

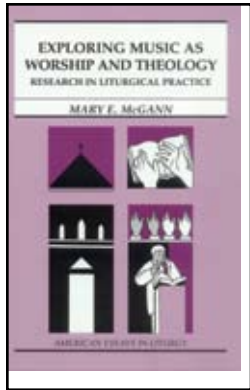
Recent Books



Exploring Music as Worship and Theology

Mary E. McGann
Liturgical Press, 2002
81 pp., \$9.95

How does music function as worship? How does it affect liturgy? How does it contribute to theology, even constitute theology? Mary McGann offers an essay that outlines a practical method to take up such challenging questions. Approaching

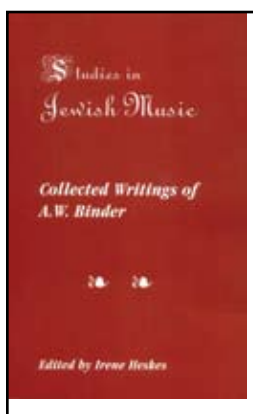


her study with tools from liturgical studies, ethnomusicology, and ritual studies, she presents a research process by which one can access and interpret a community's musical-liturgical performance. Most importantly, throughout the major part of her essay McGann not only presents theory, she also understands the need to be practical. For instance, she looks at particular worship communities, especially African American Christian communities, to illustrate her research method. Without hesitation one can say that McGann engages her readers to reconsider the value of music in exploring a community's liturgical practice. Here is current research in liturgy.

Studies in Jewish Music

A. W. Binder; Irene Heskes, ed.
Bloch Publishing Company, 2001
355 pp., \$18.95

Irene Heskes has compiled 25 articles and essays from the writings of Abraham Wolf Binder (1895-1966). Binder, a prolific Jewish musician and composer, was a notable figure in American-Jewish culture. He reintroduced chanting of the



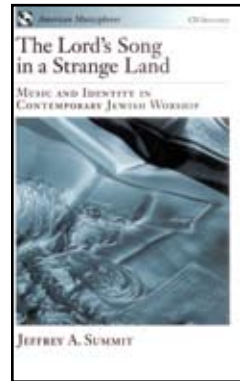
Bible as an instructor at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York and music director at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue. Later he became professor of Jewish liturgical music at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and helped to found its School of Sacred Music in 1948. His compositional activity includes numerous synagogal services and songs, Hebrew and Yiddish songs, nine

cantatas and oratorios. Everyone interested in recent Jewish musical history will benefit from these excellent articles. The collection is preceded by reflections on Binder's work as well as an extensive biographical portrait. Finally, a bibliographical listing of Binder's musical compositions concludes the volume. The reprint of the original 1971 publication of this book is just one sign of Binder's continuing influence on Jewish music.

The Lord's Song in a Strange Land

Jeffrey A. Summit
Oxford University Press, 2000
203 pp., incl. CD, \$29.95

Summit examines the music in contemporary Jewish worship, covering the wide variety of worship communities—Hasidim, Modern Orthodox, Conservative



collegiate, Reform, and transdenominational—in the metropolitan setting of Boston. Specifically he explores the diverse links between the musical choices of these communities and both their religious and cultural identity. After an introduction to Jewish worship, Summit discusses in different chapters specifically the meaning of the popular Sabbath hymn *Lekhah dodi*, the meaning of *nusach* (traditional chant), and the meaning of melody choice in prayer, and how these entities construct identity among the Jewish worshippers. Not only focusing on Boston, *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land* contributes to a larger understanding of American Jews and American religious expression. A praiseworthy feature is that the book comes along with a CD that presents almost 40 field recordings for many of the songs discussed in the book. In fact, whenever a specific song is mentioned the book contains a reference to the specific track on the CD. No wonder that Harvard Music Professor Kay Kaufman Shelemay calls Summit's study "an eye- and ear-opening exploration of the changing nature of musical tradition in American Jewish life."