

Samuel R. Torjman Thomas, PhD

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CURRENT POSITIONS

2018-19 **CUNY-John Jay College**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music

Social Activism in Popular Music, American Popular Music, Piano, Jazz Theory

CUNY-Hunter College, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Classical and Oriental Studies

Intersections in Judeo-Islamic Culture and Thought

Montclair State University, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music

Listening to Western and Non-Western Musics; Survey of World Music; Survey of Jazz

AsefaMusic, Artistic and Executive Director

Performances, lectures, and public programming

Brooklyn Music School, Director of Curriculum and Institutional Programming

EDUCATION

2014 City University of New York, The Graduate Center

PhD, Ethnomusicology

Dissertation

Redefining Diaspora Consciousness: Musical Practices of Moroccan Jews in Brooklyn

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Jane Sugarman, advisor; Dr. Stephen Blum, committee chair; Drs. Mark Kligman, Edwin Seroussi, and Jane Gerber, committee members.

Dissertation Abstract

By employing different types of musical expression in the context of synagogue life – a center for worship and communal gathering – community members emblemize and juxtapose three distinctive diasporic identities: Jewish (ancient Jerusalem), Sephardi (Spanish), and Maroka'i (Moroccan). This dissertation incorporates ethnographic fieldwork and musical analysis to demonstrate the expression of a layered diaspora consciousness, through sacred text cantillation practices, the performance of saint veneration repertoire, and the art of vocal liturgical performance.

2005 New York University

MA Program

Gallatin School of Individualized Study

2001 Berklee College of Music

BM, Jazz Composition

Fully-funded “World Scholarship Tour” recipient

BM, Performance

PUBLICATIONS

- 2018 “Kwela Jazz: South African Circulations of the African-American Diaspora.” *Newsletter for the Institute of Studies in American Music*.
- 2016 “The Virtues of the Shleuh: Celebrating the Amazigh Contribution to Jewish Music and Identity.” *Sephardi Ideas Monthly*. April.
- 2015 “Seeking the Saint, Finding Community: Celebrating the Hillula of Baba Sali.” Chapter in *Religious Diversity Today: Experiencing Religion in the Contemporary World. Volume Two: Ritual and Pilgrimage*. Anastasia Panagakos, editor. Praeger Publishers: Santa Barbara.
- 2013 “Kriat ha-Torah in the Maroka’i Synagogues of Brooklyn: Negotiating New Boundaries of Diaspora Identity” *Journal of Synagogue Music* (38) 146-162.
- 2012 “Mediterranean Israeli Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic.” Book Review, *Sephardic Horizons Online* (2/1).
- 2010 “Maqām and Liturgy: Ritual, Music, and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn.” Book Review, *Oral History Review* (37/2) 328-330.
- 2010 “Salim Halali” and “Martial Solal.” *The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. Leiden:Brill.

ACADEMIC CONFERENCE PAPERS

- 2018 UCLA, Jewish Music Working Group. *Performing the Homeland: Contesting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identity*. Symposium. Los Angeles, CA.
- 2016 North African Conference of Moroccan Jewry. *Jewish-Muslim Soundscapes: The Maghrebian Tradition of Musical Dialogue*, Rabat, Bibliotheque Nationale of Morocco.
- 2015 Association of Jewish Libraries, Jubilee Conference, *Neighboring: Jewish and Muslim Musical Co-Creation*. Washington, D.C.
- 2013 American Jewish Studies, annual national conference, *City Blocks Make Good Neighbors: Muslim-Jewish Musical Interaction in Brooklyn*. Boston, Massachusetts.
- 2012 American Jewish Studies, annual national conference, *Expressing Maroka’i Diaspora Identity: The Transnational Hillula*. Chicago, Illinois.
- 2011 Society for Ethnomusicology, annual national conference, *Negotiating Maroka’i Identity in Diaspora: Repertoire as a Field for Social Engagement*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 2010 American Anthropological Association, annual national conference, *Carving the Next Layer of Sephardi Identity: The Hillulot Music of Moroccan Jews in Brooklyn*. New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 2008 American Anthropological Association, annual national conference, *Muslim-Jewish Intersections in Brooklyn: Musical Expressions of Paradox*. San Francisco, California.

