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MUSIC AND IDENTITY AT TEMPLE EMANU-EL, B'NAI JESHURUN, AND CHAVURAT TIKVAH

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Sacred Music
New York, New York

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MUSIC AND IDENTITY AT TEMPLE EMANU-EL, B'NAI JESHURUN AND CHAVURAT TIKVAH

THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis consists of an Introduction and four chapters. The introduction maps out the theoretical groundwork for the study. The first three chapters offer a detailed analysis of each of the three congregations in my study: Temple Emanu-El, B'nai Jeshurun and Chavurat Tikvah. The final chapter connects the ethnograhic research of chapters one through three with the theoretical concepts of the introduction, and offers a concluding analysis.

The goal of this thesis is to show the role that sacred music plays in shaping Jewish identity. Personal interviews with congregants and clergy and detailed observations of worship services, in addition to secondary source materials, inform my understanding of the way music shapes identity . In each of the three diverse communities, I show how the sound of the music reflects core identifying values. Music embodies these concepts and therefore helps to reinforce them within each community.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of the power of music and its symbolic nature. Music functions on many levels beyond the mere aesthetic and can symbolize the highest ideals of a congregation. My analysis of these three congregations not only teaches about the nature of music these respective communities, but it also offers some lessons that may be applied generally to our understanding of music and identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my advisors Dr. Lawrence Hoffman and Professor Benjie Ellen Schiller for their expert guidance and encouragement in this project. Thanks also to the many clergy and congregants of Temple Emanu-El, B'nai Jeshurun and Chavurat Tikvah for sharing their time and insights with me, and for allowing me to learn from their communities. A big thank you to Dr. Mark Kligman who set me on the path for understanding ethnomusicology several years ago, and who continues to be a source of wisdom. And special thanks to my husband, Jacob, whose loving support (and editing!) makes all things possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The Metropolitan New York area is home to over 600 congregations. New York Jews are free to choose their synagogues according to their cultural identity, theology, or aesthetic tastes. But often, identity and theology can be hard to articulate. Jewish identity, in particular, is a complex phenomenon, defined by many influences and diffuse in its loyalties. Instead of trying to define the elements that make up a religious and cultural identity, Jews often simply select a worship community that helps them viscerally identify that which resonates within them.

In this search for identity, music plays a larger role in the life of a worship community than most congregations understand. While clergy often discuss music in terms of aesthetics and beauty, authenticity or singability, the power of music extends far beyond its apparent function in worship services: Music's function as a symbol enables it to identify the cultural and theological values expressed within the music. Music is a primary vehicle for constructing and sacrilizing identity for it can connect latent threads of identification and help articulate an identity that is not yet fully formed.

Music represents much more than its aesthetic form or notated text implies. The context of the music, the flow from one prayer to the next, the setting of the text, the key in which music is sung and choice of instruments for accompaniment all symbolize values beyond the music. Musical choices can reflect not only where congregants "are at," but also where we hope they will be going, for music has a role in moving a congregation from one place to another. We study the historical periods of Jewish music from biblical chants, to the Golden Age of the Ashkenazi Cantorate to new trends in synagogue music in order to understand how Jewish culture has shaped

the sound of Jewish music. It is clear that Jewish music has also shaped Jewish culture. This essay will study the role that music plays in reflecting and constructing the Jewish identity of our congregations.

My study will focus on three congregations in the Metropolitan New York area: Temple Emanu-El and B'nai Jeshurun, both located in New York City, and Chavurat Tikvah of Soundshore, a suburban area running from Larchmont to Rye in Westchester county. Temple Emanu-El is the largest Reform Congregation in America, with a membership of over three-thousand families. B'nai Jeshurun is a congregation of sixteen-hundred families, conservative in style and theology, but not formally affiliated with the Conservative movement. Chavurat Tikvah of Rye is a Reform community of twenty-eight families that meets monthly in congregants' homes. I selected these three congregations because each believes that music is central to its respective identity. In addition, the worship services of these three congregations represent vastly different points on the musical spectrum, just as their congregants represent different points on the spectrum of the liberal Jewish community. I wanted to show that universal conclusions can be drawn from diverse case studies.

At each congregation I interviewed the cantor, a rabbi or spiritual leader, and several congregants. When talking with the professional staff, I explored the conscious choices that were made with regard to musical selections and settings: What messages were the Jewish professionals trying to convey, and how were they using music to achieve these ends? When speaking to congregants, I inquired about the actual experience of the music: What music did they find meaningful, and what feelings did they associate

with their worship service and community? Many of the congregants were unable to articulate clearly what the music represented to them in terms of their Jewish identities. However, their statements regarding their experiences with their congregations in the worship service revealed a great deal about what was important to them and how the music of the worship service both represented and shaped their values.

I made at least two visits to each congregation for Friday night services, experiencing the worship service as a congregant. I sang the songs, read responsive readings and engaged in prayer. In addition to interviews and attending worship services, I have obtained the prayerbooks and mission statements, when available, from the three synagogues. While each prayerbook and mission statement could serve as a study in itself on Jewish identity, I will use these texts only in relationship to how they provide context for the music of the congregation.

I bring an ethnomusicological approach to my study of these congregations. Ethnomusicology is the study of the interplay between music and culture. It understands music as symbolic behavior--an inherently illustrative system of cultural representation: "Music is a complex of activities, ideas, and objects that are patterned into culturally meaningful sounds recognized to exist on a level different from secular communication."[1]

In order to better understand the symbolic nature of music, to discern the interrelationship of music and culture, and to understand music as

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[1]Merriam, Alan, *The Anthropology of Music,* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964) 27.

behavior, I will utilize a model for studying music proposed by Alan Merriam in his classic work, *Anthropology of Music*. This simple model involves study on three analytic levels: "1) The conceptualization about music, 2) behavior in relation to music, and 3) music sound itself."[2] This concept-behavior-sound model provides the framework for understanding the multiple facets of music in symbolic, contextual, aesthetic, and psychological terms.

Many studies attend to sound alone. They analyze the structure of Jewish music, the influence of modes, or the way music is accompanied or performed. Rarely do studies of Jewish music take into account that sound is a product of its context and the behavior that produces it. In a discussion of sound, musical context is imperative, for the architecture of a space, the acoustics, the accompaniment and other elements of context all contribute to the "sound" of Jewish music. Within the category of behavior, Merriam distinguishes three major kinds of behavior that can be isolated in respect to the production and organization of sound: 1) physical behavior; 2) verbal behavior; and 3) social behavior.

Merriam understands "behavior" to mean not only the actions people take in relationship to music, but also their social attitudes regarding musicians, and their verbalizations about what music means to them. In the category of "physical behavior," Merriam asks such questions as "What does one physically do to create the sound?" "What is the posture or the facial expression of the music maker?" "How is space physically used to make music?" Under "verbal behavior" Merriam asks, "What is verbalized about

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[2]Merriam, 32.

music?" "What is verbalized as the standard for good singing?" He continues, "verbal behavior lies on a continuum from very little conscious discussion to elaborate theoretical and technical verbalizations."[3]

"Social behavior" refers to behavior of those who produce music and of those who listen and respond to it. Under the category of "social behavior" Merriam asks, "Is the musician a 'specialist'?" "How does the non-professional participate?" "What is social status of the musician?" Merriam writes, "Who the musician is, how he behaves and what society thinks of him...are questions of vital importance to a thorough understanding of music as human behavior."[4] In this study, I will ask questions related to "behavior" from all three of Merriam's behavioral categories, but I will group them all together under the general heading of "behavior."

Behavior itself is undergirded by another level of analysis: the level of conceptualization about music. Merriam offers some specific ways of understanding cultural conceptualization by asking questions such as, "What are the sources of music?" "Is music, in itself, an emotion-producer?" and "Why do people make music? Is it to create community? To talk to God? Purely aesthetic?" These questions ask both what music is and what it should be.

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[3]ibid., 122.
[4]ibid., 144.

> Every music system is predicated upon a series of concepts which integrate music into the activities of the society at large and define and place it as a phenomenon of life among other phenomena...Our interests here are not directed toward the distinctions people may make between major and minor thirds, for example, but rather toward what the nature of music is, how it fits into society as a part of the existing phenomena of life and how it is arranged conceptually by the people who use and organize it.[5]

Understanding the concepts people hold regarding music is crucial to analyzing the behavior that arises from these concepts, which ultimately produces the music sound of a culture: "Thus music sound feeds back upon the concepts held about music, which in turn alters or reinforces behavior and eventually changes or strengthens music practice."[6] Merriam's concept-behavior-sound model serves as my framework. I analyze the interrelationship of all three parts with regard to these three congregations, observing how the sound of music not only reflects but also shapes the concepts held about music.

However, my goal is not only to achieve a better understanding of how sound and behavior reflect the individual's conceptualization of *music*. Sound and behavior transcend conceptualization of music alone. They portray larger cultural and religious concepts of identity within a community. Music acts as a symbolic touchstone for the representation of more general Jewish values and identification. Merriam explains the symbolic nature of music with an illustration from David McAllester.[7]

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[5]ibid., 63.
[6]ibid., 145.
[7]ibid., 248.

McAllester studies the interrelationship between music and culture of the Navahos. He concludes that a culture's general values are found in music and that these general values shape attitudes toward music as they shape other aspects of cultural behavior: "Since music embodies the general values of the culture, it reinforces them and thus in turn helps to shape the culture of which it is a part."[8] McAllester brings us to critical questions of interaction. How much does music shape the culture and how much does the culture shape music? Together music and culture form a single pattern of behavior.[9]

This interaction between music and culture is a pattern echoed in identity formation as well. We cannot separate out the extent to which a community shapes an individual and how an individual shapes that community: "The individual evolves in a dialectic with the communities to which he or she belongs or with those values he or she has embraced. The individual informs and shapes community as he or she is informed and shaped by it."[10] An individual enters a community and can both be greatly changed by the community, and greatly change the community itself.

Music thus plays a crucial role in disseminating and shaping both individual and communal identity. As Merriam's concept-behavior-sound model helps to illustrate, music symbolizes cultural concepts through sound. How is it that music functions as a symbol and what does it

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[8]ibid., 249.
[9]ibid., 249.
[10]Furman, Frida Kerner, *Beyond Yiddishkeit: The Struggle for Jewish Identity in a Reform Synagogue.* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987) 97.

symbolize? How does music communicate meaning? Does it imitate life? Does it represent our highest ideals? Music, as an art form, extends beyond the cognitive realm and has the potential to influence human life and behavior on several levels. The symbolic nature of music makes it a powerful agent for identification.

Aristotle asked many of these same questions in his *Poetics.* He too made claims regarding the symbolic nature of music. Music, he thought, imitates actions and movement-of-the-spirit. By imitation, Aristotle did not mean superficial copying, but rather a representation of the many forms which the spirit and character might take through the medium of the arts.[11] In his *Politics,* he explained further that music, through its rhythm or mode, had character and that it was possible to communicate this character to a listener, and even change the character or disposition of that person.[12] His thinking laid the groundwork for understanding music as a symbolic phenomenon. When he speaks of music as the imitation of the movement-of-the-spirit, he ascribes to it the power to symbolize the "countless forms of the life of the human spirit."[13] Aristotle believed that music had the potential to evoke recognition and "thereby influence integration or the formation of character."[14]

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[11]Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Bucher, introduction by Francis Ferguson, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961)I, 2-5.

[12]Aristotle, *The Politics,* ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 1340, a, 18-22.

[13]Aristotle, *Poetics*, 2-5

[14]Kubicki, Judith Marie, "The Role of Music as Ritual Symbol in Roman Catholic Liturgy," *Worship*, 69: 5 (Sept. 1995) 435.

