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Xavier I. Sayeed April 12, 2020

Echoes of Al-Andalus:

Balancing Socio-Political Idealism and Pragmatism in Andalusian Music in Israel

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Abstract

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By Xavier I. Sayeed

This thesis explores the interaction between Andalusian music and the complex social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape identity discourses in Israel. This study is based on fieldwork in Ashdod and Jerusalem in 2019, during which I observed over two dozen concerts, participated in cultural events, and conducted interviews with musicians and ensemble affiliates. In the work produced, I aim to analyze my observations in the context of the historical framing of two Israeli ensembles: The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, founded in 1986, and Tarab Yerushalayim, founded in 2016. I capture the continuum of the interaction of these ensembles with the discourse on medieval Al-Andalus and the development of ethnic expression in Israel to craft a contextual understanding of the reasoning for contemporary practices as they relate to identity. I argue that performers of Andalusian music have responded deliberately and strategically to these dynamics, employing a combination of political pragmatism and social idealism in order to advance their personal and political goals. My thesis discusses this response within three sites where modern musical practices display an inextricable link to historical developments to inform political pragmatism and supply social idealism in varying degrees. I first discuss this through the development of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, framed as a response to the historical suppression and marginalization of Mizrahi Jewish culture. I then continue my study of the orchestra as a link between medieval Al-Andalus and modern Israel, specifically noting the functionality of nostalgia towards the propagation of certain ideologies that ultimately serve current political and social aims. Finally, I use the first two chapters to frame and assess the emergence of an ensemble called Tarab Yerushalayim, analyzing the ensemble's performance practice, aims, and audience engagement in relation to the evolution of discussions regarding authenticity and the state of multiculturalism in Israel.

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Introduction:
Echoes of Al-Andalus

The origins of Andalusian music are usually traced to 9th-century Cordoba, Spain, part of Islamic Al-Andalus. The available sources from which scholars analyze Andalusian music are descriptive literary works such as Abu Faraj al-Isbahani's *Kitab al-Aghani* and Ibn Sana al-Mulk's 12th-century treatise on the structure of the *muwashshah,* one form of Andalusian music still performed in contemporary Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East. In Muslim Al-Andalus, a prescriptive method for written transmission of compositions did not exist, limiting scholars' understanding of music from medieval Spain. Even so, written works by both Jewish and Muslim authors provide clear evidence that methods of musical composition were reliant on a developing poetic tradition, including Dwight F. Reynolds', "Jews, Muslims, and Christians and the Formation of Medieval Andalusian Music," (2016) and Edwin Seroussi's, "Music in Medieval Ibero-Jewish Society" (2007). My analyses in this thesis draw substantially on their interpretations of the primary sources in their original languages.

Arabic poetry at that time was distinct from the poetic traditions of other societies. The most outstanding characteristic of poetry in Latin, Greek, or almost any other language was the presence of consistent end-rhyme. While this characteristic, combined with the presence of a regular meter, created favorable conditions for the relationship between poetry and music, Reynolds notes the most "musically significant revolution" was the development of the strophic form (Reynolds 2016, 15). The significance of this development becomes clearer with the understanding of the traditional compositional process as described by Reynolds, who

specifically focuses on the *sawt* and *muwashshah* styles. These styles are the two most represented in contemporary iterations of Andalusian music but are a few of many traditions that existed in medieval Spain. Regarding the *sawt* style, a composer would select a few verses from a pre-existing poem to set to a tune (15). An understanding of the cultural underpinnings of this style can be gleaned from Abu Faraj al-Isbahni's *Kitab al-Aghani,* where he detailed the name of the composer, performer, lyrics, mode, rhythm, and context of performance and is a source from which scholars can understand that the *sawt* style was intended to be performed by highly trained, professional singers (15). It is well known that the setting for musical performance was often in government courts for important leaders who were often patrons of the arts. Many of the professional singers who gave life to these performances were slave women trained in Medina, which was the center of Islamo-Arabic music at the time (3).

Descriptions of vocal performances of *sawt* music and the descriptive characterization of the repertoire provides evidence that while utilizing the poetic text was indeed a part of the compositional process, the performative and compositional efforts were more aimed at showcasing vocal virtuosity, improvisational skills, and artistic training than centering the text itself. In an enthusiastic account reported by Yazid ibn al-Mahallabi and recorded by al-Isbani of the performance of a song composed by Ishaq al-Mawsili, al-Mahallabi enthuses over the song stating, "The first verse of this song is but four words... Look and see whether there is any technique in the art of singing that Ishaq did not manage to put into these four words!" (17). He then marvels at the use of the full vocal range and the melismatic contour of the song, remarking in multiple ways that al-Mawsili's composition is one of unparalleled brilliance of a quality that would be nearly impossible to replicate (17). This high praise is an indication that the

composition and performance referenced would be an example of what came to be known as "heavy songs" in the *Sawt* repertoire, which featured frequent melismatic, improvisatory passages and could only be performed by the most skilled musicians (17). From this account and the discourse around the categorization of repertoire, the poetic and virtuosic focus of this tradition is quite evident.

Reynolds comments on the opposition of the *sawt* and *muwashshah* styles, noting that the focus shifts from short texts with intricate music to long texts with much simpler music that is much more popular and accessible (18). I argue that the accessibility created by the repetitive nature of the *muwashshah* style has bearing on its endurance as a widely performed style of Andalusian music and that this accessibility also has important implications on the viability of the style as a medium for the expression of nostalgia for Al-Andalus in the contemporary era.

In medieval Al-Andalus, Jewish communities adapted popular Andalusian tunes for use in religious ceremonies, often retaining Arabic melodies, but using Hebrew poetry or scripture. This adaptation was enhanced by developments in the Hebrew poetic style, which emulated Arabic meter and end-rhyme. As shown by the developments in Hebrew poetry, Andalusian music was a site of great intellectual innovation that was situated in a remarkably advanced society. Following the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from the south of the Iberian Peninsula in the aftermath of the Spanish Inquisition, many settled in North Africa and iterations of Andalusian music were concurrently maintained and adapted.

The immigration of North African Jews after 1948 brought this music to the modern state of Israel. North African communities often faced prejudice and marginalization, contending as

they were with complex identity politics in a new country struggling to define itself. Of the ensembles that emerged after a two-decade-long period of cultural suppression that relegated ethnic music to private spaces, the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra has been among the most successful at attaining social mobility. The orchestra was an Israel Prize Laureate in 2006 and has been named an Israeli national orchestra.

With these contexts in mind, my thesis project is driven by the following question: How does the performance of Andalusian music reflect engagement with the complex social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape identity discourses in Israel? I argue that performers of Andalusian music have responded deliberately and strategically to these dynamics, employing a combination of political pragmatism and social idealism in order to advance their personal and political goals.

Terminology and Relevant Sociopolitical Context

My articulation of the way Andalusian music is shaped by its Israeli context is reliant on the clarification of relevant terminology. As such, I will provide brief summaries of the academic discourse around the terms used to refer to Jews of Middle Eastern and North African heritage. In the Israeli context, the term *Mizrahi* has evolved as a catch-all descriptor, encompassing many "oriental" ethnicities outside of non-Ashkenazi (Western/European) Jewry. Tracing the transferring of the term and the conflations associated with this definition is significant to understanding the rhetorical implications of its usage. This history also effectively foreshadows the complex dynamics of race and ethnicity discussed in my thesis.

The term Mizrahi, literally meaning Eastern, originated as a Hebrew translation of the German term *Ostjuden*, used to describe Eastern European Jews. From its inception, it has represented allocated otherness, forming a chain of orientalism distinguishing other cultures from the "progressive" Western elite (Khazzoom 2002, 95). This term was transferred to Middle Eastern and North African Jews by Israeli officials, many of whom were Eastern European themselves (96). This was a puzzling descriptor, especially North African Jewry that inhabited lands far Westward from Central Europe, solidifying the terminology as a valuation of culture rather than a geographic label. Communities from North Africa, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria referred to themselves as *Sephardi,* describing their origin in Spain, but modern discourse often conflates *Sephardi* and *Mizrahi,* looping these two distinct categories into one mutual other. For simplicity, I use the term in the broad, all-encompassing definition that it presently carries to allow my work to communicate effectively with other scholarship.

The term Arab Jew is similarly fraught with complications. Iraqi-born Israeli scholar Ella Shohat coined this term as a post-colonial reclamation of Arab identity, the loss of which, she suggests, stems from a "Eurocentric concept of a single 'Jewish History" [that] cut non-Ashkenazi Jews off from their origin" (1999, 1). Edith Haddad Shaked is one critic of Shohat's representation.

> The fact is that even when the Jewish community was culturally quite embedded in its Muslim Arab environment, Jews were always considered members of a socio-religious community minority, different and distinct from the Arab population, because of their Jewish cultural tradition, their common past, and the Judeo-Arabic language - all of them separated them from the Arabs. And the Arabs saw the Jews, even the ones who spoke only Judeo-Arabic, as members of a socio-linguistic religious-cultural community, different from theirs. (Shaked 2000)

Many who join Shaked in this criticism cite a variety of perceived ideological deficiencies, though not denying the influence of Muslim Arab societies on the Jewish populations that lived within them. This discourse has in turn sparked a broad array of counter-criticism from those in the Middle Eastern and North African diasporas who identify with this representation of their heritage and find usage in Shohat's presentation. This exchange illuminates the complex dialogue surrounding identity, a central theme throughout this thesis. My usage of "Arab Jew" (oftentimes interchangeably with *Mizrahi)* acknowledges the nuanced discussion surrounding that language while leveraging the theme of reclamation within.

Literature Review

My research draws upon portions of extensive and ever-growing bodies of previous scholarship on identity politics in modern Israel, as well as on Al-Andalus and its diaspora. Many of the key texts that influence my work's discussion of Mizrahi/Jewish music through its relationship with history and politics thus model a framework for my own integration of these topics and serve as a foundation for my understanding of the culture and politics of Al-Andalus, Morocco, and Israel. One foundational work for this understanding is an article by Jeff Halper, Edwin Seroussi, and Pamela Squires-Kidron entitled, "Musica mizrahit: Ethnicity and Class Culture in Israel" (1989). The article examines Mizrahi adaptation of eastern popular music and, through that discussion, outlines the development of ethnic expression in Israel from an era of suppression to its eventual emergence. I apply the timeline discussed in this article to my framing of the history of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra in order to understand the social conditions that surround its development. This work also contributes to my analysis of the ensemble's

adaptation of Western elements as a trend utilized within other Mizrahi art forms to acquire listeners and not as an isolated occurrence.

Commentary on the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra has been included in a broad array of scholarship on Mizrahi music in Israel, especially within works participating in the discourse surrounding identity politics and cultural equity. Sociologist Meirav Aharon did a four-year ethnographic study with the orchestra, culminating in her article, "Riding the Culture Train: An Ethnography of a Plan for Social Mobility through Music" (2012). This is the sole piece of scholarship that I have been able to locate that addresses the ensemble exclusively, though my findings are limited by language barriers. Aharon's work provides a thorough analysis that contextualizes the performance practice of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra as a strategic plan for social mobility and capturing deliberate decision-making toward this aim through interviews with the orchestra's founders. Aharon's analysis of the orchestra complements my own experiences and observations in the field, allowing me to address factors beyond the scope of her study. It also provides crucial support for the limitations and barriers within my research process, such as the relatively short length of my ethnographic research trips and my challenges with access and communication as an outside, undergraduate researcher conducting my research in English.

