

Magnified and Sanctified **The Music of Jewish Prayer**



One Little Goat: New Discoveries in Jewish Choral Music

The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds
Director: Bryan White
7:30pm, 17 June 2015

School of Music, University of Leeds

Programme

Salomone Rossi (c.1570–1630)

Motet for double chorus „Adon Olam“
[Master of the Universe]

Froim Spektor (1888–1948)

Organ: Daniel Holden

„V'shomru“
[The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath]

Dovid Ajzensztadt (1890–1942)

Soprano: Mimi Sheffer

Mezzo-soprano: Beth Mackay

„Sh'chuloh achuloh“ [Thou, bereaved and burned]

„Károlyi Fraknói (1900–66)

Baritone: Robert Webb

Kinah“ [Plaintive song]

David Nowakowsky (1848–1921)

Tenor: Stephen Muir

„V'shomru“
[The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath]

Dovid Ajzensztadt (1890–1942)

Violin I: Mollie Narayn

Violin II: Harry Style

Viola: Ciara Cooke

Cello: Alexandra Marshall

Passover Cantata *Chad Gadya*

[One little goat]

i. Allegro scherando

ii. Talmudic Intermezzo

iii. Largo

iv. Andante Maestoso

Interval (refreshments available in the foyer)

Kurt Weill (1900–50)

Piano: Daniel Holden

Soprano: Mimi Sheffer

Kiddush [Blessing of the Sabbath]

**Arr. Samuel Rubinstein
(1866–1952)**

„Ki Malochov“ [For he will give his angels]

Aaron Copland (1900–90)

Mezzo-soprano: Beth Mackay

In the Beginning

Texts and translations

(Programme notes below)

Salomone Rossi, Adon Olam

Origin uncertain, 10th–11th century

He is Lord of the universe, who reigned ere any creature yet was formed:

At the time when all things were made by his desire, then was his name proclaimed King.

And after all things shall have had an end, he alone, the dreaded one, shall reign;
Who was, who is, and who will be in glory.

And he is One, and there is no second to compare to him, to consort with him:

Without beginning, without end: to him belong strength and dominion.

And he is my G-d—my Redeemer liveth—and a rock in my travail in time of distress;

And he is my banner and my refuge, the portion of my cup on the day when I call.

Into his hand I commend my spirit, when I sleep and when I wake;

And with my spirit, my body also: the Lord is with me, and I will not fear.

(Translation from the Authorized Daily Prayer Book by Simeon Singer, 1890)

Froim Spektor / David Nowakowsky, V'shomru

Exodus 31: 16–17

The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, and observe it throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested.

(Translation adapted from biblicalheritage.org/music/vshamru.htm)

Dovid Ajzensztadt, Sh'chuloh achuloh

Solomon ibn Gabirol, 11th-century, Andalusia

Thou, bereaved and burned, why do you cry? Has your heart despaired from waiting?

Károly Fraknói, Kinah

Boundless my sorrow, From eve'tide till morrow; Woe is me! Grieving I shed tears,
gone are all my dears, How said is my way, Woeful my day!

Exiled so long, And shattered with wrong, Woe is me! Yearning for my land Here I
stand, Weep, lament, My stray, Woeful my day!

Dovid Ajzensztadt, Passover Cantata *Chad Gadya*

I. Allegro Scherzando

One little goat, one little goat: Which my father bought for two zuzim.

The cat came, and ate the goat, which my father bought for two zuzim.

The dog came, and bit the cat....

The stick came, and beat the dog....

The fire came, and burned the stick....

The water came, and extinguished the fire....

The ox came, and drank the water....

II. Talmudic Intermezzo

Instrumental. Annotation in Ajzensztadt's hand:

'This tells us that the Jewish slaughterer is not a murderer without feelings of mercy in his heart. And therefore it is expressed in this way. I hope that you will understand everything.'

III: Largo

The slaughterer came, and killed the ox....

The angel of death came, and slew the slaughterer....

IV: Andante Maestoso

Then came the Holy One, Blessed be He, and smote the angel of death....

(Translation adapted from www.chabad.org)

Kurt Weill, Kiddush

Blessed are You G-d, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Amen.

