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PASTORAL, PRIESTLY, AND PROPHETIC:
THE SACRED SOUNDS OF CONTEMPORARY SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP

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

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

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Contemporary synagogue music must be viewed in light of its own tradition as well as its cultural backdrop. Here in America, this backdrop refers to the "dominant significance of the American cultural carrier. . . ." ¹ Diversity in America offers a multiplicity of cultural styles, and American synagogue music is one area that has been influenced by this diversity. "Musically, the unique quality of the American cantorate is the blending of styles and approaches from world Jewry. Although Jewish music is always eclectic, the particular combination of influences that shape Jewish-American music is characteristic only of America, especially in our time."² This blending of styles is demonstrated by congregations and cantors today who: choose various congregational melodies and cantorial recitatives from synagogue music that spans 150 years of tradition; utilize Hasidic, Israeli, and Sephardic tunes for variety; write their own creative services; and even use their choice of service within the Reform prayer book.³ In addition, "the intertwining of strands of indigenous American popular forms is uniquely American, as well as the mixing of generational musics in the synagogue. This joy in musical innovation is American, as is the radical difference among the simultaneous stylistic pools being tapped."⁴ All of these styles make up what is called the canon of synagogue

¹Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Responses," CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly (Summer 1991): 15.

²Mark Slobin, Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 283.

³The new Reform prayer book, Chaim Stern, ed., Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), vii-ix, is constructed in such a way that different services should be used for different purposes. For example, services nine and ten in the prayer book are designated as "family services," while other services have various themes for Shabbat, such as peace and social justice. The idea that prayer serves a particular goal is crucial to the role that music plays within the service and illustrates the essential connection between music and prayer.

⁴Slobin, 283.

music.

With so many styles available composers of synagogue music have much to choose from. The musical canon is both large and ongoing, and contemporary synagogue composers are always looking to add something fresh to it, as well as to hold on to tradition. Indeed, it is the aesthetic of the twentieth century to incorporate many different styles into one's work while expressing those styles in the most modern of idioms.⁵ The composer is, after all, influenced by the period in which he lives and its contemporary expression. In today's post-modern world, variety and eclecticism are key. Congregants expect a certain amount of creativity in their synagogue music. In fact, congregants cannot disengage their ears from outside influences when they enter into the synagogue. Their twentieth century post-modern ears are yearning for innovation and this does not change when they come to worship. "Congregations should expect sacred music to be visionary. They want music that asks something of them even beyond what they can anticipate. . . ."⁶

Thus, amidst so much variety, the question one must explore is what motivates the composer to utilize one particular style over another? Moreover, what function does that particular style of music serve within the worship service? This thesis will address these questions by analyzing selected musical pieces of five contemporary synagogue composers: Michael Isaacson, Meir Finklestein, Benjie E. Schiller, Rachelle Nelson and Stephen Richards.

⁵Aaron Copland, What To Listen For In Music (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957), 159.

⁶Janet R. Walton, "North American Culture and Its Challenges to Sacred Sound," in Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience, eds. Lawrence A. Hoffman and Janet R. Walton, vol. 3 of Two Liturgical Traditions (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 4-5.

This project will describe their approaches to composing synagogue music, and their particular musical styles. I will then explore the function of their synagogue compositions within the worship service.

THE PRAYER MODELS AND THEIR INTERRELATION

Music does not act alone within a worship service. As part of the larger liturgical whole, it is one of many factors involved in fulfilling the goal of the service. The music, along with the Hebrew texts, English readings and sermon, must serve a particular function decided upon by the prayer leaders. The prayer leaders should have a goal in mind when planning the service in order for the service to be successful, and music, as part of that service, should also serve that goal. Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, Professor of Liturgy at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, offers a typology of three prayer models. These models represent three types of worship styles--each serving a particular goal: priestly, prophetic, and pastoral.⁷ Ideally, an effective worship service would incorporate all three prayer models, and thus, all three worship styles. Hoffman's typology relates to the entire liturgical content, "... the competent dramatic management of space, words, and music ... blend[s] together to constitute the composite art we call worship."⁸ As a point of departure, this project will focus on the role that music plays in expressing these three prayer models.

The goal of the priestly model is to bring the presence of God into the worship service. The origin of this model reaches back to the Temple in Jerusalem, where the "worship was cultic and priests or other worship specialists invoked the presence of God on a largely passive congregation."⁹ The name of the model comes from this three-fold priestly benediction which invokes the presence of God for those being blessed. Because perceptions of the Divine are

⁷Lawrence A. Hoffman, "On Swimming Holes, Sound Pools, and Expanding Canons," in Sacred Sound and Social Change, 335.

⁸Lawrence A. Hoffman, The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988), 269.

⁹Hoffman, "On Swimming Holes," 337.

culturally conditioned, there are many different views of God. Is God intimate and personal, or is God transcendent and awesome? Each culture has both its own past and present view of God and thus, the priestly model will reflect this view. The nineteenth century German Reformers, for example, invoked a God that was transcendent and distant.¹⁰ The goal of the music of their worship service was to invoke an awesome and mighty God. This was achieved through the use of big choral pieces by Sulzer and Lewandowski to convey God's grand and glorious nature.

Today's aesthetic has changed. The priestly model of today's American Reformers invokes a more personal God, one that is intimate and present. "God's presence today, . . . is more likely to be evident in the intimacy of community than it is in the awesome grandeur that marked the ambience of European-based worship styles."¹¹ This idea of God is more in line with today's setting of American culture. "America emphasizes equality of opportunity, radical democracy, and, therefore, a scaling down of social distance. God is therefore more likely to be known as an intimate friend than as a distant monarch."¹² There are still times in our worship when we want to invoke a lofty God, but those times are reserved for the High Holy Days and high moments of drama and grandeur. In general, the God of today's worship model is one that the worshiper finds in his or her everyday life. Therefore, the music of this model needs to express the intimacy of God's presence and the closeness of God to the worshiper. Prayers like *Hin'ni* and *Avinu Malkeinu* invoke the presence of God into the congregation

¹⁰Hoffman, The Art of Public Prayer, 171-72, 275.

¹¹Ibid., 267-68.

¹²Hoffman, "Responses," 16.

because of their direct dialogue with God and, depending upon their musical settings, can either invoke a personal God or an impersonal God. A wonderful example of a synagogue composition that invokes a personal and intimate God is Michael Isaacson's setting of *K'rachem Av* (1982) for the High Holy Days. This melody is similar to a lullaby, and could be interpreted as a parent caressing her child.

The goal of the prophetic model is to move people to action. This model gets its name from the prophets. Just as the prophets preached action and group cohesiveness, this model strives to arouse group consciousness, a sense of community, and *tikkun olam* [repairing the world]. "Preaching is central to this model, as well as music that delivers a message and unifies the assembly around a common task in the world."¹³ Thus, the function of music in this model is to arouse the worshipers to social action and ethical behavior. Songs of this genre might include: *Ani V'atah* [You and I Shall Change the World, 1971];¹⁴ *Zog Nit Keinmol* [The Vilna Partisan's Song, 1943];¹⁵ and any hymns where the text is essential in expressing social action and a common goal. The songs in the Reform movement's Union Hymnal¹⁶ labeled "Songs of Social Progress" are also examples of this model. It is interesting

¹³Hoffman, "On Swimming Holes," 337.

¹⁴Music can be found in NFTY's Fifty Songbook (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1989), 64.

¹⁵Music can be found in Manginot (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1992), 161.

¹⁶This is a book of songs and prayers for Jewish worship in the Reform movement published in 1932 by The Central Conference of American Rabbis, meant to accompany the movement's Union Prayer Book. For more information on the Reform movement's hymnals see Benjie-Ellen Schiller's article "The Hymnal as an Index of Musical Change in Reform Synagogues" in Sacred Sound and Social Change 187-212.

to note that the texts of the songs in the prophetic model are not necessarily of liturgical origin.

The prophetic model was extremely popular in the 1950s and 1960s, during the time of the Civil Rights movement, heightened social consciousness, and a renewed call for justice. "Congregations would no longer sit passively. They would be asked to sing together, to constitute worshipping communities that transformed their members' lives, to infuse their worship with social concern."¹⁷ Therefore, Hoffman cites the musical example *We Shall Overcome*,¹⁸ a popular song of the Civil Rights marches, not one of Jewish origin but, nevertheless, adopted by the Reform movement. Today, the prophetic model gives us a "sense of purpose, the realization that we matter on earth because we can make life turn out all right for others"¹⁹ through our calling as a community to do action in the world. Thus, a prophetic service, and the music within that service, emphasizes the transformation of society and the repairing of the planet.

Before one can fix a broken world, one must strive to heal himself. The goal of the pastoral model is the healing of oneself.²⁰ It is this model that is "en-vogue" in today's Reform movement. This model is by far the most popular prayer model in use today, and its name is derived from the concept of "pastoral" care, making people feel better about themselves. When people speak of spirituality, many are referring to the resulting comfort that

¹⁷Lawrence A. Hoffman, "From Common Cold to Uncommon Healing," CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly (Spring 1994): 13.

¹⁸Hoffman, "On Swimming Holes," 337.

¹⁹Hoffman, "From Common Cold," 17.

²⁰Lawrence A. Hoffman, interview by author, 27 December 1994, New York, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York Campus.

this worship model provides in healing loneliness and easing pain. The pastoral model is only successful if it brings people together into a warm and intimate worshipping community where the people gain a sense that they are part of something larger than themselves, and that they are not alone.

The music of this model must function to comfort the worshiper and make him or her feel whole. "People want ritual [music] that heals, heals their broken selves, heals the wound of broken communal connection both through time and across space, and promises healing in a world that can prove shattering."²¹ Examples of music set to appropriate texts that would fulfill the goal of this model and promote warmth, wholeness, and internal healing are: Debbie Friedman's setting of *Mi Shebeirach* (1990); Michael Isaacson's intimate settings of *Psalm 23* (1979) and *Shiviti* (1992); and Meir Finkelstein's lyric setting of *El Malei Rachamim* (n.p.). In addition to these melodies having a soothing quality, their texts also lend themselves to the healing of one's soul and a connection to God.

An effective worship service seeks to combine the goals of all three prayer models. It strives to invoke the presence of God, promote internal healing, and arouse compassion and social justice for the world. Worship serves these functions by creating a sense of community which results in invoking a sense of Godliness. Both a caring community and the presence of God promote a sense of wholeness and healing that causes worshipers to create and support these caring communities outside of themselves in the larger world. A service void of one of these functions is not complete. Therefore, it is impossible to view these models as fixed and isolated entities. All three models interact with one another and must be viewed in this vein;

²¹Hoffman, "From Common Cold," 19.

a worship service does not solely fall into one single model. Indeed, it is best to view these models as the three points on a triangle, each one with its distinct functions but overlapping and flowing one into the next at various places. For example, when people feel a part of a community that has a shared history and a common purpose, they feel the presence of God and thus, feel whole and are assured that everything will be all right. Once a worshiper feels a part of a caring community, he or she will aspire to create a caring atmosphere in the world around him or her. One worship function, therefore, should lead to another, in effect, creating an interrelated system; see Figure 1, "The Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models."

Today's prayer service should be approached in a holistic fashion,²² incorporating many aspects of prayer and Jewish life. The music, too, should do no less. "With the right music, individuals recover wholeness, discover community, and uncover the presence of a God who heals."²³ Moreover, the music of a good worship service need also serve the goals of the interrelationship of the three prayer models (as depicted in Figure 1). Within one particular service, one might here the works of Sulzer, Friedman, and Isaacson; their vast musical styles may simultaneously function as priestly, prophetic, and pastoral—one particular composition not fitting squarely into only one model. Since contemporary synagogue music draws from a diversity of styles and a musical canon spanning 150 years, a particular piece may serve many functions, and thus, can be used to represent more than one prayer model. Hence, a composition may have overlapping functions within the prayer service, making the interrelation

²²As demonstrated in Lawrence A. Hoffman, Beyond the Text (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) and The Art of Public Prayer.

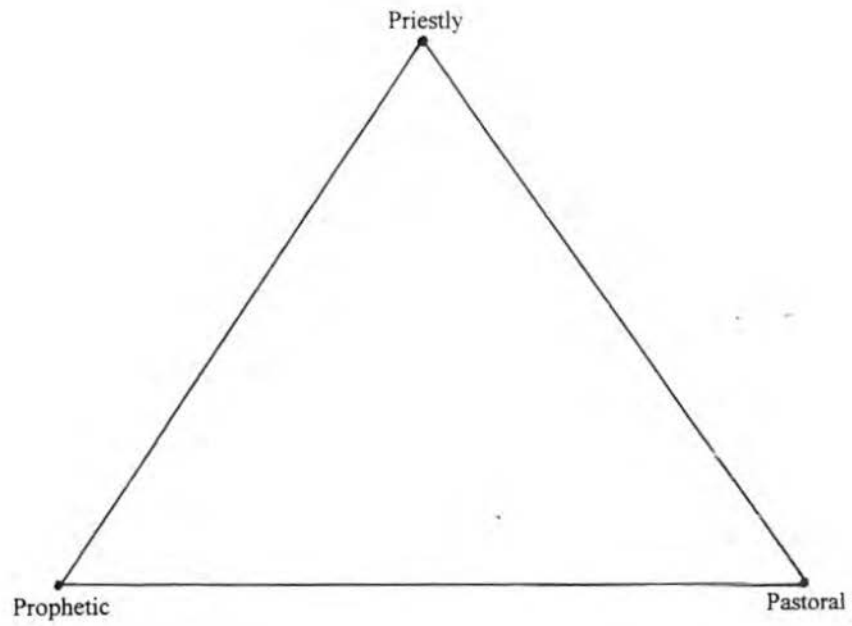
²³Hoffman, "From Common Cold," 23.

of the three prayer models essential.

With all this in mind, we will now focus on the role of music in prayer as we turn to the various musical styles of contemporary synagogue composers. We will explore the compositional approaches of our featured composers and apply their selected synagogue compositions to the interrelation of the three prayer models. By situating their compositions within this interrelated system, we will highlight the many functions that their compositions strive to fulfill within the worship service.

Figure 1

THE INTERRELATION OF THE THREE PRAYER MODELS



THE COMPOSERS

"A composer's individual character . . . is made up of two distinct elements: the personality with which he [or she] was born and the influences of the time in which he [or she] lives. For, obviously, every composer lives in a certain period, and each period has its character, too."²⁴ Thus, the interaction of the composer's personality and the period results in the formation of that composer's style. One's environment directly affects one's personality and creativity, especially that of the artist who is so inclined to personal expression. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to know and understand the era in which the composer is born, raised and influenced.

This next section will look at the biographical information of the various synagogue composers and will attempt to reveal the different environments from which each composer emerged. Through learning about the composer's background and influences, I hope to provide an understanding of the composer's approaches to synagogue composition. The following biographical information was attained through personal interviews either by phone, mail, fax, or in person. Additional information was gained from articles written by some of the composers themselves.

After exploring each composer's background, I will focus on one specific musical example for each composer and show how that particular piece demonstrates the composer's specific approach and style. Although it is impossible to capture a composer's entire style and approach to composing through only one musical setting, these pieces will serve as mere examples. Through musical analysis of these settings, I will discuss how these composers do indeed accomplish what they set out to do in their compositions.

²⁴Copland, 159.

As mentioned earlier by the great American composer Aaron Copland, writing music is the complete personal expression of the composer. However, unlike composers of instrumental music, synagogue composers have more to concern themselves with than just personal expression. A synagogue composer must take into account many different factors when sitting down to write music. Most of the time they are not just writing music for music's sake, but are putting melodies to age old texts, and thus, need to keep the true expression of that text in mind when setting it to music in a contemporary idiom in their own style.

The context of the text is also essential--whether it is used within the liturgy, for a life cycle event, a concert or a prayer service, and so on. In addition, the composer needs to keep in mind who he or she is composing for: the cantor, the choir, the congregation, an adult choir, a children's choir etc. All of these factors must be thought of before the composer can begin her personal expression of the text. One might think that this would impede on the composer's ability to express him or herself freely. However, these choices only add to the possibilities and opportunities for creativity. Compare it to a composer of instrumental music who has a choice between composing for a quartet or a full orchestra. Composing for a full orchestra might take longer and have many more considerations, but ultimately, composing for a full orchestra will have much more to offer by way of opportunity for creativity. The more choices one is faced with, the more chances there are for innovation. Ben Steinberg, a prolific contemporary composer in North America, agrees when he says, "[t]he intelligent and careful introduction of contemporary musical techniques expands a good text, increases the effectiveness of its message, and illuminates its depths."²⁵

²⁵Ben Steinberg, "The Jewish Tradition," Sacred Sound, 268-69.

Choices of texts and musical styles all add to the composer's creativity and expression. As Copland states, the composer's style is a combination of who he is and in what context he is composing. Thus, we must explore the composer's personal life experiences in order to get a glimpse of his thought process and perhaps, come to understand from whence he or she came and where it is that he or she is going with his synagogue musical expression.

Dr. Michael N. Isaacson

Biography

Michael Isaacson was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1946 and received his early education at Yeshiva Rambam. After earning a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Hunter College, New York, and a Master of Arts in Music Composition under Robert Starer from Brooklyn College, Isaacson continued his studies with Samuel Adler at the Eastman School of Music, ultimately receiving a Ph.D. in Composition. While in New York, he composed and conducted many scores for Broadway theatrical productions, and was also a showcased member of Lehman Engel's prestigious B.M.I. Musical Theatre Workshop.

Dr. Isaacson was first formally introduced to synagogue music in high school when he sang in synagogue choirs and performed on High Holy Days in the Catskill Mountains and in synagogues around New York City. Prior to high school, Isaacson learned *musach* and cantillation while preparing for his Bar-Mitzvah. After Bar-Mitzvah, he continued to study Jewish music on his own through independent research and private study with cantors around New York. At Brooklyn College, Isaacson had the opportunity to study with the talented Israeli composer Robert Starer, a protege of Israeli composer Yosef Tal. This brought Isaacson

to Israel, where he studied music at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for a summer. Shortly after, while attending Eastman School of Music, Dr. Isaacson gave many lectures on Jewish music at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music. He also taught at the State University of New York in Fredonia, where he created a Hebrew chorus. Of course, one of Isaacson's main Jewish musical influences came from his teacher at the Eastman School, Samuel Adler. After completing his Ph.D., Isaacson became music director at Temple Tiferet in Cleveland, Ohio, where he said, that much of his training in Jewish music was learned on the job.²⁶

Dr. Isaacson's composing brought him to Los Angeles, California where he composed and conducted original scores for many well known television series including: *John Williams & The Boston Pops with Joan Baez*; *Rich Man, Poor Man II*; *Little Women*; *Bionic Woman*; *Hawaii Five-O*; *Time Travelers*; and the daytime dramas *Loving* and *Days of Our Lives*. As an arranger, orchestrator and conductor for feature films, Dr. Isaacson has had the pleasure of assisting noted film composers Alex North, Elmer Bernstein, Walter Scharf, and Charles Fox.