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2005- **City University of New York**, Adjunct Assistant Professor
Present
- Teach undergraduate students, majors and non-majors
 - Design curriculum and pedagogy for courses in music and interdisciplinary studies
 - Assess student performance. manage student learning outcomes
- 2010- **Montclair State University, Boston University, Westmoreland Community College**,
Present Adjunct Assistant Professor
- Teach as part of distance learning programs in music, including music appreciation and applied music courses for majors and non-majors
 - Design and implement courses emphasizing digital humanities pedagogy
- 2007- **ALEPH Cantorial Academy**, Adjunct Assistant Professor
Present
- Teach in an online P2P setting, including group classes and private instruction

ACADEMIC HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- American Sephardi Federation Fellowship in Sephardic Studies (2018)
PSC-CUNY Research Grant (2014, 2016, 2018)
Brandeis University, Schusterman Center Certificate in Israel Studies (2015)
David Blanksteen Research Fellowship in Jewish Studies (2005-2012)
Baisley Powell Elebash PhD Research Fellowship in Music (2004-2009)
City University of New York “Writing-Across-Curriculum” Fellow (2010-2011)
Berklee College of Music, WST Full-Tuition Scholarship (1994-2001)

INVITED LECTURES AND PANELS

- 2018 *Arab-Jewish Songlines: Mediterranean Musics in Diaspora*. Magnes Museum. UC-Berkeley, CA.
- 2017 Congregation Emanu-El of New York, New Day Fellowship. *Muslim-Jewish Synergies in History: Tales of the Prophets*. New York, NY.
- 2017 Rutgers University, Jewish Film Festival, Respondent and Performance. *On the Banks of the Tigris: Iraqi Musical Life*. New Brunswick, NJ.
- 2016 Library of Congress, Botkin Lecture Series. *Musical Soundscapes of the Morocco: From Africa to America*. Washington, D.C.
- 2016 UN General Assembly, UN World Food Programme. *Breaking Bread: Interfaith Efforts to Combat World Hunger*. New York.
- 2014 Encuentros Festival of Iberian Music. *Maghrebian Musical Cultures: Routes and Intersections*. University of California, Riverside; UCLA; Columbia University.

- 2013 The Museum of Jewish Heritage. Music in Yemenite Jewish Life. Colloquium, New York.
- 2011 The Jewish Museum, The Music of Egypt. The Music of Morocco. Colloquium, New York.
- 2011 WNYC-NPR, The Greene Space. Performing Piyyutim: Sephardic Music, Poetry, and Spirituality. Hosted by Leonard Lopate.
- 2008 Brooklyn Maqam Festival. Arab Music Traditions and Their History in Brooklyn. Colloquium, Brooklyn Arts Council, New York.
- 2007 University of Indiana, Sephardic Music: Sephardic Studies Initiative. Guest lecture, Bloomington.

PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

- 2009- **AsefaMusic** Artistic & Executive Director
- Present
- Direct music performance projects, including the New York Andalus Ensemble, ASEFA, ASEFA-Jazz, and Traveling in Pairs.
 - Supervise booking and promotion of concert performances, guest lectures, and public programs performed by Samuel Torjman Thomas
 - Design educational workshops on Jewish and Arab musical traditions
 - Maintain a digital presence, including managing website and social media pages

Selected Performances, Programs, and Community Events

- 2018 Delacroix's Moroccan Nights, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
- 2018 Ana Qad Kana Li, American Sephardic Music Festival, New York, NY
- 2018 Traveling in Pairs, UCLA Music Library, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2017 East by Middle East: A Festival of Regional Music, Curator, Brooklyn Music School Playhouse, NY.
- 2017 Klezmer Series: Traveling in Pairs Through the Jewish Diaspora, Co-Curator, Brooklyn, NY.
- 2016 By the Rivers of Babylon: Music of the Iraqi and Indian Jewish Diasporas, Florida International University, Miami, FL.
- 2016 Performing Arab Cultures: Concert and Workshops, SUNY-Potsdam, Crane School of Music.
- 2014 Encuentros/Encounters: Music and the Abrahamic Religions of Medieval Iberia, University of California, Riverside and City University of New York.
- 2013 City of the World, From Mizradžo Maghreb: Hebrew Songs from the Middle East and North Africa, Curator, November 2013.
- 2005- Curator and respondent for annual series: "Sephardic Scholar Series: Performance and
2013 Portrayal," Center for Jewish History, New York, NY.
- 2002 Commemorating 9/11 at Makor, New York, NY.

