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JEWISH STUDIES, MUSIC, AND BIOGRAPHY

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The panel addresses the writing of critical biographies about musical figures with Jewish connections. The intersectional nature of human lives, while it creates rich subjects, poses methodological challenges. The biographer is tasked with evaluating and articulating the significance of a person's overlapping cultural identities—among them race, ethnicity, gender, religiosity, sexuality, class, nationality, and political orientation. The biographer in turn must balance the examination of these identities with the progression of the narrative. This issue of identity is then a thorny one—compounded by the complexities of a Jewish identity, be it self-identification, external identifier, national label, ethnic marker, or racial stereotype. But identity is only one of many issues. Consider the following questions: How does one express the entangled complexities of human experience without creating a narrative so dense that it may alienate the reader? Are there exploitative dangers in emphasizing one facet of a person's life over another, especially given the historical ambiguities of Jewishness? What roles do estates and living external parties, such as interviewees and family members, play in the process, and, if those parties are Jewish, what impact may their Jewish self-identities have on the author's interpretive freedom? What role do publishers and presses play? In what ways do representations of infinitely complex inner identities reflect the writer, rather than the person being portrayed or discussed? How do writers deal with living subjects who are invested in their own representation? Ultimately, are there ideal methodological practices for biographical research and writing, and if so, what are those practices?

The panel seeks to address these and other questions by sharing, in short presentations, the experiences of individuals who have worked or are working on biographies of Jewish musicians, defined as such externally and internally in complex ways. Howard Pollack, biographer of Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, and most recently Marc Blitzstein, among others, considers his approach as it both remains the same and differs in dealings with his subjects' backgrounds and attitudes towards identity. David Josephson, who has written on John Taverner, Percy Grainger, and the émigré scholar Kathi Meyer-Baer, investigates his subjects' sense of self and the gulf between it and the identities given to them by others. Lily Hirsch, at work on a biography of the Jewish musicologist Anneliese Landau, describes a nuanced approach to national and Jewish identity as well as to gender identity, with all possible deference to Landau's surviving family. Amy Lynn Wlodarski, working on George Rochberg, explores the sensitive negotiation inherent in examining an individual through the lens of a specific identity, one from which Rochberg distanced himself over time. Evan Rapport presents on approaching biography through repertoires rather than questions of personal identity, and the issues attending close personal relationships between scholar and subject. Ralph Locke, an author himself, rounds out the panel with perspectives from his experience as editor of the *Eastman Studies in Music*, published by the University of Rochester Press, and with a brief account of his Copland interviews (in 1970 and 1972) and the composer's attitude toward his Jewish identity.