



Preserving Cultural Harmony:

Music's Role in Connecting Communities

April 8, 2024

Israeli / Jewish

The earliest source of Jewish music stems from Judaism as a religion and the chants/prayers that were used for worship. Throughout the years the music has transformed in many ways, being influenced by the other religions in the region (Islam, Christianity) evolving both the religious aspect as well as the Israeli roots of folk music.

There are 4 major types of Jewish music

Ashkenazi music

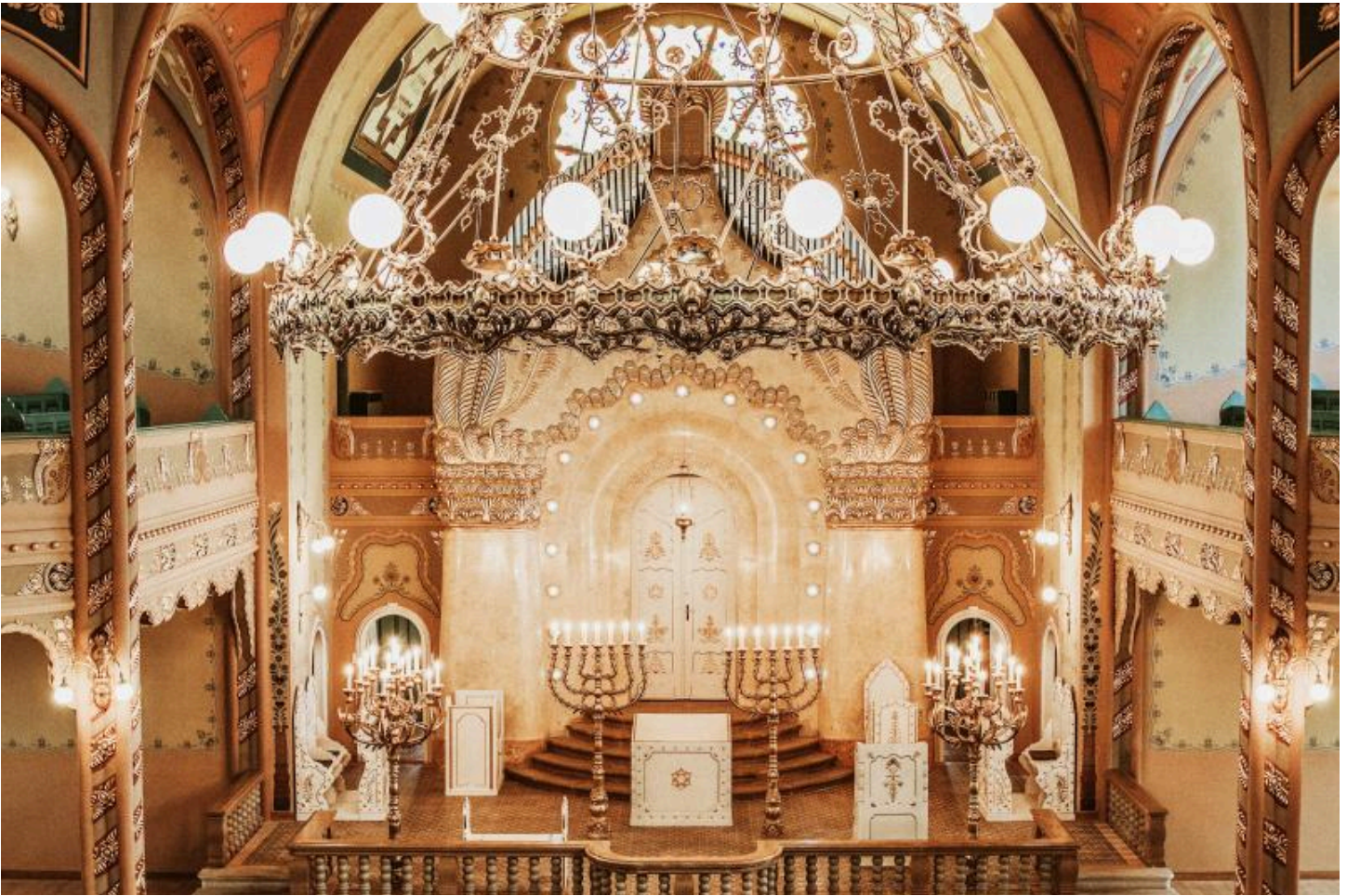
Music from the Ashkenazi group of ancestral Jews refer to those who originated generally from northern Europe and Scandinavia.

