

Program Notes
VOCE CONCERT
November 12, 2023
by Cantor Janice Roger

Hallelujah - Stephen Richards (1935)

For Stephen Richards, composing sacred music was not his goal when he completed his music and composition studies at New York and Columbia Universities. He began his career in the theater, composing and arranging for musicals.

While working Off-Broadway, Richards also served as a youth director at a congregation in Yonkers. The rabbi there encouraged him to become a cantor and Richards completed his studies at the School of Sacred Music of Hebrew Union College in 1969. In 1971, Richards served as Cantor for Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. He left in 1976 to teach at the School of Sacred Music and be the editor for Transcontinental Music Publications. Whatever his position was, Richards continued to compose music for Jewish worship. He also was the project editor for *Manginot*, a music curriculum for Jewish schools.

Richards setting of Psalm 150 - *Hallelujah* - was commissioned in 1968 by Congregation B'nai Israel of Bridgeport, Connecticut. It is an English setting for mixed choir and organ. Even though he was still a student cantor, Richards' education as a composer grounded in him the understanding that the music can serve to enhance the meaning of the text. As you listen to *Hallelujah*, you will hear the "blast of the horn," "timbrels and dance," and feel how "everything that hath breath" praises God.

Hallelujah!
Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in the firmament of His power.
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to His abundant greatness.
Praise Him with the blast of the horn;
Praise Him with psaltery and harp.
Praise Him with timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipes;
Praise Him with the loud-sounding cymbals.
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
Hallelujah!

Shir Hama'alot (Psalm 126) - Salomone Rossi (1570 - 1630)

Psalm 126 is a brief psalm, only six verses, the message of this text is a hopeful one. However, the verb tenses make it unclear whether the author is speaking of the past or describing a future redemption. Psalm 126 is recited before the Grace After Meals on the Sabbath and Festivals.

Salomone Rossi, an Italian-Jewish violinist and composer, lived and wrote between the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods. Though his primary job was concertmaster and

composer at the Gonzaga court of Mantua, Rossi found time to create settings of Hebrew psalms and prayers. Thanks to essays by the Jewish scholar Leon of Modena, Italian rabbis issued a letter in 1605 authorizing the use of polyphonic music during synagogue worship - a practice that had been forbidden since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. During his lifetime, Rossi published volumes of secular instrumental music. In 1623, his collection of Jewish sacred music was published: *Shirim Asher L'Shlomo* - Songs of Solomon.

*Shir hama'alot,
B'shuv Adonai et shivat Tziyon
Hayinu k'hol'mim.
Az yimmalei s'hok pinu
Ulshoneinu rinah.
Az yom'ru vagoyim
Higdil Adonai laasot im eileh;
Higdil Adonai la'asot imanu
Hayinu s'meiḥim.
Shuvah Adonai et sh'viteinu
Kaafikim baNegev.
Hazor'im b'dimah b'rinah yiktzoru.
Haloh yeileih uvaḥoh,
Nosei mesheḥ hazara,
Bo yavo v'rinah nosei alumotav.*

A song of ascents.
When Adonai returned to Zion
We were like dreamers.
Our mouths filled with laughter
Our tongues with joyous song.
Then the nations will say,
"Adonai has done great things for them."
Adonai will do great things for us
We will rejoice.
Adonai, restore our fortunes
Like watercourses in the desert.
Who sows in tears, will reap in joy.
Who go out weeping
Carrying seed to sow,
Will return with songs of joy
Carrying sheaves with them.

Eli Tziyon - Samuel Adler (1928)

The text is a *kinah* - a dirge - for *Tisha B'av*, the day when both the First and Second Temples were destroyed. It was probably written in the Middle Ages; however, its author is unknown. The full text is an acrostic which details the cruelties suffered during the destruction of the Second Temple. The origin of the melody is unknown and considered by some a *Missinai* tune - a melody so old that it must have been given at Sinai. Musicologists have speculated that it is related to a variety of songs that represent the migration of a well-known European tune.