The concept of "symbol" long predates Aristotle. The word "symbol" derives its meaning from the ancient practice of "symbolon." The symbolon was an object that partners in a contract would cut in two, each retaining one part for proof of contract. Neither piece had intrinsic value, unless joined with the other half to "symbolize" or confirm the agreement between the partners. This symbol functioned as a mutual recognition of the whole, and in this way served as a mediator of identity.[15] Music by itself is only one half of a symbolon. For it to have value as a symbol, it must be joined to its other half, the cultural and social context within which it operates: "Ultimately, it is by this indirect reference to the 'whole' that the symbol becomes an agent of recognition and identification between subjects."[16]

As a religious symbol, music has the power to refer to a larger "whole" of which we are a part and to open up levels of connection with God and community that might not otherwise be accessible to us. Music's transformative nature comes from its ability to help us understand who we are, while offering up what we can become. Music has a unique ability to do this because it is not fixed on paper or on canvas, and therefore has an inherently dynamic nature. In addition, music can bypass cognition, and go straight to the heart, thereby allowing more room for expression:

> Song itself gives the freedom to express thoughts, ideas, and comments which cannot be stated baldly in the normal language situation. Because of the special kind of license that singing apparently gives, [it] affords an extremely useful means

[15]Chauvet, Louis-Marie, *Symbol and Sacrament*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine E. Beaumont (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995) 112.

[16]Kubicki, 439.

> for obtaining kinds of information which are not otherwise easily accessible.[17]

Merriam's concept-behavior-sound model allows us to take into account the cultural and social, the aesthetic and the structural--the many "symbolic" aspects of music. As Merriam understands it, music is not simply a constellation of sounds, but human behavior.[18] It is symbolic human behavior that reflects and shapes the concepts with which a community identifies. This essay will explore the role that the liturgical music of these three congregations plays in shaping and perpetuating the Jewish identities of those who participate in it.

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[17]Merriam, 193.
[18]ibid., 258.

CHAPTER ONE

TEMPLE EMANU-EL

Temple Emanu-El was founded in 1845 as the first Reform Congregation in New York City. From a modest beginning with little more than thirty immigrant members and little less than thirty dollars, the synagogue has grown over the last one hundred and fifty years to become the largest Reform Congregation in the world. Emanu-El is home to over 3,000 families, exceeding 10,000 members. The growth of Emanu-El reflects the Jewish immigrant story in America.

Emanu-El's first worship site was a rented room of a private dwelling on the Lower East Side As the prosperity of German immigrant Jews increased, so too, did the prosperity of the congregation. By 1868, Emanu-El had built its first grand building at Fifth Avenue and Forty-third street. In 1873, Emanu-El hired its first permanent English-speaking rabbi. (Until that point, rabbis preached from the pulpit in German.) As Eastern European Jewish immigrants adapted to American society, they soon joined Emanu-El. Within another generation, by the early 1900's, a majority of this formerly German congregation traced lineage to Eastern Europe. In the late 1920's, immediately preceding the Great Depression, Emanu-El merged with the Reform congregation Temple Beth-El. In 1929, this consolidated congregation moved to its present Romanesque building on Fifth Avenue and 65th street.

Temple Emanu-El's educational program extends from Nursery School through various adult education programs. Many of its offerings, including the Fall and Spring lecture Series, are open to the general public at no charge. Emanu-El sponsors numerous cultural events, including at least a

half-dozen musical concerts each year and an annual film series. The Temple also houses the Herbert and Eileen Bernard Museum which displays the Temple's extensive collection of Judaica.

Emanu-El opens its sanctuary to the public daily for meditation and prayer. Its Friday night evening service has been broadcast uninterrupted since 1944 on WQXR-FM with 50,000 to 100,000 listeners each week. In addition, Emanu-El runs a Sunday Lunch program that provides hot meals for hundreds of homeless men and women.

Emanu-El's worship services reflect the spirit of universal ethics and aesthetics typical of Classical Reform ideology. Its worship service also remains one of the few remaining models of Classical Reform, preserving this musical tradition through its use of a classical repertoire, an organ and a 17-member professional choir at every service.

Emanu-El has a rich Jewish musical tradition. Classical Reform congregations have traditionally relied only on choir and organ, but Emanu-El has had a cantor since its inception as a congregation. Its first cantor was G.N. Cohn, who served from 1845-52. Since then, over the last 150 years, there have been only six cantors to serve Temple Emanu-El, including Moshe Rudinow, Arthur Wolfson and (since 1978) Howard Nevison.

Emanu-El's first significant music director was Frank van der Stucker who served from 1868 to 1896. Under his leadership, the music of the congregation grew in stature and importance. Van der Stucker was

followed by two musicians who had already made a reputation for themselves in Germany, Heinrich Zoellner and Max Spicker. The name that has perhaps become most associated with music at Emanu-El is Lazare Saminsky. Under his leadership from 1923 to 1957, Emanu-El solidified its reputation for musical excellence and became the site of many world premiers of Jewish music, including the first complete performance of Ernst Bloch's "Sacred Service" in a house of worship.

In every respect, Emanu-El embodies the ideals of Classical Reform Judaism. It embraces a classical music aesthetic and uses it in its worship to strengthen connections with the larger community of "great" classical worship music. For over one hundred and fifty years, Emanu-El has stayed true to its founding ideals, and stands as a model of great music-making in the classical Reform tradition.

From my perspective, Emanu-El remains today as one of two or three bastions of Classical Reform Judaism. Notwithstanding the events of the 20th century, notwithstanding the devastation of the holocaust, notwithstanding the two World Wars...and all of the brutalities, I and the better part of this congregation have not given up on what constituted the essence of Reform Judaism in the 19th and early 20th century...There has always been a creative tension between particularism and universalism and I am fully aware, having myself come out of a rich Orthodox background, that Orthodoxy can preserve a certain part of our people's heritage and learning in a way in which Reform Judaism simply cannot...On the other hand, we can understand the inclusive nature of Judaism, its universal thrust, and translate into living reality the teaching of the prophets of ancient Israel, in a way in which our Orthodox brothers and sisters simply cannot. So, we have not given up on that universalism.

Dr. Ronald Sobel
Senior Rabbi

Universalism is the concept that informs all thought and deed at Temple Emanu-El. Manifest alike in ethics, aesthetics and learning, universalism shapes everything that happens at Emanu-El and is the strongest form of identification for its clergy and congregants. When I asked congregants what the most important values of Emanu-El were, the answers echoed this concept of universalism: "One of the things that's very important at Emanu-El is its involvement in the larger community. It has been a leader..." Another congregant responded, "Emanu-El has strong community values, we are certainly an outreach congregation that perhaps doesn't toot its horn a lot, but we are very much part of Jewish life in the city, in the country and in Israel."

This concept of outreach is evident throughout the activities of Emanu-El. In addition to a weekly program to feed the homeless and a second-night Passover seder for disadvantaged Jews, the community reaches out to the larger community through lecture series and cultural events. Emanu-El congregants and clergy pride themselves on their philanthropic leadership both in the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Universalism is evident in the values of learning, justice and aesthetic even in the smallest detail: Emanu-El rabbis have almost always earned doctoral degrees and have preferred the title "Dr." to "Rabbi."

This universalism is strongly reflected in the congregation's conceptualization of the music at Emanu-El. The music of Emanu-El has a universal aesthetic quality that transcends the particularism of the synagogue. The congregation feels great pride in having its service broadcast over the radio to tens of thousands of people: "You know the audience for that is way beyond Emanu-El congregants: there are plenty of non-Jews who listen to it." A long-standing member feels so strongly about the universal appeal of Emanu-El service that he suggests putting it on tour: "Send it around the country, around the world. One of my main delights is to bring my non-Jewish friends here."

The congregation feels that its music has universal appeal because its Classical Reform repertoire borrows from the larger canon of "great music" written by masters of many classical genres. In this spirit, it is not unusual to find a portion of Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* or a Bach Prelude in the worship service, as they are considered the predecessors of the music of the Classical Reform tradition. The music of Emanu-El displays a universal

aesthetic that can be found in many types of great music, religious or secular. Its concert series, which is open to the public, features music from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods, and does not feature exclusively Jewish music.

A regard for this high aesthetic can be found in all aspects of the service. Rabbi Sobel remarked on the role of aesthetics in creating holiness:

> When holiness becomes the self relating to the transcendent, the timely to the timeless, the finite to the infinite, how do we define holiness?...For me, that has to be enveloped in beauty, in aesthetic beauty, both visual and auditory... I'm talking about utilizing whatever gifts God has endowed us with. The role of the rabbinate at Emanu-El, along with the cantor, along with the members of our choir, along with our organist is to create as beautiful an atmosphere, in a beauty that will help that individual reach into her or his inner soul and therefore to make tefillah as meaningful as it can be for that human being.

Congregants echoed the sentiments of Rabbi Sobel in their experience of the service. A congregant remarked that the music made her think of "sheer beauty." She continued, "I find the music very elevating, and to me, music is just a critical part of the service." Another noted, "I enjoy the music and find it very uplifting. The great organ, we always did have wonderful music...Howard Nevison is the best, he has an operatic voice. Our choir is wonderful, and I find the music contributes enormously to my appreciation of Emanu-El."

A further aspect of the universal aesthetic and beauty in holiness is its ageless quality. Emanu-El steadfastly asserts the timelessness of its traditions. When the *Gates of Prayer* was issued, Rabbi Sobel conveyed that

Emanu-El decided to keep the old *Union Prayer Book* (*UPB*) preferring, "the majesty and poetry of that language." While Rabbi Sobel acknowledged that "a couple phrases here and there...are anachronistic," he found the universal beauty and dignity of the language to transcend time. Other congregants echoed these sentiments for the same reasons: "...that book [the *UPB*], moves you to a different emotional level. It is a formal service, perhaps that's what makes it unique."

The music of Emanu-El distances itself almost completely from temporal influences of the day. Little has been added to the repertoire in the last thirty years and art music of the Classical Reform period and a smattering of classics still make up the bulk of the service. There is a concept of universal greatness about the music used at Emanu-El, and a sense that new music today does not, as a general matter, meet that standard. Regarding the influence of folk music in the synagogue and her feelings toward that style, a congregant remarked, "In the 60's with all its guitar playing, to me it has its place and I'm not sure it's in the service. Not everything needs to be brought down to the level of children. They can be raised up in their expectations."

The concept of a transcendent universalism permeates all aspects of Temple Emanu-El. Music plays a crucial role in elevating the congregation to a universal aesthetic that leads to holiness. Most profoundly, music is seen as a connecting point to a common aesthetic experience that can be understood and felt by all people of the world. In this way, the music embodies the highest values of universalism as expressed by this congregation.

BEHAVIOR

The overriding regard for universalism that informs the aesthetic taste in music has led to a unique system of behavior in music-making for Temple Emanu-El. In particular, Merriam's "social behavior," both by the music makers and by those who respond to them, has become a distinguishing feature.

Emanu-El's high regard for aesthetic beauty in music performance has led to a high social regard for professionalism in music-making. At a time when most Reform congregations have dismissed their paid choirs or quartets in favor of volunteer choirs or more active participation from their congregation, Emanu-El continues to hire a choir of 17 professionals and a music director who plays organ. Each prayer within the service is a distinct musical composition in its own right making congregational singing superfluous and usually inappropriate. Moreover, rather than join in the singing, the congregants prefer to listen to the elevated sounds created by the professionals. A similar phenomenon is discussed by Frederick Bird:

> From the perspective of lay participants the quality of a ritual performance varies according to the kind and number of roles they themselves are expected and trained to play. In some settings lay adherents are treated primarily as members of an audience; they witness (and pay for) the performances of professional choirs and clergy. Being fairly passive, they expect stellar performances by official casts.[19]

Congregants are not expected to play an active role in this worship service beyond joining in English responsive readings. Therefore, they have

[19]Bird, Frederick, "Ritual as Communicative Action," *Ritual and Ethnic Identity: A Comparative Study of the Social Meaning of Liturgical Ritual in Synagogues*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995) 42.

heightened expectations for their professional clergy and choir. If they are not going to listen to their own imperfect voices, they expect perfection. As if for a concert performance, Emanu-El hands out printed programs with the Sabbath Service musical selections and their composers. As seasoned concert-goers, this congregation knows to expect excellence from its performances.

