



Cantors Bantar is the Newsletter of the European Cantors Association - a dynamic new organisation launched in the UK by Cantor Joseph Malovany in July 2012.

European Cantors Convention Julian Klein Memorial GALA CONCERT



Guest of honour
Chief Rabbi-Elect
Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Timeless music of the Sabbath – traditional and modern – for the 21st Century

Sol Zim (New York), **Yechezkel Klang** (Jerusalem), with **Steven Leas** (London)

Choristers from London's best choirs: London Jewish Male Choir, Shabbaton, and the combined choirs of Neimah (St John's Wood) and Central Synagogue plus children's choir.

**Wednesday 19 June 2013
8.00pm
Central Synagogue
40 Hallam Street, W1N 6NW**

£30, £17.50
020 7580 1355

Welcome to the world of synagogue music

Dear Friends

This is the second edition of *Cantors Bantar*, the European Cantors Association (ECA) Newsletter. I hope you enjoyed the first *Pesach* issue. (If you missed it, it can be found on the ECA website at <http://www.cantors.eu/ECANewsletterno1.pdf>)

To remind you, the aim of this newsletter is to focus attention on **the remarkable music of our services** - whether you are a professional cantor, a lay service leader or a congregant who may know little about synagogue music. We will describe the music of particular prayers and provide interesting snippets about synagogue music history and practice. We will feature some great cantors and composers of yesteryear and, importantly, will consider contemporary issues that relate to the cantor, synagogue leadership and the shul-goer of today.

In this issue we highlight the upcoming festival of *Shavuot*, and its musical associations. The days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* are of particular cantorial significance, therefore we focus particularly on this period of **Sefirat Ha'omer - the Counting of the Omer**. (An 'omer' was an ancient unit of volume for grain). This ritual, perhaps more than any other, has bequeathed the world of cantorial music a distinct and popular musical heritage. (See page 2.)

When we pray the daily *Yishtabach* prayer (in praise of G-d's name), we refer to the Lord as the *Bocher beshirei zimra* – (the One who selects songs of praise). Singing praise to G-d – the role of the cantor – is a privilege that we cannot underestimate. A simple, rhythmic and easy congregational melody certainly has a place in the synagogue service as it helps the participants engage with their prayer.

However, the performance of a well prepared sublime piece of music for cantor and choir, that provides a deep and detailed interpretation of a particular prayer, takes the concept of singing to G-d to a new level. It is for this reason that the tradition of **choral music in the synagogue** has remained vibrant for so many generations. Take a look at our 'Get Involved' section in this edition (page 3) and you will notice that many choirs are awaiting your participation.

ECA hopes to engage with youth leadership and inspire them with the traditional and contemporary music of Jewish prayer. (See *L'Dor Vador* section on page 2.)

Wishing all our readers and their families an enjoyable and uplifting Festival.

Natan Fagleman

Cantor, Sale and District Hebrew Congregation
ECA Northern Convenor and Newsletter Editor

To offer comments, suggestions and articles, please contact me

The Music of the *Sefira*

Amazingly, the festival of *Shavuot* has no specific biblical date. Rather, we are told to count the days from the bringing of the *Omer* offering in the Temple, which starts on the first day of *Chol Hamo'ed* (the intermediate days of *Pesach*) and continues for a period of seven weeks, after which day number fifty is sanctified as the Festival of *Shavuot*. It is for this reason that we call this ritual *Sefirat Ha'omer* - the 'Counting of the *Omer*'.

The actual counting can be done by simply stating the day and week of the *Omer* with its associated blessing and in some synagogues that is the accepted practice. However, the liturgy of *Sefirat Ha'omer* grew as prayers were composed to surround the blessing and counting. The prayer that introduces the counting finds its provenance in the maxim that the observance of a *mitzvah* (commandment) must be done with the correct intention. Therefore, a custom to articulate our intention to perform this *mitzvah* developed. It begins with the phrase *hineini muchon umzuman* - 'behold I am ready and prepared to do the following *mitzvah* of counting the *Omer*.' The prayer subsequent to the counting begins with the words *Ribbono shel Olam*, which is a plea to the 'Master of the Universe', that in the merit of our counting, we will be capable of repairing all the defects that exist in both the physical and spiritual dimensions of our existence.

Cantors throughout the decades have been inspired to set the counting of the *Omer* to music. There is barely a famous cantor who has not recorded his own musical setting of these prayers. It is still common in many synagogues to dedicate the seventh or eighth night of *Pesach* for the purpose of a choral rendition of *Sefirat Ha'omer*. However, it is certainly commendable to perform these wonderful liturgical pieces at other times during the counting season too. *(Continued on the right)*

L'dor Vador – From Generation to Generation

Steven Leas, Head of ECA London, has had very positive meetings with the CEO of the United Synagogue and the Executive Directors of the youth section *Tribe*.

