



Edgware & Hendon Reform Synagogue

Services 3 February 2024

Review by Geraldine Auerbach MBE

The Edgware and District (est.1935) and the Hendon Reform Synagogue (est.1955) both flourishing Reform communities, merged in 2017 to become the Edgware and Hendon Reform Synagogue (EHRS) occupying the site in Stonegrove. It is a large and diverse community with a membership of nearly 2000 families. Music is central to the services at EHRS of which there are many varied examples, which was very much in evidence on the Shabbat I visited on 3 February.



There is always the 'Classic' Service every week in the spacious and bright sanctuary which is double height with clerestory windows and has a strikingly bright embroidered ark covering. The business end is all at the front – but the seats on either side face inwards and there are also rows in the middle, facing the front.

The Classic Service

There were upwards of 200 people at the classic service that day, which is usual for a Shabbat at EHRS. The service does not differ greatly musically from a suburban orthodox one, except maybe that on the whole people don't walk around so much and due attention paid to the prayers – and of course the fact that men and women sit together. This service was led by Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers. Along one side, sat the choir, conducted by Simon Masterson-Smith who sing acapella and play a prominent role in the service alongside a cantorial soloist, who on the day I attended, was Sara Feldman Brummer. Sara (who also officiates in some weeks at Westminster Synagogue. She will be presenting a service there in the Festival on 13 April), Sara has kindly sent me a full list of all the music they used during the Classic Service for the soloist and the choir

as well as the community – when they all sang together. I attach this list at the bottom of this review. You can see that this is mainly very familiar Anglo Jewish orthodox material much of which can be found in the ubiquitous ‘Blue Book’ compiled in 1899 and revised in 1937 by Samuel Altmann. The Classic Service is live-streamed, so many people also watch from home. They have the option of half the screen showing the siddur, which is their new Daily and Sabbath Prayerbook, **Seder Ha-T’fillot, Forms of Prayer**, published in May 2008, after much deliberation as to gender inclusiveness and other considerations. Besides containing all you would expect, this new prayer book also deals with contemporary issues, such as social justice and the environment, which are addressed in specially-commissioned prayers and there is also new material offering more musical opportunities to enhance services.

The HaKol B’Seder Musical Service

In addition to the Classic Service, EHRS holds a more intimate and interactive service that they call **HaKol B’Seder** – meaning, ‘anything goes’ that I attended. This varies from week to week. The services both started at about 10.30 and ended at 12.30 followed by a kiddush together. I did not notice any children in the synagogue – but as there are many children in the cheder, I assumed they might be at a service somewhere else in the large building.

For the ‘From Our Lips ...’ Festival Celebrating Synagogue Music they presented a service entitled ‘**Making the Old New – and Making the New Holy**’. This was a very fitting title (a quote from Rabbi Kook) for those involved with the music of Jewish prayer as this is the age-old conundrum of what music is acceptable and enjoyable to communities and why?



This service was held round a conference table and run by **Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich** (right) with newly appointed **Cantor Tamara Wolfson** (left) in the Synagogue lounge. We used notes on paper and on screen rather than a prayer book. Everyone, of the 15 people present – and the three or four who joined us on Zoom, was



encouraged to participate in the discussion about the music of prayer.

Cantor Tamara who joined EHRS as Cantor At the beginning of 2024 introduced each piece (as listed below) that she sang and told everyone who the composer was and where he or she came from and when the piece was written. This was a revelation to everyone who expressed much appreciation saying that up to that time they had no idea about the provenance of the pieces even if they were very familiar with them. Nobody had told them who composed them or when, before. (I have always felt that congregations would pay more attention to the music they hear in shul if the cantor – or somebody – would tell them what they were going to sing/hear. However, it seems that orthodox cantors are inhibited by their systems – or just not allowed – to talk to their congregations, which to me is a pity).

As you can see from the list below many of the pieces such as the Lewandowski (written for the reform movement in Berlin) Sulzer (written for mixed choirs in Vienna), Israel Alter (Hannover) Wasserzug (Poland/Lithuania and London) and the (Anglican) Verrinder, are all very familiar to Anglo Jewish communities of all stripes. Verrinder, an Anglican, was organist of the West London

Synagogue for its first 45 years. He brought an Anglican musical background to synagogue repertoire, arranging Jewish melodies for choir and organ, and forging a novel Anglo-Jewish musical identity. Participants who had come to EHRS from an orthodox background felt very much at home with this music which is regularly used in their services.

The shortened passages from the sedra of the week were chanted by Tamara first in the Anglo Jewish tradition – and then in the American trop, and we discussed the difference. There was discussion on the pieces that were new and unfamiliar to the group.

This is the list of pieces that Cantor Tamara presented to the group for the service.

