



THE JOHN LEOPOLD
and
MARTHA DELLHEIM
SENIOR RECITAL

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

Gedalia Penner-Robinson and Ingrid Barnett
Joyce Rosenzweig, piano

With Jonathon Adler, Rochelle Berman, David Childs, Cantor Josh Ehrlich, Ruth Engel, Talia Lakritz, Justin Pellis, Leilah Rosen, Max Silverstone, Neal Taibel, voice; Deborah Strauss, violin; puck glass, percussion; Mohan Ritesma, bass guitar; Aden Fischer-Brown, piano; Cantor Gerald Cohen, piano

The H. L. Miller Cantorial School and
Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Chorus
conducted by Cantor Natasha J. Hirschhorn



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PROGRAM

Hin'ni (for a Female Hazzan)

Ingrid Barnett (b.1968)

Ingrid Barnett; Deborah Strauss, violin

Adonai S'fatai

Judith M. Berman (1925–2005)

Gedalia Penner-Robinson; Roseanne Benjamin, Rachel Black, David Childs,
Cantor Josh Ehrlich, Talia Lakritz, vocals; Deborah Strauss, violin;
Mohan Ritesma, bass guitar; Aden Fischer-Brown, piano

Simple Song

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

Gedalia Penner-Robinson; Deborah Strauss, violin

Ma Tovu

Robbie Solomon (b. 1947)

Ingrid Barnett and Neal Taibel

Hashkiveinu

Michael Isaacson (b. 1946)

Jonathon Adler

Eilu D'vorim

Jacob Rappaport (1890–1943)
arr. Raymond Goldstein

Gedalia Penner-Robinson

Hamavdil

Joseph Rumshinsky (1881–1956)

Ingrid Barnett

Keter Melucha

Ishai Ribo (b. 1989)
arr. Gedalia Penner-Robinson

Gedalia Penner-Robinson; Deborah Strauss, violin; puck glass, percussion;
Mohan Ritesma, bass guitar

Kol Eit Elecha

Sayed Darwish (1892–1923) and
Moshe Ashear Ha-Kohen (1877–1940)

Ingrid Barnett and Justin Pellis; Deborah Strauss, violin; puck glass, percussion;
Mohan Ritesma, bass guitar

Ordinary Breakfast

Gerald Cohen (b. 1960)

From the opera *Steal a Pencil for Me*

Ingrid Barnett and Gedalia Penner-Robinson; Cantor Gerald Cohen, piano

Sim Shalom

Chaim Feifel (1931–2020)

Ingrid Barnett

Rumania

Aaron Lebedeff (1873–1960)
arr. by Shalom Secunda

Gedalia Penner-Robinson; Deborah Strauss, violin

Ani Havatzelet Hasharon

Jacob Weinberg (1879–1956)

From the opera *The Pioneers*

Ingrid Barnett

VaY'chabkeihu

Josh Ehrlich (b. 1985)

From *The Choral Torah*

Vocal ensemble: Rochelle Berman, David Childs, Cantor Josh Ehrlich, Ruth Engel,
Talia Lakritz, Gedalia Penner-Robinson, Leilah Rosen, Max Silverstone

Psalm 29

Lance Rhodes (b. 1980)

Ingrid Barnett and Gedalia Penner-Robinson; JTS/HUC Chorus,
Natasha Hirschhorn, conductor

Odcha

Eli Gerstner (b. 1980)
arr. Gedalia Penner-Robinson and Josh Ehrlich

Ingrid Barnett and Gedalia Penner-Robinson; David Childs, Max Silverstone, and Neal Taibel
vocals; JTS/HUC Chorus, Natasha Hirschhorn, conductor

Performer Bios



Ingrid Barnett is a fifth-year cantorial student at The Jewish Theological Seminary. Before her studies at JTS, Ingrid was a cantorial soloist, serving congregations in Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. Prior to her work as a cantorial soloist, Ingrid trained as an operatic soprano at New England Conservatory, performing light and grand opera as well as musical theater, with groups in New York City, Boston, and Connecticut. Besides receiving classical musical training at New England Conservatory, she also earned a bachelor's degree from Tufts University in Russian and East European Studies and a graduate degree from New York University in Performing Arts Administration.