Edwin Seroussi's, "Music in Medieval Ibero-Jewish Society," (2007) is another work that is foundational to my research efforts both in content and in form. Seroussi details the history of medieval Jewish music and culture in the Iberian Peninsula, ultimately arriving at its dispersal and adaptation by the Sephardic diaspora in the Ottoman empire and beyond. Throughout my work, I draw on the history provided by Seroussi's account. My emulation of his connection

between past and present throughout the bulk of my writing on Al-Andalus was significantly enhanced by Jeffery Gorsky's book, *Exiles in Sepharad: The Jewish Millennium in Spain* (2015), which discusses medieval Spain and its Jewish community more broadly. Gorsky emphasizes Jewish prosperity in Al-Andalus and makes distinctions that undermine counter-narratives of pervasive Muslim persecution, reasoning that the level of achievement attained by the Jewish community in Muslim Spain would not have been possible under a strictly- enforced and oppressive regulations. The counter-narratives he subtly opposes informs my perception as I aim to stretch the aforementioned historical discussion into the future and analyze its implications in modern music and identity in the Israeli context.

These nuanced academic discussions are not directly influential to the performance and presentation of Andalusian music in Israel, but they do balance and contextualize a widespread tradition of nostalgia across the global Andalusian diaspora. Samuel England, in a review of Jonathan Holt Shannon's book *Performing Al-Andalus* (2015), suggests that "Modern retrospect on al-Andalus, it seems, is becoming its own interdisciplinary subfield" (England 2017, 331). This statement identifies part of the reason Shannon's book offers a substantial contribution to my own work in analyzing nostalgia towards Al-Andalus in Israeli music. *Performing Al-Andalus* is the product of an ethnographic study in modern-day Spain, Morocco, and Syria, which offers valuable insight into the ways in which collective memory of Al-Andalus aligns and differs between geographic regions. This not only allows me to approach my study of Israel comparatively but to also understand the aspects of Israeli culture and Sephardic Jewish history that uniquely shape this music. Within my discussion of what I call the Andalusian Ideal, Shannon's work encourages me to consider not only Andalusian music as locally-specific but

also Andalusian memory. This distinction provides grounds to account for agency in the presentation of heritage within Israeli music and subsequently assess the aims that could potentially be served by the distinctions of the Arab Jewish approach.

Mark Slobin's work gives further grounds for describing trends in Jewish music. His article, "Four Paradoxes and Ten Dilemmas of Studying Jewish Music," offers key terminology to my analysis of young musicians (1995). The concept of "post-minority music-making," (21) which he uses to describe American Jews who have become "connoisseurs of their own past" (21) offers parameters to describe the attitudes of young Arab Jews towards the presentation of Andalusian music in an evolved Israeli society. I expand on these fundamental source materials among others to explore evidence of the specific potential of Andalusian music and associated rhetoric as a platform to assert cultural legitimacy, exercise agency, reclaim a nuanced cultural identity, and ultimately, challenge the belief that Arab and Jewish identities are mutually exclusive.

Methodology

My interest in Al-Andalus began in May of 2017 when I toured southern Spain and Portugal as a part of the Emory University Concert Choir. After visiting La Alhambra in Granada, I became fascinated with the history of Muslim Spain that was reflected in the intricate architecture of the palace. I was especially intrigued by the narratives of Jewish and Muslim coexistence in the area, which I first encountered in the Alhambra itself. My interest was reinforced by a visit to the former Jewish quarter of Córdoba, where a bronze statue of Maimonides, the medieval Jewish philosopher and theologian, sat around the corner from the

Córdoba Synagogue. Following this trip, I became increasingly interested in exploring the history of this narrative of coexistence, as well as the music of Andalusia. During this pursuit, I first learned of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra. I began listening to their multiple-volume album *Judeo-Arabic Music from Andalusia* daily. My regular listening blossomed into an academic research project, which has culminated in the writing of this thesis.

My work draws on findings from a six-week research trip to Israel in the summer of 2019. While there, I was primarily located in the port city of Ashdod, where I attended almost two dozen performances, conducted interviews with musicians and ensemble administrators, participated in local cultural events, and developed lasting relationships with residents. This trip informed my understanding of Israeli cultural dynamics and served as a first-person orientation to the Israeli music scene.

Only a day after my arrival to Israel in early June, I attended two concerts on successive nights by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra in Be'er Sheva and Jerusalem. Upon leaving the Henry Crown Jerusalem Theater, I encountered a few members of the orchestra and was able to establish contact with one of the ensemble's administrative staff members. This initial contact led to several other opportunities for direct engagement, including an invitation to an intimate concert followed by a tour of the orchestra's administrative office and a loosely-structured interview with a member of their staff. As she and I chatted over a meal at a nearby eatery, she paused to inquire about my background and expressed satisfaction that I was a Muslim American studying Andalusian music in Israel. She invited me to return the next day and travel by bus with the musicians to a set of afternoon children's concerts in the Negev.

I spent time backstage before, during, and after the performances, introducing myself to and casually conversing with anyone willing to speak with me. The younger players were most excited to share their experiences and ensure I was properly versed in the history and significance of Andalusian music. Throughout the remainder of my trip, I met with many of them several times to chat informally over coffee or lunch. Between hearing diatribes about politics, participating in impassioned discussions about artistry, and collectively ruminating on the minutiae of daily life, I was constantly scrambling for my notebook or phone to jot down quick notes to aid in my effort to piece together my understanding of identity, culture, and music.

Beyond the performances of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, I also attended almost twenty others. Many of these concerts were grouped under the Mediterranee Festival Ashdod or the Ashdod Dance Festival. The Mediterranee Festival was a week-long event that included nightly outdoor performances by diverse Israeli artists, multiple film screenings daily, and concerts by prominent artists from Morocco, Greece, Turkey, Spain, and France held in multiple performance venues, including the Ashdod Performing Arts Center, Ashdod Art Museum, and several smaller locations within the same plaza and nestled next to City Hall. The criteria I used when choosing concerts involved a hierarchy of aims that applied to my goals for the trip as a whole. I was chiefly concerned with exposure to Moroccan music and secondarily concerned with sampling music from across the Mediterranean and exposure to Israeli culture at large. Experiences of note include a performance by Les Femmes Du Tetuoun accompanied by Moroccan Israeli singer Neta Elkayam and a screening of the Moroccan film *Razia.* After a day spent at concerts and films, I sat in the festival square as a DJ played music on stage and watched friends and families dance and socialize.

The Ashdod Dance Festival was a similar display of rich culture and connection with a week of diverse classes, concerts, and performances beginning at 8 am followed by Israeli folk dancing by the beach until 5 am the next day. A large performance staged at Ashdod's large outdoor amphitheater was called *Mazel Tov* and included several dance troops portraying milestone events in Jewish life. I was particularly intrigued by the distinction between the representation of eastern and western cultures, clearly contrasted by the use of vibrant colors and stereotyped, easternized melodies. This event also featured the Jerusalem East Orchestra and West, formerly the Jerusalem Andalusian Orchestra, directed by Tom Cohen. At a lively Moroccan dance session, a presumably Moroccan rug with an intricately-sewn picture was on display in the corner of the room just a few feet away from where a large group of spectators (including myself) were crammed tightly together inching forward in hopes of being served a piece of M'smen with honey. Later that day, I watched the sound-check for a sold-out "Moroccan Night" concert as I had not been able to obtain a ticket for the actual event. Luckily, this allowed me to recognize one of the band members later in the evening, who escorted me back to the venue to join a cohort of other unlucky, ticketless folks behind the metal barricades establishing the parameters of the official event.

Concert attendance consisted of much more than simply "listening." Among the factors for which I looked when observing a public performance include, approximate age of audience members and performers, ensemble setup, audience interaction before, during, and after the show, observation of audience and performer dress and mannerisms, musical timbre and tone quality, audience participation, and any identifiable behavioral norms. These observations aided

in my understanding of Israeli music and culture and the variety of performances I attended allowed me to observe differences in these features in different contexts.

A significant development made during this trip was my awareness of a group called Tarab Yerushalayim after a player from the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra invited me to attend one of the group's rehearsals. As several young players from the orchestra further described the group to me toward the end of my trip, I developed several questions about how the details of this ensemble might inform my research. These questions necessitated a subsequent visit to Israel, which took place over ten days in December of 2019. The purpose of this trip was to observe additional concerts and conduct interviews. In addition to these interviews, I traveled with the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra to an evening concert in Be'er Sheva.

During both of my research trips, I made an effort to expose myself to as much quotidian culture as possible. I visited museums, spent every Saturday evening watching Israeli folk dancing, and walked daily from one end of the city to the other. I casually conversed with security guards, store clerks, and museum attendants that I encountered regularly. I became the proudly adopted "son" of my hosts in Ashdod, an Indian Jewish family where I fit in quite naturally. I made trips to the local skate park where my extreme lack of balance and skill solicited frequent advice from kids half my age with ten times the ability. Every Friday I'd embark on a three-hour round trip journey by bus and on foot to attend Friday prayer at the nearest Mosque in Jaffa, rushing to get on the last bus before Shabbat and always sure to grab some chocolates for my "mom" on the way. Through this cultural engagement, I developed an initial awareness of the broader context within which my project was situated.

As I embarked on my research, I navigated aspects of my own identity that both enhanced and impinged on my work. In the three times that I have traveled to Israel, including one non-research-related trip, I have spent well over 15 hours collectively waiting on additional screening after the familiar "just one moment" following a glance at my passport. As a Muslim man in post-9/11 America, I was no stranger to a bit of airport anxiety, but I found myself unusually preoccupied with adjusting my mannerisms to broadcast my benevolence. Although this was more of a nuisance than a deeply troubling experience, I found the mental strain of this worry and performance burdensome as it bled into the early stages of my research. My reflex was to assume the role of counter-narrative, to assume that I could possibly convince anyone suspicious of my presence that people who looked and believed like me were kind, caring, or morally-upright. As I persisted with my work, I grew in navigating this challenge in a way that has had a lasting impact. Assuming this role also allowed my time in Israel to have an impact beyond my research objectives.

While I was planning my stay in Jerusalem, I was admittedly naive to the implications of the geographic location of the accommodation I booked using Airbnb. I was concerned with being near the theater and not much else and ended up in Rehavia. My host was a modern-Orthodox woman who greeted me with a warm smile followed by detailed instructions for keeping the kitchen kosher. As we chatted she confessed that she was nervous to accept a reservation from someone with my last name. In a hushed tone she said, "I've never had a Muslim stay here" before erupting with excitement at this new milestone.

During my short stay there, we attended concerts and events together and spent many nights up late talking. On Thursday, I stayed in with her to prepare the next day's lunch and ran

out to get last-minute necessities - ice cream and flowers. We chatted incessantly with only a few minor points of tension that made me worry about how she perceived me in relation to my Muslim identity. This worry was eased the next morning when she made it her personal mission to find me the best place to attend Friday prayer. I had my heart set on going to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, but she was worried about my safety and was trying to convince me otherwise. I expressed feeling conflicted and a bit disappointed at which point she wrapped me in her arms and shed tears as she sympathized with me. As a religious Jew, she had never been to the Temple Mount herself and this moment of empathy and care was simultaneously heartbreaking.

