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THE EVOLUTION OF THE ALEynu — 1171 TO PRESENT

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The historical impact of an event cannot easily be judged. **Its account may survive in chronicles** and books, but somewhere during the processes of transmission, translation, documentation, and interpretation, the full implications and meanings of a specific occurrence can become blurred, disfigured or lost. The goal of this article is to show the reader that the impact of history is also kept alive through music. Religious music, particularly that of the Jews, contains that rich historical tradition.

In this article I hope to show that the *Aleynu* theme has survived despite all its liturgical and musical variations because of the profound influence under which it came into being, namely religious persecution. I do not wish to give the impression that "traditional" Jewish music has endured only because of its painful reminders of destruction, violence and desolation. Realistically, much of Jewish life has unfortunately existed under those conditions. Rather, I wish to point out that it was a sense of Jewish pride and conviction that also revealed itself through the vehicle of music during the last four thousand years of Jewish history.

Very little is actually known about communal medieval Jewry, In fact, "There is a strong possibility that important historical facts which could perhaps reverse our impression of European Jewish History in the Dark Ages, have been lost." However, it is known that sometime during the Middle Ages the economic atmosphere of Europe began to change. Jewish merchants flourished while Europe began to experience a recession. The individuals that were hardest hit financially by this change of events were the nobility. Therefore it is not surprising that the major outbreaks of anti-Semitism originated within the ranks of the titled, landed, gentry as opposed to the masses. As time went on, conditions deteriorated further and

¹ Cecil Roth, *Gleanings, Essays in Jewish History, Letters and Art*, (N.Y.: Bloch Pub. Co., 1967). p. 18.

² R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 68.

“the twelfth century witnessed an appalling development in outbreaks of hysterical violence against the Jewish community.”²

In despair, Jews began to return ever more strongly to the religion of their ancestors. They sought refuge in the worship service from daily harassments. Consequently, Jewish religious creativity flourished from the end of the eleventh century until the beginning of the thirteenth century.³ This should not seem unusual, for in Louis Finkelstein’s study of the origin of the synagogue (*American Academy of Jewish Research* 1928-1930), he states that our earliest prayer gatherings were initiated as a regular institution to escape royal persecution, later being retained as a mode of worship established as an historical tradition.

In turning to the worship service itself, we begin to see ways in which the prayers were enriched. Several influences on worship were present during this time.

The ascetic and mystical ardor of the eleventh and twelfth centuries stirred large numbers of people to crave for a spiritual perfection which the average institutionalism did not satisfy. The appearance of new social problems in the growing towns of Northern Italy, Southern France . . . was another cause of the growth of popular mystical movements.⁴

The ardent fervor exhibited by medieval Jews during that time has been exhibited very rarely throughout history (two well-known examples being the Holocaust and Masada). In this account by Ephraim Ben Jacob, (a German Talmudist and poet), we see that the events leading up to the first recorded account of the chanting of the *Aleynu* display this special kind of emotional feeling:

. . . as the flames mounted high the martyrs (thirty-four men and seventeen women) began to sing in unison a melody that began softly but ended in a full voice. The Christian people came and asked us: ‘What kind of song is this, for we have never heard such a sweet melody?’ We know it well (continued the letter writer), for it was the song *Alenu*.⁵

³ Robert Chazan, “The Blois Incident of 1171: A Study in Jewish Intercommunal Organization,” *The American Academy of Jewish Research* 36 (1968), p. 13.

⁴ Frederick Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 24.

⁵ Alfred Sendrey, *The Music of the Jews in the Diaspora*, (Cranbury, N.J.: Thomas Yoseloff Ltd., 1970), p. 184.

While details of the Blois massacre vary according to **each** account of the tragedy, there can be no doubt of the religious zeal displayed by its victims, as they chanted the *Aleynu*.

Let us first examine the *Aleynu* prayer itself. The origin of the text dates no earlier than the third century. The authorship is ascribed to Rab of Babylonia and was primarily recited by neophytes and proselytes as part of the conversion ceremony to renounce any previous beliefs. Later, it was introduced into the High Holy Day service, and following the Blois massacre of 1171, it was considered such an important prayer that it was introduced into the daily service. Its text is considered to be dogmatic and hymnic and it was originally chanted in free rhythm. Because we have no notated versions of the *Aleynu* chant prior to 1765, we can only guess how the melody was sung during the early post-Biblical times. Therefore I have chosen a simple setting of the prayer by Idelsohn, which I believe best represents the version which was sung in Blois. This choice was based on descriptions of music in early Jewish worship by Eric Werner and Peter Gradenwitz. The latter states:

. . . the vocal music that dominated the liturgy was rhythmically free and followed the irregular rhythms of the words, setting the text to music by the use of carefully chosen motifs.⁶

Eric Werner further substantiates this theory by comparing Jewish liturgy written during the first four centuries of Christianity to the Christian liturgy of the Roman Church (i.e. parts of the *Ordinarium Missae*, such as the *Gloria*, *Credo*, and particularly the *Sanctus*), which will be mentioned later:

This category (chanted prayer) comprises most of the dogmatic hymnic prayers, provided they are chanted plainly. Some of the very oldest texts belong to this group and much sweat and blood went into their redaction and acceptance. They are all chanted in free rhythm and boastful artistry was allowed to compromise the dogmatic preciseness of these texts . . . They are without meter or rhyme and represent the basis and mainspring of the daily worship.⁷

See Illustration No. 1, Page 10.

*Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel* (N.Y.: W. W Norton and Co., 1949). p. 66.

Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 182.

This particular setting of the *Aleynu* has been forced into a common meter to allow for better coordination between Cantor and accompanist.

Let us progress from this simple, relatively unadorned version of the melody to the next phase of Jewish worship music, the Cantorial Fantasia. The oldest extant version of the *Aleynu* is that of Aharon Beer (1738-1821). Cantor Beer is said to have notated this version of the *Aleynu* circa 1765 C.E. and it is the oldest known notation of this theme which exists. Although the text does not accompany the music, it is obvious that there has been an effort on the part of Cantor Beer to put the text into a framework which clearly reflects the musical style of later eighteenth century European music. (Illustration on next page.)

See Illustration No. 2, Page 11.

Hanoch Avenary of Tel-Aviv describes a Cantorial Fantasia as a considerable inflation of a well-known traditional melody according to certain rules. According to Avenary, a Cantorial Fantasia is only found within the class of *Missinai* melodies and it consists of sequences of themes always appearing in the same order: they are true melodies, and not modi or motive-mosaics where the arrangement of themes or motives would be left to the choice of the performer. Profilic motives and melismatic structure prevail throughout.⁸

I do not believe that the Cantorial Fantasia was in practice at the time of the Blois massacre. Research conducted in the area of musical style and form from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, compounded with the fact that the prayer was chanted in unison by a large group at the time of the genocide, seems to indicate against an intricate and extended rendition.⁹

This melody must have made quite an impression on the neighboring Christian communities, for it was adapted into both the contemporary secular and non-secular cultures. One can only guess that

⁸ Hanoch Avenary, "The Cantorial Fantasia", *Yuval-Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre*.

⁹B. Szablocsi's article, "A Jewish Music Document of the Middle Ages: The Most Ancient Noted Biblical Melody" found in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Low*, edited by Alexander Schreiber, (Budapest: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1947). He states that characteristics of the Old Hebrew liturgical melodies are "a psalmoidal recitative of a few tones . . . with frequent symmetrical cadences and with a pure declamatoric rhythm . . ." Also, Idelsohn speaks of the musical elements of the *Missinai* tunes as being similar to the forms which were current in the period of the Minnesong, from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, (*Jewish Music*, pp. 147-80.)

the reason for this must have been the profound impact which the Blois massacre had upon the people at the time.

Helen Wagenaar-Nolthenius provides us with one example of the theme's infiltration into the secular society. In her research she concludes that the folk ballad "Der Planctus Judei", from the Nicholas-Fleury play *Filius Getron* (found in the famous drama manuscript Orleans #201) is a direct adaptation of the *Aleynu* theme. She states:

Reports on Jewish music in the Middle Ages are rare and seldom is the music itself passed unto us. An oral tradition is what the school of synagogue singing adhered to and it never was published. On the contrary: occasionally the Jews must have imitated the Christian singing simply not to give offense, for that could become so deadly. Even on the Loire where there were large Jewish communities, the Christians seldom heard anything of the Jewish cult singing. The composer of our Jewish lament had, however, a notion of Jewish music. (If he belonged to the Christian community of 1171). Did he hear in the year 1171 a 'song so beautiful that we had never heard it before?' Or had he worked into his lament *Aleynu* elements?

See Illustration No. 3, Page 12.

Below is a comparative chart of various settings of the Credo, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*. This chart (laid out by Eric Werner in *The Sacred Bridge*). serves to prove the undeniable relationship between the ecclesiastical melody *Sanctus IX* and the *Aleynu*. This notation of the *Sanctus* of the Roman Church (taken from the ninth mass of the Virgin) is found in the *Liber Usualis* (Tournay and Rome-Edition No. 780 of 1931) and has been known in this form since the Tridentine revision in the sixteenth century.¹⁰

See Illustration No. 4, Page 13.

Now let us examine the changes in the actual text of the prayer which were made between the year 1171 and the present day. Since the thirteenth century (when the *Aleynu* was introduced into the closing section of the three daily prayer services) several philosophical and theological shifts have occurred within Judaism. These philosophical and theological shifts have caused many changes in the

¹⁰ Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard* . . . , (University Park, Penn.: Penn State U. Press, 1976). p. 43.

liturgy between various movements, particularly between the Orthodox and the Reform.

See Illustration No. 5, Page 14.

See Illustration No. 6, Page 15.

The Orthodox version has remained unchanged since the Middle Ages and is the same text as is found in Table 1. The Reform version has undergone extensive revision. The early Reformers felt that the original text was too particularistic, and strove to achieve a more universal application of its usage. This spirit of Reform, along with the creative freedom of the composer of Jewish music for the Reform and Conservative synagogue, has resulted in several different and interesting musical interpretations of the prayer itself. These changes in interpretation are evident in the three settings by twentieth century composers which follow.

See Illustrations No. 7A, 7B and 7C, Pages 16, 17 and 18.

The vocal line of this version bears a close resemblance to the Idelsohn version of the tune, however upon closer examination one notices that the accompaniment is not all consistent with the strong, out-going nature of the tune itself. Several Jewish musicologists, in an attempt to integrate the *Missinai* melodies into the *Nusach*, have classified the traditional *Aleynu as* belonging to the *Adonai Malach* mode. If this is the case, then the use of minor thirds and triads (which are not found in this mode) would completely change the nature of the piece. Samuel Adler's setting of the High Holiday tune with its subtle "minor" hints in the third stave represents to me not only the determined, majestic nature of the tune but also a strong relationship with the centuries of human suffering which have occurred since its inception.

See Illustrations No. 8A and 8B, Pages 19 and 20.

Frederick Picket approaches the music in almost an opposite manner. Retaining the traditional melody in an extended fashion in the organ, he expresses his artistic creativity in the vocal line. In this manner, his weaving in and out between major and minor, tours the circle of fifths in a round-about way.

