

JEWISH ELEMENTS IN REPRESENTATIVE PUBLISHED
PIANO WORKS OF CHARLES VALENTINE
MORHANGE (ALKAN)

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PIANO WORKS OF CHARLES VALENTINE
MORHANGE (ALKAN)

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The problem with which this study is concerned is that of determining the degree of Jewish influence in Alkan's piano music. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors contributing to a general unacceptance of Alkan's music.

The general method of procedure was to determine which works might be considered as representative of Alkan's compositions for piano. Viewpoints of writers such as Seitz and Lewenthal were considered to be authoritative. After the works were selected, a survey was made of Abraham Idelsohn's ten-volume collection of Hebrew and Oriental song entitled Hebräisch-Orientalischer Melodienschatz. This was done in order to determine which chants and motives are most commonly used in the Jewish Synagogue. The opinions of Idelsohn and his assistant, Frances Cohon, were taken to be authoritative. In addition to the Idelsohn collection, the complete compilation of Jewish accents as found in the Jewish Encyclopedia was also used. Because of the vast number of preserved Jewish melodies, the folk-songs were not included in this study.

The results of this investigation are presented in a systematic analysis and discussion of Jewish prayer-chants and their structure traceable within Alkan's music and in a presentation in table form of the Jewish accents found among

Alkan's melodies. After consideration of the outcome of analysis, elements which are known to be European are also presented. These are mainly keyboard virtuosity and harmony and secondarily, form and rhythm. In this section, Robert Schumann's opinions of Alkan's music are quoted and discussed. Because Schumann's ideas carried into the twentieth century, this gave opportunity for a re-evaluation of the lack of musical beauty inherent in Alkan's music.

The findings of this study reveal that Alkan's Jewish extraction was a great influence upon a large portion of his musical output. It was found that his larger compositions contain many melodies that are traceable to Jewish prayer-chants and accents. The smaller, more intimate works contain fewer examples. The composition entitled "Quasi Faust" was singled out among the works examined as being most representative of Jewish influence in Alkan's music. This work contains not only several examples of prayer-motives, but also programmatic meaning directly connected with traditional interpretation of the modes in which the prayer-motives are found.

This study concludes that the primary reason for the general unacceptance of Alkan's music is the Jewish, modal quality of his melodies that have nothing in common with the general nineteenth-century European concept of musical expression. The overt sensationalism of the virtuosic aspects present in much of his music serve only to support Schumann's opinion that Alkan's music is devoid of musical meaning and often sinks into mere superficiality.

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PREFACE

The Problem and its Purpose

The purpose of this study is to show interrelationships between the thematic contents of those piano works by Alkan that are considered to be representative of his general style and the more commonly used melodic phrases taken from the Jewish Synagogue, mainly prayer chants and accents. An attempt will be made to point out the reason behind consequent unacceptance of Alkan's piano works, despite the efforts of Busoni, d'Albert, and Lewenthal to bring them to public attention.

Definition of Terms

Jewish elements are considered here to be the various sources of melody found in the chanting of prayers and in the cantillation of the Bible, for example, prayer motives and accents. Because of the vast number of Jewish melodic phrases, the folk songs are not being considered here.

Representative published piano works refers to those pieces that have been acknowledged by various authors on Alkan's music to be most representative of his style of composition.

Prayer chants may be defined as a continuous ad libitum solo or a free intonation which has been in use in the numerous

Jewish Synagogues throughout the world and dates back about 2,000 years. This intonation consists of a melodious development of certain themes or motives (called prayer-motives) that are traditionally associated with each individual service (e.g. Sabbath morning service, Eve of the High Holy Days, etc.). Although prayer-motives may be traced to accents (see definition below), the prayer chant is not based on a set of stereotyped melodic formulas indicated by signs.

Nusach is a Jewish term that may be defined as a fixed method or mold which governs the structure and traditional chanting of the prayers. Within its limitations, it does, however, give opportunity for improvisations of flexibility and virtuosity.

Cantillation of the Bible is another type of intonation but is used in public recitals of prayers and Holy Scripture and is a musical expression of the meaning conveyed by words occurring in the scriptures. Cantillation is based on a set of stereotyped melodic formulas indicated by signs and called accents (see the Appendix wherein the appropriate signs are placed above each motive).

Accents, sometimes called tropes or ta'amim, developed from an earlier system designed to assist the reader in proper emphasis and interpretation of the important words of the text. These melodic formulas are indicated by signs.

In Jewish music, a scale is merely a succession of intervals while a mode is composed of a combination of tra-

ditional phrases written within a given scale. The modes, therefore, serve to determine the character of the music and were developed as interpretations of the prayers and Holy Days. For reasons of clarity western terminology such as major or minor will be used throughout this study when a certain scale or interval can be compared to the western major or minor scale or interval. Also in order to aid the reader, there will be places when Gregorian nomenclature will be used for purposes of simplification. This may aid in fixating the Jewish sound in the reader's mind.

From the Middle Ages through the end of the nineteenth century, the chazzanim were the main carriers of Jewish ritual music. They were chosen mainly for their beautiful voices and their ability to improvise on the prayer-motives. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, even the most famous among them had no formal education in music and were unable to read notes.

Sources of Data

The primary sources of data are Idelsohn's Hebräische-Orientalischer Melodienschatz and the Jewish Encyclopedia which contains the complete compilation of Jewish accents. All the prayer-motives presented in this study are taken from Idelsohn's Thesarus (Hebräische-Orientalischer Melodienschatz). The various piano works presented for analysis were carefully selected by using written opinions of writers such as Reinhold Seitz,

Raymond Lewenthal, S. Sitwell, and others. Their opinions as to which works are most representative were found to be non-arguable.

Method of Procedure

Because the subject of Jewish sacred music is foreign to most readers, it will be necessary to point out and discuss some of the basic principles of Synagogue music and its structure while applying them to Alkan's compositions. Because so little work has been brought forth that sheds light on this relatively unknown composer, it is felt necessary that an entire chapter be dedicated to present the known facts about the composer and his works.

This study will serve the reader on two accounts; to introduce Alkan and the background knowledge of Jewish music in order that one may understand the strangeness of this music.

After all facts are presented and proper analysis of Alkan's music has been conducted in relationship to Jewish music, an attempt will be made to point out why Alkan's music never became known to the general musician. Within this section, selected readings from Schumann's reviews of Alkan's music will be presented so that one can see general opinion on Alkan's music, since Schumann's ideas more or less carried into the twentieth century.

The chapters that follow are I, Jewish Music: The European Development; II, Alkan, His Life and Works; III, Jewry in Alkan's Music: His Use of Prayer Chants; IV, Jewry in Alkan's

Music: His Use of Jewish Accents; and V, Factors Contributing to Unacceptance of Alkan's Music.

Included at the end of this study is an Appendix which presents the common Jewish modes and their interpretation. This is not significant to the study itself, but may be helpful for a better understanding of the problems presented.

Significance of the Problem

Perhaps Alkan, as a composer, is not significant when compared to the greats in music history, but as a Jewish composer of art-music, he is significant in that he is one of the few nineteenth-century composers to utilize Jewish melodies as well as Jewish principles of musical structure. Thus far, as is pointed out during the course of this study, the few writers on Alkan have been concerned only with his importance in the development of piano technique and feel that he should be given equal credit along with Liszt and Rubinstein. Many authors continually compare Alkan with Liszt, Chopin, and Berlioz, but none have seen the affinity between Rubinstein and Alkan except in connection with the fact that they were both piano virtuoso-composers. Both were Jewish and incorporated melodies from the Synagogue into their music.

As to whether or not writers have been aware of the Jewishness of Alkan's music, it is doubtful, for even Abraham Idelsohn failed to make mention of Alkan's name in any of his writings on the subject of the Jew in art-music.

When one considers the great influx of Jewish musicians during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is surprising that so few studies have been done to determine the extent of Jewish influence in the music of these composers.

The significance of this study, therefore, lies in the fact that no other study of this kind has been written on Alkan's music; and also that perhaps it will encourage other researchers to examine the music of composers of Jewish extraction.

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CHAPTER I

JEWISH MUSIC: THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT

Shortly after 1500, Jews participated for the first time in musical life outside the ghetto. Abramo dale' Arpa Ebreo was a famous singer at the court of Mantua from 1542 to 1566. Allegro Porto published his Nuove Musiche in 1619 and two collections of madrigals, one (lacking title page) probably in 1622, the other in 1625.¹ The most important of these Jewish composers was Salomone Rossi (c. 1587-1630), who was one of the pioneers of violin music and the first to compose polyphonic music for the Jewish service, in his Hashisrim Asher Li'Shlomo (The Songs of Solomon, 1622).² Needless to say, these compositions, written for chorus and soloists, completely break away from Jewish tradition.

Around 1700, the wealthier German synagogues began to employ instrumental music for the Friday Evening Service and to install organs. Choirs were fairly generally employed. Because there was no traditional music for such performances, the contemporary repertory of non-Jewish music, including secular, and even operatic elements, dance tunes, and rococo

¹"Jewish Music," Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1969).

²Ibid.

arias, was used. Ahron Beer (1738-1821), one of the first chazzanim³ to possess some musical knowledge, made an extensive collection of compositions for the service and of traditional Jewish songs, including two versions of the Kol Nidre, marked 1720 and 1783.

Israel Jacobson (1768-1828) followed a different line. He was an exponent of the Reform Movement and, in the first Reform Temple (Seesen, Westphalia, 1810), he used not only organ and bells, but also German chorales provided with Hebrew texts.⁴ The consequent reaction against this Christianization of the Jewish service led to the moderate reform of Salomon Sulzer (1804-1890). Although Sulzer succeeded in bestowing a fundamental dignity and appropriateness on the musical service, his compositions and versions of songs tended to represent current European idioms rather than Jewish tradition. The same was true of Louis Lewandowski (1821-1904), whose thorough training in musical theory, harmony, etc., enabled him to write choruses in Mendelssohn's oratorio style. His complete service, Kol Rennah (1871), with its facile and pleasing tunes, has been widely adopted.

In America, Synagogue music started by imitating the current European models. Recently, however, there has been a

³Chazzanim were professional singers who were employed by the Synagogue to sing the prayers.

⁴Abraham Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music in Its Historical Development (New York, 1932), p. 474.

remarkable movement toward independent development, represented by a number of choral compositions of a distinctly Hebraic character, mostly for the Sabbath Service. Among the contributors have been Ernest Bloch, Frederick Jacobi, Lazare Saminsky, and Isadore Freed.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jews have played an active part in the development of European music, as composers and even more prominently as performers and conductors.

Judaism in Nineteenth-Century European Art-Music

It is generally recognized that a composer's creations are influenced by the music prevalent in his immediate environment. Tonal elements are instinctively chosen from the folk- and art-music with which he is filled from childhood. Since every historical nation has its peculiar folk songs, and to a certain degree, also its original style in art-music, new compositions generally make an additional contribution toward the music of the artist's nation. Despite the professed tendency in the art-music of Europe toward internationalism, toward a European music for all European peoples, and for those of European extraction, the art-music created by Germans has an imprint of German folk-song and character while Russian music unmistakably bears the mark of Russian folk-song and character. We find, likewise, Anglo-Saxon and Gaelic folk-song features in English music, and in Scandinavian music its

people's folk-motives. We know of many cases in which musicians of one nation were attracted to the musical style of another people and sought to create in the adopted style. The result, however, was different from what they had originally anticipated. Handel, Gluck, and Mozart, despite being enamored of Italian music, created German music with some Italian flavor. In either case, childhood training and environmental influence proved to be stronger than foreign models and personal effort.

Musicians of Jewish origin, due to their scattered places of residence and the often preponderant influence of the non-Jewish majority, present a phenomenon apparently unique, but genuinely in line with the facts just presented. They created or performed music in the style of their adopted country's music. The participation of the Jews in European music increased tremendously after their admittance into the social and cultural life of Europe near the beginning of the nineteenth century. An innumerable host of musicians filled the musical world, creators, and especially performers, who for the most part were virtuosos on various instruments. They cultivated all styles and branches of music: opera, oratorio, concerto, symphony, sonata, vocal, and instrumental music from sacred church-music to comic opera and jazz hits. They became distinguished theoreticians and teachers, musical critics and essayists, directors, publishers, and promoters of music. Among the many Jewish musicians from the nineteenth century

we have names such as Jacob (Giacomo) Liebmann Meyerbeer, Jacques Fromental Halévy, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Ignaz Moscheles, Jacques Offenbach, Ferdinand Hiller, Anton Rubinstein, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg, Ernest Bloch, George Gershwin, Jascha Heifetz, Artur Rubinstein, and many others. Almost none of these composers or performers had been reared in a distinctly Jewish environment or had been given a positive Jewish education. As a result, several of them became converts to the dominant Christian faith; some attempted assimilation into the society they had adopted. Indeed, Mendelssohn's and Anton Rubinstein's parents carefully kept them away from Jewish influence, and educated them in the culture of the Christian environment. In any case, very few knew anything of Jewish Synagogue and folk-song. The most conscious Jew among the above-mentioned names was Halévy, who only once (for the aria of Eleazar, in his La Juive, Act IV) used a Jewish motive, while Offenbach, a son of a chazzan, never employed Jewish motives in his compositions.⁵

Of them all, it was Rubinstein who occasionally and with serious intent used Jewish motives in connection with Jewish or Oriental episodes in his operas and in his songs. But he, likewise, utilized other Oriental material, such as Persian and Tartaric motives. Some claim that a certain inclination toward melody or lyricism is a pronounced feature in the music

⁵Idelsohn, Jewish Music (New York, 1920), p. 474.

of Jews. But the music of Mozart, Haydn, and Schubert also has the same feature. There is no standard of measure by which we can distinguish a German song by Mendelssohn from hundreds of other German songs.

