**Transferring Transnationally, Transforming Locally, Imagining Transnationally: The Transference of Interwar Poland’s Popular Culture to Israel and Its Rediscovery in the Last Decades**

**Vernacular Cosmopolitanism**

Who is coming to watch this show?! It’s old-fashioned! Boring! Diasporic! It is so 1933!… That is me: Diasporic – but in a radical sense! Ashkenazi, but not part of the elite! I’m cosmopolitan! I do not have roots! I use to visit [the Orthodox Yiddish-speaking neighborhoods of] Bney Berak because of my philological interest! I dream of performing a [Yiddish] drag show! I’m Jargon! I’m a melting pot! I’m a subculture! I’m dubbing Seinfeld into Yiddish! I make no apologies to Mizrahi poets! I’m also oppressed! I am a Bundist! I celebrate May Day! I fast every August 12 [commemorating the execution day of thirteen Soviet Yiddish intellectuals in Moscow’s Lubyanka Prison in 1952]! I am the Old Left! I am the New Left! I am the Left that hasn’t been invented yet![[1]](#footnote-2)

Ya’ad Biran, playwright and scholar of interwar Yiddish literature, wrote these lines for Esty Nissim, the main actress in *Esther’s Cabaret*, which was performed in the style of the interwar tradition of Poland’s literary cabarets in Polish and Yiddish. Why did a group of Israeli intellectuals and performers in the early twentieth century want to connect with Polish popular culture from nearly a century earlier? What does this popular culture “do” for them, and how does it contribute to their senses of both individual and collective belonging? How do these intellectuals, artists, and consumers perceive the relationship between the popular culture coming from Poland, Jewish culture, and Israeli belonging?

This article argues that the rediscovery, reinterpretation, and recreation of interwar Poland’s popular culture in Israel reflect the long project of Jews negotiating identity, in this case, using an imagined mirror of interwar Poland. To support this claim, it examines the transfer of Poland’s popular culture to Mandatory Palestine and to the State of Israel in its early years, its incorporation as a significant element in local popular culture, and the references to that culture in contemporary Israel.

**Transferring Transnationally: Polish Popular Culture in Mandatory Palestine**

Popular mass culture cannot be studied solely on a national or ethnic level or as a geographically or ethnically confined construct; as a dispersed phenomenon, its transnational and local dimensions are equally important. In interwar Poland, popular mass culture was situated in the interconnection of the local and the global, the ethnic and the universal, the national and the cosmopolitan. In Mandatory Palestine, the Jewish settlements Palestine were part of the transnational and transethnic interconnection on global and local levels.

The transnational aspects of Polish popular culture had their own unique, enduring dimensions. Certainly, the Polish nation-state still casts a long shadow over the historiography of popular mass culture in interwar Poland. Its nationalizing ethos encouraged the development of an ethnonational Polish culture in which popular mass culture played an important role. At the same time, Jewish popular mass culture in interwar Poland had reached a zenith of richness and vibrancy, a vital manifestation of a Polish Jewish civilization soon to be annihilated by the Shoah.

During the 1930s, Mandatory Palestine had become one of the markets for consuming popular-culture commodities created in Poland. This is not surprising given that the growing urban centers, like Haifa or Tel Aviv, had absorbed masses of immigrants from Poland. According to estimates of the Polish Consulate in Tel Aviv, in 1936, every second inhabitant of this city of 140,000 people had come from Poland, representing the city’s largest group in terms of country of origin.[[2]](#footnote-3) Tel Aviv housed Polish restaurants, cafes, shops, tailors, hairdressers, and even large commercial and industrial enterprises established by Polish immigrants. In addition, the distribution of goods, customer service, and consumption followed practices used in Poland. For example, Tel Aviv’s fashionable Café Ratzki of the 1930s, frequented by the intellectual elite of that time, was often compared to those in Warsaw that attracted a similar clientele. Its guest book from the years 1932–1935 is filled with its patrons’ wisecracks and witticisms. In April 1935, one visitor wrote, “If I didn’t know that I’m sitting at Ratzki, in Tel Aviv, I would think that I’m at Ziemiańska [the interwar legendary artists’ café] in Warsaw. Here, too, is not even a single *goy* [gentile].”[[3]](#footnote-4) The comparison not only refers to the similarities in atmosphere and conduct in the two establishments, but also alludes to the overwhelming presence of Jewish customers and habitués—speaking their Yiddish language—of the venues frequented by progressive literary Warsaw circles. Even the humorless leader of Polish Zionists Itzhak Grünbaum humorously remarked, “When I’ll sit in a café in the Warsaw Diaspora surprised that is not even one *goy*, I’ll remember Ratzki’s café, where also there is not even one *goy* [gentile]; but their language is overheard,”[[4]](#footnote-5) alluding to the use of foreign languages in that “Hebrew” café. Mojżesz Lejzerowicz, the Yiddish Warsaw daily *Der Moment’s* correspondent in Palestine, compared it with Warsaw’s celebrated cafe frequented by Yiddish journalists and writers: “We will continue here [in Ratzki’s café] Tłomackie13 – without Warsaw.” [[5]](#footnote-6)

Despite strong Zionist efforts to promote Hebrew culture, Polish Jewish immigrants continued to consume cultural commodities from their old land. The migrant community from Poland, whether Polish or Yiddish speaking, became the ‘bond’ with their brethren overseas Record albums of popular music made in Poland in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish also circulated in Palestine. Films made in Poland were particularly popular, attracting large audiences in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. Polish film producers also had representatives in Palestine promoting their films. Zeev Markovich, for instance, represented the producer Maria Hirszbein and Leo-Film.[[6]](#footnote-7) These films were advertised and reviewed, although not always favorably, in the daily Hebrew press, In its negative review of the 1933 Polish film *Szpieg w Masce*, starring the highly acclaimed Polish actress and singer Hanna Ordonówna (often called Ordonka, the Hebrew daily *Haaretz* asked, “Why is the public running to the cinema?” and then answered its question: “Two are the reasons: 1– The Polish language, homesickness, among Polish *olim* [immigrants]. 2– Hanna Ordonówna.”[[7]](#footnote-8) The public watched Polish films regardless of their cinematic qualities because they evoked the former soundscape, landscape, and the long familiar “atmosphere.”

Vinyl recordings of popular music made in Poland in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish, along with other cultural products from the country, were well received in urban Jewish Mandatory Palestine. Thus, Mandatory Palestine was an integral part of commercial circuit for Poland’s popular culture between the wars. Mandatory Palestine also became a crucial trade area through which Poland could extend its commercial reach throughout the Middle East. From the early 1930s, authorities from Poland’s Industry and Commerce Ministries expressed interest in the “intensification of commercial and cultural relations between Poland and the countries of the Near East,” through Palestine.[[8]](#footnote-10) In September 1934, Wiesław Czermiński, director of the Polish Maritime and Colonial League and a member of the Polish Pro-Palestine Committee, visited Palestine to study its economic development and to advance mutual commercial relations.[[9]](#footnote-11) Commodified Polish mass culture played its role in strengthening those relationships. Moreover, the migrant community from Poland had the capacity to serve as conduits between the cultural assets coming from Poland and settlers in Palestine who were arriving from around the globe.

