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Cantor Noah Schall: Keeping Chazzanut Alive

by

Ellen S. Cohen

This paper is written in partial fulfillment of the
Master of Sacred Music Degree

advisors: Rabbi Geoffrey Goldberg
Cantor Israel Goldstein

Dedication

With love and respect that I dedicate this paper to my
brother, Brian M. Cohen. I could not have
completed it without his support. He gave me
his time, advice, patience, and most of all,
he wouldn't let me give up.

About twenty-five years ago, Cantor Moshe Ganchoff stood on a stage improvising his way through a prayer while a captivated audience listened to a great work of hazzanut in the making. In the back of the audience, young Noah Schall was furiously scribbling down notes on staff paper. At the end of the concert, dozens of people rushed to the front of the room to shake hands with the already famous Cantor Ganchoff. Young Noah waited patiently his turn. However, he did not shake the Cantor's hand or congratulate him. Noah simply handed Cantor Ganchoff a piece of manuscript paper and said in a matter-of-fact way, "This is what you just sang." Every note, every dray, every turn, meticulously notated on the manuscript. Cantor Ganchoff was shocked. Noah Schall, however, did not think his manuscript to be anything so extraordinary.

There are many different people with various opinions about the musical work of Cantor Noah Schall. Nevertheless, there is one fact that everyone agrees on; many of the great works of Chazzanut which are commonly studied and sung today would not have come this far, and may have never even got past their first performance, if not for Cantor Schall's work. He is, undoubtedly, a "hero" in the world of traditional Chazzanut, having saved hundreds of great works from being forgotten, or worse yet, passed on orally from one cantor to another until they were unrecognizable from the

original composition. It is safe to conclude that some of the finest composers of Chazzanut and their compositions would be virtually unknown, if not for the meticulous work of Noah Schall.

Noah Schall was born on August 30, 1929 in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. He was the only child of Nathan and Sarah Schall, two of the many Jewish immigrants who had come from Austria-Poland at that time. His parents were not particularly musical, although his father sang in the choir of the famous Cantor Jacob Samuel Maragowsky (1856-1943), better known as Zeidel Rovner. Having a close relationship with his parents, Noah knew that they would support him in any of his endeavors. After all, he was an excellent student and, after switching from public school to yeshiva at age ten, he studied hard and excelled in each of his classes. Studying and learning (especially Jewish learning) have always been important to Noah Schall. Raised as an Orthodox Jew, Cantor Schall feels that he has become even more religious over the years through study. He makes certain to include Talmud and other Jewish studies in his daily regimen. When asked to explain his reasons for studying, he replies, "I do it for knowledge and mitzvah, and myself. Even something I studied twenty years ago, when I study it again now, I see it in a whole new light." That he

While many of today's Jewish musicians emphasize the musical part of Jewish music, Schall finds that the prayer itself, the Jewish idea behind the music, is what ties it all together and gives that sense of *kavanah* that is so often lacking in Jewish music today. He attends a synagogue which offers study groups and lectures; not only a house of prayer, but also a house of learning. As Cantor Neil Giniger suggests, "He [Schall] is a man of tremendous religious conviction." All of Cantor Schall's work centers around his quest to serve G-d in the best way he knows how. As he writes in the forward of his anthology of *Hazzanut for the High Holy Days* (translated from the Hebrew): "...and that is how I have come to edit this book, out of the responsibility and dedication which is befitting a holy work such as this."

It is hard to believe that such a musical talent as Noah Schall has had so little in the way of formal musical training. What Schall has is an remarkable ear for music. He remembers everything that he hears, and can repeat it. At the age of eight, Noah heard his first significant hazzan. The cantor was Joseph Shlisky (1894-1955), who was making a special appearance in a nearby *shul*. Before this time, he had heard only the usual *baal t'filah* who would *daven* in a very plain sort of manner. At such a young age, Noah did not quite understand what he was hearing. As he approached age ten, he began to realize a

difference in styles of chanting. This became most apparent to him when he first heard Cantor Moshe Ganchoff in a nearby synagogue. He understood that this style was far more elaborate than that of the *baal t'fillah* which he had been used to hearing. The young boy grew to like this more elaborate style of Chazzanut very much, and would run over to hear Cantor Ganchoff whenever he could during break periods of Shabbat and holiday services at his own congregation. At that time, no one could have been aware of the important professional relationship which would develop between Schall and Ganchoff so many years later.