Originally, Ingrid wanted to be a cantorial soloist because she wanted to pursue a career that was more family-friendly and to combine her love of Judaism and music. However, one night while walking home from Purim services, she was hit by a taxi. Although she sustained some injuries, Ingrid believed that God had protected her from much worse and had kept her alive for a reason. From that day on Ingrid has wanted to become more involved in all aspects of being a Jewish clergy person. From her recent experience in pastoral counseling and helping others with issues of mental health and learning disabilities, and those disillusioned with Judaism, Ingrid has a threefold cantorial mission: to preserve *hazzanut* and the classical Jewish music tradition; to be a resource for people and families who are struggling with mental health and learning disabilities; and to help people who don't relate to traditional forms of Jewish worship.

Ingrid would like to thank those who helped prepare for this special evening and to all the people who have helped her on her journey to be a cantor.



Gedalia Penner-Robinson has developed a love of prayer and song since harmonizing alongside his father, the rabbi of Young Israel of Holliswood in Queens, New York, where he grew up. He began his musical career in Yeshiva University as a singer and then musical director of the vocal group Y-Studs A-Cappella, with whom he toured the globe and produced Jewish holiday videos enjoyed by millions of viewers around the world.

In 2019, Gedalia moved to Philadelphia to study with renowned song-leader Joey Weisenberg as a resident of Yeshivat Hadar's Rising Song Institute, where his eyes were opened to both the breadth of the spiritual Jewish community and his passion for leading song and prayer within it. This led him to pursue his studies as a cantor, and to date, Gedalia has served in cantorial roles in synagogues across the eastern seaboard, including Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale, Har Zion Temple of Philadelphia, and Ohev Sholom - the National Synagogue of Washington, DC. He is proud to present this program alongside Ingrid Barnett as the culmination of his studies at the H. L. Miller Cantorial School at JTS, and as a newly ordained cantor, he hopes to build a Jewish world where everyone is heard and everyone knows that their voice matters.



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 in 2022.



An accomplished singer, pianist, conductor, composer, and recording artist, Cantor **Natasha 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. She has been commissioned to write for various cantors and ensembles, including Hazamir, the International High School Choir, and, most recently, by The Western Wind Vocal Ensemble and the Bucks County Choral Society; and featured on 10 CDs as performer and composer, including "They Call Me", a collection of her original works. This Spring Cantor Hirschhorn, a native of Ukraine, will be marking 25 years since her Ordination by the Academy for Jewish Religion and 20 years of serving Congregation Ansche Chesed as Hazzan and Music Director. A member of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School faculty, 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. Hirschhorn is the founding conductor of Shirei Chesed Community Chorus and Shir Chadash, the Brooklyn Jewish Community Chorus. Since 2016, she has directed the H. L. Miller Cantorial School Choir at JTS; and this year works as a co-director with Joyce Rosenzweig leading the combined HUC and JTS choir. In November 2022 she was honored by the Cantors Assembly with the Cantor Moshe Nathanson Award for Conducting.

Program Notes

***Hin'ni* (for a Female Hazzan)**

Music: Ingrid Barnett; Lyrics: Mahzor for Yamim Noraim

Hin'ni is a very personal prayer for me. According to *Mahzor Lev Shalem*, *Hin'ni* is an example of a *r'shut*, a prayer asking permission from God to pray for the congregation so that God will be moved by the congregation's prayers. Another meaningful interpretation is that a *r'shut* is a prayer which asks God "to make space;" thus I am asking God to make space for my voice to be heard. When I am chanting this prayer, I feel overcome following in the footsteps of cantors who have chanted this prayer before me and continuing this tradition into the future.

