

Preface

The study of Israeli culture is one of the most challenging fields of inquiry among those relating to the investigation of nation-states that arose during the twentieth century. Irrespective of a scholar's field, be it the social sciences or humanities, the extreme complexity of the Israeli case always calls for an interdisciplinary approach. The intricate web of contrasting human factors, backgrounds, memories, ideologies, and wills that shaped Israeli society and its modern culture (what we call "Israeliness") can be better interpreted if approached simultaneously from various disciplinary perspectives. This is certainly true of our topic: Israeli popular music.

Our interdisciplinary collaboration began in the early 1990s, when Regev, a sociologist, had completed his doctoral dissertation, which was the first attempt to interpret the rise of Israeli rock by using the theoretical tools of the sociology of art. Seroussi, an ethnomusicologist, had, in collaboration with other colleagues, studied only one aspect of Israeli popular music, "oriental ethnicity." We arrived at the study of Israeli popular music from widely different perspectives and believed that the study of popular music would be enlightening for the understanding of contemporary Israeliness. Concluding that only a major ethnographic undertaking could possibly map out the complex field of Israeli popular music in its entirety, we embarked on this project around 1993. A major grant from the Israel Science Foundation (formerly managed by the Israel National Academy of Sciences) for the years 1994–97 and the assistance of several colleagues and graduate students enabled us to accomplish some of the significant goals of this encompassing ethnographic endeavor. Additional grants came from the Shein Institute and the Silbert Foundation for Israel Studies, both at the Fac-

ulty of Social Sciences of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The research project was administered through Bar-Ilan University. We are grateful to the Research Authority of Bar-Ilan University for their support and for an additional intramural grant, which enabled us to complete our fieldwork. Grants for final editing of this book were provided by the Research Authority of the Open University of Israel and by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

This book, therefore, represents the conclusion of a research effort that spanned several years. Even so, this text is by no means a definitive study of all aspects of Israeli popular music; it is, rather, a starting point for reflection and a basis for future in-depth studies of the topic. We hope that the extensive raw materials we collected, a fraction of which are presented here, will nourish such future enterprises.

Throughout this project, we interviewed many of the leading lights of Israeli popular music and we are grateful to all of them for their patience when sharing their lore with us. Three major figures among them, Moshe Vilensky, Alexander "Sasha" Argov, and Yair Rosenblum, passed away only a few months after we interviewed them. We carry with us these memorable encounters that took place at their homes. We also thank the following composers, lyricists, arrangers, producers, and critics, who granted us extensive interviews during the various stages of this project: Shimon Cohen, Yehoram Gaon, Hanoach Hasson, Haim Heffer, Nahum Heiman, Nurit Hirsh, Ehud Manor, Hanan Yovel, Yoni Rechter, Arieh Levanon, Shem Tov Levy, Meir Noy, Yaacov Orland, Naomi Polani, Amalia Rosen, and Yoram Tehar-Lev. Many other musicians, lyricists, producers, and critics talked with us in informal conversations. Space constraints prevent us from mentioning them individually, but we extend our sincere thanks to all those in the Israeli popular-music community who assisted us.

Many students worked with us at various stages of this project, and they deserve our most heartfelt recognition. Some students completed their theses and dissertations under our guidance in the framework of this project, and their studies are extensively reflected in the present text. First of these all, we would like to thank Dr. Talila Eliram, who coordinated the research project with patience and efficiency and worked with us on most of the ethnographic research. Chapter 3, "Songs of the Land of Israel," would not exist without her key contribution. Eliram also assisted at the different stages of the preparation of this manuscript. Shulamit Marom contributed a detailed study of the role of the Histadrut (the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in Eretz Yisrael) in the creation of an Israeli musical cul-

ture; her work is reflected in Chapter 2. Dr. Carmela Topelberg's study of popular music in Tel Aviv between the 1920s and the 1950s served as the basis for Chapter 4. Shifra Fürst studied the phenomenon of the popular-music festivals in Israel; Chapter 6 relies heavily on her findings. Other students who participated in this project were Alona Sagui, who studied the evolution of jazz in Israel; Galit Saada, who investigated Sderot's rock scene; Miriam Kelmer, who examined the work of Naomi Shemer; and Yael Zilbershlag, who assisted us in the early stages of our research on the IDF ensembles. We thank Shmulik Tessler of Tel Aviv University for sharing his recent findings on the IDF ensembles, as well as Shoshana Levi for allowing us to quote from her ethnographic work on *musiqā mizrahit*. Our thanks also go to Dr. Marina Ritzarev for her bibliographical research on our behalf.

We are also grateful to the colleagues who assisted us at various stages of our work, in particular Dr. Dan Almagor, a leading scholar and author of the Israeli song and the musical stage, for allowing us to explore substantial sections of his private archive on the history of IDF ensembles and for his conversations with us; and Dr. Nathan Shahar for his willingness to share his vast resources and enormous knowledge on the Israeli song. Thanks also to music journalists Dalit Ofer, Yoav Kutner, Gidi Avivi, and Amit Shoham for being helpful with their knowledge and contacts. And finally, we send our gratitude to the late Meir Noy for his clarifications about the early history of the Israeli song and for compiling and leaving his vast and unique collection of Israeli songs to subsequent generations of scholars.

We benefited from the special collections of the Music Department and the National Sound Archives of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, especially the Noy-Wachs Archive of Jewish and Hebrew Song. We would like to thank the director of the department, Dr. Gila Flam, and the members of her staff, Daria Israeli, Ruti Fried, Roni Goel, Avi Nahmias, Yaacov Mazor, and Efraim Yaacov, who were at all times patient with our endless requests. We also thank the authorities of ACUM, Israel's Society of Composers and Lyricists, for allowing us to use their database for our research. We are grateful to Gila Haimovic for her dedication to the style editing of the manuscript. Special thanks to Lynne Withey, Mary Francis, Colette DeDonato, Kate Warne, and Alex Giardino at the University of California Press, who handled the manuscript and guided it to fulfillment. We thank Fern Seckbach for preparation of the indexes. Finally, we would like to thank Simon Frith and two anonymous reviewers for reading the manuscript and contributing a number of illuminating and useful comments.

Parts of the Introduction and Chapter 1 were previously published in the article "To Have a Culture of our Own: On Israeliness and its Variants" (*Ethnic and Racial Studies* [2000] 23: 223–47). We would like to thank Routledge Journals and the Taylor and Francis Group (<http://www.tandf.co.uk>) for permitting us to use these sections.

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Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, May 2002