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Dedication and Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my teacher, my mentor, and my Uncle:
Rabbi Kenneth Jay Weiss z"l.
I love you.
May your memory be for a blessing.

Dr. Carole Balin, thank you for your guidance, support and cheerleading. This process would not have been as smooth without you. I am deeply and forever grateful for all of the time and energy that you gave to helping shape the ideas in my head in order to create a work that I truly proud of. You go girl!

Cantor Jonathan Comisar, you have been a guiding force for me this year. I will be forever grateful for all of the time we spent together creating a piece of art that helps tell the story of my home. You are truly inspiring.

Cantor Yonah Kliger, You have been my friend and mentor for over 20 years, and I know that you will be for another 20. Thank you for being my guiding light and my inspiration. I hope that one day I can be half the cantor you are.

My husband, **Andrew Hass**, You are my heart and soul. You are my rock and I am so excited to begin the next part of our lives together. I love you.

Joyce Rosenzweig, My Joyce, what is there to say… you are truly fabulous. Thank you for your guidance and patience throughout my journey. I am a better person and cantor because of you.

To the cantors, composers, musicians and artists, who spent time with me and shared with me their stories of Los Angeles - thank you for lending me your voices and hearts to help share my story.

To my family, you have all helped to shape me into the person that I am today. I would be nowhere without your support, guidance, and love. Thank you for being my everything.

A Heart in the West: Jewish Musical Creativity in Los Angeles

Introduction:

"Location… Location… Location…" is a phrase well known to many, and one that is extremely applicable to my life growing up in the Los Angeles Jewish community. From the time I was a young child, I remember attending temple with the feeling of pure joy and excitement. Moreover, during the years prior to the Northridge Earthquake (1994), URJ Camp Swig (now Newman-Swig) was playing a crucial role in the formation of my Jewish identity. At the end of each summer I returned home with an even brighter spark of curiosity for what it meant to be Jewish. My family and I celebted Shabbat weekly and attended services occasionally, but it wasn't until I experienced something that literally jolted every part of my soul, that I connected to my Judaism on a much deeper level.

January 17, 1994 is a date that will always hold a place in my heart: the day of the Northridge Earthquake. Of course, it was devastating and my family's home was affected tremendously, but it was also in my mind, a blessing in disguise. As a result of this horrible event, my family packed up and moved to the city…to Beverly Hills. This move would have a tremendous impact on my growing Jewish identity. We immediately joined Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, and I can truthfully say that it is because of that decision by my parents, that I am going to be ordained a cantor in just a few months. I often wonder what my life would have been like, who and what I would have become, if that earthquake never struck.

Temple Emanuel is the quintessential “LA success story”. In the last twenty years, the congregation has made some amazing and necessary changes that have resulted in new prayer experiences, some of which have become a model for others across the country. As a young student, I had the opportunity to be a part of those new and exciting endeavors. I had the unique opportunity to learn from a phenomenal clergy team, who together, created some of the most powerful and life changing spiritual moments in my life. I am most grateful for the time I spent learning from and eventually working with Cantor Yonah Kliger. Cantor Kliger embodies the “open-minded” culture that exists in Los Angeles. He is always looking for the next best piece of music, or working with the other clergy to create new and meaningful prayer experiences. As a result of the congregation’s location, he has also had the opportunity to work with many talented musicians and artists, and in turn, I have also had the wonderful opportunity to be exposed to these people.

Los Angeles, the cradle of my birth, is also the personification of my destiny. It is a place that defines the cantor that I will soon be: open-minded, a risk-taker, innovative and experimental.

Chapter 1: At the Roots of Jewish Life in L.A.

Los Angeles, California has long been known as a mecca of innovation and experimentation. It is a place of "immigrants" – folks who have severed ties with their old lives and moved to the "Wild West" where they feel free to do the things they wouldn't have otherwise. For generations, people have flocked to the land of palm trees and clear ocean waves, seeking a fresh start. The same can be said of the L.A. Jewish community, especially the many artists who started settling there from the time of its origins.

The city of Los Angeles was incorporated as an official American city on April 4, 1850. Formerly known as the Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels[1] it consisted initially of 44 inhabitants, who were brought there from Sonora, Mexico in 1781. Over the next half century, it became a much sought after location for those seeking land for home building. The first group of overland pioneers arrived to Los Angeles in 1840 and included Jacob Frankfurt, a Jewish tailor who was the first of his faith to be recorded in the city, though he didn't stay permanently at that point. Rather, he traveled up and down the coast of California, before making it his official home in 1850.[2]

Upon L.A.'s incorporation in 1850, a census was taken of Los Angeles, which showed a total population of 8,624 people, only eight of who are Jewish, one of which was the famed Alexander Bell. All were single men, except for the previously mentioned Frankfurt, and they all lived in four homes, adjacent to each other. Others soon joined them: young Jews like themselves who emigrated mostly from Germany (and Poland) and were eager to seize the chance for quick wealth. They were part of a great migration

[1] Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner. *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*. (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library 1970). p. 3. Print.
[2] Ibid., p. 4.

of some 250,000 German Jews to the United States at the middle of the nineteenth century escaping limitations being imposed "on occupation and even on marriage, not to mention the general oppressiveness of the political and economic regime in he lands of their birth.[3] Once in L.A., these adventurous souls traveled the dusty streets, set up businesses and established partnerships. Journalist and businessman Horace Bell describes the merchantry of early 1850's Los Angeles as mostly Jewish. "The fact was", he states, "they were all getting rich."[4]

Like most Americans who reached the West coast in its early years, the Jewish immigrants in Los Angeles rarely remained there permanently. But those who did contributed mightily to its tremendous economic growth and helped to bring the city out of its former isolation. Jews were also prominent figures in projects for the civic and cultural development of the new American city. And as such, the local townsfolk found them of interest and covered topics of Jewish interest in the press.[5] The local Jewish newspaper, The *Star*, took pains to describe the differences between the terms "Israelite" "Hebrew" and "Jew," concluding with the advice that 'Hebrew' today refers mostly to the language, and that 'Jew' is generally a term of reproach, while 'Israelites' is used in a "respectful address to the nation."[6]

As we might expect, the Jews' tremendous upward mobility led them to the political arena. Since the majority of the city's population was Mexican, would-be Jewish politicians often learned Spanish to ingratiate themselves to voters. Given the Wild West

[3] Ibid., p, 4.
[4] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[5] Ibid., p. 6.
[6] *The Star*, Jan. 10, 1857.

mentality, one historian claimed that the ancient Rabbinic principle "where there is no man one must strive to be a man" reigned supreme among L.A. Jewry.[7] In his words:

> The community [around them] was rough, lawless, untutored in government. The Jews were peaceable, intelligent, literate. They were needed in city government, and filled a vacuum which lasted until a later surge of immigration from the Midwest and the East changed the ethnic and civic complexion of the community.[8]

The Jews brought their religion to Los Angeles. Initially worship services were held sporadically in the homes of the prominent Jewish men in the community while the Hebrew Benevolent Society founded on June 24, 1854 established a cemetery and appealed to married Jews eager to settle into their hometown. A notice in *The Star* on August 17, 1861, announced the there would be High Holy Day services at $3.00 a seat. While considered - albeit unofficially - the first "congregation" in Los Angeles, a second and official congregation emerged at some point between September 1861 and October 1862, Congregation B'nai B'rith (known today as Wilshire Boulevard Temple).[9]

Congregation B'nai B'rith was a Reform congregation whose first and long-term rabbi was Abraham Wolf Edelman, a student of Rabbi Henry of Congregation Emanuel in San Francisco. All prayers were recited in Hebrew and membership was offered only to Jews who did not marry outside the faith. Order and decorum were strictly observed, despite the fact that, in the early days, religious services were held in a tavern and other rented spaces, including vacant courtrooms. "The Israelites are constantly under obligation to their Christian brethren for places in which to worship," Rabbi Edelman

[7] Vorspan and Gartner, pp. 17-18.
[8] Ibid., p. 18.
[9] Ibid., p. 54.

complained, and his words fell on sympathetic ears."[10] This became the impetus for a fundraising campaign that culminated in the laying of a cornerstone for a temple building on August 18, 1872 at South Fort 273 Street (now Broadway) in downtown Los Angeles. The building was consecrated on Friday August 8, 1873 and it was a citywide event. According to research, Historian Max Vorspan learned that many felt that this event was to be the "grandest spectacles ever witnessed in Southern California."[11]

Jews in Turn-of-the-Century LA

Over the next fifty years, Jews flowed into Los Angeles by the thousands. While many made their way up the economic ladder, but most Jewish families worked hard to make a living as shopkeepers, laborers, artisans, or clerks, as in other American cities.