He is organising a Friday night musical *Kabbalat Shabbat* and planning to go to *Tribe* summer camps to inspire the youngsters.

All agree that youth is the key and the US is keen to work with ECA to engage the youth. European Groups are making headway in this direction too.

Practical steps are being formulated.



Cantor Samuel Alman (left) was tasked in 1933 with updating the famous British 'Blue Book' (The Voice of Prayer and Praise) first published in 1899. Pierre Pinchik (right) was one of America's cantorial giants of the 'Golden Age'.

The Music of the *Sefira* *(continued from left)*

The most famous *Hineini* composition is probably that of **Samuel Alman**. Although he is considered one of the greatest 'English' composers of synagogue music, Alman was born in Russia and studied music at the Odessa and Kishinev conservatories. After conscription, he served as a musician in the Russian army for four years. The terrible pogrom that he witnessed at Kishinev (1903) encouraged him to leave Russia. He came to London where he continued his studies at the Royal College of Music.

Alman was soon drawn into the Jewish life of London and appointed Choirmaster at the Dalston Synagogue. He became Choirmaster of the prestigious Great Synagogue, in Duke's Place, and then at Hampstead Synagogue. Few of his many compositions are well known today – but those that are, have become special favourites. Alman's *Hineini* is usually sung with choir in full four-part harmony and builds with a powerful crescendo until it reaches the words *tispuru chamishim yom* - 'you shall count fifty days'. It then softens its tone as we make the plea that 'G-d shall find favour in the works of our hands.' You can listen to this at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LUj1U3wsg8>

There are many beautiful and famous compositions of the *Ribbono shel Olam*; however, in my opinion, the three that are currently most popular are those of Alman, Pinchik and **Yehuda Leib Miller**. Whilst Alman's and Miller's are beautiful in terms of harmony and artistic expression, **Pierre Pinchik** adds a mystical dimension to his interpretation of the *Sefira*. A famous cantor and folksinger in Russia in the early 20th century, Pinchik was one of the cantorial giants of America's 'Golden Age of *Chazzanut*.' Using his unique vocal dynamics, he takes his congregants on a journey that begins with pathos and introspection and ends with a joyous melody, in his declaration that 'G-d will sanctify us and make us holy.' You can listen to [Cantor Pierre Pinchik - Sefiras Haomer - YouTube](#). I strongly encourage you to listen to these and other examples and inspire yourself to make your counting more meaningful, preferably by attending a choral *Sefira* in person. However, if that option isn't available to you, just listening to the recordings will hopefully afford you a flavour of how beautiful these prayers are, when they are given the full attention that they deserve.

Natan Fagleman



Shabbaton on tour In Southern Israel

The London Jewish Male Choir (LJMC)

Founded in 1926, LJMC has a long history of entertaining audiences of all kinds with a broad range of high quality Jewish music. They have performed with leading cantors of their day including David Koussevitzky, Moshe Korn, Simon Hass, Moshe Stern Joseph Malovany - at prestigious venues in the UK and abroad.

Most famous of their great conductors was Emmanuel Fisher. Today they enjoy the dynamic leadership of young Musical Director **Joseph Finlay** and their principal soloist Cantor **Steven Leas**. They rehearse on Thursdays at 8.00pm in Hendon> To come along contact David Renton david.renton@uclmail.net

The Neimah Singers, London

Neimah was originally set up in the late 90s by Jonathan Weissbart and conductor **Marc Temerlies** as a top quality musical group to accompany Cantor **Moshe Haschel** in services at St John's Wood Synagogue. Their reputation quickly grew and they were invited to sing in public concerts and for national ceremonies such as Holocaust Memorial Day. They aim to revitalise synagogue services by using music based on traditional melodies, modes and styles (nusach) by such famous cantor/composers as Rosenblatt, Adler, Dunajewsky, Rossi, Saqui, Lewandowski and Zilberts – but giving it a fresh dynamism with modern arrangements.

These are mainly by Raymond Goldstein (of the Great Synagogue, Jerusalem) and also by outstanding British arrangers Stephen Glass (now in Montreal), Marc Temerlies (now living in Israel), and the late Emmanuel Fisher. If you would like to join, please contact Jonathan Weissbart join@neimah.com.

Get involved! Have fun! JOIN A CHOIR singing glorious Jewish liturgical music

Choir rehearsals are a great way to relax from the stresses of work, an opportunity to make new friends and, most importantly, to connect with the breathtaking world of liturgical music. As long as you have a reasonable ear for music and can sing in tune, there is surely a choir just waiting for you to join them. Here are some of the UK's prestigious choirs. Let us know about yours.

