

**JONAH/
SEPHARDIC SONGS
AND MUSICAL GEMS OF JUDAICA**

United Synagogue of Hoboken, February 24, 2007, 8pm

I. United Synagogue of Hoboken Choir

Rabbi Robert Scheinberg, Director

Cuando el Rey Nimrod..... Ladino folksong, arr. Sid Robinovitch
When King Nimrod went to the field

One of the most popular Ladino folksongs, this piece tells the story, adapted from the midrash (ancient expansions to the biblical text), about the events leading up to the birth of the patriarch Abraham. When King Nimrod sees a holy light emanating from the Jewish ghetto (yes, an anachronism!), he knows that Abraham, our patriarch, has been born. Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, was the mother tongue of hundreds of thousands of Sephardic Jews in Greece, Turkey, the Balkans and throughout the world. As most native speakers of Ladino today are elderly, and as a large percentage of Ladino speakers were killed in the Holocaust of European Jewry, the language is in danger of extinction, even as there is a renewal of interest today in Ladino culture and music.

Tzur Mishelo Achalnu..... Hebrew table song; melody of the Jews of Bombay
Rock, of whose we have eaten as transcribed by Rabbi Morton Leifman; arr. Charles Davidson

This *zemer* (Sabbath table song), of anonymous authorship, is based on the Jewish Blessing after Meals: "Faithful ones, let us bless the Rock of whose bounty we have eaten. We have been satisfied and have abundance, as God has promised."

Ki Elecha..... contemporary setting of prayer text, Shirona, arr. B. Gruder
To You

The words are drawn from a religious poem from the medieval German Jewish community, also included in contemporary prayer books: "I will sing songs and weave poems, for my soul longs for You. My soul yearns to be in the shadow of Your hand, to know every mystery about You."

Haleli Nafshi et Adonai..... Psalm 146; Salomone Rossi (1570-1630)
Praise Adonai, O my soul

Rossi was a court composer in Mantua and one of very few Jews to be a successful musician and composer in the non-Jewish world of the Renaissance. He also composed synagogue music, like this selection, in the style of the Italian Renaissance. This psalm describes God's deeds towards the most vulnerable: "The LORD secures justice for those who are wronged, and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free; the LORD restores sight to the blind; the LORD makes those who are bent stand straight; the LORD loves the righteous; the LORD watches over the stranger; He gives courage to the orphan and widow, but makes the path of the wicked tortuous."

Avre Tu.....Ladino folksong, arr. Gil Aldema

A Ladino love song: “Open your locked door; on your balcony there is no light. Love becomes you; come away with me, my rose. I was seeking the pure and clear beauty that God gave you, intended for me.”

Od Yavo ShalomSheva, arr. Rabbi Robert Scheinberg
Peace will yet come to us

This song by the contemporary Israeli music group Sheva is one of the most popular Israeli songs of the current decade. It includes the words for peace in Hebrew (*Shalom*) and Arabic (*Salaam*): “Peace will yet come to us, to us and to the entire world.”

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The United Synagogue of Hoboken Choir has been singing a diverse repertoire in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and other languages since 1997.

Soprano: Jeanne Becker, Kathleen Kraft, Audrey Merwin, Joanne Perrotta, Leora Rosenberg
Alto: Marilyn Freiser, Pam Krieger, Louise Kurtz, Laurie Palumbo, Harriet Taub
Tenor: Joel Freiser, Howard Olah-Reiken, Robert Scheinberg, Ken Schept
Bass: Charlie Hollander, Russell Kriegel, Dov Kruger

Rabbi Robert Scheinberg, the rabbi of the United Synagogue of Hoboken since 1997, has been the director of the United Synagogue of Hoboken Choir since its inception. While a student at Columbia University, he was a co-founder and musical director of Pizmon Jewish A Cappella. His compositions and arrangements continue to be performed by Jewish a cappella choirs through-out the United States. Rabbi Scheinberg is also an adjunct faculty member at the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Academy for Jewish Religion.

II. Cantigas Women's Choir

Joan Isaacs Litman, Director
Erasmia Voukelatos, Accompanist

Prelude: Taqsim.....Amir Vahab
Amir Vahab, Ney

Ani l'Dodi Yemenite melody
Patricio Díaz, Fidula
Anna Maria Baeza, Clarinet
Amir Vahab, Daf

While most of the Jewish population of Yemen, traceable to around the time of King Solomon, has long since immigrated to Israel, a remnant community remains on the peninsula. This Yemenite tune, transcribed and used with the permission and blessing of Elliot Z. Levine, provides a setting for its Hebrew lyric, the familiar canticle ascribed to King Solomon: "I am my beloved and my beloved is mine, who grazes among the roses. I have come to my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice."