Of course, it was the film industry that made Los Angeles a city like no other, particularly after 1912 when there was a shift in movie-making from New York owing to lower production costs. Movie moguls, such as, Adolph Zuker, Samuel Goldwyn and Louis B. Mayer of Goldwyn/Mayer, and the Warner Brothers,who created Paramount Pictures, thrived off of Hollywood and its vigor. In order to escape Nazi persecution, artists and composers alike, left "Central and Eastern Europe, where they were already prominent musicians, eminently successful in the world of classical music and opera. All of them escaped the Holocaust - several just barely - and made their way, often precariously, to a new world and a new industry. They brought with them the music of their old world, just as that world was beginning to destroy itself.[12]

[10] Ibid., p. 58.
[11] Ibid., p. 60.

[12] "Articles & Essays." *The OREL Foundation*. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

Originally, the city of Los Angeles paid scant attention to the "entertainment revolution" occurring in Hollywood and to the that fact that most of the "revolutionaries" were Jewish. However, as the number of artists seeking a big break in LA continued to grow, organizations and institutions, including Congregation B'nai B'rith, began to sponsor lectures and performances by them. One such organization was the historic Yiddish Theater Company Habima. Los Angeles was such a draw to these artists that its leaders Benjamin Zemach and Raiken Ben-Ari eventually settled in Los Angeles many years later.

Jewish religious life continued apace. Whereas only one congregation existed at the turn of the century, there were ten within the next twenty years. The future of L.A.'s Jewry was on the minds of the community and its vibrancy defended in an article entitled "Observations of a Jewish Young Lady" in the B'nai B'rith Messenger: "Los Angeles is by no means worse off than any other place…[Los Angeles] is up to date in the Temple line, and while they are not filled to 'overflowing,' we are not asleep."[13]

Over its first decade and a half, Congregation B'nai B'rith moved from a stern, Orthodox tradition to Reform Judaism, which met the needs of its acculturating population. Rabbi Sigmund Hecht, who was installed in 1899 and remained at B'nai B'rith for twenty years, prescribed to a "clear and sober" Judaism, "well in accord, with the thinking of the generous, broad-minded bourgeois of the time."[14] The Union Prayer Book was used, along with organ and a mixed choir, and many of its accomplished singers were not Jewish. English became the language of the liturgy and the sermon. As the congregation grew, it changed locations as ever more synagogues emerged all over

[13] Vorspan and Gartner, p. 154.
[14] Ibid., p. 157.

the city, the Conservative Sinai Temple in West Los Angeles in 1906 and the Reform Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills in 1938.

Moreover, philanthropy began to play a role in the Jewish culture of Los Angeles, with the founding of five major institutions between 1909 and 1915. With efforts focused initially on local needs, with the outbreak of World War I, many Eastern European immigrants became extremely active in these institutions. As a result of the war and concern for world Jewry, there was also an uptick of interest in Zionism.

As in most American cities, the Depression took a heavy toll on Los Angeles, including its Jewish community. Jewish institutions suffered financially, as their support dwindled and the remaining limited funds were devoted to relief work. By 1936, the U.S. Census of Religious Bodies reported 42 Jewish congregations in Los Angeles, which claimed no less than 82,000 "members," meaning Jews dwelling in their area. [15] At the same time, L.A. Jewry saw the establishment of the United Jewish Community, which engaged in internal matters, the United Jewish Welfare Fund, which focused on mainly foreign philanthropy, and the Jewish Community Committee, which stood as the main public relations body for the Jewish community. All aided in the resurgence and growth of L.A.'s Jewish community.

By the end of World War II, an estimated 150,000 Jews lived in Los Angeles, 20,000 more than at the war's start. Within a year, the number surged to 168,000. At a Community Council meeting, a supporter dramatically, if not exaggeratedly, described the scene:

[15] Ibid., p. 210.

> We in the Los Angeles Jewish community are living in a frontier which is as dramatic in its way as the original pioneer town of Los Angeles which was the goal of the first movement of Americans westward. Jews are trekking westward to Los Angeles in one of the greatest waves of migration in Jewish history. Each day the urban centers of the East lose their Jewish citizens to the attractions of our climate and resources. Jewish people are coming from Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Omaha, and a hundred other places.[16]

Like the Eastern European immigrants of old, Easterners came to Los Angeles seeking a new life. They discarded the "old" and created novel forms of Judaism in their synagogues and in their homes.

The Sounds of Jewish L.A.: Spotlight on Max Helfman and the Bardin Institute

With its well-established and large Jewish community, religious observance varied among Los Angeles congregations. For the most part, Reform congregations had assumed the Germanic/Classical form, with temples like B'nai B'rith using an organ and a hidden choir. With its emphasis on decorum, the prayer experience was mostly inaccessible and did not involve members' participation. The shift toward congregational music and melodies sought by musically sophisticated congregants eager to sing along came about when Max Helfman arrived on the scene.

Max Helfman was born in Radzin, Poland in 1901. His father was a local teacher and cantor, and Helfman was first exposed to Jewish music as a participant in his choir.

[16] Ibid,, pp. 225-6.

At the age of eight, Max and his family immigrated to New York City, and he received a traditional Jewish education at the Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva on the Lower East side. Little is known of his early years, but as he got older, he began experimenting with conduction and composition. Eventually, he began his studies at the Mannes College of Music, and although he never received a formal university education, Helfman became a "self-taught, intellectual, familiar with the canon of both secular Jewish and Western literature and philosophy."[17]

Some say that the most significant turning point in Max Helfman's life came in April of 1944 when he was introduced to Dr. Shlomo Bardin. Bardin was born in Zhitomir, Ukraine in 1898 and emigrated to Palestine in 1918. After studying at the University of Berlin in 1923 and University College in London in 1925, Bardin returned to Haifa in 1926, and began teaching at the Hebrew Boarding School in Haifa. As a postgraduate student at Columbia University's Teachers College, Bardin, along with Supreme Court Justice Louis L. Bardin, was concerned about American Jewish youth abandoning Judaism when they went off to college. After being denied the possibility of returning to teach in Haifa, "Bardin reacted to Brandeis' plea to concern himself with American youth, to counteract alienation and to find a way to make Jewishness meaningful to young people."[18]

With Brandeis' financial support, Bardin forged a plan to create an institution based on the best attributes of a kibbutz. Selecting the faculty was of the utmost importance: Bardin "stipulated that knowledge and learning were to be only part of the

[17] "Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Max Helfman." *Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Max Helfman*. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.
[18] Philip Moddel *Max Helfman: A Biographical Sketch*. Berkeley, CA: Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1974. p. 33. Print.