Finally, we turn to a setting by Eric Werner. Having come the full circle, we find ourselves examining a melody not unlike the Idelsohn notation. Written in the vernacular, this setting differs from

a chorded version of the older melody only in its sense of dynamics and drama. Its link with history (all the while utilizing the Reform version of the text) is readily apparent, yet it has achieved ready acceptance into the repertoire of today's synagogue.

See Illustrations No. 9A, 9B and 9C, Pages 21, 22 and 23.

In which of these three directions will the mainstream of Jewish music flow? Will we impose the new upon the old (like Picket), the old upon the new (as did Adler), or blend both distinct elements together, losing the identity of neither?

In my introduction I stated that the *raison d'être* of the continuing existence of the *Missinai* tunes is their subconscious and historical association with religious persecution in Europe was relatively unknown and the Fantasia flourished. Today we are facing two differing sentiments regarding the future of Judaism, one of renewed Anti-Semitism toward the State of Israel, prompting a return to the tradition (ergo the Nusach) and that of the eternal optimist, with views of assimilation, prompting creative compositions which stray from the tradition. Only time will reveal which musical tradition will prevail.

לֵינוּ Olenu

Solo
Maestoso

Traditional

mf

O- le- nu l'- sha- be- ach la- a- don ha-

kol lo- ses g'- du- loh I'- yo- tzer b'- re- shis she-

lo o- so- nu k' go- yey ho- a- ro- tzos k' go-

yey ho- a- ro- tzos v' lo so- mo- nu k'-

mish- p' chos ho- a- do- moh she- lo som chel- ke-

rit.

nu ko- hem v' go- ro- le- nu k' chol ha- mo- nom

Lento

va- a- nach- nu ko- r' im u- mish- ta- cha- vim u- mo- dim

mf

li- f' ney me- lech ma- l'-

chey ha- m' lo- chim ha- ko- dosh bo- ruch

hu ha- ko- dosh bo- ruch hu.

ILLUSTRATION No. 1

(Reprinted from the Jewish Song Book, 3rd ed., Cincinnati: Publications for Judaism, 1961, p. 244.)

Olénu lēshabbêach

6.

The musical score consists of 15 staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a single line. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several dynamic markings, such as 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano), and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The score concludes with a final cadence.

ILLUSTRATION No. 2

Planctus Iudei (Ms. Orléans 201, S. 191-193)

① Vali! — pe-ri-i, nihil est re-li-qui- i mi-li, — cur es-se ce- pi? Cur ma-ter cur ri- ve pa-ter
 fo-re me tri-bu-i-sti? He - - u, quid profer-ri mi-chi pro-lu-it aut ge-ne-ra- ri? Cur na-tu-ra
 pa-rens consis-te- re me sta-tu-e - - bas? Que lu-ctus mi-hi que ge-mi-tus hos pro-spi-ci- e - - bas?
 ④ Quod querar in tan-tam mi-hi cri-men ob-es- se ru-i- nam? Qui mo-do di-ves e-ram vix aut
 nul-li-us e- ge-ham? Pol-lens ar-gen-to pre-ci- o-sis ves-ti-bus au-ro. Sum mi-ser, — id-que me-i
 moles. — est pau-pe-ri-e-i. Nam lat-et — ex ha-bi-tu me post-mo-do quo — fru-ar u-su. Quod le-vi-us
 fer-ram si fer-re pri-us di-di-cis-sem. Sed ni de-fi-pi-or e- go sa-ne de-si-pi-e-bam?
 ⑩ Sic er- go quod no-men Ni-cho-la-i i- na-ne co- le- bam? Quid ni noxa fi-des no-cu-it mi-chi
 christi- co-la-rum, quae probat et — si- ne te sic te Ni-cho-la-e vi- ge- re. Is mi-chi tris -
 tan-di cau-sam de- dit et — la- eri- man-di. Nec — so-lus He-bo nec i- nul-tus cre- do
 do- - le- bo. Tu me-ri-tis sub-da-re probris ton-de-re — fla-gel- lis. Sed les-sus ce-dam,
 noctis ti-bi tem-po-ra — cre- dam. Quod ni- si ma-ne me-a re-pa- res ti-bi cre-di-ta —
 ⑭ cau-sa, pri- - no fla- gel- la- bo te, — post- que fla- - gel- la cre- - ma- bo

ILLUSTRATION No. 3

Reprinted from Helen Wagenaar-Nolthenius' "Der Planctus Iudei und der Gesang Jüdischer Martyrer in Blois anno 1171." *Melanges offert à René Crozet (Poitiers: Société d'Etudes Médiévales, 1966).* p. 883.

Credo III

Cre-do in u-num De-um, fact-o-rem caeli et ter-rae vi-si-bi-li-um o-mni-um
Sanctus IX

Sanctus XVII

Agnus XVII

Credo III

et in-vi-si-bi-li-um
Sanctus IX

Sanctus XVII

Agnus XVII

1. Tefilla for the High Holydays

2. Aleinu of the High Holydays

ILLUSTRATION No. 4

(Reprinted from *The Sacred Bridge* by Eric Werner, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 569-70.)

עָלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל לְתַת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר
 בְּרֵאשִׁית • שְׁלֹא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹי הָאֲרָצוֹת וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ
 כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה • שְׁלֹא שָׂם חֵלְקֵנוּ כֶּהֱם וְגִרְלָנוּ
 כְּכָל-הַמּוֹנֵם • וְאַנְחָנוּ פְּרָעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים לְפָנֶי
 מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא • שֶׁהוּא נוֹטֵה
 שָׁמַיִם וְיוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ • וּמוֹשֵׁב יְקָרוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְשֹׁכֵנֵת
 עִזּוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים : הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ • אֵין עוֹד • אִמֵּת
 מַלְכֵנוּ • אָפֶס זוֹלָתוֹ • כִּפְתוּב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ • וְיִדְעַת הַיּוֹם
 וְהִשְׁבַּת אֶל-לִבְבְּךָ כִּי יי הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל
 וְעַל-הָאֶרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד :

It is **our duty** to praise the Lord of all things, to ascribe greatness to him who formed the world in the beginning, since he hath not made us like the nations of other lands, and hath not placed us like other families of the earth, since he hath not assigned unto us a portion as unto them, nor a lot as unto all their multitude. For we bend the knee and offer worship and thanks before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, the seat of whose glory is in the heavens above, and the abode of whose might is in the loftiest heights. He is our God ; there is none else : in truth he is our King ; there is none besides him ; as it is written in his Torah, And thou shalt know this day, and lay it to thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath : there is none else.

ILLUSTRATION No. 5

AFTERNOON SERVICE FOR ATONEMENT DAY

(Congregation rises)
(Before the open Ark)

Reader

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲרוֹן הַכֹּל. לְחַת גְּדָלָה לְיוֹצֵר
בְּרֵאשִׁית. שֶׁהוּא נוֹטֵה שָׁמַיִם וְיוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ. וּמוֹשֵׁב
יְקָרוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם מְמַעַל. וְשֹׁכֵינֵת עִזּוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים.
הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵין עוֹד:

Reader and Congregation, then Choir

וְאֶנְחָנוּ כְּרַעִים וּמְשַׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים לְפָנֵי מַלְךְ
מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא:

Reader

Let us adore the ever-living God, and render praise unto Him who spread out the heavens and established the earth, whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose greatness is manifest throughout the world. He is our God; there is none else.

Reader and Congregation, then Choir

We bow the head in reverence and worship the King of kings, the Holy One, praised be He.

ILLUSTRATION No. 6

(Reform version reprinted from *The Union Prayer Book, Newly Revised Edition*, (N.Y.: CCAR, 1955). pp. 260-I.)

24b. Complete Adoration

(Conservative Ritual)

CANTOR Moderately moving (♩ = 63) *mp*

A - léy - nu l'-sha - bé' - -

Organ *mp*

ach la - a - dōn ha - kōl la - sēt g' - du - lah l' - yō - tser b'ré

shit sh' - lō a - sa - nu k' - gō - yēy ha - a - ra - tsōt, v' - lō sa - ma -

nu k' - mish - p' - chō ha - a - da - mah she -

ru. 877

lö_sam_chel-kê-nu ka-hem v'-gô-ra-lê'-nu k'-chol ha-mô-nam. _____

Va - a-nach - nu kô - - r'-im_u-mish - ta - cha-vim_u-mô-

CANTOR

dim _____ Faster ♩=96

Lif - nêy me - lech lif-nêy me - lech mal -

f lif-nêy me - lech mal -

f lif-nêy me - lech mal -

f Faster ♩=96

ru. 877

Slower ♩ = 72

S
A
T
B

chëy ham'-la - chim ha - ka - dôsh ba - ruch hu.

chëy ham'-la - chim ha - ka - dôsh ba - ruch hu.

chëy ham'-la - chim ha - ka - dôsh ba - ruch hu.

Organ

Slower ♩ = 72

ILLUSTRATION No. 7C

(Reprinted from Samuel Adler's *Yamim Noraim*, Volume II, (N.Y.: Transcontinental Music Pub., 1972), pp. 107-109.)

6. ALENU - VA'ANACHNU

For Cantor, Choir and Organ

Moderately (♩=52)

Cantor

high

low

mf

p

f

A - lē - nu l'-sha-bē-ach l'- a - don ha - kol. la -

tēt - g'-du-la l'-yo - tsér b'-re-shit she - hu no-te sha - ma-yim v'-yo -

sed a - rets, u- mo-shav y'-ka-to ba-sha- ma-yim mi - na - al

ILLUSTRATION No. 8A

In free hymn-style

CANTOR

mf

Let us a - dore the e - ver liv - ing

mf

Detailed description: This system contains the first two measures of the piece. The Cantor part is on a single treble clef staff, and the piano accompaniment is on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The Cantor part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line starting on a G4. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present above the Cantor staff and below the piano staff.

clearly articulated

God, and ren - der praise — un - to Him — who spread out the hea - vens

Detailed description: This system contains the next two measures. The Cantor part continues with a melodic line that includes a triplet of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present below the piano staff. The instruction *clearly articulated* is written above the Cantor staff. The lyrics are: "God, and ren - der praise — un - to Him — who spread out the hea - vens".

and e - sta - blished the world, whose glo - ry is re - vealed in the

f

Detailed description: This system contains the final two measures. The Cantor part concludes with a melodic line that includes a triplet of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment concludes with a similar rhythmic pattern. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present above the Cantor staff. The lyrics are: "and e - sta - blished the world, whose glo - ry is re - vealed in the".

Hea - vens a - bove, and whose great - ness is ma - ni - fest through - out the

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "Hea - vens a - bove, and whose great - ness is ma - ni - fest through - out the".

world: He is our - God; there is none else. We bow the

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) at the beginning of the phrase "We bow the". The lyrics are: "world: He is our - God; there is none else. We bow the".

head in re - ver - ence and wor - ship the King of Kings, the Ho - ly One

The third system of the musical score concludes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) at the beginning of the phrase "head in re - ver - ence". The lyrics are: "head in re - ver - ence and wor - ship the King of Kings, the Ho - ly One".

mf
prai-sed be He!
SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

p Va-a-na-che-nu ko - re-im u-mish-ta-cha-vim u -
Va-a-na-che-nu ko - re-im u -
Va-a-na-che-nu ko - re - im u-mish-ta-cha-
Va-a-na-che-nu ko - re - im u-mish-ta-cha-

mf *mp* *f*

f
mo - dim lif - ne me-lech mal-ke ham-lo - chim ha-ko-dosh bo - ruch hu.
mo - dim lif - ne me-lech mal-ke ham-lo - chim ha-ko-dosh bo - ruch hu.
vim u-mo-dim lif - ne me-lech mal-ke ham-lo - chim ha-ko-dosh bo - ruch hu.
vim u-mo-dim lif - ne me-lech mal-ke ham-lo - chim ha-ko-dosh bo - ruch hu.

f *sfz*

ILLUSTRATION No. 9C

Reprinted from Eric Werner's *A New Year Service*, (N.Y.: Bloch Publishing Co., 1952). pp. 33-35.)

