

RENEW THE OLD, SANCTIFY THE NEW

Notes from My Tenth Trip To Israel

MAX WOHLBERG

The attraction of Israel does not diminish. If anything, its magnetism increases. Jerusalem becomes more precious with each visit. Every step on its cobbled streets, every glance at its ancient walls arouses one's emotions and excites one's senses. Life, it would seem, acquires a new dimension with a journey to Israel.

This does not mean that utopia has arrived there and every source of annoyance has been eliminated. One accustomed to normally efficient service is inevitably annoyed by patent carelessness and purposeless delays. One exposed to Western standards of communication, sanitation, business and social behavior is often startled by the unexpected appearance of their eastern counterparts.

Still, this is the healthiest, most cultured, only democratic state in the Near East, and it is Israel, our beloved homeland, the source of our spiritual strength. (If, in addition to praise, these lines contain also criticism as well as some suggestions, please remember they reflect the views of one who is simultaneously an American, a conservative Jew and a Hazzan.)

Although I wished to spend my entire month's vacation in Jerusalem, I managed to visit such magnificent new settlements as **Ma'aleh Adumim**, **Efrata** and **Kiryat Arba** whose strategic locations are of inestimable value to the security of Israel. The planning and architecture of these, as well as of such Jerusalem suburbs as Gilo and French Hill, are superb. The views of and from these new projects are invariably breathtaking.

It was also my privilege to visit (near Nazareth) the first Mesorati (Conservative) kibbutz, **Hanaton**. Still unfinished and in need of considerable financial support, it is located in a beautiful area and holds great promise of success. Additional source of pride in this venture may be shared by my readers in the knowledge that Yossi Zucker, a recent graduate of the Cantors Institute, his dear wife and new baby are members of this kibbutz. As Yossi has evident gifts for composition, it is hoped that some of his **hofesh** will be spent creatively in that area.

Dr. Max Wohlberg is a distinguished hazzan, teacher, lecturer and scholar. He is a veritable encyclopedia of hazzanut. He has served as Professor of Hazzanut at the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America for one quarter century.

Currently the general concerns of Israelis lie in such areas as: economy, inflation, involvement in Lebanon and elections. These are serious matters and must be dealt with by the Israelis exclusively. However, as an addendum to the elections, the religious parties proposed a change in the *Who Is A Jew* law. Their proposal would preempt exclusive authority to declare who is — and who is not — a Jew to the Orthodox Rabbi. This dangerous, arrogant, potentially divisive proposal requires some comments.

Last week, in his acceptance speech in Dallas, sandwiched between generous doses of juvenile wisecracks and palpable jingoism, President Reagan ventured to suggest that indeed religion and politics do mix. Risking the epithet *subversive* (or *intolerant*) I categorically state that they should not mix. Witness in Israel the deplorable, degrading descent of representatives of religion into the muck of petty, partisan, political plots.

Painful though it be, it must be declared that one imbued with an enlightened, liberal view and an abiding attachment to our religion is apt to be hurt, insulted and shamed by the callous, conceited, politicized views, words and acts of so many of our Orthodox brothers. Parenthetically, one also notes with regret the complacent tolerance of these reactionary views by, in the main, a religiously uncommitted, liberal population. All too many doubtlessly devout Jews readily accepting material subventions of all sorts are yet sparing in their civic affiliations.

In tangentially related areas we see the bulk of Hassidic and Agudah groups persist in the retention of obsolete habits while evading contemporary usage. Notwithstanding the hot Israeli summer they stubbornly cling to the *shtreimel* and *kapote*, acquired in Poland some four hundred years ago but ignore the correct pronunciation of our ancestral tongue acquired four thousand years ago. Thus, on Israeli radios one regularly hears old and new hassidic songs whose texts are improperly pronounced and incorrectly accented.

The next *gilgul* (appearance) of some of these songs may be in some otherwise well organized synagogue whose rabbi or cantor in search of *ruah* (spirit) introduced it failing to realize that its shortcomings may render it “an ill-wind that turns none to good”.

In all fairness I should make it clear that I do not criticize such groups as, for example, the Hapoel Hamizrachi. While we may dis-

agree on some matters of importance, its devotion to Israel, its commitment to its security and welfare are beyond question. My respect is unbounded for such pioneers of religious Zionism as the saintly Harav Kook. Rabbis Meir Berlin (Bar Ilan), Ze'ev Gold (the latter succeeded by my brother Harry, of blessed memory). They were *ohavei Yisrael*, bent on strengthening, not dividing, our people. For, let us not forget, the attempt to revise the *Who Is A Jew* law is an attempt to disenfranchise Conservative and Reform Jews, to, in fact, invalidate our Jewishness and, in the process, gain greater political favor for the Orthodox establishment.

In the matter of conversions, I suspect that the true concern of our Orthodox brothers is not how it is done but *by whom*. It would seem that conversions done by Rabbis X who was imprisoned for serious offenses involving nursing homes, Y who stole a number of sacred scrolls and hundreds of library books, Z who "solicited" clients for a loanshark, the (step) father of X, a *rebbe*, involved in smuggling narcotics secreted in volumes of the Talmud — their conversions, since they were Orthodox, were valid. But those of such eminently learned Conservative Rabbis as Agus and Bokser, for example, were not. Preposterous. Conversions by Reform rabbis, including the scholarly Tuvia ben Horin of Har El whom I was just privileged to meet, would be ignored. Visualize for a moment the catastrophic calamity, communal and familial upheaval the American Jewish community would have to face.

As for scholarship, a requisite automatically assumed for the Orthodox, a recent experience may be illustrative. At a discussion on halacha the Orthodox representative chanced to quote a frequently appearing Talmudic phrase: *Tinok shenishbah*, a captive child. He, however, pronounced it as *shenishbar*. Some of us thought that it was merely a slip of the tongue. But to compound his ignorance he proceeded to translate it as "a broken (sic) child".

Enough, however, of related matters, it is time to turn to matters solely musical. To pave the way some seemingly unrelated episodes will be of help.

1. A leisurely Friday afternoon found me listening to a radio interview of the enormously popular Sephardi singer, Yehoram Gaon. As his illustrations included Pavarotti (with the concluding measures of *Che gelida manina*), Sinatra and Stevie Wonder, the intent of his remarks eluded me at first. However with the inclusion of a

number of charmingly performed Sephardi songs, it soon became clear that Gaon wished to stress the importance of “successful communication.” While the multi-colored and many-leveled illustrations were well chosen, I was both surprised and humbled at the fact that most “Jewish” songs cited were unknown to me.

2. On a visit to the library on the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University, I chanced to pick up the October 1925 issue of *Teatron Veamanut*, a monthly reflecting the concerns of the artists in Eretz Israel.

In an article noting the opening of the Conservatory for Hazzanut in Jerusalem, S. *Rosowsky* states: “with deep faith in the eternally creative, religious spirit of our people it is my firm conviction that we stand at the threshold of the flowering of our liturgical music. Both our undying spirit as well as our fortunate opportunity in acquiring and getting to know the oriental elements of our people’s musical heritage which are being revealed to us on every step are causes of confidence. These are, without doubt, the new wells, the sources of creativity of our liturgical song. Eretz Israel is destined to serve as prime cause in the creation of our music.”

3. In our long, eventful history we have frequently seen the emergence of a small Jewish community in gaining renown due to its scholastic preeminence. It will suffice to name such towns as Yavneh, Sura, Pumbeditha, Mainz, Troyes, Slobodka and Wolozhin. Now juxtapose to those the Jewish communities of the United States.

For the first time in our history approximately six million Jews are gathered in one (free) country. Yet no scholastic preeminence is ascribed to this group. As a matter of fact — speaking of matters musical — while Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Lithuania have left their imprint on Jewish music, the influence of the United States is minimal and at times deplorable. Jazz, rock and pseudohassidic are frequently utilized elements. In our *nusah*, as well as in our cantillation, the Lithuanian tradition dominates.

Furthermore, although Israel may be considered the strongest link in the composition of our peoplehood, its spirit, the quality and mood of its being and living, the nature of its melos finds no echo, no reflection in the music of our synagogues. I am, of course, discounting the occasional use of a Sephardi tune for *Adon Olam* or *Yigdal*. My concern is *nusah* itself. That one should consider others (places, people) in one’s prayers is evidenced by such texts as *Aheinu kol bet Yisrael*, *Veliyrushalayim*, *Yekum Purkan*, etc.

Assuming the validity of my thesis, my next step is to ascertain which melodic motifs are native to Israel. As far as the *edot hamizrah*, the eastern communities are concerned, we must acknowledge that Rosowsky's admonitions were not heeded and, excepting for a few specialists, their music is still an enigma to most of us. I was therefore anxious to hear if some uniquely Israeli quality can be discerned in the Western-Ashkenazi synagogue in Israel.

To this end I attended Sabbath services (all in Jerusalem) in the Great Synagogue (Orthodox), the M'sorati (Conservative), Har El (Progressive), Hebrew Union College (Reform), Mevakshei Derech (originally Reconstructivist, independent and intellectually challenging) and the Italian (traditional) synagogue. While excepting the last, named, all were conducted with professional competence, some specific description may be in order.

The M'sorati service on Agron Street, smoothly led by capable cantor, Dov Kaplan, is an exact replica of what you would hear in the average American Conservative synagogue. In the Great Synagogue, the truly talented Cantor, Naftali Herstig, sang beautifully a service which would be at home in, say, Beth El in Boro Park, accompanied by a male-choir, efficiently conducted by Eli Jaffe, singing familiar music, tastefully arranged by a gifted young musician, Raymond Goldstein, who is also on the faculty of Rubin Academy. The choir, incidentally, is one of the four decent choruses in Israel. At Har El a young man (a student?) with a fine baritone chanted a service familiar to most, Reform congregations in the United States including at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. The service at Mevakshei Derech, while including liturgically innovative elements did not deviate from what is generally considered traditional Western music.

To sum up: the Israeli-Ashkenazi synagogue functions musically on *nusah* it inherited in lands of the *galut* and has as yet not developed a quality uniquely Israeli. Consequently, at the moment, Israel has nothing native to offer us as far as synagogue music is concerned.

We, in the United States, who would wish to incorporate some Israeli quality into our *nusah* have, therefore, a choice: We can wait until a new native musical pattern will emerge in Israel or we can attempt to create a formula, pattern or style that will have a quality peculiar to Israel. Choosing the first alternative we expose ourselves to the likelihood that a haphazard, probably lamentable

growth of nusah will include influences one would wish to keep out of the realm of liturgy.

A half a century ago the renowned Rabbi Israel Leventhal published a book of sermons entitled "*Steering Or Drifting.*" That, essentially, is the choice we face. Should we do nothing, pay no attention to the enormously exciting *kibbutz galuyot* in our ancient homeland, pay no heed to the multicolored, rainbow-hued, odd-sounding melismas heard in unpretentious places of worship or decide to study, analyze, organize this rich musical heritage and endeavor to incorporate characteristic elements of it into our liturgical music. The latter choice would, needless to add, serve as a unifying factor, bringing about closer affinity between the now distant groups.

I am, of course, also aware of the need to retain significant characteristic elements of individual groups but it is patently desirable to establish a link between the formerly separated, now reunited branches of our people. Since no such attempt was or is now being made in Israel it should clearly be the duty of the largest Jewish community to inaugurate attempts for such a delicate and worthwhile endeavor.

To test the validity of this thesis I discussed it during my recent stay in Israel with a number of writers, cantors, rabbis and musicians. These included Dr. Israel Adler, Raymond Goldstein, Akiva Zimmerman; Cantors Dov Kaplan, Naftali Herstig, Robert Segal, Chaim Feifel, Gabriel Berkowitz; Rabbis A. E. Millgram (author of *Jewish Liturgy*), Arthur Green (of M'sorati Congregation), Philip Spectre (for 17 years Rabbi in *Ashkelon*, now Executive Director of M'sorati movement), Gerson S. Levy (Past President Rabbinical Assembly) and Jack Cohen (writer, teacher, scholar, formerly with Reconstructionists, Hebrew University, moving spirit of Mevakshei **Derech**) .

While the responses of the above individuals varied greatly their agreement with my thesis was practically unanimous. If, in the future, an attempt will be made to deal with this problem and the organization of a related group will be sought, the presence of at least the last three in such a group will prove most rewarding.

When I was a child, I clearly recall, an embroidered Mizrah graced our eastern wall, a beautifully illustrated book containing Palestinian pressed flowers, rested on our coffee table and, above the doorway, a twelve inch rectangular spot remained unpainted.

This served as a constant reminder that we mourn the loss of state and sanctuary. On Tisha B'Av I shed bitter tears for the ancient, distant land which had for me a tangible, perhaps partially subliminal reality.

This past Tisha B'Av I joined a group of Moroccan Jews for morning **kinot**. We sat on the ground, huddled close together near the Western Wall. We read the heartrending words but no tears were shed. We were at the Wall, near **Mount Moriah** where the Temple stood. We were in Jerusalem, the golden, the blessed. We were at home, in Israel, the land of our fathers, in our land.

It is this blessed reality that requires recognition and expression when we sing before the Almighty. This tiny land that looms so large in the essence of our existence needs to be heard when we raise our voices in prayer and in praise.

As for the realization of this proposal, I see no overnight **success**. Persistent efforts in **selection** and **application** seem to be called for. Ultimately, I hope, distinct musical elements will penetrate the **nusah** of every Jewish group thus bringing closer the reality of an **am ehad**.

The saintly Rabbi Abraham I. Kook in viewing the future, coined an unforgettably succinct phrase: **Hayashun yithadeish vehedadash yitkadeish**, the old will be renewed, and the new made holy. That is what I seek in our music. It seems to be a dream well worth pursuing.

ANTECEDANTS TO THE GONZAGA COURT OF SALOMONE ROSSI'S TIME

DANIEL CHAZANOFF

Mantua, in Italy's northeast, is a remarkable small city with a history enriched by creativity in the arts and letters — **and humane** values. Its origins can probably be traced to the **Etruscans and its** development to the Romans.¹ Today, it is a municipality numbering 65,000 people. Yet, during the Renaissance, with a population of only 30,000 "... it was the ducal court of Mantua where the art-loving House of Gonzaga assembled around them a plethora of artists, of all categories, that made this provincial town a magnificent center of intellectual activities in sixteenth century Italy."² At the same time, the creative output of the Gonzaga court found its way to courts all over Europe where it was admired, studied, emulated and, in the case of music, performed.

