Introduction

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Dalia Cohen and Ruth Katz, the two recipients of the 2012 Israel Prize in Musicology, are the founding mothers of the Musicology Department in Jerusalem, and of musicology studies in Israel as a whole. Their research profiles share fundamental features well beyond their co-authorship of many specific studies. Moreover, they also share important biographical and personal characteristics, of which the professionally most significant are strongly related to their research profiles. Since they are also very different from one another, one might be tempted to apply to them (without rigor) Dalia Cohen's concept of “Complementary Opposites,” presented in her Contemplation and Experience in Music Education.

Colleagues who have only a superficial acquaintance with Cohen and Katz probably would notice two celebrated scholars who continue to attend conferences regularly and are passionately interested in an extremely wide variety of topics. These interests no doubt relate to the true scope of what intrigues them: the deep principles active in all music history, theory and cognition, in Western culture as well as in music all over the world. Both scholars share an intimate knowledge of a huge amount of music, yet both understand that true research must supersede expertise in a specific repertoire. Cohen and Katz also avoid the trap on the side of generalization. Even though they are both interested in deep insights that apply to entire repertoires, they never speculate, and always substantiate their arguments with rigor and with high regard for methodology (sometimes making the demonstration of methodology the principal concern).

Katz and Cohen also display very original thinking in untraveled research paths, reaching new and previously unknown insights. For example, Dalia Cohen’s guiding ideas of complexity, directionality and, more recently, natural schemata in music enabled her to gain a comparative view of the stylistic ideals of enormously different types of music, with specific examples drawn from very many specific cultures (e.g. in her book East and West in Music and with her PhD students who examined natural schemata in varied repertoires). Ruth Katz’s most recent book, A Language of Its Own, provides an overview of the entire history of Western music, transcending beyond the mere data of the type that may be found in textbooks, focusing instead on such broad issues as music’s interaction with the history of ideas. She ever emphasizes the fact that “one needs ideas to think with about ideas,” hence her general interest in interdisciplinary studies and questions of curricula in the humanities and beyond.

Both scholars always use their thorough knowledge of previous literature in a critical manner. Katz’s critical annotations to philosophical and aesthetical texts on music in Contemplating Music and The Arts in Mind (the latter co-edited with Ruth HaCohen, together with the accompanying volume Tuning the Mind) are exemplary in this regard.

Dalia Cohen and Ruth Katz have co-authored numerous studies, culminating in their 2006 book Palestinian Arab Music: A Maqam Tradition in Practice. Already their earliest co-authored publication (“Exploration in the Music of the Samaritans: An Illustration of the Utility of Graphic Notation,” 1960), encapsulated the most
important features of their lifetime research. Beyond its engagement with the essence of notation—a subject related to Katz’s and Cohen’s participation in the invention of the melograph and a subject Katz studied later in relation to medieval notation systems and Cohen in relation to non-Western music notations—this early article already shows a dual interest in the musical material itself and in the method of inquiry, an interest which has a continuous presence throughout the research careers of Katz and Cohen.

Their new study presented here, “Toward a Musical Analysis of World Music,” continues this tradition, once again combining the detailed study of specific examples with the search for consequences with a much wider appeal. In the sixth decade of their research careers, Ruth Katz and Dalia Cohen hence continue to develop new and fundamental ideas. As they often do, the authors build on their previous work while integrating new insights, thereby enriching the field with a wealth of fresh and innovative perspectives.