

H. L. MILLER CANTORIAL SCHOOL AND COLLEGE OF JEWISH MUSIC
OF THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

and
THE CANTORS ASSEMBLY

present

I Felt My Legs Were Praying: A Night of Promise and Song

A JOHN LEOPOLD AND MARTHA DELLHEIM CONCERT

MONDAY, MAY 20, 2019, 7:30 P.M.



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Produced by the H. L. Miller Cantorial School of JTS and the Cantors Assembly
Hazzan Nancy Abramson, Concert Chair

With Hazzanim Nancy Abramson, Matthew Austerklein, Gerald Cohen, Gil Ezring,
Josh Kowitz, Richard Nadel, and Marina Shemesh;
H. L. Miller Cantorial School Students Jacob Agar, Jacob Greenberg,
Anna Chapman May, and Anna Silverman;
Voces Novae, Deborah Dierks, Conductor;
John Austin Clark, Pianist

Gesher

Judith Silver (b. 1965)

Anna Chapman May, Anna Silverman, and Hazzan Gerald Cohen

Achat Sha'alti (Psalm 27:4)

Gil Ezring (b. 1986)

Hazzan Gil Ezring

Zog Zhe Rebenyu (A Sudenyu)

Sussman Kisselgof (1884–1939)

Hazzanim Gil Ezring and Josh Kowitz

Oy Mame Ben Ikh Farlibt

Abraham Ellstein (1907–1963)

Anna Chapman

Unetaneh Tokef

Israel Alter (1901–1979)

Jacob Greenberg

Sh'ma Koleinu

Mordecai Hershman (1888–1940), arr. Raymond Goldstein and Richard Nadel

Jacob Agar

Shir HaMaa'lot (Psalm 128)

Salamone Rossi (ca. 1570–1630)

Anna Chapman May, Anna Silverman, and Jacob Greenberg

Ana Tavo

Samuel Naumbourg (1815–1880)

Hazzan Nancy Abramson, Anna Chapman May, Anna Silverman, Jacob Agar,
Hazzan Gerald Cohen, and Jacob Greenberg

Sefirat HaOmer / Ribono Shel Olam

Ephraim Zalman Rozumni (1853–1904)

Hazzan Matthew Austerklein

Han'shama Lach

Gerald Cohen (b. 1960)

Anna Silverman; Hazzan Gerald Cohen, piano

Du Shainst Vi Di Zun

Illia Trilling (1895–1947)

Anna Chapman May, Jacob Agar

L'Dor VaDor

Sol Zim (b. 1939)

Hazzan Josh Kowitz

Anu Chayavim

Chana Rothman (b. 1975)

Hazzanim Nancy Abramson, Gil Ezring; Hazzan Gil Ezring, guitar

Medley: Abraham Nadel Tribute

Abraham Nadel (1926–1985)

Jake Greenberg, Hazzan Richard Nadel

I Felt My Legs Were Praying (world premiere)

Gerald Cohen (b. 1960)

Voces Novae conducted by Deborah Dierks; Hazzan Marina Shemesh;
Hazzan Gerald Cohen, piano; commissioned by the Dellheim Fund

PROGRAM NOTE BY COMPOSER GERALD COHEN

We strive to use our words, our songs, our bodies—our whole being—to work for a better and more just world. In 1965 in Selma, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., both religious leaders who heard the voice of the prophets and the Psalms as an explicit call to action. In this composition, I combine the words of Rabbi Heschel after the march—most famously remembered in the phrase, “I felt my legs were praying”—with a verse from Psalm 35 that also speaks of one’s very body exclaiming praise, and praise of a God who protects the poor from those who would oppress them.

I thank the John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Endowment Fund, which commissioned this piece for the Cantors Assembly and for the Voces Novae chorus of Louisville, Kentucky. Gratitude also to Dr. Susannah Heschel for permission to use the words of her father in this composition. I am so pleased that the premiere of “I Felt My Legs Were Praying” is occurring at tonight’s John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Concert at the 72nd Annual Cantors Assembly Convention.

*Kol atzmotai tomarna: Adonai mi chamocha!
matzil ani meychazak mimenu, v'anî v'evyon migozlo.*
(“All of my bones exclaim: Adonai, who is like You!
saving the weak from the powerful, the needy from those
who would prey on them.”)
—Psalm 35

And yet our legs uttered songs—
The march from Selma was a protest, a prayer.
Even without words, our march was worship,
I felt my legs were praying!
—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES



HAZZAN NANCY ABRAMSON is director of H. L. Miller Cantorial School of JTS. She trains future *hazzanim* in prayer, *nusah*, and religious leadership, and is helping shape cantorial arts and practices for the 21st century. Hazzan Abramson was the first female officer in the Cantors Assembly’s 68-year history and has served as president and two-time national convention co-chair.