At age eleven, Noah began to lead services in the Junior Congregation at his synagogue. Schall, who was able to imitate perfectly the *nusah* and style which he had heard so often during services, drew the attention of many congregants. Although he was not yet a Bar Mitzvah, the Rabbi of the congregation was inclined to allow this young boy to lead services for the adult congregation. By leading services a few times a year from ages eleven to thirteen, it was obvious to the people of the congregation that the young Noah Schall had an above average affinity toward the *nusah* and prayers for such a young child.

When it came to formal training, Schall began quite late in life, when compared to others with musical talent of this

magnitude. Zeidel Rovner asked Noah to become a part of the same choir that his father had sung in. The choir was well-known and fostered such talents as Mordechai Hershman and Jacob Rapaport. The music that was sung was often quite difficult. At the time, Noah could not yet read music. Teaching Noah solfeggio and sightreading then became the task of the choir conductor, who happened to be Rovner's son, Elias. So, at age sixteen, the lessons began; but there was one major problem, Elias Rovner spoke only Yiddish. Although Schall understood conversational Yiddish, he did not know the Yiddish musical terms. Because he did not know these terms, he also had no way of asking Rovner any questions that he might have. In spite of the language barrier, Schall became fluent in solfeggio, sight-singing, and musical dictation and notation by the age of seventeen. Piano, however, is another story for Schall. He took about five lessons from composer Morris Barash. Noah's inclination though was never toward the piano, and to this day he plays "by ear."

As soon as he could read music, Schall began to realize that he had an unusual ability for transcribing. His first encounter with this hidden talent happened as he was listening to a radio show which featured some of the great hazzanim of the time such as Joseph (Yosselle) Rosenblatt(1882-1933) and Mordechai Hirschman. Schall found that while listening to a piece being sung on the radio, he

had the ability to write it down, note for note. When he sang back what he had just written, he found that it was an exact copy of what he had just heard. At the time, Schall did not realize the importance of what he was doing. Even today, having an incredibly humble disposition, he will not admit to this obvious and extraordinary talent. These were the beginnings of, as stated by Jewish music publisher Velvel Pasternack, "...a new standard to the notation of Chazzanut." Pasternack continues by saying that "Schall's notation is meticulous, no one else in the world can do this." As Cantor Bernard Beer, Director of Yeshiva University's Belz School of Music, suggests, "...There is no one else who can listen to a record and capture every little grace note, every *krekhtz*, and the entire nuance on paper." Schall explains that when he transcribes a piece directly from a recording of a live performance, he uses the changing of modes and the modulations within the piece to frame his transcription.

The next step for Schall was writing original compositions closely based on the *nusah*. Schall began doing this by sitting with a friend and going through manuscripts written by cantors and Jewish composers. From this experience he was able to get a feeling for what people were writing and compare opinions on what they were reading. Schall's friend challenged him to write a composition better than the ones that they were reading. Schall took this challenge and wrote

his first composition, a setting of the *Mi Sheberach*, for which Morris Barash later wrote a piano accompaniment.

The question is whether or not Noah Schall can be considered a "composer." Schall's own feeling is that there is no way that anyone could consider him as such, and that what he does is really something quite different than composing. "To be a composer," Schall states, "one has to write music in parts, not just a melody. All I do is take a variation of the *nusah* and make it fancier." He explains: "Composing is if I write something that I never saw, there's no fixed way to do it. I would have to open to a blank page and make a melody. In what I do, I am bound by motifs and a mode. The basic motifs are the same as Katchko or Alter."

