**THE ECHO OF THE TEMPLE**

One of the most fascinating aspects of being a musician is discovering the context of the music you create. I first realized this when I was writing my Bachelor's thesis about the influence of the Great French Revolution on organ music and noticed how historical processes influence art. The second time, when in my Master's thesis I analyzed the expectations of organ concert audiences. This developed into a long-term interest in the behavior of music audiences, crowned with a doctorate in economics.

I remember the third time very well. Not long after I graduated from university, a friend who sings in a vocal trio specializing in Jewish music, asked me to accompany them with three pieces on the organ during a concert at the Church of St. Anna on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street in Warsaw. While performing the last song, *Song of Galilee* by Julius Chajes, I felt that the combination of their voices and the organ sounded particularly harmonious in this repertoire. That's how I became interested in Jewish music.

My knowledge of Jewish culture was very poor at that time. No one had touched upon this topic – not at school, nor at home, nor even in the public space. Having developed a concert proposal we agreed that it would be good to send it to places in Poland that are somehow known for Jewish presence. Perhaps towns and villages where there are still synagogues or Jewish cemeteries? One evening, I embarked on an internet search, and I didn't stop for several hours. It turned out that traces of Jewish heritage are practically everywhere.

My fascination with notes led me to explore instruments and musicians. While reading works by Professor Marian Fuks, I came across mentions of organs in synagogues. It wasn't just their descriptions, but also the delightful stories about the music accompanying the liturgy that intrigued me. A breakthrough moment for me occurred when I found photos of an organ from a non-existent New Synagogue in my hometown of Szczecin on an internet forum. In the archive of their maker, a renowned German company called Walcker, I found more information, including photos and descriptions of other organs built in synagogues a hundred years ago. Pieces of the puzzles started to match. At the same time, I joined the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, where, over the course of two years, I had the opportunity to explore the history and present of various nations.

This marked the beginning of my artistic activity in the field of Jewish organ music. Concurrently, due to my position at the Academy of Art in Szczecin, I started working on a doctorate in art. In-depth knowledge of the history of Jewish organ music proved to be not only immensely valuable but also incredibly inspiring.

In the collective consciousness, we typically view the organ as an instrument belonging to Western culture and Christian civilization. Meanwhile, many performers and enthusiasts of organ music may not be aware that, until the Middle Ages, the Catholic liturgy forbade the use of instrumental music, considering it part of the ‘pagan’ and ‘Jewish’ realms [1]. It wasn't until the mid-15th century that organs began to find a place in churches. Nevertheless, Jews themselves started to see them as ‘hukkat ha-goi’ (Heb. non-Jewish custom), associated with Christian culture.

In Jewish culture, the organ holds a centuries-old history. The Hebrew Bible mentions the 'ugav' four times – in Genesis 4:21, and twice in Job 21:12; 30:31, as well as in Psalm 150:4. Undoubtedly, the term refers to a musical instrument; however, due to the absence of a clear historical source, its interpretation varies, including possibilities such as the flute, bagpipes, or lute [2]. According to the Jerusalem Talmud (Sukkah 55c), it might even have been an ancient hydraulic organ.

Another potential ancient precursor to the organ can be found in the Mishnah 'magrepha' instrument (Hebrew: to scoop, spoon). The Babylonian Talmud (Arakhin 10b–11a) describes it as a bellows-driven pipe organ with ten tongue pipes of various sizes and keys mounted on a windchest. This instrument was believed to be present in the Jerusalem Temple. After its destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E., instrumental music was banned during synagogue services as a sign of mourning following this event.

Nevertheless, the organ continued to be a subject of interest in rabbinical thought, featured in Jewish iconography and Judaic texts. Many Bible manuscripts dating back to the 13th century contain illustrations of King David playing the organ, depicting him as an 'organist' [3]. It wasn't until the 15th century that organs became prevalent in monastery churches and cathedrals. However, it took several more centuries for Jewish musicians to overcome numerous prejudices, as well as religious and communal resistance, and finally introduce the organ to synagogues for good.