While I am ever mindful of the tradition that I am observing, this *Hin'ni* evolves the liturgy into the future. According to *Mahzor Lev Shalem*, the most common *Hin'ni* text sung in America comes from sixteenth-century Eastern Europe. For most of Jewish history cantors in all denominations were male. Because the liturgy was from a male perspective, the syntax and grammar were written for men. When I was first learning *Hin'ni*, I was annoyed that there was a line about God accepting my prayer as if "I were old and had a full beard." The other part of the traditional *Hin'ni* that distressed me was that I had to make ill-fitting musical adjustments to fit the feminine verbal endings. To my classical music sensibilities these adjustments didn't feel organic because the original melody was clearly written for masculine verb endings. When the Rabbinical Assembly wrote and published *Mahzor Lev Shalem*, I was relieved to see that they had both male and female versions of the prayer. However, there wasn't any printed music for a female leader. I could not find any version for a female leader, so I decided to write one myself. I have since learned that there are two versions of *Hin'ni* for a female leader. May my version give women cantors more versions from which to choose. I.B.

Adonai S'fatai

Music: Judith M. Berman (1925–2005); Lyrics: Liturgy (Psalms 51:17)

It was the spring of 2019. As a resident of the Rising Song Institute, I was honing my sight-reading skills by perusing a quaint little volume of congregational melodies entitled *Leveling the Prayer Field*, compiled by Merri-Lovinger Arian. Within it, I found this gem, and instantly fell in love.

It was the first time I fell in love with a song that I discovered via the written word. One might say it was the inception of seeing myself in the role of liaison between the Jewish people and the musical tradition they didn't yet know they, too, could fall deeply in love with. In a word, a cantor.

Since then, I've brought this melody to virtually every community I've served, and I can't envision my cantorate without it by my side. The lyrics comprise the opening words of the *Amidah*, present in every

service we pray in the Jewish calendar—three times a day, throughout the year. It seemed only fitting to open the program with this song, *Adonai S'fatai*, as my first contribution. Indeed, on my cantorial journey ahead, *may the Lord open my lips, that my mouth may declare God's glory*. G.P-R.

***Simple Song* (from *Mass*)**

Music: Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990); Lyrics: Stephen Schwartz (b. 1948)

I don't think of myself as much of an LGBTQ advocate. And I feel blessed that I am rarely made to give a second thought to my gay identity in my everyday life in Conservative Jewish community. But it was very odd learning how relatively few openly queer cantors there are out there, and I spent my final year of school painfully aware that I have few queer cantorial peers and mentors in this movement. There is work to be done, even here, in making LGBTQ individuals feel comfortable sharing their full selves with their Jewish community.

This is a shame, because we have so much perspective to offer, so much nuanced Torah and tefillah to share with the community based on our unique life experience and starkly fresh take on the Jewish tradition in the 21st century. While I have much to learn yet as a cantor, I pray I can offer some of that perspective to the Jewish community, and maybe even make the next queer cantor feel more comfortable doing so themselves.

In my mind, Leonard Bernstein's "Simple Song" is the ultimate contemporary approach to prayer. While most of the lyrics are rooted in the psalms (*I will sing the Lord a new song; Blessed is the Man who loves the Lord*), the free "lauda di de" syllables at the end of the piece, to me, act as placeholders, giving voice to and making space for every successive generation's contribution to the liturgical and religious tradition. The rest of this theater piece, *Mass*—composed for the opening of the Kennedy Center in 1971—is equally scathing as it is breathtaking, two adjectives that inhabit either end of many critically thinking Jews' relationships with religion. But this song, brought to you by one of the most iconic LGBTQ Jewish musicians of the last century, represents those moments when we are able to connect to God with the unadulterated clarity of the devout and praise the Lord with pure joy. G.P-R.

Ma Tov

Music: Cantor Robbie Solomon (b. 1947); Lyrics: Liturgy (selections from *Tanakh*)

I discovered this piece going down the YouTube rabbit hole. I was a cantorial intern at Congregation Brothers of Israel in Newtown, Pennsylvania, and was looking for a different setting of this prayer for Shabbat morning, other than the ones I already knew. Although this setting wasn't quite appropriate for my situation since I didn't have another singer to sing this as a duet, I liked the catchy melody, and

thought it would be a good piece for me to learn for a future pulpit where I could sing this with a congregant one fine Shabbat. I also have a soft spot for this piece because the composer attended New England Conservatory, where I received my musical education.

