Emanuel Kirschner: A Study of Power and Pressure in the Cantorate

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INTRODUCTION

Having served the Hauptsynagoge in Munich as its cantor for almost fifty years, Emanuel Kirschner saw its demise after being expelled from his residence within. Given the close relationship Kirschner had with the synagogue, the emotional toll its destruction had on him was almost certainly a contributing factor to the severe illness that afflicted him immediately thereafter (Selig 2019). The sickness claimed his life on September 28, 1938. He was laid to rest two days later. His family travelled to Munich to be with him in his last days, as he had fallen into a coma a few days before passing. No official announcement of the death was made, as no Jewish publications were legal. During this last gathering of the greater Kirschner family, the contents of Emanuel's will were revealed. His final request was for his children to say kaddish for him for a year, even though he knew they would, "because [he knew they would] fulfill this obligation of a Jewish child." His son Max reflects in the appendix of Emanuel's diary, that this was a request that, while seemingly simple, was made impossible because of Kristallnacht and because he was sent to the concentration camp at Buchenwald on November 12. While Max eventually made it to the United States with his immediate family, his mother, Ida, did not fare as well. She was in poor health and had been placed in an assisted living facility in Frankfurt upon Emanuel's death and their expulsion from their home, which had been on the top floor of the synagogue. That facility received orders from the Nazis in 1942 to transfer any patients from the Jewish Hospital to the concentration camp in Theresienstadt. Her physician decided to euthanize her, which he informed Max of by letter. Max's brother Fritz also died from a long illness during the Holocaust. It had only

been about a decade since Kirschner, a famed cantor, composer, scholar, and educator, had retired from his official post at the Hauptsynagoge. How things had come crashing down.

Emanuel Kirschner's cantorial career was widely influential and intimately connected with many of the other great cantors, scholars, and composers of his era. This article will attempt to examine Kirschner in the context of the 19th and 20th century German cantorates and to bring forth how and why he was such an important figure to the German Jewish musical world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Additionally, it will explore the ways in which Kirschner's story serves to demonstrate the powers and pressures the cantorate conferred on a person and how the power structures surrounding him influenced his career trajectory.

Kirschner is often now overshadowed by his teacher Louis Lewandowski, whose music has become emblematic of Classical Reform worship of the German style. However, the dominance of Lewandowski's music within the milieu leaves little room for the other wonderful composers of the time, of whom there were many. Salomon Sulzer was the man responsible for popularizing organ music in the synagogue rite, but Lewandowski became its champion, paving the way for every cantor of the era to compose his own organ music (Selig 2019). Kirschner was one of these cantors in the generation following Lewandowski. The only downside to this was that while he prolifically composed his own music, Lewandowski's music was ubiquitous in almost all German congregations (ibid.). He insisted on the performance of his music in the New Synagogue in Berlin, even when new cantors were hired (ibid.). Lewandowski's degree of power in the New Synagogue in some ways superseded the cantor's, which was highly

unusual. His innovations to the German synagogue rite, especially aided by composing some music in the vernacular, allowed his influence to spread and stick in synagogues across the country (ibid.). This unified the sounds of Germany to some degree, but there was a different *nusach*, which refers in this case to musical modes and patterns being used at specific times in worship, to each of the four major regions of Germany (ibid.). Kirschner, as the longtime cantor of the primary liberal congregation in Munich, was an eventual master of Southern German nusach, incorporating it into his music when appropriate (Hohenemser 1950).

The world of 19th and early 20th century German synagogues can seem static from our perspective, but like all history, it was vibrant and interwoven in a way that can be difficult to discern without close study. Kirschner had relationships with almost all the other big names in Germany at the time. He studied under Lewandowski, but had a twelve-year gap in communication before they finally spoke again. He learned from a retired Sulzer too, after Singer had taken over Sulzer's pulpit position in Vienna. Kirschner learned from many great men, including the previously mentioned three, but also Edward Birnbaum, Heinrich Frei, and his predecessor at the Great Synagogue, Max Loewenstamm. He was not only a student and scholar, but a teacher. He taught many young and aspiring Jewish professionals, having several relationships with people we would now deem important figures, such as Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, Jacob Hohenemser, Aron Friedman, Leon Kornitzer, and Heinrich Schalit. The nature of these relationships and the circumstances under which they were initiated are obscured by a lack of documentation. However, the interconnection of the figures can be identified by their frequent mentions of each other in publications and through brief references in diaries

and letters. Kirschner was something of a mentor to Idelsohn (Hohenemser 1950), for example, so when Idelsohn wrote his collection of Southern German nusach, it is likely that Kirschner helped him by either supplying some of his own nusach or by pointing Idelsohn in the right direction, which, according to Dr. Geoffrey Goldberg, would have been to Abraham Baer, Maier Kohn, or Max Loewenstamm (Goldberg 2020).