This may be true. If one would try to make a comparison between Israel Alter, Adolf Katchko, and Noah Schall, one could plainly see similarities. For instance, there are only so many ways that one could write a Barechu for Shalosh Regalim and still observe the traditional *nusah*. As Schall puts it, "...*nusah* is *nusah*!" Whether or not Schall himself agrees, it is plain to see that Schall's variations of the *nusah* are far more intricate than those of Alter or Katchko. Cantor Sherwood Goffen of Lincoln Square Synagogue would reiterate: "Even Israel Alter himself said that there is no

one better [than Schall]." Cantor Aaron Bensoussan of Temple Beth Sholom continues, "Alter would actually call Schall to review the music that he wrote!" On the other hand, Noah Schall believes that his music is no better than anyone else's, just more concise. He feels that, in reality, Katchko and Alter are more talented because they did more in the way of actual composing.

Noah Schall received his Bachelors Degree in Philosophy in 1947, from Yeshiva University, in New York. During the last year of his studies, he met Shirley, the woman he was to wed. In 1953, Noah and Shirley were married. Noah took his first High Holy Day cantorial position at the age of nineteen. After his marriage, he took a full time cantorial position in Spring Valley, New York. He stayed at this congregation for one year before becoming the cantor at Congregation Tefereth Israel in Glen Cove, Long Island. He remained at this pulpit for seven years. When the eldest of his five daughters was in elementary school, he wanted to move to an area where there were better Jewish day schools. Because a good education for his daughters was his main priority, he left the Tefereth Israel and took only High Holy Day positions from then on.

One can not ignore the fact that Cantor Schall could have had a full time congregation if he had wanted to, and

for any number of years. He certainly has the talent for it. Nonetheless, he does not find full time congregational work as interesting or as rewarding as writing or teaching. Schall also has no desire to be a performer of any sort. He is not particularly comfortable in front of a large group of people. His total lack of egotism, and his uncommon humility are likely reasons for this shyness. As Cantor Bensoussan so aptly explains it, "As great as his amount of knowledge is, that is how tiny his ego is." It would also appear that Schall does not consider his own voice to be of very high caliber. There are people who will disagree with him on that point. After first hearing Cantor Schall sing at a wedding some years ago, Cantor Bernard Beer remembers being "...surprised at how good he sounded vocally. A small voice, but very sweet. I thought he was excellent." When asked if he thought that Schall could be a full time cantor if he so chose, Beer responded, "He could be anything he wanted to be, he has an encyclopaedia in his mind, and not just for music."

During his final year in Glen Cove, Cantor Schall felt that he may want to go into teaching. An opportunity came about when Cantor Rothstein, who had been the Cantor in Glen Cove before Schall, told Schall that he would be leaving his current position as a teacher at the cantorial school at Yeshiva University. He asked Schall if he might be interested in the position, but let him know that there were other

candidates for the job. Rothstein felt that Schall would have a better chance at this teaching position if he were already connected with the School in some way. So in 1960 Schall returned to Yeshiva University and, within one year, he received his Cantorial Diploma. The faculty of the University realized Schall's remarkable talents for *nusah*, trop, and all Jewish studies, and immediately offered him a teaching position in the Belz School of Music. He taught a myriad of subjects at the School, including Nusah, Cantillation, Haggadah, and even Shofar-Blowing! After twenty-five years, Schall retired in 1985, but he continues to teach privately from his home.

Even before he attended and taught at Yeshiva University, the name and talent of Noah Schall had become quite well-known in the world of Jewish music. Many of the greatest cantors of that "Golden Age" sought his help with the transcription of their music, and called upon his sight-reading and ear training skills to help them. For many years, he was living among the great hazzanim during a time when chazzanut was at its height. Such talents as Sidney Schikoff and Jacob Konigsberg sought the help and advice of Noah Schall when they were scheduled to perform live on the radio. Even the great Jan Pierce asked a young Noah Schall to notate some music for him. Schall tells an amusing story about the very first time that he received a phone call from

the illustrious Cantor Pierre Pinchik(1897-1971). "I answered the phone and an almost inaudible voice said: 'This is Pinchik, I need your help with some music.' I thought it was one of my friends playing a trick on me and I said: 'Come on, who is this?' It took some time for Schall to actually believe that the Pinchik was calling *him*--a twenty-one year old kid!