The most significant chapter in the history of synagogue organs begins with the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, and the works of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), a pivotal Jewish philosopher and the grandfather of composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. This movement, born in Germany, initially aimed at renewing Judaism and reviving forgotten Jewish traditions. However, it evolved into the foundation of secular Jewish thought and Jewish assimilation, ultimately transforming into an emancipatory movement that sought to achieve legal and socio-cultural equality for Jews alongside other citizens [4].

These changes also impacted Jewish religious life. The reformers did not view their actions as revolutionary; rather, they believed they were uncovering the essence of 'true' Judaism, transforming it into a fully-recognized religion and shedding the perception of a closed, secretive sect. The reforms encompassed aesthetic aspects of synagogue liturgy, including shortening it (primarily by eliminating the cantillation of the Bible) and permitting the use of the German language, with sermons modeled on Christian ones. The musical facet of the liturgy underwent a radical transformation. To make it more accessible to audiences educated in Western musical traditions, they introduced congregational choral singing in both German and Hebrew, and notably, began introducing organ instruments into synagogues.

The first synagogue to adopt an organ was the one associated with a school for underprivileged Jewish children in Seesen, Westphalia. Its founder, Israel Jacobson, aligned with Mendelssohn's ideas, aimed to elevate the social status of Jews through education. The consecration of this synagogue on July 17, 1810, marks the first documented instance of an organ being played in a synagogue in Germany – an event described as 'something hitherto unheard of' [5].

Another pivotal event in the history of Jewish organ culture occurred during the Second Rabbinic Conference held in Frankfurt am Main from July 15 to 28, 1845. During this conference, there was a deliberation on whether the presence of organs and organ music in synagogues was justified. At that time, an effort was made to determine whether only Jews should be allowed as organists [6]. The conclusions reached indicated that organs should be prohibited; in accordance with tradition, they were considered foreign elements. However, they could still be used to emphasize the prayerful nature of the liturgy. Notably, there was a recommendation that in organ music, one should ‘avoid the imitation of what is barbaric unless the barbaric element is an integral part of a given performance.' Participants of the conference also outlined a new order for synagogue liturgy, which included organ music. It took a quarter of a century before a consensus was reached that musicians of both Jewish and non-Jewish origins could play the organ during liturgical ceremonies in synagogues on Shabbat and holidays.

In the following years, organs found their way into many synagogues. Among them, the most significant was the instrument installed in the New Synagogue on Oranienburger Strasse in Berlin. Its construction followed extensive rabbinical and philosophical discussions. The principles of Reform Judaism from Germany had a profound influence on other European countries too. In Poland, new synagogues were constructed, with organ music becoming a hallmark, particularly in the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street in Warsaw. The influence of organ music also extended to the United States of America, the Middle East, and the West Indies [7]. The steady development of Jewish organ music in Germany was only interrupted by the Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, on November 9, 1938. In the rest of Europe, synagogues, musicians, their creative works, and instruments were obliterated with the liquidation of Jewish districts and ghettos, and the brutal extermination of the Jewish population during the Holocaust.

In the years 2018-2023, I performed numerous solo and vocal-instrumental concerts with various musicians and undertook several artistic projects. Among these, a particularly significant one was initiated during the annual Jewish Music Days in Szczecin when we presented music that had not been performed in Poland since the war. Notably, we organized concerts featuring organ music in a synagogue in Warsaw, marking the first time this had occurred in postwar history. I was deeply moved when performing concerts at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. In the subsequent years, my focus shifted towards the works of selected cantors and composers, including Louis Lewandowski (2019), Arno Nadel (2020), Abraham Lichtenstein (2021), Jakub Weiss (2022), and Gershon Ephros (2023). Additionally, I collaborated with the Jewish Community in Berlin as an organist at the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue, which stands as the only synagogue in our part of Europe where cantors and choirs continue to sing with organ accompaniment every Sabbath and holiday. The privilege of performing this music in the original setting transformed my perspective in ways I could not have imagined. At the same time, I had the opportunity to explore and perform the majority of the surviving literature for solo organ that had been preserved. It is likely that much more music was composed but is either lost to history or still awaits discovery. I am increasingly inclined to believe in the latter possibility.

