

Jewish Music:

AN INTRODUCTION

FLORENCE HINES

Florence Hines, organist-director of Temple Israel, Columbus, Georgia, is Southeastern Regional Chairman of the Guild of Temple Musicians, Dean of the Columbus Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and Artistic Director of the newly-formed Springer Opera Company.

The history of Jewish music is as long as the history of Judaism itself and the content is as varied and idiomatic as the music of the many nations where Jews have found themselves. Through the idiom of Spanish music we can hear a distinct Jewish Ladino. In middle Europe we can hear a definite Jewishness that pervades the music of the Ashkenazim. So it is that throughout the world we discover an amalgam of traditional Jewish music with the music of the peoples living around them: a new creation out of the separateness of the two older cultural developments. This has not happened in the long-distant past but has continued throughout history and is noticeable in the United States on the Jewish music scene this very day.

During the Inquisition many Spanish Jews came to South America and thence to New Amsterdam, where they became residents in 1654. From that time Jewish immigrants were so frequent that by 1733 they were present in all thirteen colonies. These Jews dressed like their neighbors, learned to speak English,

some even Anglicized their names and, as much as possible, blended into their chosen communities. Since there were no synagogues in the colonies until 1730 religion lost its hold on many of these early colonists. As time went by and Jewish communities developed, the number of synagogues gradually did increase, yet the story of religious music was still the story of the American Jew of the times — assimilation. Most of the music in services came to be patterned after Christian Protestant music and music of the operatic stage. Only in the past ten years or less has the movement to have idiomatic religious music been growing. This is a time of reflective self-consciousness that has been seeking a new musical expression with roots in the ancient traditions.

Any portion of the Jewish liturgy can be sung, including reading the Torah. Several thousand years ago, in the early development of Jewish liturgy, it was recognized that music could help to distinguish dialogue between man and God from our more mundane expressions. Cantillation, which is musical recitation of the scriptures, prayers and other portions of the liturgy, developed from this recognition of the power of music to bring about a better understanding of the words and also, chant being different from ordinary speech, to command attention. Then and now good music presents a "larger than life" stance resulting in a literal transcendence of the meaning of the words which inspire it.

You will recall that the early part of Genesis says "and there was evening and there was morning, one day . . ." This is how the Jewish Sabbath and festival days are reckoned. With Saturday being the

Sabbath, it is considered to begin at sundown Friday and evening services are held on Friday evening. Morning services are held on Saturday morning, with the Sabbath ending Saturday at sundown. Almost any text sung in the Jewish religious services is also applicable to Christian services and certainly meaningful in concert. Currently publishers of Jewish music are beginning to include transportation of the text and occasionally a pronunciation guide for the Hebrew.

PRONUNCIATION

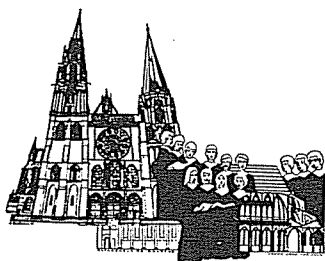
For those who would like to try singing in Hebrew here are some pronunciation aids, but I must warn that they will not answer everything, since publishers are not yet using any type of standardized transliteration.

Obviously, since Hebrew is read from right to left and music notation is from left to right we have to change from the Hebrew script to a phonetic transliteration of the sounds of the words when printing music and words together. Most usually the vowels will be pronounced as Italian vowels and the consonants are pretty close to German consonants. Sometimes you will see the same word spelled differently from song to song because you are only reading a phonetic spelling of the words. Some specific points are the *h* and *ch*, representing the same sound — German *ch*, never just *h* or *k*. You might see the word of the well-known December holiday spelled *Chanukah*, *Chanuka*, or even *Hanuka*.

Hebrew is really written without vowels so the intended vowels are added in transliteration. Besides that, there are other vowels that are even more conspicuously absent. In transliteration these are represented by an apostrophe (') as in the word *l'olam*. The missing vowel is pronounced *eh*, or the Italian *e*, and the pronunciation is *le-olam*.