Samuel Adler took the traditional melody for *Eli Tziyon* and arranged it for choir. He is the son of Hugo Chaim Adler, a cantor who served Mannheim Germany's chief liberal synagogue until the family emigrated to America in 1939 and settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. Adler studied composition with Aaron Copland, Paul Hindemith, and Walter Piston. As Music Director of Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, his choirs regularly performed music of important American, European and Israeli synagogue composers. In addition to music for use in Jewish settings, Adler has composed symphonies, concertos, string quartets, operas and other pieces for small ensembles. He has also taught at Ithaca College, the University of Cincinnati, Eastman School of Music and The Juilliard School.

*Eli Tsiyon veareha,
kemo isha vetsireha,
vechivtulah chagurat sak,
al baal neureha.*

Mourn, O Zion and her cities
Like a woman in birth pains
Like a maiden wearing sackcloth
Mourning her husband.

*Alei galut meshartei el,
manimei shir zemareha,
v'al damam asher shupach,
kemo meimei yeoreha.*

For the exile of God's servants
Who play the songs of her melodies,
And for their spilled blood,
Which is like the water of her streams

MI Chamocha - Frederick Piket (1903 - 1974)

The text is from chapter 15 of the Book of Exodus. It is part of the song of the newly freed Hebrews after they crossed the Red Sea. *Mi Chamocha* is part of the evening and morning liturgies on weekdays and holy days. While there is a chant for the words when read as part of the weekly Torah reading, many melodies have been composed for use in the synagogue. It is also a text which, during the High Holy Days and other festivals, may be sung to the musical motif of that season.

If his parents had anything to say about it, Frederick Piket would have been a physician. However, after studying medicine for about two years, Piket left to study at the Vienna State Academy of Music. He moved to Berlin in 1930, where he continued his musical studies. In 1933, Piket moved to Barcelona, where remained until 1940, when he emigrated to America.

In the United States, Piket was a freelance musician until he needed a more regular income. He began his work in the field of Jewish music as an organist in White Plains, working with Cantor Raymond Smolover. He began to compose for the synagogue, using modern compositional sensibilities and staying away from traditional modes of Jewish music. While teaching music theory, harmony and composition at The School of Sacred Music of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, he influenced future cantors to look for modes of expression beyond the Ashkenazic customs taught at the school. Occasionally he would follow a more traditional path, especially in his works for the High Holy Days.

This setting of *Mi Chamocha* was composed in 1959, as part of Piket's Friday Evening Series.

*Mi chamocha baelim Adonai
Mi kamocha needar bakodesh.
Nora t'hilot osë fele.
Malchut'cha rau vanecha
bokëa yam lifnë Moshe
Ze ëli anu v'am'ru.
Adonai yimloch l'olam vaed.*

Who is like You, Adonai, among the gods
Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in splendor, working wonders?
Your people saw your sovereignty,
The sea splitting before Moses,
They cried, "This is our God.
Adonai will reign forever and ever!"

Kiddush - Kurt Weill (1900 - 1950)

Kiddush is a blessing over wine. It has two parts, the first which refers to "the fruit of the vine," and the second which is about the Sabbath and its holiness. According to the text, the Sabbath is holy because it was a reminder of both Creation and the Exodus from Egypt.

Best known for *The Threepenny Opera* - a social satire - Kurt Weill was born in Dessau, Germany, the son of a cantor and descendant of a line of rabbis and rabbinic scholars whose Judeo-German roots go back to the 13th Century. Weill's first compositions were for Hebrew texts. Weill studied at the Berliner Musikhochschule and was a student of Humperdinck and Ferruccio Busoni. Throughout the 1920s his music and politics became more leftist, a threat to the rising National Socialist Party.

