THE JOHN LEOPOLD *and* MARTHA DELLHEIM SENIOR RECITAL

H. L. MILLER CANTORIAL SCHOOL AND COLLEGE OF JEWISH MUSIC

Josh Ehrlich, Marilyn Selby Okoshi, and Noah Rachels
Joyce Rosenzweig, piano

With Leilah Rosen, Cantor Marina Shemesh, the Choral Torah Collective, vocals;
Jenni Asher, violin; Daniel Ori, bass; Ronen Itzik, percussion; Cantor Gerald Cohen, piano;
the H. L. Miller Cantorial School Chorus;
Cantor Natasha J. Hirschhorn, conductor

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251 West 100th Street, New York, New York

JTS

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Zemer Nugeh — Shmuel Kraus (1935–2013)
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Elohai N'shama — Todros Greenberg (1893–1976)
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Rochel M'vako al Boneho — David Roitman (1884–1943), arr. A.W. Binder
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Yihyu L'Ratzon — Hollis Schachner (b. 1973), arr. Rachelle Nelson
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B'Rosh HaShana — Israel Alter (1901-–1979), arr. Josh Ehrlich
Josh Ehrlich, voice and guitar

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Drey Dreydeleh — Dovid Beygelman (1887–1944), arr. Abraham Ellstein, Joshua Jacobson, Josh Ehrlich
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Miryam HaN'via — Josh Ehrlich (b. 1985)
The Choral Torah Collective

Rachem — Mana-Zucca (1885–1981)

Noah Rachels

Ana B'choach — Marilyn Selby Okoshi (b. 1963)

Marilyn Selby Okoshi; Josh Ehrlich and Noah Rachels, voice;
Jenni Asher, violin; Daniel Ori, bass; Ronen Itzik, percussion

Ashreinu — Leib Glanz (1898–1964), with additional music by Josh Ehrlich

Josh Ehrlich

Song of Service — Daniel Mendelson (b. 1983)

Marilyn Selby Okoshi; Cantor Marina Shemesh, voice; and Jenni Asher, violin

Yihyeh Tov — David Broza (b. 1955), arr. Josh Ehrlich

Josh Ehrlich, voice and piano; Leilah Rosen, voice; Jenni Asher, violin;
Daniel Ori, bass; Ronen Itzik, percussion

Vengáx en buen'hora, Siñora coshuegra
¡Ah, el novio no quere dinero! — Traditional Ladino Folk Songs, arr. Alberto Hemsi (1898–1975)

Noah Rachels

Ya'alah Ya'alah — Traditional Moroccan

Marilyn Selby Okoshi; Jenni Asher, violin; Daniel Ori, bass; Ronen Itzik, percussion

Ma Tovu — Josh Ehrlich (b. 1985)

H. L. Miller Cantorial School Chorus, with the community

Zakeini L'Simcha — Josh Ehrlich (b. 1985)

Josh Ehrlich; H. L. Miller Cantorial School Chorus and the Choral Torah Collective;
Jenni Asher, violin; Daniel Ori, bass; Ronen Itzik, percussion

Havdalah — Zavel Zilberts (1881–1949)

Josh Ehrlich, Marilyn Selby Okoshi, Noah Rachels;
the H. L. Miller Cantorial School Chorus

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

Josh Ehrlich is a composer, lyricist, accompanist, music director, music educator and soon-to-be-cantor based in NYC. Josh has written hundreds of musical theater orchestrations and *a cappella* arrangements for ensembles all over the New York area and in Israel. He made his Off-Broadway compositional debut in 2017 with *The Imbible: Day Drinking*, which ran at New World Stages for three years. In 2021, the Cantors Assembly published Josh's *The Choral Torah: Five Books in Four Parts*, a collection of fifty-four eclectic *a cappella* settings of biblical text (one composition for every *parashah*). Josh founded and directs the Choral Torah Collective, a choir of Judaeo-musical educators that performs and promotes musical and biblical literacy at communities from Highland Park, NJ, to Highland Park, IL. With a bachelor's in Linguistics from Yale University and a master's in Composition from Rutgers University, Josh has worked as the music director for Golda Och Academy, the Leffell School, and Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. He currently studies at the H. L. Miller Cantorial School and is the student hazzan at New City Jewish Center. As a cantor, he hopes to continue his mission of using fresh four-part harmony to reanimate our most ancient words.