qualifications. The basic requirements were Jewish consciousness and enthusiasm, which would ignite the desire for identification and dedication in the students."[19] He brought Max Helfman on board as the Director of Music, who was then music director at Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark, New Jersey. Helfman conceived of the synagogue as "not so much a religious institute as a center for musical expression, an outlet for his creative mind." He imagined that a "new horizon was opening," where music could sound different from the "Chants of the Synagogue or the songs of the Yiddish Chorus" He called them the "sounds of "Brandeis," and characterized them as [h]aunting melodies of beautiful hills and valleys, of settlers returning to an ancient homeland, of dreams becoming reality, the pulse of work and the rhythm of dance; and the young voices, stirred by the emotion of these songs."[20]

Helfman studied and masterfully arranged the music of pre-state Israel and in 1947 the Brandeis Camp in Santa Susana near Los Angeles was born. In preparation for the inaugural summer, Helfman and his faculty would sponsor "Parlor Meetings" where they would present a small group of singers, usually college students, whom he called the "Brandeis Singers". After their experiment to hold three different camps in various parts of the country failed, they consolidated and focused on southern California, where Helfman moved with this wife and son, to become the fulltime music director.

Students from nearly every state, Canada, and even Mexico, came together for what was described as a "living experience in Judaism" For many of the students, the music was the highlight of their experience each summer. Bardin discovered that at least half of the campers were ashamed of their Judaism upon arriving at camp that first

[19] Ibid., p. 33.
[20] Ibid., p. 34.

summer. He strived to ignite in each person a sense of Jewish pride, as well as an obligation to serve Jews at home and abroad.

Helfman's positive impact quickly became evident. In an article in the *B'nai B'rith Messenger* a reporter gushed "After watching Max rehearse the choral group at Santa Susana for more than an hour, a well known Jewish communal leader turned to a friend and said 'If the Brandeis Institute had done nothing more than present Helfman to the West Coast, it would have been dayenu!'" Helfman's dedication was matched by his sense of humor. He could engage a group of young adults and interpret Jewish music like no other of his time. Helfman explained it in this way:

> Many of our Jewish young men and women are atrophied emotionally. They have lost their will for passionate living as Jews. Some think there is a wall between Jew and Gentile; but the real wall is between Jew and himself; the young American Jew who has been running away from his heritage and in doing so has turned his back on a rich creative past. Tell them about the problems of the Jew and your solution and they will argue with you – but you cannot argue with a song or with a dance, they are non-arguable things

Helfman, who was accustomed to the synagogue setting, adapted to the new outdoor environment, though he retained several of his previous compositions. English songs in his repertoire, such as his "Set me as a Seal," "Five little songs about God and Things," and "The Lady of the Lamp" made their way into the Bardin repertoire. At the same time, Helfman realized that he could not abandon the cantorial role he had cherished in his previous life. And so before long, he soon insisted on leading daily

worship. To that end, he composed new songs and adapted old synagogue melodies. When it became apparent that most campers came from non-religious homes, he created a song sheet with mostly hymns in English, which caused a "minor revolution." Even those who knew no Hebrew insisted the prayers be said in the ancient tongue. "We like the sound of it," they said, "It gives us a feeling of a thousand years of tradition…"[21]

Building on his success, the following summer (1948), Helfman created a "Jewish Tanglewood" at Brandeis-Bardin known as the Brandeis Arts Institute. Its objectives were (1) to train gifted Jewish youth to be able to take on leadership in the cultural lives of their congregations, and (2) to learn how to create programs and material that responded to the cultural needs of American Jewry. Twenty-five students between the ages of 18 and 25 - who were trained as composers, instrumentalists, singers, conductors, dancers and writers - were accepted into the first cohort of the program. Distinguished faculty artists were chosen from across the American Jewish spectrum, including Dr. Ernst Toch, Erwin Jospe and Heinrich Shalit who taught composition; Dr. Alfred Sendrey who taught conducting; Solomon Rosowsky who taught Cantillation, to name a few. With such an impressive faculty, large numbers of the enrolled students that first summer would become giants in their fields, including Alan Arkin, Charles Feldman, Jack Gottlieb, Gershon Kingsley, Ray Smolover, and Yehudi Wyner. Helfman called his students the "lost generation" as he strove to bring them back to Judaism and steer them toward careers in the Jewish community. Thanks to Helfman, students who might have otherwise lost their connection to their heritage remained in the Jewish fold. To one student ashamed of his Jewish identity, Helfman replied, "The object is not comfort! Of

[21] Ibid., p. 38.

course there are occasions when an effort is needed to acknowledge Judaism. Sometimes we have to swim against the stream like the salmon."[22]

Helfman touched the lives of many hundreds of students over the course of his seventeen years at the Institute. He put a spell on those he encountered, whether it was through his music or his deep and witty conversation. Not only a skilled musician, he was also well-educated with had strong convictions. Bardin summed it up best when he said,

> Many people know how to teach, very few know how to touch. Max knew how to touch a human being. He radiated enthusiasm. His influence is felt even today, years after he departed. His influence is in this institution, in these rooms. When we pray here today, somehow Max Helfman is present.[23]

The synagogue and Jewish music scene in Los Angeles was indeed changing. Composer and Cantor William Sharlin became a well-known presence in Los Angeles. A graduate of Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music in 1951, Sharlin was a student of the greats: Eric Werner, Adolph Katchko, and Rabbi Leo Baeck to name a few. Upon completion of his fellowship at the HUC campus in Cincinnati, Sharlin was offered a job at Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles. At an initial meeting with Rabbi Leonard Beerman and Jack Skirball, Leo Baeck's rabbi and search committee member, respectively, Sharlin recalls, "He [Rabbi Beerman] never asked me to sing for him, but instead had me sit down at the piano. He requested that I play something popular – something from a Broadway show. I started playing a medley of show tunes, and he shouted, "That's it! I want this man!"

[22] Ibid., p. 40.
[23] Ibid., p. 41.

Since Rabbi Beerman and Cantor Sharlin held similar attitudes and approaches when it came to sharing the bimah, they became great partners. Sharlin was free to develop as a composer, and was “determined to have the congregants learn challenging music, rather than instantly catch on to simple ditties.” That is to say, he respected his congregants and wanted to present to them music of substance, He also introduced guitar; he was one of the first to do so. In an interview with historian Jonathan Friedmann, Sharlin explained, “There is no singular-universal way to serve the enormous complex of conditions in our synagogues today... The degree of success will vary from place to place, but the goal must be the same: Sanctification.”

Most well known for his choral compositions, Sharlin served as the Cantor at Leo Baeck Temple for forty years as well as a composer-in-residence at synagogues throughout the country, sharing his music and his passion with all those he encountered.

Chapter 2: From Hollywood to the Synagogue and Vice Versa

Los Angeles was not only a home of film and television music but also a center of Jewish innovation. Many composers of Jewish decent who established themselves in Hollywood turned their attention as well to creating music for the synagogue. As a religion with a profound musical history, Judaism does not simply speak the words of the Old Testament but sings them. It is thus no coincidence that talented Jewish artists felt called to contribute to our musical tradition. L.A. congregants were the chief beneficiaries of such a phenomenon as modern composers created a bridge between the music of the day and what they heard in the synagogue.

An alliance between Jews and the movie industry reached a height in the years preceding World War II as European Jewish refugees made their way to Hollywood. Immigrant composers such as Ernst Toch and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco made their start composing for film and later found their way into the Jewish music world. Jewish movie moguls like Adolph Zuker of Paramount Pictures, Samuel Goldwyn and Louis B. Mayer of Goldwyn/Mayer, and the Warner Brothers, thrived off the talents of these Jewish men, who came initially to create "movie music" and then compositions sung in synagogue settings.