Ernest Bloch's music is designated "Jewish." Its Jewishness, however, consists of an abundance of augmented steps, and according to general opinion, of a certain heavy melancholy. But these characteristics are not exclusively Jewish, for all Semitic and Tartarian peoples have the same characteristic step, and as for the melancholy impression that Oriental music makes on the Occidental hearer, such an impression is based upon the difference of conditioning of Orientals and Occidentals.⁶ At best, Bloch's music may be said to have a touch of Orientalism. Einstein says of him: "Determined to create Jewish music, he does not turn to the real Oriental or Jewish music for themes, but tries to construct the character and spirit of his race out of himself."⁷ In music such as Bloch's, we find the refutation of the lightly conceived premise that the musician, unconscious and ignorant though he be of his people's music and folkore, yet instinctively manifests these racial expressions.

We shall not discuss all the arguments and accusations brought forth in the course of the last century as to the genuineness of the creation of Jewish composers. Opinions of

⁶Ibid.

⁷Albert Einstein, Das Neue Musiklexicon (Berlin, 1926), p.58.

that type are created out of subjective impressions, without any real basis, and are often in line with the cheap and malicious attacks of Richard Wagner, which sprang forth not out of analysis and conviction, but out of bitterness and envy. Wagner obviously had forgotten the enthusiastic laudations of Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, and Halévy which he had written when he was in need of their support. At that time, he had proclaimed Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn the greatest and purest German composers. Nor can we give more than passing attention to opinions expressed during the earlier part of this century that the Jews are revolutionaries in music, that they destroy established forms and are the protagonists of all that is new and ultramodern. Opinions such as this were products of Nazism. Alongside the Jewish musicians who became adherents of revolutionary musical doctrines in modern times, we find the majority of Jewish composers holding to the established principles of Classic music without admitting any sidesteps. Mendelssohn, Halévy, Joachim, Moscheles, and Rubinstein were strict classicists. Rubinstein, in his zeal for classical forms, made the statement that after Schumann and Chopin there are no new creations worthy of the name music.⁸ Furthermore the theoreticians, Marx and Jadassohn, were pious adherents to the style established by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, recognizing no later innovations in harmony and form. For about

⁸Anton Rubinstein, Die Musik und ihre Meister (Leipzig, 1891), pp. 64-65.

eighty years, these two men taught nothing but the classic music of the eighteenth and of the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

Jewish musicians contributed much toward the internationalization of art-music. Since Meyerbeer, the Jewish composer has learned to merge different styles into a composite one, and the virtuoso has rendered Italian, German, or Russian music in the genuine temperament of each people, giving expression to the spirit of the people whose music he presents. For the most part, the Jew who participated in creating art-music has written not as a Jew, but as a product of and contributor to the culture in which he happened to be reared. The reason is clear when it is taken into consideration that the Jewish people, despite the fact that they represent one of the most ancient cultures, have not, until recently, established a nation as we think of it.

The establishment of a Jewish National Music in Russia is largely due to the efforts of Anton Rubinstein. Since 1915, the movement has gathered impetus and is comparable to the national music of other countries. The establishment, after World War II, of the national state of Israel has contributed to this trend.

Because of a seemingly new interest in Jewish music and a renewed interest in a Jewish composer who has been ignored during the larger portion of the twentieth century, it would be natural to ask whether or not this composer was perhaps an

exception among the many nineteenth-century composers who were of Jewish extraction. Charles Valentin Morhange was not only Jewish, but was a piano virtuoso-composer who was very much aware of his extraction, and the environmental influences of this show clearly in much of his music. He is, indeed, a strange figure among the many piano virtuosi that lived and worked in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century, for his life was mysterious in comparison to the lives led by glittering piano virtuosi such as Liszt, Thalberg, or Moscheles. His music is as strange as the life he led and perhaps therein lies the reason for renewed interest in this very Jewish composer of art-music.

CHAPTER II

ALKAN, HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Paris was the place where the glittering piano virtuosi of the 1820's and the 1830's were made, and it was from there that they emanated to display their wares over all of Europe. Friedrich Kalkbrenner arrived in Paris in 1799 at the age of fourteen, acquired his entire musical education there, and stayed for virtually the rest of his life. Henri Herz became a student at the Conservatoire in 1816 and made the city a permanent base of operations. Three years later Franz Herz became a lifelong resident of Paris after entering the Conservatoire. The young Liszt moved with his family to Paris in 1823 and began to scale the heights of worldwide fame with his Paris concerts of 1824. A decade later Paris was the scene of the bitter competition between Liszt and Thalberg, the only pianist who seriously threatened Liszt's preeminence. Chopin arrived in 1831; at about this time a host of lesser pianists also sought their fortunes in Paris: Ferdinand Hiller, Theodore Dohler, Alexander Dreyschock, and many others. None of these pianists were born in Paris, or even in France. There is, however, one rather obscure piano virtuoso who was a native of Paris--Charles Valentin Morhange, known to the musical world as Alkan.

The facts of Alkan's life are enveloped in mystery and misinformation. Lexicographers have problems in even getting his name correct. He was born Charles Valentin Morhange and later dropped Morhange, which is the name of a small Alsatian town, and adopted his father's first name, Alkan. According to biographers, he changed his name in order that he might be distinguished from his brother, Napoleon Morhange (1826-1888), who, like Alkan, was a distinguished musician and a professor at the Conservatoire in Paris. Alkan is frequently given the additional name, Henri. Raymond Lewenthal offers his explanation that in some biographies, Charles is abbreviated to Ch. and may have been understood to mean Charles Henri.¹ In addition, the name Victorin is occasionally substituted for Valentin.

In studying a composer's music, it is sometimes helpful to gain as much knowledge as possible about the man and the life he led. With Alkan, however, the most patient researches have failed to bring to light anything more than conventional records of honors and appointments.

Born in Paris on November 30, 1813, Alkan was the second of seven children, all of whom were musicians. His father, who was of Jewish origin, conducted a small music school located in the Rue des Blancs Manteaux, which is the Jewish section of Paris. Alkan, who as a child showed a great

¹Raymond Lewenthal, editor, "The Piano Music of Alkan," (New York, 1964), p. v.

precocity for music, was admitted to the Conservatoire in Paris at the age of six. His teachers were Zimmerman and Dourlen, who instructed him in piano and harmony respectively. By the age of fourteen, Alkan was a finished virtuoso and became well-known in Paris by the age of seventeen. Apparently he had not yet developed the curious streak that later caused him to become reclusive, for in his youth he belonged to the literary circle of George Sand, Victor Hugo, and Lamennais. It has been reported that Alkan was a close friend of Chopin with whom he occasionally played the piano in salon recitals.²

After his return from a concert tour of England in 1833, Alkan settled in Paris, where he became a sought-after piano teacher in the Conservatoire. With the exception of conservatory concerts and recitals in private circles, he did not appear on the concert stage after his return from England. Around 1858, Alkan became a recluse, dropped his pupils, and concentrated on composition. Liszt, Chopin, and Rubinstein visited Alkan when they were in Paris. These men, along with von Bülow, admired Alkan as a virtuoso in the grand manner.³ Alkan, however, lost contact with the outside world and retired more and more into embitterment and eccentricity. On March 29, 1888, Alkan met an accidental death; as he reached

²Reinhold Seitz, "Morhange, Alkan," Die Music in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Vol. X (Basel, 1940).

³Reinhold Seitz, "Ein Vorläufer von Bartoks 'Allegro Barbaro,'" Die Musikforschung, V (1952), 370.

for a volume of the Talmud, an entire bookcase fell on him. Alkan's secluded life is typical of his whole character, which Reinhold Seitz described as ". . .viel kränkelnde Junggeselle immer wunderlicher und misanthropischer. . . ." ⁴ Seitz mentions at the same time that Alkan, as a composer, was almost entirely without success. ⁵

Virtually every writer on Alkan has compared him with Liszt, Chopin, and Berlioz. In his preface to the first volume of the collected edition of Liszt's piano works, Busoni ranks Alkan with Liszt and Chopin as a master of the piano-forte étude. ⁶ Searle goes so far as to say that Alkan's studies surpass those of Chopin and Liszt in technical dexterity. ⁷ One could certainly challenge, however, any implication that Alkan's studies are thereby superior in musical interest. The continued inclusion of much of his output in the *étude* material composed for the Conservatoire in Paris has led many to dismiss Alkan as a second Czerny. Schumann described Alkan as a composer who ". . .is one of the ultra-romantic French

⁴May be translated as ". . .very sickly bachelor, always strange and misanthropic. . . ." Seitz, "Morhange, Alkan," p. 579.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ferruccio Busoni, Vortrag zur Gesamtausgabe, F. Liszt, Vol. I (Leipzig, 1904), p. ii.

⁷Humphrey Searle, "A Plea for Alkan," Music and Letters, XVIII (1927), 276.

school, and copies Berlioz on the pianoforte."⁸ This has, no doubt, led many writers to refer to Alkan as the Berlioz of the piano. He does compare to Berlioz in his sense of dramatic effect, for both composers convey a feeling of the macabre.

It is only natural for one to want to compare Alkan and Liszt when it is taken into consideration that both composers were virtuosos of the piano. Alkan's life lacked the sensational details which kept Liszt's name alive. This, of course, accounts for the fact that Alkan has remained virtually unknown to a great number of present-day musicians. Concerning the relative celebrity of Alkan and Liszt, we can turn to the Gazette Musicale de Paris. Liszt is very securely placed, while Alkan is mentioned only as a rising young pianist. In 1835, he was referred to as an "un de nos premiers pianistes."⁹ The Gazette of April 19, 1835, contains an interesting announcement of a concert to be given on April 27 by Hermann of Hamburg, a pupil of Liszt. On the program was a potpourri for four pianos by Czerny that was performed by Liszt, Lowinsky, Alkan, and Hermann.¹⁰ As a performer it is evident that Alkan was a pianist of the highest order. A. F. Marmontel

⁸Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians, II (London, n.d.), 486.

⁹H. H. Bellamann, "The Piano Works of C. V. Alkan," The Musical Quarterly, X (October, 1924), 252.

¹⁰Ibid.

wrote these words: ". . .son toucher ferme, précis, mesure à l'autorité et l'austerité qui conviennent à sa nature puritaine et convaincue. . . ." ¹¹

Alkan composed, according to his own statements, only for himself. ¹² An examination of his music brings to light an all-personalized style that demands an unsurpassed technical facility. Alkan's art was so far removed in style and intent from that of the Wagnerian school that his contemporaries chose to ignore his works completely. Although Liszt, Chopin, Anton Rubinstein, von Bülow, and César Franck expressed admiration for Alkan's compositions during his lifetime, they did little to bring them to public attention. Alkan's natural son, Elie Miriam Delaborde, inherited his father's pianistic gifts and studied piano with his father, Moscheles, and Henselt; even Delaborde did not choose to perform Alkan's works in public.

Around 1900, however, Busoni and d'Albert led an Alkan renaissance, although their efforts were in vain and interest in Alkan's music died. In recent years there seems to have been a revival of interest in Alkan's music. Reinhold Seitz, in an article published in 1952, defends Alkan from the severe criticism that his music was ". . .dull and not even technically

¹¹A. F. Marmontel, Les Pianistes Célèbres (Paris, 1878), p. 118.

¹²Seitz, "Ein Vorläufer von Bartoks 'Allegro Barbaro,'" p. 370.

fascinating. . . ."13 Seitz contends that although the critic is a competent writer,¹⁴ his statement was perhaps influenced by current German viewpoints and that it was precisely through Robert Schumann's ". . . intelligible but unjust, destructive criticism. . . ."15 that attitudes such as this were born. Seitz admits that the best of Alkan's art is to be found in a very small number of his entire output, but as a composer, he is honest, steadfast, a searcher after new goals, and deserves attention.¹⁶

Alkan's Piano Works:
A General Survey

It would be impractical to discuss in detail the entire output of Alkan's piano works, which number over ninety, not including a large number of transcriptions for piano and a few works for the pedal piano. It would be advantageous, however, to survey those works which led to the culmination of Alkan's style in the études of Opus 39 and in the Grande Sonate, which have been singled out as representative of a most unusual style of composition.

¹³Translated from the German: ". . . geistlos und nicht einmal spieltechnisch fesselnd. . . ." Ibid., p. 372.

¹⁴Unfortunately, Seitz does not identify the author nor the source of the quotation. Ibid.