A CENTURY OF IDELSOHN

BARUCH J. COHON

(In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Idelsohn's birth. He was born on July 1, 1882 and died on August 14, 1938.)

"A munach," said my teacher, "has no personality." And I, at age 5, understood perfectly. It was this man's pungent description of the lowly *munach*, adapting itself melodically to whatever cantillation followed it. Music was already a big part of my world, and how could it be otherwise, for my teacher of *Trop* — my first teacher of music of any kind — was Abraham Zevi Idelsohn. Looking back on my childhood now, he looms large. But then, in the early '30s, I took him for granted. He was my parents' friend, my father's colleague, a man who had tunes running around in his head and could sing them and play them and write them down and — best of all — teach me how to do the same.

As I learned a little more, he let me copy some of his music. I remember when he showed me that there really was a note below middle C. A *L'choh Dodi* of his started on B.

Idelsohn was no longer an active cantor when I knew him. He was Professor of Jewish Music and Liturgy. His most prolific publishing years were just behind him. His standard works were new then, and exciting the scholarly world. The last five volumes of his *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies* appeared in 1932 — including the *Synagogue and Folk Song of the Jews of Germany and Eastern Europe*, plus the special volume of *Hassidic song* — to stand alongside the *Sephardic and Oriental traditions* he had collected in volumes 1-5. His *Jewish Music* was just three years off the press, and Schocken is still selling paperback reprints of it today. 1932 saw his second standard book, *Jewish Liturgy*, published. And a succession of articles and monographs in Hebrew, English, Yiddish, German, Dutch — on the *Kol Nidrey* and its origins, on the *Mogen Ovov* mode, on the life of the Vilna Bal-ha-besl, on the Cantor in Jewish life — and on and on his efforts went. Glance through any of the biographies written of him, during the '30s in the *Chazzonim Velt* and the *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Music* and a dozen other publications — or more recently in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* — and you get the feeling of a passionate, powerful, colorful, and determined man. A man who channeled his prodigious energy into pioneer achievements in his field, our field.

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I was hardly aware of most of that, however. As a young **boy**, I was aware of an imposing man — heavy head, black Vandyke beard, barrel chest, bearing himself with a kind of dignity that was of no specific country but specifically Idelsohn. He could be stormy and impulsive. He could abandon himself to the pleasure of a fine spring day, or could brood in volcanic rage. His offhand reaction to the American presidential campaign of 1932 was open disgust (“Roosevelt slings mud, and Hoover slings back the same mud”). He was impatient with his students at the Hebrew Union College (“A boy without a book is no boy”), furious with those who would challenge his professional authority while lacking even a fraction of his qualifications, tireless in working to finish a manuscript or a score, and yet he made time and found patience for a friend’s young son. His own children were grown-ups to me. His youngest daughter Yiska was in high school, as was Dena, while the older children were living far away in South Africa. His apartment on Maple Avenue in the old Avondale section of Cincinnati was a scholar’s workshop, and also a place where his wife Zilla could fashion gefilte fish for Shabos.

Ethnomusicology was a word I didn’t learn until nearly twenty years later, but of course that was Idelsohn’s greatness and his unique contribution to our art. Because of his combination of dream, drive, and insight, and because of the times and places in which he moved, he could singly bridge the gap between tradition and science in Jewish music, to an extent that nobody else approached before or since.

This coming year we will close a century since Abraham Zevi Idelsohn’s birth (July 1, 1882) in a section the Czar called Curland — now the Latvian S.S.R. A century of Idelsohn.

Early in that century, young Zevi stood in a market in Libau watching a man wrap a fish for a customer. The paper he was using for wrapping had strange marks on it — not letters in any alphabet Zevi had ever seen. He kept asking what those marks were until he found someone who recognized them. Music writing? A revelation! The yeshivah bochur had discovered a new world; music could be represented on paper. He didn’t rest after that until he had mastered music — first, in the customary way that he knew as the son of a shochet and baal t’fillah, by singing and studying with the local cantor, Mordecai Rabinovitz — later pursuing his studies with the great Boruch Schorr, and in conservatories in Germany. His restless nature, the migrations of his family, and his dream of musical research, took him first to Southern Germany, then to South Africa, and in 1905 to Jerusalem. There he found a polyglot steaming unsanitary and jittery population, ruled in archaic splendor

by the Turkish Sanjaq of Jerusalem, although the Ottoman Empire was slowly crumbling under its own rotten weight. Perhaps it would have disintegrated sooner, except that the subject population consisted of countless groups that were strangers to each other. Each group was isolated, culturally distinct, ignoring all the rest. And therein lay their supreme value to Idelsohn. A strongly-built young man with plenty of courage, he strapped an Edison cylinder-recording machine to his back, and went hunting for melodies. Every spare hour, and the few spare pennies not absolutely needed to feed his growing family, he spent prowling the city from Yemenite enclave to Hassidic shtiebl to Bukharan synagogue, collecting the sounds of Jewish life in all its varieties. If the Oriental Jews refused to sing into his strange horn-box, that didn't stop him. He relied on his memory, developed his own modified notation for the quarter-tones of the Middle East, built a file.

Idelsohn's century is in very reality the century of our musical Haskalah. All of us — cantors, researchers, musicologists, lecturers, composers, teachers — look to him for our foundations. He became all of those things, that boy with the well wrapped fish. And when he did his collecting — “field work,” we'd call it now — he had no Foundations to help him. No grants. No patrons. Only the dream and the drive, and the unique talent and insight to take musical charge of that moment in Jewish history.

The separate streams of our farflung tradition have begun to merge now. The technological heirs of Idelsohn's Edison recorder have wiped out all musical isolation. Cultural researchers in Israel today comb the ingathered exiles to find pure melodies that Idelsohn didn't already hear and collect. And what of us in the American cantorate? Where would our art and our knowledge be without his work? He contributed so much that we can hardly conceive of Jewish music without Idelsohn. Others have excelled in specialized areas. They, and we, stand on his shoulders.

By his own definition, Idelsohn was certainly no “*munach.*” A *pazer*, if anything. And he had a lesson for me which went even beyond music. Cut down by *one* stroke after another, crippled, muted, he still fought back. In 1933, he was to receive an honorary Doctorate. For the first time in months, he did the impossible. He stood on both feet, with only a cane for support, immaculately dressed and as dignified as ever, and mounted the steps to accept the degree. This courageous, sensitive man and total Jew taught all of us that day about self-respect.

The following year, paralysis struck again. Totally incapacitated, he died in South Africa in 1938. Thinking of his scant 56

years and of what they produced for us as bearers of the Jewish musical heritage, and for me personally, I feel fortunate to have been a ***munach*** to such a ***pazer***.

Y'hi zichro baruch.

ABRAHAM Z. IDELSOHN — A Chronology

July 1.1882 -Born in Pfilsburg, Curland, Russia (now Latvian S.S.R.) to Azriel, a Shochet, and Baal Tefilah; and Deborah Idelsohn. One of 16 children: 7 survived.

1833-1901 -~~In~~ Libau: attended heder and yeshivah to age 17; 17-18 sang in choir of Cantor Mordecai Rabinovitz. Studied hazzanut, harmony and Hebrew literature.

1901- In Berlin: Sternsches Conservatorium, choir singer in Charlottenburg Synagogue with Boruch Srhorr.

1902 — Hazzan in Leipzig. Studied at Royal Conservatory of Music, also with Cantor H. Schneider, whose daughter, Zilla, he married.

1903 — Hazzan/Shochet in Regensburg. Lost first-born.

1904 — Hazzan in Johannesburg, South Africa. Daughter horn.

1905 — Went to Jerusalem with his family, following the twin passions for Eretz Yisrael and Shirat Yisrael.

1905-21 -In Jerusalem: Cantorial, teaching and research work. During World War I, led a Turkish army band — and sang Schubert lieder to entertain the officers!

Published works from this period include: "Shirey Tzion", "Toras HaN'ginah" "Shirey T'Fillah". and "Sefer Hashirim". The latter with all its music printed Hebrew-style, right to left. First volume of his Thesaurus "Songs of the Yeminite Jews" (Vienna, 1914) — result of his field research among the various Jewish groups in the Yishuv. Thesaurus was to cover 10 volumes and to take 20 years to complete.

Hebrew opera "Jephthah", performed in Jerusalem with an orchestra of Oriental instruments.

1921-23 — In Germany: Lecturing and writing. Began Hebrew-Language History of Jewish Music for Bialik's "Dvir" Press. Volumes 2 and 3 of Thesaurus (Babylonian, and Persian-Bokharan-Daghestani) published Berlin 1922.

1923-24-In America: Lecturing and officiating. Cantor for several months at Society for the Advancement of Judaism, New York. Now, volumes of Thesaurus published with English and Hebrew introductions. as well as German. Vol. 4, (Oriental Sephardim) Berlin 1923.

1924 -Settled in Cincinnati, first to catalogue the Birnbaum Music Library, hut soon thereafter as Professor of Jewish Music and lecturer in Jewish Liturgy at Hebrew Union College, a position he held until **his death**.

1925-28-Began to write and compose for the U.S. Jewish community, while teaching and lecturing. Articles, synagogue music, and the first edition of his "Jewish Song Book" published. Also, in 1928 the 5th volume of the Thesaurus (Moroccan) published in Berlin.

- 1929 — Published “Jewish Music, in its Historical Development” (Holt & Co., 535 pages) which has remained the standard work on the subject, re-issued by Schocken for today’s market.
- 1930-33 -Published monographs on “The Kol Nidre Tune”, “The Diwan of Hebrew and Arabic Poetry of the Yemenite Jews”, “Features of Jewish Sacred Folksong in Eastern Europe”, and others. “Jewish Liturgy” (Holt & Co., 404 pages) appeared in 1932. The American Council of Learned Societies undertook to finance completion of the Thesaurus, and the last five volumes were published (in Leipzig, with English introductions) : #6 (18th Century German Synagogue Song, from manuscripts), #8 (Eastern European Synagogue Song), #9 (Eastern European Folksong), #10 (Chassidic) and finally #7 (South German).
- 1933-38 — Despite a succession of strokes which cut his life short, he published a few more works, and received the H.U.C.’s Doctor of Divinity Degree. Taken back to Johannesburg in September 1937. to spend his last days with his family, he died a helpless invalid on August 14, 1938.