Hazzan Abramson has performed as a soloist at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall (now David Geffen Hall), and the Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and has sung with the Rinat Choir in Israel. Hazzan Abramson came to JTS from New York City’s Park Avenue Synagogue, where she directed all musical aspects of congregational life. She previously served West End Synagogue in Manhattan and Congregation Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor, New York. She has taught at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York and directed the music program at Ramah camps in Wisconsin and New England. She has been a scholar-in-residence in communities throughout the United States. Hazzan Abramson sits on the board of the Zamir Choral Foundation and the Magic Circle Opera Repertory Ensemble.

Hazzan Abramson is a graduate of the Joint Program of List College of JTS and Columbia University, from which she earned, respectively, a BHL in Jewish History and a BA in Music. She received her cantorial education at JTS and earned a master’s degree in Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She received an honorary doctorate from JTS in March 2018.



HAZZAN MATTHEW AUSTERKLEIN, baritone, is the cantor of Beth El Congregation in Akron, Ohio, where he is co-spiritual leader with his wife, Rabbi Elyssa Austerklein. Hazzan Matt received a master of Sacred Music degree and cantorial investiture from JTS in 2011. Hazzan Matt is also a proud alumnus of the College of William and Mary, where he graduated summa cum laude in 2006. Hazzan Matt is a seasoned performer in many genres, including opera, classical art song, cantorial and Yiddish gems, and Jewish world music. Recent performances include a recital of the Jewish works of composer Daniel Asia and appearances with the Akron University Chamber Choir, William & Mary Middle Eastern Music Ensemble, and Machaye Klezmer Band. He is also a founding member of the cantorial quartet, the Wizards of Ashkenaz.

Hazzan Matt is an up-and-coming scholar, innovator, and leader among American cantors. He lectures at both universities and seminaries, and has mentored cantorial students across the Jewish world, including at JTS, HUC-JIR, and Hebrew College, and in the ALEPH Cantorial Program. His newest book, *Ilu Finu: A Cappella for Jewish Prayer*, will be published by the Cantors Assembly in May 2019.



HAZZAN GERALD COHEN, cantor at Shaarei Tikvah in Scarsdale, New York, for over 30 years, is an assistant professor at the H. L. Miller Cantorial School and is on the faculty of Hebrew Union College. As a composer, he has been praised by *Gramophone* magazine for his “linguistic fluidity and melodic gift,” creating music that “reveals a very personal modernism that . . . offers great emotional rewards.”

His opera, *Steal a Pencil for Me*, based on a true concentration camp love story, had its world premiere production by Opera Colorado in January 2018; excerpts were featured at Fort Worth Opera’s Frontiers Festival in 2016. Cohen’s earlier opera *Sarah and Hagar*, based on the story from the book of Genesis, has been performed in concert form. Cohen is a noted synagogue cantor and baritone; his experience as a singer informs his dramatic, lyrical compositions. Cohen’s best-known work, his “shimmering setting” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) of Psalm 23, has received thousands of performances from synagogues and churches to Carnegie Hall and the Vatican.

Recognition of Cohen’s body of work includes commissioning grants from *Meet the Composer*, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and American Composers Forum; residencies, including those at Copland House, the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, and American Lyric Theater; and accolades such as Cantors Assembly’s Max Wohlberg Award for distinguished achievement in the field of Jewish composition and the Hallel V’Zimrah Award from the Zamir Choral Foundation.

Cohen received a BA in Music from Yale University and a DMA in Music Composition from Columbia University. His compositions are published at www.geraldcohenmusic.com, and have also been published by Oxford University Press, G. Schirmer/AMP, and Transcontinental Music Publications.



CANTOR GIL EZRING is hazzan at Congregation Beth Judea in Long Grove, Illinois. With an extensive background and passion for music in varying styles, Cantor Ezring constantly strives to engage people in singing. He has taught music in public schools, congregational schools, and summer camps. Before entering the H. L. Miller Cantorial School, he was a founding member of Rock HaRuach, a Jewish rock band based out of Charlotte, North Carolina. In collaboration with the rabbi of Temple Israel in Charlotte, he created the Rock HaShanah and Rock HaShabbat services, services for Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat evening that were led by Rock HaRuach. Cantor Ezring exercises his singing and songwriting talents working closely with his sister, Aviva, as the Jewish musical duo, AGEz. Together, they specialize in writing and performing Jewish rock/country/folk music; their goal is to create accessible melodies to engage people of all ages in singing.