In 1934, in order to escape persecution in Germany, composer Ernst Toch made his way to America. Known for his musical successes in Germany, he eventually landed in Hollywood, after falling victim to the Nazi Regime, who designated his work as "degenerate music" by virtue of his being a Jew. Its performance outside strictly Jewish confines or auspices was forbidden.[24] Many of Toch's scores were burned as Hitler

[24] "Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Ernst Toch." *Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Ernst Toch*. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.

claimed that no Jew could possess the power or ability to create culture. Like so many other Jewish émigré composers from Europe, Toch secured work in Hollywood. His scores for the films *Peter Ibbetson* in 1935, *Ladies in Retirement* in 1941, and *Address Unknown* in 1944 earned him Academy Award nominations.

Toch's life in America led to the unexpected: a rediscovery of his Jewish identity.[25] His *Cantata of the Bitter Herbs*, which is liberally based on the Passover Haggadah, owes its creation to the chance meeting between Toch and Rabbi Jacob Sonderling of Fairfax Temple, a Reform congregation in Los Angeles. After Rabbi Sonderling suggested that he compose some simple melodies for an upcoming children's Passover service, Toch was inspired to compose a cantata that combined Psalms, Biblical texts and Haggadah passages.[26] *Cantata of the Bitter Herbs* was Toch's first musical composition based on his Jewish identity and heritage. He would see inspiration from his Jewish roots in several other compositions, including his contribution to *The Genesis Suite* and his fifth symphony, titled *Jephta, Rhapsodic Poem*.[27]

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco was an Italian-born, Jewish composer who is remembered today for his music for guitar, and especially for film. In 1939, before the Germans invaded Poland, Tedesco and his family, along with several other émigré composers, fled Mussolini's Fascist regime, and settled in Los Angeles. Upon his arrival, Tedesco entered a contract with MGM Film Studios, which launched his fifteen-year career as a major film composer. He was associated with several other studios including

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[25] "All About Jewish Theatre." *All About Jewish Theatre - A "Forgotten Composer" Remembered: Ernst Toch (1887–1964) and His Cantata of The Bitter Herbs*. Web. 12 Dec. 2014.
[26] "Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Ernst Toch." *Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Ernst Toch*. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.
[27] "All About Jewish Theatre." *All About Jewish Theatre - A "Forgotten Composer" Remembered: Ernst Toch (1887-1964) and His Cantata of The Bitter Herbs*. Web. 12 Dec. 2014.

CBS and 20th Century Fox, working on scores as a composer, assistant, and collaborator for over 200 films.

A chance encounter with a friend and Rabbi allowed Castelnuovo-Tedesco to reconnect with his Jewish identity. In 1943, Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote his *Sacred Service for the Sabbath Eve* in response a request from his friend and Rabbi Nahum Immanuel, the interim Rabbi at the Reform movement's Beth Shalom Temple (now Beth Shir Shalom), in Santa Monica. Castelnuovo-Tedesco commented that he felt this to be one of his "most purely inspired works," one of the pieces in which he began "to find himself again."[28] Its premiere was originally envisioned foe Immanuel's congregation since the music was set to text that appeared in the *Union Prayer Book.* The premiere, however, never occurred at the Santa Monica synagogue because Rabbi Immanuel left the congregation before its debut, and the congregation could not afford to produce this premiere. The interest in the music dissipated after Immanuel left. Thus, Castelnuovo-Tedesco withdrew the service and its official premiere took place two years later at Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City. The composer once expressed his fantasy of "hear[ing] it once again in the synagogue in Florence" where his family had once worshipped and which evoked in him an image of Jewish antiquity. In contrast, he found that "In America he had come to associate it with his personal Judaism." In a special emotional way, it indicated a return, full circle, to his Jewish roots.[29]

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[28] "Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco." *Milken Archive of Jewish Music - People - Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.
[29] Ibid.

From the Synagogue to Hollywood and Back Again: Maurice Goldman

Maurice Goldman, who was born on the East coast and eventually settled in L.A., achieved success first in the Jewish world and later in Hollywood. Born in Philadelphia in 1920, he was the son of Rabbi Marcus Goldman, who relocated his family to Cleveland Ohio. By the age of five, Goldman showed tremendous promise as a composer and piano player. After studying at Case Western Reserve University, he became the youngest person to conduct at the famous Severance Hall in Cleveland, at the age of 26. He traveled frequently between Ohio and Los Angeles, and he gained fame through compositions that infused traditional Jewish music with elements found in jazz, classical, and American folk music.[30]

Goldman combined work in Jewish and non-Jewish settings: he served as musical director for the Los Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education, directed the Los Angeles Opera Company, and served as the cantor at University Synagogue. Albeit brief, he also spent some of his career immersed in Hollywood, scoring films. These films covered a wide range of genres including a cowboy movie called *The Old Spanish Trail* starring Roy Rogers, and dramas like *Wild Heritage*, *The Bells of San Angelo,* and *Down Laredo Way*.[31] Of all his film work however, his fame came from composing the score for *Lady in the Lake*, starring George Montgomery. Despite Hollywood's lure, Goldman's real love was traditional Jewish and Yiddish music, and he composed some of the most majestic and hauntingly beautiful music that exists today.

As the L.A. music scene of the 70's and 80's underwent significant changes, Jewish music followed suit. Composers like Aminadav Aloni, Michael Isaacson, and

[30] "Maurice Goldman." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 26 Nov. 2014. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.
[31] Ibid.

Meir Finkelstein managed to straddle both worlds, effecting both the sound of popular and synagogue music.

Aminadav or Ami Aloni, as he preferred to be called, was born in Tel Aviv in 1928. According to legend, Ami was four or five years old when he came home from seeing a movie at the local theater and he sat at the piano, plucking out the melody of the movie's theme song.[32] His parents bought him his own piano, and he began studying with some of the finest teachers in Israel. At the age of 17, Ami left Israel and began his long time love affair with Los Angeles. His big break in L.A. came when he began to perform in jazz clubs, and improvised accompaniment for two of L.A.'s famed dance companies: Bella Lewitsky and Gloria Newman. Shortly after, he began his career writing music for film and TV, and in 1964, he co-wrote and composed the music for "Like a Golden Thread," a CBS television show about life in the shtetl. Aloni continued to compose for TV and film, including the scores for the movies *Once* in 1974 and *The Lost City of Atlantis* in 1978[33] as well as music for the celebrated television series *Roots*.

In 1966, cantor and musical director Sam Fordis, asked Aloni to accompany him at his congregation Valley Beth Shalom, a large conservative congregation in Los Angeles. This spurred a long and intimate relationship with the congregation, which culminated in 1977, following a battle against Hodgkin's lymphoma and a rediscovery of his Jewish identity, after which Aloni assumed the position of musical director. There, he was able to premiere new liturgical works, which cantors and choirs around the world have been singing these compositions as part of their regular repertoire ever since.

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[32] "Aloni Music Foundation – Aminadav Aloni." Aloni Music Foundation - Aminadav Aloni. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.

[33] "Aminadav Aloni." IMDb. IMDb.com. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.

Another great emerged at that time. Composer, conductor, producer, educator, and author, Michael Isaacson, has had a profound impact on both the Hollywood and Jewish communities of Los Angeles. Born in 1946 in Brooklyn, New York, Isaacson studied as a boy at Yeshiva Rambam and earned his B.S. in Music Education from Hunter College and an M.A. in Music Composition from Brooklyn College and in keyboard studies at the Julliard School.[34] He later received his Ph.D. in Composition from the Eastman School of Music. Isaacson moved from New York to Cleveland Ohio where he became the music director of Tifereth Israel Temple. Each week, he composed alternative woodwind quintet and choral music, "exploring new modes of contemporary synagogue prayer."[35] In 1976, after marrying Susan Weisblatt, the couple made their way to Los Angeles, where Michael pursued a career in music for television and film.