A TALK WITH LAZAR WEINER

KENNETH COHEN

(Following is a transcript of an interview with Lazar Weiner on January 23, 1981, at his home at 310 West 97th Street in New York. The interviewer was Kenneth Cohen, then a Junior at the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Hazzan Cohen is a 1982 graduate and will begin to serve Congregation Shearith Israel of Dallas, Texas in September 1982.

Lazar Weiner passed away on December 15, 1981, after participating in a concert of his music held at Hebrew Union College's School for Sacred Music on Sunday, December 13, 1981. His final work was a masterful setting of "Merciful God" (a poem by Samuel Rosenbaum based on the Yiddish poem, *Eyl Hanun* by Kadia Molodovski) for Soprano, Cello and Piano.)

Key: Lazar Weiner = W: Kenneth Cohen = C: Workman's Circle Choir = W.C.C.:

C: The first question, Professor Weiner, is

W: Would you cut out the word Professor, just Weiner.

C: Alright. Please tell me about the Workman's Circle Choir. When it was organized, how it was organized, who organized it, and what role you played in the organization.

W: As far as I recall, the Workman's Circle Choir was organized in 1914, by a man named Pironznikoff. Zaslowsky succeeded Pironznikoff. F. Posner, a conductor who came from London was the first "musician" in the full sense of the word. He led the chorus for about 12-13 years from 1916-1929. He was preparing a concert at Town Hall, which was to be the first major concert the group was to have performed. Posner himself translated the oratorio "Elijah" into Yiddish and arranged for an orchestra to accompany the group. He died a few weeks before the scheduled date of performance, some time near the end of 1929.

After his death, two men came to see me and inquired as to whether I would be interested in the post of conducting the choir. Both men, Mr. Mawlot and Mr. Lifschutz, were ardent members of the choir which at that time numbered about 40 people. In response to their offer, I had certain conditions which had to be met prior to my acceptance: Number 1, I would not continue in the footsteps of Posner and complete the rehearsals culminating in the performance at Town Hall. In other words, I would *not* take over the work which someone else prepared,

... Secondly, during the first year the chorus would not have any scheduled appearances.

Prior to the negotiations, I had heard the choir a number of times and was not pleased with their diction, as far as Yiddish was concerned. Since I'm a bug about Yiddish, I would not let it go that way. I have too much respect for the text as well as the music. ... Both should be maintained on a high level. Our language should be kosher.

Our problem is that as Jews we have so many dialects, and what people doesn't? In New York we say "Bawston" and in Boston they say "Baaston". Now if New Yorkers and Bostonians have dialects, why can't we Jews have dialects too? There are all kinds of dialects. I consider only one dialect — the printed word. This is the language I pursue and that I sought to develop.

With music it is the same thing. I took over the chorus in late '29, and I had to remake it my way. Meaning, I wanted to have a different method, not necessarily better. But I must say that within 2 years the choir grew from 35-40 people to over 100 by the time of our first Town Hall performance. We did various programs and compositions, primarily of Jewish composers. Naturally, we performed Beethoven, Rossini, Mozart, but everything was translated into Yiddish. My friends were probably the greatest Yiddish poets of that era, and whenever I asked them to make any translations, they were very happy to help.

C: Who, for example?

W: David Pinsky, H. Leivick, Nissenson, Minkoff, Mani Leib, Schumacher, Y. L. Peretz, Peter Hirshbein, A. W. Liessin, A. Reisen, etc. ... all the greatest writers.

C: They translated the works on your behalf — no money or anything?

W: None whatsoever. We were too poor to give them any money and they were too poor to accept money. It was a question of idealism, Jewish idealism. There were not many choruses around and we were all glad to have a chorus which would function on a higher level. I was with that chorus for 35 years. I have all the programs I have ever performed. I don't think I ever repeated a whole program — ever! This can be verified — except in one instance where we performed a cantata of mine. The demand of the audiences and members of the choir was so great that we repeated that particular program. We did the repeat performance five weeks after the initial performance.

C: What was the name of the cantata?

W: **“A Mol in a Tzayt”** (Once upon a time). We had good reviews, and it was subsequently performed a number of times after that. Throughout the thirty-five years I had completely different programs. There wasn't a Jewish composer I have not performed. Of course, I would not perform a composition that wasn't worthwhile performing; because I'm a musician and to me, music comes first. Never mind my partiality towards my friends. If it wasn't good enough, I would not do it. In thirty-five years, we did an enormous amount of music. The YIVO Institute has about 11-12,000 programs of our concerts in Yiddish and in Hebrew in its library. I did not want to send these programs to Israel for one reason.

It's not that I'm against Israel, but I felt that I've collected all the material right here in this land and if anybody in America would want to get acquainted with this type of repertoire they would not have to travel to Israel to obtain a piece of music. YIVO houses my collection which is open to the public and accessible through Xerox copies. All of my own compositions are there as well. In addition, the music of Rossini, Mozart and Schubert, Beethoven are there at YIVO all translated into Yiddish. We also did Yiddish folk songs, and a program of folk songs of different nationalities. For example, Gruizine, Chubash, Russian Ukraine, White Russian, Middle Russian and Upper Russian — all kinds including Yugoslavian and Japanese.

C: Did you have the folk song program in order to best represent the various nationalities present in the choir?

W: No, there were only Jews in the choir. But I wanted them getting acquainted with various nationalities of the entire world. So we gathered all kinds of folk songs. I even arranged one or two songs, but I primarily took native composers and their own arrangements, translating everything into Yiddish. That was quite a big job too, but I had a man by the name of David Pinski, one of our greatest dramatists, who was very happy to help — a delightful human being, who translated many of these songs. Being that the Workman's Circle was a workers organization, I had to cater to their desires and not sing any religious songs. Not that they were against religion. Yet, they were not religious. They called themselves the International Jews. Whatever that may be? I'm not criticizing that ... that was their policy. But if I accepted the job, I had to abide by their policy. And nevertheless, I sneaked in religious songs translated into Yiddish. We did one hassidic composition, but I don't remember the name ... and I was not reprimanded for that.

- C: Did you do that religious work because the choir had changed in terms of religious observance at that point?
- W: No, I persuaded them to sing it because we are a part of that culture. We are not simply Jews because we're circumcised. There are so many different things that we have, which of course is very difficult to talk about. I wish they would not have Socialism, Buddhism, anarchism, Communism, Zionism, all kinds of **"isms"**. We're Jews once and forever, otherwise we'll split into little fragments.
- C: What were the dominant ideas in the group?
- W: They were Socialists. But Socialism is not a religion. Some were leftists not communists. But as leftists who resented religious music, they did not quarrel about performing it. We did a work of Bach that we translated into Yiddish. But we did not sing to our God primarily. Do you see? **Ana Adonai Hoshia** Na (Answer us O Lord and Save us) did not enter into our minds. We went on. These thirty-five years were a tremendous memory in my life. We all passed through many fascinating people working with many great artists, poets, writers and human beings.
- C: You mentioned before I started the interview, that Richard Tucker was in your choir?
- W: Richard Tucker was with us when he first began to sing for a span of two years. It was a very good voice. But his musicianship was not on par yet. Luckily, he married a woman who was well to do, who believed in him. Tucker had good zitzfleish, if you know what I mean. And he sat and he worked diligently. Tucker was the king. And even when he reached the top, he never denied my working with him. A few years ago there was a banquet given in his honor and I was there because I belonged to that organization. He told the group gathered there "There sits one of my teachers, his name, Lazar Weiner, who gave so much to me." We even have pictures taken together.
- C: Do you recall what year that was?
- W: Since the picture is dated '35, approximately one year prior, I suppose.
- C: Do you remember any soloists from your choir, or any musical people that eventually became prominent members of the Jewish community or the world at large?
- W: No. Most members of the choir were manual laborers -workers. There was once, however, a young lady with an excellent voice who gave a recital in Town Hall. She had a very promising career, but she didn't have the patience and she married, had children and **dayeinu** – she was forgotten. I was the first con-

ductor of the Communist chorus in New York. Not because of political affiliations. I took the job because I needed the money and at that time a job was a job.

Under my auspices, that group grew in size to over two hundred singers in less than three months. (***Freiheit Gesangsferein***). In that particular chorus, one day a young man came over to me and asked if I would be so kind as to listen to him sing. I listened to the young man sing a few notes and then asked him how old he was. He replied, "I'm 18". I said to him that he was not **18**, and that he should go home and not sing for an entire year. In other words, don't open your mouth. I told him that it is symptomatic that you will be blessed with a good voice. I felt that there was something in him. A few years later, I attended the preview of a movie called the ***Vilne Balabessel***. After the viewing, a young man came over to me and said to the women he was with, pointing at me, "Do you see this man? His name is Lazar Weiner. I came to him once and auditioned for his group. After the audition, he asked how old I was and I told him a lie — 18, I was really 16. He told me to go home and refrain from singing — but I kept on screaming my lungs out. Then I decided, by jimminy, maybe that fellow is right ... so I completely gave up singing for months ... if I could not hug and kiss him now for he saved my life." So I asked this young man who he was. And he replied that he was the one singing the lead in this ***Vilne Balabessel*** ... my name is Moyshe Oyshe. So here was a case, that unintentionally, I felt it important to tell you, but perhaps not, a prominent individual was indirectly affected by my work in the chorus that ultimately affected his life. But aside from him, we did not have anyone significantly musical in the group.

C: How did you teach music to the group?

W: Everything was by rote. Almost no one read music. When I used to ask the chorus, "Why are you holding music before your eyes", they used to reply, "It looks much nicer when we hold something." "See, there you have it — it was an amateur group.

C: How did you whip them into shape though? If they had this musical deficiency?

W: Patience, my friend. Blood and sweat. We performed Mendelsohn's ***Walpurgis Nacht*** — a tremendous oratorio. We also did Mendelsohn's ***Elijah*** and Schubert's ***Song of Triumph***. My compositions were also standard repertoire — and they were not very easy. At the beginning, it was heartbreaking for the group to learn the material. They would not listen to me, I was very

strict. But as they gradually worked with the music, it became more comfortable for them. They loved it ... and I felt their love when I was standing with them on the platform (shows me a picture) with the choir of one hundred and thirty. I never used to curse at them. My father taught me not to swear. My curse words with the choir were "Your eyes should be glued to me." And their eyes were glued to me. "Weiner", they used to say, "what **is** it that you want? Here we are.. Take us." And I took them.

C: So you were very strict with them.

W: Because they saw that in the end I didn't want it for myself. It was meant for the whole. Even now I get letters of compliments from past choir members. These things are memorable to me because it is a major part of my life. Thirty-five years is no joke! I was with the Central Synagogue for 44 years ... which is a totally different story. But the W.C.C. was a highlight of my life for 35 years.

Usually in choral organizations, the *balebatim* want to deliver speeches to the audience prior to a performance. I used to plead with them to let the choir speak for themselves, explaining that this 'was a musical event, not any planned talk show. They told me they had a right to speak, but I told them they didn't have any right. I threatened to bring the chorus in right at the same moment that they were going to begin their talk. I finally talked them into it, and they had the greatest respect for the choir, my work, for all that we did. And I am very appreciative of that.

C: Do you have any recordings of the choir?

