

## Welcome to the World of Synagogue Music

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the latest edition of the ECA Newsletter, produced in honour of the festival of Shavuot. I hope that you will find it to be both inspiring and informative. In this edition we take a look at the role that music plays in our synagogue lives, focusing in particular on the 'Umipnei Chatoeinu' prayer, a festival prayer that has lent itself to some very well-known Cantorial masterpieces.

I have also included an obituary for the legendary Chazzan David Werdyger, whose life story itself is profoundly inspirational and whose contribution to Jewish music is unparalleled in the post-war era.

To portray his proficiency in both the worlds of Cantorial and Chassidic music I have attached his famous masterpiece Shema Yisroel as well as his recording of Talmud's Chassidic composition of Lo Tevoshi from the Friday Evening Service. Finally, the ECA is looking forward to holding its annual convention in Budapest, the magnificent Hungarian capital. Booking is open and your attendance is highly recommended.

Shavuot is of course the time that we received the Torah at Sinai. Throughout Jewish history the Torah has not been read as prose; rather it has been chanted as song. The verses in the synagogue are intoned melodically according to the appropriate leynung notes; the Mishnah and Talmud are meditated upon and memorized using the 'learning steiger' and even studies in ethics have their particular tunes in the study halls of the Yeshiva World.

Shavuot is also the Yahrzeit of King David, the Psalmist who is often referred to as 'Naim Zmirit Yisroel' – the sweet singer of Israel. When we sing the Psalms of Hallel this Yom Tov, let us remind ourselves of their great author and commit ourselves to spreading the joy of Jewish music to those as yet not fortunate enough to appreciate it.

On behalf of the ECA may I wish you and all your families a Chag Sameach and a refreshing, enjoyable and musically inspired summer.

**Natan Fagleman**, Sale and District Hebrew Congregation  
Head of ECA Northern Group and ECA Newsletter Editor



### European Cantors Association present the 9th **Cantors Convention Budapest, Hungary**

**Thursday 10 July - Monday 14 July 2014**

**Guest Chazanim:  
Cantor Asher Hainovitz (Jerusalem)  
Cantor Yaakov Motzen (Florida)**

#### Inspire and be inspired

Our 9<sup>th</sup> Convention focuses on Nusach and davenning for The High Holydays

Shabbat Services in the Hungarian style; concerts, tours of Jewish Budapest  
Participants: £245; Students £145. Includes meals

Register today at  
[www.cantors.eu](http://www.cantors.eu) or email  
[convention@cantors.eu](mailto:convention@cantors.eu)



## MUSIC AND UMIPNEI CHATOEINU

Music, perhaps more than any other medium, has the unique ability to express and mirror the full range of human emotions, consciousness and experience.

Its appeal on one hand is universal, transcending race, religion, culture, and era, while on the other hand nothing captures the particular essence of a specific culture, religion, era, or individual better than music.

It allows the soul to soar to heavenly heights, giving wing to man's most glorious aspirations and dreams. It expresses as well man's greatest pain, sadness, and existential loneliness.

Who has not experienced themselves singing full volume in the shower or along with every word of a song on the car radio or at home while all alone?

Who has not been depressed or lonely, joyous or happy and found in a recording the very songs to express these moods? Who has not sat around with friends and experienced through song and melodic harmony a unity of soul and purpose as voices and instruments joined together?

And who has not felt in the special melodies used during the various Jewish holidays the essence and intrinsic meaning these days are meant to impart to us?

Throughout Jewish history, music and song have been employed as an instrument to bring people together in an effective and powerful expression of community.

The prayer services in our synagogues are meant to capture the sense of awe and community which existed in the Holy Temple. Ultimately, music is a potent vehicle to feeling at one and at peace with G-d.

The act of unifying with G-d is the deepest drive of the Jewish soul, and prayer and song have been used throughout Jewish tradition and ritual as a means to achieve this lofty state of consciousness.

The music of our festivals is a primary example of song that has the power to elevate the soul. The upcoming Festival of Shavuot is one of the Shalosh Regalim (the three Foot Festivals), when a pilgrimage was made to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Alas, today we have no Sanctuary; nevertheless, we appeal to G-d to return it to us speedily in our days.

### Because of our sins

This Prayer, a mainstay of the Festival liturgy, is known as 'Umipnei Chatoeinu' – 'because of our sins', whereby we recognize that although our iniquities were responsible for destroying the Temple, nevertheless, we live in the hope that we will merit to see it rebuilt speedily and in our days.

All Festivals have the Umipnei Chatoeinu Prayer in common. It is also recited on the Yomim Nora'im (High Holidays). It has inspired many fantastic compositions, most notably by Brun, Hershman and Rosenblatt.