In February 1934, Hanna Ordonówna toured Mandatory Palestine, performing throughout the region. In an interview printed in the Warsaw Yiddish daily *Haynt*, she remarked, “Something has drawn me to your Palestine. It seems to me that it should be a remarkable land. On the one hand, it is holy and dead, full of ancient ruins. On the other, it is a land built again, full of life.”[[10]](#footnote-12) At the end of 1934, the celebrated leading man of Polish cinema, Eugeniusz Bodo, also toured and performed in Palestine. Like Ordonka, he expressed his enthusiasm for the Zionist modernist experiment:

What I saw here just blew my mind! Cities sprout from the ground, asphalt streets drawn by an architect, cross fields where other architects will build houses, public utility installations, factories, and workshops.… Everywhere there is a hectic rhythm of work, huge initiative, and action with more than American momentum... modern harmony and perfect adaptation.[[11]](#footnote-13)

These stars’ tours of Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, and other Jewish settlements in Palestine not only represented yet another aspect of the consumption of Polish popular culture in Mandatory Palestine, but also reflected the mutually beneficially personal, cultural, and commercial relationships that were created by them. The Hebrew press in Palestine and the Polish-Jewish and Yiddish daily press in Poland covered their tours and reviewed their enthusiastically received performances of sketches and songs. Bodo performed a short concert before the screening of one of his films, reinforcing the traditional integration of cinema, cabaret, and popular music.[[12]](#footnote-14) These tours served as promotions for the performers’ films as well as for songs and record albums, which, in turn, helped market the films and performers.

The audiences and consumers for these performances and cultural goods consisted mainly of Jewish immigrants from Poland who felt “the spirit of the ‘motherland’ the singers brought with them.”[[13]](#footnote-15) Some non-Polish speakers also attended these “spectacles” featuring acclaimed stars from abroad. Among them was the theater reviewer of the daily *Do’ar Ha-Yom*:

Although I don’t understand Polish, Bodo’s monologues and conversations captured me. That means that he knows how to fascinate by his temperament, contagious laughter, black laughter, black hair, and nice face… I’m not afraid to say that spending an evening in his company is enjoying the evening, a pleasant hour even for those that do not understand Polish.[[14]](#footnote-16)

While the reviewer’s last remark indicates that non-Polish speakers were a minority among the public, it also reflects how the Polish immigrant community could mediate the popular culture from the old country to the non-Polish speaking public in their new land, their infectious pleasure shared by their new countrymen.

But mediation does not always translate into unconditional adoption of practices and or understanding of nuances The double-entendre humor that often characterized the revues was met with criticism from perhaps more straight-laced reviewers.[[15]](#footnote-17) Ideologically committed Hebrew print media, like the socialist daily *Davar*, criticized Polish popular culture producers and consumers alike:

They are satisfied with “music” like that of Bodo, the “star” who came from Warsaw to cheer up the Tel Aviv ladies, that all their heart and soul aspire to the Vistula banks; who gives a few concerts in *Ohel shem* and *Beit haAm* [concert halls] and was received positively by the *Union for the Imposition of the Hebrew Language* (האיגוד להשלטת השפה העברית), even though he transformed *Beit haAm* into an inn and a cabaret.[[16]](#footnote-18)

Clearly, the immigrant community from Poland in Palestine became part and parcel of the mass culture market of interwar Poland, while also mediating the transfer of cultural assets from Poland to Mandatory Palestine.

**Acclimating to the Local**

This mediation was not simply a matter of “copying and pasting”: the performers adapted their performances to suit the old public in the new land. Bodo, for example, sang his well-known “Jewish” *szlagiers*, Polish versions of Yiddish songs translated by Emanuel Szlechter; for example, “Rabbi Eli-Melech” and “Avremele Melamed.”[[17]](#footnote-19) He also acted in some sketches prepared for his Palestine concerts, which poked fun at his being a *goy* while performing in perfect Hebrew. Playing with the Hebrew expression, “*mebeten u-mleidah*” (lit. from [mother’] “womb and birth: but idiomatically translated as [*born and bred*](https://context.reverso.net/%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%95%D7%9D/%D7%90%D7%A0%D7%92%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%A2%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%AA/born%2Band%2Bbred)), he proudly said, “From [mother’s] womb and *bris* [Yiddish for circumcision] I speak beautiful Hebrew, and even know [the poems by the Hebrew poet Avraham] Shlonski by heart.”[[18]](#footnote-20)

Ordonka understood that she could not address her old public in the new land exactly as she would an audience in Poland. When touring Palestine, she interpreted new songs in Hebrew prepared for the occasion, songs that she continued performing in Poland after her return.[[19]](#footnote-21) Her good Hebrew diction was expressly praised,[[20]](#footnote-22) which likely made her reception in Palestine even more enthusiastic.[[21]](#footnote-23) She performed her new Hebrew repertoire along with her old *szlagiers*, which the public knew from her recordings. Among them were well-known traditional songs that addressed Jewish themes; for example, her iconic interpretation of the lachrymose and sentimental favorite “Mayn Yiddishe Mame.” However, sung in Tel Aviv—and other venues in Palestine—the meanings of the songs changed. Zelig Rusetski, the Tel Aviv correspondent of *Der Moment,* explained how Orodnka’s “Jewish” songs about family relations were reinterpreted for the new society of Mandatory Palestine:

“Mayn Yiddishe Mame” relates the story about the mother who waits for years for the return of her beloved son from the distant lands, and the son will never fall into her arms again... When Ordonka recites it in Warsaw, then for you [the readers in Warsaw], it is just a story, a beautiful song, a tragedy, which is observed from the outside, as a spectator. For us, it is a piece of life, a piece of our own life: who among us does not have a father, a mother, a sister, or a brother there, far away, in Poland? Deep seas and wide lands separate us from the beloved, from the close ones, with whom, God knows, whether we will meet again. Now you can understand why the Tel Aviv concert hall plunged into an atmosphere of the silence of a cemetery when Ordonka sang about the troubles of the unfortunate mother. Everyone’s thoughts moved far, far away, to Poland, to the cities and abandoned towns. The sigh that came out of almost everyone’s heart did not refer to the unhappy mother of the song. It was the expression of longing for the beloved ones who are still so far away.[[22]](#footnote-24)

If among some members of the public the songs awakened nostalgia for a faraway land, among others, it deepened the abyss between the old and the new countries. In his review for the daily rightist Hebrew newspaper, *Do’ar Ha-yom*, Itzhak Edel (1896–1973), a Warsaw-born Jewish musician who established the first association for Jewish music in Warsaw and emigrated to Tel Aviv in 1929, highlighted the immense gulf between Jews remaining in the Diaspora and those building a new homeland in Palestine:

Songs with Jewish content that there [in Poland] moved the audience, only point out and emphasize to us, how we have distanced ourselves from them, both in terms of the text and the music. The song … describing an old Jew who wants to immigrate to Israel in order to die there, … can make us laugh.… This sick music, offspring of the Jewish ghetto, is incomprehensible in our climate.[[23]](#footnote-25)

Both reviews focused on how Ordonka’s performance was received by former residents of Poland now living in the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine. Whereas Rusetski emphasized the longing of the emigrants for their mothers, other relatives, and beloved friends who remained in the old country, Edel highlighted the differences between “the new Jew” and the diasporic Jew from “over there.” Not only did live performances in Mandatory Palestine need to adjust to the local audience, but the transnational consumption of the same songs or sketches performed or recorded in Poland acquired new significance in the new land. In Mandatory Palestine, they evoked family roots in their homelands, thus transforming both the materials’ meaning and reception. On the one hand, the consumption of this popular culture reinforced the listeners’ emotional links to their parental homeland, while, on the other, it emphasized the unbridgeable geographical, emotional, and social distances between old and new.

