

## Music Cataloging in Jewish Libraries: The Offenbach Collection and Beyond

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Description: This paper will discuss a current project to catalog the Offenbach collection of sheet music at HUC-JIR New York Campus, as well as the Birnbaum collection in Cincinnati. In working with the physical sheet music for the Offenbach collection and the digitized images provided by colleagues in Cincinnati for the Birnbaum collection, the Repertoire International Des Sources Musicales (RISM), Hebrew Annotated Manuscripts Vol .1, by Israel Adler is used as a guide to the collections. The ultimate goal is to create a website that houses both images of sheet music and metadata in order to help preserve the materials and provide access to those who may be interested in these materials.

**Eli Lieberman** is currently the Junior Assistant Librarian-Cataloger at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Eli received his MLS from Queens College. His independent study dealt with how institutions around New York City make decisions regarding their Judaica/Hebrew language collections. Eli received his master's in religious studies from New York University, focusing on issues surrounding gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews and their call for greater inclusion in the Orthodox community.

When I first began this project of cataloging these two collections, the Offenbach and Birnbaum collections of synagogue/Jewish music, I was very excited as I had never done such a project that dealt with music. I was very eager to learn the differences between how music is cataloged as opposed to monographs or some other material. Some of the most interesting items I have come across during my time here at HUC have been from these two collections, such as items from the 1700's that are in the Birnbaum collection. This newfound awareness of the history of cantorial music has given me a new appreciation of the role of music in the synagogue. As the idea of music accompanying prayer goes back all the way to the two Temples and has been present in Jewish history, culture and ritual since then, I am proud to be part of furthering the study of music in the synagogue and its usage. I have enjoyed cataloging the music, since as a librarian my purpose is to provide access to materials and facilitate research especially for such important collections as these. Learning more about the history of Jewish synagogue music has been very interesting. Before this project I did not know nearly as much of this history as I do now.

As noted on HUC's website regarding the Birnbaum manuscripts, Eduard Birnbaum was born in Krakow in 1855 and was a cantor for many in years in Koenigsburg. In that capacity he dedicated himself to collecting as many manuscripts of Jewish music from all over Europe as he could locate. He achieved great success in this area, amassing a collection that spanned the entire Jewish liturgical year,

which he arranged by the community from which each manuscript came. This collection possesses the only copies of scores for Jewish music from before 1840. It has been very interesting to me to catalog this collection. I was surprised by how many different cities had well-known cantors at this time, though their identities are for the most part unknown today. The development of this music also reflects the ways in which the wider environment impacted the musical traditions of the Jewish community of this period and beyond.

I see in these items the history of which songs/psalms/texts/melodies/ were popular during these time periods, which I find really interesting because I had not known this before I started working on this project. I catalog the items based on a combination of the images of the manuscripts and RISM, Répertoire International des Sources Musicales, Vols. B IX 1-2, which deal with music in Hebrew/Yiddish. In the case of the Offenbach collection, which is a collection of manuscripts by the hazan Isaac Offenbach, including some which are from his son Jacques, the famous composer, and a few that father and son performed together. the manuscripts were sorted and notes were made by a student from NYU in Musicology/Ethnomusicology, specializing in Jewish music whom Yoram, our director here in New York, had hired. I later utilized the notes the student had made using a spreadsheet he created, in order to make sure I was able to match each manuscript to the notes in RISM before I started to catalog the Offenbach manuscripts. This work that the student had completed before I started made it much easier for me to familiarize myself with the materials before I started creating the records. Cataloging the Offenbach manuscripts was easier as well as the materials are on-site which made it easier for me to consult Yoram if I had a question or issue about a specific item which I could not resolve on my own. Yoram and I had created a template record using the scores bibliographic workform in OCLC Connexion, which I edit as needed for each individual item, which made it easier for me as I was confident that I was using the correct fields and terminology. While I use AACR2 cataloging rules as I am more comfortable with that system, I would think eventually I will go back and switch them to RDA format at a later date.

For the Birnbaum collection located in Cincinnati, I was access given remote access via a shared drive that hosts the images of the manuscripts. For each item, I consult both these images and RISM to ensure that I am working with the correct piece as some may be missing or misnumbered. In the cases that such has happened, I notify Yoram so he can make a note of the issue. For items for which it is unclear which holiday/time of year it pertains to, I will use the general subject headings of Jewish music and Synagogue Music. If the items are clearly for a specific holiday or a specific service or

event, I will put that in the subject field, although for some of them there is not an authoritative subject heading. One thing I have noticed is that for many of the lesser-known composers that make up the Birnbaum collection, there are also no extant authority records, which can be challenging as I am not sure who the author is, if it is possible that the reference given in the manuscript is unclear, or if the composer could be confused with someone else.

This is one of the reasons I rely on RISM to guide me in the process as there is usually an explanatory note or something similar giving Adler's best idea of who the composer was, if it is unclear as many of the composers are referred to in the manuscripts as X, cantor of Y city, and if there is no other information such a reference may be confusing. I find this to be of great help, as I have no real prior knowledge of the history of these compositions and the composers involved. One thing I try to do when I create a record for a manuscript in the Birnbaum collection is that I will attempt some preliminary research on the composer to see if I can find any information is not contained in RISM, for my own edification as well as for cataloging purposes. I input such information into the general notes field (500), as well as whatever information is contained in RISM for each manuscript, unless I find discrepancies between the images and the notes in RISM. This is why I always compare the two as I catalog to make sure everything matches. In order to provide further information as well, I record each of the item numbers in RISM to allow for someone to consult RISM on their own as well should they choose to do so, if it is available to them.

The ultimate goal of this project is to create a website to provide this access to both our own institution and its students and faculty as well as to other other researchers and anyone else who may be interested. As the musical notation used in these collections is different than what is used today, we will be working with Edwin Seroussi, the famous Israeli musicologist, to help re-notate the pieces. The idea is to have faculty/students from our cantorial school to record some of the pieces to accompany the images and the metadata for at least some of the items. This is the aspect of the project that I most excited to experience when it is completed, as to my knowledge these pieces have not been played in a very long time. To be able to hear these pieces will enrich the experience of interacting with them for those who wish to do so. I have seen other websites from institutions such as the Lester S. Levy Shee Music Collection from Johns Hopkins University, that are similar to what we going to be creating for these two collections, I think.

In terms of how the manuscript hosting function could work, I like the way the British Library provides the Medieval and other manuscripts on its website, as well as similar functionality from other institutions, including my own Hebrew Union College. I look forward to being able to see how my work on this project will be connected with all the other facets of the website, and I hope it will be of great value to anyone interested in utilizing it. Preserving these materials is of great importance, as they provide a window into the musical traditions of the Jewish community at this time, to which we would otherwise not have the ability to access.

Not only have I gained greater confidence in my skills as a cataloger, through working on these projects I have increased my knowledge of the history of Jewish music, and have gained a greater appreciation for the commitment of the students and faculty of our cantorial school. One thing I have noticed since working on these projects is that if I am reading something which mentions a Jewish composer of this time period or geographical area in which they lived, I will be able to understand the reference in a way I would not have been able to do before. Also, for my parents who are both very enthusiastic devotees of classical music, it has given them another way to understand the impact Jewish composers of synagogue music and secular music, both past and present have had on the melodies and tunes that are used today. They have asked me for help in finding information about classical music composers as a result of this project, as they know that I now have experience with how to perform such research. I would like to thank Yoram Bitton for giving me the opportunity to assist in this project to make these collections available to a much wider audience, as well as helping to preserve the materials as this is also vitally important.