Kirschner made it a life goal of his to embody his work. He was regarded as a kind and pious man, dedicated to his mission with a rare passion, even after many years in the field (Baerwald 1938, 1). His presence extended beyond his musical contributions, as he also wrote prolifically, publishing many articles and a couple of short books throughout his career. His scholarly interests were primarily in the realm of Jewish music history – for example, his most famous piece was a 1914 compendium of essays about piyyutim (Selig 2019)– but he also addressed challenges facing clergymen at the time (Hohenemser 1950). One in particular discussed the difficulties of interacting with parents of bar mitzvah and Hebrew school children (ibid.).

Emanuel Kirschner wrote a series of recollections in what amounts to an autobiography or memoir. It was composed from 1933 to 1936 and was completed by his son Max, who wrote briefly of the events following Emanuel's death. Emanuel did not take notes earlier in his life about the things of which he writes, apologizing in advance if he remembers anything incorrectly, so it is fairly clear from this document that he was writing about these events from the perspective of late life. While some details of his early childhood are included in this book, there is much more content about the last twenty or so years of his life and reflections about the world around him during that time period. A few scholars, most notably Cantor Jacob Hohenemser, who was his successor

as the primary cantor of the Hauptsynagoge (Hohenemser 1950), have written about Kirschner. Hohenemser addressed the Cantors Assembly at its third annual conference in 1950. He spoke about Kirschner, admitting that much of what he would say was based on an article written for Kirschner's seventieth birthday by Abraham Zvi Idelsohn. Though I have not been able to find that document, most of what Hohenemser discusses is clearly derived from Kirschner's memoir, as it follows a very similar trajectory of events. He does include a few notes that were not in the diary, presumably acquired from Kirschner directly, as they knew each other, or from Idelsohn, who also knew Kirschner personally. I will use Kirschner's memoir and Hohenemser's address to the CA as the basis for most of this article. While I attempted to gather biographical information for this paper from as many sources as possible, most of it led directly back to Kirshner's autobiography. As a result, unless noted otherwise, any biographical information used in this article is from this source.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emanuel Kirschner, the son of a baker, was born on February 15, 1857 in a small town in Upper Silesia called Rockinitz. He was the third child of ten. The town was only populated by around 100 people, so the family had to travel by foot to a neighboring village to attend Shabbat services and other Jewish communal activities. Kirschner vividly and fondly remembered his father's *z'mirot* and the tunes of those childhood services. As a child, he attended a Jewish parochial school and was constantly harassed by anti-Semites on his way there and back. This school was in Beuthen, which happened to be where the great cantor Joseph Singer taught. Seeing the passion he had for music,

Singer pushed Kirschner to develop his musical abilities. He made trips to Kirschner's father to ask him if he would allow his son to sing in the synagogue's choir, but was always met with refusal, as his father did not want the family separated on Shabbat. However, the Austro-Prussian War eventually forced the Kirschner family to move, at which point they resettled in Beuthen, thus allowing young Emanuel and Singer's wishes to be granted. During his time in the choir, and under Singer's tutelage, Kirschner learned the music of Sulzer, Naumbourg, and the Hungarian traditional *nusach* (Hohenemser 1950). This was particularly influential in Kirschner's career, as he learned the sounds of the surrounding regions, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Austria, and France, all at a young age. He additionally picked up some piano skills from Singer. On the eve of his bar mitzvah service, Kirschner davened all of *maariv*, a testament to his learning achievements. Between the great success of his bar mitzvah and the amount Singer was pushing Kirschner to achieve musically, Kirschner's father eventually gave up hope for him picking up the family trade of baking (ibid.).

When Kirschner was an older teenager, Joseph Singer left the Beuthen synagogue to become the chief cantor of Nuremberg, at which point Kirschner decided to move to Berlin to attend the Jewish Teachers College. He believed that becoming a properly trained educator would aid him in his cantorial duties later on. At the Jewish Teachers College, Lewandowski was the director of musical and cantorial studies. There were only two lessons a week in the cantorial area of study, so Kirschner began to consider the concept of a school solely for the study of *chazzanut*, as his seminary was clearly designed mostly for educators, and perhaps rabbinical students. In fact, one of the primary issues Kirschner considered in this thought experiment was something cantors

often wrestle with today. He knew that in a seminary setting, based on his experiences, students might only learn set pieces. They wouldn't necessarily experiment and improvise. Kirshner strongly believed that mastering all *chazzanut*, which would certainly entail improvisation, was essential to being a great cantor. In order to do this himself, he travelled around Berlin visiting all the synagogues he could. Because his voice was still undergoing changes, he didn't sing for a time, and immersion was the best way he could learn about a variety of musical styles. The cantor he saw most often was Abraham Jakob Lichtenstein in the Heidereutergasse, but he also observed other local cantors such as Arnold Marksohn and two Orthodox cantors, Olitzky and Tuerk (Hohenemser 1950).