La Rosa Enflorece..... Ladino folksong
Patricio Díaz, Fidula
Amir Vahab, Daf

One of the most beautiful and well-known melodies of the Sephardic Jews, this song has as many variations and musical settings as there are Jewish communities of Spanish origin throughout the world: "The rose blooms in the month of May, but my soul is full of gloom. The nightingales sing, and are sighing of love; their passion will kill me, multiplying my pain. Come quickly my love, my dove, for I am dying of a broken heart."

Los Kaminoz de Sirkeji.....Ladino folksong (Turkey)
Patricio Díaz, Fidula
Anna Maria Baeza, Clarinet
Amir Vahab, Daf

In captivating 10/8 meter, this Ladino song from Sirkeji, the vinegar sellers' neighborhood of Istanbul, tells of an engagement gone sour. A young man speaks to his "dark and beautiful" fiancée, recalling their early courtship with beer and sparkling water which ended with cold words. The final message is to the woman's father: "You promised me vineyards and fields, but now sir, I don't even want you as a plug in the sink."

EsturuluLadino folksong (Turkey)

The village women gather to bring to Esturulu's (Little Esther's) mother's attention the questionable behavior they have observed in her daughter. Esther's mother is torn between hearing the accusations ("Little Esther, mama's little Esther, don't bring me any trouble!") and defending her daughter, whose attitude is dismissive and nonchalant: "Little Esther won't eat meat, because she wants a house apart from the others. Little Esther meets her boyfriend at the well. Little Esther sneaks to the rooftop for a rendezvous with her boyfriend. Little Esther throws on a cape (disguise) and sneaks off to the theater by herself."

Mother: Florence Pape; Esther: Emily Petrick
Village women: Catharine Baldwin, Lynne Connell, Ginger Donnan, Meera Jaffrey, Paula Lacobara,
Margarita Leon, Illanet Parisca, Caitlin Price, Eileen Vanderheyden

Take a Step / Family Tree Stephen Hatfield (b.1949)

Patricio Díaz, Viola
Anna Maria Baeza, Clarinet
Carlos Frias, Tambourine

These two pieces by Canadian composer Stephen Hatfield were commissioned in 2001. Both pieces honor immigrant mothers caught between two worlds who are anxious that their daughters benefit from opportunities in the new country without losing touch with the birthright of their ancestral culture. Hatfield chose beautiful Sephardic melodies, “Morikos” (a Sarajevo lullaby) and “La Rosa Enflorece,” to build both compositions “as the tradition of a displaced and multicultural people” (the Spanish Jews forced eastward) and as a way to honor women’s voices in song.

“Take a Step” opens with a dialogue between a young mother and her daughter in the immigrant Toronto neighborhood of Hatfield’s childhood. At the end of the piece, we realize that the young mother has become the old woman who now watches the world from her wheelchair.

“Family Tree,” also a dialogue between generations, reflects on the hardships immigrants faced. We sense the transcendent image of a seed from the family tree as the young narrator perseveres in the new land.

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Cantigas Women’s Choir and the United Synagogue of Hoboken Choir

Bashana Haba’ah..... Nurit Hirsh and Ehud Manor

Please join us in singing the refrain: Od tir'eih, od tir'eih kama tov yihyeh
Bashana, bashana haba'ah

Written in 1970, Bashana Haba’ah is a well-loved song of hope: “In the year to come, as I sit on my porch and count the birds flying around, I will see children playing, running between houses and in the fields. You will see, you will see how good it will be in the year to come.”

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Cantigas Women’s Choir, named after a medieval Spanish song form called a *cantiga*, is a community-based choir in its fifth season whose members come from as nearby as Hoboken and Jersey City and as far away as Teaneck and Brooklyn. The choir advocates through song for those whose hearts need to be uplifted and whose voices need to be heard. The choir appears annually with inmates at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Clinton, New Jersey, and has sung on behalf of cancer survivors in Bayonne, New Jersey.