¹⁵Translated from the German: ". . . verständliche, aber ungerechte, vernichtende Kritik. . . ." Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

C. F. Whistling's Handbuch der musikalischen Litteratur of 1828 lists what appears to be Alkan's first published work, despite the opus number.¹⁷ This set of variations is listed as Opus 17 and was published by Richault of Paris. The complete title of the set is given by Whistling as Variations sur le theme 'L'Orage' de Steibelt.¹⁸ Fétis, however, lists it as the second in order of publication and another set, Les Omnibus, variations pour le piano dédiées aux dames blanches as first.¹⁹ Les Omnibus is listed in Whistling's Handbuch of 1829, but without opus number and is recorded as published by Schlesinger.²⁰ To add to the confusion, there is another Opus 17, which is an Etude de Concert and is listed in the Costallet publication.²¹

Humphrey Searle explains that the reason for this confusion of opus number stems from Alkan's habit of republishing the same work under different opus numbers and of giving the same opus number to two or more different works.²²

¹⁷C. F. Whistling, Handbuch der musikalischen Litteratur, Vol. II, 2nd edition, 19 vols. (Leipzig, 1828), p. 707.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹F. J. Fétis, "Alkan," Biographie Universelle des Musiciens et Bibliographie Generale de la Musique, I (Paris, 1860).

²⁰Whistling, Vol. III, p. 1215.

²¹Bellamann, p. 252.

²²Humphrey Searle, "Alkan," Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. I (London, 1940).

Searle took upon himself the task of cataloguing Alkan's works and seems to be, by comparison to other attempts, more authoritative and complete.²³

There is nothing recorded for the period 1829-1833, but the Dritter Ergänzungsband of Whistling, which covers the period from 1834 to the end of 1838, lists the Concerto da Camera, Opus 10 (Richault), a composition for piano solo. Trois Grandes Etudes dans le genre pathétique, Opus 15 (Hofmeister), and Six Morceaux Characteristiques: "Une Nuit d'Hiver," "La Pâque," "La Sérénade," "Une Nuit d'Eté," "Les Moissonneurs," and "L'Opéra."²⁴ These are also published by Hofmeister and must have been published first at this early period without opus numbers. Later, they appear as part of the suite Les Mois, in which their number is increased to twelve.

The earliest work of distinct value is Opus 10. Again, the opus number is of no importance, for the composition is the Concerto da Camera in A minor for piano and orchestra. It seems quite incredible that it should date as early as 1823. There are pianistic effects such as bravura octave passages, long and difficult skips, and interlocking trills in chords, which set this concerto apart from any method of piano playing then in vogue. It should be pointed out that

²³Ibid., pp. 112-113.

²⁴Bellamann, p. 253.

Liszt's Etudes en forme de Douze Exercices pour piano, from which the Etudes d'Exécution Transcendante were derived, did not appear until 1830. The earlier set of études was Liszt's Opus 1. There is a second Chamber Concerto, which bears the same opus number and is in C-sharp minor. In this concerto are wide-spread chords, orchestral tremolos, and sweeping arpeggios which show a distinct advance in effects from the first concerto. In the adagio, there is the device of dividing a melody between the hands in order to free them for wide rolling arpeggio accompaniments, the device Thalberg used so effectively in 1836 and with which he earned such applause.²⁵ Dividing a melody in such a manner was Thalberg's specialty. According to Schonberg, he had gotten the idea from the harpist, Parish Alvers.²⁶ In the Trois Etudes de Bravoure, Opus 12, there is an emphasis on a freer piano technique, toward which Alkan was taking immediate steps.

One of Alkan's best-known compositions, the second of three pieces in Trois Morceaux dans le genre pathétique, Opus 15, "Le Vent," requires a virtuoso technique in all varieties of chromatics. There are rapid chromatic scales in either hand, accompanying a cantabile melody in the other. Later a melody in octaves, for thumb and fifth finger, has to be played together with tremolando figures for the inner fingers

²⁵Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present (New York, 1963), p. 172.

²⁶Ibid.

of the same hand. Critics have not taken kindly to this piece, and it may be justly said that it lacks musical value, but it, nevertheless, compares quite favorably with other nineteenth-century pieces of the same nature or of similar titles.

Already mentioned is Opus 16 or the Six Morceaux Caractéristiques, consisting of six programmatic and descriptive pieces and three more bravura studies sometimes confused by publishers with the great studies of Opus 76, entitled Trois Grandes Etudes pour les deux mains séparées ou réunies.

Humphrey Searle states that of all the Alkan studies those from Opus 76 are technically the most important. This set of studies consists of a fantasia for the left hand alone, an introduction, variations, and finale for the right hand, and a third study uniting the hands in "mouvement semblable et perpétuel." Apparently Alkan recognized the near impossibility of the last étude in Opus 76, for he wrote a separate "Perpetuum mobile" as a preparatory exercise.

The Douze Etudes dans les tons majeurs, Opus 35, are for the most part very uneven musically, many of them falling completely into the étude character, while a few others, notably "L'Incendie au village voisin" and "L'Amour et la Mort," rise to expression of true musical feeling simply and adequately expressed, but are more picturesque than useful as studies. Unfortunately, this set of études is rather difficult to obtain in its entirety.

This brings us to the Etudes dans les tons Mineurs, Opus 39 which are considered by Searle to be "Alkan's greatest achievement and contain some of the most striking piano music ever written."²⁷ Writers such as Lewenthal, Seitz, Dieren, and others agree that Opus 39 is perhaps one of the best representatives of Alkan's works. As in the Etudes, Opus 35 the key of each piece is a fourth above that of the preceding. Alkan makes use of similar key sequences in the Esquisses, Opus 63. Thus the Symphonie which comprises numbers four through seven of Opus 39, begins in C minor and ends in E-flat minor.

Every study written on Alkan and his music has concerned itself with technical content and difficulty in performance, never really reaching any conclusions. Thus far nothing revealing has come out of these efforts to present Alkan and his music, since each writer has covered the same material.

The first thing that is pointed out by every author on Alkan is the many new pianistic effects. Some writers, such as Bellamann, go so far as to state that Alkan's techniques were perhaps "first devised by Alkan and later used by Liszt and Rubinstein."²⁸ Bellamann, however, is careful to say that Alkan's pianistic achievements were "perhaps. . . only rediscovered by Liszt and Rubinstein, but certainly they were used

²⁷Searle, "A Plea for Alkan," p. 277.

²⁸Bellamann, p. 251.

by both and were identified with their names."²⁹ In order to present positive proof of Alkan's possible influence on Liszt's manner of composing, one would have to determine if Liszt saw or heard any of Alkan's compositions before 1831, when he heard Paganini's famous concert in Paris.

The above question is interesting enough, but more important is the fact of Alkan's Jewishness, its unquestionable influence on his compositions, and perhaps the underlying reason why his compositions have never stood up in the eyes of music critics and his own contemporaries.

²⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER III

JEWRY IN ALKAN'S MUSIC: HIS USE OF PRAYER CHANTS

In the foregoing chapter, it was pointed out that Alkan was respected by his contemporaries, but that because his music was so far removed from the Wagnerian school, nothing was ever done to bring his works to public attention. Not only is his music out of line with the style of the Wagnerian school, it is essentially not European, but Jewish in nature. With Wagner's publications striking out against the Jew in music, it is no wonder that Alkan's music was never recognised. The only European elements found in his works are the harmonies, form, virtuosity, and rhythms (although many may be said to have been influenced by Jewish song). This would be expected since Alkan was educated in Paris. Because Alkan's father conducted a school for Jewish children, it is evident that Alkan, himself, was reared in the Jewish tradition. It is known that he was a scholar of the Talmud. In light of this, it would only be natural that he utilized the melodies heard in the Jewish Synagogue.

Numerous examples of Jewish accents can be found in Alkan's compositions, but the most striking evidence of his Jewishness appears in his use of prayer-motives. It is the Symphonie, Opus 39, for piano, that presents the most striking examples.

Not only does he employ these motives, but he uses them in such a way as to adhere to the rules of structure set forth by tradition. Because this is a complicated matter, it would be beneficial to bring forth some of the most commonly used prayer chants and the way in which they are constructed.

The Prayer Chant in Jewish Tradition

For more than 2,000 years, a continuous *ad libitum solo*, or more correctly, a free intonation, has been in use in the numerous synagogues throughout the world. This intonation, designated as a prayer chant, does not consist of a system of accents, but of a melodious development of certain themes or motives traditionally associated with the individual service. Unlike Biblical cantillation, the prayer chant is not based on a set of stereotyped melodic formulas indicated by signs, but belongs to the general category of melody types.¹ Over the course of a long history, the Jewish people have developed this intricate, though largely unwritten, musical liturgy--supple and unrhythmical, yet highly systematized and distinctly prescribed by tradition. Abraham Z. Idelsohn traced these ancient prayer chants back to the trop, or cantillations of the

¹Melody type as defined in the Harvard Dictionary of Music is "a term used in modern writings on non-western and early European music for a practice of fundamental importance in the more primitive stages of music, i.e., a repertory of traditional melodies, ornamentations, rhythmic patterns, etc., that serve as a model for the creation of new melodies." Willi Apel, "Melody Type," Harvard Dictionary of Music, (Cambridge, 1969).

Bible. These melodies are known as hazzanut,² a word derived from chazzan, the name for the cantor who is professionally engaged to sing the prayers.

The traditional chanting of the prayers is governed by a fixed method or nusach, which must be considered as a mold. Within the limitations of its scale, patterns, and ritual application, it gives opportunity for improvisations of both flexibility and virtuosity. The nusach may be defined as the traditional musical means of the Hebrew prayers. The musical modes through which it is expressed are, with one exception, rooted in the Biblical cantillations. These particular modes are made of characteristic note-groups or phrases. They are similar to the single note-groups of the Biblical modes (see the Appendix for examples), but are subject to more variations and alteration. Unlike cantillation, a system of notation was never acquired for the phrases of nusach. Only recently have they been reduced to notation at all.

Before continuing, it is important at this point to differentiate between scale and mode as they appear in Jewish music.

Jewish Concept of Scale and Mode

The mode serves to determine the character of the music. Jewish modes, or steiger, were developed as interpretations of the prayers and holy days, adapting themselves well to

²"Jewish Music," Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, 1969).

producing a devotional character. Each mode contains the individual phrases which serve as a basis of the traditional improvisational song.³ In Jewish music, a scale is, therefore, merely a succession of intervals, while a mode is composed of a combination of traditional phrases within a given scale. Often there will be found in the same scale several different modes, each for a definite occasion in the religious calendar. In addition, the first section within a single service may be chanted in accordance with a different mode from the second section. Because the mode is often named after an important prayer chanted according to that mode, we have for example, the Adonoy moloch mode, the Mogen ovos mode, etc.

Since it can be proven that the majority of the prayer chants stem from Biblical cantillations, it would naturally follow that the characteristic melodic line should also be parallel to that of the cantillations. A greater part of the Bible is chanted in major, or rather, in scales featuring the major third. The entire Pentateuch is in this scale, as well as Esther, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and in some places even the Prophets.⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, to find that much of the nusach features this same major third. The Adonoy moloch scale, named for a characteristic mode of the Friday evening service, consists of a major scale in the

³See Appendix for a presentation of the common modes and the phrases or modes therein.

⁴Abraham Idelsohn, Hebräisch-Orientalischer Melodien-schatz, VII (Leipzig, 1932), p. 19.

classical sense, with the exception of a minor seventh and a minor tenth. In this scale (see Figure 1), we find the modes

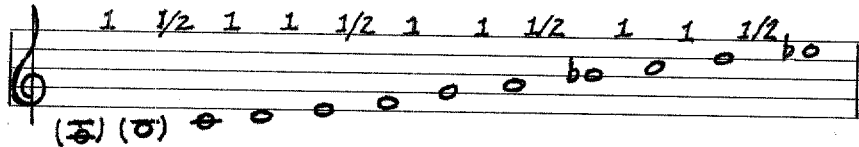


Fig. 1 --The Adonoy moloch scale

used on the Sabbath, both evening and morning, and the evening service for the High Holy Days, and certain special chants such as the Akdomus (see Table I, phrase H). It is the Adonoy moloch scale wherein we find a reservoir of melodies applied by Alkan in the Symphonie, Opus 39, first movement.

The Symphonie, Opus 39

First movement. --The opening theme features a minor third. Even though the Adonoy moloch scale features the major third, the minor third inevitably appears through octave displacement of the minor tenth interval mentioned above. Figure 2 shows some of the more commonly used phrases in this scale.⁵ These are taken from the Kabolas shabos mode ("Receiving the

⁵The dashes written above certain notes in Figure 2 and the illustrations which follow indicate those notes to be a stressed or an accented note and essential to the motive. On the other hand, notes that are enclosed withing parenthesis marks may be left out or altered. This is in compliance with tradition and in accordance with the system set forth by Cohon, "The Structure of the Synagogue Chant," Journal of the American Musicological Society, III (Spring, 1950), 20.

Sabbath") from the Friday evening service. Phrase B in Figure 2 appears in one of its three forms in every mode in the Adonoy



Fig. 2 --Commonly used phrases from the Kabolas shabos mode in the Adonoy moloch scale.

moloch scale. Phrases A and B₂ are the most typical in this scale. It is from these two phrases that the principal theme from Opus 39, seen in Figure 3, may be traced.