Weill left Germany in 1933. After a brief sojourn in Paris, he arrived in New York in 1935. After mounting a production of his biblical pageant/music drama/theatrical extravaganza, *The Eternal Road*, Weill turned to the commercial theater. "September Song" was written for *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Weill's first Broadway show. He also composed the music for *Lady in the Dark*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *Lost in the Stars*.

Weill never disavowed his Jewish roots, even though he did not look to compose music for Jewish worship. However, in 1946, he was commissioned by New York's Park Avenue Synagogue to create the *Kiddush* you will hear today.

Baruch ata Adonai
(baruch hu uvaruch sh'mo)
Elohaynu melech haolam
boray p'ri ha-gafen. Amen.
Baruch ata Adonai
Elohaynu melech haolam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitsvotav
v'ratsa vanu v'Shabat kodsho
b'ahava uvratson hinchilanu
zikaron l'maasay v'rayshit.
Ki hu yom t'chila
l'mikraay kodesh
zaycher litsiat Mitsrayim.
Ki vanu vacharta
v'otanu kidashta
mikol haamim v'shabat kodsh'cha
b'ahava uvratson hichaltanu.
Baruch ata Adonai
(baruch hu uvaruch sh'mo)
m'kadesh haShabat. Amen.

Praised to You, Adonai,
(Praised is He and blessed is His name)
Our God, Sovereign of the universe
Creator of the fruit of the vine.
Praised to You, Adonai,
Our God, Sovereign of the universe
Who has sanctified us with obligations
And made the holy Sabbath our heritage,
In love and favor,
As a reminder of the work of Creation.
It is the first among sacred days,
A remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.
For You have chosen us
And made us holy
From among the nations.
And Your holy Sabbath,
In love and favor, You gave us
As an inheritance.
Praised to You, Adonai,
(Praised is He and blessed is His name)
Who sanctifies the Sabbath.

R'tsei - Herbert Fromm (1905 - 1995)

The text, *R'tsei*, is part of every service - weekdays and holy days. It is a request that God accept the prayers of all the people of Israel with love.

Born and educated in Germany, Herbert Fromm studied with Paul Hindemith at the State Academy of Music in Munich. While still in Germany, despite the restrictions that the Nazi government placed on Jewish musicians, Fromm began to use Jewish themes and texts in his compositions. He immigrated to the United States in 1937.

Fromm's first position was as organist and music director of Temple Beth Zion in Buffalo, New York. After several years, he left Buffalo for Boston's Temple Israel, where he remained until his retirement in 1972. Fromm created numerous works for use in Reform congregations. He also wrote three books, including *On Jewish Music*, from a composer's viewpoint.

In 1951, Fromm created a version of the prayer *R'tsei* which he called *Sabbath Madrigal*. The term "madrigal" refers to a part song for several voices arranged in counterpoint and without accompaniment. It was popularized in the late 16th Century. Evidently, Fromm was fascinated with the form because he also created a *Hanukkah Madrigal* and a *Purim Madrigal*. These were based on well-known songs for those holidays. *R'tsei* is an original melody by Fromm.

*R'tzey, r'tzey, r'tzey,
Adōnai, elōhēnu, b'amcha Yisraēl,
Ut'filatam b'ahavah t'kabēl;
Ust'hi l'ratsōn tamid
avodat Yisraēl amecha;
Baruch ata, Adōnai,
sheōt'cha l'vad'cho
b'yiroh naavōd.*

Find favor (3 times)
Adonai, our God, with your people Israel.
Accept our prayer with love.
May our worship always be acceptable to
You.
Blessed are You, Adonai,
Whom we serve with reverence.

Yih'yu L'ratson - Ernest Bloch (1880 - 1959)

Yih'yu L'ratson is from the Book of Psalms, verse 19:15. It is the penultimate line of text for the *T'filah*, the series of prayers that is part of every weekday and holy day service.