Marilyn Selby Okoshi's decision to become a cantor has been a long journey home. She is returning to her love of Jewish studies and pedagogy that was honed at Gratz College Hebrew High School and a passion for Jewish music that began over 40 years ago as a member of a children's choir. She is excited to be ordained as a cantor and complete her master's degrees in both Sacred Music and Jewish Education. Holder of a JD from Stanford Law School, she worked fulltime as an attorney for over 30 years in New York City and in Tokyo, Japan. Marilyn also holds an MA in East Asian History and a BA in Diplomatic History and Economics (with a minor in French) from the University of Pennsylvania. She is fluent in Mandarin Chinese, having lived and studied in Taiwan after graduating from university, and fluent in Japanese, after studying Japanese during law school and then living and working in Japan for close to four years. Marilyn served as clergy intern at Bnai Keshet in Montclair, NJ; student cantor at Huntington Jewish Center in Huntington, NY; and is currently the education intern at Congregation Sons of Israel in Nyack, NY. She is looking forward, after ordination and graduation, to continuing to teach children and adults cantillation, liturgy, and Judaics, and to leading congregations in meaningful prayer.

Noah Rachels serves as cantorial intern at Ansche Chesed in Manhattan, under the mentorship of Cantor Natasha Hirschhorn. In 2022, he spent a weekend in residency at Temple Beth El in Rochester, New York, as recipient of the Richard W. Briskin Award; co-led *Selihot* services at Congregation Or Zarua in Manhattan; and led High Holy Day services as guest hazzan at Congregation Ahavath Achim in Colchester, Connecticut. Noah has also sung professionally at Park Avenue Synagogue, Congregation Rodeph Sholom, and the Reform Temple of Forest Hills. In addition, he has been featured as a soloist in concerts presented by Harrison Friends of the Opera, Light Opera of New York, Canto de las Americas, the Maestro Pier Miranda Ferraro Concert Series, and New York Dramatic Voices. Before studying at JTS, he spent several years working in nonprofit fundraising and administration with such notable organizations as Carnegie Hall, Columbia Business School, and Barnard College. The example set by the inimitable Cantor Jacob Ben-Zion "Jack" Mendelson helped inspire Noah to pursue cantorial training. Born and raised among New York's Catskill Mountains, Noah currently resides with his wife, Amy, and daughter, Maya, in Riverdale in the Bronx, and studies singing with Anthony Laciura.

Joyce Rosenzweig is an internationally recognized pianist, conductor, master class presenter, lecturer, coach, arranger, and authority on Jewish art and synagogue music. She has performed in concerts throughout the US, Europe, Canada, and Israel, and is a dedicated educator of cantors and synagogue musicians, having served for over thirty years on the faculty of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music, where she holds the title of Professor of Practice: Faculty Artist in Jewish Music and Performance. She has been a faculty member at The Jewish Theological Seminary's H. L. Miller Cantorial School since 2004, and has served as music director of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah in Manhattan since 1994, where she has helped to establish one of the most dynamic and emulated synagogue worship experiences in the country. Her newest CD, *Refuge*, featuring art songs by Jewish-American refugee composers, in collaboration with Cantor David Berger, was released earlier this year,

An accomplished singer, pianist, conductor, composer, and recording artist, **Cantor Natasha J. Hirschhorn** has performed throughout North America, including the Kennedy Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Alice Tully Hall, as well as numerous music festivals in the US and Canada. The founding conductor of Shirei Chesed Community Chorus; Shir Chadash, the Brooklyn Jewish Community Chorus; and, since 2016, the director of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School Choir of JTS, Natasha maintains an active teaching and performing schedule. A native of Ukraine, Hirschhorn was ordained by the Academy for Jewish Religion in 1999 and has served as the music director of Ansche Chesed since 2004; this summer she also became the assistant director of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School. She has also served as a faculty member of the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and AJR. In November 2022 she was honored by the Cantors Assembly with the Cantor Moshe Nathanson Award for Conducting.

Zemer Nugeh
Music: Shmuel "Shmulik" Kraus (1935–2013); Lyrics: Rahel (1890–1931)

Zemer Nugeh, "Sad Song," appeared in the first collection of the poetry of Rachel Bluwstein (usually referred to simply as "Rahel" or רחל המשוררת) published in 1927. Set to music by Shmulik Kraus in 1967, this song is a classic of modern Israeli poetry and music. The song is beloved in Israel to this day and it was the song that Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon decided to play as he orbited the earth on the ill-fated space shuttle Columbia in 2003.

