), the speeches of MLK, the writings of Hillel, and contributions from Iola Brubeck. You will be exploring the final two movements of the work.

#### NOTES ON THE MUSIC:

- ◆ This group of movements makes extensive use of the Gospel and blues idioms.
- ◆ Every time the full brass section enters, there is some rhythmic and musical tension.
- ◆ The last movement, a mere 57 seconds long, still brings an exciting exclamation to the entire work.

#### NOTES ON THE TEXT OF XI AND XII:

- ◆ “There are knives...and a buckler” — These words of MLK are less cited than many others.
- ◆ MLK mentions that God has called us to use “the weapon of nonviolence.”
- ◆ “*Thou shalt not be afraid...flyeth by day*” is from Psalm 91:5. That psalm is “a subtle, complex piece, a reflection on confidence accompanied by an underlying disquiet.” [**NOTE:** Segal: 2013, p. 434. See [Resource Guide](#), Works Consulted.]
- ◆ Psalm 149 is the penultimate psalm in the book of Psalms. It celebrates deliverance/redemption, one that changes the current status quo for good, permanently.

**PLAY:** [XI. His Truth as a Shield](#)  and [XII. Come, Let Us Sing a New Song](#) 

## DISCUSS:

- ❓ What themes of the text (Movements 11 and 12) connect you the listener to the CRM and the impetus toward justice?
- ❓ How does the music bring this out?
- ❓ Why choose these rather unknown words of MLK as we approach the close of *The Gates of Justice*?
- ❓ How is the use of nonviolence a “weapon”?
- ❓ What are some of the daily “terrors” and “arrows” that the African American community faced before, during, and since the CRM? How can we “not be afraid”?
- ❓ What kind of a “new song” (Final movement) might we sing if we do start to reduce hate today? What might it look like in 5–10 years?

## VIII. B. OPTION #2: “The Eagle and Me”

(Music: [Harold Arlen](#) (1905–1986); Lyrics: Yip Harburg)

### Notes on the Context

- ◆ Arlen’s father was the renowned Cantor Samuel Arluck (1882–1953) in Buffalo, New York, and sang in the all-male choir of his Orthodox synagogue.
- ◆ He was drawn to jazz and gospel music. He became staff composer of the renowned [Cotton Club](#). He later wrote music for established African American singers (such as Ethel Waters and Lena Horne) and wrote (or co-wrote) scores for three musicals that had all- or nearly all-Black casts.
- ◆ Arlen wrote (with Martin Charnin) [“That’s a Fine Kind of Freedom,”](#) which [Barbra Streisand](#) introduced at the *Broadway Answers Selma* event that Sammy Davis, Jr. hosted in April, 1965. It was written specifically for the event. The song was officially released the following year.
- ◆ *Bloomer Girl* opened on Broadway in 1944 and ran for 657 performances. The show portrays Evalina who, in her own personal life, defies notions about women and demands that her fiancé, Jeff Calhoun, emancipate his slaves.
- ◆ “The Eagle and Me” is sung by Pompey, a runaway slave, who surprises Calhoun, his former owner, when he emerges from a trunk at a way station of the [Underground Railroad](#). Evalina has persuaded Calhoun to help her hide the trunk, but when Calhoun discovers what and who is in it, he is shocked and demands that Pompey explain how he could do such a thing as run away. Pompey explains by singing “The Eagle and Me.”
- ◆ Here, you will see the performance of Lena Horne, a noted singer, actress, and civil rights activist, in 1963. She also recorded it for her 1963 *Here’s Lena Now* album, the same album with the song “Now” that was adapted from “*Hava Nagila*.”

### Consider as You Listen to the Music

- ◆ While the subject matter is serious and fiercely stated, the melody and text (ripe with metaphor) are actually quite light-hearted and joyful.
- ◆ Part of the power of the piece resides in the work itself, proudly stating the individuals' need to be free; yet part of its power is in Horne's stirring performance.