As a conductor and music producer, as well as the founding Music Director of The Israel Pops Orchestra, Dr. Isaacson has conducted and produced new recordings of music with The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, The Munich Philharmonic, The Mexico City Philharmonic, and The Tel Aviv Symphony Orchestra. In addition, his recordings with The Hollywood Pops, which he also musically directs, may be heard on the Sony label.

In 1990, Dr. Isaacson was appointed Founding Artistic Director of The Milken Archive of 20th Century American Jewish Music. In this capacity, he has conducted and produced

²⁶Michael Isaacson, phone interview conducted on February 1, 1995, New York.

fourteen of twenty CDs of newly recorded musical masterworks of the American Jewish community. This archive is the greatest single documentation of a Jewish musical period ever conceived and it's completion is scheduled for January 1, 2000.

Michael Isaacson is the recipient of grants, honors and awards from The Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, The Eastman School of Music, The Schubert Foundation, Standard ASCAP Awards, The Foundation of the Milken Families, and The Cantors Assembly's highest tribute for lifetime achievement in Synagogue music--The *Kavod* [Honor] Award. He has over 175 Jewish musical compositions published, including instrumental, vocal, sacred, arrangements, editions and educational works. In fact, he is one of the most prolific synagogue composers of the twentieth century and is often commissioned by cantors and synagogues all over the United States. In addition, Dr. Isaacson is a frequent lecturer in the field of Jewish music and has taught in Universities throughout America.

Dr. Isaacson and his family are members of Stephen S. Wise Temple in Los Angeles where Isaacson serves as music director of the Temple's High Holy Day choir. Moreover, Dr. Isaacson has composed many sacred services and synagogue pieces for the Temple's Cantor, Nathan Lam, who has been a long time friend and commissioner of Isaacson. Dr. Michael Isaacson and his wife Susan of twenty years, along with their two sons Ari and Andrew, live in Encino, California.²⁷

Approaches to Synagogue Composing

"Living creatively within the limitations of society is freeing rather than restrictive. To

²⁷Information attained from biography provided by the composer.

do so one must understand the boundaries and then joyously ping against these walls much as a racquetball in motion does."²⁸ This quote by Dr. Michael Isaacson represents his approach to composing synagogue music. Dr. Isaacson believes in using society's modern musical idioms to create new sounds, and the importance of this creativity and innovation in contemporary synagogue music is demonstrated in his own compositions. In addition, Isaacson argues that change is absolutely vital for growth and development within synagogue music. "Music has always mirrored the hopes and aspirations of its people. In this world standing still is, in fact, moving backwards. . . . the hard truth is that constant change is here to stay . . . either we recreate contemporary meaning from our Jewish traditions and values or we must severely reexamine them."²⁹ He believes that synagogue music must accelerate with other areas of culture and events of the time, because people's spiritual needs stem directly from contemporary events. It is essential that synagogue music sustain the values of the past, but make use of the vernaculars of today.³⁰

Dr. Isaacson always finds new ways of challenging the imagination of the congregation through his music. With the use of additional instruments other than piano, guitar, and organ, Isaacson seeks to add a sense of fresh color to the worship service. "We need to be reminded of the greatness of the orchestra and large chorus and our lost legacy of instrumental music in

²⁸Michael Isaacson, "The Sensibilities of Sound," [photocopy] unpublished article attained from author, summer 1994.

²⁹Michael Isaacson, "Synagogue Music is Dead," Journal of Synagogue Music 6, no. 2 (October 1975): 5.

³⁰Michael Isaacson, "Surviving Future Shock: Some Other Views," Journal of Synagogue Music 9, no. 4 (March 1980): 30-31.

the *Beit Hamikdash*.³¹ Thus, his compositions include the use of the following: instrumental ensembles, string quartet, woodwind quintet, chamber orchestra, flute, harp, brass quintet, recorder, viola, percussion, clarinet, cello, and more. In addition, Isaacson composes for a variety of vocal ensembles: four part choir, two part choir, children's choir, duets, and much more. His creativity and innovation has lead him to expand his composing possibilities to include much more than just voice and keyboard.

Isaacson's main non-sacred musical influences, such as Copland, Stravinsky, and Barber, as well as film and musical theater popular influences, have helped to shape his synagogue composing. According to Isaacson, the "programmatic music" of the turn of the century composers, Copland, Stravinsky, and Barber, tells a story. Isaacson feels that their didactic approach to the text can be applied to synagogue liturgy, however, this particular approach does not always leave much room for personal expression of the text. Some of Isaacson's synagogue pieces portray this approach, but, in general, Isaacson operates in the non-didactic approach. Isaacson states, "the conception of a piece differs as to its usage, for example, a didactic piece ([in my] *Esther the Queen* or *The Prophets* from Hope For the Future cantata) is meant to be highly accessible and clever in the sense that you write it completely for other's gratification and edification; there's little or no personal expression involved."³² On the other hand, Isaacson's non-didactic pieces, for example *Hashkiveinu* and *R'tsei* from his *Shir Ari* service, represent personal expressive relations with the text. In such non-didactic

³¹Michael Isaacson, interview by author, 26 October 1994, Los Angeles by way of fax machine to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York.

³²Ibid.

compositions, "the text is illuminated in an extremely personal way."³³

The usage of a piece is extremely important. In fact, for many composers, this is the main determining factor when conceiving of new work; indeed it is for Isaacson. In Dr. Isaacson's "Ten Recommendations For Composers of Synagogue Music," recommendation number two states, "[c]onceive the large gesture before filling in the details. Ask the w's -- when in the calendar, what resources, why this text, where will it be performed? . . ."³⁴ Whether a text is liturgical for a prayer service or intended for a life cycle event or a concert is going to directly affect how one composes for that text. Isaacson, therefore, believes that one should "map out the larger structure or dramatic gesture before writing the first note. Details are easier once the initial conceptualization is completed."³⁵

Of course many composers believe that the text is the most important aspect of a composition, and that a composer must be true to the text when conceptualizing a piece. Isaacson supports this idea and believes that "personal expressive relations with the text are ways of creating a musical *agadah* [story]. When the text is a given it becomes the generating force behind all other parameters of music."³⁶ The music tells a story which is generated by the text, but in this case, unlike didactic compositions, it is the composer's personal expression of the text which generates the music. This concept of creating a musical drama is a very important factor in Isaacson's composing. Recommendation number three in his "Ten

³³Ibid.

³⁴Michael Isaacson, "Ten Recommendations For Composers of Synagogue Music," [photocopy] unpublished article attained from author, summer 1994.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Isaacson, interview.

Recommendations" states, "illustrate the drama of the text. Each text has an impact if treated like drama rather than neutral ritual."³⁷ Isaacson thinks of the synagogue as the "Theater of the Jewish Spirit." He believes that the synagogue experience should be a powerfully dramatic experience between man and God. As a result, Isaacson makes use of dramatic techniques in his musical settings such as: contrasts of sudden loud and soft; effect of opposites, like sound and silence; musical hyperboles; instrumental colors; and other devices to "wake up" the indifferent congregant to the message before him.³⁸ Indeed, the use of fear, awe, gratitude, pleading, and yearning are all dynamic in their implied drama and should be utilized in dramatic musical settings.³⁹ Isaacson's idea of the drama of the text is apparent in all of his musical settings, and will be demonstrated in a particular musical example.

In addition to the drama of the text, a composer must consider the natural rhythm of the words. Isaacson is a firm believer in saying the words over and over again until their speech rhythm demands a musical rhythm. "Never misaccent a word to fit a preconceived melody. To the opposite, consider a melodic line only if it naturally serves the words."⁴⁰ Moreover, Isaacson speaks of the equal importance between sound and silence, and that silence in between sound creates regular and irregular rhythms. "It is the importance of silence or negative space which allows the rhythm of the sound to be clarified."⁴¹ Isaacson, in

³⁷Isaacson, "Ten Recommendations."

³⁸Isaacson, interview.

³⁹Isaacson, "Ten Recommendations."

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Isaacson, "The Sensibilities of Sound."

particular, has always utilized more than one text in some of his compositions. The use of both Hebrew and English has always fascinated him and has been a "... signature characteristic of much of my [Isaacson's] work." In fact, Isaacson calls this "The American-Jewish Sound."⁴²

Melody also plays a major role in Isaacson's compositions. He stresses that a composer must maximize the power of a memorable melody. "Give them a melody to hold on to as an anchor in your compositional sea. Once you've given the listener the gift of a good tune, they will repay your kindness by attentively considering your most sophisticated efforts in rhythm, texture, harmony, or counterpoint."⁴³ However, in order for the congregation to remember the melody and give it meaning, they must hear it more than once. That is why repetition is so important to Isaacson. "Repetition is the only way of helping the collective memory of the audience."⁴⁴ In addition, a good melody must be three dimensional: it must have a sense of history based on the initial relationship of the first two tones [notes] in the melody; it must unfold so that the listener is attracted to the drama of the present sound; and finally, it must create and define future goals and expectations which seek to be gratified.⁴⁵

Finally, Isaacson's number one recommendation to synagogue composers is, not to write "synagogue music." Isaacson claims that synagogue music does not have one specific sound, and that each text setting should be treated according to its own merits. Moreover, although

⁴²Isaacson, interview.

⁴³Isaacson, "Ten Recommendations."

⁴⁴Isaacson, interview.

⁴⁵Isaacson, "The Sensibilities of Sound."

"knowledge of *nusach* and cantillation are basic to one's background, their exclusive employment is certainly not the only compositional direction which is valid today."⁴⁶ In fact, Isaacson feels that some cantors cling to *nusach* "... to the exclusion of finding more contemporary alternatives"⁴⁷ Isaacson does utilize *nusach* and cantillation in his works, but for him it is more of an evocative quote than an organizing factor. Isaacson feels no need to be completely bound to *nusach*, so as to make it an organizing factor in his work. Instead, he feels free to allude to the tradition, in order to echo the sounds of the past as he incorporates them into his contemporary style. *B'ni, Esther the Queen*, and *Avinu Malkeinu* are all examples of Isaacson's musical settings which quote from either cantillation or *nusach*.

Overall, Dr. Isaacson categorizes his musical style as "twentieth century American-Jewish conservatively contemporary synagogue music." He claims that his sacred and his secular compositions do influence each other, but that the major difference between them is that, out of necessity, his sacred music takes less chances because it has other functions to fulfill beside personal expression.⁴⁸ Many factors such as text, prayer function, intended audience, etc. influence the synagogue composer, and can either impede on the composers personal expressiveness or enhance it. For Michael Isaacson, these factors help him to be even more creative and innovative. "Understanding the particular sound vocabulary or rules of the piece and finding the freedom within those limitations is the key to stylistic integrity and

⁴⁶Isaacson, "Ten Recommendations."

⁴⁷Isaacson, interview.

⁴⁸Ibid.

ultimate creativity."⁴⁹

Specific Illustration

To illustrate Dr. Isaacson's approaches to synagogue composition, I have chosen one particular piece to represent his approach. Although one composition is not enough to represent a composer's entire gamut of works, this one example does demonstrate Isaacson's stylistic approach.

The musical setting *Biti* [My Daughter] was commissioned in 1981 for a Bat-Mitzvah at University Synagogue, Los Angeles. Dr. Isaacson set out to research possible texts for the piece, however, very few traditional Jewish texts are written about daughters. Isaacson asked Rabbi Kerry Baker to create a poem incorporating the style of a classical text. Since then, this setting has become one of the most popular synagogue pieces to be sung at a Bat-Mitzvah or a girl's baby naming; for a translation of the text see Appendix 1a, "Analysis of *Biti*."

The text of *Biti* plays a major role in determining the composition's overall structure. The poem and, thus, the music can be divided into three verses with a contrasting section between verses two and three. The poetic meter dictates the rhythm of the melody in each verse, and the poetic meter is the same in all three verses. It is therefore fitting that all three verses have the same melody and rhythm. In addition, all three verses have the same rhyming scheme, thus making the contrasting section distinctly different from the rest of the text. The structure of the entire composition, characterizing both the text and the musical setting, can thus be represented by the letters AABA (A=verse, B=contrasting section); for a diagram of

⁴⁹Isaacson, "The Sensibilities of Sound."

poetic meter and rhyming scheme, see Appendix 1a.

The melody is very repetitive but not easily sung. I do not believe this piece was intended for congregational singing, however, it is understandable and identifiable by the congregation because of its melodic repetition of the verses. It is not intended for congregational singing because of its large range and constant leaping of large intervals, such as major and minor sevenths. This octave displacement is a common twentieth century technique, but makes the melody very difficult to sing for a congregation. However, the melody is "catchy" because of its repetition, memorable intervalic leaps, and sweet affective character.

The accompaniment in this piece is very romantic because of its constant movement and flowing style, mostly due to the arpeggiated chords throughout. This piece was originally written for harp, which explains its flowing accompaniment. In terms of the harmonic rhythm, the verses have a faster rate of harmonic activity, two harmonies per bar, than the contrasting section, which has only one harmony per bar. In addition, Isaacson uses an extended harmonic vocabulary consisting of chords with added sevenths and ninths, as well as suspensions, inversions, and a few diminished chords (which are particularly idiomatic of the harp). These harmonies create a very rich and lush sound. These rich and lush harmonies, in addition to their Romantic harmonic progression, add to the setting's romantic quality.

The rhythm of the piece, as mentioned before, is governed by the text. It is the rhythm of the text that determines the rhythm of the melody. The meter is in common time and stays constant throughout the piece. All three verses have the same repetitive rhythmic pattern that is influenced by the poetic meter of the text (see Appendix 1a). This repetition of rhythm adds

a sense of familiarity for the listener. In addition, Isaacson uses a few triplets for added drama, mostly at the ends of verses leading in to the next verse or section, to prolong the phrase and accentuate the text.

Isaacson uses dynamics to add to the drama in his compositions. In this setting, the music starts mezzo-piano in the first verse and rises to mezzo-forte in the second verse. By the time we reach the contrasting section, the music is forte and the piece has reached its high point or climax. It then tapers back down to mezzo-piano and finally, piano for the last verse. From the beginning of the piece until the end, the dynamics make a steady rise, reaching its climax at the contrasting section and then tapering down to the conclusion. In addition, Isaacson uses tenuto and ritard markings at the beginning of the last verse, again, for dramatic effect.

Isaacson uses many of his compositional approaches in this particular piece. These approaches include: the use of additional instruments such as the harp, the treating of the text based on its own merits and its natural expression through music, the use of dynamics to create drama, and the contrast of soft and loud. One specific approach that Isaacson mentions is the use of the opposites to create drama. About his *Yiskor* Memorial Service Isaacson mentions that, "it is the opposite effect of stillness in the turmoil of loss which reminds him of life's ultimate duality . . ."⁵⁰ This use of the opposites to create drama is apparent throughout this piece.

The entire musical setting is very romantic, with both the accompaniment and the

⁵⁰Michael Isaacson, "About the music. . ." in Seasons In Time Volume III: Yiskor Memorial Service (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1992), 3.

melody having a broad sweeping nature covering a large range, with notes jumping from one octave to another. This use of octave displacement and large intervalic leaps, illustrative of a twentieth century compositional technique, adds to the romantic character of the melody. This is Isaacson's way of using the opposite to create drama. There is an apparent contrast between the text, melody, and harmony. The text speaks of a parent's love for a baby girl; this love is one of innocence and naivete. The melody conveys this childlike love by its soothing lullaby. The harmony, on the other hand, gives us a sense of adult love, romance, and passion with its lush chords and arpeggiated accompaniment. Clearly this is the use of opposites to create an irony and, as a result, drama.

The contrasting section of this composition also creates a sense of drama by use of opposites. The words of this section are the most tender and loving of all stating, "I have loved you my daughter, for you have brought blessing, and with tender hands I will bless you in return." Yet the music in this section is the most tense. To build the piece to its climax, Isaacson creates tension in this section by using a circle of fifths harmonic progression. This harmonic progression creates tension and movement that leads us back to the last verse. The resolution of this tension is finally achieved when this contrasting section leads into the final verse. The harmony in the contrasting section, not the melody, creates the tension. The building of tension in this contrasting section juxtaposes the love and kindness that the words convey. The tenderness of the text and the tenseness of the harmony create drama through the use of opposites.

Isaacson also uses his "effect of opposites" in his musical setting of *Avinu Malkeinu* [*Our Father, Our King*, 1979 Transcontinental Publication]. In this particular prayer, the

congregation is asking for comfort from God and for God to save them. Like a child asking his parent for forgiveness and guidance after he sins, so too, on the High Holy Days, the days of repentance, we sing "Our Father, Our King," asking God to forgive our iniquities. The text describes God as our parent who renews our days, forgives us, redeems us, and comforts us, yet the music conveys tension and discomfort through the use of counterpoint. In this piece, the parts are always moving, constantly creating dissonance and resolution, thereby, the music creates a sense of drama through the use of opposites. However, the text is also pulling between tension and resolution. On the one hand, God is gracious to us and answers our call, yet on the other hand, we have sinned and have no merits. The music portrays the constant pull between God's goodness and humanity's sins. The moments of dissonance represent humanity's sins, and the moments of resolution convey God's perfection.

Isaacson's Composition and the Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models

Music and its effect on individuals is highly subjective. It affects different people in different ways, and it is almost impossible to classify or categorize a particular piece. In fact, I would have to say that most musical compositions have many effects. Ideally, the synagogue composer creates a piece that generates a sense of communal bonding, promotes individual healing, and as a result, brings a feeling of Godliness into the congregation. The striving for Godliness by the congregation is the ultimate reaction a synagogue composer can stimulate in his or her composition. Therefore, in applying Isaacson's composition to the three prayer models, it is essential to note that this composition is going to affect every one in a different way, and what may seem to invoke the presence of God for one person could possibly create

a sense of community for another. Moreover, the same composition could, perhaps, create a sense of healing for yet another. Most importantly, however, Isaacson's composition has many effects and thus, will serve many functions of prayer.

Isaacson's *Biti* represents both the priestly and the pastoral prayer model; see Figure 2, "The Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models with Compositions by Five Contemporary Synagogue Composers." The text speaks of the birth of a child and the blessing she has brought into the house and the family. Although the text makes reference to God only once, it is clear that God has played a major role in bringing this child into the world. The text expresses the awe and wonder that this parent has toward the birth of their child, and God is very much a part of the process. The last verse states, "My daughter, because you are loved by God, I will give you my love." Clearly, the parent is aware of the fact that without God's love, there is no love at all.