For Hollywood, Isaacson composed and arranged music for many well known television series, including *The Bob Hope Show, John Williams and the Boston Pops with Joan Baez, Little Women, Hawaii Five-O, Days of our Lives, The Nanny, and Curb Your Enthusiasm.* At the same time, Isaacson remained a prominent Jewish music composer and has since become one of the most commissioned Jewish composers ever (specifically by Emeritus Cantor Jay Frailich of University Synagogue and Cantor Nate Lamb of Stephen S. Wise). He also served as the founding artistic director of the *Milken Archive of 20th Century American Jewish Music*. Michael Isaacson's unique and powerful music can be heard all over the world.

The third crossover Jewish composer, Cantor Meir Finkelstein was born in Israel in 1951. The son of Cantor Zvi Finkelstein, it was clear from a young age, that music was

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34 "Michael Isaacson – Biography." michaelisaacson.com. Web. 26, Nov. 2014.
35 Ibid.

in his blood. At 14, he became the youngest Cantor in Europe at a small congregation in Scotland, and at 18, he became the cantor at the prestigious Golders Green Synagogue in London. Upon moving to America, Finkelstein began working at Beth Hillel Congregation in Wilmette, Illinois where he spent several years. Fed up with the Chicago winters, Finkelstein and his family moved to Los Angeles, California so he could attempt a career in Hollywood as a composer, producer, and arranger. Although he did not want a full time cantorial position, he did take on a part-time position at B'nai David Judea for Shabbat mornings. While at B'nai David, an opening became available at Sinai Temple; and he became their full-time Cantor 1982. Nevertheless, Finkelstein continued to write for Hollywood on the side, arranging music for television shows including *Dallas*, *Falcon Crest*, and in collaboration with Steven Spielberg, the award-winning documentary *Survivors of the Holocaust*. Finkelstein is one of the best-documented composers of contemporary Jewish music and has composed over 100 liturgical settings. One of his most prized works "Liberation" was written to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of the Nazi death camps, and its premiere featured the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

The sound of music began to change in the 1980's and 90's, as folk music was on the rise and artists, such as The Indigo Girls, K.D Lang, and Sarah McLachlan provided the sound that everyone wanted to hear. Julie Silver managed to blur the lines between secular folk music and Jewish liturgical music; she has become one of the most celebrated and beloved performers in the world of contemporary Jewish music today. Although she grew up and began her career in Boston, it was Los Angeles that really became her stomping ground, aiding in her success as a Jewish music composer.

Although Julie never attempted to break into the Hollywood music scene, in her work as a Jewish composer, she has collaborated with some of Hollywood's top producers and recording engineers. In her own words, Julie explained, "These songs came to life out here. California, specifically Los Angeles, it just so happened that they wanted me and I wanted them, and it was all for the same reasons which was to grow my Judaism and to learn. To teach of course, but really to learn…" Early on, she discovered that her **"**hevre is so much bigger out here because of the creative types, all of the meaningful relationships. This is a place where people come to expand and to open up, and so I found that I was on the receiving end of a lot of that good love and that teaching."[36]

The Real Hollywood Congregation… on Hollywood Blvd.

In Los Angeles, as in most places, physical location can aid in the success of a community. This is indeed the case for Temple Israel of Hollywood that is located in the heart of Hollywood. Musicians, performers, and other prominent figures in the city have helped to contribute to this congregation's success. Its cantor, Danny Maseng (born Don Tourliev), was born to American parents living in Israel. He began an acting career at a young age, starring in one of Israel's first television shows. In 1971, he moved to New York City and starred in the musical *Only Fools are Sad.* As one of a cast of six singers, the show "tells the stories of the Hasidic movement, founded in eighteenth-century Europe and advocating a simple, devotional Jewish life."[37] More recently, Maseng has appeared on "Law and Order" and "One Life to Live." In 2006, Danny Maseng made his way to Los Angeles and landed at Temple Israel of Hollywood as its cantor and music

[36] Interview with Julie Silver. September 22, 2014
[37] "PLAYBILL" Only Fools are Sad on Broadway. Web. 26 Nov. 2014

director. As a leader in the field of informal Jewish education, Danny has served as the Director of Hava Nashira for the URJ, the Artistic Director of the Brandeis-Bardin Institute, as well as the Director of The Spielberg Fellowships for the FJC. He is the Patron Artist of the Abraham Geiger School for Cantorial Arts in Berlin, the first post-Holocaust cantorial school in Germany.[38]

Today, Danny is considered one of the most popular and respected composers of contemporary liturgical and synagogue music. He has composed a treasure trove of beautiful music, releasing over a dozen albums. His compositions help to take Jewish texts to new levels, and he inspires and teaches his love of Judaism through his music. Due to his ideal location at the heart of contemporary pop music, Maseng has had the opportunity to work with many acclaimed and award winning musicians and composers, including Michael Skloff, a Grammy-award winner known for writing the theme song for the beloved television show *Friends*. The two have recorded together, played together, and even dedicated music to each other.

Los Angeles truly is a magical place of creation; musician swarm there in the hope of making it in the contemporary scene. Hollywood is the home to countless beloved Jewish composers, many of whom have made an impact on both the Jewish and secular worlds. In the words of Julie Silver, “I think that it is in the DNA of California, that people come here to make their fortune, whether it’s metaphorically or physically. Many, many people that I know who live here and are in the industry… even people that I met when I first moved here… people come here to create, and to experiment… to pan

[38] "Clergy | Temple Israel of Hollywood." *Clergy | Temple Israel of Hollywood*. Web. 26 Nov. 2014.

for gold…. In 1849 people came here for the Gold Rush. This is the Gold Rush that just never-ended." [39]

[39] Interview with Julie Silver. September 22, 2014.

Chapter 3: How does the unique climate and community of Los Angeles encourage innovation and experimentation in Jewish music and worship?

LA's unique, creative and open-minded climate and community have allowed many congregations, as well as composers, to experiment with worship. The free and open atmosphere allows people to take risks and try new concepts. As a result, Los Angeles is the birthplace of a vast array of worship experiences and musical endeavors that has had a tremendous impact on the Jewish community in the United States and abroad. In this chapter, I will focus on (1) Craig Taubman and Rabbi David Wolpe's "Friday Night Live" as well as Taubman's "Pico Union Project" and (2) the transition of Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills into one of the most innovative communities in Los Angeles.

Craig Taubman and Rabbi David Wolpe's "Friday Night Live"

Craig Taubman was born in Millington, Tennessee in 1958, but his family moved to Los Angeles shortly after he was born. Growing up at Sinai Temple, a Conservative congregation in Los Angeles, Jewish music and culture were imprinted on his soul from a very young age. At the age of 15, while attending Camp Ramah in Ojai, California, a counselor encouraged Craig to pick up the guitar and learn to play. Before long, he was helping to lead services and song sessions as Jewish music became prominent in Craig's life.