Listening was a good start, but Kirschner needed to become involved in synagogue music himself again. In around 1875, he auditioned for Lewandowski's choir at the New Synagogue as a 1st bass, to which he was accepted (Hohenemser 1950). This procured Kirschner a decent income while he studied. However, after dividing his earnings among private voice and music lessons, one or maybe two good meals a week (usually on Shabbat), and helping his family financially when he could, he needed to be frugal. This became especially true when his brother Max, who had trouble finding employment because of some facial growths, came to live with him. Kirschner dedicated himself to his work fully in order that he might one day achieve more financial success to better support his entire immediate family.

In 1877, Kirschner passed all his teaching exams and accepted a teaching position at the Jewish Community School in Berlin (Hohenemser 1950). The money was good, as it helped him truly support his parents, but he knew that he wanted more. In 1879, the

chazzan sheini at the New Synagogue became severely ill eight days before *Yom Kippur*. This prompted Lewandowksi to give Kirschner's name to the board as a substitute. It had been years since Kirschner had served as *shaliach tzibbur*, but Lewandowski was confident in Kirschner's abilities, having witnessed them regularly in his choir rehearsals and services. Kirschner had all but given up his dream of becoming a cantor, as his voice was still cracking occasionally at the age of twenty-one. However, he had grown very comfortable in the musical style of the New Synagogue, which consisted almost solely of Lewandowski's music (Selig 2019), and decided that he could lose nothing by trying. As difficult as some of the music was, much of it consisted of call and response, with the choir doing much of the hard work. The organ often played his parts too, which allowed him to easily identify which piece was which in the introductions. Kirschner studied intensely to prepare for his debut, which was quite successful. The normally surly Lewandowski even congratulated him on a job well done.

Soon thereafter, the *chazzan sheini* Heinrich Joachimsohn died. Kirschner asked Lewandowski whether he should apply, to which Lewandowski told him that he should absolutely not. Kirschner disagreed and told him that he thought he deserved a chance, as his performance during the High Holy Days had been quite successful. He approached the acting president to determine if his application would have any chance of success. The president was surprised by the question, telling him that despite Lewandowski's push against such a young, and perhaps talented, *chazzan* in their last board meeting, the rest of the board was willing to consider his candidacy. Lewandowski continued to object, but the board decided the job should be Kirschner's.

The first cantor of the New Synagogue was a man named Joachim, whom Kirschner loved and respected. According to Hohenemser, Salomon Sulzer visited Joachim's services (Hohenemser 1950). Hohenemser attributed this, in his recollection on Emanuel Kirschner written in late 1949, to Joachim's mastery of *chazzanut* (ibid.). While Joachim probably was a great cantor, especially given how much Kirschner respected him, this conclusion does a disservice to Lewandowski, as he was the person who truly perpetuated Sulzer's major contribution to synagogue music. Lewandowski's music constituted the majority of each service and was probably enough reason for Sulzer to want to attend those services.

Joachim appreciated Kirschner's talent, but believed he could improve vocally and procured him a new voice teacher, Professor Ferdinand Sieber. Sieber introduced a motto to Kirschner that always stuck with him: "Nicht abtrotzen sondern abschmeicheln muss der Singer seinem organ die Stimme." While it is difficult to translate, Max Kirschner approximates it as: "Do not force your vocal cords to produce their sound. Rather bring this sound out through a kind and clever attitude toward them." This philosophy and approach to singing helped Kirschner develop his voice and extend his career as long as he did.

Given that Kirschner thought Lewandowski to be unapproachable, Kirschner never had much of a relationship with him. He was harsh and always difficult, arrogant and self-serving (Selig 2019). Kirschner appreciated his talents, but could never penetrate that outer-layer of frigidity to become more than colleagues. In fact, this was an odd circumstance, as Kirschner was, according to Hohenemser, a very bold person who was never shy to take moral action (Hohenemser 1950). Hohenemser tells a story to prove

this, in which Kirschner tells a personal friend of Emperor Frederick II, a Mr. Magnus, that it was disrespectful to invite the rabbi and cantor to a wedding at the last minute. Hohenemser concludes that "Kirschner did not fear the most influential person when it came to defend [sic] the dignity of the Cantorate" (Hohenemser 1950). Despite this record of boldness, Kirschner never confronted Lewandowski during their time working together because he admired his talents so. While it skips many years in this narrative, the conclusion to their relationship is quite telling:

It was 1893. The two men had not seen each other for around twelve years. Lewandowski had just been forced into retirement at the age of seventy-two, as was customary in many congregations, as life-contracts were not truly for life, but until seventy-two. Thus, he was depressed in his situation. Kirschner, hearing how poorly Lewandowski was doing, decided to visit him. After the two greeted each other, Lewandowski told Kirschner that he wanted to hear him sing, perhaps to cheer him up. Kirschner decided to sing some of Lewandowski's own compositions. At the conclusion of the set, Lewandowski granted Kirschner a great compliment, saying that nobody else could sing his music like he could. He sadly asked why Kirschner had not written more to him, to which Kirschner replied that it was because he knew of Lewandowski's machinations during the hiring process years earlier. Kirschner said that he hadn't wanted to tell a man that he admired that he had "listened to flatterers and rejected upright people." Lewandowski listened to Kirschner's explanation, sitting quietly. When it was concluded, he sadly beat his chest, crying out "*chotosi*," I have sinned.