This piece is most likely to be used at a Bat-Mitzvah ceremony or a baby naming, where the people gathered are family and guests. The people that come together for a Bat-Mitzvah and a baby naming are not necessarily there to pray. They are present to share in a life cycle event, a rite of passage, and lend support to the family. However, upon hearing *Biti*, these family and guests are showered with a sense God and Godliness. They cannot help but feel the importance of the Divine in human life, and must acknowledge God's presence among all of humanity. For those that did not come to pray communally, this composition allows them to pray silently as individuals and to experience a spiritual connection with God. It does not require their audible recitation, but only their understanding of its lyric melody and soothing text.

Moreover, *Biti's* lullaby like melody could calm any soul and create a sense of order. Life cycle events, as times of growth and change in life, are times of great vulnerability. During these rites of passage, individuals need to be reassured that order will be restored. Therefore, this composition not only creates a sense of Godliness, but in doing so, also heals and consoles the soul. The listener is assured that they are not alone, because God is present. For this reason, *Biti* also represents the pastoral model, because of its ability to comfort the soul. As a result, I feel it lies between the priestly and pastoral prayer models in Figure 2, and represents both models. *Avinu Malkeinu*, on the other hand, best fits the priestly prayer model because of its main focus on God and God's presence in the life of the worshiper as a guardian and parent; see also Figure 2.

Cantor Meir Finkelstein

Biography

Meir Finkelstein was born in Israel in 1951. At the age of four, Finkelstein and his family emigrated to England, where his late father, Cantor Zvi Finkelstein accepted the position of Chazzan at one of London's most prestigious synagogues. At the age of eight, Meir joined his older brother Aryeh as *meshorerim*, singing with their father in services. It was also at this age that Finkelstein began to develop his piano skills and taught himself how to accompany his father in *chazzanut* on the keyboard. Only a year after his Bar-Mitzvah, Finkelstein assumed his first professional cantorial position in Glasgow, Scotland making him one of the youngest cantors in all of Europe.

Growing up in the 1960s, Finkelstein was influenced most by jazz, folk, opera, and the

pop music of the era, especially The Beatles. At sixteen, he left home to attend high school in Newcastle, and at eighteen, Finkelstein returned to London where he was employed as Chazzan at Golders Green Synagogue. He later received a scholarship to attend the world-renowned Royal College of Music, where he studied voice, opera, and composition. Finkelstein graduated with honors and an Associate Degree, A.R.C.M. in singing and composition.

In London, Finkelstein met and married Leba Nemeth. In 1974 they immigrated to the United States and Finkelstein became Cantor at Temple Beth Hillel in Wilmette, Illinois. Their daughter Nadia was born shortly after.

After four years in the Chicago area, Finkelstein moved to Los Angeles where he actually gave up the cantorate for a few years in order to pursue a secular music career. Being in Los Angeles gave Finkelstein the opportunity to pursue his other musical interests, such as composing secular music for television and movies, and arranging musical scores. Consequently, Finkelstein was employed in the entertainment industry as a studio musician on keyboard, and an arranger for Hollywood film scores and television. Some years later, he accepted a cantorial position at B'nai David-Judea Congregation, and he had a second child, his son Adam.

Meir Finkelstein did not become a composer for synagogue music until he was elected Cantor of Sinai Temple in Westwood in 1982. At Sinai, Finkelstein was following in the tradition of a cantor and composer Carl Urstein. This was Finkelstein's first time working with a choir and an organ, and it was then that he began to write liturgical compositions in order to supersede the music that was composed by the previous cantor. Finkelstein's first

synagogue composition was *L'cha Dodi*, to replace Cantor Urstein's setting. Finkelstein believed that his compositions could be more exciting than those of Urstein, and he began quickly to compose more and more. Since he joined Sinai Temple, Cantor Finkelstein has composed numerous musical settings for the Shabbat, High Holy Day, and Festival liturgies. He continues to serve as Cantor at Sinai Temple to this day, and his synagogue compositions are sung by cantors and choirs all over the United States and Canada.⁵¹

Approaches to Synagogue Composing

As mentioned above, Finkelstein's musical style was influenced by the popular music of his time. However, Finkelstein was also raised on the sounds of the synagogue--*chazzanut*, *nusach*, Israeli folk songs, and great synagogue composers such as Max Helfman and Max Janowski. Cantor Finkelstein is most impressed with Helfman's dramatic style, and his ability to look at the texts and express them musically without being tied to notions of *nusach* and preconceived ideas of what Jewish music should be. Finkelstein admits that his early compositions were very "Helfmanesque" in stature and grandeur of style.⁵²

More important than Finkelstein's Jewish musical influences were his non-Jewish musical influences. Highly influenced by Puccini, Rachmaninoff, and all of the Romantic composers in general, Finkelstein uses minor sevenths and minor ninths, as well as flattened tenths, in his synagogue compositions. On the inside cover of one of his Temple recordings,

⁵¹Information attained from interview by author, 10 November 1994, Los Angeles, tape recording, Sinai Temple, Los Angeles.

⁵²Meir Finkelstein, interview.

From Sinai to Sinai, Finkelstein writes, "The various musical styles used in setting our Jewish liturgy have, historically, been influenced in great part by the secular, nonsecular and popular music of the age. . . . many of our most familiar and beloved synagogue melodies can be traced directly to these non-Jewish sources."⁵³ In this particular album, Finkelstein states that he has employed many different musical styles in setting prayers from the High Holy Day, Festival, and Shabbat liturgies. He claims that the eclectic nature of the compositions is intentional, and he sets forth the following statements as guidelines which he follows when composing synagogue music: the utilization of a musical style which best expresses the intent and meaning of the prayer; the adherence to traditional modes [*nuschaot*] whenever possible, without being necessarily bound by them; and allowing the meter of the prayers to inspire the melodic line and structure of the composition.⁵⁴ (These guidelines echo those of Isaacson).

Cantor Finkelstein began composing synagogue music as a reaction to other synagogue composers. He became very critical of other composers' synagogue settings in which the liturgical text served the music and not the reverse. As a student at the Royal College of Music, Finkelstein studied German lieder and French art songs. Composers of these genres set the music to the lyrics and not the other way around. Likewise for Cantor Finkelstein, the liturgical text comes first. Thus, he began to approach the synagogue liturgy in the same manner. The melody must always stay within the confines of the lyrics, and must constantly be true to the text. When Finkelstein starts to compose a synagogue piece, he will read

⁵³Meir Finkelstein, "Introduction," [recording notes] From Sinai to Sinai, Sinai Temple recording, Los Angeles, 1986.

⁵⁴Ibid.

through the text of the prayer first, and will allow the meter of the text to determine the meter and the style of the musical setting. Finkelstein believes that, "the meter points to a certain style, so, in fact, the text begs the melody."⁵⁵ He does admit, however, that at times he will start with a melody and then search for a text that fits that melody naturally. Such was the case with his setting of *L'dor Vador*.

For Finkelstein, melody plays a major role of importance in his compositions. "I always felt that when you leave the theater, you should leave humming something. And melody is the King."⁵⁶ Finkelstein is always looking for a "catchy" singable melody that has depth, as opposed to being trite. Finkelstein believes that this can only come from inspiration. In fact, his most popular and successful melodies came naturally. For example, Finkelstein claims that his *L'dor Vador* sang itself, and came to him with the least amount of effort. "All good melodies are just dictated. I had that melody in my mind. I don't know how. I don't know why. But it works."⁵⁷ Finkelstein knows the importance that melody plays in the worship service because he sees the immediate response that the melody evokes from the congregation: when he senses this reaction, he knows that the melody "works." He states that a good melody is one which seems familiar to the congregation, as if they have been singing it for twenty years. He regards a melody that "works" as one which has an emotional impact on whomever hears it.

In effect, according to Finkelstein, once one has a text, the words will highly influence

⁵⁵Finkelstein, interview.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

both the melody and the rhythm. The text will suggest the rhythm by the accent of the words, and the "natural stress of the lyrics"⁵⁸ will imply both the rhythm and tempo. As for the use of *nusach*, Finkelstein believes that it should be utilized where it can, but in no way should the composer be a slave to it (a position similarly held by Isaacson). Finkelstein states that, "*nusach* does not allow you to express the text in the best way possible."⁵⁹ In fact, he believes that in certain instances, the proper *nusach* actually takes away from the text rather than adds to it. Finkelstein gives the example of *Hallel*. Traditionally, *Hallel* is done in minor. However, Finkelstein has composed pieces for this liturgy in major, claiming that the major scale expresses this liturgy most affectively in our present time. Hence, Finkelstein envisions the *Hallel* liturgy in the same *nusach* as the seven wedding blessings, cheerful and happy.

As for which liturgical texts to set, Meir has less of a choice than other contemporary synagogue composers because, on a whole, he is confined to Hebrew texts exclusively. This is due to the fact that Finkelstein serves a conservative congregation where most prayers are sung in Hebrew. We will see that the other contemporary synagogue composers utilize both Hebrew and English texts. Finkelstein, however, does have a few pieces composed for both Hebrew and English that are not part of the prayer service. For within the actual worship service, he has only one composition that uses both languages, which is *May the Words (Yih'yu L'ratzon)*. In general, Finkelstein composes for himself as cantor. He writes in keys that are

⁵⁸Notice the use of the word lyric to imply liturgical text. Finkelstein's treatment of the text is very much influenced by the pop culture, even to the point of calling the liturgical text "lyric."

⁵⁹Ibid.

good for him, composes singable lines that are lyric in style to suit his tenor voice, and sets texts that he will be able to use in his own congregation.

This also affects the type of instrumentation for which Cantor Finkelstein can employ, and somewhat restricts his creativity. Finkelstein loves to compose for strings and orchestra, which he does use for concert pieces and special events, such as his *Yiskor* Requiem, entitled *Nishmat Tzedek (A Righteous Soul)*, a chamber orchestra in seven movements. For practical purposes he only includes what he can make use of in the synagogue service at Sinai, which uses an organ and four part choir. Finkelstein believes that anything should be incorporated which enhances the text, and this includes the use of various instruments other than piano and organ (with the exception of guitar, which Finkelstein is opposed to in the prayer service). In fact, Finkelstein is so in favor of instrumentation and accompaniment, that he believes his compositions do not work well a cappella. He maintains that it is the lush chords that make his compositions so special, and it is absurd not to have accompaniment. Finkelstein states that the chords and a sweeping accompaniment make his synagogue music successful, as well as the modulations and chord progressions.⁶⁰ Thus, the majority of his compositions are written for organ and choir, but Finkelstein states that he would gladly use other instruments in the synagogue if it were solely up to him.

Finkelstein argues that the worship service is not a *davening* experience, but rather a musical experience. Indeed, anything that can be added to make it a more moving and spiritual musical experience should be sought out and added. This includes congregational singing. He

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

notes that congregational singing is a "mystical experience."⁶¹ There are times when a congregation chooses to join in and sing, and there are times when a melody is so enjoyable, that they prefer to sit back and listen. Finkelstein not only composes for himself as cantor, but he also composes for his congregation. He wants people to sing, therefore he writes lyric, familiar melodies for people to sing along. In addition, his congregational compositions are available in two keys for higher and lower voices, opposed to his solo compositions which are written in keys to suit his voice.

Finally, Finkelstein classifies his style of synagogue composition as "cantorial fusion." Indeed, his musical style is a result of the many layers of musical influences in his life experience, including: opera and classical music, jazz, rhythm and blues, pop, and the entertainment industry. He complains that, "many Jewish composers lack the discipline and good taste to know the difference between making something sound like it comes from the 1990s and setting a text and making it come alive with all different styles of music."⁶² Finkelstein asserts that talent is layered, and the more layers one has, the more styles one has from which to chose. Vast musical experiences have given Finkelstein a broader pallet of textures and musical ideas to incorporate into his synagogue compositions. He declares that what makes his synagogue music "Jewish," is Jewish texts. The style, on the other hand, is universal, because all musical styles are universal. Thus Finkelstein maintains that he is not a composer of "Jewish music," but rather, a Jewish person who wants to bring alive Jewish

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

texts in good taste, and does not want to copy any particular style.⁶³ His main approach to synagogue composition is through the true expression of the text. Finkelstein achieves this by way of his personal expression of the text which, by its very nature, includes all of his past musical influences.

In an article in the Heritage Southwest Jewish Press, a Jewish newspaper in Los Angeles, Cantor Samuel Fordis wrote about Finkelstein's *Nishmat Tzedek Yiskor* Requiem stating, "Composer Finkelstein deserves credit for a work of captivating melodies, moving intensity, deeply-affecting pathos, and readily-listenable musical ideas. . . . This composition identifies him as a composer of substance, capable of expressing moods of enthralling beauty in a setting of symphonic proportions."⁶⁴

Specific Illustration

To illustrate Cantor Meir Finkelstein's approaches to synagogue composition, I will look at one of Finkelstein's most popular synagogue pieces, *L'dor Vador* [From Generation to Generation]. This prayer is recited daily at the conclusion of the *K'dusha* in the *T'filah* section of the service. The text conveys God's holiness and greatness, and states, that from generation to generation, we will declare God's holiness and praise God. Finkelstein asserts that his particular melody is used to convey the spirit and meaning of the prayer, and has become the most popular of all of his synagogue melodies.⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Heritage Southwest Jewish Press (Los Angeles), 3 December 1993.

⁶⁵Meir Finkelstein, "Introduction," [recording notes] *L'dor Vador*, Sinai Temple recording, Los Angeles, 1990/1992.

Finkelstein composed *L'dor Vador* about seven years ago when he sought out a text that his predecessor, Cantor Carl Urstein, had not yet set. Finkelstein was very conscious of not trying to usurp his predecessor's compositions; rather he found alternative texts to set in order to add to the repertoire at Sinai Temple. Consequently, *L'dor Vador* was one text in the liturgy that Urstein had not set, thus, allowing Finkelstein the freedom to compose a musical setting for it. In contrast to what Finkelstein states above, about the text dictating the melody and rhythm, this particular composition is one which started out as a melody first, and the text followed later, fitting the melody naturally. Finkelstein comments on this composition, saying, "... after about five or ten minutes, the *L'dor Vador* melody came and I just started playing it, and it just flowed. Then I opened up the *siddur* [prayer book] and said, wow, I think this is going to work. I think this is going to fit. It's one of those accidents."⁶⁶ Therefore, in this particular instance, the melody came first, and just happened to fit the text perfectly, with every accent accurately rendered by the melody.

It is clear in *L'dor Vador* that the melody, not the text, is the determining factor of the composition. The entire structure of the piece depicts a pop influence. The text itself does not suggest a refrain-verse structure, yet, Finkelstein has divided it up this way—a convenient structure inherent in pop music. Because the text does not suggest this structure, it is imposed upon the liturgy. Thus, the structure of the entire composition can be represented by the letters AABAC (A=refrain, B=verse, C=ending section); see Appendix 2a, "Analysis of *L'dor Vador*."

The use of melodic repetition and sequences within the melody give the melody its familiar quality. There is essentially only one main melody in this piece that repeats itself

⁶⁶Finkelstein, interview.

three times in the form of a refrain. It feels like a melody that people have been singing for twenty years⁶⁷ because it is predictable and easily understood by the congregation. In fact, the sequences can be thought of as questions and answers that the congregation readily hears and comprehends. The verse also has sequences and a melody that is similar to that of the refrain. As a result, the listeners sense that they have heard this melody before because it is a repeat of the opening phrases. The opening octave leap sets the tone for the entire composition, and, consequently, this octave leap repeats itself throughout the piece.

In addition, the refrain melody is very lyrical and simple, which allows it to be congregational. In contrast, the one verse is probably meant to be the cantor's solo because of its high range and complicated melismas. It is in the verse that we see Finkelstein make use of his traditional cantorial background, and utilize a *nusach* style. Many of Finkelstein's compositions use this format of melodic, congregational refrain and cantorial free-style verses (For example, *Shalom Rav*).

The rhythm of *L'dor Vador* is very straight forward. The composition is in duple meter and its main rhythmic interest is the effect of holding notes over the bar line to create suspense. This is a rock-rhythm termed "pushing the beat,"⁶⁸ also known as syncopation. Accordingly, the first note of a measure is de-emphasized, and the feeling of the down-beat is delayed until the second note. As a result, Finkelstein delays the sensation of the down-beat being the strongest beat, and this, in turn, generates tension. When the sensation of the down-beat does

⁶⁷Finkelstein, interview.

⁶⁸Joseph Levine, *Synagogue Song in America* (Crown Point: White Cliffs Media Co., 1989), 191.

occur on the second beat of the measure, this creates a feeling of resolution. Hence, the entire composition is very fulfilling for its listeners because of its constant tension and resolution.

Of equal importance to the beautiful melody, is the composition's accompaniment and harmonies. According to Finkelstein, his compositions are so successful because of their lush and rich harmonies which accompany the lyric melodic line. Therefore, the harmonies are mainly supportive of the melody, and it is the type of chords which creates the "larger than life" quality of the piece. Here again we see the influence of pop music on Finkelstein's synagogue compositions. His use of jazz chords, added sevenths and ninths, as well as added fifths and sixths, nine-eighth suspensions, inversions, and dissonance all stem from his pop and jazz compositional techniques. The harmonic progressions are also indicative of these techniques. Moreover, the use of dissonance and suspension also helps to generate tension and resolution which creates drama in the music.

In addition, some of Finkelstein's harmonies allude to *nusach*. For example, at the conclusion of the piece, both the harmony and the melody allude to the *phregish* scale (also known as the *ahava raba* mode), with the lowered second (see last two pages of music attached in Appendix 2b). The G flat chord leading to the F major chord subtly informs the congregation that the *T'filah* section is beginning, and that this section is to be *davened* in the *ahava raba* mode. Of course, this style of *davening* in the mode would only occur in conservative and orthodox synagogues. However, let us not forget that Finkelstein composes for his own conservative environment.

Finally, Finkelstein's signature move, that occurs in many of his compositions, is what he calls the "surprise cadence." Essentially, it is the use of a minor chord moving to its

parallel major chord by introducing the leading tone into the harmony as a passing tone. Its effect is very uplifting and for that reason, Finkelstein probably terms this move a "surprise." This "surprise cadence" can be seen in each opening phrase of the refrain (see music attached Appendix 2b). The use of major and minor chords can be very effective when used in this way. For many, the minor scale has a history of sounding sad. Therefore, the introduction of a raised third would have a very strong uplifting quality and, potentially, a spiritual impact, both of which Finkelstein's compositions embrace.

Finkelstein's Composition and the Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models

The *L'dor Vador* text clearly fits the priestly prayer model because of its praise of God and acknowledgment of God's glory, and is therefore situated closest to the priestly prayer model (see Figure 2). The melody is also one which portrays the grandeur of God's glory. Even the opening phrase, with its sequences moving higher and higher, represents our striving to reach up to God, and grasp the Godliness that is in each and every one of us. The climax of the composition, both in the melody and in the text, comes in the verse when the text states, "For You, God, are a great Ruler, For You, God, are a great Ruler, and You are Holy." Finkelstein repeats the text to accentuate God's greatness, and the melody reaches its highest moment with its highest notes. After this section, there is no doubt in the mind of the congregant that God is mighty and awesome.