As an adult, Taubman has had an extensive career in television and film, composing and directing music for FOX, HBO, Disney, PBS as well as music for several feature films. His crossover to Jewish music came when Rabbi David Wolpe of Sinai

Temple asked Craig to join him on a new project. In the late 1960's, Rabbi Hillel Silverman, with the support of the Conservative movement, "grandly pronounced that "Shabbat should be at Home!" and that Sinai Temple would no longer hold Friday night services."[40] Although this remained a practice for many years, the generations of rabbi that came after Silverman found this to be ineffective. Thus, in the 90's, Rabbi Wolpe decided to face this problem head on. He worried that LA's young adults were not joining synagogues, and he "refused to buy into the urban myth that this demographic was satisfied and sustained by their high-powered jobs, yoga, and happy hours."[41] Rabbi Wolpe reached beyond Sinai, offering a new and exciting program for the greater Los Angeles Jewish community, targeting the 20's-30's crowd.

Taubman, who grew up at Sinai Temple, seemed like the best man for the job. Earlier that year (1998), Taubman had visited Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City and was inspired by their use of "energetic and experimental music in a liturgical sense."[42] However, Taubman was primarily interested then in music for young families and children, and so he made a counter-offer to create a service for that population. Rabbi Wolpe persisted until Taubman agreed to take on the task. The first "Friday Night Live" service took place in May 1998, and 300 people were in attendance. Rabbi Wolpe and Taubman, who were accompanied by one backup musician, led the service. They were positioned on the floor of the sanctuary as opposed to on the bimah, a departure from Sinai's traditional settings. Although the musical choices differed only slightly from past Shabbat services, Taubman's guitar accompaniment (rather than the typical organ) had a

[40] Matzkin, Laurie. *Applying the Principles of Friday Night Live to Prayer Leadership for Everyone*. Los Angeles, CA. p. 2. February, 2009.
[41] Ibid., p. 2
[42] Ibid., p. 3

transformative effect on the participants. Over the next few months, attendance soared to 800! Within a few years, "Friday Night Live" became **the** place for Jewish singles LA, drawing at times thousands of young Jewish adults.

From the beginning, Wolpe and Taubman would carefully craft each service, creating set lists and implementing musical repertoire that would move people and create an uplifting prayer experience. Each month, the two would meet to reflect on the previous month's service, asking the question whether they were meeting their initial goals. In Rabbi Wolpe's words, those goals included "moving people and giving them a Jewish experience that is not alien or alienating – a welcoming, interesting, and religious experience."[43] Along with this, Wolpe and Taubman wanted to help young adults find their place in the larger Jewish community, especially in synagogue life. In short order, they brought on guest musicians, artists and speakers, which created an experience that reached far beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Shaun Landres, who as former Director of Research for Synagogue 3000 dedicated a portion of his research to "Friday Night Live," found that people were "trying on an identity," and that 'the non-coercive setting allowed them to enjoy different aspects of the evening without commitment to synagogue membership or any specific ideology.'"[44]

Generally speaking, the LA community is constantly evolving, searching for the next best "thing." For the Jewish community, "Friday Night Live" proved to be that "thing." Its success was no accident but the result of an amazing partnership between Taubman and Wolpe. Craig Taubman was a successful and innovative musician and composer and Rabbi David Wolpe was a prominent Rabbi, well known for being eager to

[43] Ibid., p. 4
[44] Ibid., p. 5

push boundaries. Taubman strove to create an "artistically brilliant, intellectually challenging, spiritually infused and socially compelling service."[45] Taubman also believed that although the service was a sort of a "production," his ultimate goal was always to maintain his role as the *shaliach tzibur*. In his own words, "They [the congregation] feel like I'm in the moment; they feel like I am davening, not performing. As the *shaliach tzibur*, my job is to get other people into the moment, too." In a study by Zeigler Rabbinical student Laurie Matzkin, she learned that "Rabbi Wolpe functions as the *m'turgaman*, the translator, the commentator, the storyteller, the face of the synagogue rather than the voice of the prayers."[46] As a result of this successful partnership, Matzin determined that "the rabbi needs to understand that the musical choices of the worship service deeply impact the experience of every participant, and therefore need to deeply invest in building an even and sincere partnership with the musical leader."[47]

"Friday Night Live" was only the beginning. During the last few years, Craig Taubman has created a new community called the "Pico Union Project", a multi-faith cultural arts center. Based on the Jewish principle of "love your neighbor as yourself, the Pico Union Project is a

> House of worship open to groups and individuals of all faiths where people can meet and pray in a safe, encouraging and inspiring space. We are currently a regular home for five worship communities, and we have space available for special religious services and events. We provide a

[45] Ibid., p. 6
[46] Ibid., p. 7
[47] Ibid.

> supportive environment for interfaith activities and a beautiful space for lifecycle events.[48]

Its location is what makes it truly special. The "Pico Union Project" is house at the oldest synagogue building in Los Angeles, which was the original location of Sinai Temple, built in 1909. When Sinai moved to its current location in Beverly Hills, the building was taken over by a Welsh Presbyterian Church for 88 years, until the congregation approached the Jewish Historical Society of Southern California, who wanted to return the building to the Jewish community. Craig Taubman then purchased the building for the new home of the Pico Union Project. Taubman was inspired by the history and location of the building and its ties to the Jewish community. Through music, Taubman hopes to continue to create community where all who enter are welcome and will "learn to love themselves a little bit better, and in doing so, they become able to open their hearts to their neighbors, in all their diversity, in friendship, cooperation, and even love.[49]

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[48] "Our Vision." *The Pico Union Project*. Web. 06 Dec. 2014

[49] Ibid.

Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills:
The History of Shabbat Unplugged and Shabbat B'yachad
(Based on an interview with Cantor Yonah Kliger and Rabbi Jonathan Aaron)

Background Information on Temple Emanuel

Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills was founded in 1938, and since then has prided itself on being a sacred and diverse community. The clergy works tirelessly to welcome people of all backgrounds in order to "mark life's passage and discover a Jewish way of making sense of this world." As a Reform congregation in the diverse and affluent Jewish community of Los Angeles, Temple Emanuel inspires its congregants through intensive learning based on relevance and meaning for its congregants lives. Its mission statement reads, "There are many different doors that open to a more meaningful Jewish life including Jewish learning, Jewish culture, Jewish tradition, compelling worship, social justice, community, and spirituality. Our goal is to be a Mezuzah at those doorways, greeting and welcoming you. Whether you are a Jew by birth, a Jew by choice, or a member of an interfaith family; we encourage you to explore your own Jewish path within the embrace of our nurturing, intergenerational community."[50] The remarkable clergy team is made up of Cantor Yonah Kliger, Rabbi Laura Geller, and Rabbi Jonathan Aaron, and the newly hired Rabbi Sarah Bassin.

Growing up at Temple Emanuel, Cantor Yonah Kliger was exposed to a classical approach to cantorial music and worship. Under the direction of Cantor Edward Krall, the prayer experiences were filled with the sounds of a Hammond organ and a choir that was not visible to the congregation. The *bimah* held two separate podiums – one for the Cantor and one for the Rabbi, and the entire experience, in Cantor Kliger's own words,

[50] "About Temple Emanuel." *Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills.* Web. 06 Dec. 2014.

was very "church-like". In 1973, Baruch Cohen was hired, and although he was ordained an Orthodox Rabbi, he was hired as the Cantor. (Although Cantor Krall remained part of the clergy staff, neither cantor was considered the "*Cantor sheni*." According the Cantor Kliger, they both just co-existed there. Cantor Cohen brought a much more "*hazzanic*" style to his worship but also a "folksy" style informed by his Eastern European approach to music. Cantor Krall found comfort in a High Church or Germanic kind of approach. In addition, Cantor Cohen was interested in introducing congregational singing, especially through Hasidic music and he was also a skilled composer. Consequently, worship included large choral pieces as well as music that people could sing along to. It remained, though, mostly presentational with a choir present on a weekly basis during Friday worship.