**PLAY:** [“The Eagle and Me”](#)  by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg

### DISCUSS:

- ? How do the music and words interrelate?
- ? What is the role of Horne's performance in capturing the message of the song?
- ? Why do the words focus more on the eagle than the river or the bumblebee?
- ? The song's argument for freedom and civil rights derives from the perspective of both nature and religion. How effective is the song's argument? Why approach the argument this way?

### VIII. C. OPTION #3: “Long Ago, Far Away” by Bob Dylan (1962)

This early song was not released until 1991. It shows how the status quo still prevailed, without progress toward justice in our society, in spite of the preachments of some leaders (like Jesus, referenced in the opening stanza). Some have suggested that the song reacts to the Jerome Kern-Ira Gershwin song “Long Ago (and Far Away)” from the movie *Cover Girl*.

### Consider As You Listen to the Music

- ◆ Consider Dylan's musical idiom: listen for inflections of Delta Blues (i.e. Robert Johnson).
- ◆ Consider the rhythm of the vocals, as well as the flow of the text and its relationship to the guitar.
- ◆ Consider the role of the guitar.
- ◆ The piece gets its edge by extending the timing of the words into the rhythm of the song — they do fit in, but only just. It really gives the feeling that the whole piece is on the verge of falling over, without actually ever doing so. This fits in with the passion of the song's lyrics.

**PLAY:** [“Long Ago, Far Away”](#)  (Excerpt)

### DISCUSS:

- ? Consider the tone of the opening two lines: Is it serious, sarcastic, angry, or something else? How might that inform the listener's understanding of Jesus' efforts to unite people in “peace and brotherhood”?
- ? What is the effect of the repeated refrain “Long ago, far away, these things don't happen no more, nowadays”? Consider how it affects the meaning of the lines preceding it.
- ? Why might Dylan, a Northern Jew, have chosen to evoke Jesus in the opening lines?
- ? What is Dylan's intent in alluding to enslaved African Americans, and stating, once again, that it was a problem of another time?

**SHARE:** Instructor should have each *havruta* (or, perhaps, 2–3) report back on the work they explored, and how the work reacts to and/or promotes social justice.

[**NOTE:** If the instructor asked the class to share a Jewish song, prayer or quote from that aligns with our prophets’ vision of a better day, a better world, this might be a good place to show the list, or have a pair share, and/or sing/chant one of the prayers together.]

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## IX. CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSIC OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

SLIDE 19

The world of music today provides space for people of all backgrounds and identities to flourish. Music explores and engenders discussion around topics related to civil and human rights, and to concerns for equity and justice. From the concert stage to hip hop, Jewish musicians and composers (among others!) continue to bring a passionate commitment to social justice causes into their artistry. For many, doing so helps to express their Jewishness.

[**NOTE:** The instructor should choose at least two of the following selections to share with your cohort. For each selection the instructor should have the class consider: **How does this music connect to social justice? Invite the class to think about this in terms of the musicality, lyrics, instrumentation, etc.** It may be best to do this directly after each selection. If time is a concern, the instructor might choose to do this after every two selections.]

We next provide some musical selections from various genres with a brief context for each selection.

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### A. The Concert Hall: *I Will Not Remain Silent* (2014)

SLIDE 20

by [Bruce Adolphe](#) (b. 1955)

*I Will Not Remain Silent* explores the life and legacy of Rabbi Joachim Prinz, an individual who, after escaping Nazi Germany, invested himself fully in the pursuit of civil rights and equality for all. You may recall that we discussed Rabbi Prinz’ speech at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

In Adolphe’s work, the violin represents Prinz’ voice: one that represents a passionate commitment to human dignity. The sounds of the orchestra in the first movement convey the horror and terror of Nazi Germany, while in the second movement, the orchestral music conveys the hopefulness and challenge of the era of the CRM in the United States. Adolphe demonstrates through this work that the journey toward justice and equality is often met with resistance, even violence.

