



## Report COZ 32: February 23, 2021 **Music in israel's formative years** Jehoash Hirshberg and Irit Youngerman

	<p><b>COZ 32: Tuesday 23 February</b> <b>Professor Jehoash Hirshberg</b></p> <p>Emeritus professor at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, specialising in opera and Israeli Art Music talks with</p> <p><b>Dr Irit Youngerman</b> Research and teaching fellow University of Haifa on</p> <p><b>A Melody That Doesn't Exist Anymore: Hanoch Jacoby's <i>Mutatio</i> (1975) of the Negation of Exile in Israel's Formative Years</b></p>	
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COZzes are live-streamed and archived for future access on the on the COZ playlist of the IFJMS YouTube channel: [here](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1mEnDNhrSVEQtEiEvgJiMU_dBMP_I5)

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4LimEnDNhrSVEQtEiEvgJiMU\\_dBMP\\_I5](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4LimEnDNhrSVEQtEiEvgJiMU_dBMP_I5)

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### COZ 32: 23 February 2021 - Report by Malcolm Miller

**'A Melody That Doesn't Exist Anymore: Hanoch Jacoby's *Mutatio* (1975) of the Negation of Exile in Israel's Formative Years'**

Video link: <https://youtu.be/sEOIANiISNQ>

#### **Dr Irit Youngerman, introduced and chaired by Professor Jehoash Hirshberg**

A fascinating talk on an unfamiliar symphonic work, *Mutatio* (1975) by the distinguished Israeli composer, Hanoch (Heinrich) Jacoby (1909-1990), highlighted some central themes in music in the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and underlined the value of intermingling ethnomusicology with historical musicology, analysis and composition to shed light on issues of musical meaning and identity.

The distinguished scholar Jehoash Hirshberg, Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University and author of numerous publications on the music and composers in Israel, introduced Dr Irit Youngerman, one of his former doctoral students, now a Research and Teaching Fellow at Haifa University, and underlined her expertise in the field of the historical development of Israeli music.

#### **Historical and biographical context**

Dr Youngerman's clear delivery and highly structured presentation guided us gracefully through complex issues, involving historical and biographical context, analysis and a reappraisal of the generic role of the composer. We heard first about Jacoby's stylistic reference points: the individual, Bach-inspired modernism of his teacher Hindemith and of Israeli popular nationalism, a term coined by Hirshberg denoting a style directed to social uses and shaping a national audience. Jacoby

studied with Hindemith in Berlin in the 1930s, cutting short a successful career in Germany as violist and composer after the rise of Nazism in 1933. We heard how Jacoby's move to Palestine in 1934 from Europe (where he was dismissed in 1933 and first went to Turkey) as with so many émigré composers of that generation, led to a dichotomy in his creative identity between a lost world and a new life, the challenge of a double negation of being forced out of Germany, and yet having to distance oneself from one's European past once in Israel. Jacoby's notable output reflected the aesthetic challenges of the formative years, engaging with varied Jewish sources (as in his arrangements for Bracha Zfira) and large scale orchestral works.

### ***Mutatio* - a watershed**

Yet as we heard, it was *Mutatio*, the title of which suggests the transformational aspect both of music and even identity, which represented a watershed in the composer's own personal development, summing up complex influences and identity. Indeed, after completing an analysis of the work, Dr Youngerman cited Jacoby's own description of the work, as a marker of his position in relation to his Israeli style and the German tradition from which it stemmed.

But first the detective work: as we learned, Jacoby based the work on pre-existing material, derived from his research into the eastern, Mizrahi Jewish heritage in a collection produced as part of an **"Education Music Series" project**. The collection was compiled by the composer Haim Alexander in the 1970s based on field work done by the ethnomusicologist Dr Johanna Spector (1915-2008) in the early 1950s.

The project was aimed at encouraging practical arrangements, rather than scholarly research, and accordingly melodies were sent to a variety of composers, in dual-purpose transcriptions: one un-metred, free rhythm, thus close to the original; the other metrically clarified, for use in compositions. Dr Youngerman contrasted Alexander's 'practical' transcriptions and those more scholarly ones by the ethnomusicologist Amon Shiloah (Z'L).

The melodies which Jacoby received and was drawn to were two settings of the medieval Piyyut (sacred poem) 'Hon tahon', recited and chanted on the New Year/Rosh Hashana. Jacoby was attracted by the similarities and differences between those settings which were from the Kurdistan and Bagdad traditions, and explored the possibility that the variants reflected a prior common source, which did not exist anymore. Dr Youngerman delighted us with the original field recordings of those examples sung in 1951 and 1952 by singers from the two communities, which we followed in modern notation transcription.