Cantor Robbie Solomon is internationally known as a composer of Jewish choral works and synagogue repertoire, as well as an arranger. He is well known as a performer/songwriter with the popular Jewish music group SAFAM. In addition to over ten original CDs with SAFAM, Cantor Solomon's works have been performed and recorded by numerous cantors and choirs throughout the world.

Along with an Orthodox upbringing in Baltimore, Maryland, and rabbinical study at the Hebrew Union College, Cantor Solomon received conservatory training at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem, Berklee College of Music, and New England Conservatory. Cantor Solomon served as a full-time cantor for over forty years, largely in the greater Boston area. He retired after serving nine years at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, where he is now cantor emeritus. I.B.

Hashkiveinu

Music: Michael Isaacson (b. 1946); Lyrics: Siddur (Ma'ariv)

The words of Hashkiveinu, the second blessing after the evening recitation of the Shema, date back to at least the time of the Mishnah, around 200 CE. The text is so rich, not only in the list of terrible things we are asking for protection from: I keep coming back to the idea of a *sukkat shalom*—a canopy of peace—which we need today perhaps more than ever. The *chatima* (seal, or closing) of the blessing concludes, asking for protection for the entire Nation of Israel, and for Jerusalem. In the wake of October 7, this is needed more than ever.

This setting, by the prolific American Jewish composer Michael Isaacson, is one that has always resonated with me. There is an underlying rhythm to the entire piece that reminds me very much of a heartbeat, which feels intensely appropriate for this message of peace and life and protection, and once the music begins, that heartbeat continues to pound until the final notes have become a memory.

Program note by Jonathon Adler.

Eilu D'vorim

Music: Jacob Rappaport (1890–1943), arr. Raymond Goldstein; Lyrics: Talmud

Is the study of Torah, in fact, equal in merit to all other *mitzvot* combined? The rabbis of my yeshiva high school, Mesivta Yesodei Yeshurun, would almost certainly say so. There I donned a black hat and jacket and studied Talmud for upwards of five hours a day, and some days another two during “night seder” until 9:30 in the evening. Qualitatively and quantitatively, Torah study was the top priority.

My life has taken twists and turns since then. I've run in circles wherein

social justice comes first and foremost, and other spaces wherein prayer and meditation take a front seat. In molding a vision of religious Jewish practice for myself, I've had to ask: What truly matters? When push comes to shove, what takes top priority?

I love this piece, *Eilu D'vorim*, because it acknowledges that the answer is not at all simple. In this text, which the morning prayers originally lifted from the combined tractates of *Pe'ah* and *Shabbat*, we find ritualistic and ethical Jewish imperatives ranging from the bringing of first fruits as a Temple offering to gladdening a bride on her wedding day to facilitating peace between sparring neighbors. I appreciate the line of thinking that there are 613 mitzvot precisely so that everyone can find the Judaism that resonates with their unique personality and life experience, and I further love this piece for the schmaltzy opportunity it grants me to declare that message to the world via the *chazzanische* recitative that rings of my traditional upbringing. As a cantor, I hope to always advocate for the tradition on the one hand, while helping everyone find their onramp into meaningful and personal Jewish practice on the other. G.P.R.

Hamavdil

Music: Joseph Rumshinsky (1881–1956); Lyrics: Compiled by Rumshinsky from Liturgy (Hebrew and Yiddish)

Along with Sholom Secunda, Alexander Olshanetsky, and Abraham Ellstein, Joseph Rumshinsky was one of the “big four” composers who created and developed Yiddish theater in the early 20th century. According to the Milken Archive, *Hamavdil* was a song from a Yiddish theater show, *Der rebetsn's tokhter* (The rabbi's wife's daughter), a reworking of his 1909 Yiddish operetta, *A yidish kind*. Rumshinsky used fragments from the Hebrew havdalah service and a Yiddish prayer recited by women, *Gott fun Avrom*, to which he added his own words. Within the song is the popular tune sung after havdalah, *A gute woch* (A good week), or in Hebrew, *Shavua Tov*.