Temple Emanuel experienced a complete turnover of leadership in the mid-90's with the stepping down of Cantor Cohen in 1994 and the engagement of two new rabbis and a cantor within just two years. Rabbi Laura Geller, the third woman to be ordained by the Reform movement, arrived in 1994, Rabbi Jonathan Aaron in 1996, and Cantor Yonah Kliger was engaged as a full-time clergy in 1996. As one might imagine, the new team implemented many changes and with full force; however, musically, Cantor Kliger started slowly. He remembers three specific pieces of music that he insisted on including in worship upon his hiring. The first was the addition of Debbie Friedman's "*Mi Shebeirach*," the second was Ami Aloni's "*Ahavat Olam*" for the High Holy Days, and the third was Debbie Friedman's "*Ahavat Olam*". According to Cantor Kliger, this was the first time anything even remotely contemporary was used at Temple Emanuel. [51]At

[51] In contrast, according to Rabbi Aaron, the High Holy Days have remained largely the same to this day. There is still a choir; the Cantor and the Rabbi are up in front.

the same time, Rabbi Geller immediately replaced the two separate podiums with a single podium in the middle of the *bimah*. She was adamant that there be no separation between the rabbi and the cantor. The goal was to break down barriers between the clergy, and the clergy and the congregation. To take an example of the latter, Cantor Kliger recalls the year when the choir was interspersed throughout the congregation at the start of Rosh Hashanah morning services. When the choir began with the traditional round of *Kol Haneshamah*, a staple melody in the temple, congregant felt invited to join in song. Eventually, the whole room reverberated with this beautiful melody. Rabbi Aaron echoes the sentiment, "There's been a great attempt for the congregation to join in. There are so many time where Yonah says, 'This is a time for everyone to sing.' He's been trying to encourage people to join in and be a part of the musical ambiance that's there. It is not always just Yonah singing, although I'd say that most of it is choir and solo, but a lot of it is congregational singing." This is the innovation that Temple Emanuel is known for. And, this was just the beginning.[52]

Fortunately, Rabbi Jonathan Aaron, a graduate of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, is an accomplished song-leader and an even more fabulous guitar player. When he joined the clergy team in 1996, he recalls that for the first two years he really didn't play his guitar as he wanted to establish himself in the role of Rabbi. He would periodically play at Sunday morning services, or if he was leading the religious school services on Wednesday afternoon. Cantor Kliger remembers that Rabbi Aaron would play at family services as well. He realized early on that they wanted to combine

[52] In addition, Cantor Kliger pointed out however, that while the look of the High Holy Days did not change, the content changed tremendously.

the sounds of Congregation Kol Haneshama in Jerusalem, with a little Shlomo Carlbach and create a camp feel." Initially Cantor Kliger was a bit concerned about creating this kind of service. He said, "growing up without guitar being a part of our temple music culture and only experiencing Jewish music on the guitar at camp where it was not done well, made me leery of it. However, the reason that I was open to it was because I had experienced the way he (Rabbi Aaron) played guitar. We had already developed a trust and a bond, so that enabled me to feel really good about it. It was because of his artfulness and the way that he play that instrument – had it just been some "clunker", I am not sure I would have felt so good about it." He feels strongly that guitar accompaniment "should be an organic part of the whole [and be] what is driving it. If you are not able to do that, and if every song is played the same way, then there is not movement or structure or flow or breath – its just strumming along with what's happening and opposed to driving it and creating the mood through it."

Originally, the clergy team experimented with a "leaderless" service with no microphones and with the clergy on the floor, at the same level as the laypeople. But some congregant complained that they wished for their rabbis and cantor to be "raised up." In contrast, Rabbi Aaron remembers that "nobody ever said anything about [Maltz]", a facility in the day school building with no differentiation in height between clergy and congregation. He continued, "But in there [Maltz], you can hear everybody and everyone felt involved, but in here [the sanctuary], you can't hear everyone singing as much. That's why people needed to see the leadership a bit more. The original idea of it was that once the song started, everybody is singing and there is no need for there to be any kind

of leader." The experimentation with the "leaderless" service eventually became one of Emanuel most beloved and innovation prayer experiences: "Shabbat Unplugged."

Shabbat Unplugged

Shabbat Unplugged takes place on the first Friday of every month. Led by the clergy, this service-in-the-round is an energetic and inclusive prayer experience, enhanced by the music of guitar, drum, and clarinet, drawing several hundred people of all ages. The creation of this service involved a lot of work and collaboration, primarily by Rabbi Aaron and Cantor Kliger. When asked whether or not there was any pushback from the congregation or other members of the temple leadership team upon the services creation, both Rabbi Aaron and Cantor Kliger shook their heads with a definitive "no." Rabbi Aaron stated that there really wasn't a "let's just try it" mentality. "We didn't ask permission," he said.

The service originally began as something for those in their 20's and 30's. In order to get people in the door, ads were placed in the Jewish Journal. But the result was mixed - a largely random group of people with some in the 20's-30's range, but mostly from forty to sixty years old who came to say the Kaddish. The clergy needed to address all generations, not just the younger set. Once they were able to say, "this is a service for everyone," the service truly took off.

In terms of content, the primary goal of "Shabbat Unplugged" was to include music that was inclusive and that helped to create an intimate and comfortable prayer environment. Originally, the service even had its own siddur. It was made clear that there was no skipping of pages, and it just flowed from cover to cover. Each prayer was given

several different English readings as alternatives, and prior to the service, Rabbi Aaron would ask a few people to pick a reading and participate at the appropriate time. This gave an organic and participatory feel to the flow of the service.

At the time, "Shabbat Unplugged" proved to be very different from what existed in the Reform movement and had a countercultural feel. Cantor Kliger recalled that one of the successes of the early days of Shabbat Unplugged was that "there was a grass roots feel for it – "underground" is too subversive of a word, but it felt sort of underground because we weren't using the Reform movements anything. It was just not quite so institutional and in fact, it was the opposite, to echo what he [Rabbi Aaron] is saying, there was the opposite of pushback on it. After about three or four years of it, people were saying "We like it so much, let's do it more often" or "Let's do it twice a month."[53]

While the choice of music for "Shabbat Unplugged" has evolved over time, the constant has been the desire to connect people to prayer. In the words of Rabbi Aaron, "we wanted people to be able to sing along as much as possible." Eventually, Rabbi Aaron began writing melodies, which are staples in the service and remain as such to this day. He told of a funny story about one melody in particular that he had written many years before joining the Temple Emanuel team.

> The L'cha Dodi is a Yehuda Policker melody from an album that I bought my first year in Israel [at Hebrew Union College]. There was an instrumental pieces called Transcontinental or something and I was just hanging out one day and I was playing around a bit and I thought "wow" this would a be a great melody for L'cha Dodi and I just started

[53] We knew we right, and we believed that once a month made it special and twice a month would dilute it, but we ultimately said, ok we'll try it for a year and watch it and we went from 200 to 250 people coming to about 100 each time." They quickly reverted to one Friday per month.

> doing it and then we brought it in [to Shabbat Unplugged] and then he [Cantor Kliger] learned it and we just started doing it.

Cantor Kliger described how his initial desire to include traditional nusach in "Shabbat Unplugged" has changed over time. In the early days, his discomfort with eliminating that "cantorial" element was abundantly clear. Together, Cantor Kliger and Rabbi Aaron utilizing the general essence and modality of the Shabbat evening nusach, created a chant for two chatimot; "el chai vikayam" and "v'ahavat'cha." As Cantor Kliger recalls,

> You [Rabbi Aaron] found a sort of guitar lick, and that satisfied my need for some Shabbat flavor of nusach. It's not exactly the nusach, but it gives it a taste of it. And then, after I participated in the [cantorial cohort] at the Institute for Jewish Spirituality,[54] that's when we started bringing in some nusach around Hazarat Hashavuah [an introspective and meditative review of each participants week] with L'chu N'ran'na, which has become this sort of meditative chant. But, that's less in the feel for the original intent of the service than these other hatimot, because they were designed for people to sing along."