Sephardi music

Refers to music from the ancestral Jews that generally originate from the Middle East.

Israeli music

Refers to music from the Jews who originated from Israel.



Synagogue music

Refers to religious Jewish music mostly used in synagogues and for worship.

Credit - Unsplash.com

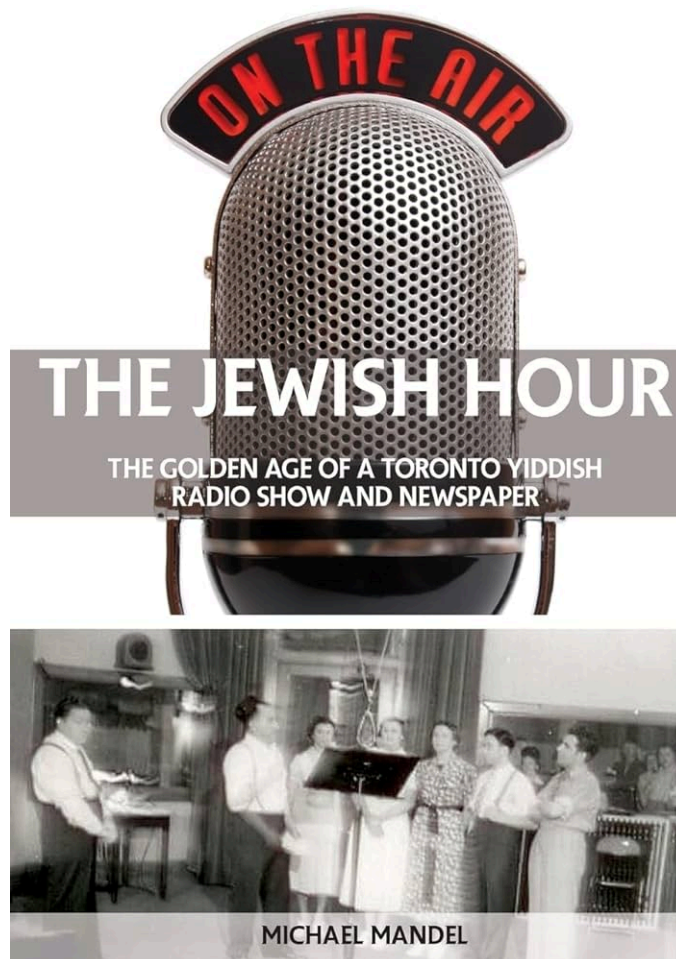
Early Jewish music culture in Canada



Earlier Jewish/Israeli music was primarily focused on culture and storytelling. The early days of major Jewish Canadian immigration began around 1910, most countries were experiencing a recession. In the 1940s Canada had strict immigration laws following the great depression and the Jewish population plateaued. (1931=45,305 to 1941=49,046 in Toronto). However, by the 80s Jewish numbers increased to 123,735 in Toronto.



The Winnipeg Jewish Folk Choir is one of the earliest examples of the Jewish culture in music founded in 1910. This choir kept the tradition of Jewish folk music alive and this was noted to ease the process of immigration to Canada by reminding new immigrants of their roots and traditions in Judaism and that they were not alone in this new country they now called home.



However there was not much recorded in Canada until the 1930's when a radio show called "The Jewish Hour" based in Hamilton emerged. It was created by Max Mendele, a musician who immigrated from Eastern Europe to Canada prior to World War 2. Although the station the show was aired on varied, the show continued from 1936 to 1953, covering everything from politics to music in a Jewish context.

"...it was a context where listeners would feel that connection to the old world..."

- Immigrant Waves and Musical Tastes: Jewish musical cultures in Canadian contexts, Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies

The more recent adaptations of Jewish music in Canada have varied widely



<https://www.nowplayingtoronto.com/event/ashkenaz-festival-2022/>

The Ashkenaz Festival, a Jewish music festival founded in 1995.



<https://ashkenaz.ca/about-us/>

"While rooted in the spirit and forms of the Yiddish culture revival, Ashkenaz seeks to spotlight a broad range of multi-ethnic Jewish identities and artistic/cultural traditions. Emphasizing cross-cultural creativity across a wide spectrum of Jewish and non-Jewish traditions"

- Ashkenaz Festival website - ashkenaz.ca/about-us/

Shtetl on the Shortwave

Tamara Kramer hosted a Jewish radio show, Shtetl, to explore her heritage in Judaism and discusses Judaism music culture. She uses this to access her spirituality through the culture and music of Judaism



https://archive.org/details/podcast_shtetl-montreal-shtetl_from-rams-horn-to-beatbox_1000325849158

Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story

“Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story”, a musical play about the story of a Jewish refugee couple coming to Canada. The music is Klezmer or Ashkenazi inspired but the story focuses on the experience of displacement and migration.