Most words in Hebrew are accented on the last syllable, but not all composers set text to music with the textual accent in mind. This, of course, sometimes happens in other languages too, so you can do what you wish about avoiding or tackling a built-in problem. Whenever you struggle with the accents of the word "Hallelujah" in Lewandowski's *Psalms* 150 keep in mind that the music is properly written for the correct Hebrew accent on the final syllable.

It has been an especial pleasure to me to hear and to feel on my lips and tongue the words of the Psalms in Hebrew, for they are one of our oldest musical and poetic treasures. Hebrew, as it was in Bible times, was re-adopted by Israel as a present-day language after years of disuse, so there is no such thing as modern Hebrew versus archaic or "classical" Hebrew.



<i>Ev'ry Time I Think About Jesus</i> . . . . .	.55
arr. Ehret (SATB)	
<i>Let Us Break Bread Together</i> . . . . .	.55
arr. Thomas (SATB)	
<i>All My Trials Lord</i> . . . . .	.55
arr. Ehret (SATB)	
<i>O Thou In Whose Presence</i> . . . . .	.55
arr. Ehret (SATB)	

DISTINCTIVE CHORAL EDITIONS

<i>Now We Sing of Christmas</i> . . . . .	.60
arr. Ermey (SATB)	
<i>Now We Sing of Christmas</i> . . . . .	.60
arr. Ermey (TTBB)	
<i>Joseph Met Each King</i> . . . . .	.40
Carter (SATB & Flute)	
<i>A Cradle Song</i> . . . . .	.55
Billingham (SSA)	
<i>Mary Had A Baby</i> . . . . .	.60
Arr. Whalum (TTBB)	
<i>Behold This Child</i> . . . . .	.55
Donahue (2 Part)	
<i>Ave Verum</i> . . . . .	.55
Faure-Boyd (2 Part)	
<i>Psalms 117</i> . . . . .	.65
Steinhort (SATB)	
<i>Savior, Who Thy Flock Art Feeding</i> .55	
Schirmer (SATB)	

For FREE REFERENCE COPIES write on organizational letterhead to Dept. RDF, Roger Dean Publishing (309) 833-2207



Roger Dean

Publishing Company

345 West Jackson Macomb, Illinois 61455

There is still another facet to pronouncing Hebrew that must be added to the mosaic. For many years the Hebrew pronunciation used in the United States was largely the pronunciation of the Ashkenazim, who are central or eastern European Jews. When the modern country of Israel came into being the pronunciation adopted there was that of Spanish or Portuguese Jews, the Sephardim. During the past several years the pronunciation in synagogues across the United States has gradually changed from Ashkenazic to Sephardic, although everywhere you go you will hear a little bit of each, sometimes at the same time — a dialect jokingly called “Ashephardic.”

If you wish to tackle anything ranging from a lively unison Israeli folk-tune persuasively arranged by Bonia Shur to the splendor of Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* replete with orchestra or even the Renaissance antiquity of the choral music of Salomone Rossi and feel insecure with the words, then probably someone from a local synagogue would be willing to make a tape of the words for your own study.

The music of the Jewish services ranges from short statements of belief, such as the *Bar'chu* and the *Sh'ma Yisrael*, through beautiful prayers, to the

lengthier psalms and religious poems. One song that is usually sung during the service is the ancient *Mi Chamocha*, the song of triumph sung after crossing the Red Sea. Often this song is written with joy and exuberance, but sometimes it is a quieter, inward turn. There is an old Rabbinic saying that while the Israelites sang and danced for joy at the miracle, God wept over the death of the Egyptians. *Ma Tovnu* is frequently sung to open a Saturday morning service. It is a text telling of the beauty of the opportunity to worship God, of His blessings, and a prayer for His continued blessing, beginning “How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling-places, O Israel!” “*L'cha Dodi*” tells of greeting the Sabbath as a bridegroom greets his beloved bride.

