



Daat
Hamakom

Center for the
Study of Cultures
of Place in the
Modern Jewish
World



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

מרכז לחקר המוסיקה היהודית
JEWISH MUSIC RESEARCH CENTRE



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Odessa Jewish Soundscapes Mama of Odessa

אימא אודסה
המוסיקה של אודסה
היהודית
Одесса Мама
Еврейская Музыка
Одессы



Music of the Synagogue and the Jewish
Street in Odessa at the Beginning of the
20th Century

Sunday, 25 March 2018

Cantor Azi Schwartz (Park Avenue Synagogue, New York)
Vira Lozinski - Yiddish and Russian songs
The Chamber Choir of the Jerusalem Academy
of Music and Dance
Conductor: Stanley Sperber
Piano and organ: Raymond Goldstein



Da'at Hamakom - Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World
Jewish Music Research Centre - Faculty of the Humanities - The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In collaboration with



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Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
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Rachel Shiffrin	Michal Cohen	Omer Plotnik	Netan'el Ozana
No'am Avidan	Ma'ayan Bar-Sever	Taum Karni	Dov Antin
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In the Modern Jewish World**

**The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Faculty of the Humanities
Jewish Music Research Centre**

**Odessa Mama
Jewish Soundscapes of Odessa**

**Одесса Мама
Еврейская Музыка Одессы**

Cantor Azi Schwartz (Park Avenue Synagogue, New York)
Singing: Vira Lozinski
The Chamber Choir of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance
Conductor: Stanley Sperber
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Sunday, 25 March 2018, 20:00
Wise Auditorium, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Edmond J. Safra Campus, Givat Ram

18:30 – Introductory discussion: Jewish Odessa and the composers
of the works performed at the concert

With

Prof. Emeritus Eliyahu Schleifer – Hebrew Union College
Dr. Svetlana Natkovich – University of Haifa
Ms. Anat Rubinstein – The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Moderator: Prof. Edwin Seroussi – The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Landscapes of Odessa – נופי אודסה

Odessa, Odessa! The city named 'Little Paris', a city of orange groves and boulevards, a city built on the shore of the Black Sea, renowned for its SPAs. A city of perfect beauty with its roads, pavements and sidewalks, with its broad even streets, outstanding shrines, towers, suburbs and theaters, but also with its hellish pyres, burning seven leagues around it" (Cantor Pinchas Minkowsky, "From the Book of My Life", *Reshumot* 6 (1929):84)

Odessa was founded in 1794 at a spot where a Tatar fortress had once stood. The name Odessa derives from the nearby ancient seaport of Odysos. Empress Catherine the Great, who espoused the vision of the Enlightenment in Russia, conceived the idea of building a modern, cosmopolitan, enlightened and progressive seaport town. To enhance the city's development, the government encouraged various ethnic communities to settle there. The new settlers included Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Italians, and numerous Jews, who had previously been confined to the Pale of Settlement, and whose freedom of movement had been severely restricted until then. The city and its surroundings soon became the chief south-bound sea access of the Russian Empire, and a maritime bridge for Russian trade with Asia, the Far East and the Mediterranean.

In cosmopolitan Odessa of the early twentieth century, 30% of the population was Jewish. It was the "El Dorado" of the Russian Empire. Many of the newcomers hoped to make a fast fortune, and realize the dream of "living like God", as the Yiddish saying goes, "make a fortune and lead a new life of comfort, free of the rattle and clatter of the chains of tradition" (Minkowsky, *ibid.*, pp. 140-141). Odessa soon developed a different character from other Russian cities. It was perceived as "southern" and "remote", a city of the "wild south", a place with rules of its own, fine nuances and a particular dialect. Its large Jewish community had a major role in shaping the unique urban, demographic, cultural and social texture that made the city famous. The neighborhood that was most identified with Jewish folklore, bred tales and urban legends, was the Moldavanka suburb, a derelict slum, crowded, disease-stricken and ill reputed. Odessa's Jews saw in Moldavanka a symbol of poverty, desolation and organized crime, as well as an inexhaustible source of juicy stories.

The city became a myth already in its heyday. Its image of a lawless, sinful city of underworld crime, a city of hedonistic good life next to the poverty and distress of Moldavanka, were nostalgically romanticized and glorified. This gave birth to spicy, witty and humoristic stories and songs. After the 1917 revolution, nostalgia and pining for "Odessa Mama" intensified, keeping alive the city's myth in literature, music and Soviet cinema.

Odessa was a magnet for Jewish scholars – *Maskilim* – who made it a leading center of *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) in Eastern Europe. They opened schools in the city, published Hebrew newspapers, and founded public institutions and cultural centers. Odessa became a center of Yiddish and Hebrew literature (Mendele Mokher Sfarim, Shalom Aleichem, Shaul Tchernichovsky, Hayyim Nachman Bialik and others). These Jewish education centers and public institutions attracted a Jewish intellectual elite that made Odessa the center of modern Hebrew culture and Zionism.