More so than the text, however, it is the melody that brings us the sense that God is present. The familiar quality of the melody with its lush, comforting chords, creates the feeling that we are in the presence of an old friend, someone we have known for twenty years or

more. In addition, the allusion to *nusach* at the conclusion of the piece, gives those who are familiar with its sound, something from the past to hold onto. Many of the older congregants will be reminded of their childhood days when they used to *daven* in the traditional modes in their *shuls*, while the younger generations will be moved by the modern idioms of pop and film, which they find so easy to relate to. This composition has something for everyone, because people find God in different places and through different mediums.

Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller

Biography

Benjie-Ellen Schiller was born in 1958 in New York, New York, and grew up in Stamford, Connecticut. Neither of her parents were musical, yet, both Cantor Schiller and her brother Steve grew up studying music. At the early age of five, even without a piano in the house, Schiller was able play songs on the piano, improvising in any key. Although she was formally taught to play the piano by her aunt, she continued to improvise, which enabled her ear to develop harmonically. Cantor Schiller claims that much of her composing today is based on her improvisational skills.

Cantor Schiller continued to study and play piano throughout high school until college. She also studied music theory in high school, and played recorder and folk guitar. Cantor Schiller did not begin to develop her vocal technique until six months before she applied to Boston University. She auditioned there in both piano and voice, and carried a double major for a year. After the first year, she dropped piano, and changed her major to theory and

composition, under the influence of Steven Alpert. Cantor Schiller graduated from Boston University with a Bachelor's degree in Music Theory and Composition. She later attended the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music, from where she was invested as cantor in 1987.

Cantor Schiller was first introduced to synagogue music at a young age when her Cantor, Charles Julian at Temple Sinai in Stamford, wrote a jazz service for the junior youth group of which Schiller was a member. Up until this point in her life, Schiller had never been moved by synagogue music, and Jewish music never spoke to her. "It [the jazz service] unlocked . . . what I thought were inaccessible doors of Jewish music."⁶⁹ This was the first time that Cantor Schiller could express herself freely through Jewish music because this jazz service was "folksy," casual, and improvisational in style. From this experience, Schiller became involved in Jewish music, and traveled to Israel with her cantor and a group of children as their song leader. At this time, she also began teaching Jewish music in her synagogue's religious school, and became involved with NFTY Camps (The North American Federation of Temple Youth) as a song leader. Five years later, Schiller became the head song leader at her camp.

In college, Schiller acted as cantorial soloist and a music teacher. Even though she never considered becoming a cantor until much later, she composed Jewish music all throughout college. During these years, Schiller composed a lot of vocal music using both Hebrew and English texts from The Gates of Prayer. She eventually joined the Zamir Choral

⁶⁹Benjie Ellen-Schiller, interview by author, 24 October 1994, New York, tape recording, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York Campus.

in Boston, a Jewish singing group that performed choral music from Israel, as well as other Jewish choral compositions. This was Schiller's first exposure to Jewish and Israeli choral music, including compositions by Israeli composers Paul Ben Haim and Yehezkiel Braun. This group made a major impact on her life. She began to travel with the Zamir Choral, and became very involved in the Jewish community. It was then that she realized, "the music served a whole different purpose. . . . and [she] saw a great connection between the music and spiritual expression. . . . that [they] were learning the music to express [themselves] as Jews."⁷⁰ This choral group opened up a door to traditional Jewish expression and prayer for Cantor Schiller.

Toward the end of Schiller's undergraduate studies, she met her husband Rabbi Les Bronstein and they were married in June of 1981. Rabbi Bronstein introduced Schiller to traditional *davening* in his community *Chavurat Shalom*, and that was where Schiller learned Hebrew. Growing up in Temple Sinai in Stamford, Schiller did not have a Bat-Mitzvah, therefore, she never learned Hebrew until she joined the *chavurah* community. After she married Rabbi Bronstein, she went with him to Israel for his first year of rabbinic studies at Hebrew Union College and she took the *ulpan* program with the other rabbinic students. When she returned to Manhattan, she auditioned for the Manhattan School of Music in vocal performance. At this time, Schiller was auditing a liturgy class being taught at the Hebrew Union College by Professor Lawrence A. Hoffman.

It was not until Schiller spoke with Rabbi Hoffman that she realized she wanted to become a cantor. Rabbi Hoffman's influence on Schiller was one of the main reasons that she

⁷⁰Ibid.

enrolled in the School of Sacred Music. In the cantorial program at the Hebrew Union College, Schiller was exposed to all of the classical Reform composers including: Max Helfman, Heinrich Schalit, Ben Steinberg, and Maurice Goldman. Leonard Bernstein was also a major influence on her Jewish composing. In addition, she was first formally introduced to *nusach* by her teacher Cantor Lawrence Avery. Schiller developed a real love for *nusach* and *chazzanut*, and they taught her to understand how the Hebrew language is sung, the natural phrasing of the liturgy, and both the rhythm and the meaning of the text. For her Master's Thesis, Schiller composed a work, under the guidance of Samuel Adler, entitled *Life Song Cycle*. The year after Cantor Schiller graduated Hebrew Union College (1987), she was asked by the Director of the School of Sacred Music at that time, Rabbi Hoffman, to join the cantorial faculty. She has served on the faculty since that time and is now the proud mother of three beautiful children.

Approaches to Synagogue Composing

As mentioned above, Cantor Schiller was influenced by both folk music and the classical style. Growing up in the NFTY camps and joining the *chavurah* movement, her Jewish musical experience was always "folksy," comforting, accessible, and informal. Folk singers, such as Joan Baez and James Taylor, also added to her folk music experience while growing up. Schiller's classical musical training came much later in her life when she began to study music theory and composition formally at Boston University. The classical music training, in addition to her folk style from her childhood, added to her layers of musical talent. Finally, Schiller received her classical Jewish music training in cantorial school, and this helped

to shape Schiller's synagogue compositions in a new way. All of these styles and influences are readily apparent in Cantor Schiller's synagogue compositions. The biggest inspiration by far for Schiller's synagogue compositions, has been being a cantor herself.

When Cantor Schiller sits down to compose synagogue music she begins with the text. She examines the liturgy from all perspectives and allows her mind's eye to see images that help her to bring the text alive. She treats the text as poetry and imagery, and this becomes her inspiration for the music. Schiller claims that the text actually sings itself, a statement that we have already heard from both Cantor Finkelstein and Dr. Isaacson. Many times Cantor Schiller will look at different English translations of the Hebrew to be inspired by imagery of the words. In either language, she asserts that the phrasing of the text is extremely important, and the melody should be the natural expression of the text. The rhythm of the words must be the main influence on the meter and rhythm of the music, and the imagery of the text should set the mood of the melody. By singing through the text over and over again, Schiller creates a melody that is completely connected to the words.

Cantor Schiller believes that the melody is the next most important factor in her compositions. She does most of her composing on the piano, and says that her ability to improvise inspires her melodies. She begins by composing a simple melody, after which she adds the harmonic accompaniment. Schiller's classical musical training has taught her that the accompaniment should act as another melodic line or as other voices. She claims that a good accompaniment brings sophistication to a piece. Sometimes, however, Schiller's accompaniments have so much of a life of their own, that they actually compete with the melody line and over power the melody. Cantor Schiller says that her best pieces are the ones

which naturally flowed and were the most easily composed; "they [good melodies] write themselves and they work."⁷¹ This seems to be true for both Finkelstein and Isaacson as well.

A good melody for Cantor Schiller is one which stands on its own--meaning, it does not need any accompaniment, and can be sung a cappella. Many of Schiller's melodies can be performed without their accompaniment, and in fact, are conceived of without an accompaniment. This is opposite of how Cantor Finkelstein conceives of his compositions. For Finkelstein, both the melody and the accompaniment are created together and work best when performed together. But for Cantor Schiller, the melody should be so expressive and romantic that it needs nothing else. Moreover, a good melody should express the mood of the text and speak directly to the congregation.

In order for the melody to be successful, it must sound familiar to the congregation and touch their souls immediately. Not all of Cantor Schiller's synagogue compositions are simple melodies that can be learned immediately by the congregation. Unlike Finkelstein, who believes that a one time hearing of a melody should leave its audience humming the tune, Schiller thinks that a good, in-depth melody takes longer to learn. Much of her synagogues compositions are meant for congregational singing, but are not easily learned by one or two hearings. Cantor Schiller intentionally writes more sophisticated melodies because she does not like simplistic music that is redundant. She wants her compositions to be challenging and have integrity, yet still be approachable by the congregation. Therefore, Schiller composes in a comfortable range for the congregation, and her melodies are prayerful, and sound welcoming and inviting.

⁷¹Schiller, interview.

Cantor Schiller uses rhythm to add interest to a composition, much like Dr. Isaacson. She states, "the rhythmic nature of the text is something I love to play with." When she feels that a melody is too square and boring, she uses syncopated accompaniments and changing meters. Similar to Cantor Finkelstein, Cantor Schiller also utilizes the "pushing of the beat"⁷² technique. In general, Cantor Schiller sticks to very strict and straight meter due to her classical training. She does not utilize the cantorial recitative style, which she terms "cantor freely," that Cantor Finkelstein so often uses.

Like Dr. Isaacson, Schiller loves to combine both Hebrew and English in her compositions. In six of her synagogue compositions, she uses both the Hebrew and the English text. She feels it is a challenge to utilize both languages well, mostly because many of the English translations are bad translations. Schiller prefers the vernacular to be a prayerful expression of the text, and claims that many times the English translation hinders the congregation from relating to the Hebrew language. For this reason, she is very careful when choosing which English texts to set.

Unlike both Finkelstein and Isaacson, Schiller composes mostly for piano and organ. She admits that she does not love the organ in the synagogue, and would prefer to use either the piano or the guitar in the worship setting. Schiller feels that a cappella singing allows the freest expression for the cantor because she is not glued to the music and, therefore, has the opportunity to be spontaneous. Thus, Schiller favors a mix of both accompanied and a cappella singing in the prayer service. In addition, Schiller enjoys composing choral music as well as cantorial solos. Her synagogue compositions include a number of choral pieces. She

⁷²Levine, Synagogue Song in America, 191.

has composed for solo voice, two part choir, four part choir, duets, and choirs with up to 6 parts.

Finally, Cantor Schiller classifies her style of synagogue music as "melodic liturgical music with a contemporary flavor that incorporates many different types of styles."⁷³ She claims that she composes for herself, to express her own sacred experience and personal emotions. Schiller wants to stir her listeners on their first hearing, tap their emotions, and leave them thinking. At the same time, she strives to keep her compositions at a high level, both theoretically and harmonically. By doing this, Schiller hopes to raise the level of musical quality in the synagogue. She states that her music is, "as expressive as a *niggun* [a song without words], but full of textures."⁷⁴ In other words, her compositions are on a high musical level, but still very expressive. Unlike high church music, which Schiller claims to be both impersonal and lofty, her high level synagogue music speaks to the soul, and even more importantly, speaks the words. Her goal in composing synagogue music is to write music with interesting harmonies and textures for real folk people.

Specific Illustration

To illustrate Cantor Schiller's approaches to synagogue composition, I will look at one of her many pieces written for life cycle events. For her Master's Thesis at the School of Sacred Music, Schiller composed her first major work entitled *Life Songs Cycle* which included eight pieces for the life cycle events such as: birth, Bar/Bat-Mitzvah, conversion, wedding,

⁷³Schiller, interview.

⁷⁴Ibid.

dedication of a new home, funeral, etc. Among these pieces was *Zeh Dodi* [This is My Beloved] for a Jewish wedding ceremony. Schiller composed the piece in 1985 for the marriage of her husband's brother. At this time, she only wrote the melody line. The harmonic accompaniment came two years later, in 1987, when she wanted to include this composition in her Master's Project. She wrote the accompaniment to legitimize the piece, which otherwise would not have been published.

The wedding couple provided the text for the piece which is based on the English translation of a conservative *K'tubah* [Jewish marriage contract], mixed with a few Hebrew words or phrases from *Song of Songs* in the Bible. Schiller's goal in composing this piece was to make it prayerful, joyful, tender, and melodic. She wrote it solely for the couple, and wanted the lyric melody to be infectious. Schiller knew that this piece would be heard only once by its audience, hence, she purposely made the melody readily understandable and repetitive.

Similar to the structure of both *Biti* and *L'dor Vador*, *Zeh Dodi* has two verses and a refrain. Its refrain makes use of both Hebrew and English, while the verses are set only in English. In fact, the use of Hebrew is very minimal, most likely to be accessible for the intended audience, who are not necessarily Jews or Jews that know Hebrew. Schiller uses only three Hebrew words which are immediately translated into English--*Zeh Dodi*, *Zeh Rei* [This is my beloved, this is my friend]. These words make for a perfect refrain, which is then elaborated in the verses, together telling a story of two people's love for each other. The structure of the entire composition can thus be represented by the letters ABABA (A=refrain, B=verses 1 and 2). Although the words differ in the two verses, the melody remains the same.

resulting in only two distinct melody lines, one in the refrain and one in the verse. Again, this structure of refrain and verse portrays a popular music influence; see Appendix 3a, "Analysis of *Zeh Dodi*."

Both the refrain and the verse repeat at least twice throughout the composition. Because the melodies are repeated, the composition is very memorable. Similar to Finkelstein's *L'dor Vador*, Schiller utilizes sequences and repeating phrases to create familiarity. In addition, the melody expresses the text very well. The text speaks of tenderness and intertwining lives, and because of its lyricism, the melodic line conveys this message well. The melody is especially expressive when it rises at high points in the text, and lowers for tender moments in the text. Even more impressive is how the melody flows like the spoken word. The melody flows freely to convey the natural phrasing of the text, and the rhythm allows for a spoken quality.

The meter in this composition is constantly changing. It moves from common time to three-four time to duple time to five-four time and so on. Schiller does this so as not to alter the text in any way. Instead of making the text fit into a set, preconceived meter, she simply changes the meter to fit the text. Therefore, the text decides the meter and rhythm of the composition and not some predetermined melody. This constant changing meter allows for the free flowing feel of the text and permits its natural expression. In this way, Schiller avoids square and predictable rhythms. As a result, the composition is less "folksy" and more at the level of an art song, making it much more challenging for its performer.

The harmony of this piece is also not predictable. To start, the harmonic rate of change is not constant. The changing of the harmonies does not always occur on the down-beat of each measure. This adds interest to the accompaniment. In some places, the harmonic change

comes late in the measure, on the second beat, thus causing a feeling of suspension, as if the harmony has left us hanging in mid-air, waiting. This delayed reaction causes a temporary tension, soon to be resolved in the next down-beat. Employing the technique of "pushing the beat"⁷⁵ or syncopation, as we have seen with Finkelstein's compositions, creates this delayed reaction, and the fluctuation of the harmonic change rate allows the harmony to fit the more free-flowing melodic line.

In the first verse, Schiller uses a syncopated harmony to add fresh activity to the piece. This more active harmony competes with the melody, and almost takes on a life of its own. This is exactly what Cantor Schiller claims is her biggest problem--creating an accompaniment which overpowers the melody. In the second verse, the accompaniment calms down and becomes more intimate, to parallel the intimacy of the text in this section. In this verse, Schiller uses many simple passing tones in the accompaniment, and the harmonies are even, arriving on the first and third down-beat of each measure. These passing tones are meant to resemble a music box and the childlike innocence of first love.

Other harmonic innovations that keep Schiller's composition interesting is her use of jazz chords. As we have seen with the other two contemporary composers so far, their use of lush, full chords adds richness to their simple melodies. Schiller's use of major seven chords adds complexity to her simple melodic line. In addition, her use of dissonance throughout the piece creates a sense of tension and resolution. Schiller uses this pattern of dissonance in every measure, which helps to keep the piece moving forward. This dissonance causes tension, but

⁷⁵Levine, Synagogue Song in America, 191.

always resolves quickly, usually on the first beat of the next measure thus, pulling the melody over the bar line. To counterbalance the tension, Schiller uses simple chords on even downbeats to create resolution and tenderness. Many times throughout the piece, however, the melody and the harmony are disjointed.

Cantor Schiller's use of dynamics in this composition help to express the text. She begins the piece with a piano marking to allude to its tenderness and then builds to mezzo-forte to show the heightened enthusiasm. Verse one has a stronger text, and thus, Schiller uses more forte markings. The text in verse two, on the other hand, is much more tender and calls for piano markings. It is interesting to note that the high points of the composition are not marked by loud dynamic markings. In contrast, the climax moments are marked by mezzo-piano and piano. The texts at these two climactic moments are "my devoted one," and "the Holy One." Schiller shows with this composition that our highest moments in life are really ones of tenderness and calm.

Schiller's Composition and the Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models

Similar to Isaacson's *Biti*, *Zeh Dodi* is also a composition intended for a life cycle event. When people think of life cycle events, they usually do not consider them to be acts of worship. However, in the Jewish religion, any life cycle event involves the presence of God and, therefore, becomes an act of prayer. This is also true of the Jewish wedding ceremony, which involves the ultimate act of creation--the coming together of a man and a woman to fulfill their part of the Jewish covenant and create a family in keeping with the laws of Moses and Israel. At this time, the union of a man and a woman invokes the presence of God.

The composition *Zeh Dodi*, speaks of the lives of the couple being illuminated by the Holy One. Indeed, this is the climactic point of the piece, revealing the importance of God's presence in the act of marriage. The implication is that, without God, a perfect union is impossible. At the same time, the tenderness of the melody communicates to the couple that every thing is going to be alright, and that they are not alone in this quest for ultimate happiness. Both the melody and the text together convey that God is with the couple. Thus, this composition serves two functions--it invokes the presence of God into the community present, and it acts to console the couple at its most vulnerable time. Accordingly, this composition fits both the priestly and pastoral prayer models; it lies in between these two prayer models in Figure 2, clearly showing an example of the interrelation of the two prayer models.

Cantor Rachelle Nelson

Biography

Rachelle Nelson was born in 1956 in Miami, Florida to parents who were both musicians--her mother is a piano teacher and her father is a singer. In addition, Cantor Nelson's sister Eve composes for television and movie scores, her brother is also a fine musician, her grandmother was a musician, and her great grandfather was a cantor. As a result, Jewish music was very prevalent in her home, and she was always involved musically, her talents being closely connected with the synagogue and Jewish life. Cantor Nelson's Shabbat experiences were very musical around the piano, including both Yiddish and Hebrew melodies, and her world while as child was very culturally Jewish.