W: Look, to make a recording one needs to be in a studio environment which accepts every little detail. Today, when a recording is made, we make a test recording of the song and change it if it isn't good. But when we made our recordings, we had a group of *one* hundred people with one small mike. And what was the result? The singers closest to the mike were the ones which dominated the recording. Totally unbalanced and distorted. The *Forward* once published 1,000 copies of a cantata of mine, *A Mol in a Tzeit*. I hope all the recordings are destroyed! I couldn't stand it when I heard it. It was improperly recorded. You have to have a studio to make a recording, otherwise it doesn't mean anything.

C: When a person came to you and asked to join the choir, how did you audition them?

- W: I just listened — if they had voices and ears, that was sufficient for me.
- C: What musical tests did you use, if any, on the piano?
- W: I played a scale or an arpeggio. If they were able to duplicate what I was playing on the piano I would say to them, “Alright, you have a voice, you’re in!”
- C: It was as simple as that?
- W: I would also find out what type of ranges they had ... tenors or baritones. It wasn’t their musicality that I was after.
- C: What happened if a person didn’t have a good voice, but really wanted to be in the choir?
- W: Those desires I couldn’t accommodate.
- C: How did you inform them that they couldn’t ... ?
- W: I’m awfully sorry ... become a librarian ... this is more or less a musical organization.
- C: Where did you perform?
- W: We had our yearly concert. Either in Carnegie Hall or in Town Hall with the Philharmonic or a small group from that ensemble. Something on the order of 40-50 pieces. Sometimes, the New York Philharmonic or the Toscanini orchestra performed with us.
- C: Did you travel?
- W: We once sang at a convention in Philadelphia.
- C: Did you ever have an assistant?
- W: No. Didn’t want one.
- C: Why not?
- W: They were too used to me.
- C: What was the choir’s favorite song?
- W: We didn’t have one. We did a tremendous amount of compositions.
- C: Did you commission anyone to write for the choir?
- W: As a test, I asked 5 Jewish composers of the theatre, Ruminshinsky, Olshanetsky, Secunda, Ellstein, Trilling. Only Ellstein and Secunda bothered to answer. Secunda wrote this completely Schubertian piece and I performed it. But in order to have it performed I had it published, because I didn’t want it xeroxed or copied ... I wanted it published. But we only performed it once and never again ... because it wasn’t a good composition.
- C: What was the title of the work?
- W: Words by Reyzin ... I can’t recall the title. Ellstein wrote a piece called *Mir Veln Zeyn*. An excellent piece. We published it and performed it a number of times. Also, the W.C.C. to-

gether with the Jewish Congress, commissioned a work by a Cantor from Stockholm, Rosenbluth.

He was here in New York a few years ago at a convention. Rosenbluth set a text by Peretz. For this work, were gathered 5 choruses together with the W.C.C. numbering close to 250 people. We won the first prize of the competition, which paid 200 dollars. They sent us the money and we then performed it a number of times — first with an orchestra.

C: Whose arrangements did you sing?

W: Everybody that was worthwhile musically.

C: Do you recall compositions, names, which were popular then?

W: Zilberts. Originals as well. A little bit of Low who was instrumental in making a conductor out of me. He forced me to organize the chorus. He said that there was a chorus available without a conductor. “Go on and pick up the baton.” He said, “You know Yiddish and you know music, go on and start conducting.” So I began conducting. This was in 1917 — in Brooklyn . . . I believe because Freyerhaber was then conducting a Mendelsonian Symphony orchestra then. But Low helped me start in Jewish choruses — there was a need for it then. There were many choruses in the country.

I was Low’s accompanist for a while and we performed every Jewish composer.

C: Did you ever bring in professional singers when you performed?

W: Depended when and what we needed to get by. But we tried to avoid it. The chorus didn’t like such things. But I felt, that since we had so many women in comparison to men, we were forced to amend the imbalance. After all, music is a question of balance.

C: Where did you get these singers from?

W: One professional would recommend another professional.

C: You organized the choir and advertised it through the newspapers?

W: Yes. Through the *Forward* or *The Day* or *The Morning Journal*, which were popular at that time.

C: How many concerts would you have in an average year?

W: Our chorus couldn’t have a concert in any house. We had to have a big place . . . Town Hall or Carnegie Hall where they could have a big stage production. I would never allow the size of an auditorium interfere with the number of choir members that could comfortably fit in that space. It was either all or none.

C: How many concerts did you have?

- W: It varied. Sometimes we would have concerts two or three times a year. Sometimes none. Excepting for our own concert. Ours was holy to us. Year after year we had our own concert.
- C: Who were the people who attended your concerts?
- W: Primarily, Jewish audiences.
- C: Who paid for the choir? And for your salary?
- W: The conductor was paid for by the choir members who paid ten cents a week dues each, I think it reached a point where it grew to be 20 cents a week. But the W.C. gave them a certain subsidy. Plus there were dues for buying music, paying for the hall and many other expenses all absorbed by the choir. The choir members had to sell tickets for their own performances in order to fill up the house. No one was going to do it for them. The same situation occurs today with the **Zamir** Chorale.
- C: Did you ever use your own compositions with the choir?
- W: Many of them. But I never stood for "MY music is the only one which exists." Once there was a Jubilee program given at Town Hall celebrating my 50th birthday, in which I decided to give a program of my own compositions. Both the W.C.C. and the Central Synagogue Choir sang. We made over 1,000.00 dollars and I didn't know what to do with the money. I came home and said to my wife, "Well, we made the money, now what do you want me to do? Shall we take a trip somewhere?" She answered that she wanted to take the money and invest it in the printing of my songs. So we printed a book of songs — my first books of 11 songs. It required the investment of the 1,000.00 dollars as well as an additional few hundred. Now its out of print. I have since published three more books all with the same design on the cover ... published by Transcontinental. You ask a short question, and I give you a long answer.
- C: Did you ever use the choir as an experimental group for your compositions?
- W: I experimented with them and too often wrote extremely complicated material. At least I had someone to work with. I could hear the music in my mind, yet very often what you write on paper looks beautiful, but when it comes to the sound . . .
- C: It's not what you want . . .
- W: It ain't necessarily so. Before my work was published, I could use the choir to experiment with.
- C: Getting back to the chorus itself, what was the average age of the singers? And from what facets of life were they?

- W: Workers from every facet of life. They would frequently come to the rehearsals in the evening totally exhausted.
- c: From what? The garment, textile firms ... or unions, like the I.L.G.W.U.?
- W: Yes. Every kind of work, not necessarily the garment industry. There were plumbers, truck drivers . . .
- C: Manual laborers.
- W: Yes, nearly all of them. Even paper hangers ... every type of skill. They would always come dirty. But they loved it ... I would see 100 pairs of eyes looking at me saying, "What do you want? Take it! We'll give it all to you." There was nothing to deter them.
- C: **They** loved you ... they loved it!
- W: It wasn't a question of loving it. They felt that they wanted to give ... to give what we all have prepared. There was a tremendous enthusiasm. I'm sorry I don't have it anymore ... I don't see it anymore. Though I do teach a couple of classes now that I'm really excited about. But those classes are not quite the same as the W.C.C.
- C: You mentioned that there were more females than males. Why was that?
- W: Somehow women are more sentimental than men in singing. Even in our folklore, the majority of our songs are love songs.
- C: What was the choirs' level of Judaica?
- W: All of them read the Yiddish paper. It is questionable whether or not they attended the synagogue regularly. I don't know, maybe they did. I personally doubt it very much.
- C: Did you use any of the music you learned at the Brodsky synagogue in Kiev while you were a chorister in the two choral groups you conducted?
- W: It's a strange thing. I left the Brodsky synagogue when I was about 14 ... (leads me to his back room of his large apartment off Broadway and shows me pictures of his past — recounting his many personal relationships, achievements, etc. . .).
- C: In what languages did you address the choir during rehearsals?
- W: Whenever I would start speaking in English the choir would say, "Weiner is angry with us already." I spoke to them mainly in Yiddish. Well, you asked me about my childhood. When I left the synagogue in Kiev, I had already studied piano for one year at the Kiev Conservatory. I didn't finish the Conservatory for my family feared the onslaught of the pogroms, so we left for America. My father had left a few months before the rest

of us. In fact, our boat that left Russia was the last boat to leave from Europe prior to the start of World War I. Instead of taking 7 days to reach New York from Hungary, it took us 11. There was a lot of gold aboard the vessel and the Germans were chasing us for the booty. Yet we made it here . . . *we* were very fortunate.

During my first seven years in America, I had absolutely nothing to do with Jewish music. Nothing penetrated me. But, over time, I became acquainted with Jewish literature, various writers and authors. Since throughout my life I was an ardent reader, I quickly became saturated with the language and enchanted. I began to recall those years when I sang in the synagogue as a child. Like they say in Italian, “poco a poco”, little by little, those feelings and memories began to get closer to me. By now, I had already become acquainted with the major Jewish composers, such as Achron, Milner, Rosovsky, Gneissen, Engel . . . all of whom have left a tremendous imprint on me. I began to feverishly study their work — and the result, of course, is seen in my work.

One very important incident occurred around the year 1924. Joe Engel had just left Russia for Berlin. I located his new address and sent him three of my Yiddish compositions, thinking well, I’ll take a chance and see if he responds. I told him in my letter who I was, where I’ve studied, etc. . . . and how excited I was about the prospect of setting Yiddish poetry. Please, I asked him, tell me your impressions of my work. I had a lot of *chutzpah*. There he was, Engel, way up on top, and there I was, just a little bit of nothing.

Well, behold a few weeks later, I received a letter saying, “Young man, I think that you have talent. But I don’t understand something. You say that you sang in a synagogue choir as a child, and that you are pursuing studying Yiddish literature, yet I do not see anything Jewish in your music. Why? Why don’t you remind yourself of your past? What you sang in the synagogue? Why don’t you return to trop? *This* was the beginning of my Jewishness. It was Engel, a few thousand miles away . . . and his remarks.

All of my musical life it was Mozart, Bach and Brahms, Beethoven and Haydn, Schubert and Schumann. Here in America it was a different story. I discovered Yiddish songs which I had never heard of before. It was here in the U.S. that I encountered Ravel and other great French composers. I don’t know whether it was instinct or what, which made me write

Yiddish songs. However, I remember distinctly the A. W. Binder wanted to beat me up because I wrote a piece with parallel fifths — this was in the early 1920's. He actually wanted to beat me up. In those days he detested parallel fifths!

C: Speaking of your contemporaries, did any of them influence you aside from ...

W: I feel that I am very much under the influence of Achron and Milner.

c : How?

W: Because of the Jewishness in their melodic lines. Do you see, it is one thing to take a Jewish melody and make an arrangement. But take for instance, Boris Godunov. You know it could only have been written by a Russian who was steeped in Russian music. With me it is exactly the same thing. In the Yiddish Art-Song class that I taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary, did you sing *Yankele Vil a Yeger Zayn?* (Sings the melody from the song).

C: Yes.

W: This is trop! And it is enough for the pieces melodic base. Mimer did not take trnp per se, but this was tropish within him.

C: Right, the source of *Yiddishkeit*.

W: Consciously or unconsciously. Does it mean that because Beethoven took Scotch songs and arranged them, it made him a Scotsman? Prokefiev used Yiddish folksongs given to him by a friend of mine and wrote an overture for orchestra. Does this make him a Jew?

C: What were the goals you set for the choir?