Blessed are you G-d, King of the Universe, who made us holy with his commandments and favoured us, and gave us His Holy Sabbath, in love and favour, to be our heritage, as a reminder of the Creation. It is the foremost day of the holy festivals marking the Exodus from Egypt. For out of all the nations You chose us and made us holy, and You gave us Your holy Sabbath, in love and favour, as our heritage. Blessed are you G-d. Who sanctifies the Sabbath.

Arr. Rubinstein, Ki malocho

Psalm 91: 11–12

For he will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up upon their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Aaron Copland, In the Beginning

Genesis 1: 1–2; 7

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth:

and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after its kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the day from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Salamone Rossi (c.1570–1630) gained a reputation as a fine violinist during his youth, earning him an appointment as a musician in the court of the powerful Gonzaga family in Mantua, northern Italy. The high esteem in which he was held is evident in that he received ducal exemption, in 1606, from wearing the yellow ‘Jew badge’ required of other Jews at the time. At the Mantuan court he almost certainly encountered such distinguished composers as Monteverdi and Gastoldi, providing an environment in which he could develop a substantial body of serious and light-hearted madrigals (including some of the first examples of continuo madrigals), and a boldly innovative collection of instrumental works representing something of a transitional style between late Renaissance and Baroque trio sonata styles.

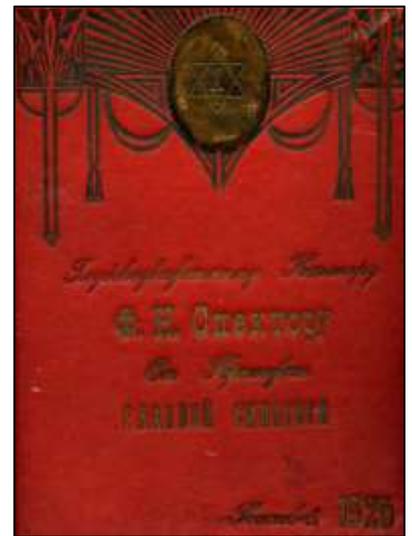


Perhaps Rossi's most striking contribution as a composer, however, is his landmark collection *Ha-Shirim asher li-Shlomo* (literally, “The Songs that Are of Solomon” - evidently a play on his own name, since the biblical *Song of Solomon* is absent from the collection), probably the first printed publication of music with Hebrew texts. Encouraged by the radical scriptural commentator Rabbi Leon of Modena, Rossi composed 33 concerted settings of texts from the Jewish liturgy for use in the synagogue, including the rendition of ‘**Adon olam**’ [Master of the Universe] performed today, which is clearly indebted to the single- and double-choir motets of the Gabrielis. ‘Adon olam’ is among the most familiar hymns of Jewish

liturgy, though its origins are unknown. It is sung to a multitude of different tunes in nearly every service, and concludes many.

The invasion of Mantua by Ferdinando II in 1630 resulted in the expulsion of almost 2,000 Jews from the city, an event in which Rossi likely perished along with his sister Europa, who was probably the first professional female Jewish opera singer. It would be another 200 years until serious published choral music for the synagogue would appear, this time among the musical reforms wrought in the wake of the 19th-century ‘Haskalah’ (Enlightenment) by composers Salomon Sulzer (1804–90) in Vienna and Louis Lewandowski (1821–94) in Berlin.

Many of the works in today's concert represent some of the first practical outcomes of an ongoing international research project, **Performing the Jewish Archive**, led by Dr Stephen Muir of the School of Music at Leeds, with collaborators from the Universities of York, Sydney, and Wisconsin-Madison. Funded by the AHRC's 'Care for the Future' theme, the project seeks out works created or thought lost during the Holocaust, exploring the impact of migration and displacement, and stimulating new creative work based upon these experiences. During a visit in 2013 to Cape Town, South Africa (funded by the British Academy), Dr Muir chanced upon the manuscript folder (pictured above left) of **Froim Spektor** (1888–1948), a distinguished Russian cantor–composer from Rostov-on-Don, South Russia. Spektor was 'Über-Kantor' of the grand Choral Synagogue in Rostov, gaining the position in 1915 against fierce international competition. In 1927 he responded to an advertisement placed in the Yiddish press by the committee of the New Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town, and took up the position of Cantor at that synagogue in 1928, travelling to South Africa via England with his young family. Now in the possession of his granddaughter in Cape Town, Spektor's manuscript folder contains some correspondence and a number of his own compositions, including a simple but highly effective setting of the Sabbath prayer „**V'shomru**“ [The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath], performed at today's concert