This whole scene, taken from Kirschner's memoir, could be described as exaggerated or false entirely, but both the detail with which Kirschner tells of everything

and the piousness with which every other person who knew Kirschner describes him lead me to believe what he says. Given that, it is clear the kind of reverence these men had for each other's talents, if not their whole beings. The German trend of cantors writing music for organ clearly grew from Lewandowski's legacy, but this story demonstrates that Kirschner desired to write such music. Kirschner could have been inclined to avoid living in Lewandowski's shadow, especially with what occurred between the two of them previously. We see here, however, how much good Kirschner believed Lewandowski was doing for the field of Jewish music. He regarded Lewandowski as admirable, despite their great personal differences, recognizing the greater good and advancement of Jewish station that Lewandowski's music brought to the liberal Jewish community of Germany.

After a few years in the position of *chazzan sheini*, Kirschner was ready to take on a primary cantor position. There wasn't to be a vacancy at the New Synagogue until later in the 1880s, as Joachim was not ready to retire. For the top talent in Germany, it often took some time to procure an upper echelon job, as cantors had to wait for another to leave his post before moving, and there were limited prominent positions (Selig 2019). Luckily for Kirschner, in 1881, Josef Singer, who had been the first cantor in Nuremberg, took over for Sulzer in Vienna. Kirschner was invited to audition for the job in Nuremberg, which went very well in his own eyes. Singer also sent Lewandowski a letter confirming that to be the case. A hiccup occurred though, as there suddenly seemed to be opposition to Kirschner being hired. Kirschner wasn't able to identify it for a long time, believing that somehow his former mentor, Singer, was a part of it. Years later though, Kirschner found out from Singer that some influential men on the board had learned that Kirschner was essentially supporting his entire family, and that these circumstances

might lead to a financial burden too large for the synagogue. Despite this incident, Kirschner tried his hand again at auditioning soon thereafter and was able to secure a new job as the primary cantor of the Hauptsynagoge in Munich. Upon hearing this news, members of the board in Berlin approached Kirschner, offering him a greater salary and guaranteeing he would become the primary cantor after Joachim retired, but Kirschner decided to move on anyway. It isn't clear exactly why he chose to leave Berlin, but most likely it was for the sake of gaining musical independence, away from Lewandowski.

This was a massive new step for him, as not only did this entail taking the musical reins of a synagogue, but the musical tradition of Munich had an entirely different nusach to learn. It was an especially dire circumstance because he was to take over a week before the High Holy Days. The position also required him to take charge of the religious school, though that was something he was adequately prepared to do. Hohenemser claims that Kirschner also taught at a local Jewish school (Hohenemser 1950), which demonstrates his love for teaching, his need for further income to support his family, or both. It was not mentioned in the memoir or by Hohenemser, but he most likely instructed either liturgical or musical lessons, as they were both fields of expertise and topics that brought great joy to Kirschner. It should also be noted that Kirschner was stepping into a position formerly occupied by the great cantor Max Loewenstamm at the Hauptsynagoge, which meant he was under a great deal of pressure. Musically, this meant mastering Southern German nusach, which Hohenemser said was often referred to as "the real minhag Ashkenaz" by people in that region of Germany (ibid.). Hohenemser described the differences as fundamental; the scales, style, form, technique, and emotion all varied from the styles Kirschner had previously begun to master (ibid.). Kirschner had

become skilled at the improvised recitative, which was called sagan. However, he believed that East and West were meeting inside him, and that he needed to gain a technical understanding of this new nusach if he wanted to bring this intersection into modern forms of music, to become a guardian of South-German tradition. Kirschner believed that he had already gained an adequate mastery of the more Eastern European-inspired nusach he grew up with and was allowed to use in Berlin. He also thought that the ideal cantor could blend East and West, so when the challenge of picking up this entirely new nusach was put before him, he knew that he must master Southern German nusach before incorporating it into his improvisational and compositional repertoire.

