A selective bibliography of books in English on the subject of Jewish music


This book goes for range and accessibility. It includes a CD with musical illustrations of many of the examples given in the book.


This book is primarily composed of musically notated examples of Jewish music. It is in songbook format, with a spiral binding for easy piano placement. It predates the klezmer revival. It is intended for young readers and has a pedantic tone, though the textual material can be complex.


This book emphasizes the roots of European cantorial and liturgical art. It has historic illustrations.


This is a comprehensive and exhaustive bibliography on the subject of Jewish music to 1985. It meets every requirement for a top-notch bibliography. Its parameters are clearly stated, its organization is logical, it has an author and a topical index, and it has lengthy annotations. It not only lists music periodicals, but also gives the contents of each volume. Besides its age, its only disadvantage is that it is printed in an antiquated, sans serif computer-output font, making it rather hard to read. It is a starting point for anyone planning to do serious research.


This book is distinguished for its breadth. It begins not with the birth of Jewish music, but with the birth of Jewish music historiography. It touches on all the important points and major figures in Jewish music, and is unique in including a chapter on Jewish women and liturgical music.

This book is by the premier Jewish musicologist, A.Z. Idelsohn. Although it is somewhat technical and academic in style, it is worth having for the sake of its authority and its low price in this reprint edition. It is organized by historical development, so readers can go right to the period that interests them. It was first published in 1929.


This book traces the presence of music in the Bible, and its link to the cantorial tradition. It is sketchier and more dated in its treatment of modern Jewish music.


This core reference work has critical historical information. It is out of print, but you should be able to find it on the OP websites.


This is the most thorough and comprehensive treatment of this subject in one place. Its approach is ethnomusicological as well as historic. It has a discography and four indexes.


Half this book is a comprehensive discography of the state of the klezmer renaissance in 2000. It is has a historical overview of the music, and the writing style is accessible and high-quality.


This book focuses on liturgical music and its Biblical roots. The Croatian-born author cites many European works and includes a glossary of musical terms from the Psalms.

This is the definitive work in English on the text of Yiddish folksongs. Rubin collected songs from European-singers and explained their background in this book. She provides notation for selected songs, but the focus is on the texts. There are extensive notes, bibliography, and index.


This is a very personal account of the klezmer revival in America by one of its leaders, musician Henry Sapoznik. The book is especially rich in the history of recorded and filmed Jewish music.


This book takes an ethnomusicological approach, looking at themes and traditions in Jewish music in their cultural contexts. It goes into great depth regarding Jewish music in the Moslem and Hasidic worlds and also looks at dance and piyyut.


This book looks at klezmer music from the viewpoint of ethnomusicology, rather than history. It looks extensively at the popularity of klezmer music in Europe. The accompanying CD has contrasting examples of songs from early recordings, and then the same songs updated by modern klezmer bands.


This book benefits from the author's field research in Europe in the 1980's. In addition to a thorough bibliography and discography, it includes an appendix of references to klezmer in Yizhor books at the YIVO; an appendix of "klezmer-loshn" (jargon); and an appendix containing notations for some niggunim.

Both the new Da Capo edition and the original Bloch edition of this book are out of print. Libraries that have either edition should hold on to it. It is has a thorough history of the Society for Folk Music in St. Petersburg.

Compiled by Beth Dwoskin

Proquest