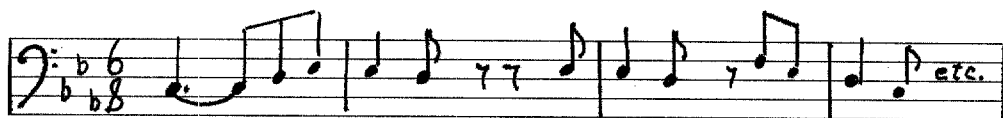


Fig. 3 --Principal theme from Symphonie, Opus 39, first movement, measures 1-4.

The similarity between the above phrases is quite apparent. Even more striking, however, is the seemingly methodical way in which Alkan conforms to the Synagogue rules of structure in composing his melodies. Cohon presents an

explanation of the way in which prayer chants are constructed. According to Cohon, there are three main headings:⁶ (1) Beginning phrases are those that introduce a sentence or paragraph; (2) Intermediate phrases are those which carry the main body of the selection to be chanted; and (3) Concluding phrases are those that, obviously, are intended to end a sentence, or, in a more sustained form, a paragraph. Cohon goes on to divide the second of these groupings into pausal phrases--ending with a musical comma--and modulations--one of the most distinctive features of synagogue prayer chants.⁷ This type of modulation is unlike the laborious modulation typical of a composer of art-music in that the traditional precentor achieves the same end result through the turn of a single, familiar, linking phrase.⁸ Finally, we have pre-concluding phrases--those which demand the resolution of the traditional concluding notes. These phrases are all un-rhythmical units. The time values of the notes as written here are presented by Cohon as being relative. Generally, the first or last note of the phrase, or both, can be lengthened to accommodate as many syllables as necessary.

⁶B. J. Cohon, "The Structure of the Synagogue Prayer-Chant," Journal of the American Musicological Society, III (Spring, 1950), 23.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Cohon points out that when Jewish songs began to be harmonized according to classical rules, the modulations presented grave difficulties. For more information see Idelsohn, Jewish Music in Its Historical Development, Chapter XXIII.

The table which follows presents the four groups discussed above as they would appear in the Adonoy moloch scale. Each group is classified in the following manner: (1) Beginning phrases (roman numeral: I, II, III, etc.), (2) Pausal phrases (arabic numerals: 1, 2, 3, etc.), (3) Modulations (small letters: a, b, c, etc.), (4) Concluding phrases (capital letters: E, F, G, etc.). References will be made to certain phrases in this manner: phrase "a" or phrase "4," etc.

Accented notes of phrases are indicated by horizontal lines (see footnote number 5 on page 27). If a phrase is marked with an asterisk, that phrase is essential to every selection in the mode under which it appears in the table.

TABLE I
 MODES IN THE ADONAY MOLOCH SCALE
 "Receiving the Sabbath"
 Kabolat Shabos Mode

Beginning Phrases	Intermediate Phrases		Concluding Phrases
	Pausal	Modulations	

TABLE I --Continued





Beginning Phrases	Intermediate Phrases		Concluding Phrases
	Pausal	Modulations	

<p>4 (See Pausal Phrases)</p>	<p>1c</p>	<p>c</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>* II</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>d</p>	<p>H</p>
	<p>3</p> <p>(ad lib. ORNAMENT)</p>		
	<p>4 (Follows II)</p>		
<p>* b</p>	<p>5</p>		

"Verses of Song"
P'sukey d'zimroh

<p>III</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>I</p>
<p>6 (See PAUSAL Phrases)</p>	<p>7-1 (See above)</p>	<p>J</p>

TABLE I -- Continued

Beginning Phrases	Intermediate Phrases		Concluding Phrases
	Pausal	Modulations	
 <p>IV</p>	 <p>8</p>		
 <p>V (German Tradition) 9</p>	 <p>9</p>		

"Sabbath Morning"
Y'kun purkon

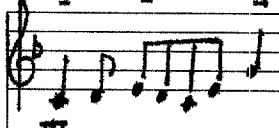
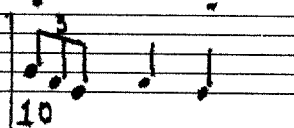

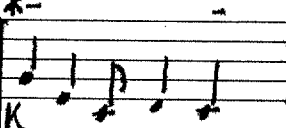
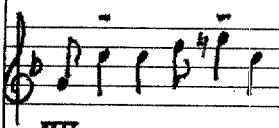
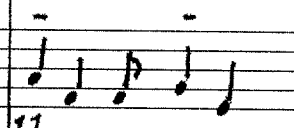
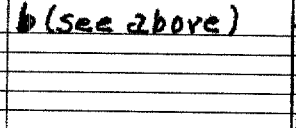
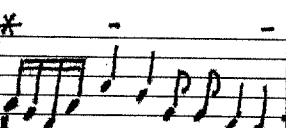
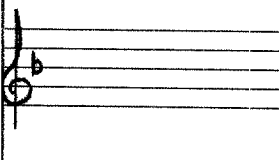

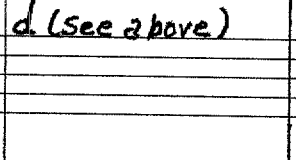


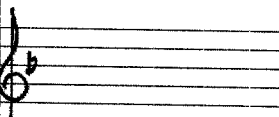
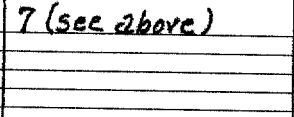
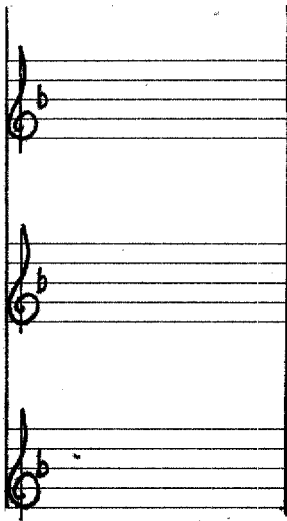
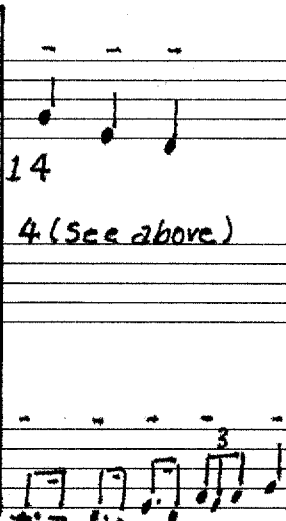

 <p>VI</p>	 <p>10</p>	 <p>e</p>	 <p>K</p>
 <p>VII</p>	 <p>11</p>	 <p>b (see above)</p>	 <p>*</p>
 <p>12</p>	 <p>12</p>	 <p>d (see above)</p>	
 <p>13</p>	 <p>13</p>		
 <p>7 (see above)</p>	 <p>7 (see above)</p>		

TABLE I --Continued

Beginning Phrases	Intermediate Phrases		Concluding Phrases
	Pausal	Modulations	
			
			

"Eve of High Holy Days"
Yomim Noroim

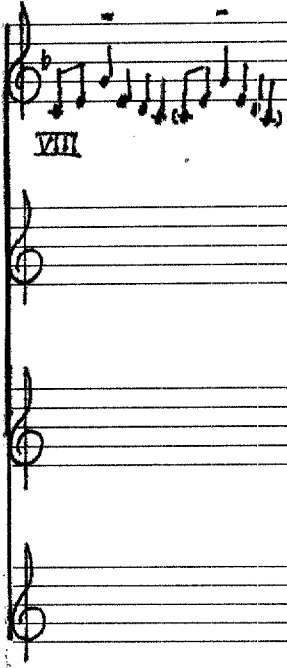
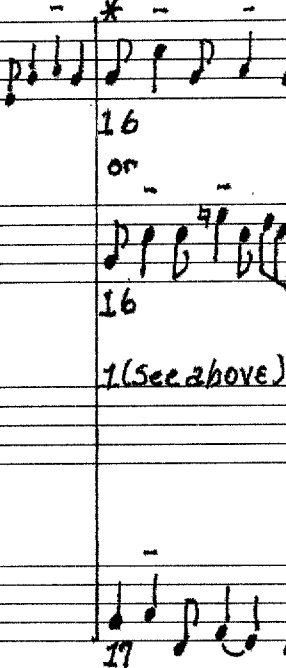
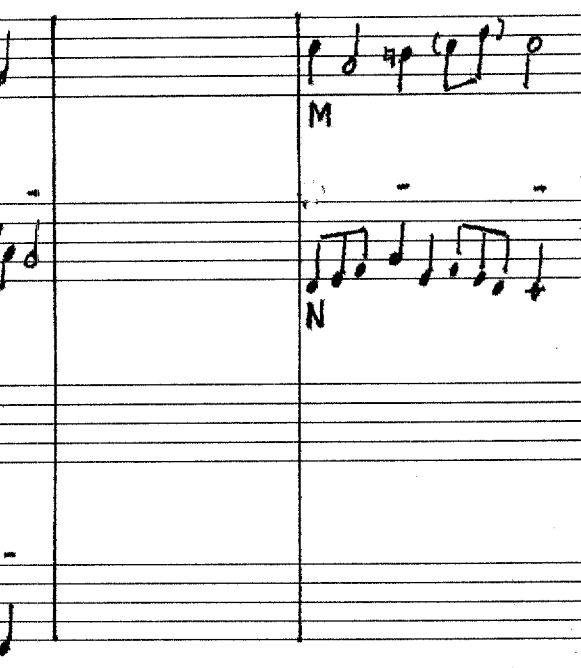
			
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TABLE I --Continued

Akdomus Mode*

Beginning Phrases	Intermediate Phrases		Concluding Phrases
	Pausal	Modulations	
IX	18	K	
X	19	X	P
XI	20	J	XII (See Beginning Phrases)
XII (German Tradition)			

*The Akdomus mode is a special mode for certain poetical sections, principally from the Sabbath morning service.

Let us re-examine the principal theme of Opus 39 in conjunction with traditional application of phrases from the Kabolas shabos ("Receiving the Sabbath") mode which is the first of five modes represented in the above table. Phrase I usually begins every response by the reader. Even though Alkan's theme is not exact in comparison, he does, however, emphasize the main notes of phrase I throughout the course of of the entire theme (notice the emphasized notes, "c," "e,"

and "g"). It is important to point out that the dashes written over the notes in Figure 4 are part of Alkan's notation.



Fig. 4 --Principal theme, Opus 39, first movement, measures 1-11.

Intermediate sentences may begin with phrase a or phrase 4 from Table I. Here again is the similarity that was pointed out earlier: the resemblance between phrase 4 and the beginning of Alkan's theme.

In the Intermediate phrases, phrase 1 appears, in one of its three forms, in every mode in this scale and is essential to every selection in the Kabolas shabos mode. Phrase 1, in its third form (1c) is the basis of the recurring "sign" motive (see phrases I and 2 in Table I and also Figure 4).

Found among the concluding phrases is another essential phrase for this mode (see Table I, phrase H under the Kabolas shabos mode). This phrase compares with measures 9 and 10 of Figure 4.

After a second statement of the primary theme, Alkan uses a modulation (see Figure 5,b) similar to one that is

appropriate for chants written in this mode (see Figure 5, a). This phrase is used to modulate to the Ahavoh rabboh scale (see phrase b under the Kabolas shabos mode, Table I, page 30).



Fig. 5 --A comparison between Alkan's modulation (see b) to the second theme, Symphonie and a traditional modulation (a) to the Ahavoh rabboh scale.

Alkan treats the phrase in sequence and does, indeed, lead into the Sabbath mode in the Ahavoh rabboh scale, named for a characteristic mode of the Sabbath morning service. This scale is used for weekday modes as well as on the Sabbath, and also in certain parts of the High Holy Day services. Though it is the same as the Arabian hedjaz scale, its use as a vehicle for the most passionate outcries of the Russian Jewish cantors, as well as for countless folk songs, has left an unmistakably Jewish stamp upon it. This scale alone has no roots in Biblical cantillations; and therefore, we find it used more in some countries than in others, and entirely unknown in other places, notably Western Germany.

The motive presented in Figure 6 is used as a sequence followed by a bridge theme that bears a striking resemblance to a phrase found in the Aharoh rabboh scale (Sabbath mode). In this scale, we find that the virtuosity of the cantorial

The phrase (see Figure 7, a) comes from the bor'chu mode in the Sabbath morning service. Notice that Alkan does not wander away from the modes for the Sabbath.

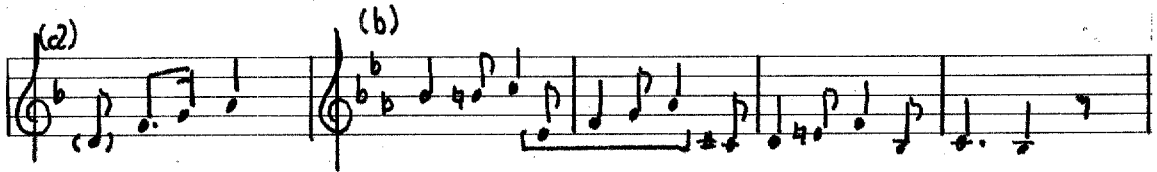


Fig. 7 --Secondary theme from Symphony, Opus 39, first movement, measures 51-54 (b) and a phrase from the bor'chu mode.