Kirschner's early years in Munich were difficult and stressful. Much of this was attributed to learning the *Nusach Ashkenaz* that was so different from what Kirschner had previously used. Kirschner was also very much a type-A personality, always determined to become his best-self and acting as his own harshest critic. Given these difficulties, he became a pupil of sorts to his *chazzan sheini*, Heinrich Frei. This didn't last long though, as Kirschner was able to quickly master the concepts. He and Frei had a contentious relationship during this period, but went on to become great friends. Intellectually, Kirschner had grasped all the concepts he needed to. It was in performance, in developing an ability to improvise within this musical system, that Kirschner struggled. Because of these struggles, Kirschner became overly anxious somewhat frequently, even becoming physically ill on occasion as a result. He wrote in his diaries that he felt an exaggerated sense of responsibility, and that it weighed him down. He also stated that uncertainty about the final judgment on *Yom Hadin* left him crippled in a way. Upon outgrowing Frei's tutelage, Kirschner went to the Academy of Music in Munich to learn from Josef

Rheinberger, the famous organist. This allowed Kirschner to translate much of the theoretical knowledge he had about music composition for organ into a more nuanced understanding, as he would be able to play his own music himself before publishing it, determining its practicality and difficulty. Only a year into his job, Kirschner received an invitation to a congregation in San Francisco in 1882, but he declined. At the time, he wasn't willing to travel that far from his family and to learn a new language, but he later wrote that it might have been a liberating experience and that as an older man he would have taken that leap if he had been able.

Also in 1882, Kirschner took a trip to Vienna to visit Sulzer and Singer, specifically to repair his friendship with Singer that had fallen by the wayside (Hohenemser 1950). This trip took more twists and turns than expected though. First, when visiting Sulzer at his summer home in Moedling, he found him in a rather odd state. Sulzer was barely dressed and sitting in deep thought at a table. Kirschner had to introduce himself as Loewenstamm's successor, at which point Sulzer's body came to life, his eyes awakening, yet he only lamented his fate and humanity (ibid.). Kirschner concluded he was bitter about being forced to retire and found the whole experience shocking in a way, as this was a morose end for such a great figure (ibid.). Similar to Lewandowski's circumstance, the nature of Sulzer's lifetime contract was most likely limited to a particular age, at which point he was forced into retirement by his contract. To try to change the mood in the room, Kirschner asked if Sulzer would honor him by reciting a prayer, to which Sulzer replied, "What do you expect from a broken pot?" (ibid.). Kirschner left, returning to Vienna, at which point he ran into Sulzer again. Kirschner couldn't believe what he saw, as this time Sulzer was accompanied by Cantor

Isaac Schiller, a former student of Sulzer's (Fruhauf 2012, 49), and he "walked straight and in utmost dignity" (Hohenemser 1950). Hohenemser describes the scene, saying there was "nothing to remind him of the old and broken sage of Moedling (ibid.). Sulzer said goodbye with "a soft kiss of blessing pressed on Kirschner's forehead" (ibid.). This must have been unusual for Kirschner, to witness two such opposite sides of a great figure such as Sulzer. It seems by the description of these events that Kirschner was unfamiliar with the common symptoms of depression, or was simply shocked by witnessing the public and private personas of a man he barely knew in starkly contrasting instances.

The trip also included a visit to the synagogue of Cantor Josef Goldstein. Kirschner wrote an excellent review of his art, calling him a "master of all styles" (Hohenemser 1950). He embodied much of what Kirschner longed to be. He sang mostly in an Eastern European style, but clearly had learned the Western style as well, blending them when it suited him. Hohensemer remarks that his vocal technique "must have been flawless and of great variety – a tenor voice of tremendous flexibility" (ibid.), perhaps suggesting that to be praised so highly by Kirschner, these conditions must have existed. Kirschner also saw Cantor Bauer, a cantor of the Spanish-Portuguese tradition, and Franz Loewenstamm (Max's son), who had published Kirschner's father's *z'mirot*. This trip did not discernably change Kirschner's life in a dramatic fashion, but did expose him to both an example of what he didn't want to be as an aging cantor, as well as to a cantor who blended many cantorial traditions, which he sought to do. He came back to Munich with a renewed vigor, and perhaps coincidentally, was offered a life-contract soon thereafter.

These were usually given after serving a congregation for five years, but Kirschner had been there for only two.

The security that this position offered changed many things for Kirschner. He married Ida Buehler in 1884, who gave birth to three children over the next decade. Kirschner was often sought out to perform in concerts, which he did on occasion, but he always recognized that his duty to the synagogue came first. When he did perform outside of worship though, he found a way to infuse holiness into the musical performances. He believed that all true art was holy, as God is all around, not just in the synagogue. Kirschner was renowned as a vocalist outside the Jewish community as well. He was once sought out as a teacher by a young man named Heinrich Knote, whom had been rejected by the Academy of Music. Kirschner molded his voice and the young man eventually became a star at the National Munich Opera. This led to Kirschner being recruited as a vocal professor at the Academy of Music in 1893. It also led Kirschner to begin a course of study with Ludwig Thuille in counterpoint and composition. Thuille believed in "simplicity of melody over complicated technique" (Hohenemser 1950). While Kirschner's compositions would not generally be described that way by most modern listeners, compared to some of his contemporaries, Kirschner made sure to emphasize the importance of melody.