The lineage of writers in Mantua can be traced to Virgil (70-19 B.C.) a gentle poet, who loved nature and solitude.³ He was born at Ande, a village near Mantua.⁴ Henderson establishes Pietole, another hamlet outside of Mantua, as his birthplace.⁵ While Virgil wrote in Latin he is referred to as "... the Italian literary diety ...".⁶

By the sixteenth century we encounter the writing of another Mantuan native which was to have a far-reaching effect upon the courts of Renaissance Europe. The *Book of the Courtier* by Count Baldesar Castiglione is perhaps the most important treatise of the period on the education of a gentleman. Its first printing took place in April 1528 at the Aldine Press in Venice.⁷ More than 140 editions of this classic bear witness to the fact that it was well-received in various countries.⁸ First editions of the work appeared in Barcelona (1534), Paris (1537), London (1561), Wittenberg (1561) and Munich (1566).⁹ The English, however, did not stop with the Sir Thomas Hoby translation of 1561. In 1622, an English version of the book appeared. This was Henry Peachham's "The Compleat Gentleman."¹⁰

Castiglione was born into a noble family in Mantuan territory on December 6, 1478; his parents were Count Cristoforo Castiglione

Daniel Chazanoff has written extensively on his research into the life and creativity of Salomone Rossi. Several years ago he received a grant from the National Foundation of Jewish Culture to continue his work. This past summer he spent some eight weeks in Italy continuing his investigation of Rossi thanks to a grant from the Foundation of the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, New York and a stipend from the Cantors Assembly.

and Luigia Gonzaga, a relative of Mantua's ruler." After receiving a classic education in Latin and Greek at Milan, he entered the service of the Gonzaga Court.¹² For a time he served at the Court of Urbino but returned to Mantua where he married the daughter of Count Guido Torello.¹³ He "... resided alternately at Mantua and Rome, where he served as Mantuan ambassador, and where his learning, wit, taste, gentle disposition and integrity earned for him an almost unique eminence at the papal court."¹⁴ He died in Toledo on February 7, 1529 while on a diplomatic mission, but he is buried in the church of the Madonna delle Grazie outside of Mantua; his tomb was designed by the great artist and friend, Giulio Romano.¹⁵

Considering the time in which he lived, Castiglione exhibited awareness and insight which anticipated future developments in music and music education. His writing established guidelines to be followed by the Courtier.

First, he favored exposure to a variety of music with the statement, "Consider music, the harmonies of which are now grave and slow, now very fast and of novel moods and means; yet, all give pleasure, albeit for different reasons ..."¹⁶ Then, he recommends a dual approach to harmony i.e., ear training to develop perception and a balance between consonance and dissonance in writing: Harmony, he felt, could be more quickly and better perceived, with greater pleasure, by trained ears.¹⁷ He also cautioned against repeated consonances which would exhibit "... a too affected harmony ..."¹⁸ By introducing dissonance, "... that discord of the second or seventh ...",¹⁹ we create contrast "... whereby our ears are held in suspense, and more eagerly await and enjoy perfect consonances ..."²⁰ Finally, in the area of applied music, Castiglione advocates an acquaintance with singing, keyboard instruments and the viols (the Renaissance stringed instruments which preceded the violin family). He regarded as beautiful music:

1. "... to sing well by note, with ease ..."²¹ which implied both good voice quality and the ability to read music.

2. and much more effective than the above, "... to sing to the accompaniment of the viol ..."²² because "... we note and observe the fine manner and the melody with much greater attention when our ears are not occupied with more than a single voice ..."²³ This statement alludes to the opera aria which arrived about 75 years after *The Courtier*.

3. "... above all, singing to the viol by way of recitative

seems to me most delightful, which adds to the words a charm and grace that are very admirable."²⁴ In this, and the above statement, Castiglione hints at what was to become two of the three musical components found in the early opera i.e., the recitative and aria. The third component, the orchestral interlude, probably began by combining the keyboard with strings. Referring to the keyboard he says, "All keyed instruments also are pleasing to the ear ... and upon them one can play many things that fill the mind with musical delight."²⁵ The string quartet by definition is the classic string chamber music form born in the 18th century. It also specifies the timbre of two violins, one viola and one cello. Yet, at the beginning of the 16th century, Castiglione says, "And not less charming is the music of the string quartet, which is most sweet and exquisite."²⁶ During his lifetime, a string quartet meant nothing more than four instruments of the viol family with no established literature. Viol performers played freely transcribed vocal compositions, folk songs and folk dances.

Summarizing his thoughts on applied music, Castiglione says, "The human voice lends much ornament and grace to all these instruments, with which I would have our Courtier at least to some degree acquainted, albeit the more he excells with them, the better ..."²⁷

To understand the life of Salomone Rossi, it is important that one gain some knowledge of the antecedents which brought about the Gonzaga court of his time. From the beginning of the 15th century, we have evidence that the Mantuan dukes recognized and recruited talent, encouraged scholarship and provided the resources for both to develop. In fostering creativity, the Gonzagas protected Christian and Jew alike from the oppressive measures of the Church within their domain. Not only did they permit the settlement of Jews in Mantuan territory but invited talented Jewish writers, actors and musicians to participate at their court.²⁸ By the first half of the sixteenth century, Jewish singers, instrumentalists and composers were in the employ of the Mantuan dukes.²⁹ The oldest Torah Ark of the Jewish world dates from this period (Mantua, 1543). Its permanent location is in the museum of the Italian Synagogue, Jerusalem.

The great tradition which led to the ducal court of Salomone Rossi's time can be traced to the reign of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga (1407-1444), "... who had a love for ancient history and verse."³⁰

His interest combined with a commitment to his childrens' education led him to invite the distinguished scholar, Vittorino da Feltre (1379-1446) to his court in **1425**.³¹ Da Feltre is referred to as the father of teaching, whom Rabelais used as his model for the tutor of Gargantua.³² The Gonzaga lord placed the children in his charge, allotting a separate villa to the master and his pupils.³³ From this beginning a great school evolved because its doors were open to students from various parts of Italy.³⁴ The school's admission policy also reflected the humane values of the Gonzagas; some students were often "... so poor that they had to be provided by their patron with clothes and food ..."³⁵ All children, regardless of social or economic station, were treated with respect "... in that little community of the intellect ..."³⁶ which appreciated sincerity and industry. In this setting, a love of learning and artistic taste developed.³⁷

Gianfrancesco's love for ancient history and verse, coupled with his encouragement of scholarship in those areas led to the first lyric drama with a secular subject.³⁸ The "Favola di Orfeo" (Fable of Orpheus) by Angelo Poliziano was produced in Mantua around 1483.³⁹ This led in turn to the birth of the opera as an art form. The essential ingredients i.e., verse, music and action were present in both the Medieval liturgical drama and the Renaissance secular drama.⁴⁰ In both cases, however, music was only incidental to the production. If the term orchestra can be applied here, it meant a small body of musicians whose total number and instrumentation varied from production to production. Monteverdi's first opera, Orfeo, produced in Mantua in 1608 used an orchestra of 36 pieces.⁴¹ By design, music (instrumental and vocal) became an integral part of the new form, opera, and a new period of music, the Baroque.

Monteverdi's "Orfeo" (Orpheus) was inspired by "... the study of Greek thought and ideals, as obtained from ancient works ..."⁴² which became popular among cultivated Italians. It is not a coincidence then, that the first opera produced in Florence, in 1600, was on a Greek subject closely related to Orpheus i.e., Euridice.⁴³ The work was written by Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini who were members of a group known as the Camerata.⁴⁴ The Camerata was made up of composers, poets, singers and amateurs who tried to create a dramatic form using the Greek drama as a model.⁴⁵ Their aim was to heighten the effect of poetry through music.⁴⁶ What evolved was the recitative or, as Bauer says, "Opera was an accidental by-product!"⁴⁷ The orchestra at the first performance

of Euridice numbered only nine musicians including one harpsichord, three chitarrone (large guitars), one viola da gamba (predecessor of the cello), one theorbo (bass lute) and three flutes.⁴⁸

Even though Florence was the birthplace of the opera, it was in Mantua that Monteverdi became the first great composer of the new form. As pointed out by this writer, stage music in Mantua enjoyed a long tradition as incidental to the Medieval religious play and the Renaissance secular drama. In Monteverdi's hands, the words, music and action became an integrated production which was aided by the presence of Salomone Rossi, who was concert-master or director of the 36 piece orchestra (it was referred to as a "company of musicians" or "band of musicians" at that time) for Orfeo probably used Baroque violins rather than Renaissance viols; this added dramatic power not present in the Florentine opera which had an orchestra of nine using only Renaissance instruments. A line from one of Amy Lowell's poems expresses the difference in succinct fashion. She says, "Only a vigorous tree has the vitality to put forth new branches".⁴⁹

In the context of Orfeo's first performance many of the musicians were Jews in keeping with the atmosphere which permeated the Gonzaga Court.

The adage, "like father, like son" is certainly a truism in the case of Lodovico Gonzaga (1448-1478), son of Gianfrancesco and pupil of Vittorino. He emulated his father's humanistic traits by distributing land to the poor peasants.⁵⁰ To improve transportation and communication, he had a new port dug on the Mincio River which flows through Mantua; the Mincio begins at Lake Garda, about 40 kilometers north of Mantua and joins the Po River, south of the city.⁵¹

Looking ahead to the time of Salomone Rossi (c. 1570-1628), founder of the first school of violinists, the river was probably the means by which the early violins of the Brescian and Cremonese schools were shipped to the Court of Mantua.

Another improvement instituted by Lodovico was the paving of Mantua's streets.⁵² In the realm of the arts and letters, he continued the trend established by his father when he invited the poet, Filelfo and two great painters, Andrea Mantegna and Guilio Romano to **join the court**.⁵³ Mantegna was brought from Padua and resided in Mantua from 1460 to his death in 1506.⁵⁴ Romano was brought

from Rome; most authorities agree that his noblest monument is the Palazzo Te which displays his skill as architect, painter and sculptor.⁵⁵ A number of his paintings are also in the ducal palace.⁵⁶ Lodovico's reverence for learning and the arts is also demonstrated by the protection which he gave to "... the humanist Politian, the Florentine architect Leone-Battista Alberti and the Paduan Painter Mantegna, who quarrelled with neighbors and tried to drive out the priests, whom he disliked."⁵⁷

Travellers entering the city of Mantua from any direction are greeted by signs which read: Mantua City of Art. This is in no small part due to the influence of Isabella d'Este (1474-1539), daughter of the Duke of Ferrara and wife of Gianfrancesco II (1484-1519), Duke of Mantua. One of the most imposing figures of the Renaissance, she was a great patron of the arts. Isabella "... gathered a vast collection of the paintings, sculptures, medallions, silver, jewels, plates, tiles, books, manuscripts, and musical instruments of the period, as well as the products of the antique.⁵⁸ She was surrounded by the chief painters and poets of the time who either worked for her or were her friends.⁵⁹ As a person, she received praise from many, including Castiglione, for her beauty, intellect and moral qualities.⁶⁰

Isabella's education included learning to play the lute and clavichord, and listening to the sounds of various Renaissance instruments i.e., viols, zinkes, dulcimers, kitharas, rankets and cromornes.⁶¹ At the age of seven she was taught to dance by the famous master of the period, Guglielmo Ebreo (William the Jew) of Pesaro.⁶² His "Treatise on the Art of Dancing" (Trattato del'arte del ballo) is the most important manual of its kind in the 15th century.⁶³ A poem by the humanist, Giovanni Mario Filelfo lauds Guglielmo Ebreo as follows:

How great have been the honors on him poured
 And guerdons for his dancing and his skill,
 By many a king and marquess, duke and lord ...⁶⁴

The attitude of Isabella d'Este toward Jews was probably formed during her childhood as daughter of Duke of Ferrara. Later, in 1495, after an anti-Semitic incident involving a Mantuan Jew, Daniele Norsa, Isabella "... roundly reproved an anti-Semitic preacher."⁶⁵ A letter to one of her vicars stated: "Tell the priest to do his job of preaching, hearing confessions, and other tasks necessary to the soul's health, but he is not to touch the Jewish

question. I don't want him to preach sermons which are more scandalous than useful."66

In short, Isabella became the Duchess of Mantua as "... a lettered and artistic woman ..."67 and was regarded as "... the First Lady of the world"68 at age 54 when the *Courtier* of Castiglione was published.69

It is with this background that we usher in the life and times of Salomone Rossi, Ebreo — a father of the musical Baroque. An important musical figure of his period, yet overlooked by music history, he was responsible for a number of innovations which established new frontiers in music.

FOOTNOTES

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3 Michelin, loc. cit.

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7 Count Baldesar Castiglione. *The Book of the Courtier*. Translated by Leonard Eckstein Opdycke (New York: Horace Liveright. Third Edition, 1929), Translator's Preface, P. vi.

8 *Ibid*.

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11 Castiglione, op. cit., P. 309.

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22 *Ibid*.

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- 27 Ibid.**
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- 42 Henderson, op. cit., P. 60.
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- 46 **Ibid.**
- 47 **Ibid.**
- 48 Bauer, op. cit., P. 17.
- 49 Bauer, op. cit., acknowledgements, P. vi citing Amy Lowell's Sword, Blades and Poppy Seeds.
- 50 Michelin, loc. cit.
- 51 **Ibid.**
- 52 **Ibid.**
- 53 Henderson, op. cit., P. 39.
- 54 **Ibid.**
- 55 **Ibid.**
- 56 **Zbid.**
- 57 Michelin, loc. cit.
- 58 George R. Marek, The Bed and the Throne: The Life of Isabella D'Este (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976), Introduction, P. xvi.
- 59 Castiglione, op. cit., P. 405.
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- 61 Marek, op. cit., P. 38.
- 62 Cecil Roth, The Jews in the Renaissance (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers. 1965). P. 279.
- 63 Sendrcy, op. cit., P. 250.
- 64 Roth, op. cit., P. 277.
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IN MEMORY OF JAN PEERCE

“Jan Peerce, the American tenor who was one of the favorite singers of Arturo Toscanini, died at the Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged in White Plains, New York on Saturday night, December 15, 1984 after a long illness. He was 80 years old.

“For more than 60 of those years, Mr. Peerce was before the public He started his vocal career in 1932 at the new Radio City Music Hall, made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1941, remained there for 27 years until 1968, made world tours and appearances in European opera houses at that time — but still refused to call it quits.

“At an age when most tenors have been long retired, Mr. Peerce kept on singing, his voice in a remarkable state of preservation.

“He made films, he taught, he recorded, he appeared on television talk shows and remained one of the busiest singers before the public.

“ He was a superior stylist, always singing with taste, always secure technically, never trying for a cheap effect. His scale was unusually even. He never lost that combination of taste with vocal splendor. Last year, two of his records were issued and they show the veteran in his late 70’s in brilliant vocal shape, gleefully hitting top B’s with the abandon of a youngster.”

So wrote New York Times music critic Harold C. Schonberg in his five column obituary. We, of the Cantors Assembly, knew Jan Peerce well, individually and collectively. His openness, his cheerfulness, his concern for the things that concerned us, and above all — even more than his spectacular talent — it was his pride in who he was, where he came from and his love for everything Jewish that endeared him to us.

His memory will remain for us a blessing and an inspiration.

S. R.

JAN PEERCE: HIS LAST CONCERT

JEROME KOPMAR

Jan Peerce died on December 15, 1984. However, it was on Sunday evening, May 2, 1982 that his life as a singer and artist ended. On that night, Jan was the guest artist with the Beth Abraham Youth Chorale in celebration of their tenth anniversary. This is the story of that memorable evening, now even more memorable in that it was the last time that Jan Peerce, one of the greatest and most beloved artists of our time, was ever to appear in concert.