Jewish liturgical music is full of realistic and joyful acceptance of life as it is, but with the ever-present hope of making this life and this world a better place with God's help. Texts and their translations are found in the new Jewish prayer book, *GATES OF PRAYER*. The texts that are sung at the usual services and festivals are full of praise, thankfulness and great joy. The only time penitential or otherwise sorrowful music is used is during the great ten days of penitence, beginning with Rosh Hashanah and end-

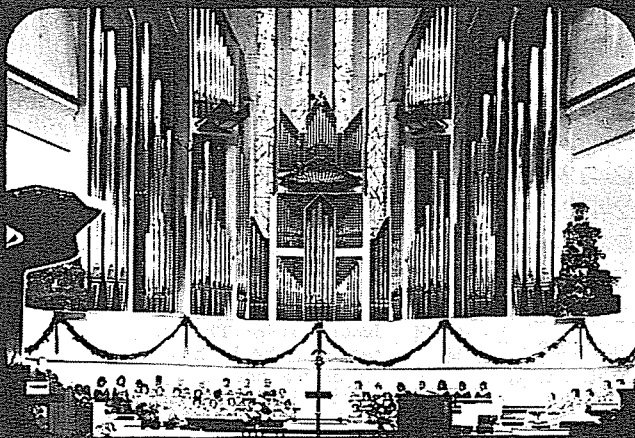
ing with Yom Kippur. These are called the High Holy Days and are, respectively, the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement. Music used during these services is set aside from that used the rest of the year and in most instances it is never sung at any other time.

The High Holy Days include some music of long tradition, great meaning and true beauty. The supplicative *Avinu Malkeinu* (Our Father, Our King); the dramatic and touching *Kol Nidre*, which speaks of vows of the past year and vows of the year to come, along with a prayer for forgiveness and pardon; the haunting verses of *Ya-aleh*; and the monumental Viddui (Confession), all are only small parts of these magnificent days of personal reflection, self-evaluation, and repentance.

Choral music was present in the Temple in Jerusalem from the time of Solomon. With the final destruction of the Temple all ornament and show was set aside as a sign of mourning and the large choirs were discontinued. Later, following the custom of the Christian Church, choral singing again came into its own in the synagogue and continues in use along with the more personal singing of either a male or female cantor, or a soloist who takes the place of the cantor of tradition. The music available



CHURCH MUSIC EXPLOSION 1980



*Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
presents its annual*

CHURCH MUSIC WORKSHOP JANUARY 2 - 6, 1980

Faculty:

- **Weston Noble** - noted choral conductor
- **Diane Bish** - concert organist, recital on the 117 rank Ruffatti pipe organ
- **Donald Allured** - handbells
- **Bruce Leafblad** - specialist in Biblical foundations of church music
- **Mabel Boyter** - children's choirs
- **Hank Beebe** - composer
- **Kurt Kaiser** - composer, producer
- **Daniel Bird** - conference dean

_____ I am interested! Please send information.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to: Church Music Explosion
Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church
5555 North Federal Highway
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33308

JEWISH . . .

today varies from traditional cantorial singing involving great flexibility and emotive power to choral music for all voice combinations and all age groups. Because of strong folk-background that has continued through the centuries, the new choral music frequently shows great ingenuity in its choral effects and innovations. Much contemporary music still adheres to the ancient and traditional motivic figures, modes, and melodies.

The elements of Jewish music are in other ways quite different. Use of the minor mode is not to express sadness or pensiveness, but a robust spirit (among other qualities). Although what is heard as modality can be analyzed as definite scales, in former days the music was written not with scales but with melodic motives pieced together in a tapestry of tone and rhythm. These melodic formulas are termed *modes* but are not to be confused with the term as used in the

musicological sense. Some of the music is metrical, some is metrical with changing meters, and some quite unmetrical. The old chants frequently formed the basis of early Christian chant in the medieval Church.

So much music has been written in the past fifty years has now been set aside, and so much new music has been written in the past fifteen years that those who have worked in this field over a period of years are still looking for lists of what is really available. The major publisher of exclusively Jewish music is Transcontinental Music Publications, 838 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021. Lawson-Gould Music Publishers, 866 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022, also prints a considerable amount of Jewish music. Mills of Belwin-Mills, has Jewish music available, and there are several small independent publishers, most of which are specializing in publishing the music of one particular composer.