Schall remembers Pinchik as being rather "eccentric," "Talking to him [Pinchik], was like being on stage." When Noah arrived at Pinchik's home, the Cantor first wanted to test his handwriting. Schall was asked to copy over an entire piece of music, just to prove his handwriting skills. Schall remembers that Pinchik had dozens of compositions lying around with only notes and no words. Pinchik would also test Noah by showing him a piece of this wordless music and asking him what text went with that music. Pinchik would then sing a text that would not fit with a melody and afterward proudly ask Schall, "What did you think?" He was actually testing the young man's perceptiveness and honesty. The reason for this wordless music was that Pinchik did not want any other cantors to steal his music. Therefore if they asked what a certain piece of music was, he would tell them that it was just piano music.

Schall explains that the cantors of that era were, more

often than not, were extremely reluctant to share their music and terribly competitive. One must remember that there were no copy machines at that time, and everything had to be copied by hand. Schall relates a story about Jacob Rappaport, who would charge someone \$75.00 per page to be allowed to come to his home and copy a particular piece of music by hand. However, if he found out that a piece someone had copied from him was shared with another cantor, he would never again let that person copy anything. For these reasons, it is amazing that Schall himself, has such a large collection of this music.

Cantor Schall explains the way that he obtained it: "Cantors who would pay all this money to copy down a piece of music from someone such as Rappaport, could not always read music. After copying these notes that they couldn't read, they would call me to come over and teach them the piece. In return, they would give me the music." Schall would then trade music with other people and build his collection in this way. He continued amassing this collection by obtaining music from the widows and other family members of the cantors he had worked with. One of the problems with such an extensive collection as Schall's, which includes original manuscripts from dozens of eastern european hazzanim, is that there is too much of it for one person to handle. For instance, he has a large collection of David Roitman's music

but it is not written with any sort of clarity. It takes someone very experienced to decipher each piece of music in a collection such as this. For example, deciding such things as where each grace note belongs, the grouping of the coloratura, and the expression marks.

It is through this collection that Cantor Schall realized the need for making many of the old works of chazzanut clearer and more useable. It was then, in 1967, that the Cantorial Council of America sought someone to write a collection of *tefillot* which would be written in the modes for Shabbat, Shalosh Regalim, and the High Holy Days. The Council brought together some of the leading composers and arrangers of Jewish music at that time, including Shlomo Carlebach, Ben-Zion Shenker, Noah Schall and many others. However, the other people involved did not add anything to the anthology of *Hazzanut for the High Holy Days* which was published in 1969.

In the end, it was solely a compilation and edition of Noah Schall. The next two volumes which would follow in this series the *Hazzanic Thesaurus for Sabbath* and the anthology of *Hazzanut for the Three Festivals*, were also the work of Noah Schall. Schall wrote these books by elaborating on the *nusah* of the appropriate holiday for many of the *tefillot*.

He added to this task by compiling many of the great works of chazzanut and clarifying and re-working them. There was grammar and *ta'amim* to be changed, and the reduction of the repetition of words that really were not so important.

Schall would later do the same in 1973 with his *Oz Y'ran'nu: Friday Evening Selections For Two Part Choir and Cantor*, in 1974 with *Hallel V'zimrah, Cantorial Recitatives and Two Part Choir Selections for the Hallel Service*, and in 1975, for the *Shir U'Shab'cha: Two Part Sabbath Morning Selections*.