While it is clear that the congregants are not singing along and that the setting resembles a concert with an audience, some congregants maintain that they are actually involved participants in the service: "I'm not sitting there as an observer of the music. It's very much involvement. I always follow what's being sung." Another congregant concurs: "I do feel a part of [the service]. And now that I can follow along in the language, I feel very much a participant. I don't think you have to get up and sing along. A lot of the congregation feels that type of congregational singing makes you feel a part of the service, but I don't feel that's necessarily so." Nonetheless, even if the congregants feel involved in terms of the service, it is clear that they do not add their voices to the professional sound, but prefer to be elevated through objectively beautiful voices.

The social attitude toward the cantor further expresses the musical preference for aesthetic universalism rather than Jewish particularism. When Emanu-El was choosing its most recent cantor, an impressive music resume filled with countless honors from the larger music community overcame the fact that their choice had not been invested by a cantorial school. The profile of Cantor Nevison found in a written program celebrating 150 years of music at Emanu-El expresses the congregation's

attitude clearly. It highlights Nevison's distinguished work in opera houses, the honor of his being chosen as the first cantor to sing in the Vatican, and his work as a judge for vocal competitions. Little mention is made of the work Cantor Nevison does within the Jewish community, although the profile does state that he is a member of the Cantor's Assembly, the Conservative Cantors professional union. Howard Nevison's universalistic skills as musician and singer are seen as more valuable than a particularistic education from a cantorial school.

While Emanu-El values Cantor Nevison for his universal qualifications as a performer, and while he himself values a high musical aesthetic, Nevison distinguishes between music that is appropriate for worship and a concert performance. He selects music for the service based on the tradition of Emanu-El and his own taste for music. In his words, he wants to choose "the highest form of *worshipful* music....That is the important word here because many people write music for the synagogue but if they can't write in a worshipful style, then it belongs in the concert hall, not the synagogue. The important thing about synagogue music is that it must be melodic, memorable and worshipful." While Cantor Nevison selects music of the high art tradition, he selects only those pieces that have memorable and lyrical solo lines. Relative to the tradition from which he works, he chooses the most accessible music, foregoing some of the more elusive art music found in the Classical repertoire.

Cantor Nevison's musical selections not only reflect a desire for an appealing aesthetic, but also an aesthetic that transcends temporal influences. He chooses the music for services over a month in advance so

that the upcoming month's musical programs for Shabbat can be published in the Temple's bulletin. The musical selections for each Sabbath may reflect upcoming Jewish holidays, but they cannot reflect current events, or the mood of the congregation at any given time. The fixed nature of the musical program, set weeks in advance, purposely separates the music from influences of the everyday world. Like the use of the old *Union Prayer Book*, the behavior related to musical selection displays the congregation's high evaluation of a transcendent aesthetic which overcomes the capriciousness of the mundane world.

Another manifestation of the concept of universal aesthetics being translated into behavior is found in the decorum of a Temple Emanu-El service. (Since liturgical reforms were at the heart of early Reform Judaism in America, early reformers consciously moved from the cacophonous sounds of the shtetl to the more refined and orderly sounds of choir, organ and art music.) Emanu-El continues in the classical Reform tradition of formality and dignity in services.

A congregant commented on the importance of decorum: "You walk in [to the sanctuary] and it's conducive to prayer, to worship, to meditation...The decorum to me is very important....*Jerusalem of Gold* and *Shalom Rav*--these are two of my favorites that [Cantor Nevison] sings. They are done with such beauty. And again, because you have a congregation that is behaving, they are done in the optimal situation, so that you can enjoy every bit of it." Just as at a concert, a good worshipping audience is distinguished by its ability to be quiet and to respond appropriately to the music. The professional concert atmosphere of worship services reinforces

the identification with classical Reform ideals of propriety in worship behavior.

Part of the behavior derives from the decorous physical space that each worshiper occupies upon entering the sanctuary. Congregants tend to sit alone or clustered with immediate family members rather than bunched together in a larger mass. These *de facto* seating rules provide congregants with the ability to express individual prayer at a comfort level that differs for each individual. One congregant who moved to Miami many years ago but who still considers Emanu-El her home, noted the importance of spatial freedom there: "The service allows you to be as involved as you want; it doesn't push you to participate or hold hands. But it clearly welcomes you. I love that the service allows you to pray the way you want to pray. I use these services as a vehicle for connecting to the prayers of my heart."

Rabbi Sobel explains this attitude in terms of greater patterns of behavior in the congregation. As he sees it, sitting in the sanctuary is akin to living in New York City. When he greets prospective members of the congregation, he tells them, "Whenever you need us and you want us, don't hesitate to call us. We're here...our arms are open wide. What we can't do is reach around you and pull you into the bosom of the body politic, because first of all, we're too large and secondly, the nature of New York City is, 'Don't do that, let me have a little bit of space!'" Emanu-El is a congregation of ten thousand members where eighty percent of the membership lives within one and a half miles of the synagogue; in other words, literally on top of each other. It is not surprising that members of Emanu-El seek out private

prayer space when they come to worship. Members of Emanu-El want to feel welcomed, but never pushed to participate.

Whether the decorum is a manifestation of life on the Upper East Side, or a regard for propriety based on principles of Classical Reform Judaism, the music strengthens the impulse to behave in a dignified manner. The social behavior regarding the selection of a cantor and the hiring of a large professional choir evidences a valuing of aesthetic universalism in music. Even the method of selecting music far in advance guarantees the idea that the elements of the worship service remain detached from temporal influences. In short, the behavior of the congregation fortifies the overriding concept of universalism that informs all aspects of Emanu-El. The music not only reflects this concept of universalism; it helps to reinforce it through the worship service.

SOUND

Worshipers who walk into the sanctuary cannot help but feel a sense of awe from the physical structure of the space. The imposing Romanesque structure dwarfs not only each congregant, but even the clergy on the pulpit, demanding a sense of humility from every player in this sacred drama of worship. The archway above the Holy Ark is filled with stained glass windows, seemingly stretching to the heavens. From this archway emanate the angelic sound of the choir, whose voices are heard, but whom are never seen. The music matches the ethereal grandeur of the sanctuary's majestic architecture.

Organ music plays quietly as congregants find seats among the pews. As mentioned above, few congregants sit with people outside of their family, and most seek a private prayer space of their own. The physical space engenders an individualistic meditative mood rather than a communal one. The approximately 250 worshippers on a Friday night span sixty to seventy rows on each side of the massive sanctuary.

Promptly at 5:15 on Friday night, the rabbis and the cantor process from a side door onto the bimah dressed in robes. With seamless choreography, rabbis, cantor and choir alternate leading the words and music of prayer. The congregation does not sing along, but they do join in responsive readings in English. As noted above, the congregation uses the old *Union Prayer Book* rather than *Gates of Prayer*, the liturgy that has been standard in most Reform congregations since 1975. The majority of prayers are recited in English. At six o'clock precisely, the service finishes and the clergy recesses up the center of the congregation through the front doors where they greet the worshipers in a receiving line. Members and visitors alike are greeted warmly as they leave.

The sound of the worship music at Temple Emanu-El can easily be categorized as Classical Reform art music. However, there are many sub-genres that are used. The standards, beginning with Lewandowski or Sulzer, are mainstays of the musical repertoire at Emanu-El. Music from the era of World War II such as Freed, Fromm or Binder and post World-War II through Six-Day-War-Era music of Janowski, Piket, Helfman or Shalit are also included in the regular repertoire.

Outside the standard canon, Cantor Nevison also includes more simple Israeli or folk melodies, such as Jerusalem of Gold or Maoz Tzur, but arranges them with classical style accompaniment for use in the service. While these are not part of the traditional body of Classical Reform music, they are arranged to match the color and tone of the rest of the service. (Many have become some of the most popular selections among congregants.) Occasionally, Cantor Nevison chooses early art music from Rossi or Palestrina. Even non-Jewish music by Bach, Beethoven or Handel might be used if they are seen as having no Christological references. The standard seems to be an aesthetic of quality art music that offers a sense of holiness and majesty.

I have included two sample services for a Friday Night evening to give a sense of the repertoire of music used at Temple Emanu-El:

10/30/98

Sing unto the Lord	*Chajes*
Bor'chu/Sh'ma	*Spicker*
Mi Chomocho	*Piket*
V'Shomru	*Helfman*
May the Words	*Weiner*
Like As a Hart	*Palestrina*
Adoration	*Lewandowski*
Kiddush	*Lewandowski/Binder*
Adon Olam	*Steinberg*

12/11/98

L'Cho Dodi	*Roth*
Borchu/Shema	*Adler*
Yismechu	*Coopersmith*
May the Words	*Roth*
Psalm 23	*Matthews*
Adoration	*Dell'Orefice*
Kiddush	*Freed*
Yigdal	*Davidson*

The music of Emanu-El's service varies, but some generalizations can be made about the sound. The music carries a sense of grandeur and richness reminiscent of fully orchestrated romantic pieces. The organ saturates the hall with many colors and tones. Coupled with the multiple voicings of the choir, it creates a rich tapestry of voice and instrument that fills the entire sanctuary. The sound is so expansive that it contributes to the worshipers' feeling of smallness and humility. One has the strong feeling of Rudolf Otto's "numinous" God, evoking awe, dread and mystery.

While the worship music is unified as a liturgical whole, each musical selection on a Sabbath service functions as a discrete unit in its own right. Fewer prayers are sung in an Emanu-El service than at a typical Reform Temple. However, Emanu-El's selections are often longer than the standard pieces of other repertoires. The music of the service does not necessarily make transitions between different rubrics of prayer. While the service has integrity as a whole, there is no sense that one piece blends into another. It is clear when one piece ends and another begins. The effect is strikingly similar to a concert. However, the organ sometimes uses instrumental music to connect one part of the service to another. For

example, organ music is used as a prelude to the service, and it is sometimes used to set the tone as the rabbis read the Mourner's *Kaddish*. In all instances, musical selections are planned with great care and never sound obtrusive or inappropriate.

Likewise, Cantor Nevison's voice is expertly trained and beautifully used. His solo line, which is amplified over those of the choir and organ, carries the majority of the words and prayers of the congregation. Yet the music does not focus on him as an individual. It is as though he (and the rabbis) are without ego or individual personality when on the pulpit--they too, are small. They do not speak casually from the pulpit, and they do not even formally address the congregation until near the end of the service. The individual voices and personalities are suppressed in this environment to be a part of the larger "we." On one hand, the clergy are professionals who occupy an exalted place, on the other hand, the physical space and the music of prayer contribute to the impression of the clergy as servants of the congregation--not individuals, but objective extensions of the congregation itself.

While the musical sound is expressive and dramatic, it is not highly emotive. The cantor and choir do not inject pathos into the music. The sense of decorum within the congregation carries over to the music itself; or perhaps, the music sets the pattern of decorum for the congregation. While the tone of the music might shift from quiet to majestic, from contemplative to joyous, from slow to relatively fast, there is not a strongly perceptible change in mood. In order to create the atmosphere of sacred

ritualization of the worship service, the cantor offers decorum, not emotion; the rabbis offer poetry not personality.

As mentioned above, the music of the worship service is purposefully detached from the outside world. The sound of the music reflects this desire to transcend the everyday world. Yet, as strong as this desire to transcend the everyday world may be, it is important to note that the sound at Temple Emanu-El does, in fact, respond to the times. Cantor Nevison's use of folk or Israeli melodies reveals the influence of today's singable "folk" music that Emanu-El works so hard to avoid. While these melodies are still harmonized and accompanied with traditional Western modalities, they are still thinly-veiled folk-tunes. Worshipers still do not sing along, however, one woman mentioned that after services, "all day long I'll be humming *Rock of Ages*."