When planning the repertoire for the concert, I asked our pianist, Joyce Rosenzweig, for suggestions on Yiddish repertoire. I was eager to sing Yiddish repertoire because when I was young, in my community, speaking or singing Yiddish in public was considered uncouth and I was discouraged from learning how to speak it. With the passage of time, more and more Yiddish words have been accepted into common American English. As an adult I wanted to honor the language that my ancestors spoke by singing Yiddish repertoire publicly at an important event. Because Yiddish theater was primarily developed by Rumanian Jews, Yiddish theater songs are typically sung with a Rumanian dialect. However, as a further nod to my Lithuanian-Polish heritage, I have chosen to sing *Hamavdil* with a Lithuanian, or Litvak, accent. I.B.

Keter Melucha**Music and lyrics: Ishay Ribo (b. 1989), arr. Gedalia Penner-Robinson**

I have mixed feelings about continuing to dwell on Covid-19 and its fallout—about all the ways that we’re changed as a society and will never take togetherness for granted again, etc.; I’d prefer to show, not tell, how we try and build up stronger in the aftermath.

If we’re to speak to it directly, I think Ishay Ribo’s way is the way: artfully, in a way that transcends preaching and pierces straight to the heart. In his original lyrics—his *paytanut*—Ribo uses the device of the *parashat hashavua*—the weekly Torah portion—to trace the ominous, terrifying creep of Covid’s sweep over our lives, one disturbing week at a time. “*Between Terumah and Tetzaveh . . . all appears to be fine . . . between Pekudei and Vayikra . . . we all, from Israel to Ishmael, wonder who will pay the price for simply venturing out of our homes.*” And what, Ribo implores, could God possibly want us to glean from this global tragedy, if not the simple exercise of ceding total faith and hope in God that either all will be well, or, despite all our efforts to understand it, at least all of it is in God’s hands. G.P-R.

Kol Eit Eilecha**Music: Sayed Darwish (1892–1923); Lyrics: Moshe Ashear Hakohen (1877–1940)**

When I was in Israel in spring of 2023, I had the great privilege of working with Yahala and Chayim Lachmish, Mizrachi hazzanim and *peytanim*, composers of sacred poetry. They introduced me and my colleagues to the beauty of Sephardic and Mizrachi music and text. It was not easy for me to learn. As a classical Western singer, I am reliant on sheet music, in addition to recordings, to learn music. While the system of *maqam*, or modes used in Arabic music, have some similarity to Western Jewish music, I had to abandon what I had been taught and learn to embrace another musical tradition. In consultation with my colleague Justin, I chose this *piyyut* because it shares some aspects of a Western major “key” called *ajam*. The *maqam* differs from its Western counterpart with musical strains reminiscent of subcontinent Indian ragas. Just as European Jewish music often incorporated music from the non-Jewish world, Sephardic and Mizrachi songs used Arabic music borrowed from their Muslim neighbors. While the Hebrew lyrics are by a Jewish author, the melody is from a popular tune by Sayed Darwish, *Taleat Ya Mahla Nourha*. The poem tells of a yearning for God, for personal redemption, and for the redemption of the house of Israel.

The composer of this sacred poem, or *piyyut*, was born in Aleppo, Syria. When he was eleven years old, his father died. Having musical talent, Moshe came to the attention of another famous *peytan*, Rabbi Raphael Taboush. Rabbi Taboush became Moshe’s guardian and

mentor. Since Rabbi Taboush was blind, Moshe acted as his eyes and transcribed many of Rabbi Taboush’s *piyyutim*. In addition Moshe learned the system of *maqam*, Hebrew poetry, and how to compose religious poetry set to music, or *pizmonim*. In 1903 Moshe became the hazzan and Torah reader in Aleppo; in 1912 he emigrated with his surviving mother and the rest of his family to Brooklyn, where he served as hazzan to the Magen David Synagogue in Brooklyn, New York, until his death. I.B.