Cantor Schall was well aware of the great task that lie ahead in editing these pieces which so desperately needed his help. However, he saw this task as vital to the future of Jewish music. Schall explains that "music should always be in the process of change...it has to evolve. Some pieces become boring and are not used anymore because they never change." "What Schall did with these pieces," says Barry Serota, a collector of chazzanut recordings and music, "is to make them into something that is useable. Schall is more interested in improving what there is, rather than always writing new things."

In order to realize all the changes that needed to be made, one must first understand all the problems that existed with the music. The first and most difficult problem was

that the old time hazzanim would often forgo proper accents and Hebrew grammar for vocal "tricks" and more comfortable vowel sounds. Schall wanted to make the Hebrew more readable, more understandable. Schall feels that most of the composers in the era of the thirties and forties thought that the melody was more important than correct Hebrew. Schall compares two composers on this point, "Alter wrote with the most clarity and served the text the best, concerning himself with *dikduk* and the like, but even Alter felt that Rappaport was best when it came to writing a melody. Alter, however, would sometimes give up the melody to respect the *ta'amim*, but Rappaport would not." On this point, Schall clearly agrees with Alter. Rappaport certainly was a fine composer of melodies, and yes, *ta'amim* and *dikduk* are by far, more important. Schall feels that American Jews of today have a stronger connection with the State of Israel and the Hebrew language, and would therefore disprove of an improper usage of Hebrew. In the thirties and forties, Jews accepted improper pronunciation and grammar.

The second major problem with much of the music from the "Golden Age of Cantors," is word repetition. Because many of the hazzanim of that generation had little or no understanding of Hebrew, they would often repeat words which were unimportant or insignificant to the central meaning of the prayer. They would choose their repetition of words either

at random, or repeat words that had a good combination of vowels and consonants for vocal ease. Much of the time, cantors would repeat Hebrew words that they recognized because the word was the same in Yiddish. For instance "emes" or "n'shamah." Oftentimes, this would result in "textual disaster!" For instance, the cantor might sing "Lord, do not forsake us," and have the choir repeat, "Forsake us!"

Another problem that Schall faced when beginning his editions, was some opposition when trying to the publish works of cantors and composers, who were no longer living. He had to obtain the permission of each of the families to for editing and publication. Some of the families, were not so willing to give out old manuscripts or rights to the music. The Rappaport family was especially reluctant to part with his manuscripts. They did, however, give Cantor Schall permission to use any of Rappaport's music which he had heard and already transcribed. (The family later sold the music for \$100.00 a page!) The families of most of the other cantors were quite helpful in this matter. Most notably, when it came time for Schall to write his book of the music of Koussevitsky, it was the cantor's daughter-in-law who gave the music to Velvel Pasternack and asked him to give it to someone who could do something useful with it. After all, who could better pay homage to these great hazzanim than Noah

Schall. As Pasternack explains, "Schall is able to analyze the great hazzanim stylistically." Cantor Bensoussan adds, "His [Schall's] *kavanah* brings out the text and actual feeling of what the composer wrote."

It is apparent, that when compiling and editing music, Schall was more interested in certain composers than others. He felt that composers such as Leib Glanz and Joseph Kaminsky were among the finest. Their music merited much of his attention and the cantors of today deserved to hear these works. Nevertheless, it becomes evident just by looking at the contents pages of any of his anthologies, that Schall was particularly interested in the music of Jacob Rappaport. Schall explains that, "Rappaport was the best of the era. He was the leading composer for cantors. Cantors both then and now find his music very easy to sing...the melody lines are always excellent."

Cantor Schall has compiled numerous works in collaboration with Cantor Moshe Ganchoff, as well as editing for Ganchoff. The professional relationship between Schall and Ganchoff began over twenty-five years ago. Cantor Ganchoff recalls, "When he began to edit for me, I thought, 'who's this kid?' But I immediately saw that he was a scholar of great knowledge." Ganchoff continues, "You can rely on his knowledge, he is superior, an expert without a match. There

is no one else on that high a level. He has worked with Barash, and edited the works of Rappaport and Zemachson. That enhances his stature in my opinion."