Cantor Nevison insists on "worshipful" music that is "melodic and memorable," so he has created a sound within the Classical Reform repertoire that one congregant noted is "more melodic than most things I'm hearing, even in participatory congregations." It is interesting to note that musical highlights selected by congregants included *Jerusalem of Gold* and *Shalom Rav*, two modern compositions in a different style from most Classical Reform pieces, in addition to the standard *Avinu Malkeinu* of Max Janowski. While these may be the most memorable pieces in congregants' minds, Emanu-El sings a healthy mixture of pieces from the "fear and trembling" school of Classical Reform music, to the newer, more accessible pieces. Times have clearly changed, and the sound of Emanu-El

has evolved with these changes, even if these changes are not fully recognized by the congregation.

The concept of Emanu-El as a guardian of the Classical Reform Tradition has made congregants and clergy alike resistant to infiltration by what they regard as the "lesser quality" music found in other congregations. In fact, it is not the music alone but its context that matters. Instead of a seventeen-person professional choir, other congregations may have a volunteer choir. Instead of singing and preaching from a distant pulpit under a massive ark, other clergy may lead their service on the same level as congregants before a movable ark. All these factors influence the "sound" at Emanu-El. The context of the Emanu-El worship service enables the congregation to sing *Jerusalem of Gold* and still believe it belongs in the canon of universally aesthetic "art" music, because all the markers of physical space, accompaniment and decorum still match that of the classical tradition.

These newer compositions still makes up only a small percentage of the music used for Emanu-El worship. In general, the "sound" of Emanu-El is largely composed of the classical tradition described earlier. The musical selections and their presentation live up to the high expectations for aesthetic beauty articulated by congregants and clergy and discussed in the "concept" section. The sound is one of majesty, beauty and high culture, reflecting and shaping the identities of the congregation and individuals within it.

CHAPTER TWO

B'NAI JESHURUN

B'nai Jeshurun was founded in 1825 as the first Ashkenazi congregation in New York City. Within a year of its founding, the community established its first permanent place of worship at 119 Elm Street. The Jewish community grew rapidly during the next twenty-five years, and so did the congregation. In 1849, B'nai Jeshurun hired its first renowned preacher, Dr. Morris Raphall, who led them uptown to a larger building on Broadway and 34th Street. As the Jewish community of New York city continued its economic and geographic move "uptown," B'nai Jeshurun followed. In 1885, the congregation moved to 65th Street and Madison Avenue, and finally, in 1918 it arrived at its present location on 88th Street and West End Avenue.

In the 1970's and 1980's, as many urban Jews fled the city for the suburbs, B'nai Jeshurun lost its membership base and the community began to decline. In 1985, the congregation already all but defunct, Marshall Meyer was appointed as B'nai Jeshurun's rabbi. He inherited a dilapidated building and an aging, diminishing congregation. In the early years, Rabbi Meyer would stand outside the building hoping to pull people in to make a *minyan*. But Meyer had experience in building a community. After his ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary thirty years before, Meyer had gone to Argentina to found the first non-Orthodox synagogue in the community. Argentinian Jews at the time were generally non-religious, but strongly Zionist and culturally affiliated Jews. Nonetheless, he managed to build the first conservative synagogue there. He then founded Camp Ramah and even a rabbinical seminary to train native-born rabbis. Meyer brought this energy and drive back to the renewal of B'nai Jeshurun.

Through a confluence of economic, demographic and social factors, B'nai Jeshurun grew explosively under Meyer's leadership.

Meyer's experience in Argentina exposed him to diverse influences, both Jewishly and musically. He drew musical inspiration not only from his historical Ashkenazi roots but also from Israeli, Sephardi, and more local South American communities. Additionally, as Ari Priven, the musical director of B'nai Jeshurun (and Meyer's friend) recalls, Meyer would have loved to appear on the opera or theater stage. He felt strongly about the drama inherent in ritual. His musical tastes were sophisticated, eclectic and dramatic. These views shaped the worship service that he devised and remain the cornerstones of B'nai Jeshurun's worship ideology today. Although Marshall Meyer passed away in 1993, only eight years after his arrival at B'nai Jeshurun, his influence is still strong among the current clergy, all of whom were his students.

B'nai Jeshurun has grown to sixteen hundred, its vitality having become something of a legend in the Jewish world, in great part due to the music of its worship services. The *New York Times* wrote an article about B'nai Jeshurun's phenomenal success entitled, "From No Quorum to No Room."[20] It commented on the congregation where "talk matters less...than music." It is the "exotic mix of Sephardi, Hasidic and contemporary Israeli melodies, improvised nightly,"[21] that has played a great role in bringing Jews into the synagogue, some for the first time in

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[20]Jane Gross, "From No Quorum to No Room; A Talmudic Quandry for a Shul: Growth or Intimacy," *New York Times*, 6, December 1996: B1.
[21]Gross, B1.

years. The Shabbat services at B'nai Jeshurun that attract over 2000 Jews every Friday night have been imitated by many other communities.

Besides its worship services, B'nai Jeshurun offers a number of educational opportunities from nursery school to adult education. Classes for adults include diverse topics such as "The Hows and Whys of *Kashrut*," "Halakha and Homosexuality," "Medical Ethics," and "Theology and Meaning in the Prayerbook." Social action is performed through a myriad of offerings, including a community meals program, an interfaith committee, a tutoring program at the local public school, or the *Hevra Kadisha*.

B'nai Jeshurun prides itself on serving all the needs of its congregants, whether spiritual, intellectual or social. It strives to be a full *Bet K'nesset*, a gathering place where people meet, not only for study or prayer, but also for singles outings or "BJ volleyball." As Priven noted, "from a leadership point of view, we are always on a search to make this place your home."

CONCEPT

> *In terms of music, we have an amalgam of traditional nusach, old tunes, modern tunes, from all different parts of the Jewish dispersion, from Israel, from Turkey, from Italy, from Poland, from Morocco. That's deliberate. Some people criticize us that we have broken the integrity of certain musical traditions...But we are about breaking stuff and crossing boundaries. We do it deliberately. We want to express the richness of the Jewish experience in the music. All that's new, and all over the globe. Because it's a vitality, and it's variety, and it's inclusive, because in many ways the music reflects who we are as a community, what we ought to be... it's ecstatic, it's contemplative, a very interesting mixture, because in that complexity there is life. In that tension is life. In the complexity and the tension, in the crannies and the cracks, in some of the niggunim, that's where there's life, and where life can be expressed, and passion can come out. So we need to keep that identity.*
>
> J. Rolando Matalon
> Rabbi, B'nai Jeshurun

B'nai Jeshurun has undergone a tremendous transformation in the last fourteen years, from a dying congregation to a vital, growing model of a committed Jewish community. This transformation is not accidental. Dynamism is a core value of the clergy and the people who choose to join here. Spiritual seekers come to B'nai Jeshurun to find meaning and affirmation of identity. Even some Jews who did not feel that they were searching have found their way to B'nai Jeshurun and have been drawn into the Jewish community, some for the first time.

The B'nai Jeshurun community celebrates emotive and passionate living. Its mission statement proclaims that "openness to transformation" is a requirement of its members. As one congregant reports, "[B'nai Jeshurun]

is a place where it is safe to really experience profound things and express them. It's not uncommon for people to cry through a whole service. People won't look at you funny, because they probably did it the first year they were there." The service is unabashedly energetic, passionate and provocative. It has challenged much of the community to bring these values of change and experimentation into their own Jewish lives.

A strong counterbalancing value to the great spirit of experimentation is the search for authentic Jewish experience. The congregation thrives on the creative tension that arises between tradition and change, yet seeks "authenticity" even within this tension. One congregant noted that the core value of the congregation was "authentic service of God," whether it be through study, political or social action, prayer, or ideally a combination of them all. Congregants and clergy expressed "authenticity" as a core value that meant not only doing things in an authentically "Jewish" way, but also studying or praying "authentically," with a full heart, and not "just going through the motions."

Many congregants responded that the "authenticity" of praying that occurs at B'nai Jeshurun struck them immediately when they first came: "I don't know what made me walk in the door, but once I was in, I would say that there is a palpable authenticity to the prayers. And that when our rabbis or Ari pray, they *really* pray...It's true of the congregation as well. There's genuine prayer happening there." "Authenticity" for another congregant meant that the message of the prayers could not end with the service, but must be translated into action. One congregant related his experience:

> The beauty initially brings you in. Once you're moved by that beauty, and you start listening to what you're saying and analyzing the words that are coming out of your mouth, you realize that it needs to be coupled with action...the communal voice needs to manifest itself in people working in whatever element of the community needs help.

There is a strong emphasis on serving the community through acts of *tikkun olam* at B'nai Jeshurun. (However, as a liberal community, there is a tension between what it can require of its members and what it can inspire in them.) Congregants are inspired to become more involved by their initial experience of the beauty of services. The aesthetic of the service is of great pride to B'nai Jeshurun members, who consider it an "authentic" expression of the commandment *hiddur mitzvah*, "beautification of a religious commandment."

In the minds of the clergy, authenticity has never meant being Jewish "purists" about the music. Ari Priven, the cantor and musical director of B'nai Jeshurun, stated this ideology clearly:

> If the idea of orthodoxy is a point of view with only one way of thinking, we are exactly the opposite...There is no single thing that couldn't be done in different ways...Some people say 'I don't want anything to do with anything that isn't Jewish.' I don't believe that. I believe music goes beyond those things. If it helps us to pray, I prefer to bring elements from the outside to make it clear that it is not only our language, not only our ability to do that. It sets a bridge to other traditions even outside the Jewish community.

Authenticity, then, in this context, is about embracing the universal qualities of music, or more fundamentally, embracing what is universally human. While maintaining an "authentically" Jewish particularism can be

a challenge when pressed against the authenticity of universal values, it is in this tension that the community thrives with energy, vitality and meaning. As Rabbi Matalon insists, "In that complexity there is life. In that tension is life. When there's no tension, there's no life."

BEHAVIOR

The creative tensions of universalism and particularism, tradition and change give B'nai Jeshurun's service its dynamism. As a liberal community seeking transformation, its service thrives on experimentation. The concepts valued by the congregation and clergy are translated into their behavior and evidenced through their music.

The Rabbis and cantor at B'nai Jeshurun have chosen to be experimental and draw music from many sources. Rabbi Matalon maintains that, "It is authentically Jewish to borrow from other traditions." While other liberal communities are just beginning to draw on Sephardi or Ladino melodies, B'nai Jeshurun has already embraced music from all over the globe: "Personally, I have been pushing for more openness to world music, now that the world has become smaller and we can learn from one another. I think there's a value in this--to exchange melodies, to sing each other's melodies...there's something very beautiful in that." Nearly all B'nai Jeshurun members share the same ethnicity; upper middle class, white New Yorkers, often conditioned as well by the cultural milieu of New York City's Upper West Side. But the diversity of the melodies imported into B'nai Jeshurun reflects the ideological, economic and social diversity that the Upper West Side culture celebrates.

Given the overwhelming variety of available musical choices, how are such choices made? Rabbi Matalon offered his criteria for choosing new music: "One of the things is that it be pleasant and aesthetic, then that it be genuine, awaken general emotions and feelings. That it be singable, and that it lends itself to people's participation, and that it can help be a vehicle for our passion...and ultimately to be a conduit for our prayer."

Despite the diversity of musical sources, an effort is made to unify the music within the ritual script, a value expressed in the mission statement of the congregation: "To inspire through unity within diversity." The cantor Priven borrows from the traditional idea of Jewish modes. In his view, a "mode" brings cohesion and a sense of flow from one part of the service to another. While he utilizes a great deal of traditional *nusach*, he does not limit himself to the Jewish modes. Instead, "what I take from the concept of modes of traditional *hazzanut* is the idea of *leitmotif*, or drama and dynamic within a service...I try to make some sense from one piece to another. When I move from the traditional liturgy to Shefa Gold,[22] at first people might not know I went into a different melody."