From its very early days, Odessa was famous for its prolific music making, in which all its citizens were involved. The city theater built in 1810, which was also home to the opera, was the cultural heart of the city. Its modern opera productions matched those of Europe's most important opera houses. The city's Jews streamed to the opera and were among its most

enthusiastic devotees. Their great fondness of music motivated them to cultivate a young and promising generation of musicians. Some of the greatest Jewish violinists, such as Mischa Elman and David Oistrakh, who starred in concert halls around the world in the first half of the twentieth century, grew up in Odessa.

A picture painted in 1894 to glorify the city's achievements on its centennial anniversary, illustrates its cosmopolitan musical nature. Empress Catherine the Great stands at the center, behind a woman who resembles Virgin Mary, symbolizing "Mother Russia". A baby (Jesus) sits in the woman's laps, holding a boat – symbolizing the city's location on the seashore. Next to the Empress are clerics, generals and city rulers wearing medals. The city's heterogeneous population is represented by children wearing the traditional clothes of its various ethnic groups, holding musical instruments: An Italian girl holds a violin, a German girl holds a guitar, a Polish girl holds a lute, an Albanian girl holds a triangle, a Ukrainian girl holds a domra, and a Russian child holds a flute. Interestingly, the Jews are not represented in the painting, despite their prominence among the city's population.



Allegoric picture (1894) celebrating the city's Centennial anniversary. The Historic Museum of Odessa. In Iljine and Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa Memories* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 52.

About the Concert

The concert has three parts. The first introduces selected works from Odessa's two leading synagogues. The second brings a selection of folk, street and cabaret songs in Russian and Yiddish. The concert ends with a number of Hebrew songs reflecting the Zionist turn among Odessa's Jews in the late nineteenth century.

Music in Odessa's synagogues

Odessa had dozens of synagogues, of which two were the most prominent: The Great Synagogue and the Brodsky Synagogue. These two synagogues were in constant competition over the skills of their cantors and the quality of their choirs. They were leaders of the *Khor Shul* (Choral Synagogue) liturgical style, which had developed in Central and Western Europe in the late nineteenth century, bringing it to the point of perfection.

Shortly after the city's founding, its first Jewish inhabitants built the Great Synagogue, also known as The Shalashna Street Synagogue. During its first thirty-five years, the synagogue's chief cantor was the legendary *ba'al tefilah* Bezalel Shulsinger (aka Bezalel Odesser, 1779-1873). Later, when the synagogue moved to a new spacious building on Richelieu Avenue, one of the city's most important arteries, it became famous for its cantors Jacob Bachman (1846-1905) and Joshua (Osias, aka "Pitzi") Abrass (1820-1884). Other cantors that passed before the ark were Avraham Dunajewski (1843-1911) and Ephraim Zalman Rozumni (1866-1904). The Great Synagogue was Odessa's central Jewish religious institution, and the old Jewish elite's place of worship. Other than regular prayers, it served as a venue for official ceremonies held by the Jewish Community in honor of the authorities.



The Great Synagogue, Lithography, 1859. In: Iljine and Herlihy, *Odessa Memories*, 70.
[Nicholas V. Iljine Collection]

The second synagogue, known as the Brodsky Synagogue, was founded in 1841 by educated immigrants (*Maskilim*) from the city of Brody in Galicia. The synagogue was modeled after the aesthetic principles of modern German synagogues. Its first cantor was the famous Nissan Blumenthal (1805-1903), who served the community for almost half a century before

he retired. He was replaced by tenor Pinchas (Pini) Minkowsky (1858-1924), who held the position for thirty years (1892-1922) until the Bolsheviks closed the synagogue. Gifted composer David Nowakowsky (1848-1921) worked alongside these two revered cantors as the synagogue's devoted choirmaster. Minkowsky's rise to the position of chief cantor in 1892, and his collaboration with Nowakowsky marked the beginning of a new era in the musical history of the Brodsky Synagogue. During Minkowsky's tenure, an organ and a mixed-gender choir were regularly included in the services. These changes, considered radical at first, have eventually become the main attraction of the synagogue. The synagogue's musical style was influenced by the German model of Salomon Sulzer and Louis Lewandowski. At the same time, Minkowsky and Nowakowsky remained loyal to the traditional style, namely, the cantorial recitative, and the "emotional" style (*"Shirat HaRegeesh"*). The Brodsky Synagogue was, then, a leading musical institution in Jewish Odessa, and was celebrated around the world as an important center of Jewish liturgical music.



The Brodsky Synagogue, postcard, early twentieth century

"Odessa Mama": Humor, satire and nostalgia in the city's musical world

Street music was extremely common in Odessa, and an important component of its local color. Its mild weather enabled holding performances and concerts in the city's green, well-groomed gardens and on the seashore promenade, to entertain the passers-by. Every self-respecting café had a balcony, whose guests could enjoy the music.