**Ordinary Breakfast, from the opera Steal a Pencil for Me
Music: Gerald Cohen (b. 1960); Libretto by Deborah Brevoort (b. 1954)**

One of the best things about being a student at the H. L. Miller Cantorial school has been the breadth of welcomed Jewish approaches within these walls. As a gay man with an Orthodox upbringing who’s moved through various Jewish spaces, I came in with an odd mix of religious experiences and tastes, and assumed I’d have to modulate my approach and practice to match the tenor of this institution when I got here. But on one end, I’ve led a mumbly “Matzah Minyan” shaharit during Minyan/Mifgash that specifically lasted an expedient and very Orthodox eighteen minutes (otherwise it’s no longer kosher—folks have work to get to!). On the other hand, I’ve respectfully swapped out an aliyah of Torah reading with a “Choral Torah” piece (see *VaY’Chabkeihu* below) during a *nusah* presentation on the Shabbat Torah service. Under the guidance of Deans Cantor Nancy Abramson and Cantor Rafi Frieder, my many approaches and priorities were welcome and all had room to coexist.

This openness to a plethora of prior Jewish experience also naturally attracts students with a wide spectrum of prior musical experience. Those who’ve primarily studied and performed opera for decades learn alongside those who’ve led tefillah and song at Ramah camps all their lives, and everyone is encouraged to bring their strengths to the table while pushing themselves to grow comfortable in new musical genres.

I am honored to share this musical evening with my dear friend Ingrid Barnett, who has a rich history of singing opera that I, frankly, do not. This piece is a celebration of all that we proudly bring through the door when we get here and all that we have yet to learn from each other. This particular selection is a scene from the opera *Steal a Pencil for Me* by our incredible professor Cantor Gerald Cohen, based on the true love story of two Bergen-Belsen survivors, Ina and Jaap, whom Cantor Cohen knew personally for 25 years. In this song, “Ordinary Breakfast,” Ina and Jaap envision sharing their lives together after the war, especially those shared everyday rituals—waking up and eating breakfast together—that they will never take for granted again. G.P-R

Sim Shalom**Music: Chaim Feifel (1931–2020); Lyrics: Liturgy (Shaharit)**

When I was in Israel last year, I was privileged to work with several great artists, including Raymond Goldstein, a brilliant coach, accompanist, and arranger. Raymond and I looked at many pieces together, but when I sang through Raymond's arrangements of Chaim Feifel's music, it was magic. Because of current events, I decided to perform Raymond's arrangement of Feifel's *Sim Shalom* as a way to express my and the world's longing for peace. The lyrics are slightly different from the *Sim Shalom* found in most siddurim. When I asked Raymond Goldstein why the text is slightly different, he answered that the text is from the Sephardic liturgy, common in Israel.

Chaim Feifel was a noted hazzan, teacher, and composer. According to Joseph A. Levine and Marsha Bryan Edelman's tribute in the *Journal of Synagogue Music*, he was a boy alto in the Meyer Machtenberg choir, singing with the remaining best-known cantors of the twentieth century Golden Age of *hazzanut*. He studied *hazzanut* at The Jewish Theological Seminary, at the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv, and privately with Leib Glantz. He served several congregations in the United States for twenty years and then settled in Israel. In 1985 he initiated a program for beginning Conservative cantorial students in Israel, under the direction of Hazzan Max Wohlberg, and also taught *hazzanut* at HUC in Jerusalem and at the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute. I.B.

Rumania**Music and lyrics: Aaron Lebedeff (1873–1960) arr. by Shalom Secunda**

It took two and a half years of cantorial school to meet Joyce Rosenzweig and sing in Yiddish for the first time. If only I could go back and start sooner!

And it was an odd thing, being handed Yiddish music for the first time, when I'd been speaking plenty of it my whole life. I grew up speaking "Yeshivish," a hybrid tongue born of American Talmud study comprised of biblical, rabbinic, and modern Hebrew; Aramaic; English; and Yiddish. When handed a Yiddish score, I could reverse engineer, say, one in five words: "Oh yeah, *boym* means tree, like Lindenbaum! Oh, that's what the word *prubeh* actually means??"

The words fell right off my lips, natural as an American reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Learning Yiddish music, then, was a full circle moment for me in cantorial school, and one of the most connective experiences of marrying the skills I brought with me through the front door and all the exciting culture and repertoire I had yet to learn.

And *Rumania* is by far the most crackerjack piece of repertoire I've had the pleasure of learning and performing. I can only hope that *Rumania* and I . . . remain-ia . . . good friends, for many years to come. G.P.-R.