Playing the violin was the first musical experience for Ernest Bloch, who was born in Geneva, Switzerland. He studied with Louis Rey and, while in Brussels, with Eugene Ysaye. In Belgium, Bloch also studied composition with Francois Rasse. Bloch's talent took him to Germany, where he lived and worked between 1899 and 1903. However, in 1904, he returned to Geneva. There he worked in his father's business and composed music in his spare time.

Bloch's first important Jewish works were created between 1913 and 1916. That year he emigrated to the United States where he taught at the Mannes College of Music. During his New York years, Bloch created several works inspired by Jewish themes. After a five-year period in Cleveland, he became the director of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. While there, Bloch developed a relationship with Cantor Reuben Rinder which would lead to the creation of *Avodath Hakodesh: The Sacred Service*, of which *Yih'yu L'ratson* is a part. *Avodath Hakodesh* was composed while Bloch was in Europe, where he had returned in the early 1930s. It is based on

the Sabbath Morning service in the Union Prayer Book. The composition is for baritone cantor, mixed choir and full orchestra and also has a narrator.

Like many Jewish artists and performers, Bloch left his homeland for the United States to escape the spread of Naziism. He taught at the University of California-Berkeley from 1940 until 1952, when he retired. Of his Jewish compositions, Bloch wrote:

I have but listened to an inner voice, deep, secret, insistent, ardent—an instinct much more than cold and dry reason, a voice which seemed to come from far beyond myself, far beyond my parents ... a voice which surged up in me upon reading certain passages in the Bible, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, The Prophets....

This entire Jewish heritage moved me deeply; it was reborn in my music. To what extent it is Jewish or to what extent it is just Ernest Bloch, of that I know nothing. The future alone will decide.

*Yihyu lerozon imrei fi,
Vehegyon libi lefonecho,
Adonoy tzuri vegoali,*

Amen.

May the words of my mouth
and the meditations of my heart find favor
with you
Adonai, my Rock and Redeemer.
Amen

Ruach Elohim - Cantor Lisa Levine (1960), Arranged by Cantor Stephen Richards

The text for this selection is based on Numbers 6:22-24, which is the Priestly Benediction: "Adonai will bless you and keep you . . ." Cantor Levine's English text is an interpretation of the traditional Hebrew. The Hebrew text is used as a chorus.

At the age of eight, Lisa Levine began singing and playing the guitar. She began her career in Jewish music as a song leader. Levine was completed her Master's Degree in Sacred Music and was ordained as a cantor in 1989. As a composer and performer, she has a catalogue of 10 compact discs and 8 songbooks. Levine has spent her career building bridges through music, which brings people of all faiths and cultures together.

(Translation of the Hebrew is in parentheses)

Ruach Elohim (spirit of God), May God's spirit be with you.

Ruach Elohim, Keep you safe from harm.

May the love of God be your shelter from every storm.

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha; (May Adonai bless you and keep you)

Yaeir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka; (May God's light shine upon you, and God's graciousness.)

Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom. (May you feel God's presence with you and may you find peace.)

Ruach Elohim, May God bless you and keep you,

Bring you to the light and safe from harm.

May the love of friends be your shelter from ev'ry storm.

Y'varech'cha Adonai...

Ruach Elohim, May God's spirit be with you,
Bring you to the light and loving arms.
Together we will be a shelter from ev'ry storm.
Y'varech'cha Adonai...

Kein y'hi ratzon (May this be God's will).

And Thou Shalt Love - Judith Berman (1925 - 2005)

And Thou Shalt Love is the translation of the text "*V'ahavta*," which comes from chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, verses 5 through 9. It was composed in 1973 and dedicated to the composer's sons.