The folklore brought in by different groups of immigrants and the citizens' humor and wit poured into the urban melting pot, giving birth to a distinctive cultural and musical language. It mainly reflected the Yiddish term *"di Odesser gas"* – the Odessan street – in popular culture, language and song. Many Odessan songs are nostalgic, addressing the city as "Odessa Mama". The songs describe the city's vibrant lifestyle and beauty, the hedonism and lawlessness of its inhabitants, and the opportunities it offers to make easy fortunes. Urban legends linked with names of Moldavanka gangsters and underworld figures are also told in song.

The Odessan *klezmer* was a unique phenomenon. Testimonies and tales describe the wild and temperamental playing of Jewish *klezmerim*, who made a living playing for drunk audiences in taverns and clubs. Another musical style identified with the permissive atmosphere and the debauchery that ruled the city's clubs and bars was the tango. In the

1920s, this genre spread like wildfire throughout Europe. Odessa was no exception, and the city's Jews became extremely fond of it.

Odessa's jazz scene, although something of a late bloomer, was another outcome of its tendency to attract new musical styles and integrate them into its local color. In the 1920s, Russian jazz had undergone a stylistic change. The new Soviet regime demanded adjusting it to Soviet concepts, aiming to moderate the wild, individual and anarchistic dimension underlying jazz. Soviet jazz, known as teatro-Jazz or Jazz Comedy was rather tame.

Zionism and its early songs in Odessa

Odessa played an important role in the early history of the modern Hebrew song. One of the most important Hebrew songbooks (with music) – *HaZamir* [The Nightingale] was published there in 1903. Words written by Hebrew poets were set to new melodies or to adaptations of local tunes. Among the composers of Zionist Hebrew songs were also liturgical composers such as Minkowsky and Nowakowsky. The new Hebrew songs of Odessa were performed in Zionist congresses, and soon became widespread, also reaching Eretz Israel, where they became assets of the new Hebrew culture.

Acknowledgements

The idea of this concert was put forward by Da'at Hamakom – Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World, and the Jewish Music Research Centre of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Its point of departure was research conducted by Anat Rubinstein, which studied the music of Odessa and the Brodsky synagogue, and the work of Cantor Pinchas Minkowsky. Her research was expanded to include Odessa's Jewish musical culture, and this prompted the idea of presenting some of the research findings in a concert.

Our thanks go to Dr. Gila Flam and the devoted staff of the music department at the Jerusalem National Library, for their cooperation on the involved archive work, and to Prof. Julia Kreinin for her help in locating and translating historic materials in Russian. We thank Dr. Miriam Trinh, Eliezer Niborsky and Michael Lukin for their assistance in translating and arranging Yiddish materials.

This musical event could not have taken place without the willing participation of the artists involved, primarily the members of the Chamber Choir of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. Particular thanks go to the choir's conductor, Maestro Stanley Sperber, for the enthusiasm with which he approached the project. Cantor Azi Schwarz of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York was quick to accept our invitation to participate in the concert, offering, other than his voice, his vast experience as prayer master. Dr. Raymond Goldstein willingly undertook to arrange some of the works and accompany the singing. Chana Englund of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance facilitated the coordination between the Academy and the concert producers. Finally, our sincere thanks go to the administrative staff of the two research centers, to Anat Reches of Da'at Hamakom and to Sari Salis and Tali Schach of the JMRC. Without their effort, this concert would not have come to fruition.

On the compositions in the program

Synagogue Singing

Adonoi z'khoronu – Ps. 115 (*Hallel*), by David Nowakowsky

The work illustrates Nowakowsky's rich harmony and his way of using the word-painting technique, where a musical gesture "describes" or "paints" a certain detail of the text. For example, the deep voice of the bass, singing the words "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. 115, 17), stand for the depth of the afterworld. Another example is the contrast between the words "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord", where the singing register is high, and "but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Ps. 115, 16).

The work culminates in a fugue ("But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for ever. Hallelujah"; Ps. 115, 18) ending in a reverberating chord that closes the piece. This festive work, which opens the concert, is among Nowakowsky's best-known and often performed works, and was also selected to open the 2015 Lewandowski Festival in Berlin.

The LORD hath been mindful of us, He will bless
He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron.
He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.
The LORD increase you more and more, you and your children.
Blessed be ye of the LORD who made heaven and earth.
The heavens are the heavens of the LORD; but the earth hath He given to the children
of men.
The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence;
But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for ever.
Hallelujah. (Ps. 115, 12-18)

Lekha dodi, from *Kabbalat shabbat*. Music: Pinchas Minkowsky. For choir and cantor, with organ accompaniment.

This work, edited from an unpublished manuscript found in the archive of Pinchas Minkowsky at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, is one of his richest and most colorful works. There are two musical approaches to *Lekha dodi* in the modern synagogue literature. In the first, the refrain *Lekha dodi likrat kala, penei Shabbat nekabela* is sung after each stanza. The second school uses a through-composed approach inspired by the choral style of the German synagogues and the models of Salomon Sulzer and Louis Lewandowski. In this second approach, each stanza has a different melody, whose mood and style reflect the content of the text.

