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From Oy to Joy

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Propositions belonging to the doctoral dissertation

**From Oy to Joy:
Jewish Musical Style in American Popular Songs,
1892-1945**

Niels Falch

1. As a means of assimilation, Jewish American composers used musical code-switching through alternating minor to major in verse, chorus, bridge, and the coda (this thesis).
2. The concept of the periodic table of musical elements can be applied to define a style in a particular place and time (this thesis).
3. In nineteenth-century Russia and Eastern Europe, sacred and secular manifestations of musical elements in the canon of Ashkenazic Jewish music were interchangeable (this thesis).
4. The 1890s in America, also known as the Gay Nineties, were characterized by joy, optimism, and happy songs in the major mode (this thesis).
5. In early twentieth-century Yiddish theater, Jewish American composers created a musical potpourri of the canon of Jewish music (this thesis).
6. A parallel music industry emerged in the 1920s when Yiddish theater was juxtaposed with Broadway musicals and in the 1930s, Yiddish with Hollywood films (this thesis).
7. In the late 1920s, Jewish American immigrants, as well as their descendants, changed the perception of the minor mode from sad, nostalgic, oriental or exotic to happy (this thesis).
8. In the 1930s, songwriters were influenced by the rise and fall in Yiddish New York's speech which changed the melodic motion (this thesis).
9. In the mid-1930s, a Jewish musical style emerged in American popular songs through the use of a mid or fast-tempo happy minor mode in combination with certain small and large intervals, the so-called Jew notes, room for a clap, and the Bulgar rhythm (this thesis).
10. Science often explains the familiar in terms of the unfamiliar (Lewis Wolpert).
11. To keep warm in the extreme Russian cold, Jewish musicians accelerated their slow and sad minor mode songs, making them sound joyful.
12. On a diet of bagels, pastrami, and gefilte fish, songwriters began to write songs in the Jewish musical style.