The next example we find is in the minchah mode (mode of the Sabbath afternoon service) which can be described as being a flowing chant of continuous motion. A reciting note is difficult to locate, but the phrases turn around the fourth and the tonic. Idelsohn points out that the source of this mode is in the Pentateuch and the Prophets. There are three phrases that are essential to every selection in this mode (see Figure 8, a, b, and c).



Fig. 8 --Measures 67-70 (Symphonie, Opus 39, first movement) and their Jewish origin (see a through d).

Alkan utilized a combination of all three with the addition of another phrase similar to "d" in Figure 8. The last measure of the above-cited theme is identical to the accented notes in "d" of Figure 8. This phrase is, in practice, utilized as a concluding phrase.

The remainder of this movement develops and recapitulates the foregoing theme in the classic tradition of sonata-allegro form.

Second movement. --At first glance, the theme from this funeral march (see Figure 9) appears to be typical of this type of piece. The fourth bar (see brackets in Figure 9) from its second phrase is, however, definitely reminiscent of a phrase in the Kol Nidrey,¹² presented in Figure 10.



Fig. 9 --Theme from the Funeral March (second movement, Symphonie, Opus 39), measures 1-8.

This phrase from the Kol Nidrey is often used in the Sabbath morning service, but in a slightly different version (see

¹²For information concerning the Kol Nidrey and its use in Jewish music, see Idelsohn, Jewish Music, pp. 144-161.

programmatic relationship here as will be seen later in a discussion of "Quasi Faust."

(a) Musical staff in bass clef, key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and 6/8 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with some rests. Brackets are placed under the first two measures and the last two measures.

(b) Musical staff in bass clef, key signature of three flats, and 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. A bracket is placed under the first two measures. The staff ends with "etc".

(c) Musical staff in treble clef, key signature of three flats, and 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. Brackets are placed under the first two measures and the last two measures.

Fig. 11 --Main themes from movements one, three, and four of Symphonie, Opus 39.

It was pointed out earlier that motives from prayer chants can usually be traced directly back to accents used in cantillation of the Bible. This will be seen in the following chapter, wherein some of the phrases from the Symphonie, first movement, will be presented as examples illustrating Alkan's use of accents.

CHAPTER IV

JEWRY IN ALKAN'S MUSIC: HIS USE OF ACCENTS

In the foregoing discussion of prayer chants, the term "accent" was mentioned in connection with the Hebrew practice of cantillation. The Jewish Encyclopedia defines cantillation as a "mode of intonation used in public recitals of prayers and Holy Scripture. The infinite gradations of tone in ordinary speech serve to bring forth interrelation and coordination of words used by the speaker."¹ Cantillation is, therefore, a musical expression of the meaning conveyed by words occurring in biblical scriptures. Delicate shades of meaning are expressed through the structure adopted for each sentence to be recited.

Early attempts toward expression were made by an introduction of certain conventionalities of pitch during recitation of the scriptures. These conventionalities of pitch resulted in an elementary form of song and became known as "singing to speech."² This evolved more and more into a musical declamation. Cantillation depends not upon the rhythm and sequence of the sounds chanted, but upon the rhythm and sequence of syllables to which they are chanted.

¹Frances L. Cohen, "Cantillation," The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. III (New York, 1903).

²Ibid.

Cantillation consists of a series of stereotyped melodic formulas, each of which is represented by a sign written above or below the scriptural text. These signs (sometimes called "strings," or "musical notes," or in the older expression, "adornment," or "tropes")³ are commonly referred to as accents or ta'amim. They probably developed from an earlier system designed to assist the reader in proper emphasis and interpretation of the important words of the text.

The oldest existing sources for ta'amim date from the ninth century.⁴ For as long as 1,000 years, the meaning of these signs was handed down orally by Jewish singers and was, therefore, exposed to considerable variation in different periods and localities. Before a necessity for a notation was generally felt, a system of manual signs had been developed that survived into the Middle Ages.⁵ This cheironomy, like that of the Church, could have been based upon the rise and fall of the finger as the notes employed seemed to rise and fall in succession.⁶ In its present state, however, these signs can rarely depict the rise and fall of the voice, for accents are intended simply to remind readers of the certain intonations they have already learned by ear. Accents, therefore, do not serve to indicate distinct pitches or any particular

³Ibid.

⁴"Jewish Music," Harvard Dictionary of Music, (Cambridge, 1969).

⁵Cohen, p. 538.

⁶Ibid.

series of notes. They only mean that an orthodox sequence of sounds is to be combined on a syllable in a definite manner as set forth by tradition.

Efforts to reconstruct the oldest form of cantillation have been made by J. D. Speidel (Spuren von der Alten Davidischen Sing-Kunst, Waiblingen, 1740), C. G. Anton (in Paulus' Neues Repertorium für Biblische Litteratur, Jena, 1790), L. Haupt (Sechs Alttestamentliche Psalmen, Görlitz, 1854), and L. Arends (Ueber den Sprachgesang der Vorzeit, Berlin, 1867). The Jewish Encyclopedia criticizes these attempts by stating:

. . . as these investigators did not combine that acquaintance at once with Hebrew grammar and history and with synagogal music on which Delitzsch rightly insists for the study of the subject ("Physiologie und Musik in Ihrer Bedeutung für die Grammatik, Besonders die Hebraische," Leipzig, 1868), the fanciful in their conclusions outweighs the probable.⁷

Fortunately, the Late Medieval status of accents was recorded by Johannes Reuchlin (De accentibus et orthographie linguae Hebraicae, 1518) and S. Münster (Institutiones grammaticae in Hebraeam linguam, 1524).

As for the modes used in cantillation, each book has its own mode, usually based on a tetrachordal scale (e.g., d-g, g-c) so that the rendition of the accent varies in pitch from one book to another. Table II is a summarization of the modes for the cantillations according to the four most common traditions. To simplify matters, however, Gregorian nomenclature is used.

⁷Ibid.

TABLE II
 SUMMARY OF MODES USED IN JEWISH
 SCRIPTURAL READINGS

Tradition	Scriptural Reading	Mode
Ashenazi	Pentateuchal (ordinary)	Hypodorian
	Pentateuchal (penitential)	Mixolydian
	Prophetical	Dorian
	Lamentations	Hypodorian
	Esther	Hypolydian
Sephardi	Pentateuchal	Hypodorian
	Prophetical	Dorian
Bagdadi	Pentateuchal	Ionian
	Prophetical	Hypodorian
Levantine	Pentateuchal	Hypodorian
	Lamentations, etc.	Phrygian

To illustrate, the examples in Figure 12 show clearly how the



accent will vary in pitch from one book to another. Here the same text is presented in (a) the Pentateuchal mode, (b) the penitential Pentateuchal mode, and (c) the Prophetical mode.

It is not always obvious whether the names of the accents are harmonious with their shape, position, and function or with the outline and tone of the musical sounds. Each particular accent, nevertheless, is associated with a parallel vocal figure or trope consisting of a group of notes which form a melismatic phrase. A discussion of interpretation will not be dealt with here since it would entail a study by itself. Furthermore the way in which accents are interpreted has no real connection with Alkan's use of them as merely a melodic reservoir.

For the sake of brevity, there follows a table which shows each accent used in the Ashkenazic or Sephardic tradition that appears in the music examined together with Alkan's adaptations. The musical examples will be labeled according to degree of relatedness (e.g., IA presents an almost exact musical quotation. In IB, we find an inversion of the accent, and on down the line). Along the right margin, each example will have an explanation as to origin of the accent, etc. Several examples were deleted because they are perhaps too commonly used in general music; only the most illustrative examples are included in Table III. Examples that are labeled with the numeral II are of lesser importance in that they are not basic to the entire melodic structure of the composition;

in other words they are not a part of a principal theme and are used perhaps during the process of melodic development. Also those that fall under the second category are more reminiscent than they are exact. Those are included here because the basic principles of cantillation allow for changes and variations.

TABLE III

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF TA'AMIM FOUND IN
REPRESENTATIVE PIANO WORKS OF ALKAN


Example	Origin and Explanation
<p>IA</p> 	<p>"Le Festin D'Esopo" is a set of variations on a composed theme, the first two measures of which are almost note-for-note with the companion accent. In these two measures, there is a combination of three accents: <u>Broken</u> (see the word, "Te-bir"), <u>Lengthener</u> ("Me-re-ka"), and <u>Handbreath</u> ("Tif-ba"), written in the mode of Lamentations, according to the Sephardim tradition.</p>
<p>These accents are conjunctive (normally following one another in a certain order, in this case, as written).</p>	

TABLE III --Continued

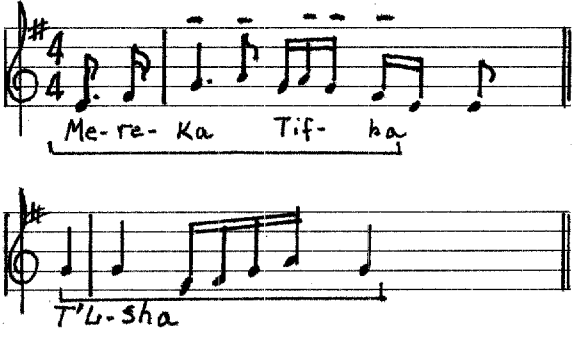
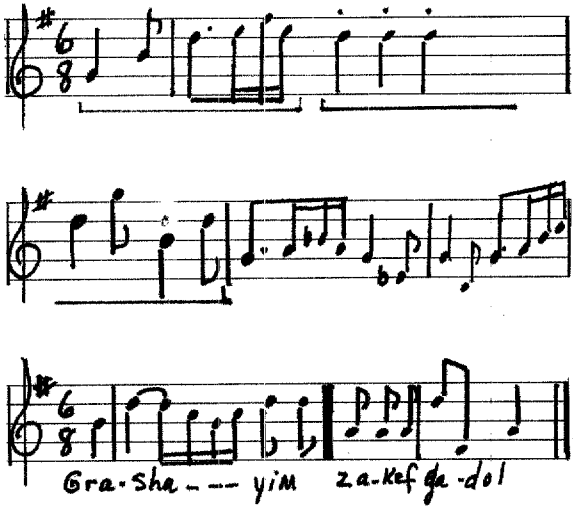

Example	Origin and Explanation
IA (continued)	The last four measures of the theme continue with a 16th-note figure, <u>Minor drawing out</u> ("T'Li-she") from the mode of Lamentation.
	
IB	The second theme from Alkan's "Barcarolle," Opus 65, No. 6 is an inversion of the <u>Double Expulsion</u> ("Gra-sha-yim") taken from the mode of Esther, Ashkenazim tradition. The remainder (see second bracket) is transposed from a phrase found in the penitential Pentateuch (<u>Major Raising</u>), Ashkenazic.
	
IC	This motive is extracted from the first full measure of the "Barcarolle," Opus 65 No. 6. Both the rhythm and shape prevails during the composition, just as one finds similar phrases sprinkled throughout the cantillations
	

TABLE III --Continued


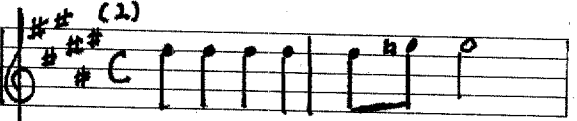


Example	Origin and Explanation
IC (continued)	(the most similar being from the penitential Pentateuch, Sephardim). It is also used in the Ashkenasic tradition but is transposed up one step. The accent used here is named <u>Major Drawing Out</u> . Alkan's phrase is in minor and the rhythm is changed, but the basic shape remains unchanged, with the exception of two notes that are left out.
	
ID	In "Quasi Faust," which is discussed at length later in this chapter, Alkan composes a "Gretchen" theme that is conflicting to the other themes in the work, as far as scope and lyrical quality are concerned. Oddly enough, only part of the theme is traceable to accents or prayer-motives. The beginning two measures (1) and an intermittent phrase that seems to interrupt the pace of this theme (see IE). At any rate, the beginning two measures can be traced to three conjunctive accents: <u>Handbreath</u> ("Tep-ha"), <u>Lengthener</u> ("Me-re-ka"), and <u>Cessation</u> ("Sil-lok"), for cantillation of the ordinary Pentateuch as used in the Sephardic tradition. In the beginning, the relationship is not exact, there being a difference of a half step. With the second statement (2) of the theme, Alkan presents the original ascending half step.
	