As Shabbat began that evening, I accompanied my new friend to a modern-Orthodox singles dating event and marriage workshop as a special guest. Before we left, she had me adjust my head-covering five different ways until she was satisfied that I didn't look *too* Muslim. At the event, everyone was sharing their family history and telling stories of their Jewish upbringing. As I stood up for my turn, I watched an audience of 40 hold their breath as I announced I was Muslim. I quickly bounced back with a joke to relieve the tension and many attendees came up to meet me afterward. At lunch the next day, she told me that for many of those people, I was the first Muslim they've ever been able to ask questions about Islam. Though I was only in Jerusalem for 5 days, she and I built a lasting relationship and still keep in touch.

Although the story of this relationship has little to do with my research directly, it highlights some of the ways I navigated and explored the meaning of my own identity while in Israel. My experiences interact with the nuances of my work and ultimately, shape the understanding that has allowed me to complete this project.

Overview of Chapters

My first chapter frames the emergence of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra within its historical context of Israeli cultural development. I use this chapter to detail how the orchestra interacted with the surrounding discourse of identity, analyzing strategic measures taken to assert their cultural heritage. I trace the methods of enacting these deliberate means of cultural navigation and highlight the presence of idealism surrounding the orchestra's vision of social inclusion and equity.

In my second chapter, I emphasize the idealism promoted and made possible by the orchestra's affiliation with a historically mythicized Andalusian narrative. I assert that their participation in a larger trend of nostalgia centered around locally-specific meaning-making gives the ensemble agency in transmitting their heritage to broader Israeli society.

My third chapter centers around the discussion of players from the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra who initiated a group of young musicians called Tarab Yerushalayim. I analyze the differences in their approach to Andalusian music as a response to developments in Israeli society, specifically discussing the relationship between authenticity and identity.

Chapter 1:
Negotiating Identity

Waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, called *aliyot* (singular, *aliyah*), began well before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The First Aliyah, between 1882 and 1903, comprised European Zionists. The Second Aliyah took place between 1904 and 1914 and brought forty thousand immigrants to Israel from Eastern Europe. After the Third Aliyah (1919-1923) brought 35,000 Jewish immigrants from various locations, the Fourth (1924-1929) brought mostly middle-class Polish immigrants and the Fifth (1932-1936) members of the German elite.

With most early *olim* or immigrants, coming from European nations, modern Israeli culture, and society developed with broadly European characteristics. Arab Jews did not immigrate to the new state *en masse* until the period between 1948 and 1951. The positionality of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish populations was influenced by linguistic, cultural, and racial variance, with Ashkenazi governmental officials having the authority to marginalize their Arab coreligionists ˛ by securing them provisions away from city centers and on the fringes of the geographical space considered to be Israel proper.

Contemporary Israeli nationalism and assimilation reflects the origin of the dominant social class, whose ideas were influenced by their experiences as minorities themselves in Europe. The so-called “emancipation of European Jewry” between 1789 and 1930 (Rosenblatt 2020) was directly tied to the rise of European nationalism in the Enlightenment era, which sparked debate about the implications and requirements of citizenship. In France, specifically,

prominent Jews in the community were assembled by Napoleon in 1807 for a "Grand Sanhedrin," in which they were engaged in deliberate discourse on how French Jewry would interact with French society at large. This led to a decree in 1808 that included provisions such as, "[that] every Israelite is religiously bound to consider his non-Jewish fellow citizens as brothers and to aid, protect, and love them as though they were coreligionists," and "[that] the Israelite is required to consider the land of his birth or adoption as his fatherland, and shall love and defend it when called upon" (Dorff 2018, 187-188).

The political emancipation of French Jewry depended on assimilation into French society. This meant demonstrating fidelity to the laws, courts, and other systems of the nation and was defined by the idea that Jews should exist as individuals and abandon ties to collectivist thought. Similar negotiations of citizenship were taking place in Germany and across the rest of Europe during this period. This idea of citizenship was pervasive in Europe in the century leading up to the establishment of the Zionist political organization in 1897 and through the subsequent development of Israeli society in the early twentieth century. This framework of nationalism, therefore, has been recreated in the assimilationist ideologies that continue to influence modern Israeli society and that have historically shaped the experiences of non-Ashkenazi minorities.

Pragmatic considerations associated with navigating the challenges brought on by the pressure to assimilate dominated the early experiences of Arab Jews in modern Israel, a stark contrast to the majority of European immigrants that had come before them. Israeli Journalist Ruth Margalit writes: "The Jewish population that predated the founding of the state was primarily young, secular, and idealistic...By contrast, the new Mizrahi arrivals tended to be large

families from traditional societies" (2016). These differences provided further barriers to the imperative of assimilation presented to this community and solidified the challenge for Jews from across the Middle East and North Africa to express their cultural heritage against the backdrop of a Europeanized culture.

With this historical context in mind, this chapter uses the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra of Ashdod as a lens through which to explore broader issues of representation and cultural assimilation for Arab Jews in the modern nation-state of Israel. I focus my discussion around two key sites of negotiation: the desire to assert their distinctive cultural heritages and to perform their support for the notion of a unified "Israeli" cultural identity; and the imperative to challenge fundamentally European notions of high culture and to emulate them strategically. My analysis of the negotiations around these contrasting aims illuminates the strategic balance of idealism and pragmatism necessary for Arab Jewry's cultural survival in modern Israel and offers insight into the particulars of navigating complex cultural identity.

The background of Israeli cultural development and its effect on ethnic expression is central to my discussion of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra's genesis. On this topic, Jewish music scholars Jeff Halper, Edwin Seroussi, and Pamela Squires-Kidron (1989) write:

> The Israeli government's policy of *mizuq qaluyot* (the 'mixing of the exiles', an Israeli version of the melting pot) placed great pressure on non-Western immigrants to abandon their ethnicity as a precondition for full social integration, and throughout the fifties and sixties, overt ethnic expressions were rare. (133)

Aligning the dual goals of maintaining ethnic distinctiveness and assimilating to Israeli society proved a difficult task, incompatible with government efforts to construct a culture that was

characteristically "Israeli," as opposed to a segmented conglomerate of identities and traditions from every corner of the world. This aim of unification was further complicated by an underlying assumption that a "socially integrated" culture would have European characteristics and would, therefore, marginalize Mizrahim who did not properly assimilate. The unfortunate manifestation of these complications and expectations is that, according to Halper, Seroussi, and Squires-Kidron, "Middle Eastern and North African ethnicity was quiescent during the first thirty years of Israel's existence" (133).

Cultural quarantine and the resulting suppression of musical expression began to subside in the 1970s as the narrow and exclusive definition of Israeli identity was increasingly challenged and the need for Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews to express their cultural identities was vehemently expressed. One such example of this expression came from the Israeli Black Panther movement, which began in 1971, founded by a group of ten young Moroccan Jews. The movement was nestled in an impoverished neighborhood called Masurara near downtown Jerusalem. A significant portion of the Arab Jewish population that had been there for nearly two decades was living on welfare and sixty percent of the houses were deemed uninhabitable. The movement, as their chosen moniker suggests, drew inspiration from the American Black Panther movement. They identified closely with the plight of Black Americans, feeling disenfranchised, exploited, and oppressed by the "unfeeling, arrogant Ashkenazi elite" (Frankel 2008, 10). The Panthers in Israel sought to politicize their identity and generate public unrest around ethnic tensions between Jews in Israel. They were particularly inflamed by issues such as the contrast between living conditions in Masurara and sizable benefits, apartments, and tax-free cars being offered to new immigrants from the Soviet Union (10-11). Although their approach openly

utilized threats of violence and was criticized for many facets of their ideological alignment, the group was ultimately successful at their objective, and their impact continues to be commemorated by Mizrahi cultural organizations. On this topic, historian Oz Frankel notes that "The Panthers' provocation destabilized notions of Israeli identity by performing difference, unsettling discursive consensus, and generating discord in the public sphere" (18). The group played a significant role in the cultural disruption that needed to take place in order to create spaces for Arab Jews to assert their cultural difference.

A rise in Mizrahi governmental involvement and representation heralded further cultural change later in the decade. A watershed development was the rise of the Likud Party in 1977 (Halper, Seroussi, Squires-Kidron 1989, 134). Prior to this, the Ashkenazi-dominated Labor Party and its predecessors led the government. This was the first time the left lost an election, and was significant because 70% of the voters that supported the incoming center-right government were Mizrahim (Omer-Man 2012). This marked an important transition in Israeli politics and an opportunity for second-generation Israelis, whose families came from Arab lands to assert their culture without fear of casting doubt on their status as Israelis. Edwin Seroussi writes that from the 1980s onward young Moroccan Jews attained status and authority, in particular, "mastering the state-supported field of culture" (2008, 33). These developments would spark what he calls an "astounding renaissance of Moroccan Jewish music" (32).

The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra was founded in 1986 in the wake of this renaissance by Moti Malka and Yahiel Lasri, both Moroccan immigrants. The core of the group was dubbed the "authentic ensemble" and was made up of Israelis with Moroccan heritage, who play traditional instruments such as the oud, kemanja, tar, and darbouka. This group of musicians usually

performed from memory, as many of them learned the tunes in their childhood homes and synagogues. The second group of musicians was predominantly of Russian heritage, trained as Western classical musicians and simultaneously employed by local symphony orchestras. They played instruments like the violin, cello, viola, bass, oboe, and trumpet, and were literate in modern Western staff notation.

The majority of the orchestra's present repertoire consists of *piyyutim* and *pizmonim*, Sephardic liturgical and para-liturgical songs typically sung in the synagogue or home (Shelemay 1998). These songs are often associated with milestone events in one's life or in the Jewish calendar year, such as holidays and events like a *brit milah* (circumcision ceremony) or wedding. In an interview with one of the group's administrative staff members, I learned that bringing these songs to the stage was controversial at first among Moroccan immigrants, who felt this repertoire belonged in domestic or religious domains and was not appropriate for decontextualized performance in concert settings (interview, June 25, 2019). Others countered that it was time for Israelis of Moroccan origin to cease hiding their culture and to prove that it was not inferior to the dominant European cultures, effectively launching the orchestra into a "war on cultural amnesia" (Belmaaza 2013). The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra offered a counter to Ashkenazi hegemony by bringing Mizrahi culture out of hiding. The ensemble also served the Moroccan Jewish community by both addressing the cultural amnesia that was a product of the historical suppression of overt ethnic expression and offering a space for communal refuge.

In sociologist Meirav Aharon's (2012) article on her four-year ethnographic work with the ensemble, she recounts words by founder Yehiel Lasri that cast the establishment and model of the orchestra as a response to historical stigmatization and suppression:

> As Dr. Lasri said, the revitalized experience of cultural traditions "frees many people…from feelings of inferiority. We, too, have classical music that can be heard in concert halls." Those members of immigrant groups who believe that they possess an "appropriate" culture, which is at least as legitimate as that possessed by more dominant social groups, are freed from some of the effects of cultural stigma. (8)

This suggests that the orchestra was founded partially to create cohesion and refuge from a dominant social class that did not see Eastern cultural expression as valuable. The orchestra's appeals to the Mizrahi experience of suppression and devaluation marks an effort to empower a collective movement to assert culture. Born out of this was an idealistic notion of what that space would look like and how the ensemble would impact perceptions of Mizrahi Jews outside their community.