Rabbi Aaron also used his songwriting skills when he was faced with the dilemma of maintaining a flow between prayers in the service. One specific section that he found especially challenging was Mi Chamocha into Hashkiveinu, and from that into V'shamru. To solve the dilemma, he wrote a new Hashkiveinu and a new V'shamru. The two are still being used today. The liturgy is crucial to "Shabbat Unplugged." In the words of Rabbi Aaron: "I think the difference [between our service, and a service like Friday Night

[54] The Institute for Jewish Spirituality is for clergy and leaders in the Jewish movement that utilizes the core practices of Torah study, prayer, mindfulness meditation, yoga as an embodied practice, and *tikkun middot* (the development of ethical character traits.

Live with Craig Taubman] is that ours is first a service and the music goes to the service, as opposed to this is about music and it just happens to be a service."

The seating and physical layout of the prayer space have always been vital to the success of "Shabbat Unplugged." From the very beginning, Rabbi Aaron insisted that the seating be in the round:

> I don't even know where it came out of but I just noticed that in services, you never looked at anyone else's face, unless you were turning this way and that way and turning behind. The only thing you saw was the back of the people's heads in front of you, and all you could see were our faces. But when you put it in the round, you see other people. So you get the feeling that you are part of a community and interacting with people. You see people and you see them sing, which makes you sing a little bit more. The sounds all comes to the center and it just was kind of part of it.

Instrumentation has also evolved over the life of "Shabbat Unplugged." As Cantor Kliger recalls:

> In the beginning there was no other instrument other then Jonathan on guitar and we were sitting around a table. The music was such that I couldn't help but play the drums on the table. We knew Amir [the drummer] and so a year or two into it, we invited Amir to play, and that took on a life of its own. The story about meeting Zach Lodmer the clarinetist, was that it was that one night we were in the middle of the service and this guy walks down the aisle with his clarinet, walks over to Amir, says something and Amir is keeping the beat and nods his head yes.

> Zach pulls up a chair, sits down, and just starts playing, and all of sudden it changed and Jonathan and I looked at each other and our eyes light up and we're thinking "this is incredible" and this guy – its like he was already living the music for a year, and he's weaving in and out and he's a sensitive and good musician and it took the service even higher. The service ends and I turned Amir and I say "Amir, man, thank you so much for bringing buddy!" And Amir said, "My friend? I don't know that guy". He was just some guy whose sister was a regular, and said you should bring your clarinet. Maybe they would want you to play. And so he did…And the rest is history…

The Creation of Shabbat B'yachad

After what seems like many years, Cantor Kliger, decided that he wanted to create a service with more of a "big band" feel. It would take place on the third Friday of each month and would consist of a high-energy full band, words projected on a big screen and a fun and casual atmosphere. After meeting Roy Zu-Aretz, a temple member and parent in the day school, that dream was realized. Their meeting was destiny as Rabbi Aaron describes,

> It was crazy! We had [Roy Zu-Aretz] over for Chanukah, and I knew he played piano and was a composer. So I had my guitar out and I said, "Come on Roy, let's play some Chanukah songs," and once he started playing, I couldn't play anymore and there was no way to following the complexity of what he was playing. So, I put my guitar back on the wall

and said, " Go for it Roy," and it was unbelievable and after a while we just kind of sat there and were listening to him play and that was at my house and that's the first time I remember hearing him play.

Cantor Kliger remembers hearing of Rabbi Aaron's excitement the following day and within short order, the two were collaborating. After Roy wrote a "Shira B'tzibor" for Yom Ha'atzmaut, Cantor Kliger got up the nerve to ask him if he would be interested in creating a new service. He recalls:

I didn't really know what the 'it' was, but I knew that I wanted it to be something contemporary with a full band and to be very different from "Shabbat Unplugged." I wanted it to complement it, but I didn't want to recreate it. What was also important was that it had a deep spiritual component to it. It was only after Roy and I really started collaborating and I would say, "Here are different melodies, and now you take it," I realized that Roy had his own really deeply, incredibly spiritual practice. Ultimately this was just the tip of the iceberg and it's hard to describe the *kavannah* that he brought to retooling most of the music. And it started with him just retooling melodies that we already knew. And then I said "Roy this isn't good enough, what about you now taking some of the prayers and really attacking them and writing your own stuff," and that was how the Sh'ma was born and the *Adonai Tzfatai Tiftach* was born and then the *Shiru Ladonai*. Look, we are in LA and we have tons of great secular composers and tons of great Jewish composers and I had collaborated with Jewish composers around town, but for me, it was

> because of Roy's sense of spirituality and his own depth of soul and kavannah and his love of Judaism and God and his love of learning, that I think we really created something special.

As someone blessed to experience Roy's tremendous talent, I can certainly attest to the fact that he is the most amazing pianist. I remember watching him and seeing every ounce of him - as if he was wearing his soul on the outside. Rabbi Aaron admitted, "I think that part of the reason that most people came to that service was for him. He took you from one place to another in the service. You can't label the style of music he plays. Its not really classical, it's not pop, it's not jazz." Cantor Kliger responded, "I can label it…he was praying through the piano. It was the combination of an incredible technical skill with a depth beyond belief that created something so different and deep and it was just the beginning of these band services happening around the country."

Although Rabbi Aaron has stated, "B'yachad is about the music…that happens to be a service" it has become is a prayerful and unbelievable experience. Other elements that added to the success of the B'yachad service are the screen, which projects the prayers, making it a hands-free experience, and the band. Roy was adamant that there be a professional drummer and bass player. In addition, B'yachad always has a story rather than a sermon. As Rabbi Aaron put it:

> And the story, the story was – I'm telling the story, and the piano is another character in the story. That's the thing. He's [Roy] not just "kind of" playing along. He was actually listening, and in turn, we recorded 12 of those stories in the studio – me facing him and him facing me – no rehearsals. And basically, I would tell him…this is the story – I would tell

him in a nutshell – this happens and this happens, and that happens and he would just go with it.

Both Shabbat B'yachad and Shabbat Unplugged are wildly successful services at Temple Emanuel. People from all over Los Angeles come to share in these experiences. I would contend that these services have helped spawn innovation in worship in other cities. Although the content and structure of the services have changed over time, the initial purpose and idea remain the same: to provide new and innovative prayer experiences that help to bring the community together to pray as one.

Conclusion: What will I take with me into my Cantorate?

The Los Angeles Jewish community is where it all began for me and I owe so much to those I encountered there. Their wisdom will continue to guide me as I journey onward and I pray that in each community that I am fortunate to serve, I will be able to reach out and touch the members of my community in ways similar to my own experience in LA.

My hope is to carry with me the wisdom to try new things and to encourage others to do the same. LA's open-minded ethos has led hundred of thousands to success, both in and outside the Jewish world. But I believe that the open-mindedness can flourish anywhere so long as we let it. Jewish communities beyond Los Angeles are starting to experience tremendous shifts musically, spiritually, and culturally, and it is because people allow themselves to take risks.

Los Angeles truly is a mecca of creativity. What a gift is was for me to call the Los Angeles Jewish community my home. I face the east towards Jerusalem when I pray, (and I have been enriched by Jewish life in New York), but a piece of my heart will always remain in the West, in my beloved LA.

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