

Ernest Bloch's Conducting Score for *Schelomo*

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...For years I had a number of sketches for the book of Ecclesiastes which I had wanted to set to music, but the French language was not adaptable to my rhythmic patterns. Nor was German or English, and I hadn't a good enough command of Hebrew. Thus the sketches accumulated and...lay dormant.

One day I met the cellist Alexander Barjansky and his wife. I heard Barjansky play....Why shouldn't I use for my Ecclesiastes--instead of a singer limited in range, a voice vaster and deeper than any spoken language--his cello?

Thus I took my sketches and without a plan, without a program, almost without knowing where I was headed, worked day after day on my Rhapsody. The Ecclesiastes was completed in a few weeks, and since legend attributes this book to King Solomon, I named it Schelomo...¹

One can detect in this account of the origins of *Schelomo* something of a spiritual force which inspired it and which it has conveyed so compellingly to generation after generation of listeners. The entry for the manuscript in Moldenhauer's own listing reads: "Full score. 63 pages . . . notated in blue ink, with many corrections, alterations and erasures, additional notes in pencil, others in black, brown and blue crayon." To round out the picture, one might mention that the musical notation offers a characteristic example of Bloch's small and fastidious hand. The presence of markings in a range of colors is also more or less characteristic, as the composer made it a career-long practice to use different pencils, crayons, and inks in his work. Though to a lesser extent with the *Schelomo* manuscript than with some others, this imparts a visual impression that forms an apt, if wholly incidental, counterpart to the vividness of the musical ideas.

The numerous markings to which the description refers tell a story different from what one might expect, for careful review of the manuscript suggests that it was actually undertaken as a clean copy of a work essentially in its final form. To be sure, one encounters erasures in the manuscript, suggesting that Bloch was still changing his mind about certain aspects of the writing; the most extensive series of these appears in the passage extending roughly through rehearsal numbers 28 to 30 (the rehearsal numbers in the manuscript were carried over into the published score)--it seems here he was unsure about the exact figuration of the solo cello line. Yet, as in all such cases, the erasures, appearing only at very isolated points in the manuscript to begin with, come to bear solely on minute details of the writing--certainly, never on any aspect that we might consider fundamental. Indeed, a number clearly were made merely to correct minor errors that probably resulted from copying out the clean score from some prior source. In short, the *Schelomo* manuscript itself documents little of the creative process that had proceeded "without a plan."

Rather, the various markings seem to belong to later stages in the history of the manuscript, and we can recognize two distinct categories of entries in its pages. The first consists of markings that are most reasonably explained as having arisen in the course of preparation for the publication of *Schelomo*. For example, appearing intermittently throughout the manuscript are miscellaneous detailed notations from Bloch--a dynamic marking here, an additional slur there--in pencil, in ink, or in ink copied over pencil. Mostly, these serve only to bring various orchestral lines into exact concordance.

The markings comprising a second category are the most numerous and by far the most prominent. One encounters these--typically large, bold notations in pencil or black crayon--on every page. They impart no new information but only duplicate indications that had already appeared in the blue ink with which Bloch had notated the score itself. Original matters pertaining to changes in tempo, dynamics, and orchestration are among those that are frequently underscored by these bold markings, changes of meter being invariably thus emphasized. The obvious explanation is that the *Schelomo* manuscript served for a time as a performing score: these markings were made to put various indications in more readily visible form, to benefit a conductor in the course of rehearsing or performing the work.

This is consistent with the early history of *Schelomo*; for, indeed, it was only in the wake of acclaim accorded to the piece at its initial performances, in New York (1917) and Philadelphia (1918), that the publisher G. Schirmer decided to issue

1. *Allig. lent.* (9-10) *Schélems* -
Rhapsodie liturgique. po. Lucille Solo et Orchestre.

Fl. 1.2. 3. 4.
Hr. 1.2. 3. 4.
Cl. 1.2. 3. 4.
Bsn. 1.2. 3. 4.
Tbn. 1.2. 3. 4.
Tbn. 1.2. 3. 4.
Timp. 1.2. 3. 4.
Hpa.
Vl. 1. 2.
Cb. 1. 2.
Cb. 1. 2.

Allig. lent. (Très librement, comme une Cadence) 2 +

this and other works by Bloch. The score appeared in published form later in

1918, and thus it was the manuscript score that was pressed into service on the earlier performance dates. Bloch himself was on the podium for the Philadelphia performance, and, correspondingly, many of these "conductor's markings" have the look of having come from Bloch's hand. Yet on the occasion of the premiere in New York, the performance was led by Arthur Bodansky, and conceivably he added entries of his own.

In a very few instances, the "conductor's markings" do more than merely duplicate a parallel notation in ink; they either supplement it or introduce an entirely new idea. For example, at rehearsal number 43 the indication (in ink) "Più animato" is followed by the entry (in crayon) "non troppo." As is true in almost all such cases, both the original and supplementary indications are included in the published score. There are, however, a mere two or three instances where one encounters a marking that does not appear in the published score. An entry (almost certainly in Bloch's hand) at rehearsal number 4, for instance, reads "Langoureux (non troppo vivo)," whereas the published score has no interpretive marking at this point. Thus we are evidently dealing with a notation made after the score had been published, suggesting that Bloch continued to make some practical use of the manuscript even after the work's publication.

The page of the *Schelomo* manuscript here reproduced offers examples of most of the various kinds of entries that were made in the score. The slur that appears in both the bassoon part and the horn part in the fourth measure of the page is in pencil; it would seem the intention here was to bring these parts into line--probably as a step in the process leading to publication--with what had been previously notated in ink in the oboe and clarinet parts. In the third measure, erasures appear in the solo cello line, and a corrected or slightly revised melodic figure is written in pencil on top of the erasures. "Conductor's markings" were added, in typically bold manner, toward the middle of the page to emphasize the change to duple meter in the fifth measure and the change to common time in the measure to follow. A pencil marking in the page's second measure, curiously, calls attention to an accidental in the first bassoon part that had already been clearly notated in ink. Perhaps Bloch chose this way of making note of an error on the bassoonist's part so as to avoid interrupting an initial reading of the piece. In the case of the decrescendo marked in the bassoon and horn parts in the third measure and the dynamic marking "mp" added to these parts in the succeeding measure, we are dealing with rare instances in which additions (here in pencil) are not included in the published score.

Bloch was not, in fact, the last conductor to ponder the manuscript score of *Schelomo*. In the late 1920s, Bloch made a gift of the manuscript to Willem

Mengelberg, who was to undertake several performances of *Schelomo* with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in January 1930. It remained in Mengelberg's possession until the time of the Nazi invasion of Holland, at which point it was hidden in a bank vault, filed under a false name for its protection.² After Mengelberg's death, in 1951, possession of the manuscript remained unsettled for a time, until it was purchased at auction in 1986, in The Hague, by Hans Moldenhauer.

¹ Sam Morgenstern, "Ernest Bloch," in *Composers on Music* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p. 413.

² A letter of December 4, 1992, from Bloch's daughter Suzanne to the editor of this volume reads: "the Schelomo score had been hidden from the Nazis in Holland--we thought it had just disappeared--possibly destroyed with the invasion in Holland. My father who sent it to Mengelberg died not knowing what had happened. Well, it found its right place!"