Lasri's insistence that the Moroccan Jewish community also has a classical music tradition reflects a tendency among the orchestra's leadership to claim commensurability with the dominant culture. This deceptively simple statement in fact reflects a complex set of assumptions. First, it echoes the plight of the orchestra and its broader community's desire to express that Mizrahi culture was of equal value to Ashkenazi culture. This is accomplished in part by the articulation of deliberate parallelism with Western symphonic orchestras, simultaneously buying into and challenging its place at the highest echelon of cultural consideration. As the orchestra fought for recognition and government funding, even threatening

suits for discrimination, their movement favored the phrase “Beethoven was ethnic too” (Seroussi 2008, 33). This transmits the idea that not only was the Moroccan classical tradition as rich and storied as the Western classical tradition but equally informed by influences outside Israel. Andalusian music was arguably more fit for Israeli society because instead of the imported Christian compositions of the likes of Mozart and Bach, it offered only “Judaic arrangements" (Shabi 2009).

The name of the ensemble itself transmitted these complex ideas of parallelism to the public in a highly strategic, yet subtle way. The use of the term “orchestra” is generally applied to Western classical music ensembles. Moreover, its use outside that context is more often a product of colonial language influence than an appropriate description of local practices. For example, Moroccan Andalusian ensembles use the term when translating from French to English. Its use in this case implies something significant, specifically its aim to create a parallel branding to the nationally renowned and government-funded Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra. Yahiel Lasri recounts the deliberateness of this connection in comments regarding the name of the ensemble:

> [Calling it] the “Israel Andalusian Orchestra” would make it a part of what is happening here [in Israel], not what happens in Morocco. Other suggestions were “The Andalusian Orchestra” [and] “Moroccan Jewry.” We went for the name that expresses our worldview--a link between Andalusia and Israel. Like the Israel Philharmonic. It’s not a surrender [as dropping reference to “Morocco” might imply suppressing their origins] … because, after all, we came here to build a state. (Aharon 2012, 10)

As demonstrated by the above statement, this parallelism was meant to communicate the ensemble’s message about its place within society and its inherent value. The use of this terminology introduces the efforts of the ensemble into the field of classical music and

demonstrates an awareness of the norms of the field as understood in the Western context. In the establishment of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, this measure of relative valuation posed a further set of pragmatic concerns when establishing the norms and practices of the group itself.

Aharon notes that these concerns were addressed through a form of what she calls "cultural appropriation," with the orchestra emulating Western performance practice. This is reflected in aspects of performance such as the dress of the performers, their positioning on stage, the presence of a conductor, the usage of sheet music, and the acknowledgment of a concertmaster. Aharon illuminates the extent to which this was a deliberate choice on part of the ensemble's founders:

> During the process of foundation, Professor Sheetret thought that the Andalusian [players] should only play on authentic instruments and sit on mats on the ground, so that would make us look like folklorists. We'd be invited to the Maimuna [Mizrahi festival] but we'd never get into Israeli society. Motti and I wanted suits and bow-ties – that was the only way to preserve our culture. We knew the way the wind blows in the corridors of power – we would never get a subsidy. Besides, a lot of Mizrahis here in Israeli society see themselves as Western, so to connect them up to their music, their home, again, they would need a link to their Westernness. (11)

The emulation of elite culture in areas of performance practice such as attire was a result of deliberate decisions to appeal to the "corridors of power" to achieve cultural prestige (11). This suggests that the orchestra's founders were strategic in their attempts to make their culture palatable to the broader Israeli society. The balance of power and strategy related to the initial mobility of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra unearths a complex and dynamic discussion critically reliant on the ensemble's historical framing.

Though the ethnographic material in Aharon's study of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra provides a crucial resource for my own study, I take exception to her use of cultural appropriation as a key theoretical framework. There is a significant tension between the term "cultural appropriation" and the background of the cultural group that initiated the ensemble. Current academic uses of this term address ethical issues stemming from power imbalances due to race and colonization and mostly aim to criticize hegemonic powers. As demonstrated by Lasri's quote above, at the time of the orchestra's founding, working with second-generation Arab Jews also involved appealing to the Westernized vision of Israeli culture that they learned was legitimate. This highlights the history of acculturation to the norms propagated by European dominance, which in turn indicates how utterly unreasonable it is to consider European culture to be something Mizrahim could willfully appropriate.

I suggest another framework that better serves to explain the strategic use of aesthetic properties from the Western orchestral milieu as a response to the social realities of early Arab Jewish migrants. In *Practical Reason*, Pierre Bourdieu (1998) counters criticisms regarding the tension between his proposed sociological framework and the concept of individual freedom, writing that freedom from social determinisms is dependent on awareness of said determinisms (5). I contend that the decisions that shaped the orchestra's navigation of Israeli culture were rooted in a profound awareness of the social determinisms that governed success in the particular field they were attempting to enter and navigate. Bourdieu's theory of capital enriches the discussion of this awareness. (Aharon herself briefly mentions Bourdieu, but does not pursue the concept of capital to any meaningful degree.) He describes "capital" as that which defines an individual's role or standing in social life. The dimensions of this concept are discussed through

specific categories, namely social, cultural, and economic capital. These three forms create what is called “the cycle of capital,” which describes the ability for one form to be leveraged or exchanged for another in the realm of social life (Bourdieu 1986).

Cultural capital can be subdivided into further categories, and the details of these distinctions help connect this social theory to the determinisms leveraged by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra. Though Bourdieu believed capital to be the property of an individual and not a collective, his theory accounts for shared cultural capital between those with a collective identity, such as the Moroccan Jewish community in Israel. Embodied cultural capital consists of an individual's skills, language, dress, accent, tastes, posture, and mannerisms (Bourdieu 1986). In the history of Arab Jewry previously discussed, it can be understood that coming to a Europeanized nation inevitably meant low levels of embodied cultural capital. Efforts toward acculturation likely played a role in arousing awareness of these determinisms and informing individual and communal behavior. I argue that the decision of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra to wear tuxedos and bow ties reflects a conscious awareness of this social reality, as evidenced by Lasri’s presentation of this choice as an appeal to the “corridors of power.”

Another significant dimension of capital, defined as holding positions of authority and attaining distinction and prestige, is institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). The connection between the political ascendance of young Moroccans and the Moroccan cultural renaissance discussed earlier is one example of how this form of capital has been attained and leveraged. This also highlights a key acknowledgment neglected in Aharon’s otherwise thorough analysis, which was produced at a time when Moroccan political leadership had already become more commonplace in Israeli society. She argues that the institutionalized capital possessed by

orchestra founders Malka and Lasri (both government officials) was leveraged to gain shared cultural capital. I argue that this was not "cultural appropriation," but rather a process rooted in an awareness of social determinisms and informed actions that leverage them to navigate social realities and attain some measure of freedom.

These efforts ultimately resulted in recognition and funding from the government: the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra became an Israel Prize Laureate in 2006 and has been supported by the Municipal Society for Culture and the Ashdod Municipality. As further evidence of its accrued institutionalized capital, it has also been named a national orchestra alongside the Israeli Philharmonic. These accomplishments not only shore up the orchestra's claims to importance but also its efforts to legitimize Sephardic culture and to promote it *as* national culture.

Modern politics exposes complications in this narrative of legitimization via ongoing and overt critical questioning of the historical hegemony of European culture in Israel. This situation is encapsulated in the actions and rhetoric of the current Minister of Culture and Sport, Miri Regev, whose "goal has been to dislodge the 'elites' in order to elevate previously marginalized groups" (Margalit 2016). Regev has blatantly expressed her ferocious intolerance for those elites, describing them as people who believe in the superiority of classical music over Andalusian music. Her cultural combat has included threats to divert funding from the Israeli Opera and Tel Aviv theater groups, recommending only people of Mizrahi origin to serve on the government advisory board on culture, and restructuring the allocation of funding to favor groups that align with her fervently nationalistic ideologies. Regev has promoted divisive and arguably extreme policy measures aimed at rectifying historic inequity by propelling Mizrahi culture forward and incentivizing demonstrated fidelity to the ideals and expectations of the state under the Likud

party. For some, it is possible to overlook her polemics due to the perceived good she is accomplishing towards challenging Ashkenazi hegemony, while others fear that her campaign will incite hatred and resentment instead of respect and acceptance.

Regev's approach differs from the careful and balanced approach preferred by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra as it has navigated a complex cultural arena. As direct beneficiaries of her mission, this has likely introduced another component necessitating pragmatic balance for the group as it continues its efforts to preserve Mizrahi culture and appeal to a broader Israeli audience. Regev's ideologies demand that "culture remains in step with the state" (2016). This forces the modern iteration of the orchestra, which advertises itself as a cultural bridge between Israelis and the Arab world, to also align itself with practices that are perhaps contradictory to that aim. One such example of this is Regev's threat to defund organizations that refuse to perform in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The orchestra's aim to represent Mizrahi culture as equally valuable to Ashkenazic culture is also undoubtedly complicated by Regev's use of her platform to call for the overthrow of not only European hegemony, but of European culture.

Others address the dynamics of Israeli culture much differently than Regev. To describe the Israeli music scene, Benjamin Brinner cites the liner notes of woodwind instrumentalist Eyal Sela's 1999 album *Darma*: "…a daily interaction between different nations, religions, and cultures offers an opportunity to create a musical mosaic in which the east and west can live together in peace" (Brinner 2009, xxii). While Sela presents a remarkably beautiful idea about the mosaic created, the complicated history of ethnic expression exposes some of the necessary adjustments that must accompany that image. It is clear that some contributors to this mosaic have had to crush and manipulate their pieces more than others in order to vie for space. Some

fragments were distorted and discolored due to prolonged exposure to elements outside their natural environment. Small fragments from entirely different sources were grouped together to appear as one, perhaps deceiving unaware onlookers. I became aware of these adjustments at the early stages of my research. I was shocked to learn from ensemble members that the repertoire of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra includes numerous compositions from the Middle East and North Africa that are outside the Andalusian tradition. This was the result of an effort to be more marketable by appealing to not only Moroccans or those with ties to Andalusian music, but also to Eastern Jews in general. The usage of the group to create a platform for all Sephardic and Mizrahi music has broader implications for the lack of sufficient available mediums for these cultures to be presented to a broad audience. Moreover, it exposes a trend where ethnic groups must surrender some of their distinctiveness to account for others in an already limited marketplace. In the pervasiveness of this phenomenon in Arab Jewish music in Israel, it is evident that the Mizrahi stake in the cultural mosaic has not been passively earned, nor did it come without sacrifice.

This sacrifice is rooted in the need to perform their support for the notion of a unified "Israeli" cultural identity dominated early experiences for Arab Jews who were defined by their low cultural capital as new arrivals in a Europeanized state. Their positionality was cemented by a lack of access and subpar provisions arranged for them by the government, as well as property seizures by governments in the Middle East and North Africa prior to their immigration to Israel. Assimilation was a law-bound pretext for inclusion in society stemming from notions of citizenship developed in Enlightenment-era Europe. This only began to change as Mizrahim began to attain social and cultural mobility after years of suppression. Once the rise of the Likud

government created an environment where Eastern-ness and Israeli-ness were no longer at odds, those with non-European cultural identities were more able to express them openly. This gave rise to political movements and ethnic expression that led to the founding of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra.