Priven uses the keyboard to maintain a "mode" by unifying the colors of two disparate musical sources, or by maintaining a background mood while changing speed or evolving to another piece. With the skillful use of accompaniment, and with a sensitivity to the flow of many contrasting

[22]Shefa Gold is a contemporary American composer of chants and liturgical music. She is active in the Jewish Renewal Movement.

sounds, Priven tries to balance the tension between diversity and unity in a way he feels to be authentically Jewish.

The search for authenticity in prayer is also manifest in the tension between tradition and change. On the one hand, the service structure at B'nai Jeshurun is very traditional. *Siddur Sim Shalom,* the prayerbook of the Conservative movement, retains all of the traditional rubrics of the service, but still leaves room for traditional *davening,* individual praying. On the other hand, the music within the service is somewhat radical. This is in part because the clergy include melodies from all different communities, Jewish and non-Jewish. But perhaps more revolutionary is the way they radicalize even the most traditional melodies and elements of the service, through musical accompaniment and the method of interpretation. This community has even experimented with German Ashkenazi nusach set to drums, mandolin and bass guitar.

According to one congregant, the congregation thrives on this dynamism: "Here was a congregation that spoke of growth and learning and change...it was exciting, it was incredibly traditional but at the same time I would venture to say *avant garde.* Here they were able to combine two mediums together, a very traditional service, and music that is definitely not mainstream,"

The clergy has tried to convey these concepts of dynamism and transformation through the music. Ari Priven explained that in order to make the music dynamic and responsive, many musical choices must be spontaneous:

> With ten melodies for *L'Kha Dodi* which do I choose? Sometimes I do not know what melody I will choose up to the very moment before I have to sing....sometimes there is a thing that will impose a mood. After a bombing in Israel, I will choose something less festive. In general I use the context of the week...but if the community needs energy, I bring that through a *L'Kha Dodi*....used in the right way [the different melodies] can serve a purpose.

In this way, the music is spontaneous, but at the same time carefully chosen and crafted to evoke a mood from the congregation. Unlike at Temple Emanu-El, congregants do not want to be passive here, and the mood of the music does not allow for passivity. As one congregant noted, "The particular way in which the music is handled...is clearly crucial and has an impact on allowing people to take over Shabbat and participate in it and not just feel that they are listening to a hazzan giving a concert." On the rare occasions when the music does not compel participation, or when the number of regulars is overwhelmed by the guests, the rabbis will offer a verbal *kavannah*, a directive for action. Usually, however, this measure is not required, because the music itself sends the message of engaged participation. One congregant remarked that this is what most struck him when he first came to B'nai Jeshurun: "People really focused and participated. It wasn't a show or performance...Here you were in a roomful of people who were really in it, of all ages."

The fundamental concepts valued by the clergy and congregation, dynamism and transformation, authenticity and action, are all expressed through the behavior related to music. In conscious and unconscious ways

the music serves as the initiator for action and change--the conduit for values-expression.

SOUND

Even before entering the sanctuary of B'nai Jeshurun, the young, earnest, urban professional throng outside the doors sets a mood of anticipation. It is a "hip" shul, a place to see and be seen, a place even the New York Times dubbed, "the 'in' place to be on Friday nights."[23] B'nai Jeshurun is a refuge from the secular world, from unengaging Judaism, from the singles bar scene on Amsterdam. For all these reasons and more, on Friday night B'nai Jeshurun's sanctuary overflows to standing room only. These factors contribute to the sound of B'nai Jeshurun, which is filled with energy, life and more than a little sexual tension.

Because services have grown to over two thousand people each Friday night, the congregation now holds two different services, one in their newly renovated synagogue on 88th Street and West End Avenue, and the other in their temporary home of several years, the United Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, on West End Avenue and 86th Street. The services cater to slightly different crowds, one primarily families, the other primarily singles and young adults, but they remain essentially the same in character. Their intent is to engage and transform the Jews who walk into their sanctuaries. Whether people are drawn in by the spectacle or by the service, hundreds of New York Jews run from the subways on a Friday night to experience Shabbat at B'nai Jeshurun.

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[23]ibid., B1.

The physical spaces of the two sanctuaries play a role in the production of sound within. While the church space and the newly renovated synagogue differ in terms of their interior iconic representation, their structures are quite similar. Both have a large, level floor area that seats approximately 500 people, with a wrap-around balcony that seats several hundred more. The ceilings stretch to over fifty feet, and stained glass windows lend formality to the walls. Service leaders require amplification in order to be heard in either sanctuary. As a result, the physical space is not inherently communal or intimate. However, B'nai Jeshurun's music fills the empty spaces with a warmth and energy that balances the stratified architecture.

The Kabbalat Shabbat Service generally begins in low and subdued tones, so that it can build in tempo and dynamic to a climax. By the time the congregation reaches the *L'Kha Dodi*, near the end of the Kabbalat Shabbat service, young and old alike are up on their feet, dancing joyously. The clergy envision this service as a bridge from the outside world, from the world of *chol*, the mundane, to the world of Shabbat holiness. Thus, the rabbis and cantor carefully construct the flow of the music to serve as the instrument of transition. Within the sound itself, transitions are carefully planned. Musical songs, *chatimot*, or prayer endings, and davening are all orchestrated into one seamless flow of singing and praying. While there are moments of silence throughout the communal songs, these silences contribute to the "sound" of the service and play an important role in punctuating the rhythm of ritual worship.

As mentioned earlier, B'nai Jeshurun draws its music from diverse sources. On any given Friday night, music from Yemenite, traditional Ashkenazi, Israeli pop and American Reform communities might be utilized. Ari Priven improvises synthesized accompaniments to these melodies in a "mode" that blends one diverse source imperceptibly into another. This mode sounds something like Israeli soft rock music in its accompaniment and in the vocal lines of the clergy. Priven's treatment of these sounds, accompanied into one mode, significantly reduces the diversity of the sound. The desire to blend Shefa Gold into Hebrew *nusach* does just that--blends the sound, into an indistinguishable, unified whole. Priven takes wide latitude with melodies from other communities, arranging them such that some become unrecognizable. A visitor with little knowledge of Jewish music might not be able to perceive the diverse sources of music, but rather think that the sound originates from one, popularly based source.

The congregation values the concept of drawing music from the melodies of the global Jewish community and the world at large. This musical diversity resonates with this congregation's general value of openness and diversity. However the sound of the music betrays the reality that on many levels the congregation is quite homogenous, with similar musical tastes.

Below are two sample services from Friday nights at B'nai Jeshurun. In some cases, the sources of the music are no longer known. The term "nusach" refers the chanting done in the mode of Shabbat services as established by the traditional Ashkenazi community. "Traditional" is a blanket term for those pieces whose origins are no longer known, but

which have been a standard part of Ashkenazi worship services for several decades.

SERVICE ONE

Niggun	*Carlebach*
Short L'Kha Dodi	*M. Zeira*
Psalms, chatimot	*nusach*
Yismechu Hashamayim	*traditional*
Psalm 98	*nusach*
Mizmor l'David	*Sephardi*
Silent meditation	*(prep. for L'kha Dodi)*
L'Kha Dodi	*1st part--Salonika*
	2nd part--chasidic
	(at end go into chasidic niggun for dancing)
Psalm 92 Tzadik Katamar	*traditional*
Barechu	*nusach*
Brachot before Shema (do chatimot)	*nusach*
Shema	*Sulzer-(slow and unaccompanied)*
V'ahavta	*nusach*
Silent through Adonai Eloheichem Emet	
Michamocha	*Lewandowski*
Malchutecha	*nusach*
Hashkiveynu daven to "Ufros" together	
V'shamru	*traditional*
Hatzi Kaddish	*nusach*
Silent amidah	
Oseh Shalom	*Hirsch*
Vayahulu hashamayim	*traditional*
Avot	*read, not sung*
Magein Avot	*traditional*
V'taher libeinu	*traditional*
Kaddish Shalem	*nusach*
Kiddush	*Binder*
Mipi Eyl	*Sephardi*
Gesher Tzar Me'od	*B. Chait*

Aleynu	*traditional*
Kaddish	
Yigdal	*Salonika*
Shabbat Shalom u'mvorach	

SERVICE II

Et dodim Kala	*Sephardi*
Yedid Nefesh	*traditional*
Mizmor l'David	*Sephardi*
L'KhaDodi	*1st part--Sephardic*
	2nd part--Chasidic
	(at end go into chasidic niggun for dancing)
Ma Gadlu	*S. Gold*
Barechu	*nusach*
English brachot	
Chatimot chanted in Hebrew	*nusach*
Shema	*Sulzer (slow and unaccompanied)*
Silent V'ahavta	
Adonai Eloheichem Emet	
Michamocha	*Lewandowski*
Hashkiveynu daven to "Ufros" together	
Od yavo Shalom Aleynu	*Israeli melody by Sheva*
V'shamru	*Ari Priven*
Hatzi Kaddish	*nusach*
Silent Amidah	
Niggun	*Carelbach*
Vaychulu	*Israeli popular music*
Avot	*nusach*
El Hahodaot	*Israeli*
Kadsheinu	*Carlebach*
Kaddish shalem	*nusach*
Kiddush, invite children to lead, sing Kadsheinu again as kids come up.	
Kiddush	*Binder*
Dror Yikra	*Yemenite*
Niggun	*Carlebach*

Aleynu`	*traditional*
Kaddish	
Hiney Ma Tov	*Sheva (from turkish melody)*
Kol Han'shama	*round from Israel's synagogue of same name*
Shabbat Shalom	*Taubman*

While many sources are used, traditional Ashkenazi chazzanut dominates the musical selections for Friday night. In addition, the clergy make frequent use of *niggunim*: Sometimes it is used to introduce a new song with the melody line first, unencumbered by words. Its structure serves as a model for the structure of the service as a whole. The *niggun* almost always begins slowly, with breath and space between the notes. It builds in tempo, dynamic and intensity with the accompaniment layering extra chords to build the richness of the sound. It climaxes to a nearly ecstatic state, with congregants singing loudly, closing their eyes, and sometimes even crying. It comes down from this climax with a slowing tempo and a quieting dynamic. In general, the entire service builds to or retreats from one or two peak moments in the service. The constant ebb and flow of the music helps build the high moments and gives a sense of dynamism to the sound.

The sound at B'nai Jeshurun embodies the concept of transformation so important to the congregation. Building to peak moments within the service creates high points of epiphany, ecstasy or catharsis within the music which then translates to the congregants as well. The rabbis and cantor also lead the service in a charismatic manner. Clearly, the clergy are engaged in the music as they lead worship, but they balance their own engagement with acknowledgment of the congregation's presence. The

rabbis' (who sing a great deal of the service with the cantor) and the cantor's voices sound professional, but not in the classical sense like Cantor Nevison at Emanu-El. Instead, their voices exude the passion and lyricism of today's Israeli popular singers. These factors lend an air of excitement to the sound emanating from the pulpit on a Friday night. The charisma of the leadership coupled with the energy in the room help make B'nai Jeshurun's sound engaging, exciting and vigorous.

Another factor that adds to the dynamic nature of B'nai Jeshurun's sound is the apparently spontaneous nature of the musical selections. As Priven stated earlier, he may choose a melody for *L'Kha Dodi* only the moment before he sings it. However, with careful and repeated listening to the service at B'nai Jeshurun, it is clear that the service is very carefully constructed. While one or two pieces may be chosen on the spot, the clergy have clearly thought out the mood of the service in advance. The desire to make the service sound spontaneous can make a sophisticated music listener feel almost manipulated. Because the emotional highs and lows in the sound are so extreme, and so clearly orchestrated, the music can sound formulaic with repeated listenings.

The challenge for this congregation is how to avoid a formulaic sound, after hitting upon a formula that works exceedingly well. Every congregant with whom I spoke felt great appreciation for the Friday night service, but many seemed to have some misgivings with the service over time. The large influx of singles and non-members in the Friday night service has played some role in the dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the congregants betray a

disinclination for the "orchestrated" nature of the sound, although they express this in non-musicians terms.