The consumption of Polish popular culture in Mandatory Palestine, especially in the late interwar years, thus changed the meaning of cultural assets. Another clear example can be found in the popular Polish songs —*szlagiery*—that were translated into Hebrew and recorded in Poland, and sold in the thousands in both Poland and in Palestine to consumers of Hebrew culture. The songs had “international” rhythms suggesting a cosmopolitan or metropolitan style, but through translation, they acquired new meanings. One example is the Hebrew version of one of the great *szlagiers* of interwar Poland, the tango “Ostatnia niedziela” (The Last Sunday), composed by Jerzy Petersburski and with lyrics by Zenon Friedwald (1935)—was Judaized, becoming *Ha-Shabat ha-Achronah* (The Last Saturday).[[24]](#footnote-26) Adam Aston performed the song in Polish, and, using the name Ben Levi (the Hebrew translation of his family name Loewinsohn), he performed the Hebrew version. As Ben Levi, he also performed the Hebrew version of “Odeszłaś, jak se’n” (You Left as a Dream), a Polish tango from 1934 with music by Michał Ferszko and lyrics by Aleksander Jellin. In Polish, the song refers to unrequited love, describing a lover who leaves and never returns. The Hebrew version from 1935, “Beli Ahavah” (With No Love), also describes the lover’s leaving, but its lyrics imply a broader farewell to one’s family, friends, and [loved ones](https://context.reverso.net/%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%95%D7%9D/%D7%90%D7%A0%D7%92%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%93%D7%99%D7%AA/loved%2Bones). Thus, both music and text were adapted to fit the local dimensions. The Polish and the Hebrew versions of the above songs were recorded in Warsaw by *Syrena Records* and sold in Poland as well as in Mandatory Palestine, further evidence that Mandatory Palestine was part of an international Polish commercialized culture market.

Another example of a song that acquired new local meanings through transnational transference is Mieczyslaw Miksne’s “Madagaskar,” a satirical response to Polish fantasies about conquering Madagascar and resettling Polish Jews there. This 1937 song was a hit in Poland in both its Polish and Yiddish versions, and the Hebrew poet Natan Alterman translated it into Hebrew. The Yiddish version retained the ironic tone of the absurd colonial dream and a Bakhtinian carnivalesque inversion of dominant values; in Hebrew, in Palestine, its political critique was aimed not at Polish colonial fantasies but at the restrictions imposed by the British Mandate.[[25]](#footnote-27) This kind of “misreading,” à la Harold Bloom, shows how adaptation to a new context substantially shifted forms of popular culture in the process of transferring and adapting Poland’s interwar popular culture to local realities.

These elements of popular culture flowing from Poland to Palestine had the flavor of vernacular cosmopolitanism. In contrast, those popular culture assets transferred from Palestine to Poland exuded “authentic” localism. The impresario Moshe Valin nurtured and positioned Bracha Zefira, a Jerusalem-born Hebrew singer of Yemenite origins, as a “Yemenite/Oriental singer.” In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Oriental rhythms and songs permeated the Polish popular musical soundscape, especially in songs with a foxtrot rhythm.[[26]](#footnote-28) Thus, Valin was able to promote Zefira, enabling her to build her career in Central Europe.[[27]](#footnote-29) She toured Poland in 1929, offering musicians there the opportunity to adopt and adapt new styles and rhythms. Musicologists and scholars considered her to be a mediator between Eastern and Western music traditions, probably foreshadowing Zefira’s later role as a pioneer in introducing European Jews to the music of the Middle East.[[28]](#footnote-30)

Around the same time, folk music and folkloric dances, like the hora, became integral elements of Polish Jewish culture, particularly for Jewish youth engaged in Zionism. The direction that cultural forms travelled between the two lands reflected not only the local consumers, but also those assets considered suitable for exchange.

Thus, in terms of popular culture, interwar Poland and Palestine formed what anthropologist Marie Louise Pratt has termed a “contact zone,” a concept applied by another anthropologist, Eugenia Prokop Janiec, in the context of Polish and Jewish transculturation.[[29]](#footnote-32) In the case studied here, the “contact zone” was partly based on the business cultures and structures that facilitated the transfer of film, performances, and music transnationally. Especially in the 1930s, it also promoted an aspirational metropolitan-style culture—not between an advancing center and retreating periphery, as in the familiar anthropological model, but, instead, across centers competing for authority in, if not ascendancy over, “the modern.” Considering Warsaw and Tel Aviv as sites of cultural exchange is important, not only because it positions two heretofore neglected locations in the transnational network of popular culture, but also because doing so contributes to our understanding of how this popular culture operated in relation to the modern world.

**Transferring Transnationally**

Despite the crucial importance of the actual material objects involved, the transferring process entailed far more than mere mechanical adaptations. It was also propelled by the agency of artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and consumers. Many of the consumers—Jewish immigrants from Poland to Palestine—had succeeded in attaining middle-class status. They could afford to consume cultural commodities from their old land and were eager to do so. This migrant community not only established a “bond” with their brethren overseas but also had the capacity to serve as a “bridge” to other groups in their new land, such as other European bourgeoisie immigrants or younger pioneers who had immigrated earlier and identified as socialist.

The transnational bonding in popular culture intensified with the immigration of Polish artists and creators, such as the composer Stanisław Ferszko (the brother of the earlier-mentioned Michał Ferszko), who had immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1937. Many Polish immigrant artists found new homes in the secular, urban areas of Tel Aviv or Haifa, performing or recreating familiar elements of popular culture from the old country for the local bourgeoisie in the growing cities, middle class immigrants from Poland, and others. As Beth Holmgren notes, Tel Aviv, more than any other non-Polish city, was the most suitable second home for a “Polish-style” literary cabaret.[[30]](#footnote-33)

The immigrants who had settled in Palestine years earlier created communities in Palestine that were shaped by norms that were, in many cases, based on values and practices from the old country. These norms, when combined with the immigrants’ social capital in their new homeland, facilitated the absorption of the newcomers into the earlier migrant communities. In their new cities, immigrant artists found an economic niche in the leisure culture performed in cafes, theaters, and dance halls in the spirit of prewar Poland’s literary cabaret which had evolved to suit the Poland’s urban bourgeoise. The existing migrant community often succeeded in integrating these artists into the social and economic life of the Jewish society in Palestine.

The in-group migrant urban community from Poland in the new cities enabled Stanisław Ferszko and other artists to “bond” with them during the immigration process and to create “bridges”’ between the artists and their performances with extra-group individuals. These artists adapted the contents to the new setting, bridging and facilitating the locally transformed old home popular culture into a new one.