Born the daughter of Rabbi S. Felix Mendelsohn, Judith Berman devoted her life to music, with a special love and energy for Jewish music. Berman frequently spoke of the inspiration provided by her parents, Rabbi Mendelsohn and Nanette Bloom Mendelsohn. In 1976, she earned a Master of Arts in Sacred Music from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Her master's thesis was a sacred service based on *Sefer Hanigunim*, a collection of Hassidic chants. In addition to her three Shabbat services, Berman composed more than 100 original songs and arranged liturgical songs for choir. She served as a music director, music teacher and conductor in several congregations. She also was one of the first Americans to mount a production of *Brundibar*, the children's opera composed in the Terezin concentration camp.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart. Thou shalt teach them unto thy children, and thou shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, (Oh, hear My commandment) when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thy eyes. Oh, thus shalt thou bind them, oh thus shalt thou write them, thou shalt write them on the doorposts of thy house, and upon thy gates, that ye may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God.

Hashkivenu - Max Helfman (1901 - 1963)

The prayer, *Hashkivenu*, is a rabbinic reading that first appeared around 860 C.E. in *Siddur Rav Amram*, the first comprehensive prayer book of the Jewish people. It is an evening prayer that paints a picture of God as both a guide and protector during the night ahead.

Max Helfman was a master liturgical composer whose works reveal the nuances of prayer. As a child, Max Helfman sang in the choir of his father's congregation in Radzin, Poland. He arrived in New York at the age of eight and, while a student at a Lower East Side Yeshiva (school), sang alto in many orthodox synagogues in the city. While he began as a self-taught composer, Helfman went on to study at Mannes College of Music.

His first position as organist and choirmaster was at Temple Israel in Manhattan, where he succeeded Zavel Zilberts, a well-known choral conductor and composer. At the age of 28, he was awarded a three-year fellowship at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. In the meantime,

Helfman had left New York for Paterson, New Jersey. During his years in the East, he turned his attention away from Yiddish worker's songs (he had conducted several Workmen's Circle choruses) to composing sacred Jewish music.

In addition to his work as a composer, Max Helfman made a significant contribution to the cultural life of the Jewish people through his work at the Brandeis-Bardin camp in Los Angeles. There he tried to create a "Jewish Interlochen" where artistically gifted youth could be trained to lead the cultural life of American Jews. Starting in 1954, he was director of the sacred music program of the West coast branch of Hebrew Union College. Four years later, he was invited to establish a Department of Fine Arts at the University of Judaism.

Hashkivenu was composed in 1942, the same year he created his complete Sabbath service, *Shabbat Kodesh*. However, *Hashkivenu* was not published as part of that work.

*Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l'sha'lom,
v'haamideinu malkeinu l'chayim.
Ufros aleinu sukot shlomecha,
v'tak'neinu b'eitzah tovah milfanecha,
v'hoshieinu l'maan sh'mecha.*

*V'hagein baadeinu v'haseir meialeinu
oyeiv dever v'cherev v'raav v'yagon.
V'haseir Satan milfaneinu umeiachareinu,
Uv'tzeil k'nafeicha tastireinu.
Ki eil shomreinu umatzileinu atah,
Ki eil melech chanun v'rachum atah.
Ush'mor tzeiteinu uvoeinu l'chayim
ul'shalom,
meiatah v'ad olam.*

Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace
and raise us up, our Guardian, to life
renewed.
Spread over us the shelter of Your peace
Guide us with Your good counsel;
for Your Name's sake, be our help.

Protect us and removed from us
enemies, plagues, sword, famine, and
sorrow.
Remove Satan from in front of us and
behind us.
Hide us in the shadow of your wings,
For You are our guardian and savior.
For You are a gracious and merciful God.
Guard our going out and our coming in
Unto life and peace evermore.

The Eyes of All - Jean Berger (1909 - 2002)

The Eyes of All Wait Upon Thee utilizes a text from Psalm 145:15 - 16. Published in 1959, the composition is meant to be performed a capella and contains lush harmonies.