The group's ascendance did not, of course, spell an end for Ashkenazi hegemony, and thus groups like the Israeli Black Panthers and modern Minister of Culture and Sports Miri Regev have used highly provocative tactics that draw attention to and challenge the issue of social inequity in the political arena. The founding of the orchestra itself was a challenge to European dominance, an effort that was furthered behind the scenes with threats of lawsuits for discrimination and crafted rhetoric. Even so, the need to conform to the Westernized norms of the field of classical music in order to gain recognition and prestige was and continues to be practiced by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, showcasing the amount of strategy and even sacrifice necessary to even enter the conversation. Today, still, the webpage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs describing Israeli music focuses exclusively on Western musical developments and mentions Eastern music only in connection to a Russian composer who appropriated Yemenite melodies (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010).

These negotiations reveal the balancing act required to initiate and maintain the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, which highlights some of the pressures and obstacles faced by Arab Jews throughout Israeli history. While idealism propels these efforts forward, the issues brought forth in these negotiations of identity showcase the many pragmatic challenges at hand and foreshadow the many ahead.

Chapter 2:
Chasing the Andalusian Ideal

While the previous chapter detailed pragmatism enacted with idealistic aims, my discussion in this chapter does the opposite. Broadly, I analyze the rhetorical impact of the term "Andalusian" as used by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra. I first take a historical approach to survey the history of nostalgia and intellectual achievement in Al-Andalus. I craft this historical framing to support my argument that the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra uses the term to leverage the mythos of medieval Al-Andalus, or what I call the "Andalusian Ideal," to covey a utopian vision of history that serves the demonstration of a unique role in modeling coexistence in modern Israel.

Nostalgia has been associated with Al-Andalus since the medieval period. This is reflected in the story of ʻAbd al-Rahman, a member of the Umayyad clan that ruled the Islamic world from Damascus until 750CE. When the Abbasids took over, he fled across North Africa to Al-Andalus. Alexander Elinson writes that al-Rahman "laid the groundwork for an Andalusian culture that constantly looked back in time, and eastward to define itself" (Elinson 2009, 3).

This is evident in several aspects of al-Rahman's cultural involvement. The palace he built was named after the Umayyad estate in Damascus. When he built the grand mosque in Cordoba, the mihrab (prayer niche) was oriented toward the direction of Mecca if the building were situated in Damascus. His obvious longing for his homeland is also reflected in his contribution to the Andalusian poetic canon. Consider this famous poem he authored about a palm tree:

A palm tree appeared to us in the middle of Rusafa.
In the west it is far from the land of palms.
So I said: “You are just like me in exile, far away,
and in long separation from my people.
You have grown up in a land in which you are a stranger,
and I am like you, isolated and far from home.
The morning cloud waters you with rain
that pours forth, the heavens pouring down torrents from the clouds.
(al-Marrakushi, 60; Elinson, 4)

The themes of exile and displacement present in al-Rahman's poetry, as well as the groundwork laid for a past-oriented and eastward-yearning culture fit well with the themes of the Jewish narrative and liturgy. They too were a people with an identity rooted in their history and a longing for the east, particularly Jerusalem. Moreover, with the people of Al-Andalus coming from diverse origins, nostalgia was a more generalizable feature, which allowed its reach to be inclusive of the particular sites of Jewish longing and memory. The tradition of nostalgia is applied towards the legacy of Andalusian achievement, specifically in regard to intellectual development and exceptional tolerance.

Actually, even without the nostalgic aggrandizement of Al-Andalus, the spirit of discovery and intellectual advancement in medieval Spain is quite remarkable. The library of the caliphate in Cordoba contained four hundred thousand books “at a time when the greatest library in Europe, in the monastery of Saint Gall, in Switzerland, held only six hundred books” (Gorsky 2015, 27). Some scholarly achievements of this period include profound works of architecture,

vast agricultural and scientific advances, commissioned poetry, literary treatises, grammatical texts, religious scholarship, and translations of Greek medical and philosophical texts. The resounding impact of these advancements remains evident. Even so, this list only begins to encompass the details of advancements made in the Islamic world in this time period.

Medieval Spanish Jewry benefited from and contributed to these advancements significantly. They also explored mystical spiritualism and generated new religious texts. Inspired by a rich Arabic poetic tradition, they developed a new Hebrew poetry that gave rise to great poets like Solomon ibn Gabriol, Samuel ibn Nagrela, Moses ben Ezra, Judah Halevi, and Abraham ben Ezra. The most successful members of the Jewish community became government ministers, and thus, were fully integrated into the life of the political elite. Diplomat Jeffery Gorsky describes the extent of Jewish success:

> By the 10th century, Spanish Jews were so proud of their status and achievements that they viewed themselves as the exiles and inheritors of Jerusalem: the name they gave to their province, Sepharad, comes from the book of Obadiah: "the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will inherit the cities of the Negev. (4)

This suggests that Jewish pride in Andalusian identity began as early as in Al-Andalus itself and gives evidence of the favorable conditions that facilitated the pride and success. Moorish rulers provided Jews with access to opportunities for wealth and power in exchange for their support (11), largely due to the utility of an alliance with Jews against opposing Christian forces (17). While tolerance in the region might not have been due to principle as much as practicality, its very existence was an anomaly in both European and Middle Eastern contexts where persecution and violence against Jews was commonplace.

Although a relative anomaly, some modern historians are hesitant to idealize or praise Muslim Spain. They argue that Jewish life was ultimately governed by a ruling class of Muslims that viewed Jews as second-class citizens. They were *dhimmis,* protected minorities, and were required by law to pay what is called a *jizya* tax in exchange for the governmental protection to which they were entitled. These groups were generally free to practice their religion and govern themselves as long as their practices did not interfere with Islamic law. Other regulations and restrictions that were in place include court testimony that did not hold as much weight as testimony from a member of the religious majority, the inability to make public displays, and the inability to hold a position of power over a Muslim.

This argument does not expose Andalusian society as inherently intolerant to its Jewish population. It can be appropriately contextualized through a critical analysis of medieval notions of citizenship and tolerance, which differ from modern conceptions of tolerance that prioritize equity and are more aware of oppression. Furthermore, as Gorsky argues, the probability of the Jewish prosperity in this time would be quite slim if these regulations were strictly enforced. This serves my assertion that imagining Jewish life in Al-Andalus is complicated and the nuances at play make it difficult to ascribe sweeping and absolute descriptors of intercultural relations in Al-Andalus. This complication, though, is often concealed by the veil of nostalgia.

In his book, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature,* Alexander Elinson points out that it is possible to argue that, "Al-Andalus is a fiction constructed in the present in order to satisfy contemporary needs and feed modern imaginations" (Elinson 2009, 3). Elinson's statement captures the essence of what I call the Andalusian Ideal, a solidified commitment to this fictional representation to serve

modern purposes. It is a narrative that is characteristically marked by the lack of the nuance and complication necessary to the discussion of Al-Andalus from an academic, historical perspective. Describing the colloquial realm of collective memory, the term naturally requires some measure of plasticity to describe diasporic communities. Anthropologist Jonathan Holt Shannon's modern ethnography of Syria, Morocco, and Spain, *Performing Al-Andalus,* demonstrates this need. He captures the variance of musical meaning-making in the memory of Al-Andalus across the Mediterranean, and even details points of contradiction between localities (Shannon 2015). The details of the Andalusian Ideal are contextually dependent and as suggested by Elinson's argument, rely on the contemporary needs of those who employ it.

A key component that is prized in the majority of these contexts is the notion of idyllic coexistence promoted by early scholarly discourse. Interestingly, these ideas were originally put forward by European Jewish historians, disappointed by the empty promises of cultural and social equity in the enlightenment era and critical of Christians for falling short of the standard set in Muslim Spain (Cohen 2014, 28). These assumptions were solidified when Arab writers repurposed these ideas to contrast Muslim tolerance with Christian persecution, employing the Andalusian Ideal in their own right (28). These writings were often guilty of neglecting the historical complexity and nuance that shaped the Jewish experience in medieval Spain.

This reductive presentation gives way to an almost utopian memory of Al-Andalus that is kindling for the flames of nostalgic memory essential to the Andalusian Ideal drawn on by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra. The ensemble's CEO, Jacob Ben Simon, acknowledges the role of nostalgia in discussing the umbrella of Andalusian music stating, "This umbrella [of Andalusian music] covers a broad spectrum of elements: nostalgia, tradition, folklore, and longing…"

(Giora, Sissem 2014). The elements of nostalgia and longing mentioned by Ben Simon act as a gateway to the promotion of the Andalusian Ideal. This calls into question what specific aspects of memory are drawn upon and especially relevant to the Israeli context. For the CEO of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, coexistence is presented as the very essence of Andalusian music:

> Andalusian music [was] created and born on the values of cultural dialogue, relations of coexistence between Muslims and Jews in general. These are the same tunes sung in Hebrew and Arabic. This is the ground on which this music grew. Its musical values and the values that accompany it are values of coexistence. (2014)

This provides important information about how the orchestra sees itself and its work and gives insight into how the adoption of this iteration of the Andalusian Ideal pizing coexistence ties into the ultimate objectives of the orchestra.

One of the aims serviced by the use of the term "Andalusian" in general is the expression of heritage, implying participation in the coexistence that occurred in Al-Andalus. Orchestra founder Yahiel Lasri detailed the deliberate choice of this term as a connection to the heritage of Moroccan Jews stating,

> [Calling it] the "Israel Andalusian Orchestra" would make it a part of what is happening here [in Israel], not what happens in Morocco. Other suggestions were "The Andalusian Orchestra" [and] "Moroccan Jewry." We went for the name that expresses our worldview – a link between Andalusia and Israel. Like the Israel Philharmonic. It's not a surrender [as dropping reference to "Morocco" might imply suppressing their origins] … because, after all, we came here to build a state. (Aharon 2012, 10)

This choice also meant the deliberate exclusion of reference to Morocco. Their assumed position as a link between Andalusia and Israel gives them agency to define what that linkage means and

what elements define the version of the Andalusian Ideal they bring to light in the broader Israeli consciousness.

One way this is accomplished is through the story of the creation of Andalusian music. The story is centered around a man named Ziryab, who immigrated to Al-Andalus from Baghdad. Ziryab, also known as "blackbird" due to his dark complexion, created the most popular music in Al-Andalus and was highly skilled and influential in the field of culture. Besides the popularity of his music, he also introduced the popular styles of dress and grooming. Many musicians expressed a desire to learn from him, but the only student he deemed capable and to whom he transmitted a majority of his repertoire was a Jewish man named Mansur. This account supports an idealized notion of the nature of Andalusian society that centers on narratives of Jewish inclusion and coexistence.