Mah Tov – Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894)

Morning blessings – Shabbat nusach

Psalm 121 (Essa Einai) – Charles Garland Verrinder (1839-1894)

Shochein Ad – nusach

Yishtabach – nusach

Bar'chu – Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894)

Shema – Salomon Sulzer (1804-1890)

Mi Chamocha – Rabbi Hanna Tiferet Siegel

Tzur Yisrael – Israel Alter (1901-1979)

Adonai S'fatai – folk (unattributed)

V'shamru – Rabbi Moshe Rothblum (composed in 1970)

Oseh Shalom – Nurit Hirsch (composed in 1969)

Ki Mitzion / Baruch Shenatan – Natan Shachar (1937-2021)

Eits Chayim Hi – Rabbi Tanchum Portnoy (composed in 1975)

Aleinu – traditional (unattributed)

V'ne'emar / Bayom Ha'hu – Traditional arr. Hayim Wasserzug (1822-1882)

Adon Olam – Uzi Hitman (1952-2004)

I asked Cantor Tamara and Rabbi Tanya for their own comments on that morning's activity.

Cantor Tamara says: "I'm always struck by how often we pray, but how infrequently we speak about our personal relationships to prayer. As a Cantor, I am particularly interested in the music of our liturgy because of how deeply it connects to our sense of tradition, memory, and meaning. You can learn a lot about a person when you ask about the music they love.

My goal at this HaKol Beseder service was to get to know the EHRS community through the lens of liturgical music, and by understanding each person's individual traditions. Through our singing of and discussions of the Shabbat morning liturgy, we unearthed new insights about one another and about some of the values that underpin prayer at EHRS.

There is a strong sense here that the community value their musical traditions. At the same time, people are hungry for change, and to learn and sing new things. We spoke about the tensions between the comfort and familiarity of tradition, and the excitement and modern relevance of musical innovation. This is a deeply thoughtful and caring community and it was wonderful to sing and pray with them in this way, in parallel to the classic service occurring in the sanctuary.

This is the list of the music used in the Classic Service on 3 February.

EHRs Classic Service – Music List 3.2.2024		
Choir conducted by Simon Masterston-Smith Cantorial Soloist: Sara Feldmann Brummer		
Title	Composer	Choir or Cantorial Soloist
Mah Tov	Danny Maseng	Choir
Elohai n'shamah	<i>Shabbat Pesukei D'Zimra nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Morning Blessings	<i>Shabbat Pesukei D'Zimra nusach</i>	All
Baruch she'amar	<i>Shabbat Pesukei D'Zimra nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Hall'lu (Psalm 150)	Joseph Finlay	Choir
Nishmat	Joel Sussman	Choir
Shochein ad	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Yishtabach	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Chatsi Kaddish	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
Bar'chu	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Yotseir or	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Ahava rabah	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Ha'eir eineinu	Carlebach	Choir
L'ma-an lo neivosh	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
L'ma-an tizk'ru	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	All
Mi Chamocha	Lewandowski	Choir
Adonai Yimloch	Lewandowski	Choir
Tsur Yisrael	Ivor Warren	Choir
Amidah	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	All
M'chalkeil	<i>Max Wohlberg</i>	All
K'dusha	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Choir
L'dor vador	Trad. Arr Ann Sadan	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
V'shameru	Trad. Arr Paul Norcross-King	Choir
R'tseih na / kadsheinu	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
V'tov beinecha	<i>Shacharit nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Yiyehu Leratson	Traditional (old melody)	Choir
Oseh Shalom	Nurit Hirsch	All
Ein Kamocha	Sulzer	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
Vay'hi Binsoa	Unattributed	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
Shema and Echad	Lewandowski	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
Gad'lu l'Adonai	<i>Torah service nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
L'cha Adonai	Edward Hart	Choir
Eitz Chayim	Blumenthal	Choir
Hakol t'nu oz	Edward Hart	Choir
V'zot ha Torah	Edward Hart	Choir
V'zot ha Torah	Lewandowski	Choir
Y'chad'sheihu	Beethoven	Choir
Y'hallelu	<i>Torah service nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist
Hodo al Erets	Mombach	Choir
Hovu	Mombach	Choir
Uv'nucho Yomar, Eitz Chayim and Hashiveinu	Lewandowski	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
Aleinu	<i>Musaf nusach</i>	All, led by Rabbi
Bayom Hahu	<i>Musaf nusach</i>	Cantorial Soloist & Choir
Anim Z'mirot	Traditional Chassidic tune	All, led by Ella Starkowitz (a child from the EHRs community)
Adon Olam	Traditional Ashkenazi melody, arranged by Paul Norcross-King	Cantorial Soloist & Choir

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Full programme of 'From Our Lips ...' Celebrating Synagogue Music - on the ECA Website www.cantors.eu