Hannah Moscovitch, a Jewish playwright, wrote the story of her own grandparents' experience leaving Bucharest entering Canada through Pier 21. This theatre-musical concert hybrid reminds Moscovitch of her heritage through researching her own families' history at Pier 21.



<https://www.hgjewishtheatre.com/2022-2023->

[OldStock.html](#)

"I'd been living in Halifax for quite a while, but it had never occurred to me that my own ancestors had landed in Canada right here. My aunt was visiting us, so we visited the Pier with my young son Elijah, and it hit me that Elijah wouldn't be here if Chaya and Chaim had not escaped Romania and sought refuge in Canada,"

- Hannah Moscovitch, The Times of Israel

Mexico

Before the colonials era, Mesoamerica, now known as Mexico, was a prosperous land home to many indigenous tribes. Each one having a strong belief in the gods and religion. Here's how these people not only adapted, but adopted their musical heritage to those who came from Europe.

Origin of the country and its musical heritage

Mexican music originates from when Spain colonized the country during the early 1500s. Known then as Mesoamerica, the population consisted of varied indigenous groups split amongst the land's different regions. The Spanish arrived in what is now the city of Veracruz along the Gulf of Mexico.

Mesoamerican regions

When the Spanish arrived they expanded north, colonizing the Aztecs on the coast and central Mesoamerica.

With them they brought their traditional Spaniard music, mixing with the Indigenous tribes created the foundation of Mexico's musical heritage. **[2](2023)**



Mexico has very strong roots in religion, both from its Spanish and Indigenous population.

Songs performed served to honor the gods; asking for fortune.
Songs asking for rain and plentiful harvest or good fishing.

Mexican Music is about celebration in oneself and the collective community, whether big or small.



Mexico has a wide variety in its selection of musical expression. Over time, these varied sounds and styles converged to produce the style of music we now call Mariachi.

Mariachi comprises primarily string instruments along with brass ones.



Mariachi bands play a huge role in the country's cultural heritage. Traditional mariachi bands are composed of up to 8 players or more. However, smaller groups of three or four members (Trios and Quatros) are still common.

With the origins in place, let's take a look at how Mexicans adapted their music to other parts of the world, specifically Canada

Early stages of Mexican music in Canada

Although Canada and Mexico are both in North America, they aren't within close proximity. Despite this Canada still saw Mexican immigrants, although initially in small numbers. In the mid-1970s the Canadian government expanded the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) to allow the

recruiting of Mexicans to fill the unskilled labor shortage in the agriculture industry. [3](2018)

Musicians had come over the border but didn't initially receive much attention from Canadians. They did however, receive subsidies from either the Mexican or Canadian governments. Although these musicians did not explicitly bring their musical heritage to Canada, they were still capable of contributing to the field by taking part in preexisting bands or orchestras.

Manuel Suarez is a violinist and conductor, who led the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra from 1972-1974. With the success of his career, it transcended to other musicians inspiring them to do the same. In 1981, the "Cuarteto Latinoamericano" or "Latino American Quartet" was founded. A well known string quartet within the Canadian Latino community, they have incorporated the Mexican soundtrack of upbeat and cheerful music as well as performing composed pieces from Mexican composers.



Cuarteto Latinoamericano

As time passed, more Mexican immigrants came to Canada. The popularity of their music would continue to increase, and more traditional forms of Mexican music would be performed.

Mexicans came to Canada later in the country's history; Although they have set their place into Canadian culture, they are not as widespread as some other groups. Despite this the

Canadian Mexican population have brought their musical culture into the modern age.