- 2002 *Commemorating 9/11* at Makor, New York, NY.
- 2001 Featured Berklee artist. Annual conference of the International Association of Jazz Educators, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 1993-1996 Featured artist at the Stanford Jazz Workshop (workshops in improvisation, composition, woodwinds and small-ensemble performance), Stanford, California.

Notable additional performances as bandleader: La Nacional (2016-present), City Winery (2014-present), Crandall Library (2012), Blue Note (2010), Brooklyn Academy of Music (2009), Brooklyn Maqam Festival (2008), Sephardic Music Festival (2005-2013)

PUBLISHED ALBUMS

- 2011 ASEFA, *Resonance*. Bended Ear Records 0329
- 2005 Samuel Thomas. *Asefa*. Compact disc. Bended Ear Records 0906
- 2001 FourMinusOne. *Split Decision*. Compact disc. Bended Ear Records 0700
- 1999 FourMinusOne. *Live!*. Compact disc. Bended Ear Records 0599
- 1997 FourMinusOne. *At Any Given Moment*. Compact disc. Bended Ear Records 0396

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

- 2012- Present **Brooklyn Music School**, Director of Curriculum and Institutional Programming
- Develop and maintain partnerships with 30+ organizations and schools
 - Develop and maintain institutional curricular standards
 - Direct oversight of BMS Artist Certificate Program
 - Design and implement educational programming for public consumption (classes, concerts, workshops, and symposia featuring western and non-western musics)
 - Contribute to development of government grants and individual donor relations
 - Supervise a staff of 7 department chairs, 23 teaching artists, and 3 administrators
 - Organize and lead regular professional development sessions on pedagogy and curriculum

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

American Musicological Society, Society for Ethnomusicology, College Music Society, Jazz Education Network, American Anthropological Association, Association for Jewish Studies, Middle Eastern Studies Association, American Society for Jewish Music

LANGUAGES

Languages: Hebrew (speak and read), French (speak and read), Arabic (read)

COURSE LIST (syllabi upon request)

Ethnomusicology and Musicology Courses (as professor of record)

Western Music: History, Language, and Culture This course is designed to satisfy an undergraduate liberal arts requirement, covering basic skills for music appreciation, Western classical music history and jazz history. Cross-cultural perspectives are included in discussions of musical elements.

American Popular Musics This course focuses on the development of American popular music from the mid-19th century to the present, emphasizing individual artists, stylistic innovations, and social contexts related to their musical production.

Global Music in America: Migration and Diaspora Drawing upon social theories in globalization and diaspora studies, this course focuses on the transnational nature of American vernacular musics and highlights growing media for transactional musical culture.

Fight the Powers That Be: Social Activism in Music This course explores America and postcolonial movements in the Middle East and Africa, and specifically the role of music in social activism, in galvanizing community, highlighting problematics in systems of power and social injustice, and as a means for inspiring action.

Jazz History Operating on two simultaneous tracks, this course is designed to survey the emergence of and contexts of different jazz styles as well as critically analyze the significance of major figures in jazz history. The cultivation of active jazz listening skills is emphasized throughout.

History and Music of the Jews of North Africa This course surveys musical traditions of Jewish communities in North Africa, including liturgical, para-liturgical, and secular music and poetics. Special emphasis is given to interethnic relations between Jews and Muslims.

Music and Gender: A Cross-Cultural Perspective This course explores culturally specific views on gender in music performance, context, and representation, as well as music's role in changing attitudes towards gender in modern societies.

Uninhibited Self: Avante-Garde Jazz, Race, and Gender in 1960s America This course surveys key artists involved in the development of avant-garde jazz, the social and cultural impacts of the genre on gender, the civil rights movement, black nationalism, and on synonymous literary movements.