Every congregant with whom I spoke preferred the Saturday morning service to the Friday night service. Saturday mornings are filled with regulars, and are "traditional" in tone (traditional meaning less accompaniment, more straight davening). One congregant wished that the service could be done unaccompanied. Another said the "songs" do not work so well for her, "although they once did." She prefers more straightforward davening without all the songs "breaking up the natural flow." It seems that this music drew in these members as seekers and encouraged them to become more involved, but that as they grew away from seeker status, the non-traditional music was often no longer "traditional" enough for them.

The greatest challenge to B'nai Jeshurun's sound is trying to strike a balance between the values of experimentation and authenticity. If the music is experimental, drawing from several sources, but changing them all to fit one sound, can it still be authentic? If the music attempts to sound experimental, when in fact it is carefully constructed, is that authentic spontaneity? The clergy makes clear that they are unconcerned with authenticity with regard to the purity of musical choices. By authenticity they mean music that promotes personal sincerity in prayer. In this sense, B'nai Jeshurun's music fulfills its goal of creating a sound of emotion and prayer.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAVURAT TIKVAH

In 1977, a group of six families founded Chavurat Tikvah, a Jewish community for worship and fellowship. The chavurah movement was founded in the 1960s by the baby boomer generation, primarily as a response to the perceived hierarchy and formality in established Jewish synagogue life. The founders of Chavurat Tikvah wanted to create a small, egalitarian community that would "personalize the celebration of Judaism."[24] They wanted a community in which families would take responsibility for their own worship, study and communal needs.

What began with six families began to grow. The Chavurah was committed to keeping its size small, so they put a cap on membership. However, in twenty-two years, the cap has been raised several times, and now stands at 28 families. The size of the group creates a need for active participation and commitment from its members. Not only do the families open their homes for services, religious school classes and business meetings, but when they host the chavurah for services, each family writes its own service book for worship. In this way, the voice of each family is strongly heard and represented in this community.

A service at the chavurah, generates an immediate sense of warmth through the informality of the worship space--a family's living room. People dress casually, and gather together to talk before the service begins. It is often hard to convince people to stop socializing, and the service generally starts "on chavurah time," meaning fifteen to twenty minutes late. Members bring their own folding chairs, or sit together closely on

[24]From Chavurat Tikvah, "Statement of Purpose."

couches or on the floor, often packing the room. Attendance is highly valued in this community, and the chavurah usually has a minimum of half of the families represented at services, and often many more.

While the Chavurah is led primarily by its members, they have employed a Jewish professional, usually a rabbinical student, to oversee the education of the children and adults of the group. Over the years, as families and their children have grown, the structure for the education of their children and study programs for its adults has grown accordingly. There is a Saturday morning family education program and Hebrew school for the children, torah study and special programs for the adults. In addition to worship and education, the Chavurah plans social and cultural events together such as trips to Jewish museums.

While the Chavurah offers education for all its members, it recognizes that it cannot offer all the programs and educational options that a larger community might provide. High school students of Chavurah families join youth groups from neighboring synagogues. Families might attend worship or holiday services at another synagogue when the Chavurah is not meeting. Many Chavurah members belong to a second congregation to meet their additional needs.

Just as the counterculture movement spurred the formation of chavurot in this country, it also strongly influenced the music and the ethos of these Jewish communities. The music of the Chavurah reflects the egalitarian, folk culture that of the 1960s. Acoustic guitar accompanies the music of the service and all members sing along. One member who has led the music

for the Chavurah for many years observed, "We were all the kind of people who would go to a Woody Guthrie concert, or to James Taylor. So the [Reform] movement music we knew was exactly what resonated for us."

Chavurah members participate in all aspects of the service, but especially in the music. Virtually all of the music is participatory, and the community is comfortable singing loudly and enthusiastically. In addition to the music, each member participates in leading the group in a reading within the service. The *sefer torah* used by the Chavurah is on indefinite loan from Brno, Czechoslovakia, a Jewish community destroyed in the Holocaust. The torah often sits on a coffee table among the people for the service, and the chavurah members lovingly passing the Torah to each member of the congregation for the Torah service.

The services at Chavurat Tikvah are often thematic, based on a holiday that might be approaching, a season, or a lifecycle event. While the structure of the service generally follows the traditional order of the prayerbook, there is a great variety among the readings and songs that each family might choose to insert. Given the freedom for expression the services offer, the liturgy and the music of the service can be seen as a personal statement of faith by each family.

While the community has grown and evolved since 1977, it has stayed close to its founding principles: "To experience and share the traditions of Judaism in a family setting, and to personalize the celebration of Judaism."[25] Chavurat Tikvah remains the vital center of Jewish

[25]ibid.

community for its members, enriching their commitment and connection to Jewish living.

CONCEPT

PRAYER FOR OUR CHAVURAH
Our grandparents came from different countries
We come together from many different paths.
Some of us are older; some younger;
Some were raised in Orthodox traditions, some Reform, some come from other faiths.
What we have in common is the need to be Jewish;
To celebrate our Holidays, to share our joys and sorrows together.
We join together to gain strength from each other's voices
So that our songs of praise to God shall be fuller.
Ours is not an easy way.
It is far easier to be one of many in an established religious community.
But by working hard and making a concerted effort to pray,
Our prayers and services have deep personal meaning.
We cherish our special Torah, and acknowledge our responsibility to its original congregation.
Their voices were stilled; so ours shall be heard for them.
We continue a long tradition of joining together in prayer.
May our prayers for our families and friends be answered.
We sometimes pray to ask for more.
May we never forget to appreciate the many blessings we have.
We gather with parents, children, old and new friends in our Chavurah. May God hear our prayer, accept our gratitude, and grant peace and health to all those we hold dear.

Amen

Dan Horowitz
Chavurat Tikvah member

The "Prayer for Our Chavurah" is frequently cited in Chavurat Tikvah services, for it expresses many of the values of this community. While many readings recur frequently in services, this poem, representing a voice from within the group, has special significance. As one chavurah member put it, "the most important value of the Chavurah is that it encourages people to contribute what they can to the experience." This poem reflects the way this Chavurah values each individual's voice and its contribution to the overall communal experience.

This emphasis on individual voices is a strong reason many people are attracted to the Chavurah. But it was not always cited as the initial reason people joined the community. Many Chavurat Tikvah members were unfamiliar with chavurot before joining, so when I asked congregants what attracted them to Chavurat Tikvah, most began by relating negative experiences in the established Jewish community. One congregant summed up his experience in a local synagogue that captures the sentiment of many Chavurah members: "We became disillusioned by the rigidity of the establishment there and just quit." Many found the Chavurah as the result of a reaction to their negative experiences elsewhere. They found the Chavurah's elevation of individuals an important change from their prior experiences.

Many of the values of the Chavurah stand as a direct challenge to the problems the members perceived in the established Jewish communities elsewhere: rigidity, formality, hierarchy and a "we do it/sing it for you" attitude. As one member put it, "The group in general does not like congregations where only the cantor sings and everyone else listens. We find those congregations to be non-user friendly." As members discovered the Chavurah, they were attracted to the sense of engagement that the community had with Judaism and with each other: "Community. That is the key word. We were peripheral in the other community, but everyone is equal here."

Equality is central in all structures of the chavurah, and especially in its leadership. The leadership for much of what happens at the chavurah has

primarily come from within. While there are two rabbis who belong to the Chavurah, they made it clear that they wanted to belong to the group as members and not be perceived as the "leaders" of the group. However, the group recognized early on that it could use some help with teaching and service leading. Therefore, since the second year of its founding, Chavurat Tikvah has hired a rabbinic student on a part-time basis to assist the Chavurah in teaching the children, preparing the services and in adult education. Just this year, Chavurat Tikvah hired a professional "spiritual leader," Cantor Ellen Dreskin, in an attempt to add more continuity and professionalism than the students could offer.

Until Cantor Dreskin was hired, the music at Chavurat Tikvah had been led primarily by one of the rabbis in the group, Ramie Arian and his wife Merri Arian, a Jewish music specialist and teacher at Hebrew Union College. (At times, other members or rabbinic students have aided in leading music.) Their leadership of the music does not interfere with the chavurah's commitment to egalitarianism, for they are not necessarily viewed as "leaders" of the service, but just as members who offer their musical gifts to the community. As one congregant explained the dynamic, "we want to be led into a song, but then it becomes our song, not just the cantor or the leader's song." The families who host the services still pick out their own music, and the Arian family leads the group in singing the family's selections. In this way, each family can still select music that reflects its tastes. Even though much of the music remains the same from service to service, this freedom allows each family to have a voice in this process.

While individual freedom is valued greatly by the Chavurah, the music also embodies the tension between individual voices and the voice of the group. The group values hearing each voice participate, and it feels strengthened by the sound of the entire community. Cantor Dreskin observed, "the most important value to this group is personal freedom and the idea that people can make their own choices about how they will do their Judaism. But there is a tension between how people will do things as individuals and how this Chavurah has a certain way of doing things. They have to share a vision." While the importance of the individual voice is a strong value, commitment to the group is also crucial to the chavurah.

A Chavurah member spoke of the importance of group commitment and how the dynamics played out in the chavurah: "It's like a family. You might have cousins that you don't really care for, but they are still a part of your family. And you still miss them if they're gone. You share the simchas and the joys of watching your kids grow up, and you share in the sorrows as well." Another member explained why commitment is vital to the life of the chavurah:

> ...the more you put into the chavurah, the more you get out of it. Those members who are less involved miss out a lot. That's one problem we have that a large synagogue does not--it gets to be a burden on those who are involved in the Chavurah to carry those who are not. We are 27 families that have to be every committee a synagogue has...Those less involved are looked at as 'coming along for the ride.'

As a community that has pledged not to grow too large, commitment has always been a strong concept. Generally, most people feel dedicated to the

group and have benefited from the commitment of its members. The Chavurah member mentioned above continued her reflections on her family's experience in the Chavurah by saying, "it has been a tremendously enriching experience for us as a family...the major identifying 'Who We Are,' is 'Members of a Chavurah.'"

While membership in a Chavurah requires great work, the rewards are also great. Those who commit to the Chavurah appreciate that the community values their individual voices and their freedoms. The Chavurah is a place in which each voice is vital to the group. Thus, participation is a primary concept for the Chavurah, and it permeates all aspects of the Chavurah's life.

BEHAVIOR

The chavurah's social behavior reflects the value of equality among members and the importance of recognizing individual voices. One member articulated how music embodied these values for him: "The most important value of the group is its spirit which comes through in song. It's the ability to see and hear individuals within a group, to be close enough to get to know everyone as individuals...You can show who you are in the Chavurah. The songs are a vehicle for those types of feelings for me."

In this spirit, the group selects music that is conducive to hearing everyone's voice--participatory music that is easily sung. It is often lively and upbeat, but it can also be slower and more introspective. Whatever the tone, the music is folksy and melodic, encouraging the active involvement

of all members. "What really attracted me was the fact that the group was really engaged, that everyone was really singing. It makes you feel more spiritual when you hear that music, when you are singing along with all your might." So important is participation that families compiling services might regularly forego including Hebrew text for prayers within a service, and include transliteration and translation instead. The particularism of Hebrew text is not valued as highly as enabling all to sing along, and having them understand what their prayers mean in the vernacular. In the spirit of *meaningful* participation, the Chavurah believes music to be more powerful when one understands the words of prayer and the meaning behind them.

The Chavurah also values music that has been contextualized to bring extra meaning, through the contributions or the shared memories of people within the group. When I asked one member what he experienced as musical high points in the service, he related an experience of watching two generations play a song together--a child he saw grow up in the chavurah with his parent. He also mentioned moments when a member would pull out a clarinet or a flute and share his or her special music talent. Another member cited a song that the Arians sing on the High Holydays that was written by their friend who had since died of AIDS: "They sing this song by Anselm Rothschild, 'Remember to Remember,' and they have pledged to sing this song to remember him...When this song comes, the tears come out for everyone." Each one of these instances point to the meaning found in hearing the special talents, voices and stories of individual members in the group. The music of the Chavurah helps create shared moments of meaning and this is seen as one of the greatest values of the music.