Below I have attached a breathtaking rendition of an amalgamation of the Brun and Hershman pieces by Moshe Haschel with the Neimah Choir as arranged by Raymond Goldstein.

It uses the mode of the Festivals to express the gravity of being a people without its ritual home and then moves into a lively and upbeat melody that expresses our hope that we will once again have the privilege of bringing the Festival Sacrifices in the Temple.

Umipnei Chatoeinu - Haschel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3Ts9cPGx-k>

## OBITUARY – CHAZAN DAVID WERDYGER



David Werdyger (30 October 1919 – 2 April 2014) born in Poland, was a Chassidic Cantor and solo singer, who was considered one of the pioneers of 20th-century Jewish music. A Holocaust survivor who was incarcerated in several Nazi concentration camps, including the factory run by Oskar Schindler, Werdyger moved to Brooklyn, New York after World War II and began recording albums featuring the music of the Bobov, Boyan, Skulen, Melitz, Radomsk, and Ger Hasidic dynasties, recording 60 albums in all.

He also founded and operated a successful travel agency, Werdyger Travel, and established the Jewish record label, Aderet Records, now managed by his son Mendy. He was the father of popular Jewish singer Mordechai Ben David and the grandfather of Jewish singers Yeedle (Mordechai's son) and Yisroel Werdyger (Mendy's son).

With the Nazi occupation of Poland in September 1939, Werdyger was subject to frequent arrests and forced labour on the streets of Kraków. In the summer of 1940, when the Nazis ordered all Jews to leave the city, Werdyger's family moved to an uncle's home in Proszowice. In response to rumours of a mass deportation, David, his unmarried sister Yettie, and his parents went into hiding with 16 others in a bunker in their uncle's warehouse, where they were cared for by a Polish employee. Three weeks later, they sneaked into the Podgórze ghetto of Kraków. From there, his parents bought their way out of the ghetto into Sosnowice, where one of their married daughters was living. David never saw them again.

### Forced Labour

In the ghetto, David worked in forced labour battalions, and when a mass deportation took place in the Podgórze ghetto, he went into hiding with 15 others. Two weeks later, his group was ferreted out of their hiding place and taken with 180 other ghetto residents to the Kraków-Płaszów concentration camp to be shot by firing squad.

Each man passed before German Nazi camp commandant Amon Göth; when it was David's turn, Göth asked him what type of work he did. "I am a professional singer, and I have a trained soprano voice," Werdyger replied. "Would you like to hear something?"

Momentarily taken aback, Göth replied, "Sing the song you Jews chant when you bury your dead." Werdyger began singing the traditional Jewish prayer for the dead, El Molei Rachamim ("God, Full of Compassion"), with great feeling and power, ending with a thunderous "Amen." His voice so moved Göth that the commandant directed him to the camp rather than to the firing squad; he was one of the 40 men saved from execution that day.

## 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, Naftali Herstik****Convenor** Alex Klein alex@cantors.eu**Executive Officer** Geraldine Auerbach MBE  
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*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

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## DAVID WERDYGER (CONTINUED)

After the war, Werdyger found his eldest brother, Yaakov Meir, and youngest sister, Yettie, still alive.

He traveled to Makova to attend Yaakov Meir's wedding and was there introduced to Malka Godinger (1923–1980), daughter of Meir Godinger. They married shortly after. Several months later Werdyger and his wife left for Paris, France, where their first son, Yisrael Aryeh, was born. Four years later, in February 1950, they sailed to New York. The couple had three more sons in America: Mordechai, Chaim, and Mendel.

Upon arrival in New York, Werdyger began working as a chazzan in the Warshever Shul on Rivington Street; after a year he moved to the Chasam Sofer Shul on the Lower East Side. His fame spread, and he signed a contract with the New Lots Talmud Torah Shul, which was famous for the high-caliber cantor's that it attracted.

Later, Werdyger moved to the Rabbi Meir Simcha Hakohein Shul in East Flatbush. In 1959, Werdyger went to a professional recording studio to record his first record, Tefillah L'David, which sold out its first production. After that, Werdyger started his own recording label, Aderet Records, to record Hasidic niggunim (melodies) which were unknown to non-Hasidic religious Jews in America.

Here is a taste of his legacy.

Lo Sevoshi -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkqm78tZg3I>

Shema Yisroel -

[http://faujsa.fau.edu/jsa/music\\_album.php?jsa\\_num=400250&queryWhere=jsa\\_num&queryValue=400250&select=werdyger&return=artist\\_album](http://faujsa.fau.edu/jsa/music_album.php?jsa_num=400250&queryWhere=jsa_num&queryValue=400250&select=werdyger&return=artist_album)

**Note**

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