A good example is the Hebrew-language literary cabarets in Mandatory Palestine, created in the image of those in Poland, whose artists performed in Polish and Yiddish. The transnational net of artists in the field of popular culture enabled Itshak Nożyk or Ferszko to begin working for the Hebrew literary cabaret *Ha-Matate* [Hebrew for “the broom”], bringing their experience in Poland’s show business to the Hebrew stage. *Ha-Matate* theater opened in 1928, but, as Shelly Zer-Zion has shown, its ensemble and artistic style consolidated only after Itshak Nożyk joined the troupe in 1933.[[31]](#footnote-34) Before Nożyk settled in Palestine, he was the moving spirit in Sambatyon, the well-known Yiddish cabaret located first in Vilna before it moved to Warsaw. As Zer-Zion noted, he shaped the poetic format and wrote many of the Ha-Matate satirical revues. Following the style in Poland, each of the troupe’s performances consisted of a collection of short sketches linked by a character or a thematic framework. Nożyk wrote the sketches and song lyrics in Yiddish, and Natan Alterman translated them into Hebrew.[[32]](#footnote-35)

The works performed by Ha-Matate, particularly the emphasis on political critique and the songs, reflect a clear cultural transference from Poland to Tel Aviv. Nożyk translated the material for the new public by transforming its contents. The Polish literary cabarets dramatized the upheavals of modern life in interwar Poland and the absurdities of the bourgeoisie life; the Yiddish Polish theater focused on the upheavals of Jewish life in interwar Poland and the absurdities of Jewish politics. Similarly, Ha-Matate became a stage for political satire, critically examining the crises of life in Mandatory Palestine and the absurdities of local Zionist institutions. It addressed political events, questions of immigration, and what the Polish immigrants in Palestinewere considered the absurdities of “Hebrew work” and the “Hebrew language.”

The different literary cabarets used language differently but with the same intent: to sharpen the political critique. In Poland, the *Szmontses* genre of sketches—comic sketches about Jewish peddlers—used performers with a “Yiddish” accent and a “Yiddish” way of speaking Polish. The Yiddish interwar literary cabaret in Poland portrayed the archetype of the Polonized Jew who used Polish words while talking Yiddish to mock their vain efforts to integrate into society and attain upward mobility. And in the Hebrew cabarets, Nożyk and others criticized the absurdities of local institutions by using the German immigrants’ “Yekkes” accent and way of speaking Hebrew.[[33]](#footnote-36) Artists like Nożyk and Ferszko (who composed theater transferred popular-culture practices from Poland to Palestine, adapting them to the new society to render them suitable for exchange, and changing them significantly in the process. These artists created a new network of consumers in Palestine by bridging the cultural assets coming overseas to out-groups already in Palestine.

This network of artists also transplanted the Argentinian tango to the Mediterranean shores, mediated through the Polish tango. This circuitous route from the Rio de la Plata to the HaYarkon River via the Vistula River may explain the idiosyncrasies of the “Israeli tango,” whose rhythmic style has strong associations with Hebrew music.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, many Polish composers and performers—Ferszko, Mordekhai Olari Nożyk (Itzhak’s son), and especially the prolific Moshe Wilensky, who studied at the Warsaw Conservatory—shaped the music of the Ha-Matate theater and of popular music generally in Palestine, including Hebrew tangos. “Artzenu Ha Ktantonet” (Our Little Country) is a Hebrew tango composed by Henryk Gold after he arrived in Palestine with Anders’ Army, the name given to the Polish Armed Forces in the East. The Hebrew tango, as did the Polish one, featured European melodic touches. The Polish and Hebrew tangos were more delicate and much slower than the Argentinian prototype; their melodies were generally imbued with lamentation and nostalgia, with the orchestration essentially remaining in the background. Using the tango rhythms, the creators transferred a popular international rhythm to Palestine; as in Poland, the Hebrew tango variant expressed a local interpretation of cosmopolitanism.

**Transforming Locally**

World War II did not interrupt and, in fact, even increased the influence of Polish popular culture in Palestine. From 1940 onward, many Polish war refugees, including literary figures and musicians, began to arrive in Palestine. Zenon Friedwald, for instance, who wrote the song “The Last Sunday” (“The Last Saturday,” as it was renamed in the Hebrew version), escaped to Soviet Russia in 1939 and found his way to Romania. From there, he traveled through Greece and Turkey, arriving in Tel Aviv as a refugee around 1940. In the following year, he directed a musical called *Yehe Seder*! (Let There Be Order), whose Polish context was noted by its reviewers. Dorit Yerushalmi’s observation that it combined “the description of Warsaw’s great suffering and heroism” with revue segments that were expertly performed by the “revue stars from Poland”[[34]](#footnote-37) was absolutely right. Its music was composed by Ferszko, who had worked in Poland with Friedwald and helped him make the transition in Palestine, and the main role was played by Lola Kitajewicz, who had performed in the Warsaw Cabaret’s performance of *Cyrulik Warszawski* (The Barber of Warsaw), under the direction of Fryderyk Járosy, interwar Warsaw’s most prominent cabaret director.

Many of the artists who found shelter in Tel Aviv or Haifa, including those who arrived with Anders’ Army, performed in the spirit of prewar Poland’s literary cabarets in revues or musical cafés for a local audience thirsting for entertainment from the old country. The relatively healthy economy in Tel Aviv gave the Polish community there the means to enthusiastically consume the popular culture productions that the Warsaw celebrities brought to Palestine during the war. The encounter between those who had already established themselves in the city and the newly arrived artist-refugees, struggling with the difficulties of making a living and adapting to a new language in a completely new urban setting in a different climate drove the financial success of the cabaret genre in Palestine.

These “artists on the move” strategically used the interconnected Palestine–Poland’s popular culture market to maximize their economic options outside Poland. The literary cabaret Li-La-Lo(“For Me, for Her, for Him”) opened in November 1944 in Tel Aviv. Valin had originally wanted to name the cabaret Lo-La-Li (for him, for her, for me), echoing the name of the Polish performer Lola Kitajewicz. However, Natan Alterman, changed the order of the words to *Li-La-Lo* at Friedwald’s request.[[35]](#footnote-38) As Yerushalmi observed, the cabaret’s name not only suggested the universal character of the repertoire but also recalled the prewar iconic Warsaw literary cabaret, Qui Pro Quo. The impresario Moshe Valin invited many artists who had performed in Warsaw in Yiddish and Polish to the stage of Li-La-Lo.

The first show performed—in Hebrew—at the cabaret was *The Barber of Tel Aviv*; its name recalling *The Barber of Warsaw* performed in Warsaw in the late 1930s.[[36]](#footnote-39) Dorit Yerushalmi discussed the strong ties between Li-La-Lo and its Polish predecessors. In *The Barber of Tel Aviv*, Lola Kitajewicz reprised her role, appearing along with Irena Różyńska, a non-Jewish actress who had performed in the successful Warsaw Wielka Rewia before the war; in *The Barber*, she played the femme fatale. Both actresses reached Palestine with Anders’ Army.[[37]](#footnote-40) Minna Bern performed alongside them. She began her stage career in Lodz in the Yiddish Kleynkunst Ararat, the quintessential Yiddish cabaret in interwar Poland. The wife of the play’s director, Wanda (Vera) Friedwald was the master of ceremonies, a role she had played in Poland before the war; in Palestine, she performed it in Hebrew “but with a Polish undertone.”[[38]](#footnote-41)

, andZenon Friedwald directed. The music was composed according to recognized Warsaw conventions and many of the song and sketches were direct translations from Polish.[[39]](#footnote-43)Not surprisingly, Yerushalmi noted, “The stage still strongly echoes Warsaw’s Kleinkunst Qui Pro Quo.”[[40]](#footnote-44)

Yet, by the time the curtain rose on *The Barber of Tel Aviv*, the Jewish community in the Warsaw Ghetto had been completely destroyed and its culture annihilated. The audience was watching a recreation of a people that was no more, thus rendering the performances so poignant. Viewers heard songs translated into Hebrew and watched monologues in the spirit of the old Qui Pro Quo, as well as scenes showing contemporary events.