Minkowsky's music follows this second compositional approach. For example, the mood of the stanza *Mikdash melekh* is sad, describing the diaspora. In contrast, *Hit'oreri, hit'oreri, ki ba orekh kumi 'uri* is powerful and vigorous. The last stanza, *Bo'i beshalom 'ateret kala*, is festive and regal. The piece features two fugues, *Mikdash melekh* and *Kumi, 'uri shir daberi*, whose harmony is particularly rich.

Amar Rabbi El'azar – from the Shabbat morning prayer (*Berachot* 64, 1), by Ephraim Zalman Rozumni. Arrangement: Raymond Goldstein

This work is a typical example of the "emotional" singing style ("*Shirat HaRegesh*"), namely, of the traditional embellished, expressive cantorial style. The work stands out for its wide-range coloratura passages that challenge the best of cantors with their extremely high notes, touching the limit of their voice. Cantor Joseph (Yossele) Rosenblatt (1882-1933), who performed and recorded this piece, extended Rozumni's original coloratura passages, considerably raising the performance bar. The version performed at the concert is Rosenblatt's best-known.

Na'aritzkho – Introduction to the *Kedusha* for the *Mussaf* of Shabbath and Holydays according to *nussah* Ashkenaz, by Avraham Dunajewski (1877)

This is one of the most beautiful melodies written for this text. Dunajewski treats the text with reverence, as if he were himself standing at the throne of God surrounded by angels. This reverence is conveyed in the choir's pianissimo. The music of the words *Holy, holy, holy* is lyrical and animated, as the angels sing to each other in the style of an operatic aria. The work features several musical traditions: The *khorev shul* synagogue style next to folk-like melodies near the end. The work also stands out for its varied vocal ensembles: a duet between a baritone and the cantor ("*Holy, holy, holy*" and "*mimkomo*") and the choir against a group of soloists.

Kol dodi – from David Nowakowsky's Song of Songs book. Arrangement: Raymond Goldstein

Several commentators have interpreted the biblical Song of Songs as a poetical allegory of the love between God and the People of Israel, disguised as the love of a man for a woman. Inspired by this interpretation, David Nowakowsky created a musical love story, a kind of operatic duet based on a mosaic of verses from the Song of Songs. In the first part of the piece, Nowakowsky brilliantly expresses the excitement and anxiety of the lovers about to meet, by a motive based on an augmented fourth against the backdrop of a minor scale. The motive conveys yearning and pining. Its orientalist themes, remindful of the style of Rimsky Korsakov, represent the ancient magic image of the bible, which inspired expressing national ideas in music. A change of mood comes with the lovers' meeting in the second part of the work. The melody, in a dance-like triple meter, is in major.

This is one of Nowakowsky's best-known and frequently-performed works. It has a number of versions, including one for choir, a version for two cantors, and a duet between a man and a woman.

Hark! My beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart; behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh in through the windows, he peereth through the lattice. (Song of Songs 2, 8-9)

O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. (Song of Songs 2, 14)

Return, return, O Shulammit; Return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulammit? As it were a dance of two companies. (Song of Songs 7, 1)

Adon olam – From the morning prayer, by Pinchas Minkowsky

Of the vast number of melodic settings of the *piyyut* Adon Olam, this is one of the most original. This work is also found in an unpublished manuscript of the Minkowsky archive in the Israel National Library in Jerusalem. It is influenced by various musical traditions such as Western art music, Russian music and Romantic musical Orientalism. The first and last stanzas are rich in elements borrowed from Russian harmony of the kind found in works by Glinka, Rimsky Korsakov and Tchaikovsky. A pentatonic motive (a five-tone scale frequently used in European folk music) catches the listener's ear. The work comprises dramatic cantorial recitatives (*ve'hu haya, ve'hu hove, ve'hu yihye betif'ara*) and dance-like sections in triple meter (*ve'hu nisi umanos li*). The diversity of style indicates the rich musical sources Jewish composers were exposed to in Odessa, inspiring their writing for the synagogue.

Odessa Mama – Popular songs in Russian and Yiddish, for voice and piano (for texts see the Hebrew section of this brochure)

In Ades (In Odessa). Lyrics: Louis Gilrod and Peretz Sandler, from the musical *Volodke in Ades*. Folk tune often included in Klezmer repertoires.

Хаим, лавочку закрой! (Haim, close the shop!) Odessan folk song.

У Черного моря (On the Black Sea). Lyrics: Semion Kirsanov, music: Modest Tabatchnikov.

Proshtshay, Odessa! [Farewell, Odessa!] Folk song, after Pesach Burstein's version in the album "*Mit a yiddishe taam.*"

The Music of Hebrew Odessa

Bein nehar Prat linhar Hidekel. Lyrics – Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Music: David Nowakowsky

An art song in the style of a German Lied, with Oriental elements. Avner Holzman wrote the following about Bialik's song (*Hayyim Nahman Bialik: Songs*. Dvir, 2005, p. 336): "This original work of Bialik's incorporates typical Yiddish folk motives (such as addressing a wish to a legendary magic bird). It is one of a series of songs that describe fondly and with irony a decent Jewish maiden yearning for a happy loving match. The heroine visualizes her black-haired sweetheart, devising tricks of temptation and seduction to ensnare him. Her innocent monologue exposes her desperate erotic desires with daring and detail that are rare in Bialik's canonical poetry". The song is also rich in expressions and images from the Song of Songs, such as "a garden locked up".