When making plans for the Youth Chorale's Tenth Anniversary Concert, it was my desire that we invite Jan Peerce to be our guest artist. Peerce was a childhood idol of mine and to appear on the same stage with him would have fulfilled a lifetime's dream. However, I had never met Jan Peerce, and I didn't even know how to approach this man whom I only knew through his recordings and the concert and opera performances that I witnessed. How does one approach an idol? Unable to come up with an answer to this, I abandoned the plan and began to make other arrangements.

Then, in December of 1981, I received a phone call from Velvel Pasternak of Tara Publications and Tambur Records inquiring whether I would be interested in making a recording with Jan Peerce and the Chorale. Of course, the prospect excited me, and a meeting was set up for the three of us on December 30 at the building of the Bureau of Jewish Education in New York. I was finally going to meet Jan Peerce.

That meeting is forever etched in my memory as one of the great experiences of my life. Shortly into the meeting, Jan asked in his friendly manner, "Where have you been all these years?" Jan had the uncanny ability to make you feel like you were his friend for years. He was a genial, friendly, and witty person who had nothing in common with the stereotypical image of a temperamental world-class artist. When we spoke, it was as if we were lifelong friends. Thus began the greatest adventure of my professional career.

While discussing the proposed recording, I inquired whether he would be interested in performing as our guest at our 10th Anniversary Concert. Indeed, he was interested, even excited.

Jerome Kopmar is the hazzan of Dayton's Beth Abraham Synagogue. An early graduate of the Cantors Institute he has had a distinguished career as a sheliah tzebbur and as a choral conductor.

Jan, however, still wanted to hear the Chorale since he was unfamiliar with their work and didn't want to get involved in an artistic endeavor that might not come up to his professional standards. After hearing some of our recordings and hearing the Chorale in a concert at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he was impressed enough to eagerly look forward to the concert.

Although almost seventy-eight at the time, Jan had a busy and active concert schedule, including a full length recital in Carnegie Hall. I was somewhat concerned whether he would be able to prepare for a program of music that would be completely new to him in such a relatively short time. He was not only unfazed by this, he was even looking forward to the challenge.

After an incredibly busy month prior to our concert in which Jan conducted the Pesach sedarim at the Deauville Hotel in Miami, a week of performances of "Fiddler on the Roof" in the State of Washington, and several concerts, Jan arrived in Dayton on Wednesday, April 27, for rehearsals in preparation for the concert.

Even his arrival for the first rehearsal was memorable. Although he had planned to arrive in Dayton early in the afternoon so he would have a chance to relax as well as have a brief rehearsal with our accompanist, a series of travel problems caused him to arrive more than an hour after the rehearsal had started. Knowing how tired he must have been, I suggested that he might just want to listen and not sing until the following day at the final full rehearsal. He looked at me somewhat incredulously and asked, "What did I come here for? I'm ready to sing now."

And so he did! There he was — after traveling for who knows how many hours, not having had anything substantial to eat all day, and being very tired — this seventy-eight year old legend ascended the stage to the applause of the Chorale and orchestra members and started to sing as if he had been relaxing all day. Just hearing that voice, tired as he must have been, sent shivers up my spine. Not surprisingly, the music was all prepared, and there was no question that we were all in for a rare and exciting experience.

During the following day, Jan displayed his unbelievable stamina. After rehearsing with me and the accompanist most of the morning, Jan felt it wasn't enough and rehearsed for most of the afternoon as well. With a scheduled three hour rehearsal for that evening with full orchestra, I was concerned that he might be over-

doing it, but the more he worked, the more refreshed he seemed to become. He thrived on work, the more the better. I was amazed at how he worked until he refined every detail and didn't stop until he was completely satisfied.

I must admit that I was somewhat intimidated and frightened about how I would be able to work with this giant. How would I be able to direct "Toscanini's favorite tenor?" After all, I had worked for months in preparing and teaching the music. Some of it I had lived with for years, and I knew exactly how I wanted it to sound.

However, I had nothing to fear. All during our private rehearsals whenever a question arose about tempi or other matters, including interpretation, he would tell me that I was the director and that my conception was what he would adhere to, especially in those sections that included both him and the choir. We worked out every phrase, and every idea was ironed out so that when we got to the main rehearsal everything would go smoothly. We worked beautifully together. I felt like the student, but he made me feel like the teacher.

I couldn't help but be aware of the difference between Jan Peerce off the stage and what happened to him once he ascended the stage. Off stage, he was loquacious, humorous, always telling a story, a real delight. On stage, however, it was all work. He was Jan Peerce the artist, the consummate pro. His only concern was to make the music live as best he knew how, and it didn't matter whether he was working at the Met or with a group of children in Dayton, Ohio.

In order to give a complete report of the last concert of Jan Peerce, I have to digress somewhat to tell of an episode that occurred between Jan and the Chorale members which, I believe, helped to make the concert the inspired event that it was. It must be understood that to the members of the Chorale the name "Jan Peerce" meant absolutely nothing. When I first told them that they would be singing with Jan Peerce, they looked at me as if to say, "So what! Who's he?" It was only after they told their parents, that they began to realize the significance of performing with Jan Peerce. Still, he didn't leave them in much awe. It was strange and perhaps even a gross case of childish "chutzpah", but, in their minds, he had to prove himself to them as much as they had to prove themselves to him. So is the way of children! To their credit, though, Jan didn't treat them like children but rather like fellow artists,

During the final rehearsal, Jan was bothered that the choir didn't sing softly enough when they were singing together with him. At first, he mentioned it quietly to me, and I conveyed it to them, reminding them that I had spoken to them about this point many times even before Jan arrived in Dayton. Then after he had to tell them himself two or three times, Jan became somewhat irritated and lashed out at them as only Jan could. The kids were appalled, not so much because he had yelled at them, but because, as I learned later, they felt that he had usurped my authority. They didn't mind being yelled at so long as it was I who did the yelling. They genuinely felt that Jan had insulted me and felt bad for me.

From this point, the atmosphere at the final rehearsal was strained. We got all the music finished to our satisfaction and we felt we were prepared and ready. But I also sensed that the kids were disturbed and that I would have to do something about it or it would effect their performance. I should add that Jan didn't realize that there was any problem. I was confident that I could handle the situation, and I didn't want to disturb him by telling him what was happening.

One would think that after rehearsing for more than seven hours he would have had enough. Not Jan! As we were leaving the synagogue after the rehearsal, Jan looked at me and asked, "What time do we rehearse tomorrow?" I looked at him as if he were crazy. I was totally wiped out, exhausted beyond words, and here he was asking about more rehearsals! Not wanting to appear uncaring, I asked the accompanist to come the following morning, even though there was no rehearsal scheduled. Again, we worked for more than two hours. It was, indeed, a relief to know that the following day was Shabbat so we could all get some well-needed rest.

On Shabbat, Jan came to our services but wanted no recognition. Everyone respected his wishes, and he just blended into the congregation like any other worshipper. I don't have to relate what it felt like for me to have him in our synagogue. I don't know what frightened me more, the concert the following day or having Jan Peerce listen to me daven. He was gracious and very complimentary, and to have him in our presence was just another thrill in a weekend of many thrills.

Early the next morning, I got a call from Jan. I should add that this came after he spent a long evening at our home and didn't get back to his hotel until well past midnight. When I heard him

ask, "What time do we rehearse today?" I almost dropped the phone. I told him there was no major rehearsal scheduled. It was our practice not to rehearse on the day of a concert except for a brief warmup and a review of some troublesome sections in our music. Jan said he had to rehearse. It was, he told me, his practice to go over the entire program the day of a concert. No way could we do it, I told him. Gaining more courage with each passing day, I told him that there would be no general rehearsal, but if he wished, he could rehearse alone with the accompanist. And so he did.

It was the morning of the concert that I had to resolve the problem the kids were having with Jan. All during the weekend, I kept getting reports that the kids were disturbed, especially with the way they perceived Jan was treating me. I called a meeting prior to our final rehearsal, knowing that Jan wouldn't be there. At this time, I conducted what I liked to refer to as a learning session in which I tried to take a bad situation and make it into a learning experience. I began by telling them what it meant to have Jan Peerce appear on the same stage with us, and especially what it meant to me personally. I also told them how hard Jan and I worked together in our musical preparations for the concert and how he accepted my musical decisions with respect and understanding. I also told them how touched I was by the way they were trying to look out for my feelings, but that in this case it was unwarranted. Jan, I told them, regarded them as professionals, and he was only expecting the best they had to offer. Besides, everything he told them to do was exactly what I stressed over and over again during our rehearsals. Little by little, I saw their expressions change, and I knew that I was beginning to reach them. I also knew that they would do everything to show that they were equal to his expectations. When Jan arrived for his "private" rehearsal, they spontaneously rose to their feet and applauded him. Jan, of course, didn't know what had happened and I didn't tell him until after the concert. The reason I mention this incident is that I know that it added even more to the electricity of the concert that night.

The first half of the concert consisted of Charles Davidson's arrangement of a suite of Shabbat zemirot from Max Wohlberg's "Yalkut Z'mirotai" and Ralph Schlossberg's "Moods in Celebration." Peerce would appear in the second half of the program.

From the moment Jan came out on stage, everyone knew that they were present at an occasion of unusual dimension. Aside from

presenting the world premiere of a new “Modim” by Sholom Kalib, commissioned especially for this occasion, Jan would also perform with the Chorale a new arrangement by Kalib of Todros Greenberg’s “Mizmor Shir Chanukat Habayit,” as well as Kalib’s “Uvashofor Godol” and “Uvnucho Yomar.” He sang by himself two selections that have been identified with him, “A Dudele” and “A Din Toire Mit Gott.” He also sang the aria “Lamento di Federico” by Cilea.

As soon as he began to sing, you could hear that he was in great form. This was not a seventy-eight year old man who was singing. If you would close your eyes and just listen, you would think that it was indeed a young man. All the Peerce trademarks were in evidence: a solid technique, a clear robust voice darkened by his mature age, a secure and ringing top, and his fabled legato and control that would have made any singer half his age drool. In addition to this, there was a fire, an intensity, in his performance that kept everyone on edge. An electricity prevailed on stage, as well as in the audience, that is hard to describe.

The choir and he collaborated as if they had sung together for years. The Chorale was more attentive than I had ever seen them. They responded to every nuance, and when they sang with Jan they did so with a sensitivity that even I, didn’t know they were capable of. They certainly deserved the accolade Jan paid them after the concert in remarks he made to the audience. “These aren’t your average kids singing ‘Yankee Doodle.’ They’re professional.”

I recall one delightful episode, amongst many. If there was one telling fact of Jan’s age, it was that he didn’t always possess the endless breath control that he did when he was younger. As a result, he would sometimes prefer to take things at a quicker tempo than he might have in his younger years. When we first began rehearsing the aria “Lamento di Federico,” I conducted it in a tempo that I felt was correct. Jan asked that I take it faster. I immediately understood why. He was more comfortable with the faster tempo because he could better execute the legato line of the aria with his shorter breath capacity. During the concert, however, Jan was singing with incredible breath control, and I felt there was nothing he couldn’t handle. When we came to the aria, without consulting with him, I began conducting it in the slower tempo that I preferred. We looked at each other, and I tried to convey to him that I knew what I was doing. He sang the aria beautifully. The control was flawless, and the legendary Peerce line was displayed in a manner

that I'm sure not many people felt a man of that age was capable of. After he finished and we went back stage, he looked at me, feigning anger, and said, "Damn it! You're like all the other conductors; you have to have it your way!" Perhaps, but inwardly, I knew, he was smiling — it was magnificent!

One can't speak of the last selection that Jan sang at the concert without realizing that this was to be the last time that he would be heard publicly. The last work on the program, Jan's final concert evocation, was "Modim Anachnu Lath." After a singing career of more than a half a century, a career that took him to the world's great concert halls and opera houses where he was acknowledged as one of the greatest artists of our time, his final statement was a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The selection was commissioned as an expression of gratitude for the Chorale's 10th anniversary; it ended up to be much more significant.

Of course, one looks at the performance of this work with different eyes, knowing what has since transpired. But even at the time of the performance, I felt this was more than just another piece of music being performed, albeit a world premiere. Jan performed this extremely difficult piece with a fervor and a passion that was so representative of him as a person and an artist. After singing a program that would have taxed just about anyone, not to speak of someone his age, he sang with a clarity of tone and expression that was truly remarkable. He ended the piece on a high "A" that had everyone gasping. Jan didn't know that this was to be his last performance, but he literally performed as if he knew it were.

After a tumultuous ovation, Jan spoke to the audience. It is perhaps these words that I will remember as making the concert all the more special because it was as if he were saying goodbye not only to this audience but to all his thousands of audiences. He made a personal statement that I certainly will always treasure. He said, "For me, this is a great night. I've had many thrilling moments. I had fifteen wonderful years with Toscanini, twenty-eight wonderful years at the Met, and I've sung all over the world with practically every conductor, and sang every type of music, but I must tell you that tonight is one of the most fulfilling nights I ever had — and I had many." He also espoused a final message to the audience, one that can almost be considered his public epitaph: "Music is something that can only bring happiness to all people, all faiths, all religions, color or creed. Just make music — good music."

As an encore, Jan sang what has become his theme song, "Bluebird of Happiness". It was this song, corny as it may be, that made Jan Peerce a household name in the thirties, when he was a featured performer at the Radio City Music Hall. It contains a simple philosophical message that Jan believed in, thus making it even more meaningful whenever he sang it. It also shows that with an artist of his calibre, even an insignificant "pop" song can come out sounding like a great art song. Jan Peerce's performing life ended with the same song that launched it.

When one looks, in retrospect, at the final concert of Jan Peerce, many other factors come to mind. One recalls that it was in a shul and not in a concert hall. He was singing Jewish music and not the operatic and classical repertoire that made him famous throughout the world. He was singing with a Jewish children's choir and not a great symphony orchestra, and it was in Dayton, Ohio and not in one of the great world capitols.

Four days after the concert, on Thursday, May 6, Jan suffered his first stroke. All through his recovery, he kept telling everyone that he wanted to bring "those kids from Dayton" to sing with him in Carnegie Hall. A concert was scheduled for January 16, 1983, in Carnegie Hall at which time he was, indeed, planning to sing again with the Chorale. However, it wasn't meant to be. In January 1983, Jan suffered a more debilitating stroke that would leave him totally incapacitated for almost two years before his death.

This amazing person never gave up. I remember visiting him after his first stroke, and although he was confined to a wheel chair, he was still singing, and determined to perform again. This never happened, and, thus, the performance of May 2, 1982, at Beth Abraham Synagogue, Dayton, Ohio, with the Beth Abraham Youth Chorale was Jan Peerce's last concert. It is a concert never to be forgotten.

EDITORS NOTE: A recording of this concert has been released by Tambur Records of Tara Publications (29 Derby Ave., Cedarhurst. N.Y. 11516).

JAN PEERCE: A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

MOSES J. SILVERMAN

History has recorded deeds of many conquerors in the military, in the sciences, and in the arts. Jan Peerce conquered the hearts of his audiences in the many fields of music, in which he played an incredibly significant role. In opera, on the concert stage, as a singer of the songs of our people, the name of Jan Peerce will always shine like a star. He was acclaimed not only as a great artist, but, more importantly, he was acclaimed as a fine human being — a dedicated and proud Jew.