Many of Rahel's poems express longing, an awareness of imminent death, and wistfulness for love and a family that is conjectured to have arisen from her own long-distance love relationship, inability to have children, and the tuberculosis that eventually led to her death at age 40. Her poetry is notable for its clear and concise language, conversational tone and lyrical quality, making it popular for musical settings. In 2011, Rahel was chosen as one of four great Israeli poets to appear on Israeli currency.

Kraus, the composer of the music, has been said to have "changed the face of Israeli music." Despite a troubled personal life, spending time in both prison and mental health hospitals, and discovering the guitar and singing only as an adult, Kraus composed many songs for himself and other famous pop/rock singers in Israel. Upon his death in 2013 from swine flu, the Israeli newspaper *HaAretz* wrote that Kraus was a key, and arguably the most important, artist in the evolution of Israeli music in the late 1960s from traditional Israeli music to modern Israeli pop and rock and roll.

Like Kraus in his musical path, each of us being ordained as cantors this year did not grow up knowing that this is the path we would take. We each arrived at JTS after many years pursuing other endeavors (musical and otherwise). The song is emblematic of what we each hope to offer as cantors; beautiful music and meaningful words that make our Jewish heritage and language relevant in a modern world. M.S.O.

Elohai N'shama
Music: Todros Greenberg (1893–1976); Lyrics: Siddur

Every morning upon awakening, we express our gratitude for the new day and the chance to live it followed by the affirmation contained in these liturgical words: *Elohai, n'shama she'natata bi, t'hora hi.* "God, the soul you have given me is pure. You created it, you formed it, you breathed it into me . . . As long as this soul is in me, I give thanks to You . . . ."

After a long career as an attorney, I am both excited and full of יראת שמיים (yirat shamayim) as I embark on this new path in the cantorate, where I can embrace my gratitude for the soul within me and continue to grow spiritually as long as this soul continues in me.

I want to thank my coach, Raphael Frieder, for introducing me to this setting of these words. Todros Greenberg composed many melodies throughout his life, starting as a young man in Russia. His compositions included many sentimental songs and melodies expressing the woes of Jewish life in his native land. Recorded Sound Archives at Florida Atlantic University state that his music often incorporated the gentle lyrical quality of Ukrainian Chassidic folk songs. In 1913, he emigrated to Kansas City, MO, in the face of impending war in Europe and later became the permanent cantor at the Anshe Sholom Synagogue in Chicago in 1919. He was remembered for his long service to Anshe Sholom, his service to the Cantors Assembly, and his dedication to teaching.

This setting of *Elohai N'shama* exemplifies Greenberg's style. Among students, his compositions are admired for their adherence to traditional nusach while not being overly flowery. I especially love in this piece how Greenberg combined *hazzanut* with more folk-like melodic sections as it exemplifies my respect for our traditional nusah and desire for musical accessibility to congregations. M.S.O.

Rochel M'vako al Boneho
Music: David Roitman (1884–1943); arr. A.W. Binder (1895–1966); Lyrics: Jeremiah 31:15; Jeremiah 25:30; Isaiah 22:12; Lamentations 1:16; Isaiah 33:7

Cantor David Roitman was often described as a "poet of the pulpit." His recordings make clear that this sobriquet was well-deserved: He infused everything he sang with meaning and feeling, such that words and music became one. Born in a small village in an area that is now part of Ukraine, Roitman was appointed cantor at the Great Synagogue in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1912, and was deeply affected, both personally and professionally, by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, which sent him into exile from St. Petersburg and, ultimately, led to his emigration to the US. It is believed that he wrote this emotional piece—among his most well-known compositions—during that difficult time.

The work is also fitting for this moment, unfortunately. Just as Rachel wept for the children of Israel sent into exile by the Babylonians, and Roitman, himself, endured the turmoil and pain of being forced to leave his home, countless people today cry bitter tears over the violent conflict in Ukraine, which has displaced millions—Jews and non-Jews alike—to say nothing of other casualties and the trauma that will undoubtedly affect future generations. It is my fervent hope that God will hear these cries and turn mourning into joy. N.R.