Ani Havatzelet Hasharon, from the opera HeChalutz [The Pioneers], Music: Jacob Weinberg (1879–1956); Lyrics: Shir Hashirim [Song of Songs]

This aria is from the world's first Hebrew opera, *HeChalutz*—the composer's only opera. According to Ellen Mausner, the composer's granddaughter, in her book, *Jacob Weinberg: Musical Pioneer*, Jacob Weinberg was born in Odessa, Ukraine, educated in Moscow and Vienna, and emigrated to Palestine in 1922 after the Bolsheviks jailed him for being a member of the educated, artistic class. In 1924 he composed *HeChalutz* and submitted it to an international music competition at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial. He won first prize and used the money to move with his family to New York City, where he remained for the rest of his life. In New York City Jacob Weinberg taught composition at Hunter College and composed synagogue music, instrumental music, and oratorios.

According to an article written by the composer on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opera, "Why and How I Composed 'Hechalutz,'" Jacob Weinberg wrote that "Palestine opened my eyes on myself as a man and a musician, and above all a Jew. All the music that I created thereafter was, and still is, an organic outgrowth of that electrifying stimulus generated by the land." As for why he wrote the opera, he wrote that after coming home one spring evening in the moonlight in what was then Palestine, a sudden idea to create an opera based on "this exotic, colorful environment and these *chalutzim* and *chalutzot* (pioneers) make an enchanting picture for a stage work." As he wrote, "In this age of democracy, shouldn't opera be democratized too?"

This aria comes at the beginning of the opera, where Leah and Zev, her love interest, are talking to each other after attending a Zionist meeting in Eastern Europe. Zev warns her that a suitor from out of town is serious about wanting to marry her. Leah laughs off the other suitor's interest, hoping that perhaps Zev would express interest in her. Zev takes his leave and Leah sings this aria to express her longing for him. She follows Zev and other Zionists to Palestine and works on the same kibbutz, but Zev doesn't express his love for Leah until the end of the opera.

The aria's text is from the Song of Songs, chapter 2: 1, 3–5, 8–12, 14, 16. The Song of Songs is a loving, often erotic dialogue between a man and a woman; Weinberg naturally uses only verses from the female's perspective in creating his heroine's aria. What is unique about these verses of the Song of Songs, as opposed to the rest of *TaNakh*, is that female sensuality and sexuality is frankly portrayed and celebrated. The music exquisitely conveys the sense of intense longing and great passion that the woman feels for her lover. In the last line, "My beloved is mine and I am his who browses among the lilies," the chromatic melismas perfectly capture the woman's heartache that her beloved browses among the lilies—i.e., he sees other women. However, the

major high note at the end captures her hope that one day he will have the same exclusive love for her, just as Leah hopes that Zev will return her love. I.B.

VaY'chabkeihu, from The Choral Torah

Music: Josh Ehrlich (b. 1985); Lyrics: Bereishit, 33:1–4

Cantor Josh Ehrlich (H.L. Miller School class of '23) is a force to be reckoned with. He spent 2018–19 on the daunting project of composing an original, SATB choral piece based on the weekly Torah portion each week for the expanse of the year. The result was *The Choral Torah*, an opus of wisdom and deep musical *drash* on each *parashah*.

Being part of the Choral Torah Collective—a community of singers who travel with Josh to communities far and wide to bring the Choral Torah to life—has in some ways been a microcosm of my cantorial journey: ever expanding my horizons and my relationship with Torah, tefillah, and skillful music-making. Learning a new Choral Torah piece for my senior recital felt like a promise to myself. A deposit, if you will, for the energies I pledge to continue expending on developing my craft and my mission, “*lashir lashem shir chadash*,” to ever-refresh the Jewish musical tradition for myself, the Jewish people, and God.

And which new piece to choose? It felt only timely, and heartbreaking, to meditate on the tragedy still unfolding in Israel. To pray for a day when the Jewish people can peacefully embrace our cousins in the Middle East once more, like Jacob and Esau did long ago. This is *VaY'Chabkeihu*, “And he embraced him.”