**PLAY:** [II. America During the Civil Rights Movement](#)  (performed by the IRIS Orchestra; Michael Stern, conductor) [**NOTE:** Instructor may choose to play an excerpt]

### B. Broadway: “I Know Where I’ve Been”

[Music: [Marc Shaiman](#) (b. 1959); Lyrics: Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman (b. 1954)]

The 2002 musical *Hairspray* (based on John Waters’ 1988 film) takes place in 1962 and tells the fictional tale of Tracy Turnblad whose dream is to dance on television on *The Corny Collins Show*. [**NOTE:** The show was based on *The Buddy Deane Show*, a teenage dance program in Baltimore from 1957–1964.] After securing a spot on the show, Tracy works to integrate the television network. *Hairspray* presents deeper themes of racism, interracial dating, classism, and sizeism through a light-hearted, winsome approach. It ran for 2,642 performances and was nominated for 13 Tony Awards, winning eight.

“I Know Where I’ve Been” comes in the second act and establishes the gravitas of the show’s themes. It is a Gospel-inflected anthemic ballad sung by “Motormouth” Maybelle as she explains to the youth the importance of action in the face of injustice, which galvanizes them to protest against the segregationist policies of the television station.

**PLAY:** [“I Know Where I’ve Been”](#)  performed by [Jennifer Hudson](#) from [Hairspray Live!](#) (2016)

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### C. Reggae: “Go Down, Moses”

SLIDE 21

by Alan Eder and Friends

This joyous version of the spiritual which is often sung at Passover *s’darim* combines the traditional words with the *Mi Chamocha* prayer. Alan Eder has been the full-time piano tech for the Herb Alpert School of Music at the California Institute of the Arts for 38 years. This was part of his larger recording project, *Reggae Passover*, from 1996. “Go Down, Moses” also appeared on the 2000 compilation recording, *Celebrate Passover*.

**PLAY:** [“Go Down, Moses”](#)  by Alan Eder and Friends (2000)

### D. Experimental Hip Hop: “Chapter 319”

performed by [clipping.](#)

Clipping. is a Los Angeles-based group with Jewish rapper and actor [Daveed Diggs](#) (b. 1982, dual roles of Marquis de LaFayette and Thomas Jefferson in “*Hamilton*”) and producers William Hutson and Jonathan Snipes. They veer toward an abrasive sound. “Chapter 319” was released on June 19, 2020, along with “Knees on the Ground,” recorded after the [shooting of 18-year old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014](#). “Chapter 319” was recorded during the protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd (May 25, 2020). Proceeds from both recordings were donated to organizations dedicated to racial justice.

**PLAY:** [“Chapter 319”](#)  by [clipping.](#)

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### E. Klezmer Music: “Mermaid’s Avenue”

SLIDE 22

(Music: Frank London [b. 1958]; Lyrics: [Woody Guthrie](#) [1912–1967])

Based in New York city, [The Klezmatics](#) are a [klezmer](#) band who have presented (and integrated) both traditional Eastern European klezmer music with other forms of music.

Woody Guthrie is one of the most significant figures in folk music. He may be best known for the iconic “This Land Is Your Land,” (written in response to “God Bless America.”) The Klezmatics have released two albums of songs based on hitherto unknown Woody Guthrie lyrics. The 2003 song “Mermaid’s Avenue” appears in the second collection, *Wonder Wheel*, released in 2009.

Woody Guthrie had moved with his family to 3520 Mermaid Avenue in Coney Island, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. This song is a paean to the thriving and diverse political and cultural scene of the Jewish community there.

**PLAY:** [“Mermaid Avenue”](#) 

## F. Hanukkah: “Light Is Returning”/“*Banu Choshech*”

performed by [Noah Aronson](#) and [Banot](#)

This is a mashup of the familiar Israeli Hanukkah song, “*Banu Choshech*” (“We have come to banish the darkness”) with music by Emanuel Amiran-Pougatchov (1909–1993) and lyrics by Sara Levi-Tanai (1910–2005) with “Light Is Returning” by [Charlie Murphy](#) (1953–2016), from 1984. This juxtaposition places the responsibility for bringing light to a darkened world squarely on our shoulders. The justice theme is heightened by the artistic choice to use Murphy’s song. Murphy, a queer folk singer-songwriter, was known for his activism against sexism and for LGBTQ+ inclusion and equality. Hanukkah celebrates a battle won and fought for the right to be different; this mashup presents a social activist interpretation and celebration of the holiday.