Cantor Nelson began to study piano, flute, and guitar as a child, and was highly trained as a classical pianist, with the idea that she would pursue piano as a profession (similar to Cantor Schiller). She grew up in Jewish camps, including Brandeis Camp in California and Camp Colman in Florida, where she was music director for a summer. In addition, Cantor Nelson attended Interlocken Music Camp, and she was very involved in NFTY camps as well.

Up until this point in her life, Nelson's musical experience had been mostly Jewish and very informal. It was not until high school that Cantor Nelson began to take music more seriously, especially her piano skills. She became more involved in classical piano and began to compete in various piano competitions. Her formal musical training continued when she attended the University of Miami on scholarship. There Cantor Nelson sang with a group called *The Sunshine Celebration*, a group of twenty-eight hand selected students who not only could sing, but also had to have compositional skills. Cantor Nelson was accepted into the group as a freshman, and traveled throughout the world, concertizing a few times a year. This experience allowed her to use her musical skills, not only as a singer, but also as a composer and arranger.

Cantor Nelson was a composer from the age of six, composing at the piano harmony parts for all the melodies that she knew. In fact, Nelson states, "I never heard melodies, I always heard harmonies."⁷⁶ At the age of nine, she began to notate her musical compositions,

⁷⁶Rachelle Nelson, telephone interview by author, 24 October 1994, Miami to New York, tape recording.

including some Jewish compositions. By the age of twelve, Nelson had composed songs that were already sung around Miami. As she entered high school, Nelson studied composition privately with a woman in her neighborhood. At the University of Miami, Nelson majored in Music Education because, at that point, she knew she did not want to be a classical concert pianist. Moreover, Cantor Nelson did not think of herself as a vocalist at that time. In fact, she was not even training vocally at all. Instead, Nelson saw herself as an instrumentalist and composer. As a result, her minor was in composition.

It was not until the end of her college education that Rachelle Nelson decided she wanted to become a cantor. She thought it would be a wonderful avenue for her to utilize her compositional skills in Jewish music, still play flute, guitar, and piano, conduct (another love of Cantor Nelson's), and at the same time, develop herself vocally. Similar to Cantor Schiller, when Cantor Nelson auditioned for the Hebrew Union College, School of Sacred Music, she also had only six months of voice lessons under her belt. During her training at the Hebrew Union College, Nelson acted as cantorial soloist at Temple Israel in Miami, and commuted back and forth from Miami to New York. Cantor Nelson was invested as cantor in 1984, and married Harvey Saunders in 1986. She is the proud mother of twin girls and currently serves Temple Beth Am in Miami, Florida.

Approaches to Synagogue Composing

Cantor Nelson states that her composing has been influenced by her great love for poetry and writing. Nelson has written poetry since she was a little girl and has a great love for words. Because of her musical ability, Nelson was able to put those words to life through

music. It was very natural for her to write poetry and then set it to music. Cantor Nelson claims, "I automatically heard melody when I wrote words. And I just did it naturally. It was never taught to me. I had no influences, no composers in my family around me, I just did it."⁷⁷

In terms of setting Hebrew texts to music, Cantor Nelson feels that it is of utmost importance to set both the Hebrew and English whenever possible. "I always felt that, when composing Jewish music, it is very important, since your greatest audience is either non-Jewish or 99.9% of your Jewish audience does not know Hebrew, whenever possible, to incorporate both the Hebrew and the English into a piece of music."⁷⁸ Therefore, most of Nelson's synagogue compositions are a mixture of both Hebrew and English (for example, *S'u Sh'arim*, *Ana Dodi*, *Shehecheyanu*, etc). Nelson does this so that anyone in her audience can enjoy her works. Thus, a main factor influencing Cantor Nelson's synagogue composing, is the use of both Hebrew and English in order for her works to be accessible to the congregation.

Indeed the most important factor influencing Nelson's synagogue composing is the use of melody. Cantor Nelson considers herself a melodist. She asserts that she writes melody, and she tries to write what a lay person out in the congregation would enjoy and find pretty to their ears. At the same time, however, she tries not to demean the intelligence or the beauty of Jewish music. In addition to a beautiful melody, Nelson tries to incorporate more harmonies and richer colors so that the music can reach a higher level. Unlike the music of Debbie Friedman, Cantor Nelson wants her music to move out of the camp feel and into a level that

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

still makes people feel they can hum along and sing, yet, at the same time, they are hearing a fine piece of art music, not just a pop song or a guitar song.⁷⁹ Therefore, Cantor Nelson tries to take that next step in her compositions and still write beautiful, popular melodies, but with a higher level of sophistication meant for the synagogue or even the concert hall.

Melody to Cantor Nelson is essential to Jewish music. Although she respects those synagogue composers who write with an atonal feel, she does not think that is what Jewish music is or should be. Any composer who has tried to take melody away from Jewish music has failed. Nelson believes that Jewish music is melody, and that people come to synagogue to relax and sometimes, be entertained. She does not feel that there is anything wrong with coming to synagogue to be entertained, as long as it is not total entertainment. In fact, Nelson says there is nothing wrong with coming to the synagogue because you love to hear your cantor sing or your rabbi preach. What is most important, according to Cantor Nelson, is that people feel relaxed by their music--synagogue music should not be too harsh, atonal, barbaric or loud. This kind of music only turns congregations away, and cantors need to know the difference between what music belongs in the service and what music belongs in the concert hall. Synagogue music must be higher, musically, than camp songs, but it must also have a melody for the congregation to hang on to. Nelson does utilize camp songs in the synagogue, however, she sets them to piano, not just a strumming guitar, which elevates them to a prettier sound.

⁷⁹This idea of composing art music, echoes the words of Cantor Schiller and her style of composing. However, thus far, not one of previous composers have mentioned composing for the listener. They have only referred to composing as personal expression, regardless of the listener's response.

In general, Cantor Nelson composes for piano. She has never composed for the organ. Nelson declares that when she writes music she hears the piano, strings, and even an orchestra, but never an organ. In fact, when Cantor Nelson performs her compositions in the synagogue, she has her organist use the strings, flute, and keyboard accompaniments on the organ, because the organ sound is too "churchy" for her. Subsequently, Nelson's compositions utilize mostly piano, flute, strings, and harp. These are the instruments that make people feel good and Nelson's main goal, through her synagogue compositions, is to make people feel good during worship. She maintains that the function of prayer is to feel good Jewishly, and have a sense of Jewish identity--feel part of a close knit community. Cantor Nelson feels that her lyric synagogue melodies create a warm environment, and promote congregants to feel positive about their synagogue.

Cantor Nelson feels that the relationship between the text and the music is the most essential aspect in synagogue composing. Nelson claims that she puts music to words, and not words to music. This has been a common theme among all of our contemporary synagogue composers mentioned thus far. When Cantor Nelson sits down to compose, she puts the text in front of her, and she tries to understand the mood of the text she is trying to convey. She tries to create a musical line that brings the text alive, always making sure to convey the words through the music. Nelson is more interested in communicating the message of the text than just putting forth a melody. As a result, Nelson will read a line of text and see what mood it brings her. Then, she will begin with a melody and later add harmonies.

Cantor Nelson is very careful to give the congregation what they like. She states, "I

am very tied-in to what people like. I write for the masses."⁸⁰ She does not compose for the intellectual trained musician, but rather, for her congregation. In fact, she uses her congregation as guinea pigs to see what "works" in a prayer setting and what sounds beautiful. Cantor Nelson feels very strongly about congregational singing and giving the congregation something to involve them. There should always be a few melodies in the service that are "hands on." If the congregants walk away humming the melody, then she knows she has done something right. Nelson tries to find the "hook" in every piece that she writes--that recurring theme that gives the composition its familiarity, something to hold onto. Again, this is very similar to Cantor Finkelstein's idea of music that "works." Both Finkelstein and Nelson agree that the synagogue composition that "works" must give the listener something to hold onto.

In terms of the Jewish modes and *nusach*, Cantor Nelson maintains that they are interwoven in her music. She asserts that the influence the modes have had on her synagogue composing has been primarily subconscious, and that she does not think of modes when she composes. In effect, the modes have become part of her ear, but she does not consciously try to utilize them at the expense of becoming too technical. Instead, Nelson prefers to rely on her natural ability to compose simple and beautiful melodies, rather than become too involved in technique. For Nelson, simplicity is beauty--less is always more.

Many of Cantor Nelson's synagogue compositions are written for choir. Her main choral influence comes from the singing group she participated in at the University of Miami. Nelson feels that choir adds color to synagogue compositions, and good choral arrangements give the piece a whole new personality. She claims, that certain melodies are so rich, and their

⁸⁰Nelson, interview.

harmonies are so lush, that they stand well on their own. Yet, some melodies need the added excitement of a choir. However, a good piece of music must be able to stand on its own, and it shouldn't need a choir behind it to make it "work;" if it does, the piece is weak, and the choir really is not adding.

Cantor Nelson categorizes her musical style as melodic and lyrical, with some classical intonations. She does not consider it "pop" music by any means. Although a few of her pieces do incorporate some popular rhythms, such as her *Shehecheyanu*, she feels that even this "pop" sound is more classically orientated. Even her harmonies are classically orientated. Jokingly, Cantor Nelson declares that she can call herself the Miami "pops" with a classical bent. In addition, she claims that she writes "movie theme" type music that can fit into various settings. Overall, Nelson believes that she composes music which "works," music which is sweetest to the ear. She is not ashamed to admit that she writes for the masses--music that is not ethnically strong, but can be used in the church as well as in the synagogue. In fact, many of her synagogue compositions are currently being used in churches around Miami because of their lyrical melodies and accessible nature (these pieces utilize both Hebrew and English). In general, Nelson's works can be classified as Jewish music that is melodic, speaks to our time, and makes people feel good.

Specific Illustration

To illustrate Cantor Nelson's approach to synagogue composing, I have chosen one of Nelson's most popular synagogue compositions, the *Shehecheyanu*. This is one of those pieces that is popular in both synagogues throughout the country, and churches throughout Miami,

where Cantor Nelson lives. The popularity of the piece is mostly due to its use universal quality. The text praises God for granting us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this day--certainly a text that applies to any religion and race. The text is in both Hebrew and English so many peoples can understand it, and the melody is of a generic nature, not ethnically tied to any culture. This prayer is used in the context of worship at the beginning of all festivals and holidays, for all life cycle events, and any time that one wishes to praise God for something new in life.

Cantor Nelson composed *Shehecheyanu* in 1987 for the convention of the American Conference of Cantors in Tampa, Florida. She wanted this piece to be uplifting and generic enough to be used for all occasions. In addition, the melody had to be simple enough so that everyone at convention could sight read it on the spot, because it was handed out as a closing piece. Therefore, when Nelson sat down to compose *Shehecheyanu*, she took all of these factors into account. First and foremost, she looked at the text and tried to find the mood the text conveyed. She understood the *Shehecheyanu* as the happiest poem, thanking God for bringing us life. What more could we thank God for other than life? When Cantor Nelson read this text, she felt such joy, that she tried to create a musical line that really was joyful. With her composition, Cantor Nelson feels she truly captured the mood of the text.

The piece is written for cantor, four part mixed choir, and keyboard. This division of parts helps to form the structure of the piece. There is a refrain that is first sung by the cantor and then repeated by the choir. The piece continues in this way, with the cantor singing and then the choir repeating each section. In addition, the piece switches off between Hebrew and English, with the cantor always starting off in the Hebrew. Overall, there are four different

sections to the piece, two in Hebrew and two in English, that can be represented by the letters ABCD (A=refrain in Hebrew sung by cantor and repeated by choir, B=verse in Hebrew sung by cantor only, C=verse in English sung by choir only, D=verse in English sung by both cantor and choir together). The text is the same over and over again, just alternating between the Hebrew and its English translation. Again, we see the influence of popular music on the structure of a synagogue composition. The text itself does not suggest this structure, therefore, Nelson repeats the text over and over again in order to fit it into this verse-refrain structure of the pop music style. Thus, the complete structure of the piece can be represented by the letters AABCAAD; see Appendix 4a, "Analysis of *Shehecheyanu*."

Although there are four different sections to this piece, there are really only two main melodic lines. The A section, the refrain, acts as a low melodic line, probably meant for the congregation to sing along with both the cantor and the choir. The melody of sections C and D are exactly the same, yet in different keys. And, the melody of section B is very similar to that of sections C and D, probably a variation on the same melodic theme. Moreover, the melodic line of sections B, C, and D acts as a high melodic line, in contrast to section A, and is probably meant as a solo for either the cantor or the choir. These two melodic lines are extremely lyrical, and because of their repeating phrases and repetition, they create a sense of familiarity for the congregation. By the second repeat of the refrain, the congregation is bound to be humming along. More importantly, the melody is so singable, that the entire piece can be done without accompaniment, and can even be converted into a solo composition to be used without choir. According to Cantor Nelson, this is the sign of a successful piece, one that "stands alone."

The rhythm of this composition gives it added interest, and again reveals its popular music influences. It is written in common time throughout, yet Cantor Nelson makes use of a lot of syncopation. This helps to get the congregation excited and moving in their seats. Originally, the piece was even more syncopated, but Nelson added extra notes to make it less rhythmic so that the congregants would be able to sing along more easily. She was concerned that the music would be too difficult for her congregation to sing along with, a factor that Cantor Schiller is less concerned with in her synagogue composing. This is a perfect example to illustrate how Cantor Nelson gives the congregation what they like. Her use of notes held over the bar line also adds to this syncopated rhythm, and her accompaniment has a syncopated rhythm to follow her syncopated melody.

The harmony in this piece is the most essential aspect of the composition. The accompanying chord progressions are very basic, mostly I, IV, and V chords. Cantor Nelson also makes use of many jazz and pop chords, such as added sevenths and ninths. This is common among all of the contemporary synagogue composers discussed thus far. However, what we have not seen so far, in any of these compositions, that we do see in the *Shehecheyanu*, is successive modulations. The repetition of melodies and texts alone would eventually get boring if it were not for the constant modulations in the composition. The key changes go up in thirds, from C major to E flat major (a major third), and from E flat major to G major (a minor third). From the key of G major, Nelson uses the circle of fifths to return to her original key, C major, and then she repeats the piece from the beginning. This constant harmonic movement upward gives the piece its uplifting quality. The congregation cannot help but feel their spirits being lifted higher and higher with every modulation. The idea of moving

up in thirds, both major and minor, was employed by nineteenth century composers; it is called "The Third Relation." The use of both nineteenth and twentieth century characteristics has been common to all of our contemporary synagogue composers and has caused their compositions to sound very romantic in style.

Cantor Nelson's dynamic markings parallel the constant rising of the melodic line and the harmonies. The piece begins with the low melodic line (section A) in mezzo-piano. It then repeats in mezzo-forte, after which, the high melodic lines (sections B, C, and D), are in forte. Finally, the climax of the piece comes at the very end in double forte, with both the choir and the cantor singing together. As the piece develops, the dynamics get louder and louder, the melodic line builds and rises, and the keys move higher and higher until the highest point of the piece, the conclusion. The piece ends on an extremely high note, both literally and figuratively. This leaves the congregation with feeling that they have reached their highest potential. Instead of resolving the piece so that the melody comes back down again at the end, Nelson purposely leaves it up in the air, so that the listener has a feeling of ending on a high note with uplift. This also coincides well with the text. The piece ends in English with the words repeating, "Helping us reach, Helping us reach, Helping us reach this day." These words are the main point of the *Shehecheyanu* prayer--highlighting the specialness of the day, whatever that day may be. Thus, it makes sense to end with those words as the climax and high point of the composition.

To reiterate, the effect of building higher and higher in melody, pitch, intensity, loudness, and text, really conveys the mood of the prayer. It has the ability to uplift and heighten the listener's emotions and spirituality, which is what makes this piece "work." The

fact that the text repeats seven times throughout the composition allows the congregation to come together as a community and share in a common interest, the praising and thanking of God. The repetition of the text acts like a mantra effect to create communal bonding and group identity. The variation in the piece comes from the alternating of the text, between Hebrew and English, the voice, between cantor and choir, the keys, the melody lines, and the dynamics. All of these features add interest to the composition, and build suspense and drama.

Nelson's Composition and the Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models

So far we have seen synagogue compositions that fit both the priestly and the pastoral prayer models. Cantor Nelson's *Shehecheyanu* is the first synagogue composition that really fits all three prayer models, priestly, pastoral, and prophetic. It clearly exemplifies the priestly model because of its focus on God and its praising of God. In fact, the act of saying the *Shehecheyanu* automatically invokes the presence of God because it acknowledges God's power and presence in our lives. This piece repeats over and over again God's name and God's ability to grant us life, sustain us, and help us. Moreover, the Rabbis claim, that when you bless something, you bring the presence of God down from the heavens and into the world. How more so when you bless God directly! Therefore, this composition allows God to enter our lives and is well suited to the priestly prayer model.

As we have seen with other synagogue compositions that fit the priestly prayer model, more often than not, these pieces also fit the pastoral prayer model. This is due to the fact that, when God is present in people's lives, they feel comforted. God is the ultimate pastor and healer, and with God on their side, worshipers feel that they are not alone. They have that

sense that every thing will be alright, and that God is looking out for them. The *Shehecheyanu* especially has that quality because of its text and uplifting melody and harmonies. The text states that God is there to help you and sustain you. What can be more healing than that? And the constant rising of the melody and harmonies gives the listener a spiritual high that heals the broken soul. Thus, the priestly and the pastoral prayer models are closely related, and this piece represents both.

Finally, the *Shehecheyanu* also suits the prophetic prayer model; see Figure 2. As mentioned above, this piece has the ability to bring people together because of its popular style and melody. It is indeed a "people's song." With this piece, Cantor Nelson successfully achieves what she tries to do in her synagogue composing--write for the masses. This song is one that belongs to the congregation. The melody is simple enough so that every one can learn it after one hearing, the text is the same throughout the piece with constant repeats, and the entire composition was conceived of in a popular vein, with very little ethnic quality. For this reason, it is used in both synagogues and churches alike. It "works" well in a worship setting because it creates a communal bonding effect. Even the text, "helping *us* reach this day," suggests that the community, as a whole, is praising God. Together the congregation is united in singing God's praises and thanking God for life, thus being restored by God's presence. To pray with sincerity is one of the highest forms of social action, and is, absolutely, a common interest of humanity--the essence of the prophetic prayer model. Therefore, all three prayer models are integrated, and their interrelation is represented by this composition.

Cantor Stephen Richards

Biography

Stephen Richards was born in 1935 in New York, New York. He is the son of a successful popular musician, Sidney Solomon, who worked as a piano accompanist for Rudy Vallee, and a sheet music arranger for Irving Berlin. His father rebelled against his orthodox upbringing, and his mother came from an assimilated background. As a result, Cantor Richards had no religion in the home while he was growing up. However, there was always music in his home. The Richards family had two pianos, one in the living room and one in Cantor Richards' bedroom.