Modern historical analysis contextualizes Ziryab's contribution to the invention of Andalusian music, clarifying that the contemporarily retained music, the *sawt*, and *muwashshah*, were created after Ziryab's death. The "mythification" of Ziryab stems from in a 17th-century biography of the singer that glossed over any primary source accounts that portrayed him in an unflattering light or illuminated any inequity he faced (Reynolds 2008). Though this myth certainly did not originate with the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, its perpetuation serves a function in the Israeli context by characterizing Al-Andalus and further crafting the Andalusian Ideal. In the story of Ziryab, a black immigrant made the most popular and highly regarded music and the only person who was deemed fit to learn from him was a Jewish man. In concerts both vast and intimate, I saw the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra present this simplified history and came to understand its rhetorical impact as anecdotal evidence of the coexistence and tolerance

of Al-Andalus. Furthermore, owning that story also implies a stake in the legacy of a society that deeply contrasted the Mizrahi reality as newcomers and minorities in Israel. In this way, it not only informs the self-image of those who carry on the legacy of Al-Andalus but also serves as a story that transmits hope, solidifying its role as an essential part of the fabric of the Andalusian Ideal.

The contrast between this idealized narrative and the social and political realities for minorities throughout Israeli history is a springboard for the idea of the role of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra in modeling and recreating coexistence in Israel. This modeling occupies two intercultural spaces: that between Jewish ethnic groups and that between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations. The first is accomplished chiefly through the visual imagery of the group acting as a valuable way to broadcast information. With Israeli musicians with both European and North African heritage creating together alongside Muslim guest artists from Morocco, the orchestra seems to bring the Andalusian Ideal to Israel. It presents the power of music to build productive relationships between those from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, who put their differences aside for the sake of the art.

I discovered that the narrative of coexistence promoted by the orchestra's diverse cast of musicians may also be deceptively idealistic. I had the opportunity to take a bus ride with orchestra members to a concert in the Negev. The silence was palpable until we arrived at the venue and everyone split into groups, largely dominated by age and racial background. I learned from an orchestra member that this kind of separation was typical and most of the classically trained musicians viewed their participation in the orchestra as nothing more than another job. Most reportedly were not too fond of the music. This disrupted my own idealized perception of

the group and their work that was built on my previous interaction with the discourse utilized in their print material and website. This left me with a plethora of questions about the tensions between this reality and the persistent presentation of the Andalusian ideal in conversation with audiences across the country. I am inclined to conclude that the collaboration and coexistence exhibited onstage is in many ways a part of the performance. The makeup of the ensemble acts as a microcosm of Israeli society and, as such, is not immune to the lapses of understanding and differently aligned values between ethnic groups. The ensemble has, however, achieved a social proximity of communities that is unique despite its flaws. Though the outward display is largely performative, its presentation remains powerful to audiences across the nation and the world.

The orchestra also has a somewhat serious responsibility to transmit a counternarrative to damaging ideologies that have permeated the society surrounding them. In response to early liberties taken with the representation of Arab tolerance of Jews, European Jewish historians developed a "counter-myth of Islamic persecution" that "flourished in the soil of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Cohen 2014, 29). This counter-myth attempts to argue that Islam is characteristically violent, specifically towards Jews, and aims to frame Qur'anic text and Islamic history to support that conclusion. Such arguments are not only teleological, they are also ahistorical (Cohen 1986, 125). Their pervasiveness nevertheless perpetuates the idea that Islam on a fundamental, religious basis is intolerant of Jews and, therefore, that forging coexistence between Jews and Muslims will always be a fruitless and even dangerous pursuit. This inaccurate notion also fuels those seeking religious justifications for antisemitic hatred and violence. Conscious historic reductionism can be quite perilous on multiple fronts. It counteracts messages of coexistence, which gives the objectives of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra a

renewed sense of meaning. The claim to heritage and connection to Andalusian history gives the orchestra a measure of credibility with which they can verify the history of tolerance. This also creates a platform to dutifully model coexistence, bringing Moroccan performers to Israel and working to emphasize benevolence. This possibly counters one extreme with another.

Part of the life of the Andalusian Ideal in Israel also involves a commitment to a shared history with others who have a stake in the memory of medieval Spain. This commitment is likely the site where many historic myths and hyperbolized narratives get suspended into perpetuity for the sake of nostalgia. With the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra having strong ties to Moroccan identity, the Andalusian music scene between the two countries is reliant on this shared idealism, which fulfills other personal, communal, and political goals.

Morocco is a uniquely suitable partner for achieving these goals as it is the unofficial capital of Andalusian music, was formerly home to the largest Jewish community in the Arab world, and holds a unique position among its counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa in terms of its relationship with Israel and its Jewish history. At one time, the town of Mogador, now called Essaouira, had 16,000 Jews in a total population of 22,000. Even after its Jewish population dwindled significantly, the Moroccan government restored approximately 140 synagogues (Maldonado 2019). This action demonstrates a unique relationship, perhaps best expressed by King Hassan II in a 1989 statement:

> I do not consider you Jews of Moroccan descent because Moroccan nationality is never lost. We consider you and all your brothers who live from Israel to Canada, in Venezuela, France, England, America, Latin America, and elsewhere, as Moroccan subjects who enjoy all the rights that the Moroccan Constitution grants you…Your rights are guaranteed by the Constitution because there are two events in the reign of my father Mohammed

> V and mine…Mohammed V made you Citizens. In my Constitution, I made you full Moroccans. (Maldonado 2019)

Hassan II's statement of radical inclusion put Moroccan Israelis in a position possessing full Moroccanness while fighting to be seen as fully Israeli. This token of acceptance allowed for an experience of belonging.

The positionality of Moroccan Jewry also provides an opportunity for groups like the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra to counteract stigmatization and bias towards Israel in the Arab world. Many Israeli musicians travel to Morocco frequently, having a level of mastery of the genre earns them a respect that transcends nationality. Moroccan Jewish senior adviser to King Mohammed VI, André Azoulay, in his keynote speech at the "Yallah: Judeo-Arabic Music Conference and Workshop" said: "What we tried to do with politics and economics failed until we brought in music" (Azoulay, February 9, 2020). Musicians serve as ambassadors in a way that is almost impossible to attain in any other sector of intercultural work.

In December of 2018, the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra had the honor of opening the Andalusiyat Festival in Morocco, which was attended by about 100 Jewish, Christian, and Muslim musicians. This historic event for the ensemble was lavished with high praise from Moroccan officials and featured a Hannukah candle-lighting with Muslim locals. The performance had to be arranged practically in secret to protect the safety of the group and festival organizers, with threats to boycott the festival and pressure to cancel the performance of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra (Steinberg 2019). The organizers of the performance anticipated

strong efforts to bar its occurrence and were undeterred in their commitment to this display of coexistence and tolerance. Orchestra CEO Jacob Ben Simon wrote,

> We opened the festival with a concert that is entirely a message of peace and dialogue – achieved through music. People demonstrating for canceling the performance have no interest in music, peace and the added value of the concert and festival. (2019)

Ben Simon demonstrates a commitment to idealism, validating the uniqueness of music as an ambassadorial tool, the value of which will inevitably be lost on some. This accomplishment served the sense of hopeful idealism fundamental to the ethos of the group. The threats of boycotts and necessary secrecy highlight the scope of work to be done and the challenges to be mounted.

The unique position of Morocco in comparison to its Arab neighbors makes it a suitable place to build Arab-Israeli relations. Arab Jews, specifically those with Moroccan heritage, see themselves as having an important and unique role in that work. To shore up the legitimacy of that role, it is beneficial to emphasize the benevolence of their Muslim neighbors both in Al-Andalus and in Morocco. Besides the way that this idea contributes to the self-image of Moroccan Jewry in Israel, this portrayal of the benevolence of Andalusian and Moroccan society also potentially serves to provide counterarguments to images of Arab society formulated by decades of conflict and strife between Israel and its neighbors. Challenging biases that emphasize antisemitism and stigmatize Arabs as inherent enemies is an opportunity to reform the negative stereotypes of Arab society and culture that were then applied to the Jewish populations from the

Middle East and North Africa that shared it. Even just the title of Rachel Shabi's book, *We Look Like the Enemy*, communicates the reality of that stigmatization.

While the Andalusian Ideal is predicated on exaggerated notions of historical reality, I am intrigued by the details of the "contemporary needs" and "modern imaginations" mentioned by Elinson (3). The examples of the functionality discussed in this chapter only begin to articulate some of the contemporary benefits that stem from the perpetuation of this narrative. Elinson decides against defining Al-Andalus explicitly in his book about Andalusian literature and nostalgia stating, "...this view is in many ways still being formed and will never really be complete" (8). He acknowledges nostalgic folklore as undoubtedly idealized without seeking grounds to dismiss the importance of modern discourse as a segment of what creates Al-Andalus. This acknowledgment supports the plasticity associated with the Andalusian Ideal and gives agency to the diaspora to play a role in determining the functional relationship between memory and reality. In that determination, Al-Andalus has become an illusory ideal; something to which modern communities can aspire. Though the efficacy of this ideal is unknown, fostering this aspiration could perhaps be more impactful than offering a historical narrative that is appropriately nuanced and complicated. In the midst of a reality where ethnic, racial, and religious tensions are pervasive and multidimensional, the Andalusian Ideal offers the alluring possibility that idyllic coexistence has existed before and could perhaps exist once again.

Chapter 3:
A New Frontier

The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra developed as a response to societal conditions leading up to and throughout the 1980s. Many of the orchestra's characteristics were devised to achieve socio-political objectives through musical performance. One such objective, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was reconnecting Moroccan Jews in Israel to their heritage after their immersion in a Europeanized society. Historical circumstances surrounding the early immigration of Arab Jews made this "cultural amnesia" a reality (Belmaaza 2016). Even then, the degree to which young Mizrahi Jews had assimilated was enough to pose a problem for the developing orchestra. Over three decades later, with Mizrahim now accounting for approximately 50% of the population, it is unclear how the performance of Andalusian music will continue to be affected by a changing society and a new generation of musicians at the helm.

The most important change that informs this effect is the shift in the social position of Arab Jews in the last seventy years. Immigrants at the beginning of Israel's statehood could claim little cultural capital; however, that is not the case for their descendants just a few generations later. Simple numerical data is enough to articulate their movement away from a minority community. Yet decades of assimilation, waves of cultural reclamation, and societal transformation eroded the previously pervasive societal biases and overt markers that distinguished Mizrahi Jews from other Israelis. Because of this, the stakes of music-making have changed, and recently-emerging iterations of Andalusian music could very well reflect the beginnings of "post-minority music-making." Mark Slobin uses this term to describe American

Jews after assimilation that have since become "connoisseurs of their own past," and I find that it applies to Mizrahi music-making just as well (Slobin 1995, 21).

In this chapter, I investigate young Arab Jews' distinct approach to the performance and promotion of Andalusian music. Their approach suggests a shift away from "cultural amnesia" towards possible post-minority music-making. I argue that the changing socio-political landscape in Israel, which increasingly acknowledges diverse ethnic identities, redefines the political objectives of Andalusian music performance. Whereas it formerly functioned as a vehicle for broader social acceptance, it now represents the assertion of Sephardic cultural self-determination. This serves as a means to question the current state of multiculturalism in Israel and to contribute to discussions surrounding representation and constructions of authenticity.

This investigation calls into question the attitude and approach of the next generation of ensembles. One such recently formed ensemble, called Tarab Yerushalayim, describes itself as follows:

> Tarab Jerusalem Ensemble is a unique group of young musicians founded in Jerusalem in 2016. The ensemble initiated with the aim of sustaining and interpreting Moroccan Andalusian music, 'Al-Alla,' in keeping with the traditions of Moroccan Jews in the diaspora. Interpretations are inspired by the great teachers and masters of our generation, Rabbi Chaim Louk, Haim Bitton, Meir Attia RIP and Yeshua Azoulay RIP. ("טראב ירושלים Tarab Jerusalem مجموعة طرب يروشلايم القدس.")