Many of the performers on Li-La-Lo’s stage were stars of the Polish stage. Some, such as the actor Aleksander Yahalomi, began performing with the Anders’ Army during its long journey from Poland, while others began performing after arriving in Palestine (e.g., Wilenski, Matityahu Rozin) or joined the Li-La-Lo in later shows (e.g., the musicians Henryk Wars and Stanisław Petersburski [Jerzy’s brother]) All in all, about forty authors, musicians, composers, singers, directors, and announcers from Poland performed at Li-La-Lo.[[41]](#footnote-46) The cabaret’s first shows relied heavily on the Polish literary cabaret tradition. Some were literary adaptations of texts from a variety of languages, and some had been performed in Qui Pro Quo. Some Polish actors brought their own repertoire, which the ingenious Shmuel Fisher translated into Hebrew.[[42]](#footnote-47)

Lola Kitajewicz performed in the Polish poet Julien Tuwim’s *Lokomotywa* (Rehov harakevet; The Train’s Street).[[43]](#footnote-48) Aleksander Yahalomi performed one of his most acclaimed songs, “Goldenberg! Goldenberg!” originally titled, “Rappaport, Rappaport!” referencing the ubiquitous name, filling four pages of Rappaports in the Warsaw telephone directory. The lyrics sung by Matityahu Rozin, “Im ‘ein li ma she-ani ohev, ani ohev et ma she-iesh li” (If you do not have what you love, then you love what you have) was the Hebrew translation of the well-known Polish phrase, “Jak się nie ma, co się lubi, To się lubi, co się ma.”[[44]](#footnote-49)

All but one of the female actresses in *The Barber of Tel Aviv* did not know Hebrew and had to learn their roles by using the Latin alphabet. The exception was a young Yemenite singer who would become one of the greatest Israeli singers of all time, the legendary Shoshana Damari. Her first hits were composed by Moshe Wilenski, who was greatly influenced by Polish popular music of the interwar era.

It was a guest director at Li-La-Lo who would teach Damari to sing in the strong, dramatic, and passionate style that became her trademark. The director, Fryderyk Járosy, was not Jewish but was well known in interwar Poland as the artistic director of Quid Pro Quo. Valin had hired Járosy for a six-month contract to direct and perform in three revues at Li-La-Lo. As Járosy wrote to Ordonka, he had “to turn the dilettante tingl-tanglu into a real literary theater.”[[45]](#footnote-50) He designed an “uncompromising program, calculated to educate the audience,” [[46]](#footnote-51) using both Hebrew and Polish on stage. One sketch featured a dialogue between Járosy and Irena Różyńska, in which she spoke her lines in Hebrew and he spoke in Polish. The entire dialogue was printed in both Hebrew and Polish in the program, so the audience could follow.[[47]](#footnote-52) Use of the Polish language and of cultural codes and symbols both increased the support that artists in Palestine received from their compatriots abroad and helped create a new culture in a new language in the new land. It was a process of transferring transnationally, transforming locally.

A performance of the aforementioned tango, “Artzenu Ha-Ktantonet” (Our Little Country), opened Li-La-Lo’s show in September 1947. The reviewer from the communist daily *Kol Ha’Am* praised the sketches but was very critical of the music, declaring confidently that “no song will be a hit.”[[48]](#footnote-53) His prediction proved incorrect, as the tango became an important part of the Israeli musical pantheon.

Not everyone was pleased by the visibility and prominence of Polish content and performers in the cabaret’s offerings. A performance by Jenny Lubicz was described as obsolete, depicting a mother who do not fit the contemporary context in Palestine. Minna Bern’s performance earned the scornful description, “foreign to the atmosphere of the Land of Israel,” while her acting method was derided as coming from the Yiddish stage. Asher Lerner of *HaMashkif* wrote that an encounter between a Jewish couple and a British policeman during curfew was more similar to the way “Jews used to negotiate with a goy [gentile] policeman in Poland” than they would do so in Palestine.[[49]](#footnote-54)

Yet, Li-La-Lo held a prominent and visible place in theater and entertainment in the years between World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel, largely eclipsing Ha-Matate. To the Jewish urban population in Mandatory Palestine, embroiled in a struggle for independence against the British, the cabaret provided a much-needed dose of entertainment familiar from the old country: humorous songs and a bit of romantic tango; sketches in a well-known cabaret style with the right mix of humor, nostalgia, and excitement; double entendre in the spirit of the 1930s Polish revues and cabarets; parody; and a bit of political satire related to the life of that time and place. All this in a well-acted performance, with well-designed costumes and decor and with a cast that sprinkled the stage with its stardust.

Immigration from Poland on the job opportunities in the field of popular culture affected the condition of veterans and newcomers alike. The upward socioeconomic mobility of the veteran community exacerbated its income disparities with the Polish newcomers, while fueling their desire to integrate the newcomers and promote their artistic contributions. A new labor market was soon created in the field of popular culture that provided the Polish community with the entertainment they had enjoyed in their country of birth.

These Polish “artists on the move” influenced the local communities in which they came to settle. In Palestine, their networking activities connected the small local artistic community to cultural capitals around the world, while the combination of social and cultural capital these artists brought from Poland generated economic capital in Palestine in the form of a nascent entertainment scene. The newcomers had options to build their artistic careers, thereby enhancing their economic and professional development.

The Polish immigrants were able to absorb Hebrew artistic styles and cultural capital through encounters and collaborations with local artists and by connecting themselves with local institutions. Together, they had a significant impact on popular culture in Palestine, increasing its innovation, entrepreneurship, and financial success. This network-based popular culture industry in Mandatory Palestine, which had its origins in the prewar Warsaw–Tel Aviv transnational network of popular culture, produced an idiosyncratic interpretation of a cosmopolitan-style culture as an alternative to a dominant, hyper-serious Zionist discourse.

**Transferring and Transforming as Resistance: Dzigan and Szumacher**

After the establishment of the State of Israel, new artists from Poland joined the wave of immigrants that settled in the new homeland. Their connections in their transnational networks helped them gain entrée to the cultural scene in the large cities.[[50]](#footnote-56)

On March 1950 Shimen (Szymon) Dzigan and Yisroel Shumacher (or Szumacher) arrived in Israel from Poland: they were the most famous Yiddish comedy duo in prewar Poland, where they performed in Yiddish literary cabarets across the country and were also active in Yiddish theater. Both survived the war in the Soviet Union, returning to Poland afterward. Soon after arriving in Israel they began performing Yiddish *Kleykunst teater*, produced by Ze’ev Markovich. They attracted a large audience, despite obstacles the new state placed in the way of Yiddish culture.