Under the category of "social behavior," Chavurat Tikvah has very strong feelings regarding the status of those who make music within the group. Most importantly, *every* member of the group makes music. They are very suspicious of the "professional" who comes to make music *for* the group. Cantor Dreskin, who is the first professional clergyperson to lead this group, remarked that "if I said, 'I lead these services,' the group would be quick to correct with, 'No, we lead our *own* services.'" Cantor Dreskin noted that she does not choose the musical selections in a service. This freedom is still highly valued by individual families. However, she added that she does have veto power over any song, "which I haven't ever used." Cantor Dreskin said that the group would not want to be led by someone outside the group, but when the Chavurah hired her, she felt taken in as a member of the community.

From its founding, music has been facilitated by insiders. Congregants have noted that this plays an important role in the nature of the music of the Chavurah: "The music is lively and present, and very personal...It is created by extraordinary people and there is no element of it being a *job*." The Arians are Jewish professionals, but leading the Chavurah is not their job. They are quick to point out that they are merely members with musical skills. In the early years, the Arians, as Jewish professionals without congregations, would seek paid High Holiday pulpits elsewhere, for they would not consider being paid by the Chavurah. The Chavurah would hire other "professionals" to lead them in music for the High Holidays. The group eventually recognized the inefficiency of this arrangement, and the

Arians agreed to act as "temporary professionals" for the High Holidays. However, it took several years to arrive at this change in status.

As mentioned earlier, participation is of vital importance to the life of the group. The skepticism toward professionals can be traced to members' experiences with cantors who leave congregants unable to participate. Since its inception, the group decided that getting 100% participation from families whenever possible was a high value. Therefore, they decided that services would only meet twice a month, to ensure that families could make these bi-monthly obligations. This year, Cantor Dreskin instituted a weekly Shabbat morning service and Hebrew school for families, which is a requirement only for Chavurah families with young children. Many Chavurah members without small children find this new model troubling. When there are services led by the Chavurah, they feel obligated to attend. However, with weekly services, the commitment is quite different. As one congregant commented, "the service is optional on Saturday mornings, but since this group is founded on 'when there are services you go,' this has caused some discomfort."

This discomfort arises because the group has placed such a premium on participation. As mentioned earlier, involvement in the group is tremendously demanding, but necessary to the life of the group: "Our involvement with the Chavurah is all-encompassing, and almost definitely daily. Of all the phone calls that come into this house, at least half are for the Chavurah." While this congregant believed that her family's involvement with the Chavurah had been a "tremendously enriching experience," she also lamented that this precluded her involvement with

the larger Jewish community. As congregants of the Chavurah and their children grow older, questions arise, such as how to relate to the larger established Jewish community from which they fled twenty years earlier.

This conceptual shift has affected behavior related to music in subtle ways. One member expressed her concern that the group did not sing music that is traditional in almost all other Jewish communities: "I don't think our kids have ever heard *Adon Olam* or *Ein Keloheinu*. I think this is a problem. Our kids will grow up and go to colleges where every Reform and Conservative child knows these songs, and they won't." This congregant took this situation into her own hands and made a point to include *Adon Olam* in the next service held in her home. However, this was an individual decision, and the next family might well not want to include "traditional" songs in their service. Individual freedom regarding musical selection comes at the cost of continuity from one service to the next.

On the whole, however, the music remains the main source of continuity from one service to the next. The prayer space changes each month, and the prayerscripts change each month, but most of the music remains constant. As one congregant put it, "the music makes the service....and services are at the heart of the Chavurah." By the transitive property, then, the music is at the heart of the group--a sentiment echoed several times over by the members of this community.

SOUND

Just when it seems that the living room cannot hold another person, the doorbell rings and another family arrives. Even if the Chavurah's service has already begun, members wave to latecomers and greet them while moving chairs to accommodate everyone in the group. The chairs are generally configured in a loose circle, or concentric circles, with the Torah at its center. Dressed in jeans and sweaters, members pile onto couches, on folding chairs and on the floor, filling all available floor space with bodies. The joyous sound of the community's voices swells the remainder of the physical space with spirit and emotion.

Each individual prays from a photocopied prayerbook, created by the host family and marked in various places for individual participation. A reader begins:

Happy are those whose synagogue is small,
because we love each other
because we have to
because we do...
Happy are those whose house is a shul,
And whose temple is a home.

This community celebrates each house as a shul, and takes pride in transforming their homes to temples. This transition does not always come easily. As one member pointed out, "What is hard is that it is not an inherently spiritual space. You have to make it that. There are problems to overcome, like the phone ringing, or a coffee pot boiling." On the other hand, she continues, "The atmosphere does match the music. It is one of informality. We're on top of each other, so there is all this sound, and it is

really quite moving." In physical and metaphorical ways, the prayer space greatly influences Chavurat Tikvah's sound.

The Chavurah is so familiar with most of the melodies that the music leader need only play the first few chords on the guitar before the group begins singing along. The room fills up quickly with the sound of everyone's voices. While one can hear his or her own voice, no one person stands out within the group. Sometimes, harmonies or rounds emanate organically from the group, adding another layer of sound to the generally simple melodies. It is not unusual for tapping feet or swaying shoulders to respond to the rhythm of the music.

The sound of Chavurat Tikvah could be categorized as Reform camp or folk-style music. However, the group draws from many sources that do not fit that categorization, but *sound* as if they do because of the context and accompaniment of the pieces. For example, the Chavurah uses traditional pieces such as the Rothblum V'shamru or the Sulzer Shema sung in low keys and accompanied by a guitar. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the pieces used in Chavurat Tikvah services come out of the Reform camping milieu, and were composed with guitar accompaniment in mind. Many of the pieces used in recent years are written by Debbie Friedman, the premier composer in the Jewish folk style. Compositions by Craig Taubman, and Jeff Klepper & Danny Freedlander are also frequently sung. Below are two sample services from a service at Chavurat Tikvah:

Friday Night-Service One

Bruchot Haba'ot	*Deborah Lynn Friedman(DLF)*
Birkat Halevana (not a R. Chodesh service)	*DLF*
Candle Blessing	*Binder*
Shalom Aleichem (on Clarinet)	*Israel Goldfarb*
Barechu	*Debbie Jacobson*
Ahavat Olam	*Anslem Rothschild*
Shema	*S. Sulzer*
V'Ahavta	*Trope*
Mi Chamocha	*Lisa Glatzer*
Avot V'Imahot	*Chanted nusach*
Shalom Rav	*Klepper/Freedlander*
Al Shlosha Devarim	*S. Dropkin*
Torah Blessings	*Traditional*
Mi Shebeirach	*DLF*
Aleinu	*Traditional*
Angel's Blessing	*DLF*

Service Two

Beloved	*Arnie Lawrence*
Blessing over Sabbath Candles	*Benjie Ellen Schiller*
Hatzi Kaddish	*Traditional nusach*
Barechu	*Ben Siegel*
Shema	*T. Pik*
Thou Shalt Love	*DLF*
Mi Chamocha	*I. Freed*
V'Shamru	*M.J. Rothblum*
Avot	*Anselm Rothschild*
Shalom Rav	*Klepper/Friedlander*
YihiYu L'Ratzon	*Unknown*
Al Shlosha Devarim	*Traditional*
Torah Blessings	*Traditional*
Mi Shebeirach	*DLF*
Aleinu	*Traditional*
Bashana haba'ah	*Nurit Hirsch*
Oseh Shalom	*DLF*

All of the music lends itself to participation, as it is chosen with this in mind. The very act of singing this music plays an important function for the group. Edward Henry, an ethnographer of Indian Music, comments on the nature of this music:

> Participatory music is music in which ideally, everyone present participates. It constitutes a type of commune: a song of this type is a framework for a cooperative social process which joins musically untrained individuals in immediate, tangible relationships with one another. The songs are perforce less demanding and more repetitious.[26]

As Henry states, participatory music necessitates simple and repetitive vocal lines that can be taught to a group of non-musicians. The music of the Chavurah often utilizes a musical motif that is repeated for several verses, or a repetitive chorus, such as in the V'shamru or Shalom Rav. The tunes are often set to standard I-IV-V chord progressions or circle of fifths accompaniments. The melody lines are often predictable and familiar, because otherwise the group finds it hard to sing along. Merri Arian commented on this phenomenon: "If the music is all participatory, then by definition the level of the sophistication of the music only reaches a certain point. To make it harder would cause people to say, 'Who can sing along with that?'"

In addition to limiting the sophistication of the sound, the Chavurah's participatory music also limits the vocal range of the music. There is only a small band of notes within which non-professionals are comfortable

singing. Colors from an angelic lyrical soprano or a booming bass voice are absent from the sound. Instead, the Chavurah's single focus on "music of meeting,"[27] or music that facilitates Henry's "cooperative social process," precludes the group from most "music of meditation," where the group might listen and have opportunities for introspective prayer instead of singing. It also precludes "music of majesty," where the group might listen to a sophisticated piece of transcendent music that engenders a sense of awe. The limitation of musical selections limits the ability of music to express the widest range of emotion.

Merri Arian regrets that the group does not do more listening: "I think the service is really missing something for everything to be too participatory...it is a wonderful thing to just be able to listen, and our group does very little in the way of listening." Cantor Dreskin stated that she felt guilty when she would present a piece of music and not teach it, for listening was so unfamiliar to the group.

Given these statement by those who lead music for the Chavurah, it is surprising that many of the members named "listening" moments as a musical highlight in the Chavurah. Congregants who spoke against "cantors with whom you can't sing," spoke later of the emotional moments when listening to the Arians singing a piece alone on the High Holidays, or listening to a clarinet play *Shalom Aleichem*. It could be argued, however, that since virtually everything is sung as a group, a "highlight" becomes any moment that differs from the norm. It is clear that the Chavurah

[27] For a discussion on the Three M's in Music--Meeting, Meditation and Majesty, please see Benjie Ellen Schiller, "Some Notes of the Future of Jewish Sacred Music."

prefers participatory singing, and these solo listening moments may be the only pieces that stood out singularly in members' minds.

Nevertheless, some members feel that the Chavurah sound is enhanced by more "listening moments." One member noted, 'When someone else is singing, I hear the words better and simultaneously, I become more introspective and think about my spirituality." This member felt that songs in which he listened allowed him to look inward. However, he continued, "Singing as a part of this group teaches that being a part of this group is being part of something bigger than ourselves." The actual process of music-making as a participant is what helps this member feel the presence of God. The "sound" or the aesthetic of the music is secondary to the process by which the community makes music.

The sound of music at Chavurat Tikvah reflects the important concepts of the group: it is made by the group and for the group, it is personal, and it empowers each voice to be heard. Unlike Temple Emanu-El, Chavurat Tikvah would never expect the larger public to appreciate its musical aesthetic over the radio. However, its members proudly bring guests to Chavurat Tikvah B'nei Mitzvah to experience the energy and power of a roomful of participating, praying Jews. As active players in the ritual drama of worship, Chavurat Tikvah members have different expectations for their music than Temple Emanu-El or B'nai Jeshurun. It is not perfection Chavurat Tikvah wants, but *sound*, however imperfect, coming from every members' lips. For them, it is from this process of singing and being heard that holiness comes.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

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Merriam's "concept-behavior-sound" model illustrates how concepts shape or reinforce behavior, which in turn correlates to sound. Utilizing Merriam's model, Chapters One through Three demonstrate how the musical sound of Temple Emanu-El, B'nai Jeshurun and Chavurat Tikvah is constructed from a foundation of concepts which integrate music into the broader culture of identification. Like the ancient practice of "symbolon," in which each half of the symbolon holds no intrinsic value until joined with its other half, music functions as a symbol only when coupled with its cultural concepts.

