

In 1863 there were anti-Jewish riots by the Orthodox Christians in Sofia. Three Jews were forced to convert to Christianity and were held in a monastery. One of them, Yom Tov Kohen, escaped and asked Yakir Geron, chief rabbi of Edirne, for permission to return to his synagogue to pray. The latter did not respond at first, for fear of Christian reprisals, and when he finally granted permission, the Christians again rioted. In the final years of the Ottoman period, Sofia was under the authority of the rabbinate of Edirne.

During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 to 1878, Sofia was conquered by the Russians. In 1879 the city became the capital of the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria, which became the Kingdom of Bulgaria in 1908. The Jews in Sofia almost alone extinguished the fires set by the invading Russians, or by the departing Turks according to other accounts. They organized their own fire brigade, led by Avraham Salonikio, and in many instances had to fight off the arsonists who were intentionally starting fires in many of the town's buildings. In the end, the new Bulgarian capital owed its preservation to its Jewish residents. Because many Jews were under Italian, Austrian, or French diplomatic protection, the Russians did not loot Jewish property. Over the next forty years, many Jews from the Ottoman Empire migrated to Sofia.

In 1878, the Russian military census counted 3,538 Jews in Sofia, and the → Alliance Israélite Universelle reported four thousand. In January 1880 the official Bulgarian census counted 5,001 Jews in Sofia. There were six synagogues in Sofia at the time: Qahal Qadosh Romaniot, Qahal Qadosh Francos led by the Tagger family, the Sephardi Qahal Qadosh Shalom, Qahal Qadosh Maqedonia, and Qahal Qadosh Ahava ve-Ḥesed, and Qehillat Ashkenazim, made up of descendants of the Hungarian and German Jews who came in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

During the Second World War male Bulgarian Jews were conscripted to do forced labor, but there were no deportations to death camps. Between 1948 and 1949, most of the community emigrated to Israel.

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YITZCHAK KEREM

Solal, Martial

Martial Solal, renowned worldwide as a jazz pianist and composer, was born in Algiers on August 23, 1927. His mother was an opera singer, and he began studying piano at age six, but his interests soon developed away from classical music. According to Solal, the period of Vichy rule in Algeria was inadvertently beneficial for his musical studies. Because of the Aryanization laws that banned Jews from many realms of Algerian society, Solal intensified his study of music in an area open to Jewish participation. During this period he studied both piano and clarinet. At the conclusion of World War II, Solal began performing regularly (mostly on clarinet) in clubs and at military functions frequented by members of the Allied forces.

After moving to Paris in 1950 to seek greater work opportunities, Solal began performing exclusively on piano. His tenure with the gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt, whom he worked with beginning in 1953, was crucial to both his development as a musician and his reputation in the industry. By the mid-1950s, Solal had matured into a bandleader and recording artist. He turned his talents to developing a uniquely rich style of composition and improvisation that would later blossom into an innovative approach to the melding of the two.

Solal's improvised reharmonizations of the standard jazz repertoire and his rhythmic fluidity would become signature components of his performing style.

Solal's discography, compiled in the ensuing decades, includes a number of notable recordings featuring trio, duo, and solo configurations. His body of work also includes many film scores revered for their contribution to French *film noir*. The best-known Solal film score was the one he did for Jean-Luc Godard's 1960 film *À bout de souffle* (Breathless), which showcased his astute ability to mix standard jazz compositional techniques with high-level, sophisticated improvisation. In the late 1990s, Solal completed a method book on applying specific improvisation techniques to piano.

The commencement in 1989 of the Martial Solal piano competition in Paris solidified Solal's place among the great in jazz piano. Critical acclaim for him has increased in recent decades with jazz awards and numerous articles in jazz publications worldwide. Solal will continue to be recognized most for his inventiveness in the standard jazz repertoire and his sophisticated harmonic and rhythmic approaches to improvisation. In 2008, he published his autobiography *Ma vie sur un tabouret* (Arles, 2008). The most outstanding items in his discography are *Sidney Bechet–Martial Solal Quartet* (1957), *At Newport 1963* (1963), *À bout de souffle* (and other film music) (1959–64), *European Episode*, with Lee Konitz (1968), *In Solo* (1971), *The Solosolal* (1978), *Triangle*, with Peter Erskine and Marc Johnson (1995), and *Live at the Village Vanguard* (2001).

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SAMUEL REUBEN THOMAS

Somekh, 'Abd Allah

'Abd Allāh Somekh was a halakhist, rabbinic educator, and spiritual leader of Iraqi Jews both in his homeland and throughout the Baghdadi mercantile diaspora. The son of Abraham and Khātūn Somekh, he was born in Baghdad in 1813 and died there in 1889. His family traced its lineage back to Nissim Gaon, head of the Nehardea academy in the tenth century.

Somekh studied under → Jacob ben Joseph ha-Rofeh, and in his twenties divided his time between business and study. Subsequently he decided to devote himself to the renaissance of rabbinic scholarship and leadership in Iraq. With major funding from Ezekiel Menashe and later from Ezekiel's sons Menashe and Sasson, Somekh established Midrash Bet Zilkha, a college in which outstanding graduates of the communal Talmud Torah were initiated into advanced Torah scholarship and eventually qualified as rabbis. The study program was hierarchic, with more advanced students teaching classes of newer ones. In 1889, Rabbi Solomon Bekhor Ḥuṣīn wrote of Somekh in the European Hebrew periodical *Ha-Sefira*:

He restored the crown of Torah in Bavel [Babylonia] to its ancient glory, after it had been removed for hundreds of years. For he founded a great and spacious *bet midrash*, and raised up many disciples, and imbued Israel with Torah. Almost all scholars and rabbis [currently] in Bavel, Persia, Media, and India studied under him and drank from the well of living water that he created. And our brethren in these lands all refer to him as *Istai*, i.e., our teacher and master, just as Rabbi Judah the Prince [redactor of the Mishna] was called simply "our teacher."

1. Religious Scholarship and Creativity

Qibbuṣ Ḥakhamim (A Gathering of the Sages, 1971), a commentary on the Passover Haggada, together with a guide to the halakhic rules for preparing and conducting the Passover Seder, is an impressive tour de force composed