Nowakowsky set to music the song's first four stanzas. His musical gestures create an association with the free flight of the exotic bird. The melody is rich in oriental ornamentation and climbing scales that symbolize the soaring of the bird. Similar to *Kol Dodi*, oriental elements inspired by Russian composers represent the awakening of Jewish nationalism in Eastern Europe, which regarded Bialik's songs as its symbol.

Shabbat HaMalka, Lyrics – Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Music: Pinchas Minkowsky, choral arrangement – Sarah Shoham

In 1903, Odessan educator and pedagogue Noah Pines published a collection of children's songs he had written, under the title "*Hazamir – shirei yeladim lezimra ulemikra*" [The Nightingale – children's songs for singing and reading]. The publisher was Moriah, Bialik's publishing house. The collection included game songs, songs of nature and national songs that Pines deemed right for children after his strict pedagogical approach. In addition to Pines' songs, the collection included songs by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Shaul Tchernichovsky, as well as song translations. The music of the songs, mostly composed by Pinchas Minkowsky and David Nowakowsky, appeared in a separate book.

The "Shabbat Song", written by Bialik and set to music by Minkowsky, is among the best-known pieces of this collection, and with time became an Israeli classic. Poet Yaakov Fichman wrote in his memoir: "When he [Minkowsky] wrote the music for Bialik's song '*Bo'u netze likrat Shabbat hamalka*', it seemed to complement his '*Lekhu neranena*' and '*Lekha dod*'". We used to sing the melodies with deep longing, and Bialik himself liked humming the tune." ("*Nigunei Elul*", in *Arugot – divrei shira ufroza, kitvei Yaakov Fichman* [Flowerbeds – Prose and Poetry Pieces, The Writings of Yaakov Fichman], book 5, Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1954, pp. 228-229).

Sarah Shoham is a choir conductor and composer, writing music for first-rate choirs in Israel and abroad. Her compositions and arrangements have been performed by choirs worldwide. She won numerous prizes for her musical achievements, including the Levin Kipnis Prize for art compositions (1989), the Prime Minister's Prize for composers (2002), and the Paul Ben-Haim prize for her musical life work (2013).

Shir HaMa'alot, Ps. 126. Music attributed to Pinchas Minkowsky, choral arrangement: Raymond Goldstein

According to Ashkenazi custom, this song is sung before *birkat hamazon* [the blessing after the meal] on Shabbat and holidays. The text images are taken from the world of agriculture in Eretz Israel – sowing and harvesting, wheat sheaves – and express a yearning to return to Zion.

The composer's identity is uncertain. The work won publicity thanks to its rendition by Yosele Rosenblatt (who was a relative of Pinchas Minkowsky). In a film produced in 1933 during Rosenblatt's visit to Eretz Israel, he is seen performing the song with great pathos on a boat sailing the Jordan River. Although Rosenblatt recorded the song, he had never mentioned the name of its composer. As a result, the song was unjustly linked with his name (Rosenblatt never bothered to deny that he had written the song). Some of Minkowsky's acquaintances insisted that Minkowsky, who was known for his nationalist ideas, is the true composer, and that the melody did not match Rosenblatt's style. Whatever the case may be, the song, with its music of longing, became a symbol of the modern return to Zion. The Zionist movement embraced it warmly, and even proposed using it as the anthem of the Jewish national movement.

When the LORD brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the nations: 'The LORD hath done great things with these.'

The LORD hath done great things with us; we are rejoiced.

Turn our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the dry land.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Though he goeth on his way weeping that beareth the measure of seed, he shall come home with joy, bearing his sheaves. (Ps. 126)

The Composers

David Nowakowsky (1848-1921)



David Nowakowsky was composer, teacher, and conductor at the Brodsky synagogue in Odessa. He was born in Malin, Ukraine, left his home at an early age, and moved to Berdichev, where he was hired as a choirboy at the local synagogue. In Berdichev he taught himself harmony and counterpoint as well as cantorial traditions of famous cantors such as Yerucham Blindman ("Little Yerucham").

In 1869, at the age of 21, he was offered a position at the Brodsky synagogue in Odessa as choir director and assistant to cantor Nissan Blumenthal. In Odessa, he adopted a German musical style, after the model set by Salomon Sulzer and Louis Lewandowski. In 1892, Blumenthal retired and was replaced by Pinchas (Pini) Minkowsky, who was appointed chief cantor of the Brodsky synagogue. That was the time when Nowakowsky won fame in the world of Jewish music. He went on developing and perfecting his choral style and mastering polyphonic and contrapuntal techniques that won him the nickname "the Jewish Bach".