Y'hiyu L'Ratzon
Music: Hollis Schachner (b. 1973); arr. by Rachelle Nelson (b. 1956); Lyrics: Psalms 19:15

At the end of each Amidah, these words are generally said silently as the punctuation to our individual prayers asking that our bespoke prayers be acceptable to God. As a shul-goer my whole life, I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that I had never really considered, prior to embarking on my cantorial studies, why this verse from the Psalms is included here. I generally recited the fixed liturgy and thought that extemporaneous prayer was "not Jewish." I have since learned that Jewish prayer started as a very spontaneous and individual endeavor. A prime example is Moshe praying for the healing of Miryam with the simple

words "Eil na r'fah na la." Over time Jewish prayer has become more fixed, and without research and study, the modern Jew, even an observant one, may be hard pressed to explain why certain words are where they are. The words of this psalm, incorporated by the rabbis into our daily prayer, evidence our tradition of personal bespoke prayer and, I think, address the natural human tendency to fear that our thoughts and feelings are somehow lacking. As a cantor and educator, as well as a life-long learner, I hope to not only lead the community in prayer, but to bring meaning to the words and continue learning and sharing our rich Jewish prayer legacy.

Although the words in this composition are a personal statement, "may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you," I like to sing this aloud at the end of the silent Amidah: first, to remind the *kahal* of the Jewish tradition of adding personal prayers even to the fixed liturgy, and second, to reassure us all that self-doubt and yearning for connection to the Divine is common among us. In our modern American congregations where so many do not understand Hebrew, even if they can "read" it, I also appreciate this setting that combines the Hebrew text with the English in a beautiful way to offer to our congregations. This setting, composed by cantor and composer Hollis Schachner and arranged by cantor and prolific composer of Jewish music Rachelle Nelson, is emblematic of the great contribution of women to the modern cantorate and our Jewish musical heritage. M.S.O.

B'Rosh HaShana
Music: Israel Alter (1901–1979), arr. Josh Ehrlich; Lyrics: Mahzor

As Catherine Madsen writes, "Perhaps the point of highest intensity in the Jewish liturgical year is the *Unetaneh tokef* prayer at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which presents human fragility at its most extreme." She goes on to criticize the supplementary responsive reading in the Lev Shalem Mahzor—a litany of "who shall" queries adapted from the original (*who shall be pierced by the sharp sword of envy . . . torn by the wild beast of resentment . . . afflicted with anxiety . . . rich in tranquility*)—for "recasting each kind of death as a metaphor for personal growth" thereby "replac[ing] the horror of contingency with the self-absorption of neurosis. The old prayer's stark confrontation with time," she concludes, "is deflected into the leisured emotional lint-picking of the affluent."

Reading Madsen's merciless critique (for Rabbi Jan Uhrbach's class The Art of Prayer Leading) was a revelation for me. I found it especially piercing given my own history of struggling with traditional prayer texts and altering them in the name of accessibility. Was my attempt to embrace prayer while eschewing Jewish particularism and fire-and-brimstone God language a type of emotional lint-picking? I also realized how much resentment I had once carried toward the very things to which I am now devoting my life: I had deemed ancient liturgy archaic, Judaism burdensome, and *hazzanut* melodramatic, indulgent, and self-absorbed.

All of that said, after spending some thirty months in cantorial school, I have come to see merit in both the traditional liturgy and its contemporary alternatives. And the tension between the two–much like that between old-school *hazzanut* and modern congregational sing-along tunes–suggests a liminal space, even a golden path, for the twenty-first century cantor to traverse.

I first learned Hazzan Israel Alter's setting of *Unetaneh tokef* from Cantor Jack Mendelson while studying in Jerusalem. I was living in a studio without a piano, so I arranged a guitar accompaniment to help me navigate the modulations. In juxtaposing a traditional cantorial vocal line with the contemporary flavor of acoustic guitar, my aim is not to modernize or de-dramatize the text but rather to reconcile my own complicated feelings about my calling. J.E.

Hariu Ladonai
Music: Gerald Cohen (b. 1960); Lyrics: Psalm 100

A wide range of emotions are expressed in the poems that comprise the book of Psalms. Indeed, it is in the psalms that we find some of the most potent, heart-wrenching language of lament and sorrow. Yet, it is also here that we encounter unbridled shouts of joy and proclamations of praise and thanksgiving, such as those in Psalm 100. Gerald Cohen's setting of this text, with its propulsive rhythmic accompaniment and shifting meters, brings the psalm to life, evoking festive, ecstatic dancing. The more soaring melodic lines bring the singer (and the listener) closer to the Divine.

It has been a special privilege having the opportunity to learn from, and get to know a bit, the composer of this piece, Gerald Cohen—an accomplished cantor in his own right—during my time studying at JTS. Whether writing soul-stirring music or sharing his vast knowledge and expertise, he never fails to give generously of himself. N.R.