	
	

TABLE III --Continued

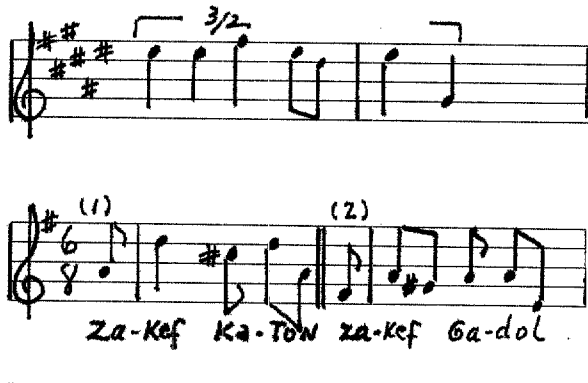

Example	Origin and Explanation
<p data-bbox="268 512 308 544">IE</p> 	<p data-bbox="906 512 1501 1385">Alkan interpolates this figure in his "Gretchen" theme from "Quasi Faust." Here we have an implied meter of 3/2 (see brackets). Phrases of a similar outline are found throughout the accents for the cantillations. The ones appearing here are (1) <u>Minor Raising</u> ("Za-kef Kat-on") from the penitential Pentateuch, and (2) <u>Major Raising</u> ("Za-kef Ge-dol") from the mode of Lamentations. For the most part, this Alkan melody is non-Jewish, but this phrase stands out because of the conflicting meters, a device which he uses more than once in this composition. As one can see, the outlines of the compared phrases are very similar even though the notes are not exact. Even in traditional use, it is permissible to change notes.</p>
<p data-bbox="268 1178 308 1210">IF</p> 	<p data-bbox="906 1417 1501 1972">The second movement of the <u>Symphonie</u>, Opus 39, contains, in its secondary theme, two examples of accents (in the first phrase and in the second phrase). Within phrase 1, as in previous illustrations, Alkan uses two conjunctive accents, the first named <u>Bunch</u> ("Se-gol") and the second, <u>Resting Horn</u> ("Mu-nah") both from the Prophetic mode, Sephardic tradition. The second phrase, however, is traceable to a single accent ("Zar-ka") named <u>Scatterer</u> from the Prophetic mode.</p>

TABLE III --Continued




Example	Origin and Explanation
<p data-bbox="268 506 311 538">IG</p> 	<p data-bbox="906 506 1524 1606">"Fa," Opus 38, No. 2 is taken from the second of five sets of pieces called <u>Chants</u>, each set containing six pieces. The key signatures of the pieces in each set follow those of Mendelssohn's <u>Lieder ohne Worte</u> (first book). It is interesting to note that although Alkan keeps the pitch F, "Fa" is not written in F, but has the key signature of A minor. The main theme is found among the accents for the ordinary Penitential mode (Ashkenasic). The name of the accent in this case is <u>Minor Raising</u> ("Za-kef Ka-ton"). The mode for the ordinary Penitential is equivalent to the Gregorian hypoaolian (see Table II, page 45) and this theme in fact is written within that mode. The additional tone, F, may be referred to as the subtonium, the final and dominant being A and C. The subtonium serves to enlarge the range of the scale; in fact, Alkan steps outside the range of this mode very seldom and only for the sake of harmony.</p>
<p data-bbox="268 1500 327 1532">IIA</p> 	<p data-bbox="906 1634 1481 1959">Opus 63, entitled <u>Esquisses</u>, contains 48 short pieces that go through all the major and minor keys twice. The themes of most of these pieces are based on a very short motive. Number 37, "Scherzettino" utilizes a fragment of the accent named <u>Chain</u> ("Shal-she-let") from the ordinary Peni-</p>

TABLE III --Continued

Example	Origin and Explanation
IIA (continued)	<p>tential mode. Were it not for the fact that this short motive is repeated again and again in sequence, one would tend to dismiss it as being too commonly used in general music.</p>
IIB	<p>The same can be said of the first piece in Opus 63, "La Vision," which utilizes a common Jewish motive that is found throughout the cantillations and appearing in slightly different forms. This phrase is not limited to any one mode. The motive shown here is named <u>Steps</u> ("Da-re-ga") followed by <u>Broken</u> ("Te-bir"). This motive occurs twice during the course of these two conjunctive accents. An outline of the theme from "La Vision" can be seen in the conjunction and follows the accented notes therein (see notes with dashes). It was pointed out in the discussion of prayer motives that notes may be added to or taken away from the basic motive. Since prayer-motives usually have their derivatives among the accents, the same rule applies here. The motives that are bracketed are used throughout this composition.</p>
IIC	<p>"Heraclite et Democrite," Opus 63, No. 39, is representative of Alkan's fondness for opposing ideas. He often chooses to write pairs of compositions that characterize</p>



TABLE III --Continued

Example	Origin and Explanation
IIC (continued)	<p>contradicting titles such as "Jean qui pleure, Jean qui rit" or "Ma chère liberté, Ma chère servitude." Here, however, two opposites are juxtaposed within a single piece. The first theme repeatedly uses the accent named <u>Minor Raising</u> as found in the penitential Pentateuch mode (Ashkenasic). In the beginning measure, the relationship is not exact, but later becomes more so, with the exception of an f-sharp (see 2, in IIC). Upon first glance, the opposing themes seem to be completely different, the second theme being in a major key and containing a repeated note pattern. Actually the Heraclite theme carries, in its fourth measure (see 4 in IIC), a motive that is used in the second theme (see 3 in IIC), thus providing a means of unity. The mode in which the accent is found carries no apparent programatic meaning except perhaps that the mode is a melancholy one to the western ear; Heraclite was known as the Dark Philosopher as opposed to Démocrite, the Laughing Philosopher.</p>
IID	<p>A typically Jewish triplet rhythm () is carried throughout the theme from "Scherzetto," Opus 63, No. 47. This rhythmic figure and derivatives of it are sprinkled throughout Synagogue music. The accent that bears a close</p>

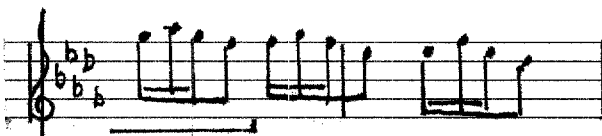
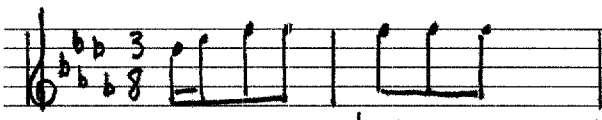
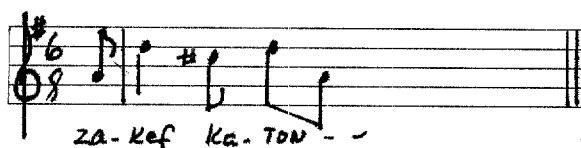
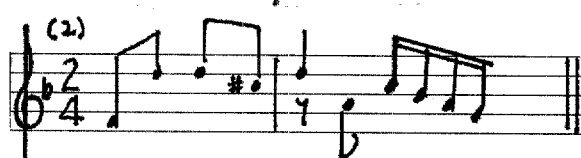



TABLE III --Continued

Example	Origin and Explanation
<p data-bbox="261 517 320 549">IID</p> 	<p data-bbox="900 523 1481 917">resemblance does not, however, carry the same rhythm. It comes from the cantillation for the Prophets and is named <u>Major Raising</u> ("Za-kef, ga-dol"). Another accent, <u>Stretcher cum Minor</u> ("Pash-ta Ka-ton") from the mode of Ruth is more similar. Alkan keeps the theme in d-flat major; therefore, the relationship is not exact.</p>

The examples in Table III represent Alkan's use of Jewish accents. As was pointed out earlier, the more common musical phrases were deleted. There are several themes that are made up of disjunctive accents (those that do not naturally follow one another). There seems to be nothing unusual about these examples except that because they occur rather frequently, one could say that Alkan consciously and with full intent incorporated prayer-motives and accents into his music.

The pieces that may be referred to as characteristic pieces ("Le Vent," "L'Opéra") carry more interest in pianistic effect and it can be said that they contain few, if any, Jewish motives. The smaller pieces such as the forty-eight from Esquisses (Sketches), Opus 63, some of which were presented in Table III, also use the accents with less frequency.

The larger works are those that are more Jewish in nature, going to such an extent as to contain actual programmatic meaning as, for example, in "Quasi Faust."

"Quasi Faust": a Full Realization
of Synagogue Tradition

Alkan's "Quasi Faust," the second of three movements comprising the Grande Sonate (Paris, 1847), brings together each tradition of the Jewish Synagogue: use of prayer-motives, accents, and the ancient practice of a fixed idea. It is for this reason that "Quasi Faust" has been chosen for discussion at length. Not only does Alkan utilize these elements in the abstract; he also creates program music by using the interpretation of the modes in conjunction with Goethe's tale of Faust.

The Grande Sonate can be singled out as Alkan's first published work that presents his style at its culmination. The second movement, which forms the apex of the sonata, is the longest and most difficult movement. This work is perhaps one of the most difficult and longest piano sonatas since Beethoven's Hammerklavier.

The Grande Sonate may very well have been influenced by Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique (1831), which is subtitled "Episode in the Life of an Artist." "Quasi Faust" is intended to depict man in various stages of life. The movements are labeled "20 Ans," "30 Ans," and "40 Ans," in that order.

Prior to the Grande Sonate Alkan used descriptive titles, but not in a programmatic sense. According to Seitz, Alkan stated that his titles have nothing in common with program music, but that they are only "a special direction to the mind [of the performer] which might indicate the way to the [composer's] fantasy."⁸ Evidence indicates that "Quasi Faust" is indeed program music. This point will be discussed after we deal with the more abstract elements.

The primary point of interest in the over-all construction of this second movement is the melodic idea which reoccurs throughout the course of the composition. This application of the principle of a recurring theme (idée fixe: Berlioz, Leitmotif: Wagner, transformation des thèmes: Liszt) has for centuries colored the synagogue chants. A kind of supplementary calendar was formed, making each holiday recognizable by a single phrase of music.⁹ Alkan goes farther than simply announcing a motive and restating it as the movement progresses. The idea itself is used in the same way as Liszt would have in his method of thematic transformation; in other words, using the basic motive in different guises throughout the movement.

In "Quasi Faust," one phrase serves as the germ from which its themes are derived (see "a" in Figure 13). In this

⁸Reinhold Seitz, "Ein Vorläufer von Bartoks 'Allegro Barbaro,'" Die Musikforschung, V (1952), 370. Translated from the German: "einer besonderen Richtung des Geistes, der Phantasie die Wege weisen mochten."

⁹Cohon, p. 30.

piece, we are given a four-note motive that is related to a prayer-motive found in the Psalm mode scale (see "b" in Figure 13). It is this scale that contains outstanding examples of the principle of a fixed idea, one of which is somewhat related to the opening motive of "Quasi Faust" (compare "a" and "c" in Figure 13).

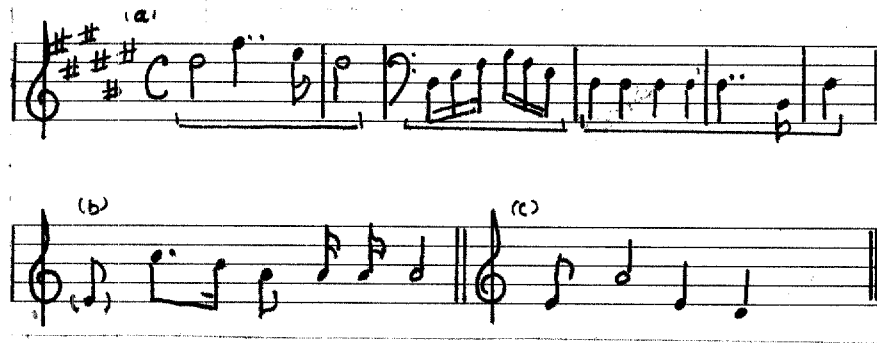


Fig. 13 --The basic motive from "Quasi Faust" and its related Jewish motive.

The opening theme of "Quasi Faust" (Figure 13a) can be divided into three motifs (see brackets), the last two being derivatives of the four-note motive which will be named the "Faust" theme.

There is an interesting parallel between this movement and Liszt's A Faust Symphony (1854). Both Alkan's and Liszt's themes are parodied and mocked in order to stand as negations of their original meaning. Only the "Gretchen" theme remains untouched; it becomes symbolical of the power which conquers evil. The importance of this analogy lies in the fact that Alkan's "Quasi Faust" was written some seven years before Liszt's Faust Symphony and that the treatment of themes is

so similar that one may wonder if Alkan independently developed the principle of thematic transformation along with the principle of leitmotiv, without the influence of Liszt or Berlioz. It is a point to consider when one remembers that the principle itself is traceable to the ancient Jewish Synagogues. The term leitmotiv was not coined until 1878, when Wagner's friend, H. von Wolzogen, published his article, "Die Motive in Wagner's 'Götterdämmerung,'" in Musikalisches Wochenblatt. Wagner's term was Grundthema, which he brought forth in his essay, Oper und Drama (1851). His concept of this principle is illustrated most clearly in the Ring (1857-1874). Liszt's symphonic poems were written between 1848 and 1857. Alkan's Grande Sonate was published in 1847. Liszt, however, had begun a few of the symphonic poems before his move to Weimar in 1848. Up until that year, Liszt's home city was Paris and since Alkan and Liszt were friends, it is impractical to try to establish which composer developed the principle of thematic transformation. One should also point out that Berlioz also mocks and parodies in his Symphonie Fantastique (1831).

To continue, the "Faust" theme is transformed into a mocking melody which Alkan labels "Le Diable" (see Figure 14).



Fig. 14 --"Le Diable" motif: an inversion of "Faust"

Here we have the first actual transformation--accomplished by inversion, probably with the idea in mind that in every man there is an inner conflict of good and evil.

The mode in which the related prayer-motive is found may give more insight into the meaning of "Quasi Faust." This mode is used in various parts of the services of the religious year. The Psalm mode bears marked similarity to the selichoh mode and uses many of the same phrases. There are several phrases in this mode that bear striking resemblance to the "Faust" theme (see Figure 15). The selichoh mode is used for a group of penitential prayers. The fifth motive in Figure 15 is similar to the phrase which Alkan labels as "Le Diable."