Jean Berger was born Arthur Scholssberg in Hamm, Germany. He pursued studies in musicology at the Universities of Vienna and Heidelberg. However, he was also an accomplished pianist and studied conducting. After receiving his doctorate in Heidelberg, Schlossberg was appointed assistant conductor at the Mannheim Opera House. While there, he studied composition with Hugo Adler. In 1933, seeing the leadership change in the German government Schlossberg emigrated to Paris to study composition with Louis Aubert.

While in Paris, he changed his name to Jean Berger. Berger arrived in America in 1941. While he had intended to return to Paris, Berger stayed in America and immersed himself in the music he heard here. He also enlisted in the United States Army. After the war, he entered the academic world until his retirement in 1971. Upon retiring, Berger became a visiting professor at colleges and universities in the United States and abroad.

The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
The eyes of all...

La Rosa Enflorece - Sephardic, Arranged by Sarah Cattan

This song is also known as *Los Bilblicos*. The text is Ladino, a hybrid language that developed among Jews living in Spain (prior to their expulsion in 1492) from Castilian Spanish. *La Rosa Enflorece* is as Sephardic romance.

Sarah Cattan's earliest degrees were in neuroscience, with a PhD from the University of Montreal in 2016. However, she also studied music and currently teaches singing and music theory in Marseille and Provence, France. Cattan directs and arranges for two amateur choirs, one of which is the Chorale Mediterraneo-Provence.

*La rosa enflorece
en el mez de mayo,
Mi alma s'escurecu
susfriendo del amor.*

The flower blooms
in the month of May.
My soul darkens,
tormented by love.

*Los biblicos cantan,
suspiran de amor,
Y la pasion me mata,
muchigua mi dolor.*

The nightingales sing
with sighs of love.
My soul, my destiny
are within your power.

*Mas presto ven palomba,
mas presto ven a mi,
Mas presto tu mi alma,
que yo me vo morir.*

Come quickly, o dove!
Come quickly to me.
Come quickly beloved,
for I'm going to die.

Hal'luhu (Psalm 150) - Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller (1958)

Raised in Stamford, Connecticut, Benjie-Ellen Schiller began her musical journey as a self-taught pianist and guitarist. During her undergraduate years at Boston University, Schiller studied composition. She also served as a music teacher and song leader at a local synagogue and sang in the Boston Zamar Chorale, where she performed music of Israeli composers and was inspired by the quality of their music. Several years later, Schiller entered the School of Sacred Music of Hebrew Union College and was ordained a cantor in 1987. She would return there to serve on the faculty. Schiller is also a member of "*Begeg Kefet*," a group of seven singers who perform folk-infused and classical choral arrangements to benefit "*Miriam's Dream*," which supports the Jerusalem-based *Yad Lakashish* and other groups that aid elderly and disabled people.

Schiller's setting of *Hal'luhu* was completed while she lived in Israel, where her husband was beginning his rabbinic studies. The composition, accompanied by guitar and drum, was based on melodies and modalities she heard emanating from homes and synagogues during Shabbat.

(For the translation, see *Hallelujah* by Stephen Richards)

Dem Zeydn's Nign - Arranged by Jacob Finkle

The lyrics to this piece are by Shike Driz. It was originally set to music by Saul Berezovsky (1908 - 1975) and later, by Josh Waletsky, who gave it the title which VOCE is using today.

Josh Waletsky has sung, taught and composed Yiddish music all his life. He studied piano and composition at the Juilliard School. In 1970 he wrote and directed the Yiddish operetta "*Undzer Shtetl*" - our village. In addition to his work with Yiddish music, Waletsky has composed for numerous films and founded the klezmer band Kapelye. In 1983, he served as the script and musical consultant for the film "Yentl."

*Gis mir on, mayn tayere,
A bekherl mit vayn
Le khayim vel ikh trinken,
Gezunt zolstu mir zayn!
Gehert hob ikh der tseyln,
Az in dem vayn dem altn
Hot aley n der zeydenyu
a nigndl bahaltn*

Pour me a little goblet
Of wine, my dear
And I will drink
To your health!
I have heard tell
That in this old wine
My dear grandfather himself
Hid a little melody

Ay-di-bay-dam-bam...