He had millions of admirers all over the world who knew him through radio, television, stage, motion pictures and recordings. Thousands of music lovers always thronged to opera houses and to concert halls to hear Jan Peerce. His every appearance was a hymn to faith and joy, as in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which Jan Peerce had performed numerous times and, particularly, as the favorite soloist of the great Toscanini.

However, there is something more, which endeared him to those of us dedicated to our sacred calling. Jan Peerce, always unspoiled by the adulation of the multitude, gave unstintingly of his precious gift of song to the God of his fathers. He did not confine his prayers to the holy days or to the festivals. Wherever he might have been, in a synagogue in some large city, or in some small *bet midrash*, wherever his busy schedule would find him, Jan Peerce wrapped in the fringed tallit of our faith, and wearing the crown jewels, the tefillin, could be found leading the congregation in worship. This great operatic artist of our time was creating a special bridge connecting music and art with the synagogue, which added a new dimension to Jewish music and life. His voice symbolized the chant which is the soul of our people.

This was a man whose rare vocal endowments added rich musical beauty to the world. In addition, his devotion to Judaism was a source of pride and inspiration not only to hazzanim, but to all of our people, everywhere.

Throughout his singing career of more than half a century, Jan Peerce was described in many ways. He was called a "national treasure" — he was called "a living legend" — he was called a "consummate artist". There is no doubt in the mind of any person that these accolades were true, but the words that best describe him to me are "Jan Peerce — a great man, a great human being".

Moses J. Silverman is the distinguished **hazzan of Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago, a post he has held for over four decades. His long career includes every aspect of Jewish music and parallels his close friendship for Jan Peerce.**

Jan's eternal devotion to God and his people recalls to mind this excerpt from Psalm 13:

“As for me, in thy mercy do I trust; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the eternal, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”

At my synagogue's celebration of my 40th anniversary, Jan Peerce came to pay me honor and to sing on what was an unforgettable occasion. I spoke of him in this fashion. “What can I say to my ideal tenor Jan Peerce? In spite of geographical limits, I am proud to say we have been intimate friends for a long, long time. His magnificent voice, his artistry and his outstanding talent have always been an inspiration to me. Everyone knows how much pleasure he has brought to so many people all over the world. To me, he is the number one tenor of this generation. His busy concert and operatic schedule is perpetual. Only last night he sang in Tucson, but this wonderful man came here tonight to celebrate with me in the spirit of enduring friendship, which I pray will go on for many years”.

We loved him; we respected him. Jan Peerce, *naim zemirot yisrael*, the sweet singer in Israel was and is, and will be an enduring inspiration to us all.

Our sages tell us, that all the blessings that come to a man, come to him because of his wife. Alice, was the love of Jan's life, the veritable rock on which he built his career, and in the finest sense of the word, his 'eyzer *k'negdo*' — his ever constant helpmate.

At our last convention we honored Jan Peerce on the occasion of his 80th birthday by establishing the Jan Peerce Endowment Fund. His wife, Alice accepted the plaque which reads “As an expression of its admiration and affection for one of the greatest operatic and concert singers of all time in recognition of the constancy and elegance with which he has carried his Jewish heritage, and in appreciation of a glittering musical career which has always been marked by his loyalty and devotion to the music of the Jewish people. May this fund serve as a continuing source of support to those who labor in the field of Jewish music and an inspiration to all who would follow in his footsteps”. It was signed on May 22, 1984, Iyar 21, 5744 by our President Hazzan Ivan Perlman and by our Executive Vice President Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum.

To Jan Peerce we say now, “You were a source of blessedness and inspiration when you entered our lives and our world. Now that you have gone from the world you go with blessings from our hearts and our souls”. Whenever your name will come upon our lips, we will always add the words “*zekher tzadik livrakha*” “the memory of this righteous man shall ever be a blessing unto us all”.

**THE CANTORATE FACES
THE CHALLENGE
OF OUR TIMES**

A ONE DAY SEMINAR

Sponsored by

Cantors Assembly

American Conference of Cantors

Wednesday, December 26, 1984

Hebrew Union College · Jewish Institute of Religion
One West Fourth Street, New York City

Morning Session: 10:30-1 2:30

Chairman: Cantor Richard Botton, *President*
American Conference of Cantors

10:30 Introduction of the Theme
Cantor Richard Botton

10:45 “The American Synagogue: A Typology”
Professor Abraham J. Karp,
Philip S. Bernstein Professor of Jewish Studies, University of Rochester

11:15 “The Variety of Cantorial Experience and Practice”
In the Conservative Synagogue:
Hazzan Morton Shames, *Temple Beth El, Springfield, Mass.*

11:45 In the Reform Synagogue:
Cantor Sarah Sager, *Fairmont Temple, Cleveland, Ohio*

12:15 Questions

Afternoon Session: 2:00-4:30

Chairman: Hazzan Ivan Perlman, *President, Cantors Assembly*

2:00 “Looking to the Future: The Way To Go?”
Hauan Samuel Rosenbaum
Executive Vice President, Cantors Assembly

2:30 Cantor Raymond Smolover
Executive Director, American Conference of Cantors

3:00 Questions and Discussion

4:30 Closing Remarks

Minha

THE CANTORATE FACES THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIMES

CANTORS ASSEMBLY * AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF CANTORS
SEMINAR * DECEMBER 26, 1984 * HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, NEW YORK

Cantor Richard Botton
President, American Conference of Cantors

INTRODUCTION

Friends, colleagues - allow me to be a shaliach who utters for each of us a long overdue B'ruchim Habaim to all of us - as we meet together in a historic move toward greater friendship and cooperation between chazzanim from the Reform and Conservative Movements. May the good feelings of today portend many other such meetings. From this day on let it be known that chazzanim are indivisible in their dedication to the enhancement of the worship experience. (Shehecheyanu chanted by all).

The character of the synagogue is changing - along with the quality and dedication of its leadership. Therefore, today we gather to examine our role in today's changing synagogue. There are disheartening problems.

We all know of the untrained soloists and song leaders who through congregational ignorance, nonetheless acquire the title hazzan with dubious effect on the t'filot of the congregation. Our role as the arbiter of liturgical musical taste is challenged most often by rabbinic and lay Leaders with questionable or nonexistent musical credentials, and often a total lack of understanding of the prayer experience. Consequently, we are told that hand clapping, and singing of the popular so called "ruach" tunes are substitutes for kavanah and hitaavut. These people are well meaning - but perhaps ill advised. Are they talking about prayer? Or campfire-friendship circles?

My dear friends, there is a Ladino proverb which states, "Consejo de tu companero toma, y el de tu corason-non dexes." (Take counsel from your companions, but be true to your own heart). We have been trained to lead worship. We have been trained in the music of the liturgy - and while we must listen to our rabbinic and lay friends, and constantly improve our skills - we must be true to that which our hearts, talents and skills direct us.

I am heartened by the fact that Solomon Sulzer had similar difficulties - from which he arose victorious - to the glory of syngogue music and the ministries of all of us.

I am also heartened by new developments in the cantor-ate which, I believe will ultimately auger well for us. The applicants for both cantorial schools are

at a much higher musical level than ever before. The Hebrew Union College, whose facilities we use today, has now changed its course of study to a Masters level. The entrance of our women colleagues into our ranks is also, I believe, a most positive and fortuitous development.

Yes, it will bring some pain - some inequities - even some initial panic and insecurity within our ranks, but most assuredly, women are and increasingly will be joining as partners in accepting the challenges before us.

My grandmother used to tell me, "Poco hablar es salud para el puerpo" (To talk little is good for the health of the body.) So I shall conclude by paraphrasing Abraham Joshua Heschel, The mission of a cantor is to lead in prayer. The hazzan does not stand before the ark as an artist in isolation, trying to demonstrate skill or to display vocal feats. The cantor stands before the Ark not as an individual - but with a congregation. The task is to represent, as well as to inspire a community. Within the synagogue, music is not an end in itself, but a means of religious experience. Its function is to help us to live through a moment of confrontation with the presence of God; to expose ourselves to the Divine in praise, in self scrutiny, and in hope.

Our meeting today serves as an inquiry as to how the hazzan can so function within the context of today's synagogue.

And so. let us begin:

"The Many Faces of the Synagogue in America"

Professor Abraham J. Karp
Philip S. Bernstein
Professor of Jewish Studies
University of Rochester

(Due to technical reasons, we are unable to print a transcript of Professor Karp's address. He focused his talk on the developing and changing nature of the American synagogue, from earliest colonial times to the present, a viewpoint which is summarized in the following short statement.)

Professor Ernst Simon, of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, has pointed to the basic differences in the retention of Jewish loyalties in the European and American Jewish communities. Whereas in Europe, inertia assured Jewish identity, in America inertia makes for assimilation. In America, a positive Jewish identity requires an active effort of affiliation or association. Viewed from the perspective of a community which desires its survival, in America, each generation has to be rewon for Judaism. A study of the American Jewish historic experience discloses that the chosen instrument for the rewinning of the generations has been the synagogue.

Historically, the synagogue has been the chosen instrument of American Jewry for establishing and enhancing Jewish association, for the transmission of Jewish knowledge, and for the retention and fostering of Jewish loyalties. Because of this, and to conform to American realities, it has been, and continues to be, the central institution in American Jewish life. It has also, as we shall see, displayed a remarkable ability to adopt and adapt to contemporary needs and to respond to recurrent challenges. Because of its ability to reformulate its function, to reorganize its priorities and to re-orient its program of activities, it has retained a remarkable vitality.

The old mandates remain; new challenges present themselves, and the synagogue will need do today what it has done in the past - to adopt and adapt. In order to do so in an effective manner, it is well to turn to the historic experience of the synagogue in America.

"The Variety of Cantorial Experience and Practice"
 In the Conservative Synagogue
 Hazzan Morton Shames
 Temple Beth El, Springfield, Mass.

The conversation goes something like this, "Hello, Cantor Shames, this is Cantor Moshe Cohen. I really feel as though I have to speak with you." "Yes ." "First, I would like to thank you for all the trouble you went through on my behalf getting me this job, and I don't really know quite how to say this, but I am kind of unhappy here." "What seems to be the problem?" "Well, to put it simply, there just doesn't seem to be a future for a cantor here." "What do you mean, are you serious?" "Oh, sure, they want me, but for all the wrong kind of reasons. They say they need a cantor, but then the truth is they don't allow me to function as one." He then begins to pour out his pain, his anxiety and frustrations. I have become a sympathetic listener to his misery, and I try to offer as best I can a few possible suggestions like: "Moshe, have you tried this? Moshe. have you tried that? Chaim had the same problem, and he worked it out in this way." "Cantor Shames, I have really tried." "Well, here is something else I don't believe you have tried." I give him another suggestion. "Well, maybe not. I'll certainly do my best. And thanks again for giving me your time and listening to me. Shalom."

I hang up the telephone, but not before I have assured him that if things do not work out, I'll do my utmost to find him another position.

Each week, in my position as chairman of placement, I am faced by dear colleagues and friends. Men for whom I have respect and for whom I have the greatest regard. Their anxiety is my anxiety. We are trying to be cantors and yet we are being forced by our congregations to give up all that we were trained to do as hazzanim. For the greatest part, our role as shaliah tzibur is being reduced to that of song leader. There is throughout American Jewish synagogue life, with few exceptions, an emptiness in Jewish values, a scorn for authentic nusach a community illiterate in Jewish study and on a larger scale, a great tension between the professional staff and the congregation with regard to the content of Jewish life and ritual.

Throughout history, the hazzan was the custodian of the most spiritual book of the Jew: the siddur, the prayerbook. As a shaliah tzibur, a name given to him even before that of hazzan, he became the true emissary and the messenger of our people. Is there a greater mitzva that we can perform? Therefore, the hazzan's role in the life of the Jew has been of ultimate importance. During the Middle Ages, the names, harav and tzadik, were also given to cantors. In fact, the titles, rabbi and cantor, became interchangeable. Since all of these responsibilities were placed upon the shoulders of the hazzan, the qualifications of great scholarship, pleasant voice and deep piety were special and exacting in combination.

In many ways, the well-trained hazzan of today recalls the hazzan of the Middle Ages. The hazzan as an important member of the community has returned to Jewish life. But are we allowing our present-day cantor to act fully as that type of hazzan? I think not. What is really true today, is that there is no correlation between the skills of the thoroughly trained hazzan and the expectations of his congregation. There is a conflict between his professional qualities and the actual requirements of his position. The great congregations of old produced great cantors. That is the essential thing; that the great congregations demanded great cantors.

The congregations of today are undemanding and do not require the cantor to be great. What do I mean by this? By and large, they do not ask that the cantor be skilled in nusah, they do not want to hear the great music of the synagogue. In fact, they are ignorant of its existence. What they are asking for we understand to be mediocrity. Our congregations do not challenge the hazzan on a level of which he can be proud. Rather, they ask that he limit himself in the practice of his art. And so, as a result, since the demand is for mediocrity, that is precisely what we give them.

The cantor of today tends to assume much of the blame for what is essentially the blame of the congregation. It is not right for us to sit back and constantly re-examine our faults without including the American Jewish community which we serve. In fact, we, hazzanim, have done everything in our power to try

to insure a pure cantorate. A cantorate respectful of all Jewish traditional practices fulfilling them with commitment and dignity. We have established excellent schools of learning to train gifted young people to enter the profession. We have established cantorial organizations, not only to provide us with benefits and security of all kinds, but above and beyond that we wish to provide for the American and world Jewish community competent cantors. And, in addition, we in the Conservative Movement have promoted and encouraged a host of composers and writers to create new music and literature so that we, as Jews, might establish a glorious tradition of hazzanut in the 20th century as those before us established in their time.

It is true that during the 50's, 60's and even into the 70's we had a golden age of hazzanut with congregations who were thirsting for all that we gave them. Many of us may look back upon the rock services and folk services as shtuss, as folly: and in a way, they were that. We did, however, manage to survive and to retain still the great classic literature which we all treasure and by which we lived. It was our life-blood, and we preserved it.

Most of us here today experienced that golden age of hazzanut. This was not the age of the few star hazzanim, such as Pinchik and Rosenblatt, who were worshipped and idolized. Rather, we have seen a community of 400 conservative cantors, each trying to serve God and k'lal Yisrael.

But what are the current practices in synagogues. Are all the horror stories about our calling true? Or are there indications that our profession will succeed despite the signs of congregational apathy and the dilution of the literature.

Let me tell you that many of the stories you hear are real. I hear about them each day of my life, and in the same breath I wish to assure you that hazzanut and hazzanim will survive and flourish. On Shabbat a few weeks ago, I walked out onto the bima of my synagogue which has a magnificent sanctuary, built for its membership of 950 families: I looked around at the 100 regular standbys who make up this Friday evening congregation. This is not uncommon throughout the united States today: only a few congregations, perhaps in Canada and here and there in the united States, who still share a link with the European tradition can boast of a large attendance. Most congregations suffer unless a bar or bat mitzva or perhaps a special program is taking place.