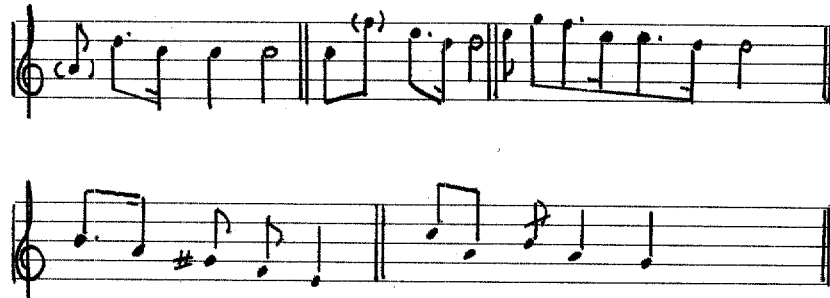


Fig. 15 --Motives from the selichoh mode which bear resemblance to the "Faust" theme.

The theme that follows is the "Gretchen" theme (see Figure 16), the beginning of which can be traced to an accent found among the cantillations for the Pentateuch (see Table III, Example IID). It is also similar to the third motif of the "Faust" theme. Otherwise, the "Gretchen" theme is ori-

ginal. It does, however, have the same lyrical quality of most cantillations of the Pentateuch.

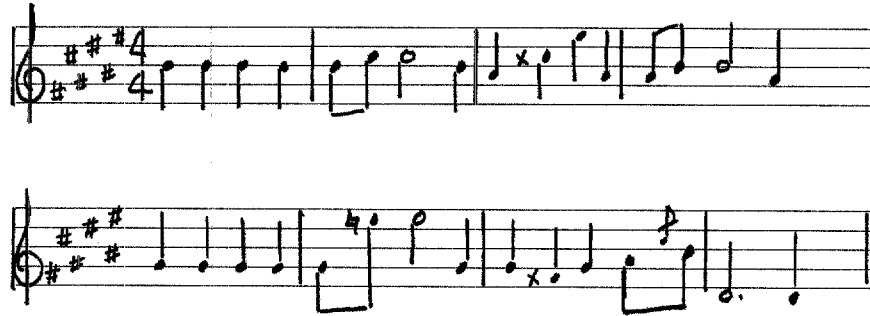


Fig. 16 --The "Gretchen" theme from "Quasi Faust," measures 57-64.

Before actual statement of the "Gretchen" theme, Alkan writes a contrasting parody of the "Le Diable" motif. With it, he creates a quiet transition to the calmer mood that prevails (see Figure 17).



Fig. 17 --Transition to the "Gretchen" theme from "Quasi Faust," measures 52-55.

After the first statement of the "Gretchen" theme, Alkan does not bring out new thematic material for some 160 measures during which he presents elaborate passages of striking effect which contain some of the most difficult, brilliant innovations in the realm of piano technique and acrobatics. This, however,

The Reuchlin method of transcription holds special interest here. Alkan does not go so far as to transcribe in retrograde, but he does place the chant in the tenor, using it as a cantus firmus, then adding a new voice each time the chant is repeated. Alkan, however, takes it even farther by accumulating seven different contrapuntal voices going simultaneously, while the chant is doubled in octaves, and an eighth part is added for harmonic purposes making nine parts in all.

Problems in performing this section are compounded with the entrance of the fifth voice, but Alkan was obliging enough to supply a "facilité."

Within the chant lies the key to the composition--its structure and its program. The chant provides a basic reservoir for thematic content (compare measures two and three of the chant, Figure 18, with the opening theme, Figure 13). As for programatic content, consider the mode from which the phrase is extracted (the krovoh mode for the High Holy Days, taken from the additional prayers of the morning service of New Year and the Day of Atonement). It was noted earlier that the "Faust" theme is related to a phrase found in the Psalm mode. The notes are transposed, but the rhythm is exact.

This apparent change of modes can be explained by the program. At the beginning of the movement, Faust is vulnerable to evil, thus the Psalm mode and its relative, the selichoh mode, which is used for penitential prayers. It can

be said that this represents man's inner conflict. When we are given the chant in this piece, the mode changes to one that is taken from prayers for the Day of Atonement. At this point it is interesting to note what follows this polyphonic section.

The quiet polyphony continues for 28 measures and is then interrupted by a tremendous outburst, which is the chant in full harmony, the bass notes of which are labeled "Le Seigneur" (the Lord). The loud fff does not subside even when several measures later, Gretchen enters against the "Chant," where we see the words "avec bonheur" (with happiness). After alternating between piano and fortissimo statements of the "Gretchen" theme, there is a double bar, after which a muffled Mephistopheles enters and is answered with the chant set against a pedal tremolo on CC (perhaps the Lord again). Immediately, we hear the chant written along with the "Gretchen" theme as before, but this time the rhythm of the chant is diminished and is used as a basso ostinato so that it stays in a 4/4 meter while the theme above it remains in 3/2.

The two conflicting meters finally come to an agreement toward the end when "Le Diable" is repeated three times only to be overcome by the continuing ostinato of the chant, bringing the movement to a victorious ending, thus giving reason for the name "Quasi Faust."

We have, within the Grande Sonate, a combination of accents and prayer-motives, the modes of which carry true

programmatic meaning. It would be difficult to say that this work contains autobiographical elements as it was thought of Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique, because biographers know very little about Alkan's life. Obviously, Alkan's Jewishness carries a great deal of importance in his compositions. The same can be said about the virtuosity found in the many difficult passages. Let us refer to his keyboard dexterity as being an essentially European influence in order to conclude why Alkan's music has never attained a great deal of attention.

CHAPTER V

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO UNACCEPTANCE OF ALKAN'S MUSIC

After the death of Beethoven, writers on music were complaining of a general state of musical degradation in Europe. We have writers such as Fétis, in Paris, and Schumann, in Germany, both pointing out that one example of the declining state of music was the nineteenth-century virtuoso-composer, represented by such virtuosi as Thalberg, Moscheles, Liszt, Alkan, and others.

Along with Liszt is Alkan, whose compositions demand a virtuosic technique of such magnitude as to seem at times overwhelming. Schumann himself felt that Alkan's compositions often were devoid of musical meaning, with little to offer except exploitation of keyboard mastery.

Most writers on Alkan, such as Lewenthal, Seitz, and Fétis, agree that he contributed much to the development of keyboard technique and that many of his compositions contain technical innovations that surpass those of Liszt in both difficulty and effect.

Among Alkan's most difficult compositions are "Quasi Faust," from the Grande Sonate, "Symphonie," from the Etudes dans les tons mineurs, Opus 39, and "Le Festin d'Esopé," also from the études of Opus 39. These pieces are important for

study since they each present both Jewish melody and extremely difficult, technical demands. The examples that will appear in this discussion will be limited to "Quasi Faust," the reason being that an entire study could be devoted to this phase of Alkan's music.

Within "Quasi Faust," we find several fine examples of Alkan's ability to create extremely difficult, but at the same time, effective passages. In the section following the first statement of the "Gretchen" theme, Alkan writes a long dialogue between "Faust," "Gretchen," and "Le Diable." Our first example consists of blind octaves that are written in an unusual way (see Figure 19). Simple chromatic octaves were



Fig. 19 --Alkan's version of blind octaves (measure 87, "Quasi Faust").

common property of the day; but here we have them combined with alternating chords. According to Lewenthal this is the first appearance of this effect in piano literature.¹ It seems unusual that Liszt did not make use of it. He did, however,

¹Lewenthal, p. xix.

come close with his use of chromatics on the sixth in the second version of his Paganini Etude in E-flat.

A few measures later in "Quasi Faust," there are tremendous skips and crossings (see Figure 20). These are



Fig. 20 --Octave skips and crossings in "Quasi Faust," measure 91.

practically impossible when the tempo indication, Assez vite (quite fast) is taken into consideration.

Another feature of this piece and of Alkan's writing in general is his use of large chords. First we find a series of chords that are written in tenths (see Figure 21,a) and several measures later there are rapid repeated chords in which we find one of Alkan's innovations (see Figure 21,b). Even the largest hands would have difficulty in grasping the chords presented in Figure 21,b. By playing with the very tip of the thumb, it is possible to catch both the b-sharp and the edge of the black c-sharp. Alkan made other experiments along these lines, sometimes directing the fifth

finger to play two adjacent white notes. Almost immediately Alkan writes the four enormous skyscraper chords (see Figure 21, c) that precede the chant. Notice that he uses two different signs to indicate arpeggio.

Fig. 21 --Exceptional chord passages in "Quasi Faust" (measures 178, 22, and 226-229).

Passages such as these are one of the reasons Schumann wrote so critically about Alkan's music. With the publication (1838) of the Trois Grandes Etudes dans le genre pathétique, Opus 15 ("Aime moi," "Le Vent," and "Morte"), Schumann wrote a review that revealed not only his convictions against superficial virtuosity, but also against French music of the day.

A glance at the contents of this collection gives us a fair idea of the taste of this disciple of young France; it has a considerable flavor of Sue and Sand. One is startled by such false, unnatural art. Liszt caricatures intellectually; in spite of his occasional aberrations,

Berlioz has a human heart, he is a voluptuary full of strength and daring; but here we find little more than weakness and unimaginative triviality. The études are entitled "Aime moi," "Le Vent," and "Morte," and their 50 pages are distinguished by the fact that they are filled with notes, without any marks of expression. This caprice is not altogether blamable, though even without it we know how such music is best performed; but its inward emptiness is too visible, and with outward nothingness added to it, what remains? In "Aime moi," we have a watery French melody with a middle part that is not suited to the title; in "Le Vent" there is a chromatic howl over an idea from Beethoven's A-major Symphony; in the last we have a crabbed waste overgrown with brushwood and weeds, and the best of it is even borrowed from Berlioz. We always make allowance for erring talent provided only that talent exists, and a little music besides; but when the former is doubtful, and nothing of the latter to be found but black on black, we turn away in discouragement.²

Schumann was concerned about the influence that the so-called school of virtuosity at the piano was having upon German music. In an essay on pianoforte music Schumann refers to French piano music as being "pseudo Romanticism which is at home in the Parisian grand opera, but which has stolen thence into pianoforte music and even penetrated beyond the Rhine."³

Even though Schumann was kinder in his second and last review of Alkan's music, he still had many reservations. He writes about the Six Morceaux Caractéristiques ("Une Nuit d'Hiver," "La Pâque," "La Sérénade," "Une Nuit d'Eté," "Le moissonneures," and "L'Opéra").

This composer is one of the ultra-romantic French school, and copies Berlioz on the pianoforte. His last publication but one (études) we treated somewhat severely at

²Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians, Vol. II (London, n.d.), p. 317.

³Ibid., Vol. I, p. 282.

the time, and the recollection of it is still terrible to us. These six characteristic pieces are of a far gentler morality and please us infinitely more. Gemüth a word not to be found in any French dictionary, is also missing in French compositions, as in these. Yet we find such an excellent jest of operatic music in No. 6 ("L'Opéra"), that a better one could scarcely be imagined. The "Winter Night" is also characteristic; a cutting frost breathes in it. We could have wished its opposite "Spring Night," more warm and odorous, though it is pretty enough. "Easter" might have been advantageously excluded from the collection, but that entitled "The Harvester" affects one as delightfully as country after city air. The "Serenade" would just answer the purpose of its title agreeably but marks of expression are wholly wanting; in regard to this, however, something is to be said for and against. The composer of these pieces may be an interesting player, who well understands the rarer effects of his instrument, but as a composer, only the severest studies will enable him to make much progress for he sinks too frequently into what is mere superficiality.⁴

Seemingly Schumann dismissed Alkan as a second-rate composer, for only these two reviews exist among his writings. It is quite evident that Schumann's opinion reflected and still reflects the general opinion of Alkan's music, when it is taken into consideration that very little has been done to promote his music. Although writers such as Lewenthal, Seitz, and Busoni agree that his music should certainly not be ignored, one might question the taste of these gentlemen. They were probably impressed more than anything by the extreme technical demands of Alkan's music rather than by any surpassing musical beauty inherent in it.

Other than pointing out the triviality of Alkan's music Schumann also pointed out that there was very little convincing feeling in the compositions reviewed. There is certainly none

⁴Ibid., Vol. II, p. 486.

of Chopin's florid melody within Alkan's compositions. Schumann used the words "watery French melody" in describing "Aime moi" from the études of Opus 15, perhaps meaning a melody with little substance. Because Alkan was ingrained with Jewish tradition, his original melodies tend to be short, motivic themes and have nothing in common with the ideal concept of Romantic expression.

Another point made by Schumann was Alkan's lack of expression marks; true enough, there are few phrase markings, etc. Much of his work appears as devoid of expression marks as some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music. Many of his works are marked with verbal directions in either Italian or French, such as appear in the Grande Sonate. Schumann felt that marks of expression were not necessary, provided that the work had meaning and was obviously representative of whatever emotion the composer might be portraying.

The majority of Alkan's works are full of effect and for the most part, orchestral effect, along the same lines as Berlioz might have used. Schumann was perhaps the first to recognize the analogy between the two composers. One might describe Alkan as being a frustrated orchestral composer.