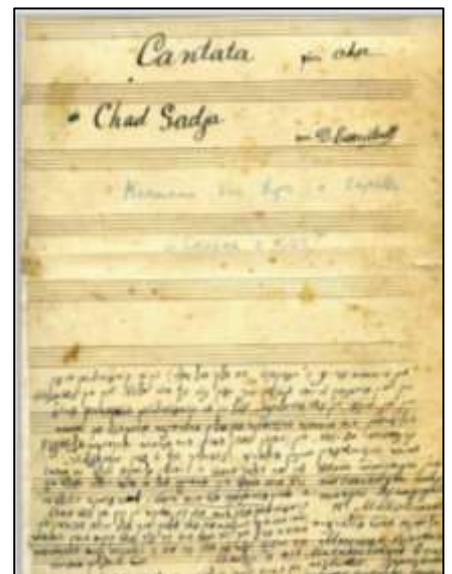
Dovid Ajzensztadt

Spektor's folder also contains previously unknown works (or works considered lost) by other significant Jewish composers. **David Nowakowsky** (1848–1921 was cantor of the Odessa Synagogue for 50 years, and Professor of Theory and Harmony at the Odessa Conservatory); his setting of „**V'shomru**“ for cantor and SATB choir (from Spektor's papers) is also performed today. **Dovid Ajzensztadt** (1890–1942), knew Spektor as a young man in Rostov-on-Don, and later became famous as choirmaster of the extraordinary 100-strong choir of the Tłomackie Street Synagogue in Warsaw (the synagogue, pictured later in this programme, was destroyed during the war). His subsequent story is less fortunate than his friend Spektor's. Forced into the Warsaw

Ghetto in 1940, he was initially a key figure in the ghetto's cultural life, helping to establish the Jewish Symphony Orchestra, and performing regularly with his soprano daughter, Maryisa, popularly known as the Nightingale of the Ghetto.' In 1942, however, the ghetto was liquidated, and most inhabitants sent by train to the extermination camp at Treblinka. According to an eyewitness, Ajzensztadt and his wife were placed in one line, and their daughter in another. Unable to bear the separation, Maryisa attempted to run to her parents, but was shot and killed by an SS Officer. The fate of the composer and his wife are uncertain, but they were either shot immediately afterwards, or else killed at Treblinka.

Only six works by Ajzensztadt were thought to have survived the war until the emergence of Spektor's folder. One of them, **Sch'chuloh achuloh**, was published by Israel Alter in Johannesburg a collection of music that Ajzensztadt's brother had brought from Poland upon his escape. The cantata for choir and orchestra on the Passover song **Chad Gadya**, found in Spektor's collection in Cape Town, was, however, reported by the musician Issachar Fater in his memoirs of Polish music between the wars:

'Creations based on the *Chad Gadya* tale have taken on the most varied musical garb, from primitive folk song to complex musical compositions. The most significant known to me was composed by the Warsaw conductor Dovid Ajzensztadt. It is a musical poem for choir and orchestra, constructed on the model of a classical sonata in four parts. The first section, a congenial narrative, is entitled "Allegro scherzando." The second, "Andantino," is intertwined with talmudic intonational motifs and anticipates a coming storm. The third movement, "Largo," launches the war between the Slaughterer and the Angel of Death. This "sharp-sounding" episode awakens unease and dread, unpleasantness, apprehension and horror. The concluding "Andante maestoso" depicts the ultimate victory of justice over authority; it is an ode to the master of the universe. The composition was performed by the choir of the Great Synagogue in



Warsaw on Tłomackie Street at its annual concert under the direction of the composer, Dovid Ajzensztadt.'

The concert that Fater describes (8 March 1931) must have been a grand affair. According to the programme (pictured right), it featured two other works by Ajzensztadt, alongside music by Lewandowski, Rimsky-Korsakov, Handel, Haydn, Schubert, and Nowakowsky. The manuscript of *Chad Gadya* in Spektor's folder is evidently a very early version (possibly Ajzensztadt's earliest complete draft), and is a setting for a cappella chorus. However, an annotation in Yiddish on the front cover (above) indicates that Ajzensztadt was already drafting a piano accompaniment, and Fater mentions an orchestra in his review. Sadly, the final version remains lost; the orchestra is today represented by a string quartet.