Their show was based on ones staged in postwar Poland but was adapted to Israeli society in several ways. Dzigan exchanged his Hasidic clothing for the kibbutznik’s shorts, replaced his small yarmulka for a round brimless hat, and substituted Israeli political references for those dealing with Polish generals and ministers. His red kerchief, however, continued to be his “trademark.”[[51]](#footnote-57)

Their show was performed in Yiddish at Dzigan’s insistence: he refused to perform in Hebrew. As Diego Rotman wrote in his study of the duo, “Their Israeli identity did not manifest in an acquisition of the Hebrew language but rather in their talent for addressing the local, current experience, exposing the nation’s weak spots.”[[52]](#footnote-58)

But their inclusion into the Israeli scene was not easy. In response to the Hebraist Israeli policy, they did, however, include some songs in Hebrew. The general public’s denigration of Yiddish and the pressure to perform in Hebrew transformed Dzigan and Shumacher’s transgressive performance in Yiddish into an act of linguistic opposition:[[53]](#footnote-59) “This particular act was part of the battle to preserve in the State of Israel the multilingualism and multiculturalism that had characterized Jewish culture in the diaspora throughout the generations.”[[54]](#footnote-60)

Their performances came to permeate the Hebrew popular culture. By waging this “battle,” the duo may have attracted renowned satirical and comic writers who did not know Yiddish to write for them.[[55]](#footnote-61) Hebrew actors and immigrant performers also joined Dzigan’s troupe. Giora Manor, the regisseur and theater reviewer, claimed that, in the duo’s shows, “Instead of the Hebrew theater absorbing immigrants and helping them progress from Yiddish to Hebrew, immigrants create possibilities of existence for Hebrew actors.”[[56]](#footnote-62) Referring to Hebrew-speaking actors performing in Yiddish, Rotman felt that: “This particular act was part of the battle to preserve in the State of Israel the multilingualism and multiculturalism that had characterized Jewish culture in the diaspora throughout the generations”[[57]](#footnote-63)

This Yiddish duo performing in an anti-establishment language in a “diasporic” tradition complicated the Israeli dichotomy between a hegemonic, elitist Ashkenazi culture and a subjugated Mizrahi culture. That would be a crucial element in reinventing the interwar popular culture of Poland in Israel in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

**Reimagining Interwar Popular Culture**

During the last third of the twentieth century, Polish influences on Hebrew popular culture were nearly entirely obscured. For example, the song “The Last Saturday, was a hit in the 1970s as sung by the popular Israeli singer Yardena Arazi; later, a notable website for Hebrew songs characterized its lyrics and music as “anonymous popular folklore,” its interwar Polish origin forgotten.[[58]](#footnote-65) Yet, at around the same time, Polish Yiddish interwar songs themselves enjoyed a renaissance.

Chava Alberstein, who has recorded more albums than any other Israel singer, began recording and performing Yiddish interwar songs from the secular Yiddish repertoire in the 1970s. Her third album, Hobnmir a nigundl, spotlighted her Yiddish repertoire, providing a cultural alternative to folk Hebrew songs in a hyper-Zionist political atmosphere.

Over the twenty-first century, there has been a rediscovery of interwar Polish popular culture in new media and the academy, in music, and fringe theater, with each interacting and enriching the other.

Dzigan and Shumacher are a case in point. An episode of a 2004 documentary series about Israeli humor created by leading documentary makers Anat Seltzer and Modi Bar-On and directed by Avida Livni was dedicated to this Polish comedy duo. That same year, a show about them, *Di eybike Dzigan un Shumacher* (Dzigan and Shumacher Forever), was performed at the Yiddishpil Theater, established in 1988 with Israeli government support. In 2013, the Yiddishpil put on a new play, *Dzigan un Shumacher knakn shoyn vider* (Dzigan and Shumacher Are at It Again). This musical comedy, written by two Israeli playwrights, B. Michael and Ephraim Sidon, starred the veteran Yiddish actor Yaakov Bodo and the famous Israeli comedian Dovale (Dov) Glickman.[[59]](#footnote-66)

New media are participating in the rediscovery of Polish popular culture. For example, *Oneg Shabbat* is a very popular Israeli blog that has been published weekly since 2007. It is written by David Assaf, a professor of Jewish history at Tel Aviv University, who specializes in the study of East European Hasidism. He devoted several blog posts to how interwar songs transferred from Poland to Palestine and Israel, going from Polish and Yiddish to Hebrew. Assaf has also written a book in Hebrew that illustrates intercultural connections through songs, such as the earlier mentioned “Ostatnia niedziela.”[[60]](#footnote-68) In addition, some historians of Israeli theater, such as Dorit Yerushalmi, Shelly Zer-Zion, and Diego Rotman, have explored the Yiddish and Polish roots of Hebrew theater.

This academic research has nurtured a third route of transmission: the rediscovery through mainstream and fringe theater of interwar Poland’s popular culture in its Yiddish variant.

Fringe theater is a telling case study. The Salamanca fringe theater group, in which Rotman is active, performed *Der Dybbuk (1937-2017): A Film Performance* based on the Yiddish film from 1937.[[61]](#footnote-69) It is a kind of political *szopka* (puppet theater) with references to *Dzigan and Shumacher’s Escape 1949-2022*, based on their life stories.[[62]](#footnote-70)

The performances of the fringe theater Esther’s Cabaret, mentioned in the beginning of this article, are less ephemeral than those of Salamanca but similarly are shaped by the academy. Ya’ad Biran, the Yiddishist literary scholar and playwright, works closely with this theater group. Its productions recreate the atmosphere of interwar literary cabarets in Poland and draw on various Yiddish performance traditions, particularly those rooted in the United States, while incorporating elements of Israeli contemporary culture.

Esther’s Cabaret, for instance, transforms Dzigan’s signature red kerchief into “the red flag of the revolution” and marks interwar Yiddish culture as both “diaspora and jargon.” It addresses questions of linguistic hegemony through the character of Yidele (a popular Yiddish name, lit. “little Jew”), as he talks about his rigid, cold wife (representing Hebrew) and his warm and voluptuous mistress (representing Yiddish), thereby inverting the Hebrew–Yiddish official hierarchy.

In a captivating monologue, a Djinn wearing a galabieh (the robe worn in Arabic-speaking Mediterranean countries) and speaking Arabic engages in a conversation with a new immigrant from Poland, who lost all his entire family “there” and speaks Yiddish. They discuss the rightful ownership of the land that now is the State of Israel, the expulsion of the Arab village’s inhabitants, the emptiness left despite its replacement by a kibbutz, and the war, described as “worse than diabolic.” The Djinn says, “In this place, instead of fearing Djinns, people fear themselves.” The subordinated Palestinian population, Arab language, Islamic culture, and Yiddish diasporic culture from Poland are portrayed as simultaneously marginalized.

The production also aligns itself with the marginalized Mizrahi culture, paying tribute to diasporic traditions as transnational and cosmopolitan in contrast to a dominant chauvinist, hyper-Zionist discourse. In a monologue from the show that premiered on June 2019 Esty declares, “I do not apologize to [contemporary Israeli poetry group] Ars-Poetica, I am also an oppressed minority,” referring to a contemporary Israeli poetry group that challenges the “Ashkenazi” monopoly of Israeli culture.[[63]](#footnote-71) This show also satirizes Jewish extremist messianism and the political fantasies surrounding construction of the Third Temple on El-Aksa’s mount.

It is worth noting that while Ester’s cabaret reinvents Poland’s interwar popular culture, it primarily focuses on its Yiddish variant. It adds a Yiddish twist to an imagined German-American tradition, including presenting a Yiddish version of the song “Cabaret” from the eponymous film, but overlooks the Polish ingredients of the theatrical tradition.

Transforming, and reimagining, the Yiddish *kleynkunst teater* provides a way to resist contemporary tendencies in Israeli politics and culture. It opposes hyper-Zionist chauvinistic policies, challenges the long-standing hegemony of the Hebrew language, critiques rampant messianism and its linkage to political practices, and can even questions homophobic discourse. Ultimately, it helps renegotiate a sense of belonging within an increasingly fragmented Israeli society while realigning the creators, performers, and audience with other subordinated Israeli cultures and discourses.