Minkowsky and Nowakowsky worked together for three decades before the synagogue was closed, inspiring each other stylistically. The musical style for which the Brodsky synagogue became world-famous took shape at that time. It was a combination of polyphonic choral style and traditional *hazzanut* – a mixture of "emotional" ("*Shirat HaRegesh*") and "orderly" singing ("*Shirat HaSeder*"): "Nowakowsky must thank Minkowsky [for Minkowsky's masterful rendition of his music gained Nowakowsky fame as a composer]. Of course, Minkowsky must also thank Nowakowsky, for transforming "Pini" into Minkowsky..." (Elijahu Załudkowski, *Kultur-treger fun der Yidisher Liturgye*. Białystok: s.n., 1930, p. 193-194).

Two volumes of Nowakowsky's compositions were published in his lifetime. One included original music for Friday evening, and the other for *Neila*, the prayer that ends Yom Kippur. The bulk of his compositions, titled "Songs of David" was never published, but miraculously survived the Holocaust. Parts of it have been recently published in the United States.

In addition to his job at the Brodsky synagogue, Nowakowsky also taught music in several Odessan schools, as a professor of theory and harmony. He organized and produced concerts, wrote instrumental and vocal art music, as well as children's songs in Hebrew published in *Hazamir* (1903).

By the late nineteenth century, Nowakowsky became active in the Odessa Committee, a group of intellectuals who supported the Zionist movement led by Herzl. As an active member of the group, Nowakowsky was asked to set to music Naftali Herz Imber's song "*Tikvatenu*" [Our Hope] for the fifth Zionist Congress. His music did not succeed in replacing the popular folk melody that had already spread at that time and eventually became the national anthem of the State of Israel. After the Bolshevik revolution, life in Odessa became extremely hard. Nowakowsky's health failed, and he passed away in the summer of 1921.

Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924)



Pinchas Minkowsky was cantor, composer, writer and researcher of Jewish music. He served as cantor of Odessa's Brodsky synagogue for thirty years (1892-1922). Minkowsky was born to a family of cantors in the town of Byala Zherkov in Ukraine. As a child, he was already known for his beautiful voice, and served as prayer leader. When he grew up, he studied with the famous cantor Joshua Abrass. He studied music theory and harmony with Robert Fux in Vienna, and was cantor in Kishinev, Harson, and for a short while at Odessa's Great Synagogue. In 1887, he was invited to be chief cantor at the *Adat Yeshurun* synagogue on Eldridge St. in New York. After four years, he was called back to replace Nissan Blumenthal as chief cantor of the Brodsky synagogue in Odessa. Minkowsky's collaboration with David Nowakowsky made the synagogue a leading center of Jewish liturgical music. His style was a mixture of what he called "emotional singing" ("*Shirat HaRegesh*") – traditional *hazzanut* style, and "orderly singing" ("*Shirat HaSeder*") – western choral style. He won fame and reputation, and was internationally acknowledged as a cantor and an expert on Jewish music.

Minkowsky was also a famous writer, scholar and researcher of Jewish music. His literary style is rich, colorful and witty. He published dozens of articles and other writings in Hebrew, Russian, Yiddish and German. His articles explore the history of Jewish music, musical theory and *hazzanut*. Minkowsky was also an active member of the "Lovers of Hebrew" association

("Hovevey S'fat Ever", later renamed "Tarbut" [culture]), and published articles where he described Jewish music as a means to foster Jewish nationality.

Minkowsky composed dozens of pieces for the synagogue, set to music songs by his friend Hayyim Nahman Bialik, and children's songs from HaZamir book. He was close to the "Odessa Writers" circle (Shalom Aleichem, Mendele Mocher Sfarim, Tchernihovsky, Achad Ha'am).

After the Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent riots in Odessa, Minkowsky managed to obtain an exit permit, and immigrated in 1922 to the United States, where he and his family lived in Philadelphia. He was unable, however, to regain success. Although he received the honorary title of President of the Cantors' Association in the United States, he was unable to secure a regular position as a cantor. Heartbroken and destitute, he died in the winter of 1924. Hundreds of cantors attended his funeral.

Minkowsky firmly objected to any commercial recordings of synagogue singing. He considered them a sacrilege, and sharply criticized cantors who indulged in them. His voice, which had moved so many hearts, was therefore lost forever. Most of his works survived in manuscripts, and were eventually donated by his family to Israel's National Library, with the rest of his archive.

This evening, several of Minkowsky's works are being performed in public for the first time in a hundred years. The works were discovered and arranged by Anat Rubinstein as part of her research, with the support of Da'at Hamakom and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem JMRC. The concert therefore takes a first step towards doing justice with this unique personality.