Another aspect of my work involved creating new compositions inspired by tradition. Over the past few years, I delved into the mindset of the old composers of Jewish liturgical music who endeavored to blend synagogue prayer melodies with contemporary musical language, merging Jewish scales with Western harmony, and incorporating improvised passages with rhythm and meter accessible to all. I engaged six talented Polish composers of my generation in an attempt to recreate this creative process.

Each of them approached the subject in a unique manner. Adam Porębski arranged Abraham Lichtenstein's 19th-century cantorial songs, initially for cantor, choir, and organ, and later for solo organ. This revival brought the music of Szczecin's most renowned cantor back to my city. Aleksandra Chmielewska and Dariusz Przybylski crafted impressive compositions based on two Kaddish melodies notated by Louis Lewandowski. I selected these melodies because they left a lasting impression on me during the initial one hundred performances during synagogue liturgies in Berlin. Anna Huszcza, in a personal tribute to the organ tradition, chose Louis Lewandowski's tune from three monumental volumes. Marcin Łukaszewski skillfully intertwined the world's two most renowned Jewish melodies, *Kol Nidre* and *Hava Nagila*, constructing a bridge between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’. In an intensely personal work, Ignacy Zalewski shifted the focus from melody to timbre, aligning with the direction that Jewish organ music was beginning to take shortly before a dramatic break in its history.

For a considerable time, I deliberated on the title for the project and album. At first, I harbored doubts about *The Echo of The Temple*. However, I became convinced that it was the apt choice during late-night recording sessions when we repeatedly listened to the organ's reverberations resonating through the grand interior of the Collegiate Church in Stargard. The vision of the organ in the Temple in Jerusalem has profoundly inspired countless generations. Today, too, this instrument is primarily associated with sacred spaces. The compositions on the album echo age-old traditions, ideas, and aspirations. Furthermore, owing to the recording format, we often find ourselves literally listening to the echo of the temple.

Listening to this album and delving into its accompanying history allows for reflection on various ideas. Jewish organ music serves as evidence that one can adeptly blend tradition with modernity, striking a harmonious balance between embracing the new while respecting the old. Numerous captivating topics across different aspects of life await our discovery, offering valuable lessons. Those who remain ignorant of history are condemned to remain stagnant.

As I mentioned at the beginning, every form of music has its unique context. To truly grasp and comprehend this context goes beyond merely offering a historically plausible interpretation. In doing so, we can effectively ‘revive’ the individuals who created it and evoke the era in which it was conceived. Perhaps, someday, after experiencing this album, someone will feel compelled to narrate our story in a similar fashion.

[1] Peter Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1993.  
[2] Word: *Biblical instruments*, in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, www.grovemusic.com.  
[3] Joachim Braun, *The Iconography of The Organ: Change in Jewish Thought and Musical Life*, „Music in Art: International Journal for Music Iconography” No. 28, 2003.  
[4] David Sorkin, *Religious Reforms and Secular Trends in German-Jewish Life: An Agenda for Research*, „Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook” No. 48, 1995.  
[5] Caesar Seligmann, *Geschichte der judischen Reformbewegung von Mendelssohn bis zur Gegenwart*, Julius Kaufmann, Frankfurt am Main 1922.  
[6] *Protokolle und Aktenstucke der zweiten Rabbinerversammlung*, E. Ullmann, Frankfurt a/M. 1845.  
[7] Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development*, Dover, New York 1992.