Yiyihu l'ratzon imrei finu vehegyon libeinu l'fanecha, Adonai tzureinu v'go'aleinu—May the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts be favorable before You, Adonai, our Rock and our Salvation. G.P.-R.

Psalm 29

Music: Lance Rhodes (b. 1980); Lyrics: Psalm 29

Cantor Lance Rhodes is a cantor, composer and arranger of Jewish music. He was the cantor for Congregation Brith Shalom in Bellaire, Texas, from 2009–2015 and the interim cantor for Temple Emanu-El in New York City during 2015 and 2016. Cantor Rhodes received his bachelor of music degree from the University of Miami in 2003 and was invested as a cantor from The Jewish Theological Seminary in 2009. He was born into a very musically active family and is the paternal grandson of Hal Rhodes (composer, pianist for Milton Berle, and versatile multi-instrumentalist) and the maternal grandson of the late Harriet Ackerman, established actress and singer.

This piece is unlike common congregational settings of this psalm, such as the ones by Carlebach and Goldfarb that we sing for Kabbalat Shabbat and the Torah recessional. This setting of Psalm 29 is notable

not only for its choral arrangement, but also how it represents the text. While the congregational melodies encourage participation because of a repeated melody, this composition with its more varied music better describes the lines of text. The song begins with an upbeat melody which highlights the text, “Acclaim to God, you sons of the mighty, acclaim to God glory and strength, the glory due His name, prostrate yourselves before God in the splendor of holiness.” The melody takes a more serious, ominous tone in the next lines of the verse, “God’s voice is upon the waters. God of glory thunders. God is upon the many waters.” The melody returns to the previous upbeat mood with “The voice of God is in power, God’s voice is in beauty.” The music alternating between upbeat and serious more accurately depicts the text, which depicts both the beauty and terrifying power of God’s voice. I.B.

Odcha

Music: Eli Gerstner (b. 1980); Choral arrangement: Gedalia Penner-Robinson; Piano arrangement: Josh Ehrlich; Lyrics: Psalm 86:12

If you had told me as a teenager that I could spend my whole life in a career of leading Jewish music and prayer, I’d have never believed you. I simply didn’t know that there was a sustainable vocation to be had as a pulpit cantor.

I feel so fortunate that my journey feels so cohesive in retrospect. Every experience and every turn has led me to exactly this moment. I would not be who I am today if I hadn’t grown up listening to artists like The Chevra, the early-aughts Yeshivish boy band who composed this pop-ballad *Odcha* and instilled in me a love of prayerful Jewish music both deeply rooted and dauntlessly contemporary. I wouldn’t be who I am today if I hadn’t spent years at Yeshiva University developing musically as the director of Y-Studs a *cappella*, honing the skills to arrange this song for choral ensemble and discovering a love of bringing Jewish music to communities all around the world. And I wouldn’t be who I am today if I hadn’t been given the opportunity by JTS to apply the sacred call of this song’s lyrics to my professional life: “*Odcha Hashem Elokai b'chol l'vavi, va'achabda shimcha l'olam*”, “I will praise You, O Lord, my God, with all my heart, and pay honor to Your name forever.”

May God bless me with the strength to do so for years to come. G.P.-R.

The Jewish Theological Seminary

Cantor Raphael Frieder, Interim Director, H. L. Miller Cantorial School

Combined Choir of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School and Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music

Conductors: Cantor Natasha J. Hirschhorn and Joyce Rosenzweig

Pianists: Pedro D'Aquino and Elliot Roman

Choir: Kelsey Bailey, Toby Banks, Roseanne Benjamin, Rachel Black, Samantha Chamberlin, David Childs, Aleksandra Dubov, Erin Ehren, Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel, Ruth Engel, David Epstein, Phillip Fisherman, Leslie Goldberg, Emily Lezin, Ilana Mulcahy, Justin Pellis, Ada Luisa Sinacore, Brittany Stern, Marc Szechter, Neal M. Taibel, Margo Wagner

Concert produced by Cantor Gerald Cohen and Aden Fischer-Brown, assisted by Cantor Raphael Frieder and Lena Marandi

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.

John Dellheim (ז"ל) 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.