Ephraim Zalman Rozumni (1866-1904)



Cantor and composer Ephraim Zalman Rozumni was the cantor of Odessa's Great Synagogue. He was born in Nikolayev, Russia, and was named after his grandfather, who had served as the city's chief Rabbi. This family name was given to his grandfather on his appointment by Tsar Nikolai I, who was impressed with him and said he was "a wise Jew" (Розумний єврей). Ephraim Zalman was known for his beautiful voice from his early childhood. The story goes that his beautiful voice appeased the wrath of the Rabbi in the *heder*, who was known as extremely short tempered. At the age of 19, Rozumni was appointed chief cantor of Nikolayev's Great Synagogue. He later worked as cantor in Kishinev and then at the Great Synagogue of Odessa, where he remained to the end of his life. Rozumni was extremely popular, among other things because he was among the first cantors to give concerts of

hazzanut across the Russian empire. He was also known for his colorful personality and hedonistic conduct. His compositional style leans on convoluted traditional cantorial recitatives and improvisation. The melody *El male rahamim* adopted by the Ashkenazi community is attributed to him. His collection of cantorial recitatives *Shirei Rozumni* was published in 1930, with famous cantor Samuel Alman as editor.

Avraham Dunajewski (1843-1911)

Dunajewski was a composer and choir director at the Great Synagogue of Odessa. His music was famous for its rich and "sweet" harmony, influenced by German and Russian sources. Dunajewski published two volumes of his works: *Israelitische Tempel Compositionen für den Sabbath* [Synagogue Compositions for Shabbat] – 1887, 1893, and *Liturgische feierliche Synagogen-Compositionen für Cantor und gemischten Chor* [Festive Liturgical Synagogue Compositions for Cantor and Mixed Choir] – 1898. His music for the prayer *Av harahamim* is extremely popular in many Jewish communities around the world to this day. Pinchas Minkowsky wrote the following about Dunajewski's eclectic style: "Mr. Dunajewski absorbed the old and new *hazzanut* directly from the source. He has also mingled here [in Odessa] with Italian singers who have been disseminating their homeland's singing for many years. Dunajewski is well versed in the laws of harmony and knows how to use voices and lead them correctly. His melodies are easily received... We can find in them a mixture of Italian and Slavic singing... We must thank him for his contribution to the Jewish prayer repertoire in Russia, after the old songs of Ashkenaz have lost favor and the new ones do not suit us at all, and if there is no singing – there is no prayer, and his songs are pleasant to the ears of the listeners". [Pinchas Minkowsky, "Prayer and singing – 4" *Hatzfira*, 24 December 1897].



Interior of the Brodsky synagogue, ca. 1910: Cantors, synagogue personnel and choir. Cantor Pinchas Minkowsky stands to the right of the Ark; next to him is choir director David Nowakowsky.

Source: YIVO.

The Performers

Azi Schwartz – cantor

Cantor Azi Schwartz is the Senior Cantor of Park Avenue Synagogue, and is a world-renowned vocal performer and recording artist whose music reaches both Jewish and interfaith audiences worldwide. His craft of Jewish liturgical music has been described as emotionally moving, spiritually uplifting, and artistically dynamic.

Azi grew up in a small, traditional community in Israel. His grandfather, also a cantor, inspired Azi to pursue his passion and inclination for singing and music. After graduating from Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute and studying under the top cantors in the world, including composer Raymond Goldstein, Azi continued studying music at The Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance where he studied under phenomenal teachers, including Maestro Stanley Sperber. He earned a Masters in Classical Singing and Conducting from Mannes School of Music.

This journey brought Azi to New York, where he leads Park Avenue Synagogue (PAS), the largest Conservative community in NYC and the flagship of Jewish liturgical music in North America. As PAS Music Center's Director, Cantor Schwartz creates, records, and publishes new liturgical music, as well as hosts world-class guest artists for concerts and worship.

Passionate to bring Jewish liturgy to non-Jewish audiences, Azi has performed at Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, Madison Square Garden, the US Capitol Rotunda, and the Israeli Knesset. During Pope Francis' visit to New York in October 2015, Cantor Schwartz represented the Jews at the multi-religious service at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. He plays the cantor's role in Richard Gere's movie 'Norman', and performs in concerts and interfaith missions around the world. Azi has an astounding online following. He released his ninth album this fall, containing liturgical music commissioned in the past year.

Dedicated to cultivating the next generation of cantors and inspired by Professor Eliyahu Schleifer, Azi serves on the faculty of all major cantorial schools, and serves as Treasurer for the Cantors' Assembly, the largest professional organization for cantors. Azi is married to Dr. Noa Schwartz, and they have four children.

Vira Lozinsky – singing

Lozinsky is acknowledged as one of the best Yiddish singers of our time. She was born in 1974 in Belz, Moldova, to a family of Yiddish performers, from whom she inherited her love for the Yiddish language and its songs. She began studying music at a young age, and excelled in playing the violin. In 1990, after she made Aliyah at the age of 16, she studied musicology and Yiddish literature at Bar Ilan University. She studied voice development at the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, and the legendary Yiddish singer Nechama Lifshitz was her teacher for several years.

In 2012, Vira won first prize in the International Competition of Jewish Music in Amsterdam. She is proficient in many musical styles – classical music, Balkan, Gypsy and Russian folk music, as well as Blues and Jazz. Her performances attract both Yiddish music devotees, and audiences that have no knowledge of Yiddish.

Her two recent albums were awarded international prizes, and she has participated in several international projects. One of her songs has recently been included in the song collection "Jewish Celebration" of the Putumayo world-music company.