Soprano 1: Anne Christensen, Lynne Connell, Agnes Dimatteo, Angelika Fuellemann, Carolyn Hoberman, Margarita Leon, Claire Meyer, Lillian Meyer, Ilannet Parisca, Claire Pedulla, Emily Petrick, Amanda Pickering, Kathia Roberts-Moore, Cinthia Santos, Shaylin Schundler, Julie Sloane, Ulrike Talkenberg, Carla Wills

Soprano 2: Catharine Baldwin, Kerry Benz, Becca Brasser, Karen Hansen, Meera Jaffrey, Lenore Jean Jones, Paula Lacobara, Emily Litman, Judy McCaffery, Jennifer Marsh, Lisa Mason, Diane Oltarzewski, Shanna Pargellis, Caitlin Price, Cynthia Sanford, Lynn Schundler, Ozgun Tasdemir

Alto: Katie Almroth, Melanie Best, Rachel Chang, Ginger Donnan, Jan Gallagher, Rulande Henderson, Silja Jaaskelainen, Frances Marsh, Rebecca Nichols, Florence Pape, Nancy Pedulla, Debbie Rothman, Meg Simmons, Eileen Vanderheyden, Deborah Wenger

Joan Isaacs Litman, Director, has conducted choruses and festivals throughout the metropolitan area for more than 25 years. Her choirs have performed at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center and the United Nations. A specialist in choral music education, Ms. Litman has studied and led music education seminars throughout the United States and recently in Cairo, Egypt, and Tehran, Iran. She is a member of the music faculty of the United Nations International School in Manhattan, and is also a member of the summer faculty at the Kodaly Institute at Capital University. Ms. Litman is the author of *Song Caravan: Songs of the Middle East*, which will be published in 2007, and is a founder and Music Director Emerita of Mustard Seed School in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Erasmia Voukelatos, Accompanist, is a Canadian pianist of Greek descent and has been active as a chamber and solo pianist, teacher, music director, and concert series presenter. Concerto appearances have included the Mozart Concerto in A Major (K. 488) and Haydn Concerto in D Major with the Canadian ensemble *Mercredi Musique*, as well as Bach's D Minor Keyboard Concerto, which was released on the CD *The Best of Brooklyn*. She loves to collaborate with her husband, violinist Ashley Horne, and has been accompanying Cantigas since its formation.

Lillian Meyer, Flute, currently studies with John Littlefield, having begun her studies at age eleven with Sharon Levin. Lillian's performances include Marathon Concerts with the Dieckow School of Music, the 2004 Bach Festival hosted by her alma mater, Mustard Seed School, and various events at her current school, The Spence School.

Guest Artists:

Anna Maria Baeza, Clarinet, has been heard in recital and live media broadcasts throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. She received the Career Development Grant from Concert Artists Guild in New York City, and has performed at the Aspen, June in Buffalo, Taos/Angelfire and Banff music festivals. Ms. Baeza holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in clarinet from SUNY Stony Brook, where she studied with Charles Neidich and Jack Kreiselman. She holds degrees from the University of Southern California, where she studied with David Shifrin and Mitchell Lurie, and has studied in France with Guy Deplus and with distinguished chamber musicians Julius Levine, Gilbert Kalish and Yehuda Gilad.

Patricio Díaz, Fidula and Viola, was born in Madrid, Spain, where he studied violin and viola with Antonio Arias. He furthered his training with Alexander Babrovski and Fyodor Druzhinin at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow on scholarship from the government of the former Soviet Union. He graduated in 1991 from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with an M.A. in Music Performance. Mr. Díaz currently resides in New York, where he performs with several orchestras and ensembles and is on the faculty of the United Nations International School.

Carlos Frias, Percussion, has been performing in the metropolitan area for a decade. Originally from the Dominican Republic, he is an experienced world musician appearing with several rock and Latin jazz bands. Mr. Frias currently performs with local groups as a drummer and percussionist.

Amir Alan Vahab, Daf (large Persian frame drum) and Ney (reed flute), is one of New York's most celebrated and distinguished composers and singers of Persian sacred and folk music. A native of Iran, he performs in the traditional Persian style, and is the director of the Soroosh Ensemble. Mr. Vahab detects a dialogue between Middle Eastern and Western music traditions emerging in his work, influenced by his own experience as well as his research in ethnomusicology.

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INTERMISSION

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III. Jonah: A Rock Oratorio

Benjamin Gruder, Composer and Director

SOMEWHERE IN JUDEA

Prologue/Amida (prayer)/DialogueJonah, Chorus
Send Somebody ElseJonah, Chorus

ABOARD THE TSURIS

Sea ChanteyChorus, Jonah
I Am the OneJonah, Chorus
Jonah! (What were you thinking?)..... Ship's Captain, Chorus

INSIDE THE LEVIATHAN

Jonah's ChoiceJonah

NINEVEH

Forty More DaysJonah, Chorus

SOMEWHERE NEAR NINEVEH

Jonah's Lament.....Jonah
I Know I KnowJonah, Chorus
Standing before You.....Jonah, Chorus

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CAST:

Jonah.....James Baylis
Ship's Captain Howard Olah-Reiken
Chorus
Soprano Meryl Gross, Audrey Merwin, Natasha Luccia Novikov, Leora Rosenberg
Alto..... Pam Krieger, Lori Leifer, Harriet Taub, Deborah Wenger
Tenor..... Jennifer Horowitz, Wayne Michaels, Howard Olah-Reiken
Bass.....Sadler Hayes, Dov Kruger, Carl Pellman

Benjamin Gruder (Composer, Director) has a wide-ranging musical background, singing and playing trumpet, bass and keyboard in a variety of musical situations, including stints in a county symphony orchestra, a punk rock band and a Haitian band. He developed *Jonah* while studying composition with Jeremy Wall (best known for his work with Spyro Gyra, David Broza and Richard Stoltzman). Currently he is the conductor of Nashir, the Rottenberg Chorale (New York City), Kol Rinah (Westchester) and Yorktown Jewish Center Choir. His choirs have performed in Blue Claws Stadium, Merkin Hall and Westchester County Legislative Rotunda, as well as numerous synagogues, churches and music festivals. His latest composition, *Grunge Kaddish*, was performed in June 2006 in Merkin Hall.

James K. Baylis (Jonah) would like to thank Ben for asking him to be a part of this wonderful project. Mr. Baylis is very involved in the Jewish music scene, recording and performing with many groups, including a performance at the White House with Kol Zimra, a professional Jewish a cappella group. He is also a proud member of Actors' Equity. Acting credits include the national tour of *Footloose*, the European tour of *Fame: The Musical*, and regional productions of *West Side Story*, *Grease*, *A Chorus Line*, and *Metamorphoses*. Thanks to friends and family for their undying support!

Tomasz Gajewski, Audio Engineer; David Klueger, Audio Assistant
Sound equipment provided by Scharff Weisberg, Inc., New York, NY

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Please join us in the social hall for a reception following the concert.

Special thanks to:

- Rabbi Robert Scheinberg and the United Synagogue of Hoboken for hosting this evening's concert
- Barry Grossman for his generous devotion of time, energy and expertise in arranging for the procurement and setup of the sound reinforcement/recording system and audio engineering, as well as coordinating the many-faceted overall logistics of the evening
- United Synagogue of Hoboken volunteers Monique Franc, Dave Kaufman, Pam and Noam Laden, Matt Meistrich, Yvonne Silver, Ali Silver and Dan and Olga Steinhauser for set-up, clean-up, refreshments and ushering assistance
- Laurie Palumbo for her tireless work on publicity mailings and assistance in transporting sound equipment
- Dov Kruger for editing and printing the audience lyric packets
- Amelia Pargellis and Ann Ryen for their assistance with Cantigas Women's Choir
- Mustard Seed School for Cantigas' weekly rehearsal space
- Deborah Wenger for suggesting the idea of this concert in the first place, for bringing the representatives of the three groups together, and for providing editorial and practical support in innumerable ways

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The United Synagogue of Hoboken, founded in 1905, is Hoboken's center for Jewish life, offering educational opportunities for all ages, religious services, and a wide range of Jewish cultural events.

The United Synagogue of Hoboken is the successor congregation to the Star of Israel Congregation, founded in 1905. The historic Star of Israel sanctuary, where tonight's concert takes place, was completed in 1915. Its design has been compared to the Great Synagogue of Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

As the Jewish population in Hoboken dwindled in the 1960s and 1970s, the Star of Israel building fell into disrepair, and the leaders of the community thought seriously about selling the property. In the 1980s, however, larger numbers of Jews began to move to Hoboken, and the Star of Israel building became the focal point of the community once again. The Kaplan Family Learning Center annex, housing offices and classrooms, was completed in 2000.

This friendly, informal and participatory congregation is a member of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and is fully egalitarian (granting men and women full equality in all aspects of synagogue ritual). In 1989, the United Synagogue of Hoboken became one of the first Conservative congregations to employ a woman as the rabbi of the congregation. In 2005, the congregation proudly celebrated its centennial. A major renovation and historical restoration of the sanctuary is set to begin in March 2007.

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UPCOMING CANTIGAS PERFORMANCES:

Voix des Femmes: Choral Offerings of France

Featuring Ashley Horne and Erasmia Voukelatos

Friday, May 11 at 7:30 p.m., All Saints Episcopal Church, 707 Washington Street, Hoboken

Saturday, May 19 at 7:30 p.m., Holy Apostles' Church, 9th Avenue and 28th Street, New York City

Program layout and design: Meg Simmons

Cover design: Carolyn Hoberman