Cantor Richards began composing at age seven. He would make up tunes and try to notate them, but many times his father would have to rewrite them. By the age of ten, Richards was proficient at the piano and did not need his compositions rewritten by his father anymore. In 1957, Richards received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from New York University, and went on to Columbia University to study for his Master of Arts degree in Music Composition.

At this time, Richards was not truly happy with either himself or his music. During the 1950s and 60s, people were creating dissonant music and atonal music. It was completely different from the kind of music Richards had grown up with and was used to hearing and composing. Moreover, it was not the type of music one would want to sing along with. However, atonal music was in vogue, and Richards was expected to compose it. Richards hated composing atonal music, and at the age of twenty-four, "Richards found both his personal identity, and a niche for creating music he related to in what [his] parents had

rejected--[his] Judaism."⁸¹

Cantor Richards began directing a synagogue junior choir in New York and he wrote a children's opera for the group based on the Book of Ruth. A representative of TIKVA Records heard a performance and asked Richards to adapt the opera to an adult performance scored for chamber orchestra. *The Ballad of Ruth* was released by TIKVA Records in 1959, and was Richard's entree into Jewish music. Richards continued to work in musical theater and compose for off-Broadway theater companies, chamber groups, choruses, and ballet troupes, as well as coach singers, teach, and play piano. However, he also continued to compose and arrange synagogue music.

After a while, Richards decided it was time to formally learn Hebrew. He enrolled in some Hebrew classes at the Hebrew Union College, and at age thirty, became a full time cantorial student in the School of Sacred Music. At the beginning of his cantorial studies, Richards still saw himself as a composer who would write music for the concert hall and work with great professionals. "But in the course of cantorial study, [he] had to turn 180 degrees--to see [his] main job as involving people in music. . . . he learned that a cantor's role is to get the congregation to join in, if not actually singing, then to join in emotionally."⁸²

Cantor Richards was invested as cantor in 1969, and went on to serve various congregations in the United States. In 1980, Richards moved to Pheonix, Arizona, where he served Temple Beth Israel for eleven years, and later, served Temple Kol Ami. He married

⁸¹Sharon Mandel Peerless, "Cantor's Story . . . Reads Like 'Jazz singer' in Reverse," Cleveland Jewish News, 17 March 1989, 36.

⁸²Ibid.

Marjorie Morse Richards in 1985, and currently, Cantor Richards serves Congregation B'nai Tikvah in Walnut Creek, California, and is the father of six children. He claims that his theatrical background has helped him in his work in the world of synagogues, and that what he does best is getting people to participate in music. Richards states, "I love working with choirs, especially kids' choirs, and teaching music to young people."⁸³

Approaches to Synagogue Composing

Due to Cantor Richards' extensive involvement in Broadway in the 1960s, his synagogue composing is very much influenced by the style of musical theater, as well as that of Puccini and other Romantic composers.⁸⁴ His music has a sense of drama that is similar to movie scores and operas--creating a "larger than life" effect. Richards believes that this dramatic effect is created by three things: tension and release, for example, dissonance resolving; passages that change tempo or modality; and build-up of textures, dissonances, and rhythms.

Richards creates various textures in his synagogue compositions by composing for many different instruments. His synagogue compositions include the use of: piano, oboe, strings, brass quintet, and organ. Richards feels that the use of instruments in the worship service combines both praying and striving for beauty. In addition, he adds layers to his music by

⁸³Stephen Richards, "Musical Roots," Baltimore Jewish Sun January 1994. Information for biography attained from newspaper articles sent to me by the composer. As a result, information is limited.

⁸⁴Richards, information in a letter received from the composer by mail, 26 October, 1994.

setting pieces for both cantor and choir. Cantor Richards believes that volunteer choirs are an essential part of synagogue life. He declares, "[i]t is the essence of the worshiper actively praying; it maintains the connection between the institution and its members, . . . music has the power to bring people together in a common bond and purpose, and the volunteer choirs in our synagogues bring people together in a most holy common purpose."⁸⁵

Cantor Richards is a strong advocate of congregational singing. He believes that the music of the synagogue should actively involve people of all ages--"sometimes singing, sometimes listening."⁸⁶ Here, Richards mentions the idea of active listening. This idea is based on the fact that one does not necessarily need to sing a prayer aloud in order to participate in it. Instead, one can pray by listening intently to a beautiful melody rendered either by the cantor or the choir, and still feel as if he is actively involved. Many of Richards' synagogue compositions have beautiful lyric melodies that are readily understood by the congregation, but are not necessarily intended for congregational singing. These are the kind of melodies that congregants leave the sanctuary humming to themselves.

On the other hand, Richards states that, "the sanctuary doesn't have to be converted into a camp."⁸⁷ Richards feels that this only results in a "secularization of the service."⁸⁸ Whereas Richards believes that the music of the synagogue should be based on elements of stylized folk song, he does not approve of replacing the cantor with a song leader and

⁸⁵Stephen Richards, "Music and Prayer in Reform Worship," Journal of Synagogue Music 9, no. 2 (June 1979): 24.

⁸⁶Ibid., 25.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., 23.

congregants stomping and clapping to the guitar. He strongly maintains that this activity only works against striving for holiness.

Cantor Richards asserts that the worship service is not for our enjoyment, but rather to serve God, a very different view from that of Cantor Nelson. As a result, he feels that the use of secular music in the synagogue is inappropriate. Although it may stimulate a nice sensual feeling, and a pleasant sociological experience, Richards asserts that it is not a religious experience.⁸⁹ However, he is aware that secular music and Jewish music have influenced one another throughout history. Thus, Richards believes that secular music can be infused with synagogue music if it is done with an attitude of holiness.

This, therefore, is the basis of Cantor Richards' synagogue compositions. He feels that synagogue music "must be steeped in the liturgical and musical traditions of [the Jewish] people, yet infused with all the technique and art we can muster, still seeking primarily to involve the worshiper and capture the moods and spirit of the prayers."⁹⁰ Richards strives to find the perfect balance in his synagogue compositions between art music and stylized folk music, and between active, vocal participation on the part of the congregant, and active, participatory listening.

Overall, Cantor Richards sees his synagogue compositions as a primary function of prayer. They reach inward and affect our deepest feelings, as well as express our needs and aspirations to God. Furthermore, Richard's synagogue music allows us to enter into a spiritual experience and be elevated--"to surmount the ordinary, the secular [and] to strive toward

⁸⁹Ibid., 24.

⁹⁰Ibid., 25.

holiness."⁹¹ This is not the first time we have heard a contemporary synagogue composer connect the music of prayer with transformation toward holiness and transcendence. Many of the compositions we have explored thus far, have echoed the same.

In addition, Richards maintains that one of the main purposes of prayer is to inspire us to social action--to join in partnership with God to repair and perfect the world. Active and participatory experiences within worship can promote this behavior. Music is essential in creating a bond between people, as mentioned above. The right kind of synagogue music can generate a collective response and eventually, result in group identity and social action.

Specific Illustration

Cantor Stephen Richards' most popular synagogue composition is *R'tzei*. Published by Transcontinental Music Publications in 1988, it is sung in synagogues around the country, and is a favorite of many congregations. The *R'tzei* prayer is part of the *T'filah* section in every worship service, but in general, in the Reform movement, this particular piece is used mostly on Friday nights and Saturday mornings during Shabbat worship.

Unlike most of the contemporary synagogue composers we have studied so far, Richards does not alter the text of the prayer to fit into a preconceived structure. Up until now, all of the composers, with the exception of Isaacson, have utilized a pop musical structure for their compositions--the refrain-verse structure. Cantor Richards does not use this structure, rather, he goes straight through the text, from beginning to end, without ever repeating the same words. For Richards, this is the natural expression of the text, and this is the structure

⁹¹Ibid., 22.

which the text itself suggests.

Although Richards does not repeat text, he does repeat melody, also a common trend among our composers. Cantor Richards utilizes two basic melodies in this composition, and he alternates between the two. The first melody, melody A, employs *nusach* by starting in the *ahava raba* mode (a major scale with a lowered second). This first melody is a lower melodic line and has a very minor feel to it. This lower melodic line is used to build drama and tension in the piece. The second melody, melody B, is a higher melody line and has a major feel to it. In fact, it could be thought of as going to the relative major of melody A. This higher melodic line is used for the high points of the piece, to create drama at the climactic moment, and it also corresponds to the climax of the textual meaning. Thus, the melodic structure of the entire piece can be represented by the letters AABAB; see Appendix 5a, "Analysis of *R'tzei*."

As stated above, Richards alternates between two melodies, one with a minor feel (A) and one with a major feel (B). His use of the repeating melodies and repeating sequences adds a sense of familiarity to the composition, another common trend among our composers. This sense of familiarity leads the congregants to believe that they have an understanding of where the piece is going. Moreover, the congregants walk away with the sensation that they have been singing along with the cantor, although not necessarily audibly.

The rhythm of this piece is extremely interesting. At first glance, it appears a lot easier than it is. The melody line is in duple time, however, it plays against the accompaniment, which is in triple time. This causes the piece to be very busy, and in certain places, even disjointed, causing tension and syncopation between the melody and the harmony. Sometimes

this effect is jarring to the listener, and causes him to "wake up." This is one of Richards' dramatic effects. He uses rhythm to create tension and release, as well as dissonance resolving. This syncopation, or "pushing of the beat" which we have seen before with Finkelstein, Schiller, and Nelson, is another common trend among our composers. In addition, Richards' use of triplets, like Isaacson, adds drama by prolonging the rendering of the text.

The dynamics in this composition are also important to note. Cantor Richards begins the piece with the lower melodic line in piano and builds to mezzo-piano. Then, the lower melodic line repeats, and again it is piano building to mezzo-piano. When he finally reaches the higher melodic line, it is in mezzo-forte and forte, after which, Richards returns again to the lower melodic line, again in mezzo-piano and now, mezzo-forte, as it builds to the final climax, the closing blessing and the blessing of God's name. The climax of the piece is, of course, the higher melodic line, with forte markings, finally coming to a close with the repetition of one word, "Zion," in piano and double piano; see Appendix 5a.

Cantor Richards' dynamic markings correspond beautifully with the text. The entire composition builds louder and louder until the final declaration of God as the one who returns his presence to Zion. This is the high point of the piece, the ultimate climax. There is also another high point to the piece, when the text states, "pour your spirit on us." This part also acts as a climactic moment, because the text is speaking of the presence of God in our lives. Therefore, the high points of the text correspond to the high points of both the music and the dynamic markings. It is interesting to note that all the high points of the text are rendered in the major melody, and all the building parts of the composition are rendered in the minor melody.

The most important aspect of this composition is the text. Both the melody and the meter are round and symmetrical. The text, however, is not so round and symmetrical. It seems clear to me, therefore, that the melody of this piece came first. Cantor Richards wanted to be true to his melody, yet not alter the text too much. In order to round out the text to better fit his melody, Richards added the nonsense syllable "Ah" to his composition. In general, the Hebrew text is phrased and accented correctly. The only problem was that Richards "ran out" of words. In order to maintain his preconceived melody, he had to add something. Rather than alter the accentuation of the Hebrew, or force the words that do not fit naturally, Richards opted to add to the text. Therefore, the "Ah" syllable acts as a filler. It also could be interpreted as a spontaneous, improvised release of expression, meant to add to the drama of the text, but probably less likely.

Richards' Composition and the Interrelation of the Three Prayer Models

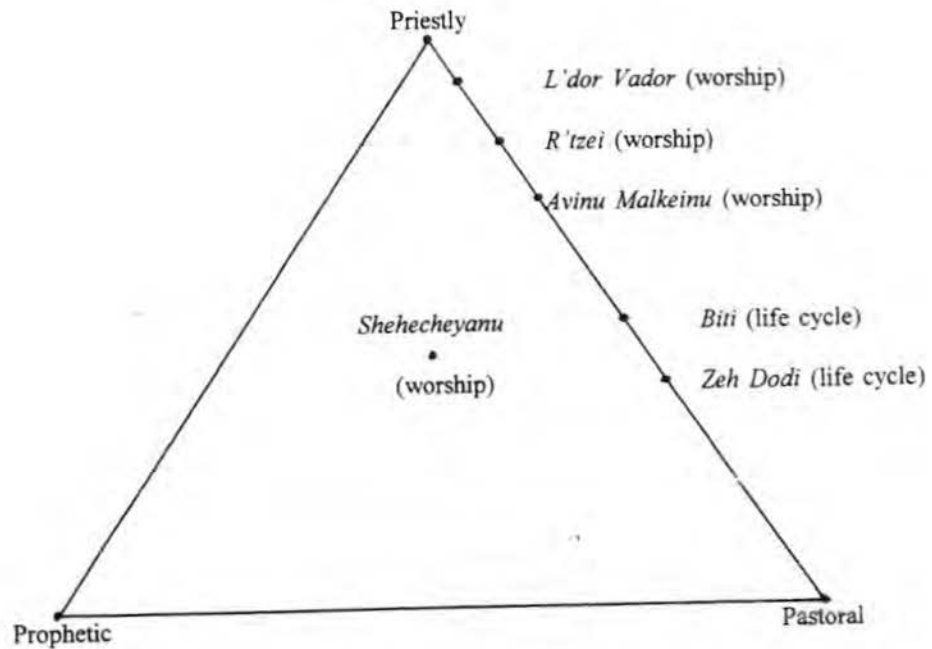
The nature of the *R'tzei* prayer is that of supplication and praise of God. It is the congregation asking God to hear and accept their prayers in love. Moreover, it is asking God to shower us with God's spirit. It is actually, the ultimate prayer for invoking the presence of God into our midst, other than the priestly benediction itself. It even makes mention of the *Sh'china* [God's presence] in its closing blessing. Clearly, this composition best fits the priestly prayer model, but like the other compositions that fit this model, there is an apparent implication of comfort and relief present in this prayer that allows it to fit the pastoral model as well; see Figure 2.

The closing blessing of the prayer gives us the hope that we will be restored to Zion.

In addition, the other high point of the composition states, "God, you are close to all who cry out to You. You turn Your face to Your servant [Israel] and are gracious to us. Return us to Zion in mercy." Again, God is the quintessential pastor, the ultimate healer. God is there for us, all we need to do is cry out. This synagogue composition allows the congregation to cry out to God. The allusion to the *ahava raba* mode even helps to make the crying authentic. After all, it is this mode which is the most Jewish of all the modes, and is known for its crying quality. Moreover, the yearning melody is full of our yearning for Zion. The disjointed feeling conveyed by the conflicting meters of the melody and the harmony, reveals our tension and conflict with the return to Israel. Indeed, we not only sense that God is with us, but we implore God to comfort us when we sing, "God, be satisfied with Your people Israel, and accept our prayers in love."

Figure 2

THE INTERRELATION OF THE THREE PRAYER MODELS WITH
COMPOSITIONS BY FIVE CONTEMPORARY SYNAGOGUE COMPOSERS



CONCLUSION

"Perhaps the single most dominant characteristic of twentieth century Western art music is its variety and eclecticism and thus its resistance to easy categorization and generalized stylistic descriptions."⁹² As contemporary synagogue composers writing in the twentieth century, these five composers are part of this post-modernistic style. They draw from a multitude of earlier musical styles, including those of the nineteenth century Romantic composers, as well as the non-classical twentieth century techniques of Broadway, film, and pop music. In addition to the use of eclectic musical styles, as part of the post-modern era, these composers enjoy the freedom of expressing themselves individually and creatively. In fact, creativity is one of their main goals. The idea of being truthful to one's imagination and inner creative urges is essential when composing in the twentieth century.

However, these five contemporary composers are not just composing for their own gratification. They are indeed synagogue composers, and have additional goals and obligations to fulfill other than pure self-satisfaction. They must take into account the congregation for which they are composing and thus, the congregation's needs. These five contemporary synagogue composers are aware of the effects that certain musical styles and techniques have upon the worshiper. Their synagogue compositions convey an understanding of the correlation between contemporary musical techniques and how they function within the worship service. Isaacson, Finkelstein, Schiller, Nelson, and Richards all realize that certain musical devices are more effective in the worship service and better facilitate spiritual and meaningful prayer. As a result, they all tend to utilize these compositional devices in their synagogue compositions.

⁹²Don Michael Randel, ed. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), s.v. "Twentieth Century, Western art music," by Robert P. Morgan, 889.

Biti, *L'dor Vador*, *Zeh Dodi*, *Shehecheyanu*, and *R'tzei*, all have lush, extended harmonies created by full chords with added sevenths and ninths. Not only do these five compositions make use of a new harmonic vocabulary, but most of them utilize creative harmonic progressions as well. It is less common to find a simple I-IV-V chord progression among these contemporary synagogue compositions. These new and innovative harmonic progressions provide a sense of uplift and excitement for the worshiper. In addition, the use of pleasant dissonance to create tension and resolution is common to all of these pieces and generates a sense of building and climax for the listener.

Another compositional device that is common to all five pieces is varied repetition of melodic motifs, and lyric melodic lines that make use of sequences. The repetition of a melody results in a memorable melodic line, one that conveys a sense of familiarity, and is at least hummable, if not singable. Due to their twentieth century pop aesthetic, all of these melodies are readily understandable by the listener. A familiar and readily understandable melody contributes to the worshiper's sense of continuity within the worship service.

In order for a melody to be congregational, it must be either easily sung or readily understood by the worshiper. Melodies with a lower tessitura are more likely to be sung by the congregation. However, as mentioned above, a melody can also be considered congregational if it is at least hummable. In these five compositions, we see the use of sweeping melodies with a broad range. The two pieces intended for life cycle events, *Biti* and *Zeh Dodi*, are more similar to art songs because their melodies are extremely broad, making their degree of performance more difficult. Therefore, they are more likely to be performed as solo pieces, and are less likely to be congregational. On the other hand, the pieces intended

for worship, *L'dor Vador*, *Shehecheyanu*, and *R'tzei*, also have broad ranges, but they include a refrain or a repeating melody that has a lower tessitura and a simplified style, intended for the congregation to sing as well. Whether or not the piece is intended for congregational singing is made obvious by the fact that the two life cycle songs are written for solo voice, and the three worship pieces are written for both solo voice and choir. This implies that the choir is employed to urge the congregation to join in with the melody.

Rhythm is also a factor to take into account when composing for congregational singing or not. Sometimes an interesting, syncopated rhythm can inspire the congregation to join in with the cantor and choir. Although some rhythms may be difficult for the average congregant to follow, they work to keep the worshiper engaged and moving in his or her seat. Such is the case with Nelson's *Shehecheyanu*. Originally the syncopation was even more prominent, but she toned it down to make the piece more accessible to her congregants. *Shehecheyanu* is not the only piece that uses interesting rhythmic patterns. In fact, all five compositions utilize creative rhythms. Syncopation, or "pushing the beat," happens to be the most popular compositional trend because it helps to propel the piece forward, and gives the composition movement and excitement. The employment of triplets is also a popular effect meant to create drama by prolonging a phrase.