The virtuosity and orchestral qualities are perhaps the first things that come to mind upon examination of Alkan's music. These influences coupled with traditional harmonies served to work against Alkan's melody. Alkan studied at the Paris Conservatoire and was, therefore, schooled in traditional

harmony. This obviously was a deterrent to his compositions, for the Western concept of harmony is not compatible with the modal feeling of Jewish melody. Alkan, however, was not to blame, for it was not until late in the nineteenth century that a harmonic system was devised for the Jewish chant. Insurmountable obstacles stand in the way of employing harmony for a Jewish song, the primary features of which sharply contradict the established principles of traditional European harmony.⁵ Apparently Alkan, like so many Jewish Church-musicians, lacked the knowledge, art, and daring to recast the technique of harmony to conform to the artistic demands of Jewish song.

In reading the preceding reviews Schumann wrote on Alkan's early published works, perhaps the question arises that if Schumann had chosen to review Alkan's later works (Opus 39 or the Grande Sonate) would he have treated them as severely? In order to answer the question properly, one would have to study Schumann's musical aesthetics and his ideas on musical reference. The task is not simple, for Schumann was distrustful of philosophical explanations of music and remained aloof from such disputes.

Perhaps Schumann would not have treated Opus 39 or the Grande Sonate so severely but he would certainly have had the same reservations about the overt sensationalism that is so

⁵For information on harmonization of Jewish song, see Idelsohn, Jewish Music, pp. 478-492.

consistent in Alkan's music and perhaps would have questioned the musical meaning of much of his later output as he did in the reviews of Alkan's early publications.

Summary and Conclusions

In the beginning chapter it was noted that few nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers of Jewish extraction were influenced by the music of their religion or their Jewish culture. Rubinstein has been singled out as the founder of a Jewish National School of Music, for he used Jewish motives in his compositions. His music, however, cannot be labelled as totally Jewish, for he also used Persian and Oriental melodies to say nothing of western melody. Alkan's music, however, can be called Jewish. Some of his shorter compositions can only be referred to as being Jewish in nature, his original melodies having the same motivic, rhythmic, yet lyrical quality as Jewish chant. We find in his longer compositions many examples of prayer-motives and accents, providing a basis for the entire work.

Because of the traditional interpretation of Jewish modes, the question arises whether or not Alkan's use of prayer-motives and accents has programmatic meaning in his music. As far as the accents are concerned, the answer is negative, for these serve as a melodic basis for the composition at hand. With his use of prayer-motives there is definite programmatic meaning. One fine example is the Funeral March from the Symphonie, Opus 39. Here he uses a phrase from the Kol Nidrey,

known as an improvisatory chant which is meant to recall devotion especially on the Day of Judgement. As a general rule the prayer-motives carry meaning only when there is a title to the work, as in "Quasi Faust." Obviously, Alkan was consciously aware of what he was creating in the content of the Grande Sonate. On the other hand, the use of a phrase from the Kol Nidrey in the Funeral March could very well have been unconscious, for the other movements do not have titles and are not program music.

Combined with Jewish influences is the fashionable European manner of composing sensational piano music. Naturally Alkan would have been influenced by the virtuosi who lived in Paris and studied at the Conservatoire, for he too was a well-known virtuoso and friend of Liszt, Chopin, and Rubinstein. Instead of working for his music, this pianistic sensationalism worked against it. This is revealed in the fact that he has been accused of sinking too frequently into what might be called superficiality. Schumann criticized him for this and also because his music was pseudo-romanticism. When the strangeness of his Jewish melody is taken into consideration, it is certainly no wonder. His melodies have their own kind of lyrical quality, but certainly there is nothing of Chopin and Liszt in them. Both the sensational details and traditional harmonies served to work against the Jewish modal quality of Alkan's music. Take for example, the Allegro Barbaro. This piece does not contain Jewish motives

as such, but it is written in the Lydian mode⁶ and its harmony is no more complicated than that of Schubert's. Let us say that perhaps Alkan's music does not sound strange as much as it sounds wrong.

Historically, Alkan's music is important for study, for there is now a definite trend toward a National Jewish School of Music. He could very well have played a part in influencing Rubinstein to incorporate Jewish motives into his music. It is doubtful that it could have been the other way around, for Alkan was too ingrained with the music of the Synagogue and its traditions for it not to have been a great influence on him.

⁶This piece is referred to by Seitz as the forerunner to Bartok's piece of the same title. See Seitz, "Ein Vorläufer von Bartok's 'Allegro Barbaro,'" pp. 370-372.

APPENDIX

THE MODES OF THE PENTATEUCH, PROPHETS AND LAMENTATIONS

This presentation of the basic Biblical modes will serve to help understand how accents are used and perhaps give some insight into the quality of the basic scales. It is quite apparent that there is a basic similarity between Gregorian modes and Jewish scales for very often the different Jewish modes will be based on, for example, the Lydian or Dorian modes, however modified they might be.

The Pentateuch and Prophets

These modes will be discussed together since they are each based on a basic tetrachordal system. The Pentateuch (Ashkenasic) has as its scale f-g-a (flat)-b-c-d-e-f whereas the Prophets is based on the scale d-e-f-g-a-b-c-d. This scale is the same as the ancient Greek phrygian. In some instances it is changed to the scale d-e-f-g plus g-a-b (flat)-e, which is the scale of plagal of the first Gregorian mode or the Hypodorian. This the standard scale in Jewish music, not only in Synagogue song, but also in folk song. Nearly eighty-percent of all Jewish folk song is based upon it. It expresses a fine and tender sentiment and turns frequently to a bright and even joyous mood. According to West European and espe-

cially Anglo-Saxon feeling, the Prophetic mode sounds melancholy. This mode has been well-preserved through the obligatory chanting of a portion of it (called Haptara) after the reading of the Pentateuch.

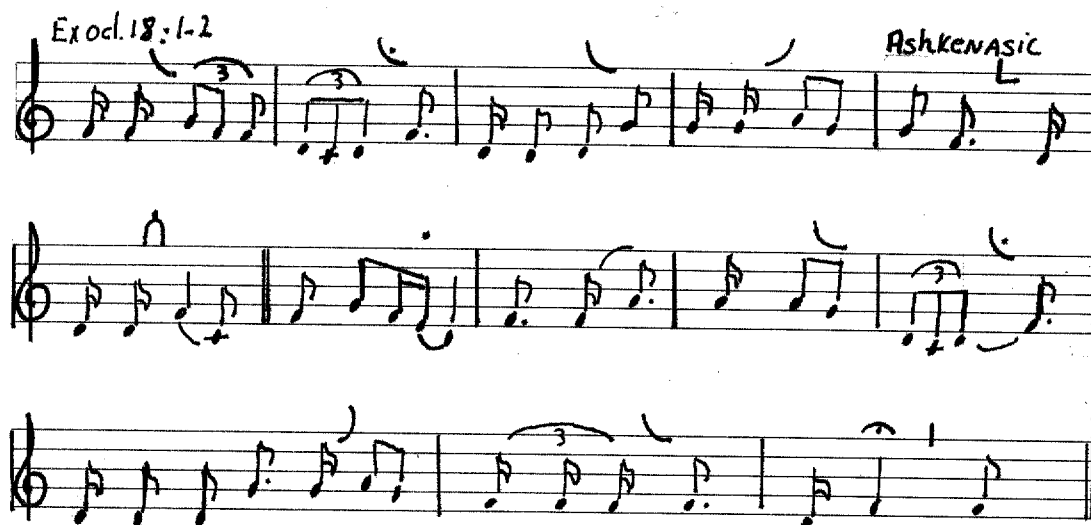


Fig. 22 --Cantillation for the reading of Exodus 18:1-2, mode of the Pentateuch (Ashkenasic community).

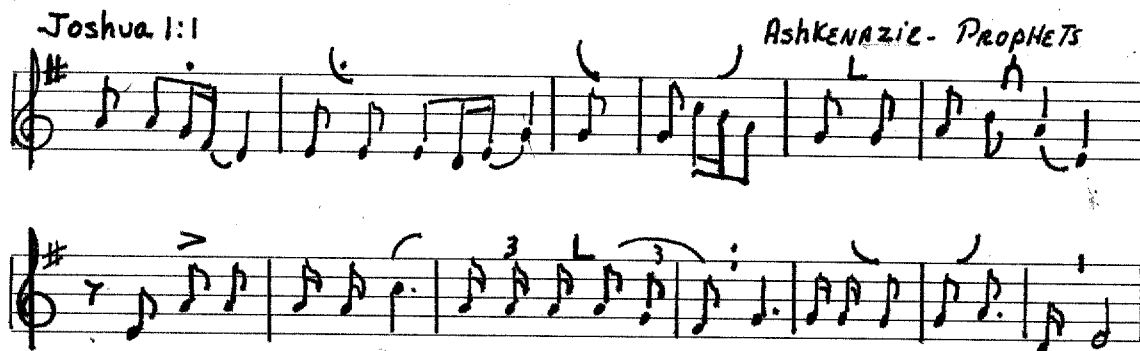


Fig. 23 --Cantillation for the reading of Joshua 1:1, mode of the Prophets (Ashkenasic community).

In the scale of the Prophetic mode, there is also the mode of Lamentations which has the same tetrachordal character except among the Ashkenazim, with whom the tradition was so modified by European influence as to give special emphasis to the third and fifth tones, a distinct characteristic of the European scale.

The lamentative character of the mode of Lamentations is expressed mainly through the melodic line which is short and produces the effect of depression. Especially the verses of the third chapter are short and remind one somehow of the pentameter in which the Greeks wrote Lamentations. Though the mode is common to all Jewish communities, each has peculiarities of its own.

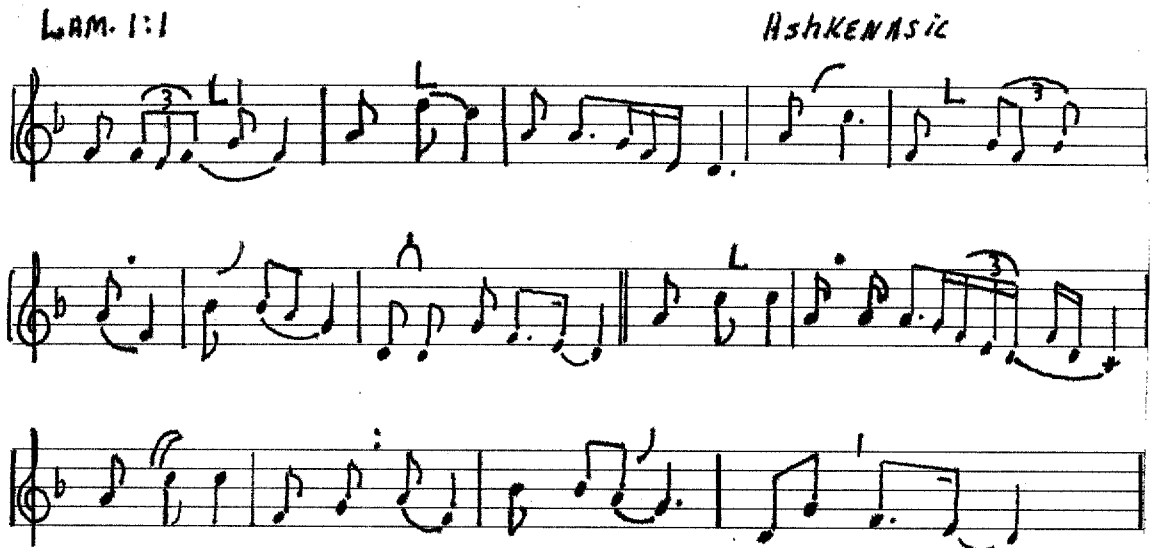


Fig. 24 --Cantillation of Lamentations 1:1, from the mode of Lamentation (Ashkenasic).

Selected Modes of the Prayers:
Traditional Interpretion¹

The Tefilla mode or Adonoy moloch may be described as soulful, dreamy and suitable for devout prayers. This mode expresses profound emotion and solemnity and is utilized for the texts and prayers which voice an optimistic view of life. The Ashkenasic communities use it for introductory selections of the Sabbath and for a great part of the morning service on Sabbath and for Holiday prayers. Like most of the modes of the prayers, the Adonoy moloch is derived from the Pentateuch mode.

The Mogen ovos mode had its development primarily in the song of the Ashkenasim. This mode in its Ashkenasic version is founded on the minor scale and has a tender, lyrical strain. Because of its lyrical qualities, it became the basis for many Jewish folk tunes of both religious and secular character. The Mogen ovos as a whole is derived from the Prophetic and Pentateuchal modes.

Thus far, the prayer-modes treated show connection with the Biblical modes (Pentateuch, Prophets, Lamentations, etc). They are derived from them or at least absorb some of their motives. The Ahavoh rabboh, however, is the one exception. This mode is based on the tetrachords e-f-g (sharp)-a plus b-c-d-e, or their equivalent steps in other notes. The aug-

¹The descriptions of the modes included here are according to Idelsohn's findings and written down in his book, Jewish Music, Chapter IV, pp. 72-89.

mented step of this scale does not exist in the scale of the Biblical modes and of their derivations in the prayer-modes. The Ahavoh rabboh mode is named for a prayer in the morning service. This mode became a real channel of Jewish expression, especially for moods of excitement, and the passions of pain, love, and faith in God.

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