Tarab Yerushalayim is a particularly interesting case study because several of its young musicians are also members of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra. Their initiation of a new group

in itself implies their desire to approach Andalusian music in a different way. Their description highlights a fidelity to tradition. This suggests that the new generation is not looking to emulate the dominant social class in their performance practice, but rather looking for ways to more closely mirror the music-making practices of their forebears. That the group refers to itself as part of the Moroccan diaspora is also noteworthy. This contrasts the naming choices of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra mentioned in the previous chapter; here, there is an absence of concern for the implications of affiliating with Morocco by name. Articulating the claim of belonging to another nation's diaspora also has implications for how these young people view their community's history leading up to Jewish nationalism. Their Moroccan heritage continues to hold significance and inform identity in ways that transcend geographic origin. Morocco represents more than a place where their ancestors awaited return to the land of Israel. This unmediated dialogue surrounding claiming heritage and the break from using the dominant social class as a reference point for success marks a contrast with the political objectives of both groups at their point of emergence. The articulated aims of Tarab Yerushalayim are, in fact, largely apolitical.

Though they perform repertoire similar to the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, Tarab Yerushalayim does not invoke the Andalusian Ideal in the same way. Whereas the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra highlights the power of the music as a cultural bridge between Judaism and Islam, Tarab Jerusalem instead uses its description to show reverence to Jewish masters of Andalusian music. The front-facing elements of the group's presentation consists of a deep knowledge of the history of Andalusian music and Jewish history in Morocco and an attempt to produce an iteration of the music that reflects that awareness. As demonstrated in the previous

chapters, that awareness is distilled or mediated by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra to appeal to the general public and accomplish a specific set of goals. They are somewhat limited by their success, which places additional pressure to acquire a regular base of subscribers. One of the tactics used to accomplish this is collaborating with popular singers, often citing the Moroccan heritage of the performer, even if it is distant and has little to no presence in the music he or she produces. While this might work to draw an audience, this practice is not seen favorably by many of the young "purists" who make up the core ensemble of the orchestra, many of whom are also a part of Tarab Yerushalayim.

The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra had 5,000 subscribers in 2018, with concerts given to relatively full audiences (Steinburg 2016). While attending the ensemble's concerts throughout the country from Be'er Sheva to Jerusalem, I consistently noticed that the overwhelming majority of concert attendees were elderly. The young musicians independently mentioned concern about the lack of a young subscriber base to me on several occasions. This concern might have sparked the desire for a new approach, driven by the sensibilities of a younger generation eager to usher in a new era in the performance of Andalusian music. As stipulated in previous chapters, the characteristics of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra were determined as a response to the hegemony of Western classical music as the pinnacle of "high culture." Emulating Western performance practice was a strategic measure of communication. In the modern era, the persuasiveness of this formal platform of performance is diminishing as a means to transmit inherent value or superiority. This is due to streaming platforms and social networks creating an unparalleled level of access to new content in many technologically engaged societies.

Online reviews, recommendations, and referrals are now highly democratic, and that information augments and sometimes overrides the role of formal entities, governmental or otherwise, to grant importance sheerly through their public recognition. Moreover, with the volume of information made accessible by the internet, the unique opportunities for visibility are accompanied by an awareness that garners the attention of the broader public. This was a far less attainable goal of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra when it emerged in 1986 than it was in 2016. These factors necessitate not only a change in the overall objective of the ensemble but a specific change in marketing strategy and market awareness. Media engagement is central to this feat. The ability to present instantaneous information and solicit attendance passively is more favorable to the younger generation than the long-term commitment needed for subscribership.

The performances of Tarab Yerushalayim also promise a unique experience with their commitment to producing "authentic" performances, generating a sense of novelty and even intimacy. The performance practices of the ensemble differ from the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra often in the sites where strategic Westernization was employed. Musicians play from memory on only traditional instruments, for example. They arrange themselves in a circle and do not use a conductor. The musicians and the audience are also often on equal levels within the physical performance space. Instead of bow ties and jackets, the ensemble is clad in matching grey smocks. Musicians play traditional instruments like the rabab, kemanja, and oud with the objective of mirroring Moroccan music as closely as possible. These changes in performance practice are key differences in the approach adopted by this ensemble and support the characterization of these young musicians as "connoisseurs of their own past," (Slobin 1995, 21) with a revived interest in connecting to the practices of their ancestors. This connection is

achieved through the study of their communities' history and through connection with current Moroccan citizens.

Tarab Jerusalem has received recognition and performance opportunities at festivals in Morocco, and many musicians from the ensemble travel there often. The members of the group that I was able to interview reported feeling safe and comfortable in Morocco when traveling to perform at local festivals. They did not report any negative experiences similar to the threats of boycott and demands of cancellation faced by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra in 2018. As an Israeli national orchestra and Israel Prize laureate, the latter ensemble is certainly higher-profile and thus prone to attract a certain type of attention. With Tarab Yerushalayim being a smaller ensemble of young people, there is a decreased sense of performative diplomacy, which allows the group to be more immersed in the music and interpersonal connection.

One musician even shared with me that he regularly receives messages from Moroccan musicians who want to come to play in Israel. This highlights the establishment of personal relationships that evoke candid sharing and mutual longing for collaboration. Even if this dialogue is not strategically carrying subtle political motives, there is still an element of ambassadorship and de-stigmatization that occurs through these relationships. There is a certain element of power in this type of intimacy. I am curious about the impact of this work in relation to the balanced benefits of interpersonal relationships and affiliation with the state of Israel in a formal manner. The position of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra may garner more attention and lend to increased access to intercultural space and an overall perception of legitimacy. While lacking the formalized recognition and associated prestige, this may lead to heightened trust in

intercultural relationship building, though the opportunities for this may be limited by restrictions in the reach and platform of a smaller group.

For the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, decisions were often governed with attention to the axis of identity, culture, and relationship-building. This prompts me to recollect a previously mentioned quote where the idea of playing ‘authentic instruments' and sitting on the floor was dismissed by the founders of the orchestra. They stated that “We’d be invited to the Maimuna [Mizrahi festival] but we’d never get into Israeli society” (Ahron 2012, 11). Tarab Yerushalayim prioritized differently. However, this is true of many other ensembles that came far before them, perhaps the ensembles of the late 1900s that *were* playing at Maimuna. What is it that makes their practices distinct from those groups? I argue the key difference is that presentation in the modern era has different stakes. My point is not that societal pressures and preferences have shifted so significantly that the presentation of certain aesthetic features would not leave them relegated to a certain, specific cultural space. Rather, societal pressures on younger generations have shifted so that vying for mainstream inclusion and respect of Mizrahi culture is no longer a concern of the same magnitude.

This ability to reclaim practices is due in part to work done to revive Andalusian music and Eastern culture at large from its suppression. This effort included strategic marketing and rhetoric aimed at prompting recognition from a dominant social class, and its appeal was ultimately successful. From these examples of the generational approach to Andalusian music, is it evident that the focal point, for some early iterations of Andalusian music in Israel, was vying for acceptance and space. In the younger generation, however, there is a focus on what might be called “authenticity,” with less concern about acceptability to the dominant social class. What is

clear is that young Israelis have an interest in maintaining Andalusian music and Moroccan culture in Israel and in ensuring that it will be a part of the evolving dialogue on representation and authenticity.

My exploration of authenticity as a central aim of Tarab Yerushalayim is informed by interviews and informal conversations with the five members of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra who play in both ensembles. Along with the reference to tradition in the group's description, my personal research led to my identification of authenticity as a core desire for the young musicians with whom I spoke. This exploration unearths some of the complex challenges of playing Andalusian music in Israel and emphasizes the resounding impact that the history of ethnic suppression has on performers today. Furthermore, the discussion of authenticity offers insight into the future impact, objectives, and challenges of this musical tradition in the Israeli context. In this section, I draw on examples from the history and practice of Mizrahi music more broadly to craft an understanding of the landscape of authenticity in the Israeli context.

Avihu Medina, a composer and singer of *Musica Mizrahit,* challenges the requirement of authenticity that captures the essence of this ideological landscape. He offers an alternative perspective on how Mizrahi music in Israel should be considered:

> You have to judge shir Mizrachi [Middle Eastern popular song] exactly as you judge any other song. For a regular Israeli song - a Western song - you don't check if its roots are really Polish or Rumanian. You judge it as an Israeli creation.
>
> Why do they ask us to be "authentic"? Authenticity never interested me. I want to create a song for people to use that comes out of their own experience, and not out of some tribal archaeology.

> I am not interested at all where a person comes from and what he had there. Now there is a new thing. The influences on a composer are different from the influences that existed in the past.
>
> To create in a certain style you have to live in the place, in the environment, in the geographical area. Today people write "Yemenite" songs. How can you write a "Yemenite" song? You drive a Subaru, you watch TV, you dress faranji-style [European] '86 - but you sing "Yemenite"? In my opinion this is false. To sing Yemenite you have to ride a donkey, attend synagogue three times a day, put on tefillin [phylacteries] every morning and eat Yemenite food. (Harper, Seroussi, Squires-Kidron 1989, 134)

Medina's statement is from a 1986 interview, notably the same year the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra was founded. It showcases some of the tension around authenticity in the era when ethnic expression was first emerging. He expresses dismay at the disparity between Western songs, considered "Israeli" despite the specific heritage of their creators, and the categorization of Mizrahi music as "other." His frustration stems from "authenticity" being a pretext for relegation to otherness. The distinction of "experience" and "tribal archeology" alludes to the plight of Arab Jewry detailed in my first chapter, where assimilation and recognition of Israeli-ness was paramount. From Medina's perspective, the request of authenticity was at odds with that aim. It challenged the ability of the Mizrahim to be a part of the "new thing," which was integration into Israeli society and full participation in nation-building. Medina also appears to give some experiential qualifiers for the production of authentic music. He suggests that it is a false categorization to deem the music of Europeanized people as solely ethnic. There is a tension between the Westernization of Arab Jews, which was a product of pressure to assimilate to Europeanized visions of unified Israeli identity, and the persistent aversion to consider their music as reflective of their experiences as Israelis. Even when the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra

was founded, second-generation Mizrahi immigrants struggled to express their heritage after deliberate Europeanization, evidence of the tension to which Medina alludes (Aharon 2012, 11).

Early approaches to authenticity were informed by social necessities to adapt and Westernize in pursuit of acceptance. This was demonstrated by the strategic naming and performance practice of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra. Not only did they strive for parallelism to the Philharmonic by using the term orchestra, but also deliberately branded themselves as Israeli. This addresses the concerns raised by Medina and supports their aim of advocating for Mizrahi culture *as* Israeli culture. The pressures addressed by the orchestra were also present in Medina's own discipline with the success of musica mizrahit was dependent on musical codes that were "close enough to the Western tradition to be tolerated" while simultaneously possessing a nonspecific Eastern character (134). Authenticity is a term that is ultimately referential. The examples of Avihu Medina and the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra demonstrate that for musicians in the period of emerging ethnic expression, the desired point of reference was not their country of origin, but Israel.