**Conclusion**

Elements of popular mass culture from interwar Poland gradually permeated popular culture in Mandatory Palestine and, later, the State of Israel, eventually becoming an integral of cultural life in the country. Over time, the overseas origins of these cultural transfer were internalized so deeply that they became blurred. However, in recent decades, scholars, intellectuals, artists, and consumers have rediscovered them. What prompted this rediscovery?

There are several possible explanations, but I argue that those involved in rediscovering and recreating interwar popular culture in Poland over the past fifteen years have been reacting to three elements of the nationalist, ultra-Zionist discourse of Netanyahu’s administration. The first is its ethnocentricism, equating Jewish ethnonationalism with radical nationalism. The second element portrays East-Central European Jewish culture as diasporic. The third is the populist anti-Ashkenazi rhetoric that labels Central-East European Jews as an “old” elite and their culture as elitist, oppressive, and seeking to marginalize Mizrahi (Oriental) Jewish culture.

This process of rediscovery, reinterpretation, and recreation of Polish interwar culture reflects the ongoing project of Jewish identity negotiation. Artists, scholars, and performers, many of them of Ashkenazi descent who feel oppressed by what they consider Netanyahu’s nationalist and authoritarian regime, find in Poland’s interwar popular culture sociocultural and sociopolitical alternatives that, although unrealized, possess a metropolitan and cosmopolitan flavor in a somewhat counterfactual manner.

These artists, scholars, and performers, while far from a marginal element in the Israeli society, continue seeking their place in Israeli society. These delegitimized elites mourn what they perceive as a persecution of humanist values and seek a cosmopolitan vision that reinterprets the meaning of Israeli culture. The recreation of prewar Polish songs, literary cabarets, and Yiddish theaters reflects a yearning for a culture that can laugh at its own limitations. Simultaneously, it offers a consciously contradictory “parochial-cosmopolitan” alternative that challenges both the prestigious intellectual cultures of the academy and many aspects of postmodern life.

This rediscovery is often dehistorized. Its significance lies in its differentiation from mainstream Israeli-Hebrew popular culture, its Mizrahi variant, and the ubiquitous Americanized instant Hebrew pop culture. It reinvents an alternative mass culture, which time and again invigorates audiences with the experience of living in a contemporaneous imagined “national cosmopolitan” alternative.

In the transfer of cultural practices through theater, music, and songs from one collective to another, from one language to another, spanning seas and mountain chains, their original meanings underwent change. The new “translated” forms transformed them, imparting new meanings and challenging older patterns. Transferring is transforming. Within this transcultural process, concrete distinctions between “foreign” and “familiar” and between “cosmopolitan” and “parochial” were reshaped. On the one hand, differences blurred, but on the other hand, this process also reinforced—linguistically, culturally, and nationally—groupings and identities.