**ABOUT THE WORKS**

**Adam Porębski  
*Shire Bet Haknesset* – Synagogue Songs Based on the Melodies of Abraham Lichtenstein (2021)**

1. ***Barekhu***
2. ***Veshameru***
3. ***Mekhalkel khayim bechesed***
4. ***Missod khakhamim***

Composing *Shire Bet Haknesset* presented quite a challenge. The foundational material for this work consisted of songs composed by Abraham Lichtenstein, the cantor in the Jewish community of Szczecin between 1833 and 1847. However, this doesn't imply that my sole task was a simple soprano harmonization. I recontextualized these single-voice melodies, which were deeply rooted in tonality, within a new musical framework that encompassed harmony, rhythm, and texture. Yet, the most significant challenge was preserving the distinct essence of Jewish music. Did I succeed in achieving this?

**Aleksandra Chmielewska  
*Late Night Prayer* (2023)**

*Late Night Prayer* draws inspiration from the traditional Kaddish melody that follows the reading of a Torah passage. This composition weaves an atmosphere of concentration, contemplation, and mystery, interwoven with emotional and sublime segments distinguished by rich melodic figurativeness. The use of subtle pastel tones dominates, creating a key feature of the work that aims to evoke an ambiance of contemplation and reflection, suggesting that the titular prayer takes place late at night.

**Anna Maria Huszcza  
*Hissorari* (2023)**

*Hissorari* takes its name from the recitative of the same title, a part of a liturgical poem by Lech Dodi. The original composition served as inspiration for a two-part work, in which polyphonic techniques play a prominent role. The first part, resembling a prelude, features harmonization of a fragment from the source melody. The musical narrative gradually intensifies before revisiting the initial melody. Subsequently, a textural shift following the cadence introduces the main theme, whose subsequent iterations resemble a fugue. The distinctive leap of a fourth, derived from the original source, assumes a central motif, with a second motif appearing later, augmented and underscoring the source of inspiration.

**Dariusz Przybylski  
*Kaddish –* Passacaglia (2020)**

‘Kaddish’, one of Judaism's most significant prayers and an Aramaic doxology, glorifies the name of God, expresses submission to His will, and invokes the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God. The passacaglia's theme is based on the melody of Louis Lewandowski's composition, with its eleven-fold repetition inspired by the orphan's (mourner's) ‘kaddish’. This prayer has been recited daily since the 15th century by the son of a deceased parent for eleven months after their passing, as well as on each anniversary of their death. This period of mourning aligns with the belief that the soul of the wicked undergoes purification for a year after death. Therefore, the ‘kaddish’ is recited for twelve months, avoiding the impression that the deceased was evil. Notably, the prayer itself does not contain references to death; the orphan recites the ‘kaddish’ to convey a continued desire to worship God.

**Marcin Tadeusz Lukaszewski  
*The Ark* (2023)**

I composed *The Ark* at the request of Jakub Stefek, to whom I extend my heartfelt gratitude. This work marks my initial foray into the realm of Jewish music tradition. The composition incorporates several symbolic references to universal themes within Mosaic faith. These references range from the title, which can symbolize the Ark of the Covenant or Noah's Ark, to the coda of the piece, where I sonically reproduce the symbols of the Star of David and the menorah. The musical foundation of the composition relies on the distinctive Jewish scale (Avanah Rabbah scale), notable for its unique sound system. Additionally, the composition features quotations from well-known melodies such as *Hava Nagila* and *Kol Nidre*.

**Ignacy Zalewski  
*Who Were You, Mr. Grosfeld?* – Postlude (2022)**

*Who Were You, Mr. Grosfeld?* serves as a personal musical reflection. This composition delves into the enigmatic life of my great-great-grandfather, Grosfeld, whose biography remains a mystery to me despite years of researching my family's history. This piece serves as a meditation on the identity of Mr. Grosfeld, leaving me to rely on imagination and music to fill the gaps.