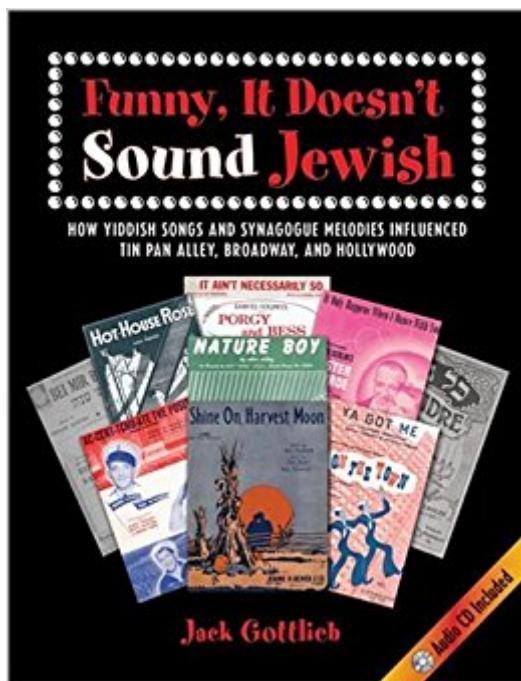


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# Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish: How Yiddish Songs And Synagogue Melodies Influenced Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, And Hollywood (SUNY Series In Modern Jewish Literature And Culture)



## Synopsis

In *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish*, Jack Gottlieb chronicles how Jewish songwriters and composers transformed the popular music of mid-twentieth-century America. Although many critics, historians, and musicians have alluded to the Jewish influence on American popular song, this is the first book ever to support such assertions with comprehensive musical examples. Drawing on a variety of historical and archival sources, as well as his own experiences as a composer of synagogue, popular, and concert music, Gottlieb carefully and compellingly documents how a minority culture infused a majority culture, enriched it, and still retained its own identity. He does this with the support of a companion CD that includes previously unrecorded songs as well as some surprising rarities performed by the likes of Judy Garland, Billie Holiday, and Leonard Bernstein.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In his introduction to this meticulously researched study of Jewish-influenced theatrical and popular music from 1914 to 1964, scholar and composer Gottlieb observes, "For the first time since ancient history, when synagogue cantillation influenced church plain chant, Jews contributed significantly to the music of the mainstream." To support his case, he analyzes melodies written for synagogues and the Yiddish theater and finds them in tunes that may not "sound Jewish." He discusses innumerable composers and artists, familiar and obscure, observant and nonobservant, converts

and even non-Jews. One chapter is devoted to Cole Porter, "who wrote a little-known ballad, 'Hot-House Rose' (1926), which tells the bitter tale of a Jewish sweatshop (or hothouse) girl." The melodic passages cited on almost every page will be of most value to the musically sophisticated. On the other hand, everyone will be able to appreciate the accompanying 70-minute CD, which includes a marvelous, very Yiddish recording by Judy Garland of *Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen*, as well as Leonard Bernstein at his piano singing Marc Blitzstein's poignant *A Zipper-fly*. This is a loving, comprehensive and fascinating book. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

""Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish is a marvelous book, meticulously researched and a pleasure to read. Jack Gottlieb has filled in the gaps on an era that deserves greater recognition. Bravo on a great job!"Gottlieb is a superbly equipped tune detector No serious student of the music of Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood can afford to bypass this landmark study. American Music Gottlieb's writing style is amiable, anecdotal, and breezy, and his enthusiasm for his topic is contagious. Kurt Weill Newsletter Gottlieb's impressive book *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish* traces the influence of Jewish secular and synagogue music on Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood with pointed wit, but underlying seriousness. Turok's Choice expands Gottlieb's long-standing and popular lecture on the importance of Jewish sacred, folk, and popular idioms in American popular music. Gottlieb teases out many historical threads not obvious to the casual listener. CHOICE Accompanied by a CD with 70 minutes of great musical examples, [*Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish*] is full of wisdom, wit, practical information, clever musical twists and turns and will become a classic. It's a literary jewel and laypersons as well as seasoned cantors are guaranteed to love it and learn from it. Koleinu exhaustive and lively Out of this impressive musicological sleuthing comes a highly readable, fascinating account of a sometimes hidden, sometimes obvious chain of cultural influences accessible to all readers. Jewish Book World In his introduction to this meticulously researched study of Jewish-influenced theatrical and popular music from 1914-1964 Gottlieb observes, For the first time since ancient history, when synagogue cantillation influenced church plain chant, Jews contributed significantly to the music of the mainstream. The melodic passages cited on almost every page will be of most value to the musically sophisticated. On the other hand, everyone will be able to appreciate the accompanying 70-minute CD, which includes a marvelous, very Yiddish recording by Judy Garland as well as Leonard Bernstein at his piano. This is a loving, comprehensive and fascinating book. Publishers Weekly as delightful as it is informative This is a book that people will want to flip through and stay to read in large chunks. It's that good and, I would

