

**A CULTURE
INSTITUTE
FOR JEWISH
MUSIC IN THE NETHERLANDS**



By Anton Molenaar, musicologist and director JEM Foundation

JEM - Judaic European Music - Foundation

As result of the enthusiasm for Jewish music and musicology of the founders and their scholarly friends JEM Foundation was established May 5, 1994.

Our goals are to develop and stimulate knowledge of and familiarity with Jewish European music in all its facets. We also want to make this knowledge accessible to current and future generations, and thus contribute among others by means of musicological research to the preservation of Jewish European musical traditions, religious and secular.

We consider as Jewish European the music that belongs or originates in the liturgical, classical and folk musical heritage of the Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

Our foundation participates in transferring the knowledge on Jewish music and responds to a clear need for this specific musical knowledge. We focus on broad Jewish and non-Jewish audiences of all ages, professionals and music lovers, who are interested in music, history, Jewish music and its cultural background. We would like to achieve a wide knowledge exchange and interaction between the varied interested groups, lay and professional.

We have been maintaining national and international contacts with scholars and organizations for a long time, in countries like England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Russia and The United States.

Activities

JEM Foundation has six fields of activity. The first is scholarly research, inventory and description of musical and historical material, publishing and aiding proper preservation. The second is documentation and organization of knowledge and information. The third is education, courses, lectures and information meetings. The fourth is making musical knowledge accessible to a broader audience. The fifth is presentation, promotion and organizational assistance and advice in the field of Jewish European music, such as performances and other events. And the sixth field is maintaining and developing contacts at an international level with academic institutes and scholars who are involved with Jewish music.

Research & Publications

Reconnaissance Research was a priority in our first years, and has resulted in the localization of a large number of research projects.

In progress is the research project *Dutch Jewish Music History* (working title) about the development of Jewish music in the Netherlands since the arrival of the Ashkenazim and Sephardim in the late 16th century.

We did several publications among others *Musical Life of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1988/1994) and some small articles about the chazzanut of the Amsterdam Sephardim and Ashkenazim. We also wrote some CD reviews. The latest published article is *The Music of the Amsterdam Sephardim: a musicological survey*, about the musicological facts known up to now (Shofar, vol 18, no. 4, Summer 2000, for The Midwest Jewish Studies Association, The Western Jewish Studies Association and The Jewish Studies Program of Purdue University by The University of Nebraska Press).

The following (educational) publications are currently in progress: *Jewish Music History*; *Jewish Folk Music*; *Jewish Classical Music* and *Chazzanut*.

Education

Courses, lectures and *workshops* are held for Jewish and non-Jewish institutions.

For the moment JEM Foundation developed two courses: *Jewish Music history and Movements in Jewish Music*. The first is an overview of Jewish music from early times to the present, and covers liturgical, Classical and folk music. The second is about the different musical movements after in the European galut,

Our lectures: *Introduction to the History of Jewish Music, Movements in Jewish Music after the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish Music in Earliest Times and Canaan, On Jewish Music* (with live music) and *On Jewish Folk Music*.

We are now working on catalogue *On Jewish Music*, in which professionals present their educational programs.

Jewish Music for Life is one of our workshops: about your personal reaction to the various genres of Jewish music.

Special Projects

In the project *De Joodse Karavaan* (The Jewish Caravan), in which Jewish culture and identity are pivotal, we have compiled a Folk Music Kit that includes information and CDs on Jewish folk music.

In progress are:

De Taal van de Ziel (The Language of the Soul) is the working title of a TV documentary about the origins, development and influences that have led to the contemporary Jewish musical heritage of the Netherlands.

With the project *Jewish Music Center* we want to establish a music center unique for the European continent. Please ask for more information about this project when you are interested and we will send you ours plans.

Through a *Jewish Music Database* we wish to contribute to the digital birth of Jewish European musical heritage. It will be a database for a broad audience, professionals and lay people who are looking for information about or are doing research into Jewish music. The database will include facts about individuals (performers, choirs, ensembles, composers, etc.), works (compositions, song titles, etc.) and organizations that are involved with Jewish culture and music (cultural centers, museums, libraries, universities, etc.)

Concerts

From 1994 onward JEM Foundation supported several concert projects. Among others *Lewandowski Concerts* in honor of the 100th anniversary of the death of the Berlin synagogal composer Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894) and concerts for several klezmer bands, Yiddish song cycles, etc., for musicians from The Netherlands and abroad (Israel, Germany, Russia). Our latest support (2001) was for the music festival *Mir Sajnen Do !: Jewish Culture in Image and Sound* in The Uilenburger Synagogue in Amsterdam.

Final Word

JEM Foundation depends fully on subsidies, funds, sponsors and donors.

For more information please contact

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***“ Making Jewish music accessible to a broader audience is a
key towards understanding the significance of Jewish culture
for European history and civilization ”***