Ay-di-bay Dam-bam Da-day da-day...

*Gis mir on mayn tayere
A kelishik mit yayin
Far ale mayne libe
Vel ikh oys trinken le khayim
Ikh hob gehert der tseyln,
Un s'iz mistam kayn lign
Az in der tsveyter koysye
Ligt dem zeydns nign.*

Pour me a shot glass
Of wine my dear
And I will drink
To all my loved ones.
I've heard it said,
And it's probably no lie,
That Grandfather's melody
Lies in the second cup.

*Gis mir on, mayn tayere,
Dos same beste yayin
Lomir take far dem nign
Oys trinken le khayim
Kener zogn, kener veysn
Dortn muz es lign
Afn dno fun driter koysye
Der nign shebenign*

Pour me the very best wine,
My dear,
And let's drink to, why,
The melody itself!
Those who know say
It must lie there,
At the bottom of the third cup,
The melody in the melody

Lebn Zol Columbus - Arnold Perlmutter (1859 - 1953) and Herman Wohl (1877-1936)

Many Yiddish songs were composed to praise Christopher Columbus, symbol of the New World to many immigrants. This song comes from a Yiddish comedy "The Green Millionaire," composed in 1915. It expresses the new Americans' amazement for how good life is in the

United States. And they are grateful to the man who made it all possible, Christopher Columbus!

Born in Galicia, as a child, Perlmutter sang with Chazzan Boruch Shorr until his voice changed. After that, he became a klezmer violinist. Perlmutter began his work in the theater as an orchestrator and song notator for Abraham Goldfaden, whom he met while in Germany. In 1900, Goldfaden's troupe emigrated to America. Wohl was born in Galicia as well. However, he started his career directing synagogue choirs. Once in America, he worked in both the theater and synagogue. For many years he conducted the choir for Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt.

Perlmutter and Wohl were a regular fixture on Second Avenue as early as 1903. They composed music for dozens of operettas and plays performed in Yiddish theaters. Among the most famous was "*Dos Pintele Yid*" written by Boris Thomashefsky. "The Green Millionaire" was premiered by Thomashefsky in the Thomashefsky Theater.

*A shtetl iz Amerikeh
A mechayeh ch'leben.
Es rut oif ir di shchinehleh,
Mir zoln azai lebn.
Milchomes, biksen, menschenblut
Darfn mir oif tasures.
A gubernator darf men nit,
a Kaiser af kapures.*

America is a little village
Where, I swear, life is great.
The Divine rests on her;
we should all get to live so.
Wars, guns, or bloodshed
we need like a hole in the head.
Who needs a governor?
Who needs a tsar?

*Ai, s'iz gut, zingt-she aleh mit:
Oy! Lebn zol Columbus,
trinkt briderlach lechayim!
Lebn zol Columbus,
oy, far dem land dem nayem.
Zait tsufriden, glebt nit in di trombes,
Shrait-zhe Yidn: Lebn zol Columbus.*

Ay, it's great, everyone sing along:
Long live Columbus!
Brothers, drink a toast to life!
Oh, long live Columbus
for discovering this new land!
Be merry! Pay no heed to grumblers.
Shout, Jews: Long live Columbus!

*Meidlech in Amerikeh,
a glik gur a Gan Eyden!
While boys iz do ke-choil ha-yom,
A teyneg oy a leybn!
Kain nadan darf men do nit
shadchonim oif kapores.
Un az a trombanick vil gelt
kriegt er a moyd mit tsores.
Ai, s'iz gut, zingt-she aleh mit:
Oy! Lebn zol Columbus! . . .*

For girls, America
is a great place, a paradise,
for boys here are plentiful
like the sands of the sea,
a pleasure, oh, what a life.
You don't need a dowry,
Who needs a matchmaker?
And if a chump wants to marry for money,
he's liable to wind up with a wife
no one else would marry.