Kirschner began to write music for publication around 1884, which was approximately two years after he began studying with Rheinberger and a year after he began studying with Thuille. His first composition was "*Mi Addir*," written to be sung at his wedding to Ida Buehler. However, it wasn't until 1896 that "*T'hillos L'el Elyon*" was published, his first volume of compositions. It was dedicated to his father, the first person

to teach him the importance of Jewish music. The volume was reviewed by Singer, Cantor Eugen Davidson, and a Professor Zengenberger (Hohenemser 1950). The reviews were positive overall, but there was a recognition that combining Western music and counterpoint convention with Jewish modes was always difficult (ibid.). Hohenemser believed that Kirschner was the first Jewish composer to make the organ an "equal partner in the performance of *chazzanut*" (ibid.). This is certainly a contentious statement. Lewandowski and many of Kirschner's contemporaries used the organ as much as Kirschner did, so perhaps this referred to Kirschner's willingness to twist tonalities and introduce as many chromatics in the organ parts as in the vocal lines of the cantor or choir. There are numerous examples of this, but even his first piece, "*Mi Addir*," contains both a simple major vocal line and an organ part filled with chromatics, especially at the piece's conclusion. Hohenemser also credited Kirschner for introducing the Munich community to "the minor Eastern European modes of his youth," most likely what is mostly referred to as Magein Avot (ibid.). The congregation had been much more familiar with nusach that consisted of major modes previously.

Kirschner was an essayist and a serious scholar of Jewish studies. While most things he wrote about revolved around music in some way or another, not all of it did. Published in 1914, his most famous essay collection, called "Über mittelalterliche hebräische Poesien und ihre Singweisen [Medieval Hebrew poetry and the ways in which it was sung]," was about the history of piyyutim (Selig 2019). He wrote another, called "Home and School," in which he described his effort to teach the next generation about Jewish practice while dealing with always-difficult parents (Hohenemser 1950). Others detailed the history of practices specific to the synagogues of Munich and of Jewish

music as a whole (Selig 2019). Kirschner's scholarly pursuits may likely be attributed to his relationship with Josef Singer. Singer had been one of the most prolific Jewish musicologists of the previous generation of cantors, so for Kirschner to believe writing to be an important element of his cantorate does not seem out of place. Eduard Birnbaum became the most impactful musicologist of Jewish music in Kirschner's generation (ibid.), but it was a man Kirschner influenced who actually became the most well-known of all: Abraham Zvi Idelsohn. Idelsohn came to Kirschner as a cantor from Regensburg at the Danube. Idelsohn could only experience so much at his pulpit, so he came to hear from a well-travelled and musically diverse cantor in Kirschner. The advice he received from Kirschner was to enroll in the Leipsig Conservatory of Music. While there, Idelsohn discovered the Eastern musical elements that intrigued him so much during his career, leading him to move to Jerusalem. He mined the depths of the many traditions that had made their way to Jerusalem for the following twelve years, and then became a professor at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati (Hohenemser 1950).

Kirschner enjoyed a long and successful career in Munich. He published his second and third volumes in 1898 and 1911. These included some traditional nusach, but like much of Kirschner's work, the modes are disregarded at times (Selig 2019). To be fair to Kirschner, his knowledge and repertoire of modes and nuschaot was so extensive and intentionally diverse, that it could be unclear from which tradition each piece's nusach was derived. The reviews for these volumes suggested both tenderness in melody and grandeur in the proper moments, such as during the Torah service (Hohenemser 1950). His fourth volume, which consisted of High Holy Day music, was published in 1926. Germany was in poor financial shape after World War I and inflation was rampant,

which had destroyed Kirschner's savings. Thus, while he tried to self-publish this last volume, he ended up needing help from the Council of Bavarian Congregations. In 1928, he retired from the cantorate, though he continued to teach in the religious school and work with the cantors and accompanists as a cantor emeritus. While he had been retired for almost ten years by the time the synagogue was destroyed, he was given the honor of singing the last prayer ever sung within it (ibid.).

POWER AND PRESSURE IN THE CANTORATE

Kirschner's story can help inform how we understand the power structures of the Jewish communities in Germany during his era. The power of other cantors, music directors, synagogue presidents, hiring committees, boards, and congregants all tangibly influenced Kirschner's career and the direction it took. The pressures he felt throughout his career came directly or indirectly from his relationships with these people, as well as from himself, though that can be linked to the external pressure. He had a great deal of responsibility placed on him, and the expertise demanded of a cantor in each area of his work was tremendous. Whereas Kirschner perceived his most important duty to be the education of the next generation, setting up the Jewish community of Munich for a promising future, the responsibilities most vital to his job success were elsewhere. His performative, compositional, and scholarly prowess were more observable by the congregation at large. They also, perhaps because of this, were the areas of his job that caused him the most anxiety. The people placing this anxiety on him, those with the power around him, influenced his career in a number of varying ways and to different degrees.