I thought back some 30 years when I first came to my congregation. Then our Friday night attendance was invariably around 400. It is true that the late Friday night service was an American innovation; nevertheless, there were people in shul. Today the faltering Friday night service still persists in some congregations although it is fast disappearing. Where it exists, one often finds the gimmickery, which includes the guitars and the accordians. Rabbis and cantors, in order to be part of amkha assume alternate roles. They leave the pulpit: they do away with various portions of the service in the siddur and replace it with whatever they view as a "relevant" service meeting the "needs" of our time. On Shabbat morning, the practices are often more drastic. The bar or bat mitzva becomes the main event, and the service of which it is a part, is designed for a congregation which would not otherwise attend services. The service is abbreviated to the minimum with little concern for what has been removed. Most often, there is no repetition of the amidah either in shaharit or musaf. The Torah service is shortened; a few hassidic nigunim are admitted to let the worshipper know that he is in the synagogue; and a quick exit follows after the benediction in order to head for the party.

The hazzan finds himself frustrated and unfulfilled. To say that all cantors in the movement are unhappy or are not being fulfilled is also not true. There are many men within the profession who would never change their role as hazzan. In fact, they enjoy a rich hazzanic career. Their congregations have embraced them as they have embraced their congregations. They are loved and respected and bring us all much joy.

In placement we find it difficult to provide all the needy congregations with cantors. Yet, on the other side, there are congregations where cantors feel if they were to leave, that their post will not be refilled because of financial problems in the congregations and untrained laymen would then assume the responsibility.

My friends, throughout the cantorate there is a feeling of uncertainty and malaise. Despite the wonderful situations there may be, there is, nevertheless, a pervasive tendency among congregations, to ask less of the cantor than he is trained to do.

What happened to the profession we studied for while we were students at the Seminary? What of the exulted talk of creating an American cantorate to replace our talented hazzanim who died al kiddush hashem. Are we really shlihei tzibur? Or are we instead song leaders for a community operation mistakenly identified as a religious service? Further, I must mention that in large measure, the rabbi has not been supportive of our role. We ask ourselves - is the hazzan a representative of klei kodesh or are we to be forever dependent as to our prominence in the synagogue upon the disposition of the rabbi; who also today is searching for a role.

The message I bring to you today has to do with what I perceive to be the deepest problem in American synagogue life. It has nothing really to do with the relation between the cantor and the rabbi. It has everything to do with the relationship of cantor and congregation. What has gone out of Jewish worship in America is congregational participation. Even to have to state it in those terms, to say congregational participation is to betray the problem.

I do not mean congregational participation as the American public understands it. In golden days of Judaism, there was no question of participation of the congregation. The congregation was the Jewish community. It didn't participate: it existed and its being was the being of Judaism.

But in America, in Conservative synagogues, all our capabilities are enlisted to attract the congregation and to entice it back to participation. That seems wrong. Somehow, some way, we have to make the Jew conscious of what Judaism and the synagogue can do for his life. If he finds this inadequate, there is no reasonable way to alter things to suit him; and at the same time, to maintain Jewish ritual. The efforts of the hazzan today are to attract a congregation. But, too often, this activity of attracting has produced a grotesque caricature of Jewish ritual. And we as cantors feel sick inside at having produced it. Most importantly, such alteration rarely works.

At some point we must ask ourselves, who do we serve, Judaism or the congregation. Are we religious leaders or social leaders? Clearly, we are religious leaders and our duties are to serve religiously motivated people. I feel that such people are increasingly rare in American Jewish life. Jews join congregations for various reasons, to be traditional, to maintain a link with the past, to declare solidarity with Israel, but less and less do

they join because of a religious need. This is something that is simply not felt on the most part in Jewish life. The majority of most congregations are totally unmoved by matters of faith, or belief, or the need for religion. Make no mistake, a need for Jewish community is deeply felt, but a need for Judaism is rare.

We cantors seek to serve Judaism and its ritual celebrations, but instead, and by default, we serve the community.

I am not developing a philosophical framework, but leading yet to another issue of my topic: the variety of cantorial experience and practice. The cantor and the rabbi in America have changed from rabbi and shaliah tzibur to pastor. The cantorate is dominated now by a pastoral quality, which it never had before. I don't mean pastoral in the sense of ministering to the congregation's needs, but rather that of the shepherd and his flock. We, today, the rabbi and the cantor go towards the congregation and say, "Come to us, let us pray." Whereas it used to be in Jewish life that all of us together, the rabbi and the cantor and the congregation, would all come and stand before God. Today more often than not, our congregations are not even thinking of God.

It seems to me that the real paradigm in Jewish life is as follows. Over here we have the rabbi and the cantor: and over here we have the congregation; and all are knowledgeable Jews, devoting themselves to God so that when we all assemble to pray, there is never a question of the cantor doing something which is foreign and beyond the capacities of the congregation. On the contrary, it remains for the cantor to prove that he is worthy of the congregation. That he, the cantor, is a holy, knowledgeable man because they the kehillah, the congregation is involved also in something holy.

In America where there is a pastoral setting, the life blood of prayer has disappeared because we are engaged in the ridiculous task of trying to attract the congregation; and as we attempt to make the service more and more attractive, the services become less and less Jewish. We must never stop exploring and trying to bring Jews closer to their God, but within a firmly anchored Jewish setting.

Judaism in America has been diluted to something of a club in which all of us are members. There are the federations, the havurot, and the Camps Ramah. All of these clubs are designed to make the uneducated Jew feel good about himself. For example, in the federation, the secular Jew when asked about a weekend retreat and what they did for services will answer with great pride that they had the most wonderful havdalah imaginable. How ridiculous that an entire Shabbat of prayer and study should be reduced to a service which occupies one page in our prayerbook and lasts at most, five minutes.

The havurah is a fast disappearing institution. I believe that it is disappearing largely because it was built upon purely emotional rather than on intellectual and religious considerations. There was no religious framework except for good fellowship amongst Jews. This is commendable, but it cannot sustain itself. There are still a few congregations where two services exists and take place simultaneously; a regular service and a havurah service. I believe it has been wise for the klei kodesh and the leadership of synagogues to allow these two services to continue because experience has shown that sooner or later, the havurah service disbands once again to join the rest of the congregation in prayer.

The Camps Ramah and the practices at Camp Ramah have proven to be a detriment to what we might consider proper in a synagogue setting. I do not want to detract from the wonderful young people who go to these camps. These young Jews who come back with enthusiasm and a certain amount of knowledge will, in fact, make up the leadership of our congregations in years to come. But I do cry out against the practices which they have brought into our synagogues which our leadership, ignorant themselves of Jewish practice, have allowed to become permanent.

Just a moment ago, I asked the question, who do we serve as hazzanim? My answer is Judaism rather than the Jewish community. And I know that this sounds scandalous, surely we serve Jewish people, not an institution. But the institution of Judaism is an institution of people answering their religious needs in a certain way. There are many different ways of doing things, but there is only one genuine motivation for being Jewish: and that is a religious motivation. Behind all the myriad forms of Jewishness in the world is the practice of Judaism in its traditional form with observance of ritual. Yes, our religion has and will continually evolve, but it will never be anything but a religion answering religious needs. I am not a philosopher so I turn to one to

articulate what I mean by religious needs in the words of Lev Shestav, who says, "Does one not discern the following: the fig leaves under which Adam once hid his nakedness, when he suddenly felt the horror of his fall and his perpetual anxiety is an extinguishable thirst, and it is idol chatter to say, that men have always been able to find on earth what they need. They seek agonizingly, but do not find anything."

We do not answer this need when we abandon Jewish practice or dilute it to make it palatable. It will never be palatable to certain people, but there has always been a sh'eyrit hapleytah, the saving remnant.

It is this sh'eyrit hapleytah whom we serve. We must adopt an aggressively conservative approach as cantors and cease this grotesque parody of Jewish life which seeks to attract and not to serve Jews. we must serve the religious needs of our people and stop attempting to serve their social needs. Not until they become more intimately acquainted with the need of what Shestav spoke will the majority of them need us for what we are.

Let us then serve those who will have us and need us as Jewish leaders and hope and pray that our fellow Jews will understand what we are doing.

THE VARIETY OF CANTORIAL EXPERIENCE AND
PRACTICE IN THE REFORM SYNAGOGUE

CANTOR SARAH SAGER, FAIRMONT TEMPLE, CLEVELAND, OHIO

I would like to add my feelings to those already expressed that this is an exciting and historic occasion, one that is full of possibilities for the future, and, in which it is an honor to participate. Already I am astounded at how much we share, and many of my assumptions, as you will see, have been profoundly shaken.

As I was collecting my thoughts for this presentation, it occurred to me that the variety of cantorial experience and practice in the reform synagogue is in many ways reflective of the history of the reform movement itself.

In contrast with our conservative colleagues, who have enjoyed an essentially unbroken cantorial tradition which emerged and developed during the centuries after the destruction of the temple, the reform cantorate, although it was retained in liberal European synagogues, was basically rejected (with some few exceptions) by the liberal movement in this country during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Its emergence, then, today, as a growing and valued profession is a most interesting and wonderful phenomenon.

At its inception, the reform movement sought to bring Jews and Judaism into the modern world. As that world was dominated by Christians and their institutions, the early reformers consciously modelled themselves after the Protestant Church and its practices. They rejected, for example, the tallis and yarmulke in favor of a musical ensemble composed of organist, music director, and ~~four-part~~ choir. They even adopted Sunday morning services as the main service of the week to accommodate those who had to work on Shabbat mornings. They even eliminated Bar Mitzvah in favor of Confirmation two years after the thirteenth birthday. ~~They adopted~~ the term "temple" to describe their houses of worship, in rejection of the point of view that the Jews were still waiting for the Temple in Jerusalem to be restored. ~~Concomitant~~ with the demise of the cantor was the abbreviation of the liturgy, the abbreviation of the Torah service, and the ascendancy of the rabbi's sermon as the main focus of the service.

As with most revolutionary movements, once the pendulum had swung very far in one direction, it began to swing back a bit as compromises with tradition took place, and the movement, having made its point, and having become comfortable with itself, became more flexible in allowing and accepting variations on its point of view. The watershed for the reform movement can be marked as the post-World War II era when large numbers of Eastern European Jews began to join reform synagogues. Prior to this time, the reform movement in this country was dominated by German Jews who fashioned and established what we now refer to as "Classical" Reform Judaism. With the move to the suburbs in the post-war era, the children and grandchildren of Eastern European orthodox and conservative Jews began to create and/or join reform synagogues. For obvious reasons, the reform synagogue - although it suited their style of life, wasn't like the shul they remembered. And so they began to lobby for change - often locking horns with the rabbi who was trained and ordained by the Hebrew Union College - and frequently was a child of the classical reform movement himself. Almost every reform congregation has its story of a major confrontation between the forces of the classical reform tradition and the forces of encroaching "traditionalism". I served a congregation where years after the fact, people still talked about the yarmulke controversy as if it had happened yesterday. For a long time the wearing of a yarmulke was forbidden in this congregation and, if my memory is correct,

this prohibition was even included in its constitution. The prohibition was ultimately overturned, but not without a lot of pain and controversy. For many of our congregations, the advent of the "hew" prayerbook (it is now ten years old!) was the issue that brought forth the inherent conflict between the "classical" reformers and the "neo" or "pseudo" reformers.

At any rate, as we all now know, many of the trappings of traditionalism have appeared in the reform movement - if not the philosophy and theology that were formerly associated with them. There are very few reform congregations left in this country where Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies are not practiced. And more often than not, I would guess, the young boys, at least, appear weekly in their uniforms of tallit and yarmulke. The majority of reform congregants still do not regularly wear the tallit and yarmulke, but the large majority of reform rabbis and cantors do wear the tallit, and many wear the yarmulke - not only out of their own conviction, I believe, but because they have become symbols for their congregations of the warmth and nostalgia of the synagogues of their childhood - and also out of a sense that this is the way a rabbi or cantor "should" look!

Sunday services have all but disappeared - and cantors, fully trained and invested cantors are assuming "first-time" positions all over the country. Again, I think my own experience is probably reflective of the experiences of many: in my student pulpit, I was the first cantorial presence in a congregation that had been served by a Methodist choir director and organist, and a quartet of one Jewish and three non-Jewish singers! When I interviewed for my first full-time position, two out of the three New York-area congregations for which I auditioned were themselves looking for their first full-time, invested cantor. The congregation that I am presently serving in Cleveland is almost one hundred and fifty years old and I am the first person to hold the position of cantor there. The reform cantor, then, even though he or she is a member of an ancient profession, is in many ways a new entity, a trailblazer, a "first".

It is my impression that because of this, our reform congregations don't always know what to do with us. They want cantors - for the warmth we bring to the service, for the feelings of intimacy and identification they cannot find with the goyishe choirs and organists, for our voices and the beautiful music we bring to them. But whereas the chazzan is and always was central and essential to the conservative service, because the reform service was without the cantor for most of its history, our congregations cannot justify our existence on the basis of our contribution to the service alone.

I recognize that that is probably no longer true of the conservative synagogues either - but this is primarily for economic and not philosophical reasons. I grew up in a large conservative synagogue where the chazzan was responsible for the worship services and the life cycle events of the congregation. And no one ever questioned whether his contribution to the congregation was sufficient to justify his position. Such a question would never be asked in a conservative synagogue. The chazzan may not always be a full-time position, but his basic function and necessity as the shaliach tsibbur of the congregation is taken for granted.

I do not mean to imply that the reform cantorate is under siege. We are enjoying a renaissance of purpose and function that is most heartening. But the nature of our experiences, I do believe, is based on this basic dichotomy between the assumptions of our two movements. In order to justify the hiring of a full-time cantor in a reform congregation, he or she frequently becomes responsible for all kinds of duties - many of which have no direct relationship to the cantorate. If I may draw again from my own experience: in my former congregation, where I was the first full-time cantor they had ever had, I was not only responsible for all worship services, the High Holy Day choir, the volunteer choir, the childrens choir, and the entire Bar and Bat Mitzvah program - which meant that I was solely responsible for the training of over sixty children a year, I also taught a Sisterhood Hebrew class, I taught ninth grade pre-Confirmation, and I was a major contributor to the adult education program. Many of our members are Junior Youth Group or Senior Youth Group advisors or, are another creation of the reform movement, Cantor-Educators. Again, I would emphasize that I am not judging these categories, but rather, I am describing them in an effort to delineate the great variety of experiences available to the reform cantor - coming out of the history of the movement. In truth, many of our experiences have either evolved out of or developed from a growing sense of our knowledge and expertise as clergy - and this, I believe, is the most exciting aspect of the reform cantorate today. Again, because many of our immediate predecessors were gentile musicians or cantorial soloists - either Jewish or gentile, the reform cantorate has, in many instances had to "re-invent the wheel" - in establishing our credibility as Klay Kodesh. In contrast with the seminary of the reform movement, the Hebrew Union College which was established in 1873, the School of Sacred Music was created in 1948 and is only now in the process of seeking its first full-time faculty appointment. I think most of my colleagues in this room would agree that the School of Sacred Music has in many ways been the "step-child" of the seminary. I am not familiar enough with the Jewish Theological Seminary to know if our conservative colleagues share the same feelings, but it is my sense that there has been a stronger un-official apprentice system at work in the conservative movement that has not been dependent upon the school.