Drey Dreydeleh
Music: Dovid Beygelman (1887–1944), arr. Abraham Ellstein (1907–1963); adapted by Joshua Jacobson and Josh Ehrlich; Lyrics: Moishe Oysher (1907–1958)

When it comes to the golden age of Yiddish theater, two of the biggest names on the scene were those of Moishe Oysher and Abraham "Abe" Ellstein. A noted cantor, singer, and actor, Oysher was a gifted performer who utilized his rich, powerful voice to great effect, whether on stage, radio, screen, or bimah. Ellstein was highly skilled as a composer, arranger, conductor, and accompanist of theatrical music, as well as classical and liturgical music, and is generally considered one of the so-called "Big Four of Second Avenue," along with Sholom Secunda, Joseph Rumshinsky, and Alexander Olshanetsky. Collaboration between Oysher and Ellstein yielded several gems, including classic recordings of *Chad Gadyo* and *Drey Dreydeleh*. With respect to the latter, presented here, the Yiddish song experts Chana and Joseph Mlotek observed that the melody not only matches that composed by Dovid Beygelman for Itsik Manger's *Yosl Ber*, but also was also used for the songs *Ikh leb in geto in kavkaz* ("I live in the ghetto in the Caucasus") by Khane Kheytin, and *Vi der zeyger tut a klung* ("When the clock strikes") by Sam Liptzin.

Our performance of the joyful *Drey Dreydeleh* is an adaptation of the piece as arranged for chorus by Joshua Jacobson, created expressly for this occasion by Josh Ehrlich. N.R.

***Miryam HaN'via* (from *The Choral Torah: Five Books in Four Parts*)**
Music: Josh Ehrlich, (b. 1985); Lyrics: Sh'mot 15:20

In what's arguably the most musical of all the Torah portions—so much so that the day we read it is dubbed *Shabbat Shira,* "Sabbath of Song"—Moshe sings his triumphant "Song of the Sea" to celebrate the miraculous Red Sea crossing. And then, his sister starts the epic afterparty.

There's rhythm built right into the language here: when you repeat the word *"tu-**pim**"* (drums), with its two plosives "t" and "p," you can't help but feel the beat. Perhaps it's possible *tupim* is the precursor for the word "timpani"? And where percussion goes, dance is sure to follow. On the word *"m'-cho-**lot**"* (dances), I stretched out the last syllable to include many notes—depicting motion with melisma. If you feel moved at any point to get up and dance, please do!

I'm thrilled to present *Miryam HaN'via* with the the multi-talented members of the Choral Torah Collective: Evan Feist, Gedalia Robinson, Jeff Weisz, Shirel Richman, Leilah Rosen, and Cantors Mira Davis and Arielle Reisner. J.E.

Rachem
Music: Mana-Zucca (1885–1981); Lyrics: Max S. Brown

It was relatively recently that I happened upon this song on YouTube, as recorded by the renowned American operatic soprano Rosa Ponselle in 1921. I hadn't thought that Ponselle was Jewish (and indeed, she wasn't), had no idea she had ever sung in Hebrew or Yiddish, and was struck by the melodic similarity between the opening line of *Rachem* and that of "Ritorna vincitor" from Verdi's *Aida*, a role for which Ponselle was acclaimed. Moreover, I wondered: Who was this Mana-Zucca?

Gisella Zuccamanof—later known as Augusta Zuckermann before rearranging the syllables of her surname and adopting the mononym Mana-Zucca—was born to Polish immigrants in New York City. A child prodigy as both a pianist and composer, she performed Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 1* with the New York Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall at age eight, and went on to write, by some estimates, well over 1,000 compositions, including numerous popular songs and pieces for solo piano, two operas, a ballet, chamber music, and orchestral works. *Rachem*, published in 1919, became a hit not only with audiences, but also with notable singers of the day, regardless of their religious affiliation. After falling in love with the piece on musical and expressive grounds, I decided to include *Rachem* in this program to showcase a woman composer, and to help make sure that Mana-Zucca is not forgotten. N.R.

Ana B'choach
Music: Marilyn Selby Okoshi (b. 1963), arr. by Marilyn Selby Okoshi and Dr. Galeet Dardashti; Lyrics: R. Nehunia ben Hakanna (2nd century C.E.)