The employment of various instruments in synagogue compositions also creates a sense of drama. Certain instruments lend themselves to being played in a romantic and dramatic style. Just as orchestration in a film score adds to the intensity of the moment, so too does the use of certain instruments in synagogue music add to the drama of the worship service. In general, these five contemporary composers write for a variety of instruments, including flute,

strings, organ, and piano. However, in the particular pieces illustrated here, only the keyboard is utilized. An example is Isaacson's *Biti*. Written for keyboard, it is also intended to be performed with a harp. The arpeggiated chords in the accompaniment are idiomatic of this instrument. Overall, Isaacson, Finkelstein, Schiller, Nelson, and Richards, all employ the use of instruments in their synagogue compositions in order to add to the dramatic style of their composing, and to enhance the sacred drama⁹³ of worship.

Two extremely popular trends that are implicit in three of these compositions, are the use of octave displacement (*Biti* and *Zeh Dodi*) and intervalic leaps (*L'dor Vador*). Both are twentieth century compositional techniques and add to the sweeping melodic lines, and help to shape their broad range. The octave displacement is what gives *Biti* and *Zeh Dodi* their exceptionally romantic quality. It also makes the compositions difficult to sing, both for the congregation and the performer. Nevertheless, for the active listener, these pieces can be extremely moving and emotional.

The use of both Hebrew and English seems to be the most popular trend in contemporary synagogue music. With less and less Jews knowledgeable in Hebrew today, this trend is essential for full participation in prayer to be possible. Thus, all five of these composers use both Hebrew and English texts in many of their compositions, some more often than others. Finkelstein is the only composer that does not incorporate both languages on a regular basis because he writes for his conservative congregation, and they pray mostly in Hebrew. Even with this being the case, Finkelstein still has some pieces that utilize both languages together.

⁹³Hoffman, The Art of Public Prayer, 185.

With regard to the specific compositions illustrated here, only *Zeh Dodi* and *Shehecheyanu* incorporate both Hebrew and English texts in the music. It is interesting to note that neither of the pieces that lie closest to the priestly end of the model make use of the English text. Perhaps this suggests that the Hebrew text is more likely to give the congregation a sense of Godliness. *Zeh Dodi* employs the English because, many times at weddings, there is tremendous diversity of people present from a whole host of cultures, and not all, or even most, understand Hebrew, including the wedding couple. In this case, it is essential to make use of the English in order for those present to be able to understand what is taking place. Similarly, *Shehecheyanu* incorporates the English in order to create a sense of communal bonding which is crucial for those compositions situated closer to the prophetic end of the model. For today's worshipers, the English text allows them to understand what is being said, and therefore, empowers them and enables them to share in the knowledge of performing a common goal.

All of these nineteenth and twentieth century compositional styles give the synagogue composer a starting point with which to begin their creative process. However, it is not the use of any one single musical technique which makes a synagogue composition successful. On the contrary, it is the entire effect of the piece which reaches out and touches the worshiper. The music as a whole, combined with the sacred text, within the context of a religious ritual, elevates the worshiper to a higher spiritual and emotional level. In the Romantic period there existed the mystical conception that, "art [music] gave entry into a

transcendent spiritual world, undefinable and infinite."⁹⁴ In addition, the exploration of innovative and extended harmonies, and new kinds of texture and instrumental sonority contributed to the creation of new Romantic effects. It is these effects that contemporary synagogue composers tend to make use of in their synagogue compositions in order to convey a sense of holiness and Godliness to the worshiper.

The use of melodic repetition and sequences, along with the allusion to *nusach* to create a feeling of familiarity, all help to promote a feeling of comfort and serenity--toward the pastoral end of the model. Lyric melodic lines accompanied by lush harmonies raise the hopes and aspirations of the listener to new found levels of holiness and spirituality--toward the priestly end of the model. Simple or catchy melodies that encourage congregational singing foster a sense of community and group identity--toward the prophetic end of the model. This sense of community, in turn, helps to connect us with God, for the covenant is between God and the people of Israel. Interesting rhythmic techniques, such as syncopation, as well as the use of harmonic dissonance, help to "wake-up" and "shake-up" the worshiper out of his indifferent state. Various instruments, such as strings and harps, played in a romantic and dramatic style, can add a new kind of holiness and perfection to the worship service.

The worship service is most effective when its music incorporates all of these compositional techniques and thus, promotes all three functions of worship--priestly, prophetic, and pastoral. These compositional devices work to enhance the functions of the three prayer models and make them come alive in a truly effective way. The appropriate synagogue

⁹⁴Randel, ed. The New Harvard Dictionary of Music s.v. "Romantic," by Don Michael Randel, 715.

composition can combine all three prayer models, and make obvious their interrelationship and overlapping qualities. Such a composition would be situated in the middle of all three models, and its overall effect would generate a sense of holiness, group identity, wholeness and spiritual renewal. These five synagogue composers, as well as others, make use of these compositional techniques in their compositions in order to arouse the feelings and emotions that these three prayer models represent--wholeness, holiness, and a sense of belonging.

Clearly it is the overall impact of the entire piece within its ritual context which creates a sense of holiness and connects the worshiper with God. Because the music constantly strives for wholeness and perfection, the worshiper also feels this desire. However, the music is not acting alone to create holiness. The music is an expression of the text, and the text is the music's inspiration. What links all of these composers and their styles to Judaism and the tradition, is their connection to the text. The text is the inspiration for these synagogue composers' creativity. Their works are a personal expression of the text fused with the holiness the text conveys. Through these composers' synagogue compositions, the worshiper is touched with a sense of Godliness. The text becomes secondary to the music only in the moment that the music touches the listener. At that instant, it is no longer the text which is creating the spiritual effect, but the music. The music transcends the text. Why else would the Hasidim use *niggunim* [songs without words] to elevate the spirit during worship? The music may be the vehicle to convey the words, but it is the music which is the medium that lifts the soul to a level of holiness.

Isaacson, Finkelstein, Schiller, Nelson, and Richards all understand the function that music plays in both the worship service and the life cycle event. Not only do they know the

effect that the dramatic expression of the text has on the worshiper, but they are also aware of the importance of drama in music because they have all been influenced by opera, theater, and film. In fact, all of these influences have manifested themselves in these composers' personal expression of the text. All, in their own way, incorporate dramatic trends into their synagogue compositions; some even use more than one trend at a time.

For some composers, their dramatic styles act as their personal signature on their compositions. In *Biti*, Isaacson uses the effect of opposites to create drama. In *L'dor Vador*, Finkelstein's dramatic signature is his lush extended harmonies and, what he calls, the "surprise" cadence (going from a minor chord to its parallel major chord). In *Zeh Dodi*, Schiller uses sweeping melodic lines and octave displacement to portray the drama of the text, not to mention the text's romantic content. In *Shehecheyanu*, Nelson's dramatic expression is manifested in the nineteenth century Romantic compositional technique, the "Third Relation," where the melody modulates and ascends in both major or minor thirds. In *R'tzei*, Richards utilizes two separate meters, one for the melody and one for the harmony, to produce dissonance and resolution through syncopation, thus creating drama.

Hence, the dramatic expression of the text is, in actuality, the composer's expression of the text through his or her personalized medium of music. In essence, a synagogue composer's composition is simply a portrayal of his or her own personal aspirations to strive to a level of holiness and Godliness as inspired by the text and communicated in the music. "What, after all, do we listen for when we listen to a composer? He [or she] need not tell us a story like the novelist; he need not "copy" nature like the sculptor. What is it that he gives

us then? Only one answer seems possible to me: he gives us himself."⁹⁵ Thus, the various musical styles that a composer utilizes in his or her works is his or her way of expressing him or herself to God, and through the music, this expression enables the congregation to feel connected with Judaism and God during worship. It is for this reason that the Jewish musical canon is so vast, so as to include everyone's personal musical expression to God. As a result, "it is to the listener a sort of musical Tower of Babel. And yet so many varying melodies and musical styles are all part of our musical tradition. The needs of such a diversity of peoples can be met by embracing it all. For us it can all be a part of our expression to the Eternal One."⁹⁶

⁹⁵Copland, 158.

⁹⁶Patricia Ernest Hickman, "Views From A Pulpit: A Tower of Babel," Koleinu: A Publication of the American Conference of Cantors, 3, no. 2 (January/February 1995): 2. Citing Amnon Shiloah, Jewish Musical Traditions (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 17-19.

Appendix 1a

ANALYSIS OF BITI

My daughter because you are the soul between us,
My daughter because you are peace and tranquillity,
My daughter, because you are the spirit of our home
You will remain our hearts forever.

Come, my child, let us learn the Torah of our people.
Come, my child, let us meet the world.
Come, my child, throughout our lives let us
walk in paths of pleasantness.

We have loved you, our daughter,
For you have brought us blessing.
With tender hands we bless you in return.

My daughter, knowing your love for your parents,
My child, knowing you are the beloved of God,
We give, daughter, our love to you and
with it, child, the blessing of our hearts.

verse 1
(A)

verse 2
(A)

contrasting
section
(B)

verse 3
(A)

rhyming scheme

a [ביתי כי את הנשמה בינינו.
b [ביתי כי את שלום ושלום
a [ביתי כי את הרוח בביתנו.
b [אתי את השלום שלום שלום

a [בואי יערה נשמה תורת עמנו.
b [בואי יערה נשמה את העולם
a [בואי יערה נשמה כל חייו.
b [נשק של ברכי - נשק

transition to contrasting section - mf

[אהבתי יערה אהבתי
נבני אהבתי כבדתי אהבתי
אליהם אהבתי כל את ברכתי וזי

p [ביתי כי את אהבתי את הוריי
d [יערה כי את נאהבתי באהבה
c [את יערה אהבתי אהבתי
d [ואהבתי את ברכתי ביתי

dynamics

mp

mf

mf

mf

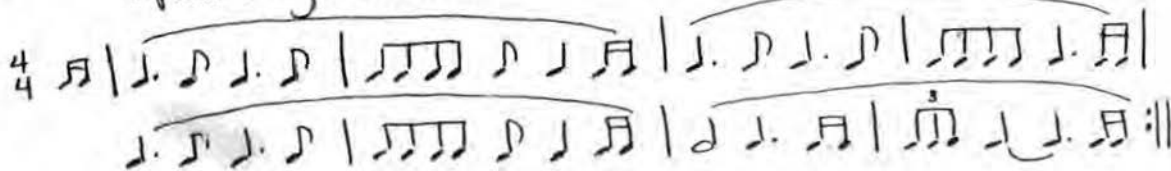
f → mp

p

p

Melodic Structure Pattern: AABA

Rhythm - repeated rhythm pattern used on every verse
repeats every two measures



Appendix 1b

THE MUSIC OF *BITI*

Biti

90

(My Daughter)

Text: Kerry Baker

Michael Isaacson

Espressivo (♩ c.84)

voice

mp

Bi -

Keyboard

mp

A

ami⁹

D⁷

arpeggiated accompaniment for harp

4

octave displacement

ti ki at ha - n' sha - ma bei - nei - nu, Bi -

p

G

ami/C

D⁷ sus

G/B

6

octave displacement

ti ki at sha - lom v' shal - vah, Bi -

C²

A/C[#]

D⁷

G

8

ti ki at ha - ru - ach b' - vei - tei - nu, i - ti at tish - a -

bmi E/G# ami f#mi7b5 emi⁹ emi/D A/C# ami/G

11 *mf* verse (2)

ri ad o - lam. Bo - i yal - dah nil - mad to - rat a - mei - nu, Bo -

D7 G ami/C D7sus G/B

14

i yal - dah nif - gosh et ha - o - lam, Bo -

A/C# D7

16

i yal - dah b' me - shech kol cha - yei - nu nei - leich al dar -

Handwritten notes: *bmi*, *F/G#*, *ami*, *f#mi7b5*, *emi*, *emi/D*, *A/C#*, *ami/C*

19

chei no - am, no - am. A -

contrasting section

Handwritten notes: *D7*, *bdim7*, *G#dim*

21

hav - ti yal - da ti o - tach mip - nei she - bat kiv - ra -

slower rate of harmonic change: one harmony per bar

Handwritten notes: *F7b*, *ami sus*, *Cmi/Eb*, *Cmi*

24 tension builds

cha ei - lai; A - sim al ro - sheich et bir -

G/B G Edim7 C#dim f G/D

VII⁰⁷ (of V)

triplets for drama

27 climax of piece

kat ya - di, Bi - ti, ki at o -

rit. ten. verse ③ a tempo resolution

triplets add drama

a tempo

A⁷sus sub. mp D⁷ P G ami/c

I

V of V⁷ of

Circle of fifths builds tension

29

he - vet et ho - ra - yich, Yal - da - ti, ki at ne - e - hav ba - e - lo - him, e -

D⁷sus G/B C A/C# D⁷ G

V of V

32

tein yal - dah a - hav - a - ti ei - la - yich, v' - ei

bmi E/G# ami ~~f#mi7b5~~ emi9 emi/D

34

tein lach bir - kat li - bi — bi - ti —

A/C# am/C D7 G am/C

len.

37

p rall.

G C2 G rit

ANALYSIS OF L'DOR VADOR

Melodic Motifs

L'dor Vador, L'dor Vador
 L'dor Vador Nagid Godlecha
 U'Inetsach n'stachim } sequences
 U'Inetsach n'stachim }
 K'dushat'cha Nakdish

Refrain
 (A)

$\begin{matrix} \text{לִדּוֹר וָדוֹר, לִדּוֹר וָדוֹר} & a_1 \\ \text{לִדּוֹר וָדוֹר נָגִיד גּוֹדְלֵיכָה} & a_2 \\ \text{וְיִנְעַשׂ נִסְתַּחִים} & b_1 \\ \text{וְיִנְעַשׂ נִסְתַּחִים} & b_2 \\ \text{כְּדוּשַׁתְּךָ נִקְדִּישׁ} & c, (c_2) \end{matrix}$

V'shivchacha Eloheinu
 Mipinn Lo Yamush L'olam Vaed
 Ki Eil Melech Gadol } sequences
 Ki Eil Melech Gadol }
 V'kadosh Ata

verse
 (B)

$\begin{matrix} \text{וְשִׁיבְךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ} & & \text{מִפִּינָנוּ לֹא יִמָּשׁוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד} \\ \text{כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל} & \text{sequences} & \begin{matrix} \text{כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל} \\ \text{כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל} \end{matrix} \\ \text{וְקָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה} & & \text{כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל} \end{matrix}$

Baruch Ata Adonai
 Hael } sequences
 Hael }
 Hakadosh
 Amen

Ending section
 (C)

$\begin{matrix} \text{בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי} \\ \text{הָאֵל} & \text{sequences} & \begin{matrix} \text{הָאֵל} \\ \text{הָאֵל} \end{matrix} \\ \text{הַקָּדוֹשׁ} & & \text{הָאֵל} \\ \text{אָמֵן} & & \text{הָאֵל} \end{matrix}$

Melodic
Structure Pattern: AABAC

Melodic Motif Pattern:
 A Refrain¹ a₁ a₂ b₁ b₂ c₁
 A Refrain² a₁ a₂ b₁ b₂ c₂
 B verse
 A Refrain² a₁ a₂ b₁ b₂ c₂
 C Ending a₃ a₄ (play on opening ^{melodic} motifs a₁ & a₂)

Translation: Through all generations we will declare Your greatness. To all eternity we will proclaim Your holiness. Your praise, Our God, shall never depart from our mouth. For You are great and Holy God and Ruler. Blessed are You O God, Holy God. Amen.

Appendix 2b

THE MUSIC OF *L'DOR VADOR*

L'dor Vador

From Generation to Generation

for Solo Voice, Mixed Choir (SATB) and Keyboard

Text: GOP p. 308

Meir Finkelstein

Gently with movement

Organ

Solo

refrain A_1 pushing the beat A_2

S L'-dor va- dor, l'-dor va- dor, l' dor va- dor na

A

T

B

$Cmi7$ $C7$ fmi $fmi7$ $Dm7$ $Cmi7$ F Bmi

9-8 sus

Surprise
cadence
Finkelstein's
signature
 $Cmi \rightarrow Cmaj$

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Handwritten musical score for a song, featuring three systems of staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) and lyrics. The score includes handwritten annotations for chords, sequences, and a surprise cadence.

System 1:

- Lyrics: gid god- le- cha, u- l'- ne-tsach n'-tsa- chim, u- l'-
- Chords: $D^{\flat}maj^9$, E^{\flat} , A^{\flat} , $A^{\flat}maj^7$, $G^{\flat}maj^9$, $D^{\flat}maj^7$, $b^{\flat}mi$, $b^{\flat}mi^{\flat}$, $C7+5$
- Annotations: B_1 sequences, B_2

System 2:

- Lyrics: ne-tsach n'-tsa- chim k'- du- shat- cha nak- dish.
- Chords: fmi^7 , $b^{\flat}mi^7$, fmi , $b^{\flat}mi^7$, Cmi
- Annotations: C_1 , added 9th

System 3:

- Lyrics: (none)
- Chords: Cmi
- Annotations: surprise cadence, Cmi to $Cmaj$

Handwritten musical score for a song, featuring two systems of music. The first system includes a refrain and sequences, while the second system continues the melody and accompaniment.

System 1:

- Refrain:** l'-dor va- dor, l'-dor va- dor, l'-dor va-
- Sequences:** l'-dor va-
- Chords:** C7, fmi, Dmi7, Cmi7
- Handwritten Labels:** A₁, A₂, B₁

System 2:

- Lyrics:** dor na- gid god- le- cha, u- l'- ne-tsach n'-tsa

The score is written for a single melodic line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked with a common time signature (C). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and chords.

Handwritten musical score for a song, featuring two systems of music. The first system is marked with B_2 and C_2 . The second system is marked "verse". The lyrics are in Hebrew, and the music is written on staves with treble and bass clefs. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like fmi and $b^b mi$.