add, that important. Hadassah Magazine *Jack Gottlieb's Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish* is an always informative, always entertaining account of that remarkable musical evolution of the simple songs of the shtetl and the fervent chants of the synagogue into many of the most memorable songs of the golden age of American popular song. It is a volume to be studied and savored. Milton Babbitt As any initiate of showbiz knows, the lore and heritage of Yiddishkeit simmers just beneath the surface of much of the entertainment world's most venerable traditions. Now, thanks to Jack Gottlieb's hugely entertaining and inclusive book, all Broadway and popular music enthusiasts can have an instant insight into these poignant and amusing connections. Along the way, Gottlieb offers wonderful bouquets of Tin Pan Alley, opera house, backstage, and publishing gossip, which bring a smile to our lips and remind us that nothing ever really changes. The book offers lots for a musician, and at the same time, very much for the general reader, who is sure to pick up some great one-liners and party talk from this fascinating work. Michael Tilson Thomas *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish* is a marvelous book, meticulously researched and a pleasure to read. Jack Gottlieb has filled in the gaps on an era that deserves greater recognition. Bravo on a great job! Michael Feinstein Jack Gottlieb knows how to talk, knows what he's talking about, and what he's talking about is worth heeding. Taking off from the general premise that language shapes music he shows how the Jewish sensibility has specifically shaped Broadway musicals, including those by gentiles. This he does from every possible angle: historic, linguistic (vocal inflection, punning nuance, Yiddish jokes, etc.), and musical (harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, color, and especially tune). His thesis is sometimes daft, often bold, usually original, and always comprehensible. This book is indispensably informative. Ned Rorem Jack Gottlieb has produced a remarkably witty and enjoyable, yet serious historical examination of popular music. Copious musical examples and the inclusion of a CD of rarities are delightful bonuses. *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish* is a significant contribution to American arts and letters. Gunther Schuller "Gottlieb is a superbly equipped tune detector ... No serious student of the music of Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood can afford to bypass this landmark study." -- American Music "Gottlieb's writing style is amiable, anecdotal, and breezy, and his enthusiasm for his topic is contagious." -- Kurt Weill Newsletter "Gottlieb's impressive book *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish* traces the influence of Jewish secular and synagogue music on Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood with pointed wit, but underlying seriousness." -- Turok's Choice ..".expands Gottlieb's long-standing and popular lecture on the importance of Jewish sacred, folk, and popular idioms in American popular music ... Gottlieb teases out many historical threads not obvious to the casual listener." -- CHOICE "Accompanied by a CD with 70 minutes of great musical examples, [Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish] is full of wisdom, wit, practical

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comprehensible. This book is indispensably informative." -- Ned Rorem "Jack Gottlieb has produced a remarkably witty and enjoyable, yet serious historical examination of popular music. Copious musical examples and the inclusion of a CD of rarities are delightful bonuses. Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish is a significant contribution to American arts and letters." -- Gunther Schuller

An absolute must-read! So you thought you knew where our beloved music in the theater came from?!

A superb book - lots of fun - but digestible only in little bites. There is a lot of information in here!

If you share my growing concern at the musical cross-over tendencies in synagogue songs and how "un-Jewish" much of today's Jewish music sounds, you'll find a charming antidote in Dr. Jack Gottlieb's new and original coffee table book: Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish. Gottlieb's earnest musical detective comparisons and analyses invite us into joyfully playing the "sounds like" game. After we chuckle in consternation, at the Yiddish or liturgical roots of a pop song's pedigree, we marvel at the truism that there seems to be "nothing new under the sun

Don't be mislead by the title of this book. It isn't glib or lightweight--in fact, it's a brilliant analysis of the subconscious effect synagogue music and Yiddish song have had on our most beloved popular music. When I picked it up (out of curiosity) I found myself mesmerized and couldn't stop reading. The book is peppered with musical examples that continually evoke "I never realized that song was related to that"! Gottlieb must have spent decades researching this and it seems unbelievably thorough. He doesn't stop at musical analysis; he also includes a good examination of the history behind everything, particularly focusing on the heavy periods of emigration, when most of the (now) well-known Jewish composers came to America. The book made me look at some of the best known popular songs in a new light, yielding a deeper understanding of what went into their creation. It may seem a little expensive, but you also get a CD packed with great rare recordings that have never been released before (try Bernstein performing Blitzstein's classic "Zipperfly" or Jolson singing "Khazn oyf Shabes" in Yiddish). Gottlieb decides to pay limited attention to some of the living composers who focus on Jewish themes (for example, Jason Robert Brown and Osvaldo Golijov are only mentioned casually) but I suspect he could write another book on them. Let's hope he does--I would line up to get a copy.

Over 30 years ago there was a famous ad campaign for a brand of "Jewish rye bread," showing an American Indian eating a deli sandwich, and the caption read, "You Don't have to be Jewish to Like Levy's Rye Bread." With regard to this book, this was never so true. Anyone who loves the "Great American Song Book" spanning the first half of the last century cannot afford to miss this book. Especially remarkable is that it IS a scholarly book, complete with footnotes and bibliography, but the tone is also so jocular. The accompanying CD of musical examples alone is worth the cost of the book. Do yourself a favor - Order this book, but pass on the Most book offered by .com in tandem. It is hardly as comprehensive and definitely pales by comparison.

This book is a must read - it was so entertaining and funny, I had pop comming out of my nose laughing! And my friends and I had a great time sitting around the piano playing and singing the composed music enclosed! We even added a few lyrics of our own to the already hilarious lyrics ;-) Have Fun!

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