### **Combining East and West**

Jacoby aimed to create his own 'common source' combining elements of both versions, a type of 'ur-melody'. And whilst on one level looking East, he was drawn 'West' to the Bach chorale tradition as appropriated by his teacher Hindemith, as for instance seen in the symphony *Mathis der Maler* (1934). Dr Youngerman demonstrated how *Mutatio* shows a clear modelling on that work, a type of Bloomian 'misreading' which, pace Joseph N Straus, reinterprets Hindemith, using similar

structural devices, orchestration, and use of quotation, to new effect. Where Hindemith quotes a Bach Chorale in the framing sections surrounding a movement in symphonic style, Jacoby draws instead on the Piyyut melodies, both the transcribed versions and his own 'common source' version. The sonata design remains at the movement's centre, its themes structured on the Piyyut motifs. To familiarise our ears to those citations, we enjoyed a special recording by the speaker's husband Yoram Youngerman, General Director of the Israel Camerata, Jerusalem.

As we learned, Piyyut melodies formed the thematic basis for Jacoby's novel symphonic form. We heard short examples of each process before hearing entire sections of the three-sectioned work. Thanks to the clear explanations one could hear how in the first Jacoby creates a Chorale prelude type of treatment of his 'ur-version' projected by brass over a polyphonic tutti texture. Later the Kurdistani melody is intoned by tenor trombone over a polyphonic fabric leading to imitative passages based on the Bagdad variant, building a brass-rich climax; curiously chromatic yet resolving in consonance (seemingly A major in the first section), yet with a rhythmic fluidity resulting from changing metres. The central section develops motives in a kind of sonata exposition, with somewhat opulent orchestration, yet thinning out for the climactic double fugue conclusion, in which the fugal development of the Piyyut is interwoven with a second fugue based on the Kurdistani trombone theme, driving to an exciting flourish.

The overwhelming effect was of a surging dynamic whole, a powerful symphonic statement which expresses a tension between echoes of the composer's prewar years and the dynamic energy of his Israeli maturity a tension between east and west of a particular power, overtly projecting multi-layered identities and meanings.

Dr Youngerman's fascinating talk raised lively questions, on topics like the more recent appeal of the Piyyut to younger Israeli composers, and the Hebrew language as a common source for communities in dispersion. Thanks to Dr Youngerman and Professor Hirshberg, our understanding of the multi-faceted picture of music in Israel is much enriched, and new light shed on the renaissance of Jewish musical research and composition at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its evolution through the dark years of 'exile' and displacement, to its fruition in Israel and beyond.

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## **Irit provided the following links**

**“A Melody that Doesn't Exist Anymore”: Hanoch Jacoby's  
*Mutatio* and its sources in Jewish-Iraqi Piyyut**

Irit Youngerman [ibyman@gmail.com](mailto:ibyman@gmail.com)

### **Further info and links**

This talk is based on my recent article:

“ ‘A Melody That Doesn't Exist Anymore’: Negation, Erasure, and Void in Israeli Art Music, as Reflected in Hanoch Jacoby's *Mutatio*.” *Musical Quarterly* Vol. 103, No. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2020): 139–183.

- Link to *Mutatio* on youtube:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_Isil8xEM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_Isil8xEM)
- Hindemith – *Mathis der Maler* symphony  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-YT3Rd4ZJg>
- “Es sungen drei Engel” – chorale  
<https://youtu.be/OxYxNR48TIM>

Please see also the music examples below

### Bagdad Version (trans. Haim Alexander)

### Kurdistan Version (trans. Haim Alexander)

### Jacoby's Version

### *Hon ta'hon* Transcription by Amnon Shiloah

drum ♩ = 80 27

חוֹן תָּ - חוֹן עַל בָּ - נֵי - הָ  
 Hon tā - hon 'al bā - ne - khā

לְ - - הָ - שָׁ - בִּים  
 le - - - khā shā - - - vim

חַד - פּ - יָב לְ - פָּ - נֵי - הָ  
 uv - fa - ḥad le - fā - ne - khā

נְ - - - צָ - בִּים  
 ni - - - ṣā - - - vim

יְ - - הָ - אִים עַת יִ - קָרֶ - אוֹ  
 ye - - re - 'im 'et yi - qāre - 'u

לְ - דִין - לְ עַל כֵּן בָּ - אוֹ  
 le - din ki 'al kēn bā - 'u

נִכְ - - א - בִּים  
 nikh - - ā - - vim

**Hon ta'hon Transcription by A. Z. Idelsohn**

49. 

Hôn ta - hôn 'a - lă ba - ne - ھا lah şa - - - bim



ub - fa - ھاi lə - fa - ne - ھا niş - şa - - bim jě - rê - im



'êt jiq - qor - u lad - di - něki 'al kên ba - u ni - hě - a - - -



bim, za - hô - rě ti - zě - kôr ra - hă - mim jô - mẽ had - - - din etc.