The manuscript of *Chad Gadya* links its composer and Spektor far more intimately than has previously been understood, and opens up a small window onto the interconnected world of early 20th-century East European Jewish synagogue composition. Written on the front cover of the manuscript is a letter from Ajzensztadt to Spektor. Not only does it clearly indicate the respect in which he held the older Russian Cantor, it also offers a tantalising hint at the rather more illustrious and well-known non-Jewish musical connections that these hitherto little appreciated figures may have had:

My dearest friend, Mr Spektor, this is part of the whole work. I derive such pleasure from this composition. I don't think I am deluded, because the piece has been praised by Prof. Maliszewski (the great Polish musicologist and Director of the Odessa Conservatory), and by the great Alexander Glazunov. Their signatures will naturally follow on a second copy. But you are the only man whom I truly respect. I beg of you – send me your opinion! With hearty greetings, Your best friend Dovid Ajzensztadt.'

[Stephen Muir]



Kurt Weill

Among major Jewish American composers who have devoted a significant part of their gifts to Broadway, film, and American musical theater—Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Jule Styne, and Stephen Sondheim, to name only a few—Kurt Weill was one of the very few, along with Leonard Bernstein, to write even a single synagogue piece. His setting of the **Kiddush**, however, was his only expression of the Hebrew liturgy outside the context of his Jewish pageants.

In 1943, Cantor David Putterman of New York's Park Avenue Synagogue began an annual program of commissioning established and promising younger composers from the general

music world—non-Jews as well as Jews—to write for the liturgy. In this visionary concept, which blossomed into one of the most vital and long-running chapters in the history of sacred music in America, Cantor Putterman was following a precedent created in 19th-century central and western Europe by such legendary cantors and cantor-composers as Salomon Sulzer (1804–90) in Vienna and Samuel Naumbourg (1815–80) in Paris.

Cantor Putterman turned to Kurt Weill for one of the commissions for the 1946 special new music Sabbath eve service. After discussing a number of possible texts, they agreed on a setting of the kiddush—the prayer and blessing recited on Sabbath eve (and, with text variants, on the eves of the Three Festivals and of Rosh Hashana) over a cup of wine to affirm the Divine sanctification of the day. This ritual symbolizes, recalls, and celebrates God’s gift of the Sabbath as the first of the holy days to have been designated in remembrance of the creation both of the world and of the Jewish people as distinct (—in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt”). Weill clearly intuited the theatrical possibilities in the kiddush text, even as a “miniature” musical statement; and he appears to have understood that liturgy and theater are not necessarily mutually exclusive. His setting incorporates admirably the restful mood of the Sabbath, its reflective aspect, and its spirit of historical continuity.

[Neil W. Levin]



Tłomackie Street Synagogue, Warsaw

Ki malochov (Psalm 91) has been sung traditionally at funerals in Helsinki, Finland, by the male choir of the Jewish Choir Association (*Juutalainen laulukoulu*). The song was arranged for the choir in the 1920s and 30s by Helsinki-born Samuel Rubinstein (1886-1952) who was one of the founding members of the choir (est. 1917) and its long-time conductor. Besides Yiddish folksongs, the choir has had in its repertoire cantorial pieces, especially by Lewandowski. The origin of the melody of *Ki malochov*, is not mentioned on the notes of the song.

[Simo Muir]



The Jewish Choir Association in Helsinki in the 1920s (Finnish Jewish Archives, National Archives of Finland). Conductor Samuel Rubinstein in the middle of the first row.



Aaron Copland

Copland's *In the Beginning* sets the words of the seven days of creation from the King James Version of Genesis. In the events of each day, the mezzo-soprano solo outlines God's pronouncement, which is then fulfilled in the choral response. The open sonorities of the work resonate with the vital sound of Billings's style, belying its great musical sophistication. Copland moves through a dazzling series of modulations, characterizing each day with varied musical textures and rhythmic figuration. Amongst the work's many striking passages, perhaps the most stunning are 'let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven' in which the choir represents the stars springing to life under the breathless recitation of the soloist, and the creation of man from dust mixed with 'the mist of the earth' rising up in open fourths and fifths, to filled out by thirds as it 'waters the whole face of the earth'.