W: Clean, clear singing.

c : Please describe your involvement with the childrens choirs in the sleep away camps during the summer.

W: I was with the Shalom Aleichem Schools for many, many years. After which I became involved with the Zionist *Farband* and their summer camp program. I probably spent a good 15, 16 summers in those camps.

C: During which years?

W: The first was Boyberick of the S. A. schools ... approximately 1925. It was located about 50 miles off Poughkeepsie. Eight miles from Rhinebeck N.Y. The S.A. order was strictly Yiddish. The children used to leave camp each summer with a hundred Yiddish songs under their belts.

C: What were the ages of the children?

W: From 6-14. I had a choir with girls who were 13, 14.

c : What type of children's music did you use?

- W: All kinds of things. There was a great pageant at the end of each summer. Our theme was "People of the World Unite." Each of the 16 bungalows represented a different nationality. For example, I had to prepare the Yugoslavian bungalow with Yugoslavian folk songs. And the artists and dancers of the camp did similarly. We had to prepare everything in Yiddish . . . translating from the Yugoslavian language into Yiddish in addition to learning the stylistic folk song of each country. And the camp finale was *Alle Menschen Zeinen Brieder* — Beethoven's Ninth. We just changed the words. All peoples are becoming one . . . what a monumental idea!
- Every year we would do this kind of event . . . varying nationalities . . . we went through hundreds of songs. But how did we do the translations? I don't read Japanese. Starting with the melodic line, I would write to the poet and take it from there. We did some big literature . . . everything was lost. I even wrote quite a number of compositions for the group too, pertaining to the theme of peace. "May all people who live find peace in the world."
- C: What was the size of the W.C.C. at its highest and lowest point?
- W: The largest size was about 140. When I left the chorus there were about 65 — many died. After all, it was alive for 35 years.
- C: In what year did you leave the choir?
- W: Ten years ago in 1970.
- c: Why?
- w: The quality of singers were not there any more. Only old people remained. And because of World War II, there was a lack of immigration . . . It wasn't anymore.
- C: When you first took over the W.C.C. how old were the members of the choir?
- W: We had young ladies in their twenties and old men in their eighties.
- C: Did you always sing accapella?
- W: We had accompaniment, yet, if the piece was accapella, we would do it that way. We used a piano at every rehearsal . . . I had to do everything with one finger . . . in order to punch out the melodic line.
- C: Were the professional singers that you brought in at performances Jewish?
- W: Yes. If not, some of them were singing in Temples. Even though Hebrew is not the same thing as Yiddish, these pros were accustomed to Synagogue music. I don't think we had many gentiles who were professional singers. We didn't use many of them,

It was primarily the preponderance of women which caused us to hire more male singers.

- C: What were some of your personal feelings leading the group?
- W: When you come to someone and they give you whatever they have and you feel their honesty and their devotion, what more can you ask?
- C: That's right . . . purity and honesty. How did the Jewish or Gentile world view the success or standard of the group?
- W: We received wonderful criticism. Once in the New York Times, they reviewed a concert and said we were the best amateur chorus in New York City . . . that was in the early '30's. That was when the group was at its peak. Somewhere between '35 and '45. It was during this period that I composed and conducted the Legend of Toil. Critics even compared it to the work of Bloch. I was very much surprised by that.
- C: Nice. Did you ever use instrumental pieces between choral numbers?
- W: We had a violinist play a group of solos. Quartets often performed with us. Audiences found it too monotonous to listen to a whole program of choral music.
- C: Who were these instrumental groups that performed with you?
- W: Professional people that we invited.
- C: Jewish professionals?
- W: It didn't make any difference. We would invite a String Quartet to perform a Beethoven movement or two.
- C: How did you place them in a typical program?
- W: We would have a group of songs with the choir, followed by the instrumental group invited for that evening. Then we'd play our second group and they would do two groups and we would do three groups . . . constantly alternating. It added variety.
- C: How long were your concerts?
- W: Normally anywhere between an hour and forty minutes and two hours. I didn't believe in any *chopness*. If a concert was announced for 3:00 p.m., I would start 5 minutes passed three. If I would announce a rehearsal for seven o'clock in the morning — five minutes passed seven I said to whoever came late, "Here is the mezzuzza, kiss it and go home." I wouldn't allow tardiness . . .
- C: If you didn't come on time . . .
- W: Unless . . . we are human beings. I knew who was sincerely telling the truth. Yet, they had the greatest respect for my punctuality. The concerts were always on time. Even the Philharmonic or the Metropolitan start their events five minutes passed the scheduled time,

- C: Do you recall any kind of choral techniques that you might have used to motivate the people in the choir?
- W: I don't know what you mean. You see sometimes I had to take them by the neck ... sometimes with their feet, and sometimes with their **puppeck**. **You** can never predict what **you** have to do. You size up the situation.
- C: Do you have any comments on the future of Jewish music? What do you foresee?
- W: If we will not have a Jewish immigration, we will be swallowed up by the larger culture. And that will be the end. I'm sorry to say it. Although there are 64 Universities in this country which have Yiddish chairs. There is even one University in Queens where there are over 700 students in the Yiddish program. But not every University has a large Yiddish department. Harvard doesn't have one, but they do have a Yiddish chair. It's strange, that you people, third generation Jews, are coming back to your parents and asking them why they didn't teach you Yiddish as a child. I've been teaching at the School of Sacred Music for the past twenty years, since '56, and this is the first time in 24 years there that they have asked me to teach Yiddish Art song. Prior to now, I had been coaching Cantors. Now I have the class called "Contemporary Music and Yiddish Art Song ... with 8 students in the class — I usually don't allow more than six ... but they forced two more on me. Why do the students eat from the palm of my hand? They're anxious to know it. I'm sorry that in those 24 years I could have influenced people throughout the country in Yiddish Art Song.
- Who are you? You're a Cantor ... and you will be taking a job in Kalamazoo. What will you do when you become a factor in the community, and they ask you to take part in a community event? What will you sing? El **Male Rahamim**? Just cantorial music? A song in English with Jewish content? Why not sing a Yiddish Art song, you're a Jew? It improves you as a human being as well as an artist. Not just one avenue of expression. There's a famous saying in Yiddish "A worm lies in horseradish — he thinks there is nothing sweeter." It means that if you are used to only the same thing day in and day out, you think nothing else exists. It's' wrong! One way of doing things does not mean culture.
- We are swallowed by larger cultures here in America. The fact that I'm stubborn is nobody's secret . . . go ahead and invest so much time, money and energy in your own designs. Nobody subsidized my work ... once in a while I got some-

one to help me out, but I'm not a shnorer (beggar). I don't ask for anything.

Not many of my songs are being sung. Why? Because they are too complicated. But I'm aiming at music somewhere else. Not in the realm of songs like Bei *Mir Bistu Sheyn*, which has a right to exist! Everything has a right to exist. But when they come to me and ask me, "Where is your Schubert", I'll open my mouth and I'll say nothing. So what does it prove? We have our Schubert! Not with my own compositions, but with the works by Engel, Gnessen, Rosovsky, Fromm, and even by me little *boichek*, Yehudi Weiner ... and I talk about my own already.

We are a young musical culture ... probably a hundred years old. What was Jewish music a hundred years ago? It was only to be found in the synagogue. Nowhere else. Just sung by the Cantor. How many choruses were there? Where was the orchestra? Where was the Opera? Where was the symphony? The Quartet, Sextet, ... Tell me, do you know of any? Why shouldn't Jews know? I don't know. Occasionally someone wrote a symphony. Mahler is a great composer, but he is not a Jewish composer. Neither is Mendelsohn, Rubinstein, Gershwin ... they are *not* Jewish composers. They are Jews — composers, but not Jewish composers. Which is something entirely different. This is a problem. Am I stubborn. No, these are my beliefs and I love them. Its my love. What to do about it now, I don't know? I have given up writing for the synagogue five years, because we are beginning to use Rock 'n Roll in the Service. Jazzing up the Service. And I want to have a *m'chitza*, a division, between the secular and the profane. Between good and bad. I do not want to bring the musical comedy into the synagogue. The synagogue has its place and so does comedy. Everything has a right to exist. But to break down the *mechitza* and mix up all these things. It seems that we love the goyim. Because the goyim took jazz into the church and our synagogue follows suit. I object to these things.

C: No instruments in the Temple then?

W: An organ is enough. A Quartet, an orchestra, perfectly alright, but not Rock 'n Roll with electric guitars and drums.

C: I know a cantorial student at H.U.C. who often performs a service with her light acoustic guitar and flute, taking on the effect of an instrumental interlude ...

W: It all depends on how you use the flute. "*B' tzil-tze-lei terua*", in Psalm 150, with its description of musical instruments ...

I'm not objecting to using instruments at all, but how they are used in the synagogue is a subject for discussion.

C: What pieces did you select for those instrumental interludes of your choral programs. Classics?

W: Always.

C: Any Jewish works?

W: My cantata. Three cantatas of mine utilize an orchestra. When I performed Mendelsohn's *Walpurgis Nacht*, I didn't change one iota. Just changed the language. I didn't minimize anything, or distort anything, I have too much respect for the printed page.

C: Let's say you dislike a bar of what a composer has written, and feel you could have done it better, would you change it?

W: I would never do it. Sometimes I will make, out of a quarter, two eighths, or vice versa, because of the words

C: Simply rhythmic changes according to the text.

W: These textual kind of compromises are made, but not those which destroy the music. No, if I don't like the song, I will not do it at all. It is my sense of duty. Or I'll take a piece of paper and write my own song. I want to give of myself . . . or is it that you are the one that wants to take? Where are we now?

C: I'd like to thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

W: Alright.

LAZAR WEINER: REBEL WITH A CAUSE

SAMUEL ROSENBAUM

(Excerpted from a talk given as part of a program in memory of Lazar Weiner at the 35th annual convention of the Cantors Assembly)

How to grasp the essence of Lazar Weiner?

When a lawyer does not have any precedent in the law with which to support his case, he will try to convince the court that his case is unique, *sui generis*, an altogether special and different case than has ever been considered before, and therefore, must be considered on its own merits. The case is not to be compared with anything that has preceded it, there having been nothing like it until now.

Lazar Weiner was *sui generis*.

One, unique, special, like no other who has ever come before.

His major uniqueness was not only his extraordinary talent but that it was coupled with a thorough classical musical discipline and training. Few, if any, Jewish composers of the first half of the 20th Century came to their craft so formidably prepared. He was not a primitive although his ear was true to the authentic spirit of the Jewish people. He was a master. Uniquely gifted, he developed his own style. And while he was always true to that style he was not confined to one pattern. He could be lyrical, dissonant, elegantly legato, jagged and angry, classical, contemporary, spare and luxuriant.

His songs were so carefully thought out, the voice and piano treated so evenly, that they could well be sonatas for voice and piano. They easily hold their own against Schubert, Brahms and Moussorgsky, and some even against John Cage.

But what brings him even closer and makes him dearer to the Jewish *neshome* is his long-time devotion to Yiddish poetry. He was determined to the very end to bring new life, new light, and melody to the known and little known works of Yiddish poets, who were, he said, the secular prophets of the Jewish people.

The June issue of the *Journal of Synagogue Music* will give proof that he was not interested in Yiddish poets only to find new texts for him to set. He was concerned that the words should live and if that meant refurbishing a simple folk tune so that it became an elegant art song, he was ready and willing to do it.