Ganchoff feels that Schall is one of the only people who can truly understand his musical style, probably because they both lived the chazzanut of that time period. Ganchoff, who never used to write anything down and would only improvise, feels that it is Schall who "forces him to create." "...[He] makes me prepare first and be aware of what I'm singing." Schall insists that Ganchoff use proper grammar and accents and that he avoid repetition of words. Ganchoff is sometimes both red by this because he wants to create a sound without always concerning himself with the text and proper usage of the Hebrew. Ganchoff is an outstanding example of Schall's great contribution to the hazzanim of the future. Ganchoff reiterates, "He came over and worked with me on *Melech Rachaman*. Without him, I wouldn't have bothered with it. I need him because he persuades me to write and puts himself into my music. He makes me live up to my potential, if I do something that is not so great, he'll say, 'Come on, let's do that again.' He knows that I can do better."

Ganchoff has great respect for Schall and is grateful to him. "If my pieces are more accessible to cantors and cantorial students, you can thank him for that." The

dedication inside each of Ganchoff's collections says the following:

I should like to express my gratitude and sincere thanks to my dear friend and colleague, Cantor Noah Schall, for his devoted efforts in the preparation of these recitatives. It is due to his dedicated efforts that this book has come to fruition.

In addition to Schall's editions of the works of others, his anthologies contain many of his own elaborations of the *nusah*. Schall himself does not feel that these elaborations are anything so intricate or out of the ordinary, yet most of the cantors that have seen and sung his music, feel quite the opposite. Cantor Aaron Bensoussan, who is also a student of Schall's, claims that "...no one knows how to bring out a line more than Schall." Cantor Neil Giniger, who studied privately with Cantor Schall for seven years found Schall's writing of the *tefillot* so easy to understand, and quite clear and concise. "His writing enables me to make sense of some of the most difficult coloraturas and hazzanut." In a letter written to Noah Schall from musicologist Eric Mandel after the publication of the anthology, Mandel writes that he himself is studying Schall's work to try and understand how he utilizes the *ta'amim* so perfectly.

Part of the reason that Schall's work is so highly regarded is because his writing is done in such good taste. Cantor Bernard Beer, who was also a student of Schall's

before becoming part of the faculty at Yeshiva University, agrees that "his [Schall's] tastes in writing, editing and arranging, are very high." Barry Serota adds, "People who have bad taste in music, couldn't possibly appreciate Noah Schall's music." When composing his own music based on *nusah*, Noah Schall improvises a melody for a particular *tefillah* into a tape recorder, always using basic *nusah* for his frame. He uses an old *ba'al tefillah* style and Hassidic influences and builds on that. He will sing this into the recorder about three or four times. More often than not, each time is a little different. Schall then combines each of the times that he sang, always being sure not to change the phrases that he sang the same each time. He then goes back and corrects rhythms and accents so that they are more "singable" and flow better. Schall explains that if he were to write the same thing over again, it would undoubtedly come out differently. This may not seem like a standard way of writing music, but it clearly works for Noah Schall.

Schall's works for High Holy Days, Shabbat, and Shalosh R'galim became widely known and received reviews from many different sources. At the time, the Jewish Week of Washington D.C. wrote, "there are many praiseworthy points of this fine collection." Cantor Wolfson, the cantor of Congregation Emanu-El in Manhattan at that time, said in a letter to Cantor Schall that he would, "highly recommend the

anthology to all of his colleagues." One of the most complimentary reviews of Schall's work was from Reform composer Herman Berlinsky:

The volume by Noah Schall is a testimonial of historic responsibility. This work represents an ideal combination of freshness, originality, and deeply felt religiosity within the framework of the most authentic modal system of our nusah. Coming to us with the authority of the Cantorial Council of America and Yeshiva University, it should enable a tradition-minded, responsible cantor to resist any erosion of this marvelous treasure of Jewish music, for even in the Conservative and Orthodox Synagogues, these elements tend to be replaced by pseudo-Israeli and pseudo-Hassidic ditties. If the words of our tefillot have any meaning and relevance to our generation, they must find their interpretation in music which mirrors these meanings and sentiments.