At any rate, despite our humble beginnings, I think we are gradually coming into our own. In my own congregation, our senior rabbi just left on a six-month sabbatical. In re-distributing his responsibilities, I was given certain responsibilities that were formerly covered by one of our remaining two rabbis. There is another interesting phenomenon taking place in my congregation that is plainly illustrative of the currents in our movement. This same senior rabbi is planning to retire in a year and a half - at which time the congregation plans to reduce its staff permanently to two rabbis and a cantor - indicating their acceptance of the cantor and the cantor's ability to assume part of the rabbinic load.

To be fair, the proposed reduction of our staff is motivated primarily by economic reasons and I will, in fact, be depriving an assistant rabbi of a job. This, unfortunately is where I think many of our reform colleagues are headed. As the School of Sacred Music is continuously upgraded - it is now awarding a Master's Degree instead of a Bachelor's Degree, there is a lot of discussion about a first year in Israel program which I believe will become a reality in the not too distant future, and as cantorial students take more and more classes with rabbinical students - why shouldn't more and more of our congregations choose to have a

clergyperson who adds a special cultural dimension instead of an assistant rabbi who has no special musical expertise. It is an interesting question - and the situation has the potential for tension and conflict. I pray that as the movement is presently expanding there will be room for all of our well-trained, talented, and able professionals. And that as our rabbis and cantors are trained in such close proximity, the respect and interrelationships of the student years will evolve into a mutuality of purpose and concern in the years of professional association.

Ultimately, the status of the cantor in any congregation is dependant upon what happens on the pulpit. And here, once again, the choices available to the reform cantor are reflective of the history of our movement. Just as the conservative cantorate inherited a largely continuous tradition of musach hat'filah, the reform cantorate was cut off from this rich musical source. Although we are once again claiming it as our own, the exact musical character of the reform cantorate is somewhat confusing and unfocused.

We are all well versed in the secular accretions to Jewish music throughout the centuries. The nusach has never been immune to such influence, and even the beloved Ahavah Rabah mode is not authentically Jewish but was adopted by our people from the Mongolian tribes that swept through Asia Minor during the thirteenth century. Such musical "borrowings" have occurred throughout our history on both a conscious and unconscious level.

The apotheosis of this kind of secular influence was probly reached in the Union Hymnal of 1932. This volume contains such enduring examples of Protestant hymnal style as "Father, See Thy Suppliant Children" and "All the World Shall Come to See Thee", both of which are still alive and well in Cleveland and, I suspect, in many other areas of the country as well, particularly since "All the World" is included in the new High Holy Day Prayerbook, The Gates of Repentance. I personally have developed a great fondness for "All the World", but with the exception of our "classical reform" congregants and my senior rabbi, the majority of my congregation finds it strange, uncomfortable, and even embarrassing. It is a hymn that could never have found its way into the conservative synagogue, and reminds us of a time in our reform history when we were trying very hard to emulate the goyyim. This particular style is quickly disappearing, but remnants of it still remain in many congregations and our cantors are required to include such hymns on certain occasions. I know of a congregation in this country where a K'dusha sung in the German language is a sacrosanct part of the Yom Kippur repertoire. These remnants are rich sources of history and association in the congregations in which they are used and indicate to us the vast musical possibilities that are available to the reform cantor.

To begin with, the reform cantor has always had the use of musical instruments. For most of us, that means the regular use of the organ - or piano, but there are reform congregations in this country that are blessed with small musical ensembles of any variety of instruments. Woodwind quintets, string quartets, flute and harp, are just a few of the possibilities utilized by some congregations on a regular basis. For those of us who don't have such resources, most of us do try to program at least one or two special music Sabbaths that include the use of special instruments. Many of our contemporary composers have created pieces conceived with instrumental accompaniment but which nevertheless include an optional organ part when such instrumentation is unavailable.

Many of our congregations have choirs - and this, I know, is a resource we share with our conservative colleages. For those congregations that do have a quartet or octet or even larger combination of voices, the repertoire available is quite extensive and exciting. Most of the synagogue "giant;" of the twentieth century composed with a four-part choir in mind. One has only to think of Max Helfman, Isahore Freed, A. W. Binder, Herbert Fromm, Lazer Weiner, Ben Steinberg, Charles Davidson, Max Janowski, Hugo Adler, Sam Adler, Joseph Achion, Paul Ben-Chaim, to name a few of our major composers whose synagogue compositions were conceived primarily for soloist - even cantor - and four part choir. Indeed, this was the legacy bequeathed to us by Sulzer, Lewandowski, and Naumberg in the nineteenth century.

The repertoire of composed pieces of this century and the last is not the only source of music in today's reform synagogue, however. Many of us utilize our Yiddish heritage or the Sephardic melodies that are becoming more and more accessible in large measure thanks to the work of Richard Neumann. The works of Salomone Rossi of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, of Darius Milhaud, of Ernest Bloch, are available for judicious use on special occasions and for special events.

Perhaps even more interesting is the return to tradition of the music in the reform synagogue. I am not sure that entire sections of the service will ever be chanted according to the nusach as is the practice in the conservative synagogue. For one thing, as long as the chazarat hashatz does not exist for us, we will never be able to do it! But many of us include the nusach wherever we possibly can: for the Chatzi Kaddish, the Avot the K'dusha Tsur Yisrael

The nusach will never have the same power in the reform worship experience as it does in the conservative, but its presence is increasing, and, I believe, is a potent source from which we all draw strength and inspiration.

I would guess that the majority of our congregations do not have both a cantor and professional choir. Many of our reform colleagues work alone on the pulpit or are assisted either weekly or monthly or on special occasions by a volunteer choir. In most instances the volunteer choir is trained by the cantor and, in my observation, is a source of great strength and popularity for the cantor. Repertoire for the volunteer choir is as varied and diverse as our congregations themselves.

There are two forces, however, that have greatly affected the music of the reform movement in the past several years. One is the ubiquitous nature of Chassidic Festival-type melodies, and the other is the popularity of camp tunes. We have, thank God, finally emerged from the guitar-playing madness of the late 60's and 70's. This is not to say that there isn't a place for guitars and guitar music in the synagogue. There is. I think, in fact, that that whole era taught us a great deal about the needs of our congregants to feel a part of something that is warm and inviting and accessible. It also reminded us of the need for congregational participation - a more difficult goal, it seems, in the reform movement than in the conservative - again, because of our more formal beginnings. There is a time and a place for such melodies and whether we like it or not, they are here to stay and we must deal with them as part of our total cantorial experience.

The other type of melody is harder to “pigeon-hole”. Who would deny the use of “Ckeh Shalom”, “Al ShlosHa D’varim”, “V’haeir Eineinu”, and a host of other melodies that have come out and continue to come out of Israel. They are not derived from the nusach, they are not composed by our important Jewish composers, and yet they speak to us and to our congregants, and no cantor in his or her right mind would try to eliminate them from the worship service. Rather, along with so many diverse elements, in a limited and, hopefully, tasteful way they also have become part of the repertoire of the reform and the conservative synagogue.

There is one other area of endeavor that is also making a “comeback” in reform practice after its premature banishment, and that is the use of the trope or cantillation. At Fairmount Temple, in Cleveland, all of our Bar and Bat Mitzvah students now have the option to chant their Torah portion or their Haftarah portion - or both - in a return to tradition that is really quite remarkable for a congregation that probably would not have allowed any chanting at all ten years ago. Again, the cantillation doesn’t have the same compulsion as it does in the conservative synagogue; in fact, the most insistant parents of my Par and Bat Mitzvah students are those who either grew up in the conservative movement or who have recently left it - and want their children to chant for purely emotional reasons - or to please grandparents. But for them, the experience would just not be complete without the child chanting the Torah or Haftarah portion.

In conclusion - and I would emphasize that this has been a subjective analysis to which I will welcome your comments and response in a few moments - it seems as if the reform cantorate is currently engaged in an intricate balancing act: based on the history of our diverse congregations, trying to fulfill the tastes of our congregants while at the same time educating, broadening and enlightening them with the musical creations of our people from ancient times to our own day. It is, at times, a confusing and frustrating task - the demands are so great and the options so many; and yet at times we feel as if we stand on the threshold of great achievement. After all, it is in our hands to guide and enrich and inspire our people for the next generation.

Afternoon Session: 2:00-4:30

Chairman: Hazzan Ivan Perlman, President, Cantors Assembly

"LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE WAY TO GO?"

Hazzan Ivan Perlman

My dear colleagues,

For those of you who do not know who I am and cannot read my name tag, I am Ivan Perlman. I have the privilege of being the president of the Cantors Assembly. I want to tell you I share with all of you the experience of being a part of history. It is a wonderful, wonderful occasion and I predict it is only the beginning of many such occasions as the years will go by.

About five years ago, at the University of Rhode Island, and I am from Rhode Island, Rabbi Seymour Siegel, who was a member of the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary, predicted (when he was Scholar-in-Residence for Hillel at URI) that within the next decade there would be no more cantors and that the rabbi would be the token Jew in the community.

I recall that with a great deal of pain because the next day, after having read it in the newspaper, I had to travel to Philadelphia, to address six congregations who were honoring their cantors. I can recall being absolutely livid at the time. However, in retrospect, Rabbi Siegel was not being facetious and in some cases, unfortunately, he was prophetic. There are, indeed, communities today where cantors have served that are no longer serving and in some where they are now using "cantorial soloists". So, while he was being selective, I hope, in his predictions, he was not being all-inclusive and I think that this day is testimony to the fact that he was not entirely correct.

It is a wonderful thing to be standing here at the Hebrew Union college, joined with colleagues of the Reform and Conservative movements. We listened, already, to two of our colleagues articulate some of the problems in the cantorate. They. I can assure you, come out of experience of depression and pessimism. Most of you who know me know that I am the eternal optimist. Let me point out to you, since we all declare that we are now part of history, that this institution, this great Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the great Jewish Theological Seminary were both founded to train rabbis for the American

community. It is through the intervention of these rabbis, for their love of hazzanut and the preservation of Jewish music and Jewish tradition that these institutions both now have schools to train hazzanim. That tells me something. You know, I have met with the President of the Rabbinical Assembly and with the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. These have been marvelous meetings and I am more optimistic than ever. I recognize that it is not always the rabbi that is our problem. It is the ego and the autonomy that we share and these problems are being overcome each and every day by each and everyone of us who understands that we have a sacred role to fulfill in Jewish life. We are fulfilling it with love and with affection. I want you to know that within the breast of the rabbi beats a Jewish heart. They are as much instilled with the love of hazzanut as we are.

For the first time in the history of the Rabbinical Assembly, we will have a Hazzan-in-Residence at the Rabbinical Assembly convention. The President of the Cantors Assembly has been invited to address the Rabbinical Assembly. Hazzanim of our Assembly will give concerts at the Rabbinical Assembly convention. By the same token they will send us a Rabbi-in-Residence. The President of the Rabbinical Assembly will come to address us. We are all, I think, on the road to maturity. I think it speaks well for all of us.

presidents, myself included, come and go. There are two men within our organizations that have remained for some years - ken yirbu - may they remain for many more years to come. I will only say that if the future of hazzanut in both of our movements is alive and well, and the future of hazzanut is alive and well in both of our movements, the instruments that have accompanied and strengthened and harmonized the future for us, it is the instruments of our executive vice presidents. Without any further introduction, and so that we do have time later on for questions and answers, I will call upon the Executive Vice Presidents of the Cantors Assembly and the American Conference of Cantors, Samuel Rosenbaum and Ray Smolover.

Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum

Having watched the difficulties with this microphone, I am led to agree with the late Stephen S. Wise, who, when he was called upon to speak and found a microphone in front of him, pushed it aside with a flourish, and said, "I will not entrust this million dollar voice to a twenty-five dollar gadget." Neither will I.

I would like to add my voice to the good feeling expressed about the importance and the meaning and the relevance of this event today. Not because it has not been said beautifully over and again, but because if I have learned anything, it is that if you love someone or something, you should let it be known day in and day out. Not because the loved one will forget but because it builds the love all the more strongly. I am delighted to be here. I am delighted that at last we are meeting face to face in a public meeting with some of the best in the American cantorate, with the men and women of the American Conference and with my colleagues of the Cantors Assembly.

I find it more than a little difficult to know where to begin. It is evident from the litany of problems we have heard that there lies ahead of us a catalogue of challenges, which we shall need to confront, not in some distant, unforeseeable future, but tomorrow morning as we go back to our own communities.

It is obvious, too, that our problems are not discreetly hazzanic, but are bound up with the state of American synagogue life, which in turn is a function of the state of Jewish life in America today, which is, in turn, inextricably a part of the human condition in our age.

For the sake of reasonableness and to preserve our sanity, let us for the moment agree that these are hardly times of spiritual and moral uplift and that this deficiency is not a matter of great urgency either to the general public nor to a great portion of American Jewry.

That this condition cannot help but have a discouraging effect on our attitude towards the religious life goes without saying.

Having disposed of, for the moment, of the universal spiritual malaise of our time, we can begin to focus on our own more immediate concern: The state of synagogue life and how we hazzanim should deal with it.

It is no secret that many of us feel threatened by developments, a good number of which are beyond our ability to control. We are dismayed by the growing vulgarity of the way Jewish life is celebrated, by the trivialization of the synagogue service, by the inroads which demean Jewish worship reducing it in many cases to pale imitations of campfire song sessions, by the apparent determination of many in synagogue leadership to make of the hazzan a technician, a mechanic who has little to say about the way Jews pray, but has rather to fulfill a number of unrelated but necessary functions on a high-tech style table of organization.

As the traditional ground of the hazzan is cut away, as his voice becomes increasingly muted, his function will surely become more and more circumscribed and, before long, dispensable.

I use the word traditional and I do not want that to be misread. Tradition must not be confused with intransigence or with inflexibility. On the contrary, that word needs a broader interpretation. It means here that the central function of the hazzan, is that of sheliah tzibbur, a leader in prayer, no matter how much that function may need to be altered to meet the needs of our congregations at this point in our history. Jewish prayer, traditional Jewish prayer, has always been the time-sanctified interplay between sheliah tzibbur and daveners. The Jew prays because Jewish prayer can give him access to an otherwise indefinable dimension of human values which might be lost in a world of only those things which can be measured, defined and catalogued.

It is the task of the sheliah tzibbur to touch the innermost core of those who pray with him, to open their hearts to God's fatherhood and humankind's brotherhood; to lift those who pray out of the realm of the thinkable and to bring them closer - even if only for an instant - to the unthinkable and to encourage them to meditate upon it.

I am concerned when a hazzan is not given an opportunity to carry out this task. Not because my ego is bruised, but because if the hazzan becomes only a token leader of the service, intentionally or not, the ancient and treasured special kind of

Jewish prayer may die. Since time immemorial Jews have prayed most sincerely and thoughtfully in the mesmerizing age-old sprichstimme chant, attuned by pusah to the calendar, expanded or contracted, simplified or elaborated upon by reason of the condition of the davener's spirit. To daven is to set in motion an entire syndrome of chanting, singing, swaying; a mystical casting off of the here and now and an uplifting mysterious union with the past. For me, remembering and reunion with the past are an important part of why I pray and these are strongest when I daven. And as I grow older that pull of the past to be remembered grows more intense.

When a Jew is led in prayer by a skilled sheliah tzibbur, those evocations come to him more easily, more beautifully, more spontaneously. That is what I consider the hazzan's task to be. If I am not permitted to perform my task, how will my congregants learn how to daven?