**PLAY:** [“Light is Returning/Banu Choshech”](#) 

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## X. WHAT WE’VE LEARNED (Weaving Our Threads Together)

SLIDE 23

[**NOTE:** The instructor should catalog responses to the following in a place where all can see, and then add to those responses from the following bullet points, particularly when it was a focus of the instructor. If time is a factor, the instructor might simply ask, “What have we learned today?” Instructor may wish to have students take a few minutes to write down their thoughts before offering their responses.]

Let’s take a few moments to reflect.

**?** **What is something you have learned these past sessions about Jews, music, and social justice? What have you learned about the power of protest, ritual, and performance?**

- ◆ Cultural representation continues to remain a concern in social justice work (*Porgy and Bess*, Jewish performers bringing African American musical forms to white America, e.g. Sophie Tucker, Benny Goodman)
- ◆ Social justice concerns in this lesson focused on the dignity of people of color but also included other groups (abled-ness in *Porgy and Bess*), economic justice and workers’ rights (“*Der Arbiter Himnen*,” “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”) and voters’ rights (“She’s Good Enough to Be Your Baby’s Mother and She’s Good Enough to Vote with You”).
- ◆ Jewish music served as the background for compositions and performances that told stories of African Americans or promoted social justice directly (Lena Horne’s performance of “Now!”) and indirectly (“Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Miriam’s Song”).
- ◆ The different ways collaboration does take place (“Chapter 319”) or does not (*The Gates of Justice*) and the lessons these examples provide for social justice work.
- ◆ Some expressions of social justice we encountered were quite direct and scathing (“Strange Fruit,” “No More,” “Now,” “Here’s to the State of Mississippi”)
- ◆ Jews often brought a social consciousness into their work in music, in whatever genre, at whatever level. Beyond performers, we might think of Kenneth Goldstein in Folk Music or Hilly Elkins producing *Golden Boy*, and Albert Grossman’s management of Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul and Mary.



- ◆ Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs are two dominant figures of the AFMR, particularly after it became more identified with civil rights.
- ◆ “The Eagle and Me” and “Now” sought to get audiences’ understanding of the need for civil rights.
- ◆ Jews continue their active involvement in music today, and continue to bring a social justice consciousness with them.
- ◆ American Jewish life continues to bring social consciousness into the forefront (e.g. “Light One Candle” at Hanukkah, the use of “Go Down, Moses” at Passover).
- ◆ The prophetic concern for a better world is at the heart of Jewish social justice concerns (Yom Kippur haftarah, “*Olam Chesed Yibaneh*,” “Somewhere”)

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## XI. OUTRO

SLIDE 24

We began this part of our journey with Ben Platt’s opening rendition of West Side Story’s “Somewhere,” an affirmation that there will be a better time and a place when all is better, when “everyone shall lie down neath their vine and fig tree in peace and unafraid.” (Micah 4:4)

As we go, we leave you with a more contemporary version of that hope. Matthew Paul Miller (b. 1979) grew up as a Reconstructionist Jew and, in his journey, took on the stage name and persona of [Matisyahu](#). Matisyahu is a Jewish American reggae singer, rapper, musician and beatboxer. His song “One Day” (2008) is an anthem of hope for a day and time when hate and violence vanish, when understanding and peace reign.

The performance version here is from [Koolulam](#), a social initiative that tries to empower communities and strengthen the impetus for different groups to find common ground. Koolulam has specialized in bringing large numbers of people from very different, often competing backgrounds together in large public performances to create a *kodesh* (holy) moment that can transcend the injustices of today and move each participant’s personal needle, at least a bit.

Here, Koolulam brings together Jews, Muslims and Christians of very different degrees of religiosity, ages, economic levels, etc., to actualize, if for a moment, the hope of “One Day.”

**PLAY:** “[One Day](#)”  by Matisyahu

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