Shabbaton Choir, London

Shabbaton, under the baton of **Stephen Levey** since 1991, rose to fame through its association with Cantor **Lionel Rosenfeld** (now Rabbi at Western Marble Arch Synagogue) and has accompanied him, together with Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks and others, at *Shabbatot* and *Selichot* services across the country and on several Solidarity trips to Israel. Shabbaton is also invited to sing at public performances, on television and radio and has made several recordings.

Shabbaton grew out of the 'Bnai Brith Festival Singers' established in 1984 under Stephen Glass. Their lush harmonies and arrangements, written mainly by Stephen Levey and Stephen Glass, clearly bring out the mood and meaning of the words. Shabbaton rehearses every Tuesday evening in Stanmore and often sings with Cantor **Jonny Turgel**. To join them, go to their website: <http://www.shabbatonchoir.com>.

Manchester Jewish Male Voice Choir

The Manchester Jewish Male Voice Choir was re-formed in Spring 2012 after a ten year hiatus. Their debut performance (to great acclaim) was at the ECA Cantors convention 2012 in their home town, under the inspired direction of Alexander Tsalik of Moscow. They went on to enthral the audience at a tribute concert for *Chazzan* Avrom Hillman. **Simon Nevitt**, a final year undergraduate at the Royal Northern College of Music has become their regular conductor.

They rehearse every Tuesday evening at Stenecourt Synagogue. The choir is currently developing new repertoire (predominantly from its original collection) and is looking to inspire a new generation of choral singers. Help is offered to those who do not yet read music. If you would like to join them, kindly contact Jeremy Nussbaum nussbaum.jeremy@gmail.com.

United Hebrew Congregation (UHC) Choir, Leeds

Formed in 1986 UHC was under the musical direction of the late Jack Fixman until his untimely passing in 2001. Since then they have performed under the baton of **Phil Cammerman**. The choir sings at the UHC for bar and bat mitzvahs, special occasions and, of course, during the *Yomim Noraim* (High Holidays) with UHC's Cantor **Albert Chait**. The repertoire includes favourites by Lewandowski and Rosenblatt together with recent arrangements by Phil Cammerman, of pieces by Sholom Secunda, Stephen Glass, Sol Zim and a stirring version of *Uvenucho Yomar* by their own chorister Andrew Ullmann. In June 2012, they performed with a chamber orchestra at the 'Leeds in Harmony' concert with *Chazzanim* Chait, Isdale and Lemmer. The choir rehearses most weeks on a Thursday evening. To know more contact Phil Cammerman Philbabs.cammerman@ntlworld.com

WRITE TO US ABOUT YOUR CHOIR AND WE WILL LIST
IT ON A CHOIR SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE
WWW.CANTORS.EU

EUROPEAN CANTORS ASSOCIATION (ECA)

THE FUTURE OF SYNAGOGUE MUSIC

ECA is a new framework for cantors, prayer leaders and interested lay people, to engage in dialogue, training and profile-raising to ensure that the beautiful and unique music of Jewish prayer continues to enhance synagogue services for future generations.

Patrons:

Cantors Joseph Malovany, Cantor Naftali Herstik,
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Amir Ellituv Sephardi Community South Manchester
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(Manchester)
Chaim Kantorovits Cheadle Synagogue
Lionel Rosenfeld Western Marble Arch Synagogue
Geoffrey Shisler New West End Synagogue

ECA is based on orthodox tradition and convention and is open to all who are interested in the music of the synagogue and the role and art of the cantor.



EUROPEAN CANTORS ASSOCIATION
the future of synagogue music

EUROPEAN CANTORS CONVENTION

**CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE,
40 HALLAM STREET LONDON W1N 6NW
TUESDAY 18 – THURSDAY 20 JUNE 2013
GUEST TEACHERS:
CANTORS SOL ZIM & YECHEZKEL KLANG**



Convention provides outstanding training, inspiration and musical resources. A great meeting place for cantors and prayer leaders from the UK Europe and the Commonwealth. Register now at WWW.CANTORS.EU

Comments from previous European Cantors Convention delegates:

Exhilarating!

Great atmosphere!

It has been inspiring to rub shoulders with some of the world's greatest chazzanim!

I am grateful to have received such great material and will make good use of it!

I am looking to attend a conference once a year to gain inspiration for the year ahead!

My Shul and I felt it would be very useful!

I take advantage of every opportunity to learn new things!

Convention is supported by the Jewish Music Institute and Central Synagogue as well as by individual donors. (You could offer a scholarship for a young cantor to attend.)