In November 1980, Lazar sent me a portfolio of songs he called “*Poet’n Zingen*” (The Songs of Poets). These were four songs whose music as well as words had been composed by the poets themselves. He had constructed a tasteful and loving accompaniment for each, together with a short article in which he told how he came to put together such a collection.

This portfolio bears out anew Lazar’s lifelong belief that Yiddish poetry was the true essence of *amkha*, the soul of the broad Jewish masses, just as the *Tanakh* contained the heart of the Jewish sense of ethics and morality.

As a human being, Lazar was demanding of himself as of others. He was acerbic, he was feisty, apparently unable to communicate personal feelings easily except through his music. He covered this inadequacy with stinging jabs of his own kind of humor.

We wanted him, at least I wanted him, so much to be our grandfather, but he twisted and turned insisting on being Peck’s bad boy.

He was a rebel because he could not accept fame and glory easily. He never let down his guard, nor his ambition. I firmly believe he enjoyed being angry more than being satisfied. You might say that his anger was essentially his credo, his unrelenting drive for ever higher standards in Jewish life and in Jewish music.

Now, if anyone has earned a peaceful eternity, it is Lazar. But if I know him he is probably at this moment complaining that I am taking too much time talking when we could be spending it, not in mourning for his passing, but in celebrating his having been for an altogether too short a time in our company. Celebrating, by listening again and again to his music.

LAZAR WEINER
310 West 97th Street
New York, New York 10025
November 28, 1980

Dear Sam:

I am enclosing the promised four songs "Poet'n Zingen". If the music is acceptable, I am enclosing the poems for you to translate which I hope you will do.

I do not have the correct Yiddish spelling of the song "Di Nacht" at present but will send it later.

I repeat, if the songs will be accepted I would like to have the following: The Yiddish poems should be transliterated into English and on the other side — the English translations. I also enclose my small article "I Remember". This unique document should be a Foreward at the beginning of the album of the four songs.

Please let me hear from you.

Yours,
Lazar

MUSIC SECTION

“POET’N ZINGEN”

(Poets Sing)

Four Yiddish Art/Folk Songs
with words and music by

Avraham Reisen

Peretz Hirshbein

Mani-Leib

Mordechai Gebirtig

newly arranged by
Lazar Weiner

FOREWORD

I REMEMBER

LAZAR WEINER

About the years 1918-19, my unforgettable chaver, the poet N. B. Minkoff introduced me to Yiddish literature. One day I asked if it would be possible to meet some of the writers whose works I had been reading. So one Saturday evening he led me to the home of Dr. J. Kling on 181st Street in the Bronx. The word salon was familiar to me through reading, and here in Dr. Kling's home I found a salon where a group of Yiddish writers used to meet. The evening was captivating with its readings from newly written manuscripts, its discussions and its heated arguments.

It was here that I met Yehoash, Reisin, Hirschbein of the older and known writers, and a group of "DI YUNGE" among them Mani Leib, Moishe Leib Halperin, H. Leivik, Zishe Lande, Ignatov, Raboy, Haimovitch, Dilon, Rolnik and many others. Rolnik always sat in a corner and never uttered a word. I was elated by the atmosphere of these Saturday evenings and always looked forward to spending time with these creative minds.

Bertha Kling, the wife of Dr. Kling, and a poet in her own right, possessed a small but very warm and expressive voice. She had a never ending source of folk songs and songs in folk style and we made music far into the night. I heard almost all of these songs for the first time in my life.

When I first heard the song "*May Ko Mashmalon*" Bertha told me that it was not a folk song. I was very impressed by it and asked her who wrote the tune to this poem. She took me by the hand and brought me over to the poet Reisin and said "Ask him". I dared and asked. He answered, "The nigunim that I heard when I was a Yeshivah bochur have lingered in my memory all my life, and I fitted my poem to the rhythm and mood of those tunes."

Then Bertha introduced me to Mani Leib who had written "*Flantz Mayn Shvesterl a Gortn.*" I asked him whether he had made up the tune to this poem and his answer was "Yes, I made the tune to fit the poem."

"*Di Nacht*" Peretz Hirshbein wrote the poem as well as the tune. I remember his appearance. Tall, erect and slender with a magnificent head of hair. He sat at the piano and accompanied Bertha Kling. Hirshbein could not read music but somehow his

finger seemed to know how to move over the keys. The harmonies were simple and primitive. Later I learned that the songs, “*A Malach Veynt*” and “*Yamen Royshn*” which I thought were folk songs, were also by Peretz Hirshbein. A short time later I made simple piano accompaniments of these songs and arranged to have them published.

Although I did not know him personally, I can't omit the name Gebirtig from “Poets Sing.” I have always admired him for his genius in combining the perfect harmony of word and sound.

I know that there are others that I have omitted in this series, but let this be a beginning.

These arrangements I dedicated to the memory of the unforgettable Bertha Kling.

Poem and Melody

I

by
A. Reizen

arr. Lazar Weiner

MAY KO MASHMA LON

SLOW

MAY KO MASH-ME-LON DER

RE-GN? VOS ZSHE LOZT ER MIR TZU ME-AN?-ZAFNE TRO-PNS OF DI

SHOY-BN KAY-KLEN ZICH VI TRI-BE TRE-AN. LNDI SHTI-VL IZ TZU-

2

RI-SN, LUN ES VERT IN GAS A BLO-TE; BALD VET OCH DER VIN-TER

The first system consists of a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line is in a 2/4 time signature and contains the lyrics: RI-SN, LUN ES VERT IN GAS A BLO-TE; BALD VET OCH DER VIN-TER. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line with chords in the right hand.

KU-MEN CH'HOB KAIN VA-RE-ME KA-PO-TE... MAY KO

The second system continues the piece with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: KU-MEN CH'HOB KAIN VA-RE-ME KA-PO-TE... MAY KO. A dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) is placed above the vocal staff. The piano accompaniment maintains a similar rhythmic pattern to the first system.

MASH-ME-LON DOS LICH-TL? VOSZSHE LOZT ES MIR TZU

Ped. Ped. Ped.

The third system concludes the piece with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the lyrics: MASH-ME-LON DOS LICH-TL? VOSZSHE LOZT ES MIR TZU. The piano accompaniment features a more active right hand with arpeggiated chords. The word "Ped." is written below the piano staff three times, indicating pedaling for the final chords.

HE-RN! S'KA-PET UN ES TRIFT IR CHEY-LEV UN SVET BALD FUN IR MIT

VE-RN! A-ZOY TZANK ICH DO IN KLAI-ZL VIA LICH-TL SHVOCHUN TIN-KL BIZ ICH

VEL A-ZOY MIR OYS-GEYN IN DER SHITL IN MIZ-RACH VIN-KL.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. (TEN)

Poem and Melody
by
Pavel Hirschbein

Di Nacht⁴
(Ay-ere-lu-ere) An. Lazar Weiner

Moderato *mp*

Di NACHT, ZI KLUMT BAY NACHT ZU MIR

SHTIL-LEH, SHTIL LI ZUCHT DI TIR; E-FIN OYF, ICH KUM NOCH BU, NIT

VER DEM TROY-ER BAY MAINTIR, DROJ-SN KLA-PN SHVE-RE TRIT

5

BARG UN BOJ-MER SHLO-FN NIT; SHTE-RN, GRO-ZN VA-CHNITZT;

The first system of the handwritten musical score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are "BARG UN BOJ-MER SHLO-FN NIT; SHTE-RN, GRO-ZN VA-CHNITZT;". The piano accompaniment is written in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

DUR-CHN HAR-TZN TRO-JER TZIT. SHU-LEH, SHTI-LEH BARG UN BOJM!

The second system continues the musical score. The vocal line lyrics are "DUR-CHN HAR-TZN TRO-JER TZIT. SHU-LEH, SHTI-LEH BARG UN BOJM!". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs.

IN MAJN HAR-TZN SH'A UN SHTIL VEBT DI NACHTA ZI-SH TROYM,

The third system concludes the musical score. The vocal line lyrics are "IN MAJN HAR-TZN SH'A UN SHTIL VEBT DI NACHTA ZI-SH TROYM,". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a bass line, ending with a fermata over the final notes.

6

SHTI-LEK, SHTI-LEK BAR G ZUN BOYM! IN MAYN HAR-TZN VEYNT DI VELT.

The first system consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with a fermata over the first measure. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords in the right hand.

AJ-LI-LIK-LI SHLOF AYN VELT! AJ-LI LIK-LI SHLOF ZUN RIL.

The second system continues the piece. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are shown. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *f*, and a tempo marking of *40*. The system is divided into two measures by a vertical line.

(slowly)

S' BENKT MAYN HARTZ A-ZOJ NOCH RIL. AJ-LI LIK-LI

The third system begins with the tempo marking *(slowly)*. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are shown. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *f*, and a tempo marking of *40*. The system is divided into two measures by a vertical line.

SHLOF AJN VELT, AJ Li Li Li Li

This system contains a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment is written for the right and left hands, with a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are written above the vocal line.

SHLOF MAYN HARTZ AJ - Li Li Li - Li SHLOF UN RU

This system continues the musical score. The key signature remains G major. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are shown. The lyrics are written above the vocal line.

AJ - Li Li Li - Li Li

Poco Rit...

This system concludes the musical score. The key signature remains G major. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are shown. The lyrics are written above the vocal line. The system ends with a 'Poco Rit.' marking.

Poem and Melody
by
Mami-Leib.

8

arr. Liza Weiner

MAJN SHVESTERL.

Andante, con sentimento

Handwritten musical score for the first system. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo/mood is 'Andante, con sentimento'. The lyrics for this system are 'FLANTZT MAJN SHVES-TE-RL A'. The piano part includes a dynamic marking of 'p' and a 'Ped...' instruction.

Ped... Ped... simile

Handwritten musical score for the second system. The lyrics are 'GOR-TN HOJ-HOJ HOJ-HOJ BLI-EN SHEY-NE BLU-MEN DOR-TN'. The piano part includes a dynamic marking of 'p' and an 'Ar.' (Arco) instruction.

Handwritten musical score for the third system. The lyrics are 'HOJ-HOJ! AZ VEN MIR VET BI-TER VE-RN IN MAJN LE-BN IN MAJN'. The piano part includes a dynamic marking of 'p' and an 'Ar.' (Arco) instruction.

9

SHVE - RN, HOY - HOY, HOY - HOY, ZOL ICH IN DEM GOE - TN KU - MEN

KU - EN BAY DI SHEY - NE BLU - MEN, HOY!

GROE - T MAYN SHES - TE - BL A BRU - NEM

10

Handwritten musical score for the first system. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: HOJ-HOJ, HOJ-HOJ, SHAYNT DOS VA-SER VI DI ZL NENNEN.

Handwritten musical score for the second system. The lyrics are: HOJ-HOJ! AZ VEN MIR VET BI-TER VE- - - RN.

Handwritten musical score for the third system. The lyrics are: IN MAYN LE- BN IN MAYN SHVE - RN HOJ-HOJ. There is a 'gra' marking above the piano accompaniment in the final measure.

11

HOY-HOY ZOL ICH FAR DEM BRU-NEM ZIN-KEN

The first system consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

UND OS FRI-SHE VA-SER TRUN-NEN HOY!