Ana B'choach is a *piyyut* (liturgical poem) believed to have been written by a sage in Israel sometime in the second century of the Common Era. It holds great significance to Kabbalists, who believe the first letter of each of the 42 words in the *piyyut* comprise an unpronounceable 42-letter name of God. Because each of its seven lines is believed to contain a different energy, one might chant or focus on a different line, depending on one's spiritual needs and desires.

Because the *piyyut* is believed to embody the name of God, it is customary to say *Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto L'Olam Vaed*—"Blessed is God's glorious kingdom forever and ever"—as the last line, which may be in a whisper or silently as in the Shema. The piyyut has been included in the *Kabbalat Shabbat* liturgy, with the current *Siddur Lev Shalem* increasing its prominence as compared to the previous *Siddur Sim Shalom.* The editors of *Siddur Lev Shalem* suggest that this piyyut is appropriate as part of the Shabbat liturgy because each of its seven sentences mentions a different aspect of God. Thus, it is fitting as "a Friday evening prayer that celebrates God's sovereignty on the seventh day of creation."

I wrote this setting as part of a class on piyyutim at JTS with Dr. Galeet Dardashti that sought to find musical settings for the *piyyutim* that the editors chose to include in the *Lev Shalem* series of siddurim and *mahzorim* that either had no known musical setting or for which a new setting seemed fitting. When I started the class, I was only aware of one melody for this piyyut and learned a second one, popular in Israel, in the course of my research. In my composition, I use the word "ana" (sometimes translated as "please," or simply an expression of intensified yearning) as a repetitive mantra to try to capture some of the poem's yearning for support, strength, protection, and aid from a power higher than ourselves. My *Ana B'choach*, with lead vocals by Cantor Mira Davis, was chosen as one of the 10 tracks included on the album *Seeds of Song* published by the JTS / Block-Kolker Center for Spiritual Arts in 2020. M.S.O.

Ashreinu
Music: Leib Glanz (1898–1964), arr. Raymond Goldstein, introduction by Josh Ehrlich; Lyrics: siddur

What if all prayer is pointless? That possibility, contained in the quote from Ecclesiastes "הכל הבל" (all is futility), is itself addressed in our morning prayers. In ברכות השחר, we ask, "What can we say before You . . . when even the wisest appear to You as devoid of wisdom? When their deeds are mostly desolate? When man's preeminence over beast is non-existent and all is futility?"

"And yet," the prayer goes on, "we are Your people, covenantally connected to You through our ancestors and Your abundant love. And therefore we are obliged to thank You and to praise Your name: How good is our portion, how pleasant is our lot, and how beautiful our heritage!"

I learned this setting of Leib Glanz's *Ashreinu* last spring while sitting in the Jerusalem apartment of its arranger, Raymond Goldstein. Every day during the four months I spent in Israel, I became increasingly aware of how good my portion is, especially to have had the privilege to study privately with Raymond, and with Hazzan Naftali Herstik. I became all the more enchanted with the words and music of *Ashreinu* when I discovered the complex existential wrestling that precedes it in the prayerbook. To contextualize it, I wrote music for an excerpt of the introductory text. J.E.

Song of Service
Music: Daniel Mendelson (b. 1983); Lyrics: Gerald Skolnik

Last year, at my internship at Huntington Jewish Center, the executive director of the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, who was a congregant, asked me to sing this prayer for our armed forces on the Shabbat closest to Veterans Day. The words are excerpted from the Prayer for America's Military Personnel written by Rabbi Gerald Skolnik for the *Siddur for Jewish Personnel in the Armed Forces of the United States* and the music was composed by cantor, composer, and filmmaker Daniel Mendelson. Cantor Mendelson's composition was chosen by the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council from hundreds of submissions to a contest to set this prayer to music in honor of the 100th anniversary of the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council in 2018.

When I matriculated as a full-time student in cantorial school, I was a part of a cohort of first-year students in the Division of Religious Leadership who had embarked on the path to becoming rabbis and cantors. Two members of my cohort who will be ordained as rabbis with me this coming May are also becoming chaplains in the United States Navy. I am grateful to that congregant for bringing this prayer and music to my attention and I am privileged to offer it here in honor of all those who have served and are serving in our country's military. M.S.O.

Yihyeh Tov
Music and Lyrics: David Broza (b. 1955), arrangement by Josh Ehrlich

On the Podcast *Israel Story: MixTape*, David Broza explains how *Yihyeh Tov* functions like the *Amidah* for him: a supplication he utters every day, finding new meaning each time. He has even gone on to add verses to this wistful prayer for peace since he first wrote it in 1977—just after Anwar Sadat visited Israel. Much like Paul Simon with *American Tune* (composed only three years earlier), Broza expresses the heartbreaking tension of living with hope amidst the backdrop of a broken country.