First System:

B_2 C_2

chim, u-l'- ne-tsach n'-tsa- chim k'- du- shat- cha nak-

fmi $cmi 7$

Second System (verse):

verse

dish v'-shiv-cha- cha, e-lo- hei- nu, mi-

fmi $b^b mi$ fmi

pi- nu lo ya- mush l' o-lam va- ed Ki eil

b^bmi *fmi*

sequences

me- lech ga- dol, ki eil me- lech ga- dol v'

D^bmaj7 *A^b* *C^m7* *A^b* *b^bmi7* *E^b7* *A^bmaj7* *C^m6*

9-8sus

refrain *A₁*

ka- dosh a tah. L'- dor va-

b^bmi *b^bmi6* *C*

V of

A₂

dor, l'-dor va- dor, l' dor va- dor na

fmi

I *B₁* *B₂*

gid god- le- cha u- l'- ne-tsach n'- tsa- chim u- l'-

Handwritten musical score for a song, featuring two systems of staves. The first system includes a treble and bass staff with lyrics: "ne-tsach n'-tsa- chim k'- du- shat- cha nak- dish Ba-". The second system includes a treble and bass staff with lyrics: "ruch a- tah, A- do- nai, Ba-ruch hu u- va- ruch sh'". The score is marked with "B₂" and "C₂" above the first staff, and "ending section" above the second staff. The bottom staff includes handwritten notes: "G^b7", "F", "b^bmi 7 / e^bmi", and "G^b".

allusion to ahava rabah
scale = nusach
F ahava raba
f-g^b-a

A3 similar to opening melodic
poco a poco rit.

sequences

A4

Handwritten musical score for the first system. The vocal line (top staff) includes the lyrics "ba-el ha-el ha-ka-". The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) features chords and melodic lines. Annotations include "mo", "oo", "C+", "Gb+9", "F+5", and "flattened 9". A "morendo" marking is present at the end of the system.

Handwritten musical score for the second system. The vocal line (top staff) includes the lyrics "dosh" and "men". The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) continues with chords and melodic lines. Annotations include "A-", "pp", "F", "Fmaj9", "Gb min", "Chit + nib", "Gb maj", and "F ends in major". A "signal" marking is present at the end of the system.

signal
to ahava rabah
and Musaf Amidah
Gb maj to Fmaj

ANALYSIS OF ZEH DODI

Refrain (A)

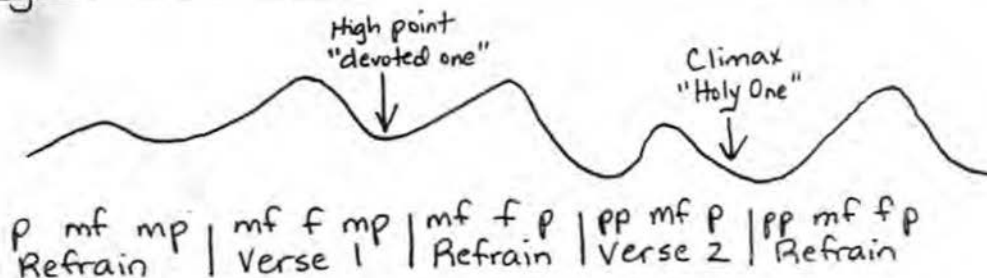
Zeh Dodi, Zeh Rei, This is my beloved
 Zeh Dodi, Zeh Rei, This is my friend
 This is my beloved, My friend

Verse 1 (B)

Let our lives be intertwined
 Let our hearts be one
 In faith in hope forever (High point)
 Limitless my love for you, my devoted one
 In faith in hope forever

Verse 2 (B)

I take you to be mine
 In tenderness
 In trouble and in joy (Climax)
 Let our lives illumined be, by the Holy One
 In faith in hope forever

Melodic Structure Pattern: ABABADynamic Structure

Appendix 3b

THE MUSIC OF *ZEH DODI*

For The Wedding of William and Denice Bronstein

ZEH DODI

For Solo Voice and Keyboard

107

Song of Songs 5:16; United Synagogue K'tubah

Adapted by Lester Bronstein

Benjie Ellen Schiller

Tenderly (♩ = 84)

constant change of meter

1

p Fmaj7 Bbmaj7 Gmi7 E♭ C♭

p Refrain

Zeh do-di, zeh re-i, This is my be-lov-ed.

p Fmaj7 F Gmi7

5

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mf pushing the beat

Zeh do - di, zeh re - i, This is my— friend,

mf E^b maj 7 B^b harmonic change on 2nd beat F G mi 7

9 pushing the beat syncopation

mp poco rit. ... a tempo

This is my be - lov - ed, my friend.

p G mi 7 C^7 poco rit. ... *mp* a tempo F

13

mf Verse ① *f*

Let our lives be in - ter - twined, let our hearts be one in

mf F syncopated harmony B^b *f*

16

faith, in hope for - ev - er. Lim - it - less my love for you, my de -

mp *gmi7* *passing tones* *f* *Ebmaj7*

18

Add(8th)-----
mp arrival point *mf* Refrain

vot - ed one, in— faith, in hope for - ev - er. Zeh do - di,

High point of piece

mp *Fmaj7* *ami* *Bbmaj7* *p* *mf*

21

zeh re - i. This is my be - lov - ed.

25

f *pushing the beat* *p*

Zeh do - di, zeh re - i, This is my — friend.

f *sub. mp* *p*

28

This is my be - lov - ed, my friend.

pp

32

pp Verse ② intimate moment

I — take you to be mine, in — ten - der-ness, in troub - le, and in

pp passing tones for accompaniment—simple accompaniment

35

joy,— Let our lives il - lum - ined be by the

mf *poco rit. ...*

Simple passing tones for tenderness *poco rit. ...* *dissonance builds tension*

38

Ho - ly One in— faith, in hope for ev - er.

a tempo sub. p *Arrival point* *pp*

Climax of piece

a tempo resolution *sub. p* *even harmonies on 1st 3rd beats of measure* *simple + tender chords* *pp* *even chordal harmonies*

40

pp Refrain

Zeh do - di, zeh re - i, This is my be - lov - ed.

pp music box accompaniment *childlike innocence*

43

mf Zeh do - di, zeh re - i, *f* This is my—

47

p friend. This is my be - lov - ed, my

50

sub. p

friend.

53

ANALYSIS OF SHEHECHEYANU

Melodic StructureA melody (acts as refrain)

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam
Shehecheyanu, V'kiy'manu, V'higiyanu Lazman Hazeh

B melody

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam
Shehecheyanu, V'kiy'manu, V'higiyanu Lazman Hazeh

C melody

Blessed are you, Lord our God
Lord of the universe
Granting us life, preserving us
Helping us reach this day

D melody

Blessed are you, Lord our God
Lord of the universe
Granting us life, preserving us
Helping us reach this day

<u>Overall Structure of Composition</u>		<u>Keys</u>	<u>Dynamics</u>
refrain	A cantor - Hebrew text.	C maj.	mp
	A choir - Hebrew text.	C maj.	mf
	B cantor - Hebrew text.	E ^b maj.	f
	C choir - English text.	G maj.	f
refrain	A cantor - Hebrew text.	C maj.	mp
	A choir - Hebrew text.	C maj.	mf
	D choir & cantor - English text.	E ^b maj.	f, ff
<u>KEY MODULATIONS</u>		upward in 3 ^{rds} ; corresponds with dynamics	
C → E ^b → G → C → E ^b			
m3 M3 II of I m3			

Appendix 4b

THE MUSIC OF *SHEHECHEYANU*

SHEHECHEYANU

115

Gates of Prayer, page 404
Gates of Repentance, page 17

for Cantor, Mixed Choir (SATB) and Keyboard

Rachelle Nelson

$\text{♩} = c. 84$

CANTOR

SOPRANOS
ALTOS

TENORS

BASSES

KEYBOARD

mp F *emi 7* *dmi 7* C⁹ *ami* *ami 7*

poco rit. *a tempo*

mp 5 (A) section/melody

Ba - ruch e - lah, A - do - nai e - lo.

D G⁷/F C⁹ F⁹ C⁷+9 F⁹

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10

hei - w me-lech ha - o - lam. she - he-che - ya - - nu v' - ki - y' - ma - - nu v' - hi - gi -

ya - - nu — laz-man ha - zeh.

Ba - ruch a - tah A - do - nai — c - lo -

Ba - ruch a - tah A - do - nai — c - lo -

Ba - ruch a - tah A - do - nai — c - lo -

15

hei - nu me-lech ha - o - lam she - he - che - ya - - nu v' - ki - y'.

hei - nu me-lech ha - o - lam she - he - che - ya - - nu v' - ki - y'.

hei - nu me-lech ha - o - lam she - he - che - ya - - nu v' - ki - y'.

Cmaj+9 Fmaj9 Cmaj7 Fmaj7 Cmi7

⊕ to CODA

20

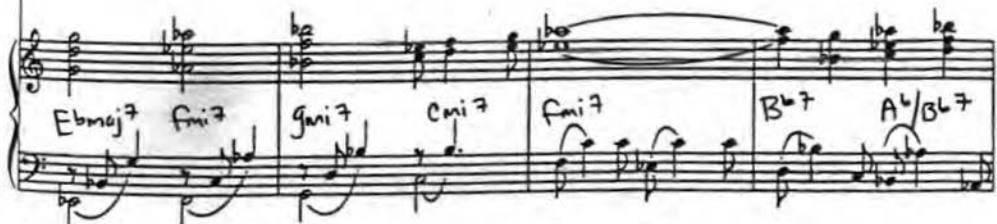
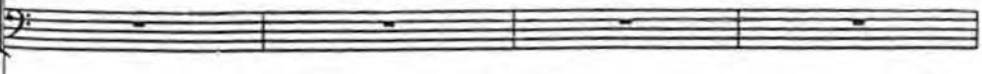
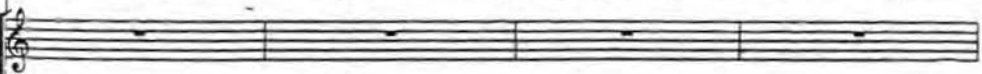
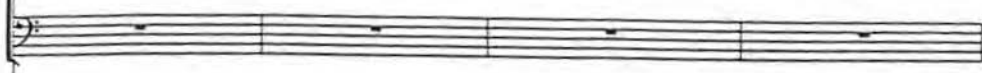
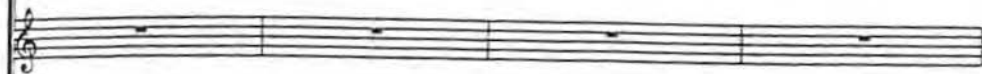
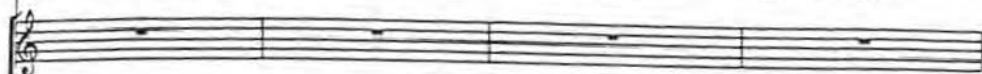
② section/
f melody

ma - - nu a - - nu laz-man ha - zeh.

ma - - nu a - - nu laz-man ha - zeh.

ma - - nu v' - hi - gi - ya - - nu ha - - zeh.

dmi7 Cmaj+9 ami ami7 D Fmaj9 G7



30

section/melody

Bles - sed are you — Lord our God. Lord of the un - i - verse —

Bles - sed are you — Lord our God. Lord of the un - i - verse —

Bles - sed are you — Lord our God. Lord of the un - i - verse —

f *Gmaj7* *ami7* *G* *C D C* *D* *ami7* *D*

35

Grant - ing us life, — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

Grant - ing us life, — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

Grant - ing us life, — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

Grant - ing us life, — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

G *ami7* *G* *C D C* *D* *pre-serv*

D.S. al C

tenuto

Ba

tenuto

this day!

tenuto

this day!

tenuto

this day!

tenuto

this day!

D.S. al C

tenuto

amit

D⁷

G⁷

G⁷

I of I(G) circle of fifths V⁺ of I(C)

CODA

40 ① section/melody

zeh. Bles - sed are You — Lord our God Lord of the

zeh. Bles - sed are You — Lord our God Lord of the

zeh. Bles - sed are You — Lord our God Lord of the

zeh. Bles - sed are You — Lord our God Lord of the

CODA

D

G⁷

f

gmi

Cmi

fmi

45

un - i - verse — Grant - ing us life — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

un - i - verse — Grant - ing us life — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

un - i - verse — Grant - ing us life — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

un - i - verse — Grant - ing us life — pre - serv - ing us. Help - ing us reach —

Bb7 Ebmaj7 Fmi7 Gmi7 Cmi7 Fmi7 Gmi

Help - ing us reach — help - ing us reach this day!

Help - ing us reach — help - ing us reach this day!

Help - ing us reach — help - ing us reach this day!

Help - ing us reach — help - ing us reach this day!

fmi Gmi Ab Bb7 Ebb

Broader 50 ritard. ff

ANALYSIS OF R'TZEI

Melodic StructureDynamicsp
mpA melody [כזה ה' אלוהינו, בעמק יזראעל
ותפילות באהבה רבה]p
mpA melody [ותהי ערבון, תמיד עובדת יזראעל
יזראעל עמק]mf
f

high point

B

melody

[אלו קרוב עכש-קונאלו, כנה אלו צדק וחנינו
עם כוחק...]mp
mfA melody [ותחטנה ציננו, באק ציון
בגלגלים...]f
f

climax

B melody [בניק אתה ה'
המחטני סנינו ציון
ending [ציון
ציון]Overall Melodic Structure: AABABA melodyLower melodic line; used for building drama + tension;
has minor feel; dynamics also depict this as a low
section; uses Anavah Rabah mode (lowered 2nd and major 3rd).B melodyHigher melodic line; used for high point and climax
of piece as well as height of textual meaning; dynamics
depict this as a high section; has major feelTime SignaturesMelody line is in duple time $\frac{4}{4}$
Accompaniment is in triple time $\frac{12}{8}$

Appendix 5b

THE MUSIC OF *R'TZEI*

"R'TZEI"

for Solo (High Voice) and Keyboard
with Optional Choir

Text: Liturgy
Gates of Prayer, page 43

Stephen Richards
(ASCAP)

(A) melody

♩ = 76 - 80

Cantor

Note the 2 time signatures; duple against triple time

Keyboard

p

R' -

use of Ahavah Rabah mode

7-8 sus. F/E

synclapation

E

3

3

3

3

tzei A-do-nai e-lo-hai-mu b' -

7-8 sus. F/E

E

E/D → leads to new tonality ami

s - m' - cha Yis - ra - ell

991261 - 10

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minor feel

sequences

Am *mp* D Gmaj⁷ Cmaj⁷ 3

u - t' - fi - la - tam b' - a - ha -

mp

F B^b5 E 3 3 3

back to Ahavah Rabah

vah t' - ka - beil,

mp

A melody

F/E E E^m9

U - t' - hi l' - ra - tzon ta -

Ahavah Rabah made

p

E F/E E E/D V^2 to new tonality a mi →

mid a - vo - dat Yis - ra - ell

p

use of nonsense syllable

Am D Gmaj⁷ Cmaj⁷

mp Ah

p Ah Ah

p Ah Ah

back to Anavah
Rabah

Fmaj⁷ B^{°7} E E/D

Yis - ra - eil a - me - cha.

Ah Ah

③ melody major feel

mf *c* *3* *3* *G/B* *3* *3*

Eil ka-rov l' - chol ko - r' - av - p' -

mf

F/A *E/G⁴* *3* *3*

nei el a - va - de-cha v'-ch- nei-nu Sh'-

c *high point* *sequences* *G/B* *use of triplets* *3*

foch ru - cha - cha

mf

Ah

mf

Ah

f

Handwritten musical score for the song "Back to Arava Rabah". The score is written on four staves. The first staff is for the vocal melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked "F/A". The melody features a triplet of eighth notes on the first staff, followed by a quarter note and an eighth note. The second staff is for the vocal accompaniment, also featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff is for the piano accompaniment, showing a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff is for the piano accompaniment, showing a treble line with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics "back to Arava Rabah" are written above the first staff. The lyrics "a - lei-nu, ___" are written below the second staff. The lyrics "v' -" are written below the third staff. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

E F/E E E/D V^7 leading to am

shu - v'-cha l' - tzi - yon

nei - nu b' - shu v' - cha l' - tzi -

nei - nu b' - shu v' - cha l' - tzi -

minor feel

Am use of nonsense syllable Gmaj⁷ Cmaj⁷ variation on earlier melody

Ah

yon

yon

return to Anavah
Rabah

F B⁷ E E/D

b'-ra - cha - mim

Ah

Ah

Climax c ③ melody major feel G/B

Ba - ruch a - teh

f

F/A E/G⁷ variation on earlier melody E

A - do - nai

991261 - 10

Use of triplets for drama and high point

C G/B

ha - ma - cha zir sh' - chi - na -

ha - ma - cha - zir sh' - chi - na -

ha - ma - cha - zir sh' - chi - na -

The first system of music consists of four staves. The top three staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is common time (C). The vocal parts feature triplets of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.

F/A E/G# E synopated rhythm

to l' - tzi - yon,

to l' - tzi - yon,

to l' - tzi - yon,

The second system of music consists of four staves. The top three staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is common time (C). The vocal parts feature triplets of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand. The word "synopated" is written above the piano part.

return to ami
minor feel

Am D

p

l' - tzi -

l' - tzi - yon

l' - tzi - yon

mp

Am D

ff

yon l' - tzi -

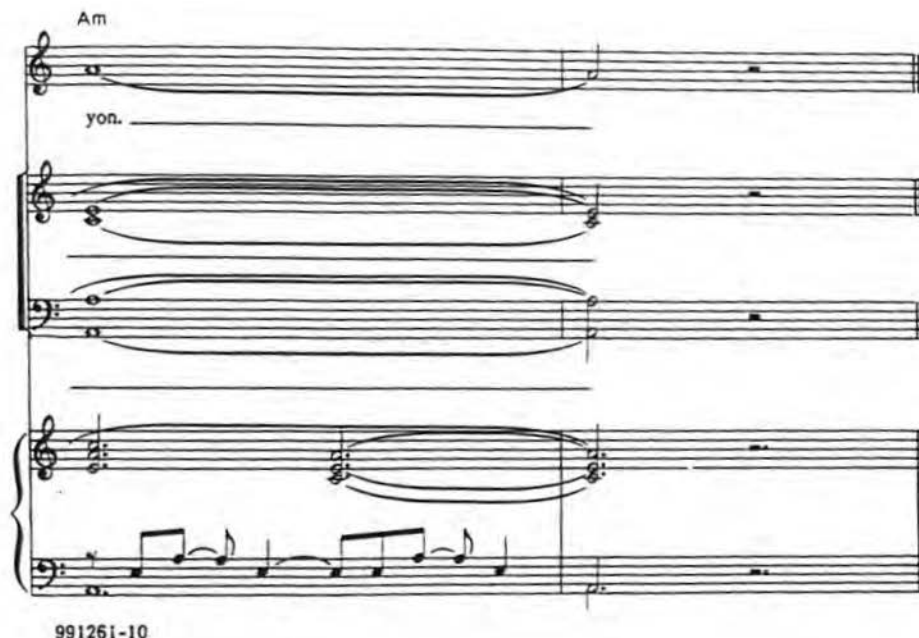
p 3 l' - tzi - yon

p 3 l' - tzi - yon

p

Am

yon.



991261-10

Be gracious, Adonai, our God, to Your people Israel,
and receive our prayers with love.

O may our worship always be acceptable to You.

Fill us with the knowledge that You are near

To all who seek You in truth.

Let our eyes behold Your presence in our midst

And in the midst of our people in Zion.

Blessed is Adonai,

Whose presence gives life to Zion and all Israel.

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