In the past they might have learned from a father, a grandfather, a neighbor, a pious melamed. Today there are few pious melamdin. Fathers, and even grandfathers, stumble over aliyah brakhot at children's and grandchildren's bar mitzvahs. Where will the young generation learn if not from us?

In the entire spectrum of Jewish agencies and institutions today only the synagogue is firmly anchored in the sacred Jewish past. Only the synagogue serves as the spiritual home of the Jew. Only the synagogue service provides him with the regular and regularized opportunity to express his yearning for something or some One outside of himself. The others are concerned with current needs: social, educational, recreational, medical and financial. All important and worthwhile.

But the element that identifies the special and unique group on behalf of which these other institutions labor so devotedly and expertly, the element that identifies us as a Jewish community, can best be nurtured, taught and experienced in the synagogue. It is the one all-embracing institution which validates the existence of all the others.

That is because the synagogue was created by the Jewish people. In each generation Jews have modified it, changed it to serve their own purpose and convenience. So will it be with us.

Some time ago, well within the memory of many of us, here in the rarified and heady atmosphere of freedom, many Jews turned their backs on the synagogue as a viable and regular part of their lives. It is our obligation to help them to turn back to the synagogue.

The Jewish people created the synagogue's kley kodesh to serve its needs.

Today, as we watch, the Jewish people seems to be debating whether they need for us to be the skilled synagogue specialists as in the past, or living, out-reaching, interacting role-models who can lead them to a return to Torah and mitzvot and to a more fulfilling sense of their Jewishness.

A generation ago many Jews turned away from observances and searched elsewhere for salvation. Today there are signs of a possibility that Jews may once again turn to observing the commandments because only through them can they define themselves as authentic Jews.

The synagogue, itself, will need to prove once again that it can be the authentic and relevant instrument of Jewish expression and not merely a facility in which Jews play at the excessive, expensive and generally meaningless rituals celebrating milestone events.

To the hazzan in an authentic synagogue, a synagogue of earnestness and purpose, of wholehearted Jewish intensity, can be the joy we all imagined it would be when we first decided to become hazzanim. Only such a synagogue will survive, flourish and grow.

For the purposes of this discussion and only in the briefest capsule form I want to suggest how such a synagogue might come to be. But there is one sine qua non: that there must be - as part of any action plan - a reconsideration and, if needed, a reorganization of roles and responsibilities.

The task of restructuring the synagogue is the common responsibility of synagogue professionals and concerned lay people. All of us will need to be equal partners in this enterprise, with this or that professional or layman taking the lead when matters of his or her particular expertise are being considered.

We, together with our colleagues the rabbis, the two arms of the synagogue's spiritual staff, must more than ever before bend every effort to establish a continuing dialogue which will permit us to put both professions to work solving the common problems we face. Such a dialogue can build mutual respect and mutual commitment for the ultimate benefit of klal yisrael.

I am pleased that in the last months such a dialogue between the Rabbinical Assembly and the Cantors Assembly has been revived. I know it is our intention to pursue it vigorously. We cannot permit pride or personality or old prejudices on either side to stand in the way.

The Conservative and Reform movements have much in which they can take justifiable pride. In the period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the early 1970's these movements, through the devotion and talent of a number of its rabbis, hazzanim, educators, lay leaders, its seminaries and its professional organizations, shaped not only the American synagogue into its unique format, but the way we worship, the way we socialize as Jews, the way we teach our children to be Jews.

The hazzanim of both our organizations, more than anyone else, are responsible for the remarkable burst of creativity in Jewish music which took place in those years; years in which new music, traditional music, folk, synagogue and art music flourished in publication and performance.

Music in Jewish life is not an adornment but rather part of the warp and woof of its fabric. It is a part of being a Jew. It is for this reason especially that the drive for musical expression must not be allowed to remain dormant. We should have learned from history that every generation needs to recreate for itself, in its own image, the values of the previous generation or take the risk of losing them forever.

The work that lies ahead is already cut out for us. We have sensed foretastes of this in the convention programs of our organizations of the last several years, through the music we hear and perform, in the topics we discuss.

If we are to judge by these, there is already in progress a broadened conceptualization of the renewed perception of our role in synagogue life.

What we must bring about is an appreciation and support for what is happening on the part of the worshipper. This awakening appreciation must go beyond the love for an individual hazzan into an appreciation of the cantorate in general for the ideals and goals toward which we strive.

Part of the job is an educational one for us. "Look at us", we must say to the American synagogue community, "we have something to offer. We are descendants of a calling that goes back in one form or another, for at least two millenia. It is in your interest that you open yourselves up to the image of today's and tomorrow's hazzan and embrace him or her as a meaningful and important contributor to Jewish survival in America."

For our part, we, as organizations and as individuals, must commit ourselves to a creative revitalization of Jewish worship, a renewal of interest and a raising of standards for Jewish music, Jewish knowledge and Jewish culture and to an overriding concern for anything that works toward Jewish survival in the synagogue, in the community - and most important, in the **home**.

As you know, the Cantors Assembly, thanks to a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is engaged in a three year project to write a history of the cantor in America. We are almost a year into the job and as a result of a number of surveys, questionnaires, interviews and careful research we have already gathered a large number of revealing statistics and facts on the cantor, his history, his function, his education, etc.

This is not the time to discuss those findings, but the answer to one question in a recent survey has particular **relevance here**.

Our investigator, Prof. Mark Slobin, ethnomusicologist at Wesleyan University and the author of a number of impressive books dealing with diverse aspects of Jewish music, sought to discover how hazzanim feel about their profession. The question to which I refer asked the respondent to indicate what disturbs him most about being a hazzan today; what would he change if he could.

Almost universally the answers came back that the factor that is most frustrating to them as hazzanim is the liturgical illiteracy they find among their congregants, and their lack of discrimination in what constitutes prayer.

This is not surprising. All of us know how helpless we feel in chanting the liturgy before a congregation of worshippers who may know how to read the words, but who have no idea what the words actually mean and who may even be turned off by the literal translations on the facing pages of the siddur, completely unaware of the heavy overlay of midrashic, rabbinic commentary and historical events which helped shape the true meaning of our liturgy.

Small wonder that congregants grasp at tunes, jingles, hasidic melodies and the like. These are immediately accessible, demand little thought and probably produce a temporary sense of satisfaction at being able to participate.

I, like most of my colleagues, have consistently fought this trend, deplored it and searched for ways to eradicate it. From where we stood it was superficial and of little lasting value: the kind of pap we feed little children. In the process, we charged, Judaism is reduced to the level of a TV commercial.

This is a day devoted to self analysis and we must be truthful to ourselves if we are to learn anything.

No, I still believe what I have been saying, but where many of us fall short in dealing with this phenomenon is that we spend all our energies bemoaning it and little thought or energy in understanding it and in learning how to utilize it for higher purposes.

We had better come to grips with the broader implications of this rush to what we consider to be inappropriate options for Jewish prayer. Are not our congregants telling us, showing us that they have a need for making a connection with their Jewishness? Is it not up to us to grasp the hand they are extending to us and to guide them to a more authentic experience?

The hasidim teach that when you want to pull someone out of the mire, you must get down in the mire yourself in order to be able to pull him out. We must begin with our congregants where we find them to be - and gradually convince them to come up to where we believe they should be:

Has Jewish life not always had its full share of illiterates? Do we really believe that the shtetl was filled with pious, learned men and women? Were all our grandfathers really rabbis as we like to think they were?

Then why are we surprised at what we find?

One thing, however, distinguished the shtetl am ha-aretz from his modern counterpart: the ambiance of faith and the respect for learning which set the shtetl apart from all other ethnic communities.

That ambiance is missing from our lives. To recreate that ambiance is the responsibility of all who are truly concerned for Jewish survival.

Such an honest passion for quality in Jewish life can bind the rabbi and hazzan and lay leader more closely together than any code, contract or armistice imposed by synagogue balebatim.

The perception of our role as hazzanim must be big enough to include aspects of the ancient hazzan of Talmudic and medieval times, the special honey and vinegar of East European hazzones, the staid and stately Oberkantoren style of Vienna and Berlin of the 19th Century, and the new free, boisterous harmonies and rhythms of our own time, blending together to produce a thoroughly contemporary rendering of the hazzan of the 21st Century. Above all, the hazzan must remain a man of the people, an integral and integrated part of the Jewish community, his influence touching educational, social and religious aspects of community life.

We will need to enlarge our arsenal of talents and skills if we are to accomplish this. In addition to vocal and instrumental music we must learn to use dance, poetry, literature, liturgy and related art forms in order to create new spiritual experiences for our congregations thus providing a tangible role-model of Jewish commitment and Jewish knowledge.

I am more than a little pleased that for many hazzanim, particularly the younger ones, although not limited to them, this is not a new concept, but one which they have been pursuing with more than a little diligence and with much success. Some are finding professional fulfillment in working with young people, expanding their experiences with Jewish music. Others, in seeking out that special one-to-one relationship which grows between bar mitzvah student and hazzan: a relationship which often continues through the lifetime of both. Still others, participate in the education of the congregation's adults, in teaching Jewish music and liturgy, in developing amateur baaley tefillah and baaley k'riah. Still others have developed the special skill and tact to do pastoral work with great effectiveness. And some are specializing in serving as community resource persons and in teaching specialized areas of Jewish music.

A number of our members find great satisfaction in working with the elderly, the sick and the learning disabled. As our population continues to age, and people live longer, the older men and women of our communities require our serious attention and concern. They will certainly need to fill their increased leisure time with constructive activity. We should be providing at least some of these.

As people grow older they instinctively turn to religion for support. With music as the key, a knowledgeable hazzan can guide such people to a richer, fuller understanding of their Jewish heritage_

There is also little doubt that before the century is out the work-week may well be shortened to four or even three days. Such a process is already under way in many industries. How will men and women in the prime of their working years deal with their new-found leisure time? The concern of the synagogue should be directed now to formulate productive educational, recreational, cultural and religious activities; not only to fill empty hours, but to help keep them active and to fend off what could well be catastrophic emotional and psychological crises in their lives.

Such a hazzan can serve to bridge the gap between the little that one learns in religious school as a child, what is experienced in youth groups and summer camps as a teenager and what should be experienced at home and abroad as an adult.

In this way the hazzan can help shape the celebration of Sabbaths and the festivals, directly teaching in workshops and adult classes and leading families beyond old haphazard patterns of behavior, turning memories and random nostalgia into positive intimate living experiences of Judaism through ritual, prayer, music, dance.

Obviously what is emerging is a new enlarged role for the hazzan. And this must come to pass not tomorrow but starting this very day.

We must not be afraid of change. It is the one unchanging fact of life. Just as the hazzan of the 20's and 30's was different than the hazzan of the immigrant generation, and the hazzan of the 60's and 70's was different than his predecessor, so must the hazzan of today's generation be prepared to march to the sound of a different drummer.

Yes, Judaism demands that we hold fast to tradition, to faith, to the word. These are as valid today as they were at Sinai. It is only the vestments in which these truths function that may wear out and may need to be changed, and we should not be afraid of reasoned, orderly change.

Such an enlarged and enlightened role may well serve as an incentive to young persons, searching for a meaningful and useful career, to turn to the cantorate. Both our organizations must become more zealous and determined in recruiting candidates for our cantorial schools. It will also require a rethinking of the curriculum and the priorities of the cantorial schools. Courses in education, psychology, art, dance, musical instruments (beyond the required piano), drama, poetry, as well as in Yiddish and in accelerated courses in Hebrew, to say nothing of computer skills and social work.

These are only some roshei praktikim, some capsule chapter headings, but they can serve, if no other purpose, to set us thinking, and talking together.

But our actions, no matter how heroic, will be meaningless if they are not implemented and augmented by corresponding and related action by our mother institutions and by our colleagues, the rabbis, and by the organizations of the congregations we hope to continue to serve.

And that is the purpose of this entire exercise: to begin to counsel together. The problems, the dilemmas, the frustrations which most certainly lie ahead are common ones. We all had a share in creating them, we all most certainly will have a share in the pain we will know should we fail.

Finally, if we are truly concerned with providing such hazzanim to future congregations, there are some things we must begin to do now:

1. Achieve a commitment by the seminaries, the cantorial and rabbinic bodies and by the appropriate synagogue lay bodies to this hazzan role model.
2. Careful screening of applicants to the cantorial school with respect to their motivation. You will tell me that we cannot afford to be too strict with

our candidates; we have only a small number of applicants.

Well, I am convinced that the new image, and stricter standards will attract not less, but more applications once word gets out of what we are about.

3. More stringent undergraduate requirements in areas of music, education, Judaica, and Yiddishkeit. The last two are not the same. Similar inservice education should be required of hazzanim already in the field.
4. In addition to the aforementioned subjects, the reorganized schools must include instruction in community involvement and program implementation, sensitivity training for working with families and groups, adult education techniques.
5. Joint classes must become the norm - wherever possible - for rabbinical and cantorial students, in as many subjects as possible. Except for advanced Talmud and courses in the Codes for rabbinical students, and technical music and nusah courses for the cantorial students, all students should study together.
6. Agreement on the part of the lay organizations to demand of their constituent congregations that they abide by legally adopted standards for relationships and practice. Such an acceptance of discipline on the part of constituent congregations is now at a very low ebb. The pain, and the frustration and cynicism this attitude engenders is not only destructive for the hazzan or rabbi, but for the congregation, the movement and for Jewish life itself.

It would seem that I am asking that we change the world after all. Perhaps we will not go all the way, but it is incumbent on us to begin with ourselves.

And if you have any doubt that Jewish song has the power to rearrange reality let me share with you a story in point. I am indebted to my colleague and friend, Solomon Mendelson, who heard it from one who was part of the story.

Some time in the early 60's, during one of the short thaws in our relationship with the Soviet Union, the president of the ZOA took a task force to Russia in order to make contact with Soviet Jewry. Obviously they could make no public appeal for Jews to come to them so they made it a practice to carry a Yiddish *news*-paper under their arms wherever they went as a silent signal. They noticed now and then that some men and women turned and looked at them, hesitated, but generally walked away as though they had thought better of it.

During their stay in Moscow they learned that Jan Peerce was to give a recital at the Bolshoi. It occurred to them that this might be the place to make contact with Jews. They went and sat through an elegant concert of operatic arias, art songs, etc. As was always the case, Jan was superb and received an enthusiastic reception, which continued long enough so that he came out to sing an encore.

The audience settled down in their seats and listened intently as he came center stage to announce his selections. He looked straight out at the audience and spoke up loudly and clearly: For my encore, he said, I will sing "A Din Toyre Mit Got". And it was as though a bomb had exploded. Jews by the hundreds came out of the shadows, stood up, applauding, screaming, stamping their feet. It was immediately obvious who was a Jew. There was no doubt.

Not only had the song identified the Jews to the world, but it identified the Jews to themselves.

That is the power of Jewish song. Let us harness it together, for the sake of heaven and for the sake of our own lives.