I first learned about this song from my choir director, Daniel Henkin, when I was a student at Yeshivah of Flatbush High School. Years later, I discovered there was a verse omitted in the arrangement I had been taught, a verse in which the Egyptian president responds to the Israeli's call for peace by saying, "Let's go! Just leave the territories." In the almost thirty years since Rabin's assassination, *Yihyeh Tov* feels as poignant as ever given how dim the vision for peace between Israel and Palestine has become. And still, we pray.

And when I'm feeling most broken about my own conflicted response to a polarizing political situation, I thank God for Leilah—whose name is in every chorus—who holds my hand and shares her beautiful voice with me for this song. J.E.

Vengáx en buen'hora, Siñora coshuegra* and *¡Ah, el novio no quere dinero!
Music: Traditional Ladino folk songs, arr. Alberto Hemsi (1898–1975); Lyrics: Traditional

Born in Turkey to Italian parents, composer and ethnomusicologist Alberto Hemsi made it his life's work to perpetuate the traditional music of Sephardic Jews. Between 1923 and 1937, he traveled widely around the former Ottoman Empire, collecting and documenting melodies and lyrics that had been transmitted orally by generations of Jews whose ancestors had been expelled from the Iberian peninsula centuries earlier. Hemsi collected 232 songs in all and used 60 of them in his *Coplas Sefardies*, published in ten volumes. In each case, he combined the traditional tunes and words with modern, often complex piano accompaniments of his own composition, taking what were essentially folk songs sung at weddings and other communal gatherings and turning them into art music suitable for the concert hall. The two pieces presented here are both related to wedding celebrations.

A former singing teacher of mine, Francisco Casanova, inspired me with his devotion to, and reverence for, the art of singing and the poetry of the sung word. Prior to his untimely passing in 2019, he introduced me to singing in Spanish. While Ladino and Spanish are obviously not the same language, much of Ladino is derived from sixteenth-century Spanish. I offer these songs in tribute to my late mentor and friend. N.R.

Ya'alah Ya'alah
Music: Traditional Moroccan; Lyrics: Israel ben Moses Najara (1550s–1625)

In connection with my studies to become a cantor, I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to coach a few times in Jerusalem with Israeli *payytanit*, cantor, musician, singer, conductor, actress and teacher Yahala Lachmish, who carries on the Libyan musical tradition of her father. Yahala introduced me to *piyyutim* in three different Sephardi/Mizrachi musical styles (what she described as Jerusalem Sephardi, Moroccan and Libyan). Today, I am pleased to share with you a few verses from one of those, *Ya'alah Ya'alah*, with the Moroccan style melody I learned from her last summer.

This *piyyut* was written by Israel Najara, a rabbi, musician, composer, and *payytan* from a distinguished Spanish family of scholars. He was known for, and sometimes criticized for, contrafacting popular melodies from Arabic, Turkish, Greek, and Spanish songs as well as other Hebrew *piyyutim*. In defense of Najara, noted Safed Kabbalist Isaac Luria stated that Najara's hymns were listened to with delight in heaven. Najara wrote in the introduction to his first book of *pizmonim*, *Zemirot Yisrael*, published in Safed in 1587, that his practice of using secular melodies for his poetry

was intended to turn the Jewish youth from profane songs. Many of his *piyyutim* have been incorporated into standard Sephardi/Mizrachi liturgy and his *Yah Ribon Olam*, written, like many of his poems, in Aramaic is still sung by Jews around the world.

Ya'alah Ya'alah borrows phrases and imagery from Song of Songs as well as Lamentations. While the verses refer to *ya'alah (*an Ibex doe and euphemism for a lover), *dodi* (my beloved) and *ra'ya* (wife), other references and contexts in the *piyyut* suggest that these words are meant to represent the relationship between God and Israel. The two verses I presented today are the two verses that are directed to a feminine form, בת אהובה, and רעיה, which Cantor Lachmish suggested makes them them particularly appropriate for celebrations of girls, such as baby namings and *b'not mitzvah*. The entire piyyut, however, is often sung at weddings and other celebrations. M.S.O.