CANTOR JOSH KOWITZ is thrilled to serve as full-time cantor at Congregation Beth Ohr (CBO) in Bellmore, New York. He is a 2018 graduate of H. L. Miller Cantorial School, where he was formally invested as hazzan and earned a master’s degree in Sacred Music. A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, he holds a bachelor of Music degree in Vocal

Performance from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Cantor Kowitz also completed 400 hours of chaplaincy training through the Center for Pastoral Education at JTS, where he worked as chaplain intern for older adults through DOROT (a nonprofit organization whose goal is to alleviate social isolation and provide concrete services to older adults). Before coming to CBO, Cantor Kowitz served as cantor for Temple Sinai in Middletown, New York; student cantor for White Meadow Temple in White Meadow Lake, New Jersey; and cantorial intern at Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, Maryland. Cantor Kowitz enjoys bringing Torah, music, and spirituality into people’s lives through many pathways—leading prayer, teaching classes, building community, and engaging in pastoral outreach to our members. He enjoys playing saxophone and piano, hiking, and swimming.



CANTOR RICHARD NADEL is the cantor emeritus of Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael, Springfield, New Jersey, where he served for 32 years. He currently is the spiritual leader of the Jewish Council of Cedar Crest. Cantor Nadel has been a cantorial coach at H. L. Miller Cantorial School for many years. He holds a doctor of Sacred Music Honoris Causa from JTS, and in 2017 was the recipient of the Gregor Shelkan Award for Mentoring and Education from the Cantors Assembly. Cantor Nadel is a noted mohel in the New York metropolitan area.



CANTOR MARINA SHEMESH was born in Russia and immigrated to the United States by way of Israel and Canada. She earned bachelor of arts degrees at the State Conservatory of St. Petersburg and at the Rubin Academy of Music, where she won first prize in the Academy Vocal Competition. She received her master of Sacred Music and diploma of Hazzan from JTS.

As a soloist at the New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, she sang various soprano roles; she also regularly performed with major Israeli orchestras. Since coming to the United States, she has performed as a concert artist at many venues around the country and internationally, and has been the recipient of awards and scholarships for her vocal achievements.

Cantor Shemesh was featured in the documentary *Faith First: Second Career Clergy*. She also performed in the world premiere at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall of *The Challenge of the Muse* by Samuel Adler, as part of Only in America: Jewish Music in a Land of Freedom, an international conference of Jewish music held at JTS in 2003. She was especially honored to be one of the cantors invited to participate in the opening of the Jewish Institute of Cantorial Arts, in Berlin, Europe’s first cantorial school since the Holocaust decimated European Jewry. Cantor Shemesh has served Congregation Beth Israel in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Brotherhood Synagogue in Manhattan. She has served as cantor of Temple Sinai of Summit, New Jersey, since 2012. Cantor Shemesh teaches voice at JTS and at her home studio in Livingston, New Jersey.



JACOB AGAR, lyric tenor, has just completed his fourth year at H. L. Miller Cantorial School. Prior to that, he received a BA in Opera Performance and Linguistics at the Conservatory of Music, Purchase College, SUNY. He is currently the cantorial intern and music teacher at Central Synagogue - Beth Emeth in Long Island. Jacob has performed with several opera companies, such as Amore Opera, Dicapo Opera, Utopia Opera, Garden State Opera, and Purchase College Opera, and worked with a wide variety of conductors. Jacob is also an avid recitalist and composer, and performs concerts all along the East Coast of the United States.



JACOB GREENBERG has just completed his fourth year at H. L. Miller Cantorial School. He is currently president of the Cantorial School Student Organization and was the school's admissions intern in the 2017–2018 school year. Jacob spent the spring 2018 semester in Jerusalem, and this past summer, he was a chaplaincy intern with Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland.

Jacob is the cantorial intern at Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, Maryland, working with Hazzan Asa Fradkin; the clergy intern at Rutgers University Hillel; and part-time cantor at Congregation Etz Hayim in Arlington, Virginia, where he led High Holiday services for the first time this past fall.