There are those who feel that Schall is blatantly ignoring the needs of the many differing styles of today's cantor by writing only for Orthodox cantors, or, as Cantor Sherwood Goffen, who once studied with Schall suggests, "...for the Orthodox cantor of the thirties and forties." Schall readily admits that he is not writing for money or popularity, but rather for his own self expression. Furthermore, he does not find modern chazzanut interesting, "It does not create any sort of a mood for davening."

There is great controversy surrounding the question of the practicality of Schall's music and editions. Although there are cantors that use some of Schall's music within their davening or concertizing, many people question the

overall need of Schall's work. The students at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion-School of Sacred Music, have the option of using music from Cantor Schall's anthologies within the context of their traditional workshop classes, but it is not mandatory. However, it is unlikely that many of the students will use this music in either their student pulpits or in their full time pulpits after Investiture from the Hebrew Union College. There is little interest in this type of traditional Chazzanut in most of today's Reform Synagogues.

There is a very different problem with Schall's music at Yeshiva University's Belz School of Music. Director of the school, Cantor Bernard Beer, explains that Schall's music, which is sometimes used for study purposes at the Belz School, is generally too advanced, both musically and cantorially, for the average Yeshiva University student. Cantor Goffen, who also teaches at the School, says, "most of our students do not understand the superiority of Schall's music compared to others. Therefore, I only use it in the teaching of my advanced cantorial improvisation class." Beer continues, "For the purpose of study, Schall's music is good...in a practical sense, it's inappropriate."

One can conclude from this that there is no place for Schall's style of music in today's Orthodox synagogues; that

it is best left in the era for which it was written, in the Orthodox synagogue of the thirties and forties. Barry Serota agrees that, "Noah Schall's music is not applicable for today's Orthodox synagogue." Most of the Orthodox *shuls* are looking to imitate the old *ba'al tefillah* style exactly, without any ornamentation or elaboration. Cantor Neil Giniger does not entirely agree. When asked if he agrees that there is absolutely no room in today's Orthodox synagogue for Schall's music, he answers, "In a practical sense, yes...but in a higher sense, no, because not to use music like Schall's diminishes the level of synagogue music." Giniger feels that all cantors, in any movement of Judaism, need to find a happy medium between "cantorial acrobatics" and "just plain *nusah*." "The point being that, in the Orthodox *shul* today, people want to participate more, they don't want to hear a concert like in the old days," declares Giniger. "Schall wants to do his own work and stay above the shortcomings of today's synagogues. He is writing for himself at the best level he can," Cantor Giniger concludes.

One can infer that if Schall's music is not widely used in the Reform or Orthodox movements, that it must be used in the Conservative seminary and synagogues. This is most certainly true. According to Conservative Cantor, Jacob Mendelson, who also teaches classes and gives individual coachings at both the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish

Theological Seminary-Cantor's Institute, "Schall's music is very well known amongst students at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The Shabbat book is the most popular and when students sing the music of Rappaport, it is Schall's editions which are mainly used."

Mendelson also finds Schall's music very useful in individual coaching sessions." Regarding the use of Schall's works in the Conservative synagogues of today, Mendelson says, "It is most often used in the Conservative synagogue, which is the last vestige of classical chazzanut." Cantor Ganchoff does not feel that it much matters which branch of Judaism uses Schall's music, he says only that "Schall is writing for cantors who are very musical." What many people do not realize, is that Schall is all too aware of the changing, or rather, the changed face of chazzanut. He says, "Many hazzanim today do not really know their craft, there are hardly any creatists today. These hazzanim are rarely unique, everyone just imitates. It's almost a waste of time to write in this era. If there was more of a market for it, I'd do it more." Cantor Giniger reiterates, "Schall recognizes and realizes the state of chazzanut in the Orthodox synagogues today." Cantor Bensoussan adds, "Noah Schall sees this era of chazzanut dying and it has a great affect on him musically. When he talks about this kind of music, people don't fully understand what he's talking about. Schall is

left from that legacy, but not enough students want to take the time to learn it exactly how it's meant to be, the way Schall teaches it."