Over the course of Kirschner's career, other cantors (and a music director) played a tremendous role in shaping its direction. Most obviously, Kirschner's interaction with Singer at a young age set him on the road to becoming a cantor. The surviving details of their personal interactions are limited, but we do know that Singer visited Kirschner's father many times to try to convince him to allow Kirschner to join his choir. This is in itself a clue toward the amount of faith Singer had in Kirschner's abilities and how much pressure he might have put on Kirschner to succeed. He very well may be the primary reason Kirschner aspired to be a cantor. Because many young men were conscripted into choirs, the cantor often had great influence over the young men of his community. This was more common in the Eastern European tradition than in Germany, but it still existed there (Selig 2019). In this manor, the process of creating more cantors started with the cantors themselves, as they could positively paint the profession and its importance while engaging with these children at a young age. Kirschner's interaction with Singer is just one example of such contact yielding a cantor.

While not a cantor, Lewandowski became the most influential figure in Kirschner's early career. It was Lewandowski who gave Kirschner his first opportunity to become a *shaliach tzibbur* for the High Holy Days in 1879. It was also Lewandowski who tried to take his cantorial aspirations away from him by denying him a job as *chazzan sheini* in Berlin. This is a testament to the extent of Lewandowski's power, which in many ways superseded the power of his cantors. While it's more a symptom than a cause, part of how Lewandowski was so powerful within his synagogue's framework was because he was on the board while simultaneously being employed by the synagogue as music director. This allowed him to influence board votes heavily. In

the case of Kirschner being hired as *chazzan sheini*, the board disagreed and subverted Lewandowski, but this was unusual. While Lewandowski's individual case seemingly has no other parallels at the time, its impact was quite important in shaping not only Kirschner's career, but the trajectory of many cantors of the time. Kirschner was forced to seek another job outside Berlin because of his desire to move away from the power-hungry Lewandowski. If he had stayed in Berlin, he would have had no reason to incorporate the Southern German nusach that became emblematic of his music into his repertoire, both for improvisation and for composition. In this way, Lewandowski changed Kirschner's legacy. The more obvious impact he had on Kirschner was pushing the importance of the modern organ service onto him, but this was spreading throughout Germany and would likely have pervaded Kirschner's work whether he knew Lewandowski personally or not. It was Lewandowski's unique power and influence that pushed Kirschner away, forcing an entirely different nusach onto him unintentionally.

In the course of Kirschner's move to another city, the power of the hiring committees was on full display as well. Kirschner believed that he had secured the job in Nuremberg after his mentor Singer left for Vienna. His audition went quite well, as was confirmed by Singer in a letter to Lewandowski. In the end, an influential man found out that Kirschner supported a large family and was able to singlehandedly derail that job opportunity for Kirschner. In this respect, this man's decision to push for another candidate was as influential as Lewandowski's influence on Kirschner moving. Otherwise, Kirschner would have ended up in Nuremberg, which had an entirely different musical tradition from Munich. While this seems like a small hiccup in his career, the power of one man on the committee to alter his path so greatly is evident. In Munich, the

hiring committee was equally as capable of using their power to influence Kirschner's trajectory, but upon deciding that he was qualified for the job in all areas they could evaluate, they sent him to a musical expert in Munich, to determine his suitability for the job from a musical perspective. Once again, an individual person had the power to determine Kirschner's fate in Munich, though this power had been conferred by the hiring committee. The cantor could only determine his path as much as study and personality would allow. As with anyone else seeking employment, the cantor was subject to the discretions of the hiring bodies he encountered.

Once in a congregational role, Kirschner was subject to the will of the synagogue president. Interestingly, in his memoir, Kirschner doesn't mention the names of individual presidents often, if at all. This, in a way, allows us to perceive the power of the position, not the individuals. As described in the biographical section, one of Kirschner's first major disputes with a president came when he decided he wanted to sing in public concerts. Kirschner had not consulted the board when he first went to participate in a private concert, but if his name was to be circulated on a concert billing, he knew he needed to get consent. Cantors had great power in their spheres of influence, as musical choices were obviously left mostly to their discretion, but also because these choices could impact liturgical practice. If they were in charge of the religious school and bar mitzvah program, they also were able to determine what topics were emphasized in those settings. However, cantors were still limited in what they were permitted to do, as their status as exemplars was essential and monitored by the board and president. Especially outside their Jewish confines, they acted as representatives of the whole community. The president first ruled that he would not allow Kirschner to perform, but changed his mind.

If the president had been more adamant in this case, Kirschner may not have gained as much fame within the Munich and wider German spheres. Kirschner was widely respected by those who came into personal contact with him, but concerts were one way he was able to build his brand without personal interaction. As I stated earlier, it was the opportunity to build the reputation of the synagogue that convinced the president to alter his decision. Once again, Kirschner's career trajectory had been subject to the desires of others, even if he got what he desired in this instance. Kirschner understood that other people would have this sort of power over him and took it upon himself to argue his case when he encountered opposition rather than use his own authority to override others. He believed that better relationships among leadership would yield healthier communities. While a fairly obvious conclusion, this mindset may very well have been borne from his time dealing with Lewandowski and his tendency to do what he wanted regardless of the board's feelings.