[Bryan White]

The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds

Director: Dr Bryan White

Sopranos

Lisa Beare
Libby Clark
Evie Parker
Nicki Sapiro
Ellie Sourbutts
Caitlin Mayall

Altos

Claudia Chapman
Imogen Halsey
Catherine Haworth
Rachel Scholey
Rachel Wallace

Tenors

Alex Chisholm-Loxley
Jimmy Lawrence
Stephen Muir
Michael Webb

Basses

Duncan Boutwood
Ben Cunliffe
Liam Henneby
Chris Pelly
Simon Pratt
Robert Webb
Alex Weston



The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds (CCL) was formed in 2001 (originally as Leeds University Liturgical Choir) as a chamber choir which included the performance of sacred choral music in liturgical settings as one of its important aims. Since that time, it has developed into one of the finest choral ensembles in the north of England. The choir performs at services and gives concerts; it has also collaborated with a range of professional ensembles including Fretwork, QuintEssential Sackbut and Cornett Ensemble, Skipton Building Society Camerata and Leeds Baroque Orchestra. The choir has performed in a variety of prestigious venues throughout the UK (St. Paul's London, York Minster, Bath Abbey, Bristol, Chichester, Durham, Ely, Leeds, Lichfield, Lincoln, Salisbury, Truro, Wells, and Worcester Cathedrals, the Howard Assembly Room), and has participated in the Beverly Early Music Festival and the Pennine Spring Music Festival. It has toured abroad to Prague, Czech Republic (2005), Rhineland Germany (2007) Mantua, Italy (2009), Krakow, Poland (2005 & 2011) and Budapest, Hungary

(2013). The choir has recorded three CDs: *Songs of Praise: Music from the West Riding* (2004), *Vox Dei* (2006), and *No Man is an Island* (2008). The choir appeared on Corinne Bailey Rae's second album, *The Sea* (2010), and has recorded the title music (by Stephen Kilpatrick) for Michelle Lipton's play *Amazing Grace*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* in 2010. In Autumn 2013 CCL celebrated the Britten centenary with performances of *A Hymn to St Cecilia* and *A Boy was Born*. In July 2014 it performed for the second time at the International Medieval Congress. In summer 2015 the choir will be touring Shropshire including a performance at Shrewsbury Abbey.

Bryan White took his undergraduate degree at Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX), where he studied choral conducting with Lloyd Pfautsch and Barbara Brinson. He completed a PhD at the University of Wales, Bangor and is now Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds. He is a member of the Purcell Society, and his research focuses on English music of the Restoration period. Bryan has performed as a baritone soloist in the United States and in Great Britain,



and at Leeds he is a member of the Leeds Baroque Choir. He works regularly with the University of Leeds School of Music Chorus with which he has prepared works including Tippett's *Child of our Time*, Elgar's *Caractacus*, Parry's *The Lotus-Eaters* and Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgis Nacht*. He has worked as chorus master in the revivals of several neglected operas including productions of Louis Spohr's *Pietro von Abano* and Salieri's *Les Danaïdes*. Recent notable performances include two with the School of Music's Chorus: *a cappella* music by Finnish composers including Sibelius, Rautavaara and Mäntyjärvi and William Mathias' *Ceremony after a fire raid* for choir, percussion and piano, paired with Vaughan Williams' *Mass in G*. In March he will direct the School's Chorus in James Macmillan's *Cantos Sagrados* and Gerald Finzi's *Lo, the full final sacrifice* at Leeds Town Hall.

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Mimi Sheffer, soprano, was raised in Israel. Following an education in Jewish studies, she completed her studies as a flutist at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem. She then proceeded to study classical singing at the Rubin Academy of Music in Tel-Aviv under Tamar Rachum. She won the Young Artist competition – Kol Israel prize (National Israeli Radio), won two awards from the Rubin



Academy of Tel-Aviv and was a four-time winner of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation grant. As a participant of the Israeli Vocal Arts Institute, she was invited to New York to pursue her studies at Joan Caplan's studio. She underwent further training in theatrics and interpretation and took part in master-classes under Renato Capecchi, Nico Castel, Rita Loving, Alfredo Kraus, Vera Rozsa and Hilde Zadek. Among her operatic roles were Mimi, Contessa, Micaela, Fiordiligi and Desdemona.

Mimi Sheffer's cantorial career began at the Reconstructionist West-End Synagogue in New York City, where she was employed as a full-time cantor, and grew rapidly until she officiated at the renowned Temple Emanuel in West Hartford. In Berlin she served as cantor and spiritual leader at the Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue. Along with her congregational duties she dedicates herself to interreligious activities, leading workshops and performing extensively.