THE CANTORATE FACES THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIMES

CANTORS ASSEMBLY - AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF CANTORS
SEMINAR - DECEMBER 26.1984 - HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, NEW YORK

Dr. Raymond Smolover, Cantor
Executive Director, American Conference of Cantors

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:

My new 1985 calendar contains the following quotation, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life:" As I read the quotation, I asked myself, "So what happened to all of my yesterdays?" Our times tend to the quick-fix approach in solving serious problems (similar to those weekend emotional marathons which are supposed to change your entire life in 48 hours). Perhaps the future does not begin at all, but simply evolves out of the present as the present becomes the future of the past.

In considering the challenge facing the cantorate, although we need not return to Sinai, we seem to require a grounding in the past. For some of us, however, the past is suspect. Can we really rely upon the past to provide direction for the future? According to Will and Ariel Durant, in summing up their ten volume "Story of Civilization" and I quote, "Our knowledge of any past event is always incomplete, probably inaccurate, beclouded by ambivalent evidence and biased historians, and perhaps distorted by our own patriotic or religious partisanship . . . Besides, most history is guessing and the rest is prejudice."

A more traditional approach to the past was my mother's reply to my father (alev hashalom) when after having davened in the orthodox shul for the first fifteen years of my life, and then in the conservative synagogue for the next fifteen, I accepted a position as cantor in a reform temple: my father exclaimed, "Vos volt dain zeide gezogt?" (What would your grandfather have said?) To which my mother responded, "Di zelbe vos Avraham avinu's zeide hot gezogt, un vos Moische rabeinu's zeide hot gezogt, un vos der Bal Shem Tov's zeide hot gezogt, un vos dain zeide hot gezogt. "Azoi geit di velt!" (The same as Abraham's grandfather said, and Moses' grandfather said, and the Bal Shem Tov's grandfather said, and your own grandfather said, "Such is the way of the world." History smiles at all attempts to force its flow into theoretical patterns or logical grooves; it reeks havoc with our generalizations. breaks all our rules, but perhaps within even these limits, we can learn enough to bear the present patiently, and to respect one another's illusions about the future.

Let me, therefore, begin with the present, with the current status of the cantorate in Reform Judaism. On October 19th of 1983, the officers of the ACC were invited to meet with the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It was the first such meeting. The purpose was to provide an exchange between the rabbinic and cantorial leadership to acquaint each other with the priorities of our mutual concerns. Our president, Richard Botton, suggested that our concern with, "who's in charge" be replaced by "what we are charged with as clergy role models." I provided statistics, an orientation about the ACC and its relationship with its own members and concluded with an evaluation of the future of the cantorate in Reform Judaism.

I noted, however, that only six of the thirty-five congregations represented by the Executive Board of the CCAR were being served by invested cantors. I suggested that this might explain a number of our differences. I reminded them of the four

guests who were asked to close their eyes as they entered a garden on an estate containing a large elephant and to describe their experience: The first, whose arms encircled the leg of the elephant described the trunk of a stately tree whose roots sustained the ecology of the garden. The second, whose hands held the flapping ear of the elephant, described a beautiful bird who filled the garden with song. The third, whose hands pressed against the side of the elephant, described an obstacle blocking his way; and the fourth, holding the swaying trunk of the elephant, described a **threatening** cobra about to strike.

I suggested that we cantors and rabbis may likewise be responding to what would seem to be an experience we share in common: the synagogue, its worship services, the rabbi and the cantor. However, whereas one cantor may be responding to the experience of a rabbi who is spiritually and musically sensitive; who appreciates the function of music in prayer as being the attempt to elevate and transcend the verbal, and where one rabbi may be responding to the experience of an invested cantor, a fine musician with a well trained voice, both devoting their professional lives to the service of God, our religion, our people and our cultural heritage:

There is another cantor who is responding to the experience of a rabbi for whom music is the necessary pause between responsive reading, who considers "good synagogue music" sing-a-long-music of whatever quality, for whom music is primarily a possible panacea for congregational participation; one who considers musical liturgy unbearably long if it lasts four minutes but who will speak for forty. As there is another rabbi who is responding to a singer, without formal cantorial training, who cannot distinguish between a sacred melody and a trivial popular tune; one who is more interested in the sound of his or her own voice, rather than serving as the voice of the soul of the congregants: for whom the synagogue is not a way of life, but a source of additional income. I pointed out that statistics which I was about to present should emphasize how important it is for us to be continually aware that our experiences in the synagogue may not be what we have in common, but that for the sake of our common purpose, we must transcend our individual experiences.

Our statistics indicate that there are some 780 congregations in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Approximately 200 have cantors who are members of the American Conference of Cantors. Some 38 congregations are served by Student Cantors of the HUC-School of Sacred Music. Our Executive Board consists of 26 members 7 of whom are female cantors and one is an officer. Twenty-one of the 38 students at the HUC-SSM are females. There are, therefore, over 500 congregations who do not have cantors. Of these, approximately 160 are served by soloists. A projection based on student enrollment and cantors who have retired or passed on. indicates that it will take between 25 and 50 years to provide these congregations with qualified cantors.

With regard to our members, I noted that members of the ACC are obliged to uphold the highest ethical and moral standards of our calling and to adhere to behavior appropriate to members of the clergy. The ACC supports and upholds the freedom of each of its members to serve his or her congregation in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the contractual agreement between the cantor and the congregation. The ACC further supports the concept of the "freedom of the pulpit" for the cantor as well as for the rabbi and lay leaders. Members of the ACC adhere to the placement policy as contained in the Joint Cantorial Placement Commission "Green Book" and follow the guidelines for contractual agreement contained in the ACC "White Book."

A little over a year has passed since that historic first meeting and we now meet for another historic first. In considering the challenge of our times we must recognize the uniqueness of our times with regard to the synagogue, since there is no future for the cantorate unless there is a future for the synagogue. The nature

of that future will determine the nature of the cantorate.

In a world where the redeemed State of Israel serves as the connecting link with our people, our biblical past, as well as the center of our Jewish culture. where the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the B'na Brith, and other such secular organizations stand guard over our secular rights as Jews; where colleges teach Judaism; where the YM&YWA and the Jewish Community Centers provide a wide variety of social and educational programs; where the 92nd St "Y" and the Goodman Hebrew Arts School prepare and present music and cultural programs of Jewish content. . . what is the non-duplicable role of the synagogue? Two generations ago most of these activities fell within the province of the synagogue. What now and in the future, is to be the domain of the synagogue?

In Abraham Heschel's, "Insecurity of Freedom" there is a chapter on the "Vocation of the Cantor." In considering the role of the cantor and the synagogue, Heschel asks, "What does a person expect to attain when entering a house of prayer? In the pursuit of learning one goes to a library; for aesthetic enrichment one goes to the art museums; for pure music to the concert hall. What then is the purpose of going to a house of prayer?" The answer seems simple. To pray! Today, however, that is either not relevant or not considered of sufficient priority.

What has happened to prayer? In the first place, we no longer pray, we attend worship services which have become either routine or serve as another forum for current events and religious instruction. As I sit on the pulpit, I often recall that at the age of 17 I served as a page in the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh. I would pick up requests and deliver the reference books to the desk. When no requests were made I would slip into the restricted area and read the blue star marked books on love and sex. I recall wondering when I would experience the love and sex I was reading about. I now wonder, as I listen to the responsive reading and the interpretation of the scripture and to the sermon on America politics... "when will I experience prayer?"

The Joint Worship Commission of the UJC recently published a report by Drs. Askenas and Jick on "Coping with Change - The Reform Synagogue and Trends in Worship." We learn from the report that congregations are trying to cope with the challenge of changes in worship. The study indicates the following: (1) Most congregations report some sort of shift towards greater pluralism and greater participation in worship styles, mode and content; (2) Services are changing as lay leadership roles are enlarged, as women participate more, as fixed pulpits are replaced by more flexible arrangements; (3) The format of the service is also being refined. One shift is from standard services to a wide variety of service formats, such as special themes children's services and musical services; (4) In some cases there are multiple minyan and an chavurot; (5) The roles of music and that of the cantor has been slowly changing as well. As part of the move to make services warmer and increase participation, the role of the cantor has been enlarged. Liturgical music has been supplemented, and in a few cases yargel supplanted by folk songs and contemporary Israeli music. Congregational singing is encouraged. The organ is placed in view of the congregation. Choirs are becoming congregational. (6) More traditional symbols have emerged with the use of the kippa and tallit; (7) The boundaries between reform and conservative modes of worship are disappearing.

I noted that the words, "God" and "Prayer" do not appear in the report why not? Perhaps because we are afraid to ask for fear of the answer "Who can pray after Aushwitz and "what" was God during the Holocaust?" And yet, synagogues stand and births occur. and bar and bat mitzvah students are to be prepared, and people fall in love and chance marriage, and the elderly must be visited and cared for and we must all be buried sooner or later.

The "coping with change report" reminds me of a time when we experimented with changing the shape of the theatre stage and the seats in the concert hall. We changed programs from Bach to PDQ and provided hours of music appreciation with Lenny Bernstein instructing thousands on the development of the main theme in the Mahler, and we turned the arts over to committees. The wearing of tuxedos (though appropriate for formal concerts) has as little effect upon the music as does the kippa or the tallit (though also appropriate) on the effectiveness of prayer. Arranging the synagogue seats in the round sooner or later becomes a merry-go-round of experiments with worship.

If the God of our fathers cannot stand up to the Holocaust, it may be that our fathers experienced God in the context of their times, not ours. For me, at least, prayer to God, the Source and Process of Creation has meaning. But to pray is to wrestle as Jacob did. It is to strive to bring the fragments of my being into a greater wholeness and to unite this oneness with my community, with humanity and thus become part of that Process best described by Marti Buber as the sacred dialogue. But this requires enormous effort, not committee meetings or even staff meetings. It is akin to the endless hours of rehearsals to keep a symphony from becoming routine. A genuine prayer requires the same sensitivity as a poem or a sonata. Poems are not written by committees and symphonies - with few exceptions - are not composed by conductors any more than plays are written by stage managers.

I further suggest that religiousness is a talent, and we are not equally gifted in music, science, art or religiousness. Moses may indeed be to religion what Mozart was to music - an extraordinary genius, one of a kind, in each respective domain. We must not confuse the teachers or the practitioners of religion or music with those whom Abraham Maslow described as having reached the "peak experience." On the other hand, we must not confuse those who attend the synagogue with those who should or could. The 90% of our children who attend the colleges and universities and who joined their neighbors this past week in a sing-in of Handel's "Messiah" or "Judas Maccabeus" are not our congregants. Our congregants are their parents, their grandparents or their own children. And instead of Judas Maccabeus we invite them to participate in congregational singing of neo-chassidic "pablum" tunes. No wonder they stay away!

But this generation has a need to pray. They know all about social action, and Israel, and our history: they read and they watch television. They also have need of marriage counsellors and psychiatrists and they know where to go to obtain treatment. And if the synagogue cannot offer a meaningful praying community, there are many small groups and even cult groups which offer alternatives.

The synagogue boasts of being a family of families. It is more often a euphemism than a fact. Does the board of trustees consider the professional staff a family? Does the professional staff relate to one another as a family?

THE WAY TO GO:

There are positive factors which hold promise for the future of the cantorate as a profession: (1) The freedom of the mind and spirit provided by our theology and way of life; (2) A possible relationship between cantor, rabbi, members of the professional staff and congregants which can serve as a meaningful way of life; (3) Financial income in keeping with that of the academic establishment; (4) The opportunity to serve in a spiritual and aesthetic environment.

There are, however, negative factors which do not augur well for the future

of the cantorate (1) The possibility for a secular professional career is greater now than ever before for our talented Jewish youth; (2) Former artistic and vocal challenges continue to dwindle in the synagogue as the use of sing-a-long tunes take over the major portion of the musical liturgy; (3) The incentive to grow both spiritually and artistically diminishes as standards decrease to the level of the lowest taste in the rabbinate and on the board of trustees; (4) Professional insecurity increases as cantoral positions depend more and more upon the goodwill of an incumbent administration and senior rabbi, than upon the years and the quality of service rendered by the cantor. In addition, rabbis attain the age of prime security (between 40 and 60) as cantors become more vulnerable to the vocal wear and tear of teaching, training b'nai mitzvah along with the extraordinary stress placed upon the singing voice.

CONCLUSION:

The synagogue - if it is to survive as more than a life-cycle service institution - must surely become a spiritual oasis. One must recognize upon entering the synagogue, that it is not the local "Y" with wonderful social, educational and recreational activities. The sounds may not be as glorious as those heard at the Metropolitan Opera. The organization may be less efficient than at IBM and the deficit slightly lower than the national budget. Upon entering the synagogue one must recognize that this is where the spirit prevails; where the values of the market place are left in the parking lots; where relationships of those who comprise the professional staff are that of "minyan hakohesh" (a *kvul* quorum)...a sacred community.

Prayer must again become the prime purpose of religious services with the responsibility for prayer services being the province of the cantor, who in turn must be given the opportunity and time to provide a sacred experience.

Finally, if there is to be a future for the cantorate, we must provide the conditions that will attract our best minds and most talented young people into the leadership roles of the laypeople, the rabbinate as well as the cantorate. We must provide them with security, dignity, and the challenge to grow so as to be able to help their congregants grow in the love of each other, of our heritage and the desire to pray and become at one with God.

RECORD REVIEW

“FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH” – Hazzan Morton Kula and the Adath Jeshurun Choir (Minneapolis, Minn.), Marlys Moscoe Fitterman, Director. Adath Jeshurun Records; \$9.00

With the choir in the American synagogue in a serious state of decline it is nice to see that in at least one synagogue the choral program is thriving. This seems to be the case in Adath Jeshurun Synagogue in Minneapolis.

As part of their 100th anniversary Adath Jeshurun Synagogue has produced a recording featuring their hazzan, Morton Kula, and choir. The result is a wonderful treat for those that appreciate good synagogue choral singing. Throughout the recording, this group of 16 singers of “professional caliber” perform with a wonderful degree of balance, good tonal quality, and with pitch that is always accurate and secure, and diction that is clear. Perhaps most noteworthy is that one senses a wonderful degree of enthusiasm that permeates everything they sing. This in itself makes the recording a delight. Credit for this must go to the choir’s director of 20 years Marlys Moscoe Fitterman.

The repertoire is basically classical with even the “contemporary” selections being more classical than modern. This listener was especially pleased with Leo Low’s Magen Avot, the plaintively sublime Kaddish of Max Hellman and the delicately expressive Veshamru of Mark Silver. Psalm 100 by Ario Hyams, composed in honor of the centennial celebration, is a spirited piece that captures the text well. One would have liked a little more development, but the work serves its purpose well. In the solo sections Hazzan Kula sings with artistic expression and musical sensitivity throughout.

A wonderful inclusion in this recording is a “V’chulam M’kablim” composed and sung beautifully by Hazzan Morris Amsel who was the hazzan of Adath Jeshurun for 30 years prior to his retirement. It is a wonderful piece of traditional “hazzanuth” performed by a master “baal nusach.” The inclusion of this selection is a testament to the love and devoted esteem Hazzan Amsel has from his congregation.

For those that have been questioning whether there is a future for the choir in the American synagogue, I’m sure they will be uplifted by this recording. The future of choral singing in our synagogues will be assured only with more groups like the Adath Jeshurun choir. If only there were more like them.

Jerome B. Kopmar