The power of lay-people cannot be overstated. Even outside the boardroom, the influence of lay-people on clergymen was immense. The amount of power people with money had over congregations was as vast as it is today. Because Kirschner believed education to be the binding pillar of Judaism, he spent a great deal of his time interacting with students and parents. This especially exposed him to a level of interface with lay-people in his community that other cantors might have avoided. While Kirschner never states that lay-people forced him to change his way of teaching, he was forced to learn another nusach to appease his congregants. While adjusting musical styles to meet the needs of the congregation would seem commonplace, it proved to be a very difficult transition for him, one that took years of struggle to fully resolve. He never mentions

trying to fight this need in his memoir, indicating how much power the congregation's members held in this instance, and how important it was to Kirschner to satisfy this need of theirs. The beginning and end of his career in Munich also demonstrate the kind of power the synagogue's lay-people held over Kirschner. The board was able to offer Kirschner a "lifetime" contract after only two years on the job, subverting the norm of five years, but also made sure to protect itself by inserting the common clause that retirement came at seventy-two.

Strangely enough, the role of the rabbi never seemed to strongly influence Kirschner according to his memoir. He was often quite friendly with his fellow clergymen, admiring many of them greatly. Many of them clearly admired him as well, as he was a scholar equal to one of their own, a musician who did justice to the liturgy, and a kind, pious man. Despite all this, Kirschner never discusses his relationships with these men at length. They never seemed to determine the fate of his career as much as the actions of the many musicians and lay-people around him did.

All these external forces guided Kirschner, but his internal struggle was equally a source of pressure throughout his life. As a cantor, Kirschner was always going to be expected to be a performer. Especially with his lofty career aspirations, there was never any doubt that he would be leading many Shabbat and life-cycle services. With that in mind, it is curious that Kirschner's greatest anxieties stemmed from performance. As described by him, he was often nervous leading up to the performance, flipping a switch as soon as prayer began. His piety is well documented, so I don't believe this to be a put-on in his writing. Conversely, there is a great likelihood that his piety led to much of his perpetual anxiety about singing. He believed that the weight of the community was on his

shoulders before God at all times. Based on his memoir, there are plenty of examples in which he displays his technical proficiency and confidence in music. For example, when auditioning for his position in Munich, the board determined that he go before a musical expert named Hermann Levi, who would assess his capabilities. Instead of the normal practice wherein a singer brought a selection of pieces to perform, Kirschner told the proctor of his examination to test him with whichever pieces of music he desired. After Kirschner sight-read a piece of lieder by Brahms nearly perfectly, the man congratulated Kirschner and told him he'd be happy to listen to him any Shabbat morning. While singing before one person can be less intimidating than an entire hall, this demonstrates that Kirschner was not nervous about music on a technical level. Partially because the nature of being a cantor at the time was so performative, he put the utmost pressure on himself to be perfect. This was most relevant when he first moved to Munich and needed to adapt to a new musical tradition, but that anxiety remained with him for many years, as he desired to be a conduit for all the nuschaot he had ever encountered, blending them into an ultimate form. This kind of pressure can be formulated internally because of an inflated sense of self-importance, but it also could have been rooted in his piety, as I propose. The role of the cantor does traditionally mandate that kind of burden be put on a cantor's shoulders.

Kirschner was able to shape a great deal of the musical, liturgical, and educational directions of his community. Even so, it is clear that his influence was greatly checked by the power structures of the synagogue. The actions of hiring committees, presidents, lay-people, and other cantors all put restrictions on his activities. The expectations of all these people also came together to form internal pressure for Kirschner, equally influencing his

decision-making. Despite the cantor's ability to influence the musical direction of a congregation, including its liturgy, even these powers could have easily been curtailed if the bulk of his community desired it to be so. Individual figures, such as Lewandowski, held enough sway in their communities so as to redirect Kirschner's career in directions he never could have anticipated. The community, in a way, imbued the clergyman with a degree of power. It could become unbridled if it was left unchecked, but in Kirschner's case, he, as far as I have seen, did not express a desire to work above these structures, rather with them. Without their influences, Kirschner would not have ended up in Munich. He would not have incorporated Southern German nusach into his music and become a guardian of that tradition. Kirschner's life in the cantorate is a fascinating example of the ways that interpersonal dynamics shape the careers of the Jewish people's most esteemed exemplars of prayer. Kirschner deftly navigated the power dynamics and pressures placed on him to ultimately become the cantor of one the most esteemed German Liberal congregations. Despite this accomplishment and the many volumes of beautiful compositions that he left us, Kirschner's legacy is underappreciated. By recognizing the power dynamics that have produced this historiographic omission, we may begin to revive Kirschner's music, and call attention to the work of previously marginalized composers.

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