As a female cantor and classical singer, she specializes in the dialog between Jewish liturgy and classical music and in reviving cantorial orchestral music in Europe. She offers a wide range of original and highly virtuoso programs. Mimi Sheffer has performed at the Berliner Philharmonie, where she sang the Sacred Service by Ernest Bloch and the 42nd Psalm by Felix Mendelssohn with the Berliner Symphoniker and the Singakademie, as well as at the Konzerthaus Berlin where she presented her program "aus Oper und Synagoge".

Mimi currently lives in Berlin with her family.

Now a Mezzo-Soprano in the Chorus of Opera North, Beth Mackay graduated from the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and the Royal Northern College of Music both with distinction. In addition to the pressing Opera North chorus schedule, Beth understudied the roles of Flora (*La Traviata*), and Fortuna and Valletto (*The Coronation of Poppea*) last season, and is currently understudying Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* and playing the role of Carmela in De Falla's *La Vida Breve*.



Beth's other opera roles include Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Nancy (*Albert Herring*), the Baker's Wife (*Into the Woods*), Lady Macbeth (*The Okavango Macbeth*; "Beth Mackay's slight frame belies a gorgeous voice" – *The Stage*), Alisa (*Lucia di Lammermoor*; "If I were a talent scout I would keep my eye on Beth Mackay who sang Lucia's companion" – *Michael Kennedy, Opera Magazine*) and as Madame Butterfly's Suzuki (Beth "provided the winning combination of excellent acting and beautiful projection"). She also sang in Welsh National Opera's production of *Moses und Aaron*, making her debut in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

On the concert platform, Beth has appeared in solo recitals and oratorios by composers including Bach, Rossini and Tippett, with choral societies across the UK. Beth made her BBC Proms debut as a soloist in Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*, and appears as a guest soloist on a recording Copland with Merton College, Oxford, singing the title track *In the Beginning* to critical acclaim. As a graduate of the University of Leeds and having hailed from The East Riding, Beth is delighted to be singing with The Clothworkers Consort at Toll Gavel today.

Leeds University graduate Robert Webb was a member of Leeds University Liturgical Choir (now Clothworkers Consort of Leeds) in 2004-5 and has subsequently returned to sing with them on several occasions. After graduation, he studied music as a postgraduate at Birmingham Conservatoire. He was awarded Distinction in the LRSM performance diploma for both Singing and Violin. During five years with Lichfield Cathedral Choir, he sang for daily public services, for broadcasts, and on tour in New York. He combined this post with freelance consort singing, orchestral playing and string teaching. Now based in York, Robert is a member of Ebor Singers and York Guildhall Orchestra, and has sung on many occasions with York Minster Choir as a Deputy Songman. He is employed at Pudsey Lowtown Primary School, where his duties include teaching singing, ukulele and class music, playing piano accompaniment, and supporting Maths and English. His recital projects during 2015 include performances of Schumann's *Liederkreis* op.39 in Leeds, York, Worcestershire and London.



Born in Zambia in 1972, Stephen Muir gained undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Music from Birmingham University, taking vocal lessons at Birmingham Conservatoire under Andrea Calladine, alongside masterclasses in singing with Alastair Thompson and Bridget Budge, percussion with Evelyn Glennie, and conducting with George Hurst. He has worked extensively as a professional musician in the West Midlands and Yorkshire, including recordings and broadcasts for Radio 3 and Classic FM as a tenor soloist, and as a percussionist with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Solo roles have included a number of modern-day British and world operatic premieres—Anton Eberl's *Die Königin der schwarzen Inseln* (Shah Kosru), Schubert's *Die Freunde von Salamanka* (Alonso), J. C. Bach's *Amadis de Gaule* (Amadis), J. F. Lampe's *Margery*; or, a *Worse Plague than the Dragon* (Moore of Moore Hall), and Antonín Dvořák's *Tvrde palice* (Toník).



He appears throughout the North of England as a tenor soloist, performing for a wide and diverse range of ensembles under the Davies Music agency, including a number of J. S. Bach Evangelist roles. He is Assistant Director of The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds. As Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Leeds, he specialises in Vocal Performance coaching, 19th-century Russian and Czech music, and Jewish liturgical music, and is principal investigator of the AHRC-funded project **Performing the Jewish Archive**.