Hora - Marc Lavry (1903 - 1967)

The hora is a type of circle dance that probably originated in Romania. It played a foundational role in modern Israeli folk dancing, becoming a symbol of the reconstruction of the

country by the Zionists. It is danced to a variety of tunes, mostly at Jewish weddings and celebrations.

Marc Lavry was born in Riga Latvia but studied music in Germany at the Leipzig Conservatory. In 1929, Lavry became the conductor of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. When it was disbanded by the Nazis in 1933, Lavry returned to Riga but in 1935 decided to emigrate to Palestine.

In his biography, Lavry wrote:

I immigrated to Israel in 1935 and immediately felt that I found my spiritual homeland", he wrote in his autobiography. Nowhere until arriving to Israel, did I feel that grounded. I felt that I landed where I belong and that I found a place worth fighting for. I felt that the country inspired me as a composer and that here I wrote my best compositions.

While still in Berlin, he had begun to compose Jewish music. Once in Israel, he absorbed the energy of the country and once he had mastered Hebrew, he found his musical voice. It is a combination of traditional folk and classical musical styles.

The text, *hora nirkoda*, literally means "let's dance." It was composed in 1950 and Lavry made an arrangement for Israeli singer Hanna Aharoni, who had a range of four octaves.

i thank You God - Elliot Z. Levine (1948)

The text for this piece was inspired by the Jewish prayer which said each morning upon waking, *Modeh Ani*, and a poem by e. e. cummings.

Elliot Levine was born in Yonkers, New York and studied music at Queens College, the Manhattan School of Music and Brooklyn College. An accomplished baritone, he has sung with the Rome Opera, the Mannes Camerata, and the Folger Consort. In 1969, Levine became a founding member of the Western Wind Ensemble. In addition to original choral works, he has created arrangements of folk music - Jewish and secular.

i thank You God for most this amazing day

(*Modeh ani l'fanecha* - I am grateful before You)

For the leaping greenly spirits of trees

And a blue true dream of sky

And for everything which is natural, which is infinite, which is yes

i who have died am alive again today

And this is the sun's birthday

This is the birth day of life and of love and wings

And of the gay great happening illimitably earth

(i thank You God...)

How should tasting, touching, hearing, seeing, breathing any lifted from the no of all nothing

Human merely being doubt unimaginable You?

(i thank You God...)

Now the ears of my ears awake

And now the eyes of my eyes are opened

(i thank You God...)

Hallelujah (Psalm 150) - Louis Lewandowski (1821 - 1894)

The last chapter in the Book of Psalms, Psalm 150 captures the essence of the entire book. Hallelujah means, "Praise God," and the command to praise appears in each of the six verses. Each verse has two clauses which mirror each other.

During this program, you have heard three different approaches to the text. The oldest is by Louis Lewandowski. Born in Poland, Lewandowski came to Berlin at the age of twelve. He was the first Jew ever admitted to the Berlin Academy of the Arts. Lewandowski served as music director of the Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue in Berlin from 1840 until the early 1890s. He created hundreds of compositions and published two volumes of liturgical pieces for cantor, choir and organ (optional, so that the work could be used in synagogues without organs). Lewandowski's style is in the Classical/Romantic choral tradition and has been compared to his contemporary, Felix Mendelssohn.

(For the translation, see Hallelujah by Stephen Richards)

Hal'luyah

Hal'lu eil b'kodsho;

Hal'luhu birkiya uzo.

Hal'luhu big'vurotav;

Hal'luhu k'rov gudlo.

Hal'luhu b'teika shofar;

Hal'luhu b'neivel v'chinor.

Hal'luhu b'tof u'machol;

Hal'luhu b'minim v'ugav.

Hal'luhu b'tzil-tz'lei shama;

Hal'luhu b'tzil-tz'lei truah.

Kol han'shama t'haleil Yah.

Hal'luyah!