***Ma Tovu* (from *The Choral Torah: Five Books in Four Parts*)**
Music: Josh Ehrlich, (b. 1985); Lyrics: Bamidbar 24:5–6

Bil'am, the sorcerer who utters the iconic words of *Ma Tovu*, had been given the mission to curse the Israelites so as to banish them from the land. Instead, upon seeing their tents he is so overcome by the spirit of God that he blesses them, comparing their encampments to the interwoven waterways and flora that comprise the earth and fill it with natural splendor.

To capture this bucolic beauty, I turned to Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* (#6). One of his only programmatic works, it begins with a movement depicting (in the words of its composer) an "awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside." Its first four notes—scale degrees 3 - 4 - 6 - 5 —create a soundscape so idyllic that Disney composer Alan Menken used them, perhaps unconsciously, to set the opening words of "Belle" from *Beauty and the Beast* ("there goes the baker . . .") and the title words of "A Whole New World" from *Aladdin*.

After the tenor sings a simple rising scale, the alto takes over the melody, starting with a quote of the familiar Lewandowski setting of this text. The soprano joins a third above the alto, tracing a line which resembles Beethoven's pastoral theme. This duet of the highest two voices, then, becomes like a melody itself, a model of a harmonious relationship that parallels the dynamic between the ancient Israelites and the land they inhabited. J.E.

Zakeini L'Simcha
Music: Josh Ehrlich, (b. 1985);
Lyrics: Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772–1810)

On March 19, 2020, Leilah and I fled Manhattan to quarantine with my parents at their house in Highland Park, New Jersey. We ended up staying for six months. Every Shabbat that spring and summer, the four of us would gather alongside a couple dozen neighbors to sit on socially distanced lawn chairs in our backyard and pray. Leilah, my dad, and I took turns leading. The simple act of consistently assembling as a community had never felt so powerful; that June, I applied to cantorial school.

In August, I picked up my dad's old nylon-string guitar and started teaching myself to play. I also wrote my first setting of liturgical text intended for communal singing, complete with guitar accompaniment. I was drawn to the alternate ending paragraph to the silent Amidah for Shabbat, a prayer originally composed by R' Nachman of Breslov that "I may merit the joy and freedom of Shabbat." After listing in detail both the agonies to be avoided—and the extent of delights to be had—on Shabbat, the poem concludes with the wish to sustain the joy of Shabbat into the mundanity of the week ahead. As I now shift from the joy and respite of being a student to the work of being a cantor, much like Shabbat pivots into the workweek, this prayer strikes a chord for me. J.E.

Havdalah
Music: Zavel Zilberts (1881–1949); Lyrics: Siddur (Isaiah 12:2–3; Psalms 3:9; Psalms 46:8; Esther 8:16)

The son of a prominent cantor in whose choir he sang as a child, Zavel Zilberts was born in Belarus and became well known as both a choral conductor and composer. It was relatively early in his career that he developed his compositional style incorporating elements of traditional *hazzanut* with classical choral writing. Zilberts emigrated to the United States in 1920 and shortly thereafter became the director of the New York Hazzanim Farband Chor—the chorus of cantors of the Jewish Ministers Cantors Association. He also founded and led successful Jewish choirs in New York City and Newark, New Jersey.

Zilberts' setting of a portion of the Havdalah liturgy remains among his most popular and cherished works. Musically, it makes for a rousing finale; it is also fitting addition to this concert on thematic grounds. Just as Havdalah helps mark the conclusion of Shabbat, and thus the differentiation between the holy and the mundane, here it serves to mark a milestone for us on our journey from cantorial students to ordained cantors. N.R.

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Concert produced by Cantor Gerald Cohen and Cantor Natasha J. Hirschhorn

The H. L. Miller Cantorial School trains students as hazzanim (cantors) for congregational service and as teachers of Jewish music, Jewish educators, chaplains, choral directors, composers, and research scholars. The power of music to move the spirit is unsurpassed, and JTS-trained hazzanim learn imaginative and innovative uses of music toward the reinvigoration of the American synagogue.

We are deeply grateful to the leadership and staff of Ansche Chesed for providing their Sanctuary as the venue for this concert.

John Dellheim (*z"l*) was a Holocaust survivor who became a pioneer computer programmer at IBM. He deeply loved Judaism and Jewish music and endowed the John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Internship Program and Concert Series to bring Western cantorial music around the United States via the mentors, alumni, and students of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School, thereby perpetuating the performance and transmission of Jewish sacred music to future generations.

The John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Endowment Fund initiative includes an internship program that pairs students with mentors in the field, and expands the school's opportunities to teach concert planning, enhance repertoire coaching, and present student performances.

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