



SOLOMON EPSTEIN

(1939-2018)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Solomon Epstein (Savannah, Georgia, November 3, 1939 - Agawam, Massachusetts, December 21, 2018) was an American composer of operas, choral music, incidental music, instrumental works, music for synagogue sacred services, vocal chamber pieces, art songs for voice and piano, and arrangements of Yiddish ghetto songs. Among his most distinctive works, *The Dybbuk: An Opera in Yiddish*, and *Moby-Dick: Opera-Oratorio in Three Acts*.

He graduated in 1965 (Bachelor of Sacred Music and Cantor's Diploma) from the Cantors Institute of Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City, where he studied composition with Hugo Weisgall and Miriam Gideon, and was awarded the Jacobsen Memorial Prize to Outstanding Graduate. He completed his Master of Music in Voice and Opera at Yale University School of Music in 1970, and earned his DMA in Music Composition/Orchestration from the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford in 2001.

Dr. Epstein was employed as a Cantor and Music Director in Synagogues in Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts from 1966 to 2000, and was Interim Director of the Graduate Opera Department at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri in 1980-81.

In May 1999, Solomon Epstein's opera *The Dybbuk* was given a première in Israel at Ben-Gurion University, Beersheba; a second performance took place at the Susan Dellal Centre for Dance and Theatre, Tel Aviv. The production was supported by the Lerner Foundation for Yiddish Language and Culture, Tel Aviv, which also supported the making of a DVD of the Tel Aviv performance, directed by Rachel Michaeli.

A book by American-music scholar Aloma Bardi, *Esotismi musicali del Dibbuk. Ispirazioni da un soggetto del folclore ebraico [Musical Exoticisms of the Dybbuk: Inspirations from a theme of Jewish folklore]*, was published in March 2014 by the Centro di Studi Ebraici, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale". Alongside analyses of musical adaptations of S. Ansky's play *The Dybbuk* by Aaron Copland, David Tamkin and Leonard Bernstein, the volume includes a chapter on Solomon Epstein's opera (pages 162-190).

Dr. Epstein died of kidney failure on December 21, 2018. He donated the collection of his unpublished music manuscripts to the ICAMus Archive in 2014. Following his death, the Epstein family donated the composer's papers to ICAMus on December 30, 2018. The contents of this second donation are currently (January 2019) being processed and studied.