Tempo I

The second system continues the piece with a tempo change to 'Tempo I' indicated by a hairpin symbol. The vocal line has a half note G4, quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking 'p' (piano) and continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

NEJT MAYN SHVES-TE-RL A KI-SHN. HOY-HOY HOY-HOY

The third system concludes the piece. The vocal line features a half note G4, quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, followed by a final 'Hoy-Hoy' with a fermata. The piano accompaniment continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, ending with a final chord.

1h

PACH FUN VAI — SEGENZ GE — RI — SN, HOJ — HOJ,
 AZ VEN MIR VET BI — TER YE — RN IN MAYN LE — BN IN MAYN
 SHVE — RN HOJ — HOJ, HOJ — HOJ ZOL ICH OI — FN KI — SHN

Musical notation includes treble and bass staves for piano accompaniment and a vocal line. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *pp* (pianissimo). The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

13

Handwritten musical score for the first system. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: LI - GN BIZ DER TOYT VET MICH FAR VI - GN. A long horizontal line is drawn above the vocal staff, spanning the entire length of the system. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, showing chords and some melodic fragments. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, showing chords and some melodic fragments.

Handwritten musical score for the second system. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: HOY! The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, showing chords and some melodic fragments. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, showing chords and some melodic fragments.

Poem (and Melody)
by
M. Gebin'lik

Yankele $\frac{14}{}$
(Vig-Lid)

arr. Lazar Weiner

Moderato

SLOF ZSHE MIR SHOYN, YANKE-LE, MAYN SHEY-NER, DI

EJ-GELECH, DI SHVARTZIN-KE MACH TZLI, A JIN-GE-LE VOS HOTSHOINA-LE

TZESN'LECH MUZ NOCH, DI MAME ZINGEN AY LIU-LIU? A

JIN-GE-LE VOS HOT SHOYN A-LE TZEJN-LECH, MUZN OCH DI MA-ME ZIN-GEN AY-LIU
 LIU A JIN-GE-LE, VOS HOT SHOYN A-LE TZEJN-LECH, UN
 VET MIT MA-ZL BALD IN CHEY-DEY GEYN UN LERNEN VET ER CHU MESH UNGE

16

MO-RE, ZOL VEJ-NEN YENDI MA-ME VIGTİM AJN? UN

LER-NEN VET ER CHUG MESH UN GE-MO-RE, ZOL VEJ-NEN YENDI MA-ME VIGTİM

Poco Più Mosso

AJN? A JN-GE-LE VOS LERNEN VET GE -

17

MO-RE, OT SHTEYT DER TA-TE KVILT UN HERTZICH TZU, A

The first system of the handwritten musical score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

SIN-GE-LE VOS VAKST A TAL-MID CHO-CHEM LOZT GANTZE NECHT DER MA-MEN NI.

The second system continues the musical score. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are consistent with the first system. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

RL? A SINGE-LE VOS VAKST A TAL-MID CHO-CHEM LOZT

The third system concludes the musical score. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are consistent with the previous systems. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

18

NIT DER MAHEN NIT TZU-RLU! A JIN-GE-LE VOSVAKSATA TAL-MU
 CHO-CHEM, UN A GE-NI-TER JOY-CHEK OJCH TZU GLAYEH. A
 JIN-GE-LE A KLINGER CHO-SNBO-CHEK, ZOL LI-GN A ZOJ NASVIJN A

mp *staccato*

19

Handwritten musical score for the first system. The vocal line is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: TAJCH? A JIN-GE-LE A KLL-KER CHO-SN BO-CHEP, ZOL. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a simple rhythmic pattern in the right hand.

Handwritten musical score for the second system. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: LI-GNA-ZOJ NASVI IN A TAJCH. The key signature changes to E minor (three flats) for the final measure. The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and the instruction *Tempo I*. The word *Nu* is written above the final note of the vocal line, and *para zir* is written above the piano accompaniment.

Handwritten musical score for the third system. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: SHOF-ZSHE MIR MAJNTAJ-ER CHO-SN BO-CHEP, DER-VBJLIG SU IN SAVI-LE BA. The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano).

20

MIR SVET KOS-TN NOCH FIL MI UN MA-MES TRE-RN BIZ VA-NEN SVET A-

The first system of the handwritten musical score consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The piano accompaniment starts with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The music is written in a fluid, handwritten style.

MENTSHA ROJS FUN DIR. SVET KOS-TN NOCH FIL MI UN MA-MES TRE-RN BIZ

The second system continues the musical piece. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are shown. The lyrics are: MENTSHA ROJS FUN DIR. SVET KOS-TN NOCH FIL MI UN MA-MES TRE-RN BIZ. The notation remains consistent with the first system, showing the continuation of the melody and accompaniment.

VA-NEN SVET A MENTSHA ROJS FUN DIR

The third system concludes the musical piece. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are shown. The lyrics are: VA-NEN SVET A MENTSHA ROJS FUN DIR. The notation shows the final notes of the piece, with some fermatas and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'.

REVIEW OF NEW MUSIC

"Psalm 139," by Warren Benson for S.A.T.B. and keyboard, Transcontinental Music, New York

Augmenting the list of new publications for the *Gates of Repentance*, Warren Benson, Professor of Composition at the Eastman School of Music, provides a tautly crafted, coloristic approach to an English translation of Psalm 139.

Fugacious feminine endings and light, treble organ comments buoyantly color the text, 'Wither can I flee from your presence'. "Heavens" and "lower depths" are respectively painted with an ascending serpentine organ line and a descending diatonic women's duet. An evanescent tonal shift from Ab to B gives flight to "the wings of morning" while the solitude of octaves punctuates "farthest shore".

It is refreshing to hear an instrumental accompaniment that has a lift of its own. At times it punctuates or extends vocal ideas, other times it initiates; always in an engaging way.

Curiously the composer omits setting the concluding thought:

"If I say, 'Surely darkness will conceal me, night will hide me from view,' even the darkness is not too dark for You, the night is clear as the day."

Whether this last image was thought to be redundant or perhaps the tenacity of "Your right hand will hold me" was preferred as a final idea, this setting relinquishes the possibility of an arch form that would return to the ephemeral nature of the opening.

The work is not easily sight read. Its performance requires the same patient care that the composer obviously gave to its conceptualization; but the rewards are greatly satisfying.

The Transcontinental catalog distinguishes itself by the welcome addition of Warren Benson's fine music.

"Blessed is the Match," S.S.A.T.B. acapella, by Lawrence Avery, Transcontinental Music, New York

In a simple, unassuming setting of Hanna Szenesh's "*Ashrei Hagafur*" (translator is not credited), Cantor Avery's choice of harmonies brings up the issue of harmonic vocabulary.

Just as one would not deliver a speech with each sentence in a different language so one should not compose a musical entity with many different kinds of harmonic devices. The result is the same in both cases; a statement communicated with less clarity.

To be specific, modal vs. tonal, quartal vs. tertial, and triads vs. sevenths all mix together in an opalescent wash.

While clearly the composer has other elements nicely under control, harmonically this piece would be much more effective employing the doctrine of "Less is More!"

"Hebrew Songs for the Beginning Beginners," Piano Solos and Duets compiled and arranged by Ruth Norman, published by Century Music Publishing Co., 263 Veterans Blvd., Carlstadt, New Jersey 07072.

Familiar holiday tunes are arranged for both solo and four hands. This is a lovely way for a parent and child to share a piano bench. Recommend it to your congregation.

"Jewish Easy Piano Pieces," op. 97, Words and Music by Minuetta Kessler, Transcontinental Music, New York

These are charming, personal reflections upon the holidays, Israel, and *t'fillah* for beginning pianists who like to sing along as they play. The music is better than the words.

It is hoped that Transcontinental will encourage the creation of many more instrumental works; for now it offers the composer of Jewish music limitless possibilities.

"Avadim Hayinu," S.A.T.B. acappella by Steven Richards, Transcontinental Music, New York

Cantor Richards, former editor of Transcontinental, now serving Temple Beth Israel in Phoenix has embroidered the traditional tune with a festive madrigal lightness. Accessibly crafted, this piece should do very well in the educational arena as well as in synagogue life. The next time a choral director in your community inquires about Jewish material for his spring concert, recommend this Pass-over madrigal.

"In Days of Awe" medium voice and piano, music by Maurice Goldman, words by Herb Brin, Transcontinental Music, New York

Here is an expression of yearning composed in a later romantic style with an undulating pianistic accompaniment. If your congregation is programming concerts in and around the High Holidays, this art song would be a lovely inclusion.

"Yism' chu," S.A.T.B. and keyboard, by Mordechai Cohen, Transcontinental Music, New York

While there is little to be said for an endless ostinato accompaniment and less than inventive supporting harmonies, the rhythmic

vitality of this hassidic-like setting (complete with “*Yism’chu v’malchutecha*, AYE!) is, indeed, infectious.

If your choral forces are not intimidated by extended beats (5/8, 7/8, 11/8) sung at a whirlwind tempo, this piece will surely wake up the lethargic and recapture the distinterested.

“*You Shall Love the Lord Your God*,” medium voice, S.A.T.B., oboe and keyboard, by Michael Horvit, Transcontinental Music, New York

This setting is reminiscent of classic Reform music, composed in the forties and fifties. Every cliché associated with “religious” works can be found in this treatment, including augmented seconds, doleful pedal points, oboe sequences with Semitic tunes as ornamentation. Why, when Transcontinental is so selective about accepting new works, is this piece published in 1981? If you are in a nostalgic, Cecil B. DeMille mood, you’ll enjoy performing it.

“*Kaddish*,” S.A.T.B., keyboard, by Marvin David Levy, Transcontinental Music, New York

In memory of Leonard Joel Goldberg, a man whose life spanned but thirty-four years, the composer offers a simple, contemporary Kaddish. All voices sing one melody. This chant is varied by alternating textures of men and women’s voices along with concomitant octave doublings. The accompaniment joins in now and again supporting the tune in a peaceful davening fashion. The singers are instructed to sing with quiet intensity in a sustained legato avoiding all opportunities for dramatic accentuation.

The result is an effectively stark intonation with a theatrical intimacy of sensitive proportion.

“*Psalm 121*,” S.A.T.B. and cello, by Aminadav Aloni, Transcontinental Music, New York

This is a most interesting interpretation of “Esa Einai” by a newcomer to the Transcontinental catalog. Aloni, a Los Angeles freelance composer and Temple music director is a member of the Los Angeles Composers Council. This composition is the result of a creative exercise “assigned” to three members who were all asked to set this psalm. At a subsequent meeting, the “premieres” were performed and discussed.

Aloni divides the psalm into three sections:

1. *Esa einai — al yanum shomrecha.*

Lyric, sustained, double stopped cello harmonic underpinning.

2. ***Hinei lo yanum – al yad yeminechu.***

Rhythmic, fugal, pizzicato cello, mixed meter, Yemenite-feel.

3. ***Yomam hashemesh – meatah v'ad olam.***

Return to a lyric, impassioned andante with a strong, dramatic cadence.

His strong sense of form, melody and color combined with years of knowing what is practical without the loss of integrity makes Aloni a bright new star on the national scene. Welcome!