Though the histories of the groups are essentially intertwined, Tarab Yerushalayim's approach to authenticity reflects the societal shifts of the past few decades. Their choices of dress, orientation, and instrumentation indicate efforts to distance from the Western elements adopted by Mizrahi musicians before them, which were fundamentally linked to their approach to Israeliness. Performance practice and aesthetics remain inextricably linked to identity, and thus, are reflective of developments in the social positioning of young Arab Jews. The postcolonial use of the term "Arab Jew" itself reflects these developments. Although the terminology is relatively new to academic discourse and not widely used colloquially, it

acknowledges a transformation that envisions an Arab identity that is not required to be demonstratively separate from Jewish identity. As Israel grew to incorporate cultural pluralism into its vision of nationalism, Israelis gained increasing social freedom in expressing and interpreting cultural heritage without oppressing worries of marginalization.

This shift is even poetically communicated by the different locales of the two groups. The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra was founded in Ashdod, a coastal city about 25 miles south of Tel Aviv and a similar distance north of the Gaza Strip. Ashdod is home to the largest population of Moroccan Jews and is one of the many places on the periphery of Israel where the majority of ethnic immigrants settled in the second half of the 20th century. Jerusalem has always been a central focus of Jewish longing for the return to the land of Israel. The social marginalization of eastern Jewry was accentuated by physical marginalization from the city. Tarab Yerushalayim, in name alone, represents the incorporation of ethnic identity into the centrality of Israeli identity, actualizing the developed freedom of expression now possible within nationalism.

This freedom has manifested in a trend of young musicians using their artistic platform to explore their heritage, incorporating diasporic Jewish languages and drawing sonic inspiration from sources that reflect their familial history. At the 2019 Mediterranee Festival hosted in Ashdod, I observed this trend on display nightly as young Israeli musicians took the stage at the festival center. These performances included Bint el Funk, the founder of the Yemenite Funk genre; Tamarada, a singer who incorporates Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia; as well as Adi Elbahar, who performs in Arabic, Greek, Spanish, and Ladino and incorporates Andalusian influences. These performers' incorporation of non-Western elements reflects an inversion of the early approach to ethnic expression articulated by Avihu Medina and showcased

by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, which relied on the incorporation of Western elements to assert legitimacy. In response to the correlation between authenticity and experience suggested by Medina, these performers and the larger movement they embody assert that heritage is an essential component of that experience.

Tarab Yerushalayim is a part of the generation at the helm of this trend. Their approach to authenticity includes interpretation, as documented in the description of the group, but their appeal to tradition shows evidence of a "profound essential perception of continuity as the hallmark of cultural authenticity" (Seroussi 2008, 6). In my interviews with ensemble members, there was a shared emphasis on familiarity with the tradition's canon, history, and style as a defining feature of the group's legitimate presentation of authentic Andalusian music. The potential perils of this emphasis are performances that neglect the actual experience of performers. I maintain that the correlation drawn between experience and expression is an essential component to account for the subjective and referential nature of authenticity. An awareness of the musical features of the Andalusian diaspora offers a pathway for the incorporation of experiences and influences specific to the Israeli context. Andalusian music in the diaspora has developed into regionally-specific forms, differing between locales and reflecting transformation by the interpretation and influences of local musicians. Even within Morocco itself, the Andalusian style in Fez is distinct from that of Tetouan. Edwin Seroussi notes that this adaptation coexists with pride in continuity (6). This feature allows potential for Tarab Yerushalayim to solidify a genuinely Israeli Andalusian music.

Tarab Yerushalayim embodies Slobin's description of "post-minority music-making" insofar as their generation's thorough pursuit of ethnic reclamation qualifies them as

"connoisseurs of their own past" (Slobin 1995, 21). This post-minority status is evidenced by the transition in approach to authenticity that correlates with integration into mainstream culture correlating with a developed sense of belonging and security. This development was achieved through efforts of assimilation by their ancestors, and their integration alongside their Ashkenazi peers led to the possession of the appropriate cultural markers to solidify relief from the need to continually advocate for their Israeliness. The trajectory of modern politics, however, may predicate an increased need to self-advocate for their Arabness.

This potential need arises primarily from tension against how Mizrahi Jews perceive the utility of their Arab heritage. The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra highlights relationship building between Arabs and Israelis on the front page of its website as one of its central missions. This aim reflects the view of Arab Jewish identity as a powerful tool to build bridges between Arab and Jewish cultures, a sentiment that has been echoed in personal conversations with Mizrahi Jews in Israel, at academic conferences, and even at my university's campus. David Harary and Noam Yekutiel Sibony, of Syrian and Moroccan heritage respectively, give voice to this vision in an opinion piece published in the *Jerusalem Post*.

> Because Arab Jews have a unique connection to their broader Arab neighbors, they also have a unique opportunity to act as a diplomatic bridge for shared understanding. If Jews continue to be seen as solely a "white" European nation among other Arabs, Israel will fail to be heard and listened to. Through our shared genetic makeup, songs, food and customs, Arab Jews offer the Jewish world a pathway for increased dialogue, connection to, and perhaps one day, unity with the Arab world. (Harary and Sibony 2019)

As seen by the relationships between Moroccan and Israeli musicians from both the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra and Tarab Yerushalayim, Andalusian music is a platform where the opportunity for diplomatic bridge-building is actualized. For a nation that is often overwhelmingly defined by conflict, the evidence of interethnic collaboration corroborates the compelling idealism of Arab Jewish identity as a vehicle for unity with surrounding Arabs. Trends in Israeli politics, however, pose challenges to further actualization of this idea, especially with Arabs in Israel and the West Bank.

Right-wing political alignment has been on the rise amongst Israeli youth, with 63% of voters 18-34 years old identifying as "right" compared to just 46% of voters over 35 (Adkins and Bales 2019). Analyses of this trend attribute it to a young generation that has never witnessed any peace process, who grew up and came of age in a time of heightened violence and tension. Right-wing politics and ideas of nationalism seemingly align better with the way this shaped their worldview, marked partially by a diminished sense of optimism and feeding into an extreme nationalist vision that is notoriously at odds with Arab interests in the area. The complications of conflicting interests and resulting persistence of tension and frustration are furthered by a growing presence of overt anti-Arab sentiment in the 21st century. In 2007, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel reported that expression of anti-Arab views had doubled in the year prior and noted a 26% increase in racist incidents (BBC 2007). A 2018 survey of 500 Jewish Israelis conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute for Channel 10 found that 74% of respondents were at least a little disturbed by hearing conversation in Arabic in public (Pileggi 2018). These statistics represent a severely limited picture of the growing data and documentation of how this increased bias manifests.

The increase of these sentiments have occurred almost simultaneously with developments in Mizrahi cultural inclusion. As shown by the transformation of Andalusian music and approach to authenticity, musical expression is deeply reflective of how societal pressures inform identity. Anti-Arab sentiment might pose challenges for the expression of identity for Arab Jews, as cultural bias continues to stigmatize Arab-ness. This, however, is not a new issue, but one that has persisted and evolved since even well-before the establishment of the state of Israel. The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra attempted to address this stigma with deliberate marketing and strategy aimed at integration and recognition. The young musicians in Tarab Yerushalayim, comparatively unencumbered by the cultural suppression faced by their predecessors, have approached Andalusian music with the objectives of authenticity and assertion of identity.

Noting the relationship between authenticity and experience, the next frontier of Andalusian music in Israel could be leveraging cultural mobility and "post-minority" status to continually shape and challenge the current ills of social and cultural reality. The apolitical approach of Tarab Yerushalayim contrasts with the deliberate measures taken by the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra to achieve change. This methodological change reflects the shift in cultural values in younger generations that are no longer as compelled by formalized institutions, perhaps increasing the reach of their music to more of their peers. In an interview, one musician commented that when he is participating in this ensemble, he doesn't think about the political implications—he's there because he loves North African music and wants to enjoy it with others who share his passion. As I spoke with other members, I gathered that this seems to be the ethos of the ensemble. Rather than a performance of an ideal, they offer an intimate presentation of their commitment to creating Andalusian music reflective of both their deep knowledge of the

tradition and experiences as Israelis. The less-formalized approach grants accessibility and fosters dialogue, crucial components of this music's role as a celebration of heritage and harbinger of hope in a context seemingly rife with inter-ethnic conflict and tension. As Andalusian music remains a site of collaboration and relationship-building despite societal and political challenges, it nurtures an ember of hope for a future of unity and connection where it is perhaps needed most.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored several touchpoints where the performance of Andalusian music interacts with and participates in social, political, and cultural discourse. The arc of my work demonstrates a variance in the deliberate usage of pragmatic measures to influence these discourses, with the early efforts of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra taking a highly strategic approach compared to the less formal and structured approach taken by Tarab Yerushalayim. I provide brief accounts of the transformation of Israeli society in the past several decades that link this variance to the development of a more robust Israeli multiculturalism that diminishes the need for cultural institutions to respond to interethnic inequity, a freedom that was shaped by the informed efforts of those that came before them. The authenticity prized by younger ensembles and Israeli musicians more broadly is ultimately the result of a search for identity. This reflects the way that early ethnic suppression still reverberates in modern Israeli life. Both groups participate in the confrontation of anti-Arab sentiment that has manifested in different ways and shaped Mizrahi lives throughout history. The Andalusian Ideal is a key feature of this confrontation, providing a platform for the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra to claim agency in the representation of historical narratives of Arab-Jewish relationship and collaboration that ultimately prizes the illusory of coexistence applied to both the past and future. Andalusian music in Israel participates in a legacy of nostalgia that informs locally-specific practices globally, extending the merits and pride of that legacy to those who carry the music forward. As Andalusian music continues to respond and adapt to socio-political discourses in Israel, there is a potential to leverage the power of this idealism and make practical use of social mobility to continue to push these discourses forward.

My project traverses many topics that provide almost endless avenues for continued exploration. In conducting research, I was limited by my cultural, musical, and linguistic knowledge. Addressing those deficiencies as my career progresses could allow me to comment on issues that are, at present, beyond the realm of my abilities.

Likewise, I recognize that I still have much to learn about the complexities of Israeli cultural politics. The discussion of Miri Regev's polemics in the first chapter, for example, alludes to a link between policy and culture that is both beyond my grasp and outside the scope of this project. As mentioned, the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra receives government funding, and therefore, could be the subject of analysis of the alignment of state and culture and how that influences its objectives of Arab-Jewish relationship-building. This pathway of study could be enhanced by ethnographic work extending to Morocco and inclusive of Arab Israelis and Palestinians.

Studies of the Andalusian music in the Israeli context could benefit from the analysis of written discourse disseminated by the Israeli Andalusian to analyze trends in the representation of the Andalusian narrative. Through improved command of languages and musical styles, I could complement this discussion with a more detailed analysis of repertoire and its implications.

As the younger musicians among them move to blur the lines of contextually "appropriate" expression through a unique group, it remains to be seen how the aforementioned shifts will impact the structure of the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra itself going forward as their audience base begins to shift and as the next generation moves into the leadership of this cultural institution. As these changes take place within the next several decades, it would be beneficial to

extend the study of the ideological, social, and political distinctiveness of young Mizrahi players of Andalusian music. These encompass only a few of the various pathways for further research and there is much still to learn.

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