Today, much of Noah Schall's time is spent teaching privately to a variety of hazzanim, who hold positions in synagogues of each of the three divisions of Judaism, as well as some who are not full-time cantors, but who often concertize and perform great works of hazzanut. He also finds himself in great demand, writing pieces for students and transcribing many difficult works from recordings, as *only he can do*. As Cantor Jacob Mendelson suggests, "Noah Schall is the person most commonly called upon in the world to notate for cantors." Mendelson continues, "...not only that, he is incredibly resourceful, a great musician, and has an extra-ordinary knowledge of *nuschaot* and *mi-sinai* tunes."

Cantor Bernard Beer speaks of Schall as a private teacher. "On a one on one basis, he can teach a student an entirely new approach, one which they had not seen before." Cantor Bensoussan, who has regular private coachings with Schall, had no musical background when he began studying chazzanut. When he was studying at Yeshiva University, he found Schall to be "...one of the most knowledgeable teachers, a man of tremendous depth." Schall taught Bensoussan solfege and general music. Cantor Bensoussan

considers Schall an amazing teacher in the private setting, and feels that one of the most incredible things about him, is that he will always admit when something is "out of his league."

Cantor Schall explains that he often creates music based on the needs of his students. If someone needs a setting for a certain *tefillah*, he takes the *nusah* for that *tefillah*, and adds on to it according to the student's vocal abilities and/or limitations. For example, if a student can sing very high notes, Schall is sure to add them in. If a student can not sing *coloratura*, he will not write any. Oftentimes, he will tape record the student singing the same piece from week to week. He encourages the student to try and improvise. He then listens and compares the recordings to hear which phrases were the same, and which were different. Schall says that he gets inspiration from his students. "When you hear it sung back, you see what's wrong. Both the student and I learn from their mistakes, and we learn how to fix these mistakes." This is all a part of the endless learning process on which Noah Schall bases his life.

A value that Judaism teaches us, is the value of learning, the value of knowledge. Cantor Noah Schall is a testimony to Jewish knowledge because he has never stopped learning and he is continually teaching. He teaches our

Jewish heritage by keeping alive some of the greatest music of our people. He gives an invaluable gift to the hazzanim of the future by preserving countless great works from the "Golden Age of Cantors. "There are those that are of the opinion that there is no other person alive today who possesses such an incredibly intense understanding and insight of traditional chazzanut and the great hazzanim of a many years ago.

Cantor/Composer Gershon Ephros, when speaking of the works of Noah Schall, quotes the Haftara for the Sabbath in Chanukah, Zehariah 3:2 [The works which Schall have edited, are like] "a brand plucked out of the fire." The commentary in the Hertz Chumash explains this to mean "Something precious snatched from destruction." He is completely unique in this field.

Cantor Aaron Bensoussan states, "Schall heard the true essence of chazzanut growing up. He felt it, he lived it." Velvel Pasternack affirms, "He is totally dedicated to the world of chazzanut, it's a part of him." This aspect of Noah Schall is agreed on by each and every person who knows him, and all who have witnessed his work. Noah Schall is always willing to share this part of him, this wisdom and understanding, with anyone who wants to learn.

Cantor Schall can usually be found surrounded by great cantors, outstanding talents of the past that most of us will never have the fortune of knowing. Koussevitsky and Kwartin, Rosenblatt and Roitman, Pinchik, Chagy and Schlossberg. Their photographs cover the walls of Noah Schall's basement in Flushing, Queens, and the music of these great men is there too, piled on desks, jammed into drawers, over-flowing from the bookshelves onto the floor. In the midst of all the precious clutter Noah Schall sits at the piano, smoking a cigar, spending endless hours, doing what only he can do--preserving the hazzanut of the past for the hazzanim of the future.

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