Canadian Mexican music in the modern day



Mariachi Band Canada

By the year 2000, the Mexican population had boomed, reaching over 200,000 permanent residents of Mexican heritage. From here the population continued to increase with each passing year. One of the biggest parts of Mexico's musical culture are the Mariachi bands, and now with more support from the community they were able to bring this practice to the forefront. In 2003, Mexican residents of Vancouver, British Columbia, established “Mariachi Band

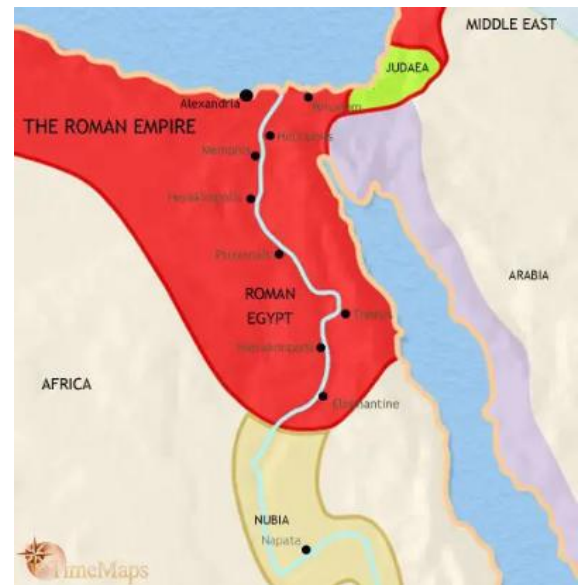
Canada” which was the country's premier mariachi band. [4] (2014)

Other forms of Mexican music have reached wider audiences with the advent of the Internet. Now you're to go online and search for Mariachi bands or Mexican musicians. Additionally Mexican radio has become a bigger staple recently. Dedicated stations playing music from Mexican artists. Nowadays it's easy to find all sorts of music from the community and each new release evolves with society's taste while maintaining its cultural heritage.

Egyptian/ Egypt

Ancient Egypt

Around the era of the pharaohs, a time ranging from 3100 B.C.E, stood the cultivation of the musical history of the Egyptians. The music centered around religious themes and rituals, music played a significant role in religion, and musicians played in temples and tombs. Hathor and Bes are two Gods and Goddesses of Egypt, Bes symbolizes music, merriment, and childbirth. Meanwhile, Horus was the Goddess of the sky, women and love, these two Gods were significant figures and were both associated with musical arts. Musicians also had a very high standing because it was thought that through music people could have a stronger connection to god, hence music was sought to appease the gods



Festivals

An important ritual for Egyptians was the “Opening of the Mouth”, this ritual was performed during funeral rites. Egyptians believed that with the use of music, hymns and showing grief over those who passed, the dead would have all their body function back in the afterlife. Also, Positions of high musical status, often occupied by women, were mainly found among temple musicians, highlighting the revered role of music in the worship of the Gods.



Early Immigration History

Egyptian immigration to Canada first became appreciable in the 1950s. Most of the Egyptian immigrants who came were of urban origin, and 75 percent had white-collar jobs. The main reason for the immigration was due to economic factors in Egypt and the 1952 Revolution and changes to the country's political and economic structure. Many Egyptian families found safety in Canada and immigrated due to the better opportunities and lifestyles. They were drawn in by the promise of a better lifestyle and the open, welcoming policies of the Canadian government.



Early Musical History



As the Egyptian community in Canada grew, so too did its cultural expressions, particularly in the realm of music, which served as a source of comfort and connection to their heritage. With the increased size of the Egyptian community they found great comfort in music, and so, many popular groups such as Reda Folklore Dance Troup came to Canada. Furthermore, they held a festival in 1978, inviting the Om Kolsoum, an Arabic orchestra and a 15-voice mixed choir. The festival sponsored appearances in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, and the musicians used both Western and traditional instruments to capture the hearts of the audiences.

Egyptian Music In The Modern Day

In recent years, electronic music has significantly adapted with the introduction of radio, TV, and other online platforms. Bands and solo artists have emerged, blending traditional Egyptian sounds with global music genres, creating a rich modern music scene. An example of this is the Egyptian Alternative, a music subgenre of rock that emerged in 1990, it is a combination of Western rock



influenced by traditional Egyptian Music. The use of electric guitars and Arabian instruments such as oud and qanun, creates a unique sound that reflects the turbulent times in which the genre emerged. The use of modern instruments and technology has allowed Egyptian music to reach and grab onto a wider array of audiences, while still maintaining its musical heritage. For example, the Egyptian artist Mahmoud El Esseily garners millions of views for each music video. The artist Mahmoud El Esseily has modernized the genre by blending traditional musical elements and combining them with pop and electronics, utilizing digital platforms such as YouTube, he gathers a large standing gaining millions of views per music video, allowing him to reach a global level.

Sources

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