Musical sound alone, deprived of cultural values, does not hold transformative power in terms of identification, for there is no context for the sound.

> A minimum knowledge is required if a symbol is to be able to exercise its power. In regard to music, this would include some knowledge of the cultural codes which enable the listener or performer to understand the music. Without this, music, like any other symbol about which nothing could be said, would dissolve into pure imagination. Such a situation would reduce the musical symbol to the Romantic ideology of art for art's sake."[28]

An illustration of this is found in the results of the effort to import B'nai Jeshurun's services to other communities. On some occasions, Ari Priven and a rabbi will visit another community to lead a "BJ" Friday night service, although not on Shabbat. While the music, and even the "performers," remain the same, the experience does not hold transformative power.

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[28]Chauvet, 128.

Without the context and concepts that support this music, it was reduced from "symbol" to mere information, a commodity easily passed from one community to another. While this effort to share the success of B'nai Jeshurun stems from the best intentions, the very act of pulling music from its context renders the music ineffectual as a symbol: "Musical theorists today, particularly those influenced by post-modernist writings insist that musical meaning can only be understood in the institutional and societal context within which the musical works are created, presented and enjoyed."[29] Without a familiarity with the context and symbolism of B'nai Jeshurun's music, a listener cannot appreciate the ability of this music to inspire identification.

The other half of the symbolon, cultural concepts, also lacks power to change without a transformative medium to carry these concepts. Alone, "sound" and "concept" function as signs, which provide information, and remain on the level of cognition. However, when these two halves are joined, music functions as a symbol and provides not only information, but integration of cultural values within an art form.

Music realizes its potential for identification only when it performs as a symbol. As a symbol, "music evokes participation and allows an individual or social group to orient themselves, that is, to discover their identity and their place within the world."[30] This is particularly true of music as a ritual symbol, because people enter into ritual with an expectation of integration

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[29]Alperson, Philip, "Introduction: New Directions in the Philosophy of Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (Winter 1994), 8.

[30]ibid., 111.

of communal and individual identity. As Victor Turner describes it, ritual creates "communitas,"--a strong communal experience of identification with a group when an individual senses, even momentarily, a recognition of an essential and generic human bond.[31] Experience of "communitas" when listening or participating in music is critical to mediating identity.

Music has created a sense of "communitas" in the three congregations of this study: At Emanu-El, the music which emanates from the heavens of the massive sanctuary humbles both congregants and clergy alike. In these moments of majesty, worshippers at Emanu-El are reminded of the literal and figurative smallness of each person. Even the clergy appear free of ego and personality in the context of the service. Simultaneously, the music uplifts the congregation as a whole and reminds it of its prophetic mission in the world. The congregation is bound in communitas through the values of universalism represented in its music.

At B'nai Jeshurun, communitas derives from the unity of the music which is attained from diverse sources. Music of all strands is welcomed, embraced and integrated into the community, just as B'nai Jeshurun tries to welcome, embrace, and integrate Orthodox, homosexual, single-parent or single Jews into its community. Additionally, the dynamism of the music gives voice to the many seekers who enter B'nai Jeshurun, looking for transformation and meaning. Worshippers identify with the engaging sound, which gives them permission to emote and engage authentically in

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[31]Turner, Victor, "Liminality and Communitas," *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) 96.

prayer. The music at B'nai Jeshurun invites the community to reach a level of communitas in which pretenses are put aside.

Chavurat Tikvah seeks communitas on every level of interaction, but most explicitly through its music. The music creates a community of equal individuals. There are no "professionals," and so there are no intermediaries for the religious experience. Nothing is too high, too low, or too hard to join. The Chavurah values each person's voice as equal. The community not only *hears* everyone's voice, but it also *recognizes* it. Communitas is built on personal interaction, in which members perceive the generic human bond between them through their music.

In each of these three congregations, music mediates this fundamental experience of communitas and builds identity. But to what extent does this experience reflect existing identities and to what extent does it construct them? How much can we attribute transformation to music's power?

At Temple Emanu-El, "transformations" are the most subtle. This community is conservative by nature, and unlikely to consciously seek radical change through religious practice. Instead, the music at Emanu-El reflects the population of its membership. But while the music reinforces the cultural values of the congregation, in some cases, it shapes them. The community's regard for aesthetics and universalism encouraged one congregant to become a major philanthroper in the synagogue and in the larger New York community as well. Another congregant credited her experience in the congregation with "intensifying [her] commitment" to Jewish life, including city-wide and national Jewish organizations. Every

congregant expressed great pride both in being a member of Emanu-El, and in the dignity of the values expressed there.

Every congregant with whom I spoke at B'nai Jeshurun credited the worship experience for transforming their Jewish practice. One congregant said that she "had no Jewish connection before BJ," and she is now a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Other stories are no less dramatic. One member, who was never active in synagogue life after his Bar Mitzvah, has grown in observance since joining B'nai Jeshurun and most recently informed his new employer that he was Shomer Shabbas. Another noted that the worship service "pushed me in a direction of searching for what is more Godly about our existence." Music as symbol here invites radical transformation, and members have responded to this call.

At Chavurat Tikvah, members cited their experience in the Chavurah as a major identifying force. One family reported that its involvement in the Chavurah changed the nature of its religious identity: "Judaism is no longer something we go to; it's something that we are with." Another congregant noted that his first positive Jewish experience occurred in the Chavurah. While his involvement in the Chavurah did not change his religious practices, it had a tremendous impact on identification: "My interest in being Jewish has been changed from negative to positive."

Emanu-El, which offers the least engaged worship service, produced the least tangible transformation among its members. This may be related to the congregants' involvement with ritual symbols:

> The effectiveness of symbols depends not on the extent to which they are rationally grasped and understood, but more importantly on the extent to which a person or persons are involved in them. Participation in the symbol is what determined the possibility of insight and interaction.[32]

At B'nai Jeshurun and Chavurat Tikvah, members more actively participate in music as a symbol, and there is some correlation between this fact and the transformative nature of music. Nevertheless, in all cases, even at Emanu-El, music functions to strengthen, and in some circumstances to create, Jewish identity.

Music, or course, is but one ritual symbol among the many elements that make up Jewish identity. In part, music is credited with great power because of its ability to express meaning in a medium that is reverberating, universal and not fixed. Its true power lies in its ability to represent the life of emotions in a way language cannot. Furthermore, "the ability of music to resonate in the human subject enhances the possibility that insight will occur. These insights, in turn, provide that moment of recognition which allows subjects to further orient themselves and discover their identity within their world."[33]

Without music, some of the congregants of each of these three congregations might not have discovered their latent Jewish identities. In some cases, the music created their Jewish identities from nearly nothing. The music helped many of these congregants to identify what they valued

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[32]Kubicki, 437.
[33]ibid., 438.

about their Judaism, and about themselves as human beings. Values cannot transform in a vacuum. Music was the missing piece in these congregants' symbolon, and when it matched with their cultural concept, it unleashed the Jewish identity within. Music as symbol allowed them to identify and articulate their identities.

In addition, music helps reinforce identity in each of these three congregations because each community believes that its music is unique. Congregants are very aware of the music in "neighboring synagogues," and are cognizant of how their music differentiates them from all other places. Uniqueness plays an important role in reinforcing identity:

> To develop maximum commitment in its members, a group must form a unity or a whole, coherent and sharply differentiated from its environment. The group builds commitment to the extent that it...develops its own uniqueness and specialness...The strength of commitment, then, depends on the extent to which groups institute processes that increase the unity, coherence, and possible gratification of the group itself, at the same time that they reduce the value of other possibilities. [34]

The importance of distinguishing oneself from the "Other" causes congregants to differentiate their music and their underlying concepts from other neighboring synagogues. At Emanu-El, congregants celebrate their service as a stronghold of Classical Reform decorum amidst Reform Judaism's climate of change: "It's a formal service, but that's what makes it unique. We participate, but differently." The concept of a real Reform canon strengthens congregants' commitment to their music, and causes them to diminish the value of vastly differing possibilities: "At the last

[34]Furman, 71.

[UAHC regional biennial], the cantor sat with a bongo drum. I really didn't like it. That doesn't lift me to a different level, to a level of feeling spiritual."

Congregants at B'nai Jeshurun receive a great deal of feedback on the uniqueness of their worship services, especially given the publicity the congregation has received over the last few years. They are aware of how the music's dynamism differs from that of most other Jewish worship experiences: "When I was a kid, music was stagnant in terms of using it as a medium to push people, but that's what BJ's music does...The clergy's understanding of the crescendo, the way it works up, the repetition, its done in a way that really appeals to people's emotions." This member was very attuned to the unique way in which the clergy crafted the music to elicit emotional involvement from the congregation. The congregants' strong value of "authentic" praying sets their congregation apart from many others in the city in which members are not engaged: "People [at BJ] really focused and participated, it wasn't a show or performance. People cared enough to learn what the service was about." Implied in this comment is the notion that at other congregations, people *did not* focus or participate. This comparison reinforces the important concepts of this congregation.

Chavurat Tikvah, as a chavurah, is already distinct from other mainstream congregations. However, several members cite their music as a primary point of uniqueness. "Worship is important to our group. We do that best. And music is *very* important to our worship." Members proudly note the personal nature of the music, not only in terms of who makes the music, but even the musical selections in a service: "They are special and unique

and reflect the family who selected them." The Chavurah makes strong distinctions between their method of leadership and that of most mainstream synagogues: "With a cantor, . . . people sit back and the cantor just sings." Even though the Chavurah is led by an invested Cantor this year, the congregation still harbors strong negative feelings toward this model of "cantor-led" services.

Strikingly, each congregation holds beliefs that seemed to contradict strongly held concepts. The importance of differentiating musical concepts from other congregations sometimes leads to an inability to see change. For example, the introduction of "folk" melodies into Emanu-El goes on unrecognized; it is seen simply as part of the canon. Congregants cannot see this change because they cling so strongly to their concept of high aesthetic. At B'nai Jeshurun, congregants love the dynamic, experimental nature of the music, but at the same time try to reconcile their growing desire for more "traditional," unaccompanied music. While Chavurat Tikvah congregants speak only of participatory music, many cite listening moments as highlights in their service.

Music represents the identifying concepts of a community, and as a result change is hard to achieve. When music outside the standard repertoire is introduced, it can either create dissonance with strongly held concepts or adapt to match the existing sound. In each of these congregations, the music-makers alter music from diverse sources to match the self-concept of the congregation, whether universalistic, transformative, or participatory. Dissatisfaction among congregants can occur when music conflicts with

core concepts of the community. Music articulates elements of identity and then reinforces them, and it cannot be changed lightly.

The questions remains: Does music reflect identity or actually help to construct it? Asked in another way--Does music express or evoke emotion? As discussed in the introduction, this question dates back to at least the time of Aristotle, and even finds voice in a passage from the Babylonian Talmud (Pesachim 117a):

> 'To David, a Psalm,' (*L'david mizmor)* intimates that the Divine Presence rested upon him, at which point he uttered this song. 'A Psalm of David,' (*Mizmor l'david)* implies that he [first] uttered [this particular] psalm, and then the Divine Presence rested upon him.[35]

The Talmud is discussing the two parallel introductions to the Psalms of David. The first implies that David was initially inspired by the Divine presence and only thereafter created music; the music expressed David's already existing connection to God. However, in the second passage, the music itself evokes the Divine presence, in a place *where it did not previously exist.* Music can not only express a prior identification with God as in *L'david Mizmor;* it also has the power, as in *Mizmor l'david,* to *construct* a relationship with the Divine. The two examples together affirm the reality that sacred music functions equally in both directions. As evidenced in this ancient passage, as well is in the contemporary examples of Temple Emanu-El, B'nai Jeshurun and Chavurat Tikvah, music works not only to reflect identity, but to construct it as well.

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[35]Translation, Dr. Mark Kligman.

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