In the American Guild of Organists' official journal, *The American Organist*, a section has been inaugurated which is devoted to occasional reviews of Jewish choral music. The *Journal of Synagogue Music*, a quarterly publication, also publishes reviews of Jewish choral music. A fairly new organization for those who work in Jewish music, wheth-

er they are Jewish or not, is the Guild of Temple Musicians, 6636 N. Talman, Chicago, Illinois, 60645. The GTM quarterly *Newsletter* mentions new music, and it has a real communication to offer to anyone who is involved in this work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ben-Sasson, H.H., editor, *A History of the Jewish People*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., Eng. translation 1976.

Cantors Assembly, "Journal of Synagogue Music," 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, 10011.

Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Gates of Prayer*, New York, 1975.

Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Union Songster*, 1960.

Coopersmith, Harry, *The Songs We Sing*, The United Synagogue Commission of Jewish Education, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1950.

Dimont, Max I., *Jews, God and History*, Signet Book, New American Library, New York, 1962.

Eisenstein, Judith Kaplan, *Heritage of Music*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 1972.

Idelsohn, A. Z., *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, Schocken Books, New York, 1932, reprinted 1972.

Idelsohn, A. Z. *Jewish Music and Its Historical Development*, Schocken Books, New York, 1929, reprinted 1967.

Malm, William P., *Music Cultures of the Pacific, the Near East, and Asia*, Prentice-Hall History of Music Series, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1967.

Potok, Chaim, *Wanderings*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1978.

Rosowsky, Solomon, *The Cantillation of the Bible (The Five Books of Moses)*, New York, 1957.

Sachs, Curt, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World, East and West*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1943.

Sendrey, Alfred, *Music in Ancient Israel*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1969.

Werner, Eric, "The Jewish Contribution to Music" in *The Jews, Their History, Culture and Religion*, Vol. III, Philadelphia, 1949. ❖

CHORAL MUSIC RENTAL

Large selection, reasonable rates. Write for listing, terms and rates — New York Choral Society, 165 W. 57 St., New York, New York 10019, Attn: Mary Robbins



FRENCH CHORAL MASTERWORKS

Now available with English and French texts.

Translated by Robert Hess.

Francis Poulenc

LITANIES À LA VIERGE NOIRE

SSA. Organ or String Orchestra & Timpani*

Organ/Vocal Score (Fr. text only) (Durand) \$6.50

Chorus Part (Octavo) (Fr. & Eng. text) (312-41258) .60

*Orchestra material available on rental

SEPT CHANSONS (Seven Songs)

SATB. A cappella.

- | | | |
|--|-------------|--------|
| 1. La blanche neige (<i>The white snow</i>) | (312-41248) | \$.50 |
| 2. A peine défigurée (<i>Barely disfigured</i>) | (312-41247) | .50 |
| 3. Par une nuit nouvelle (<i>Through a new night</i>) | (312-41246) | .50 |
| 4. Tous les droits (<i>All the rights</i>) | (312-41245) | .60 |
| 5. Belle et ressemblante (<i>Beautiful and resembling</i>) | (312-41244) | .50 |
| 6. Marie | (312-41299) | .60 |
| 7. Luire (<i>Dawn</i>) | (312-41242) | .50 |

For FREE REFERENCE COPIES of any 4 octavos, send request on organizational letterhead to Dept. 1CX,

THEODORE PRESSER COMPANY

Bryn Mawr, Pa. 19010

NOTES OF INTEREST

J. W. Pepper & Son, Inc. will join European American Music Distributors Corporation it was announced recently. The cooperative venture will be known as European American Retail Music, Inc. and will operate out of the J. W. Pepper headquarters in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The headquarters of European American Music administering trade, performance, and publication, will remain in Clifton, New Jersey.

««»»

The Young Singers of Callanwolde, directed by Stephen J. Ortlip, recently participated in an exchange tour under the auspices of the Belgian government. They participated in the International Koorfest in The Hague, Holland, and received the highest score of performing children's choirs and were awarded the second highest Festival trophy for their performance. They also participated in an International Choral Concert in the town of Haarlem, Holland.