1. <https://bethshalomaleichem.co.il/esthers-cabaret/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. M. Szulkin, “Żydzi palestyńscy w świetle raportów polskiej służby dyplomatycznej, cz. II (1936–1939),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 117/1 (1981), p. 64. See also: Artur Patek, “Soplicowo nad Jarkonem. Próba portretu zbiorowego polskich uchodźców wojennych w Tel Awiwie (1940−1948),” Studia Środkowoeuropejskie i Bałkanistyczne, Tom XXX (2021), pp. 29–51. <AU: I suggest supplying English translations wherever possible here.> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Mordekhai Naor (ed.), Beit café makom Katan ko! Beit Café makom adir! Café Ratzki: Café safruti beTelAviv 1932–1935, Tel Aviv: Modan, 2006, pp. 76–-77. Mordekhai Naor (ed.), Beit café makom Katan ko! Beit Café makom adir! Café Ratzki: Café safruti beTelAviv 1932–1935, Tel Aviv: Modan, 2006, pp. 84–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Mordekhai Naor (ed.), Beit café makom Katan ko! Beit Café makom adir! Café Ratzki: Café safruti beTelAviv 1932–1935, Tel Aviv: Modan, 2006, pp. 76–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See: “Nowy film z życia żydowskiego,” *Kino dla Wszystkich*, 24 July, p. 8; ‘“Tsabar’ - hafilm hakolani haeretz Israelu harishon, *Do’ar Ha-yom*, 26 June 1932, p. 3; “Tzabar – Film meKahayey Eretz Israel,” *Haaretz*, 13 Jene 1932, p. 4; “Anaf Ta’asiah chadash – Haseret Tszabar,” *Haaretz*, 29 June 1932, p. 4; “Ta’asiat sratim BeErtz Israel,” *Haaretz* 29 April 1932, republished in ”’Alilot’Tsabar: Yedi’ot al hafakat haseret aalilati harishn baharetz,” sinematek: Ktav et le-inienei kolnoa, 95 (July 1988), p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Sh[imon]. S[amet], “Badim, Haartz, 7 August 1934, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Katarzyna Dziekan, “Between anti-Semitism and political pragmatism: Polish perceptions of Jewish national endeavours in Palestine between the two world wars,” Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Southampton Faculty of Arts and Humanities, October 2019, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
9. Katarzyna Dziekan, “Between anti-Semitism and political pragmatism: Polish perceptions of Jewish national endeavours in Palestine between the two world wars,” Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Southampton Faculty of Arts and Humanities, October 2019, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
10. “A geshprekh mit Hanaka Ordonuvna ofn veg kan Erets Isroel,” *Haynitge Nayes,* 9 March 1934, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
11. Eugeniusz Bodo, “ Jestem w Palestynie,” 5-ta Rano: bezpartyjny dziennik żydowski, 19 January 1935, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
12. “Ha-im lutsina hi bakhurah?” *Haaretz*, 1 January 1935, p. 4; “2 kontsertim akhronim shel ha-Zamar ha\_polani A. Bodo,” *Haaretz* 15 January 1935, p. 6; “Badim,” *Haaretz*, 20 June 1936, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
13. “Zamar Polani ba-‘Ir,” *Ha-Yarden*, 19 December 1935, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
14. Uri Keisari, “E. Bodo Man’im zemirot beOhel shem,” *Do-ar Ha-yom*, 17 December 1934, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
15. Sh. Samet,”be-Mamlekhet ha-Badim,” 19 February 1935, *Haaretz*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
16. Ts.L. “Huliot,” *Davar*, 10 January 1935, p. 2. On the official promotion of Hebrew and the continued popular use of other languages, especially Yiddish, see Anat Helman, ‘‘’Even the Dogs in the Street Bark in Hebrew’: National Ideology and Everyday Culture in Tel-Aviv,’’ *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92.3/4 (2002): 359–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
17. He even sang Hebrew songs he learned especially for the occasion, songs that he continued performing in Poland after his return. Sh. Samet,”be-Mamlekhet ha-Badim,” 19 February 1935, *Haaretz*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
18. Sh. Samet,”be-Mamlekhet ha-Badim,” 17 December 1934, *Haaretz*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
19. Sh. Samet,”be-Mamlekhet ha-Badim,” 19 February 1935, *Haaretz*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
20. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
21. “Do Palestyny – wiosną 1934 (5) Z Hanką Ordonówną na pokładzie ‘Polonii,’” *Nowy Dziennik* 22 March 1934, p. 7. Uri Keisari, “E. Bodo Man’im zemirot beOhel shem,” *Do’ar Ha-yom*, 17 December 1934, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
22. Zelig Rusetski, “A lebediger grus fun Poylen: Hanka Ordonuvna ubn Tel Aviv,” *Der Moment*, 21 March 1934, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
23. Itschak Edel, “Be-Olam Ha-Neginahh: Hanka Ordonuvna,” *Do’ar Ha-yom*, 16 March 1934, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
24. On this song see: David Asaf, Shir hu Lo Rak Milim: Pirkey masa’ ba-Zemer ha-‘Ivri, Tel Aviv: Am Oved 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
25. <https://www.zemereshet.co.il/m/song.asp?id=4275&phrase=%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%92%D7%A1%D7%A7%D7%A8> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
26. For example, “Nikodem” (1933), music by the Jewish musician Adam Aston and lyrics by Ludwik Starski ; “Abram, Ja ci zagram!” (1928) music by Szymon Kataszek and lyrics by Julian Tuwim. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
27. Y. A. Shefi, Meyomano she haempresario Moshe Valin, Tel Aviv: Bamat haomanim, 1941, pp. 30–32, 36–38; Moshe Valin, Ya mim shel khol vekokhavim: Impresario ivri beartzeinu haktantonet, Tel Aviv: Taron Golan, 1998, p. 40–45. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
28. #  Magdalena Kozłowska, “A Spectacle of Differences: Bracha Zefira’s Tour of Poland in 1929,” in: Halina Goldberg, Nancy Sinkoff with Natalia Aleksiun (eds.), *Polish Jewish Culture beyond the Capital, Centering the Periphery, Rutgers University Press*, Forthcoming. See, also, M. Regev, E. Serousi, Popular Music and National Culture in Israel, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 196.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
29. Eugenia Prokop Janiec, Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty, Kraków 2013, p. 37–40, 52; Eugenia Prokop Janiec, “Kontakt i konflikt: polsko-żydowska contact zone,” Tematy i Konteksty, 7/12 (2017), 58–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
30. Beth Holmgren, “A Warsaw Star in Tel Aviv: Fryderyk Járosy at “Li-La-Lo, 1947–1948.” *Cosmopolitan Review. A Transatlantic Review of Things Polish in English* (Vol. 6. No. 2 (2014). http://cosmopolitanreview.com/fryderyk-jarosy/. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
31. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
32. Shelly Zer-Zion, “Hard to Be a Jew in Mandatory Tel Aviv: Relocating the Eastern European Jewish Experience,” *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Fall 2018), pp. 87–89. Dwora Gilula, Mul tagmul mechiot kapayim: Nathan Alterman veha-bamah ha-‘ivrit (Tel Aviv, 2008), 43–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
33. On the archetype of the German Jew on the Hamatate see: Tom Lewy, Ha-yekim ve-ha-te'atron ha-ivri: be-ma'avak ben mizrakh le-ma'arav erope (*The German Jews and the Hebrew Theatre: A Clash between Western and Eastern Europe*). Tel Aviv: Resling, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
34. Dorit Yerushalmi, “Legacies, archives, afterlife: re-envisioning the Li-La-Lo theatre (Tel Aviv, 1944–1948),” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 17:2 (2018), 173–190; Roz,“Hallo, Kan Warsha,” *HaMashkif* 17 November 1941, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
35. Natan Gross, “W drodze i po drodze - polskie korzenie hebrajskiego kabaretu,” *Archiwum Emigracji: studia, szkice, dokumenty*, Vol 3 (2000), p. 103–111. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
36. Anna Mieszkowska, Jestem Jarosy! Zawsze ten sam. Warsaw: Muza, 2008, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
37. Ryszard Wolański, Tango Milonga: czyli co nam zostało z tamtych lat, Warsaw: Rebis, 2019, p. 288; Anna Mieszkowska, Bodo wśród gwiazd: opowie sć o losach twórców przedwojennych kabaretów, Warsaw: Marginesy 2016, p. 309; Anna Mieszkowska, „Czolówki Rewiowe Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie 1941–1947” Pamietnik Teatralny 47 nr. 185-186, (1998): 165–166. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
38. H. Ritterman-Abir, Nie od razu Kraków zapomniano, Tel Aviv: Tirosh 1984, p. 63; Mariola Szydłowska „Z dziejów żydowskich widowisk rozrywkowych we Lwowie przed 1945,” Pamiętnik Teatralny Vol 250 (2014), pp. 115–117. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
39. Moshe Valin, Yamim shel khol vekokhavim: Impresario ivri beartzeinu haktantonet, Tel Aviv: Taron Golan, 1998, p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
40. Yerushalmi p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
41. Natan Gross, “W drodze i po drodze - polskie korzenie hebrajskiego kabaretu,” *Archiwum Emigracji: studia, szkice, dokumenty*, Vol. 3 (2000), p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
42. Moshe Valin, Yamim shel khol vekokhavim: Impresario ivri beartzeinu haktantonet, Tel Aviv: Taron Golan, 1998, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
43. Moshe Valin, Yamim shel khol vekokhavim: Impresario ivri beartzeinu haktantonet, Tel Aviv: Taron Golan, 1998, p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
44. “Jak się nie ma, co się lubi, To się lubi, co się ma.” Kazimerz Krukowski, Moja Warszawka, Warszaw: Filmowa agencja widawnicza, 1958, pp. 70, 87, 90. See also, Beth Holmgren, “The Polish-Language Cabaret Song: Its Multi-Ethnic Pedigree and Transnational Adventures, 1919–1968,” in: Tamare Trojanowska, Joanna Nizińska and Przemysław Czapliński (eds.), *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018, pp. 263–67. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
45. Anna Mieszkowska, „Zawsze ten sam, czyli Fryderyk Járosy na emigracji w latach 1945-1960,” Pamietnik Teatralny: czasopismo kwartalne poswiecone historii i krytyce teatru, Vol. 185/186 (1998): 260 Różyńska 321, here 282. Anna Mieszkowska, Mistrzowie kabaretu: Marian Hemar i Fryderyk Járosy – Od Qui pro Quo do Londynu, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Zwierciadło, 2016, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
46. Anna Mieszkowska, Mistrzowie kabaretu: Marian Hemar i Fryderyk Járosy – Od Qui pro Quo do Londynu, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Zwierciadło, 2016, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
47. Anna Mieszkowska, Mistrzowie kabaretu: Marian Hemar i Fryderyk Járosy – Od Qui pro Quo do Londynu, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Zwierciadło, 2016, p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
48. Y. Berg, “Artzenu haktantonet be Li La Lo “*Kol Ha‘Am*, 19 September 1947, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
49. Asher Lerner, “Kach katuv ba-leksikon – ha-Tochint ha-shishit be ‚li-la-lo,’” *HaMashkif*, 8 April 1946, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
50. Krakowski, Od Melponema; Wiera Gran. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
51. Shimen Dzigan, Der Koiakh fun Yidishn humor, Tel Aviv , p. 93, 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
52. Diego Rotman, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
53. Diego Rotman p. 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
54. Diego Rotman, p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
55. Diego Rotman, p. 154, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
56. Giora, “Ben-Ze’ev,” cited in Diego Rotman, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
57. Rotman, p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
58. <https://shironet.mako.co.il/artist?type=lyrics&lang=1&prfid=552&wrkid=16453> [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
59. Diego Rotman, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
60. <https://onegshabbat.blogspot.com/2015/03/blog-post_27.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
61. https://sala-manca.net/copy-of-der-dybbuk-1937-2017-live-performance [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
62. https://sala-manca.net/dzigan-and-shumachers-escape-1949-2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
63. I thank Ya’ad Biran for sharing with me the script of the different programs of Esther’s Cabaret. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)