ANNA CHAPMAN MAY is passionate about Jewish music and liturgy, and is about to graduate from H. L. Miller Cantorial School. Born in Brooklyn, she has been a lifelong New Yorker, with the exception of two years spent in Israel, where she lived and worked as a librarian at the Hebrew Union College Jerusalem campus. The daughter of a classical pianist, she grew up surrounded by music, playing piano and singing in chorus. Anna currently serves as a student cantor at Congregation Brothers of Israel in Newtown, Pennsylvania, as well as Congregation Beth El in New London, Connecticut. Last year she performed in the Dellheim Cantorial Concert From Bima to Broadway at Congregation Beth Tzedec in Calgary, Alberta. She has also performed in cantorial concerts at JTS and in New London, Connecticut. Last summer she completed a unit of clinical pastoral education, working as a chaplain intern at Project ORE, a program providing lunch and social services for marginalized seniors. She is married to Scott May.



ANNA KATARZYNA SILVERMAN came to New York from Warsaw, Poland, in 2014, and is about to graduate from H. L. Miller Cantorial School. She was born and raised in Warsaw and is a proud third generation of Warsawians on the Jewish side of her family. Anna did not learn that she was Jewish until age 26; she then became involved in Jewish life, first as a member of the Jewish choir Clil and the Jewish vocal ensemble Shir Aviv, and then as a member of the non-Orthodox synagogue Beit Warszawa in 2009, where she is still considered a *shlichat tzibur* (prayer leader). She

was one of the first *shlichei tzibur* to serve in different cities of Poland, trying to re-create non-Orthodox Jewish life within the framework of the Jewish Renewal in Poland project. She studied Jewish studies at the PAIDEIA Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, from 2011 to 2012. She studied opera at the Bulgarian State Conservatoire (now National Academy of Music Prof. Pancho Vladigerov) in Sofia, and is a graduate of the Acting and Voice Department at the Fryderyk Chopin Music Academy (now Fryderyk Chopin University of Music) in Warsaw. She is also a jazz singer and a singer of South African township music. She is a mother of two daughters, both living in Warsaw, and an avid reader.



JOHN AUSTIN CLARK, director of music and keyboardist, serves as founding producing artistic director for Bourbon Baroque, an ensemble founded in 2007 that performs the music of the Baroque on period instruments. He received his BM in Music Education from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and MM in Harpsichord Performance from McGill

University. Mr. Clark operates a private piano studio (#musicbox1532) and is an active accompanist, recitalist, and vocal coach. He directs and produces musical theater and opera at venues such as CenterStage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Pandora Productions, and Commonwealth Theatre Center, all in Louisville, Kentucky, and Gulfshore Playhouse in Naples, Florida.

Now in its 13th season, Bourbon Baroque has established itself as one of the region's most celebrated baroque ensembles with collaboration, strategic partnerships, and community engagement as its core values. Bourbon Baroque has partnered with a variety of ensembles, including Incantare, Empire City Men's Chorus, Louisville Ballet, Kentucky Opera, Louisville Youth Choir, and the Youth Performing Arts School of Louisville, Kentucky. This past season, Bourbon Baroque engaged a 30-piece period classical orchestra in an unprecedented all-Mozart program with the Louisville Ballet featuring Mr. Clark in Mozart's *Piano Concerto, K. 415*. This summer, Mr. Clark returns to Gulfshore Playhouse as music director in Boublil and Schönberg's *Les Misérables*. He is the recipient of the 2017 Young Alumni Achievement Award from his alma mater Louisville Collegiate School in Louisville, Kentucky.

VOCES NOVAE is a unique, semi-professional choral ensemble that seeks to uplift the human spirit by performing the finest in choral literature. They are dedicated to awakening the highest musical artistry, providing a camaraderie that nurtures their members' musical and personal development, and delivers a gift to the audience that evokes the spirit with which they embrace our music. Voces Novae was founded by conductor Frank Heller, who has been artistic director of the choir for more than 25 years; Deborah Dierks is serving as conductor in spring 2019.

In past years, Voces Novae has partnered with the Louisville Orchestra for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, conducted by Jorge Mester; the 2014–2015 season saw the vocal ensemble perform *Carmina Burana* with the Louisville Orchestra under the direction of Teddy Abrams. Voces Novae's repertoire includes a particular focus on a cappella and contemporary American music, however, the ensemble consistently performs an eclectic array of works ranging from early chant to European classical to living modern composers.

John Dellheim (z") was a Holocaust survivor who became a pioneer computer programmer at IBM. He deeply loved Judaism and Jewish music, and endowed the John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Internship Program and Concert Series in order to bring Western cantorial music to synagogues around the United States via the mentors, alumni, and students of H. L. Miller Cantorial School, thereby perpetuating the performance and transmission of Jewish sacred music to future generations. The John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Endowment Fund initiative includes an internship program that pairs students with mentors in the field and expands the school's opportunities to teach concert planning, enhance repertoire coaching, and present student performances.