Survey of World Music Developed around ethnomusicological perspectives on studying musical cultures, this course explores aspects of musical practice, including approaches to melody, rhythm, harmony, improvisation and composition, and organology, as well as musically-constructed meaning and the tension between continuity and change.

Applied Music Courses (as professor of record)

Middle Eastern Music Ensemble This ensemble performs music of the Middle East and North Africa. Repertoire includes song texts in Arabic, Hebrew, and Ladino.

Jazz Ensemble/Improvisation Techniques Within the context of a small jazz ensemble, this course explores different techniques for jazz improvisation.

Jazz Theory This music theory course emphasizes a jazz and popular music approach to basic music theory, including reading skills, harmonic function, form, and jazz chord structures.

Jazz Composition This course focuses on big band composing and arranging. Students produce weekly written exercises, with guidance and feedback from the professor.

Basic Piano/Keyboarding This course is a group keyboarding class for beginners and composition majors. Topics include reading fundamentals, functional harmony, the blues, and improvisation.

Afro-Cuban Percussion Ensemble This ensemble performs percussion pieces drawing upon the Afro-Cuban musical tradition. Some chanting is included as well.

Performing Mediterranean Cultures This interdisciplinary course includes participation in a frame drum ensemble as well as close analysis of select ethnomusicological texts for exploration of different Mediterranean cultures. [cross-listed in Music and Ethnic Studies]

Ethnic Studies Courses (as professor of record)

Hebraic Culture and Thought in the Islamic World This course focuses on the history and cultural expressions of Jews living in the Islamic world from the rise of Islam to the seventeenth century. Particular attention is given to the ways in which the Jewish experience was shaped by the surrounding Islamic cultural, social, and intellectual milieus.

Immigrant NYC Organized around sociological theory, this course explores several of New York City's immigrant communities, focusing on communal narratives, the construction of ethnic boundaries, and negotiating intercultural exchange.

Courses in Interdisciplinary Studies (as professor of record, individually or co-taught)

Sacred Music, Spiritual Sound This course examines the role of musical expression in several spiritual philosophies, with an emphasis on Judaism, Buddhism, and Spiritual Humanism. [cross-listed in Music and Philosophy]

Ritual, Gender, and Performance This course explores the role of ritual as cultural expression, emphasizing the place of music and perspectives on gender. [cross-listed in Music and Theater Studies]

Hearing History: A Global Perspective This course is organized around three distinct historical units – Trujillo's Dominican Republic, the Atlantic slave trade, and medieval Spain – and musical material that helps to elucidate the history. [cross-listed in Music and History]

Performing Mediterranean Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective This course includes participation in a frame drum ensemble and close analysis of select ethnomusicological texts for exploration of different Mediterranean cultures. [cross-listed in Music and Ethnic Studies]

Harlem Renaissance This course examines writings by seminal authors, political thinkers, and journalists, and works by important artists, including audio recordings and videos of many early figures in New York jazz history. [cross-listed in Music and Literature]

Sociologies of Violence This course explores representations of violence/anti-violence in popular song lyrics, musical performance, national anthems, and music commodification. [Music and Sociology]

Individuals in Conflict with Society: Soundscapes of Vietnam This course examines conflicts embodied and engendered by the Vietnam War, with a focus on the interdisciplinary idea of “point of view.” [cross-listed in Musicology, Theater Studies, History, and Literature]

Protest: Manifestos and Music This course explores cross-cultural expressions of protest in political writing, song lyrics, and in integrated media to examine ways in which national narratives of justice are shaped. [cross-listed in Music and History]

Journeys in Literature and Music This course explores the concept of “journeying” as a theme used in structuring several musical and literary works. [cross-listed in Music and Literature]

SAMPLE WORK

YouTube Playlist – <https://goo.gl/8Z1Hzy>

Selection of lectures, performances, and performance talks

Academic Publications – <https://goo.gl/jf5HyQ>

Published writing samples

Audio Recordings – <https://goo.gl/UcbWNA>

Full-length albums