Vira performs with her own musical ensemble and with other well-known ones, such as the Raanana Symphonette, The Klezmatics (Grammy winner), the Emil Eibinder Ensemble, and many others. Her performances were broadcast on Israeli television's Channel 2, on the German-French television channel Arte, and in radio stations such as CBC (Canada), BBC, Deutsche Welle (Germany) and Kol Israel.

The Chamber Choir of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance

The choir numbers 30 members, mostly music students of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, and won first prize in the 2008 National Choir Competition. Soon after Avner Itay founded it in 1969, it was recognized as one of the best choirs in Israel, and has appeared with Israel's most important orchestras including the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra (Israel Broadcasting Authority) and the Israel Chamber Orchestra. It has performed under maestros Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, Kurt Mazur, Daniel Barenboim and Gary Bertini.

In 2000, Stanley Sperber was appointed the Chamber Choir's artistic director, and has conducted its numerous performances throughout Israel. Among others, the choir appears regularly in the Abu Gosh Festival, in the *Tzlilim BaMidbar* [Desert Sounds] Festival, and in the Choral Fantasy Festival in Jerusalem. The choir gave concerts in the United States, and took part in the prestigious international choir competition in Marktoberdorf, Germany. At the end of the competition, the choir joined forces with the Munich Voice Ensemble in two special concerts performed in Munich and at the Dachau Memorial.

In the past few years, the choir has joined the Israeli Philharmonic Choir in performing Penderecky's *Polish Requiem*, Verdi's *La Traviata*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and Mahler's *Second Symphony*. It also performed Handel's *Dixit Domino* with the Israel Chamber Orchestra, Mendelssohn's *Song of Praise* with the Israel Sinfonietta Beer Sheva, and Brahms' *German Requiem*, with the Chamber Choir of the Buchman-Mehta School of Music.

In 2014, at the festive opening concert of the International Arthur Rubinstein Competition, the choir performed Stravinsky's *The Wedding* and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with the Israel Camerata Jerusalem Orchestra under the baton of Stanley Sperber.

Stanley Sperber – conductor

Stanley Sperber, a native of New York, established the Zamir Chorale in New York. He immigrated to Israel in 1972 and made his debut with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in 1973. Sperber has appeared as guest conductor with the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra (London), the Symphony Orchestras of Baku, Estonia, Sofia, The Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic, and the Philharmonic orchestras of Budapest, Salonika, Novosibirsk, Krakow, and Bucharest and a number of orchestras in North America including the Edmonton Philharmonic, the Oakland Symphony Orchestra and the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra. In 2004 he made his conducting debut in China with the Shanghai Opera Company.

A prominent expert in choral-music and conducting, Sperber was the music director of the Tel Aviv Philharmonic Choir, the Jerusalem Academy Chamber Choir and for 16 years, the Israel National Choir – Rinat. Sperber has directed the Israel Chamber Orchestra and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the latter in performances of the Brahms Requiem, and was music director of the Haifa Symphony Orchestra (1985-2000), after which he was appointed Laureate Conductor. His awards include "Order of Merit" by the Israeli Composers Association, and from the National Council of Culture and Arts: "First Prize for the Performance of Israeli Music" with the Haifa Symphony Orchestra (1992).

Professor Sperber is music director of the Chamber Choir of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance where he teaches choral conducting, and in 2009 he was appointed Professor of Conducting by the Academy.

Sperber is an active tennis player and an internationally certified tennis chair umpire. He has represented Israel in major competitions including the Davis Cup and the US Open.

Raymond Goldstein – pianist, organist, composer and arranger

Pianist and composer Raymond Goldstein was born in 1953 in Cape Town where he completed his musical studies. Since 1978, he has been on the faculty of the Jerusalem Academy of Music specializing inter alia in opera/musical theatre/Jewish art music. He also holds the post of music-arranger (associate-conductor) to the Jerusalem Great Synagogue Choir where he has over 1000 works to his credit. In 1991, he was appointed senior teacher at the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute. As musical director/accompanist, he frequently appears on stage, radio and television in Israel and has undertaken concert tours in Australia, USA and Western Europe. He has made professional recordings with international cantors and singers, and as accompanist and arranger, his name appears on more than 300 CDs, cassette tapes and DVDs. His compositions include a chamber opera, three cantatas, a concert Kabbalat Shabbat service, orchestrations, works for chamber ensemble, and numerous arrangements (more than 3000 in total), sacred and secular.



להקת כליזמרים מרחובות אודסה - Klezmerim in Odessa's streets

Program

Synagogue songs

David Nowakowsky – **Adonoi z'khoronu** – for choir, cantor and organ

Pinchas Minkowsky – **Lekha dodi** – for choir, cantor and organ

Efraim Zalman Rozumni – **Amar Rabbi El'azar** – recitativo for cantor with piano accompaniment. Arrangement: Raymond Goldstein

Avraham Dunayevsky – **Na'aritzkho** – a-cappella choir and cantor

David Nowakowsky – **Kol dodi** – duet with piano accompaniment. Arrangement: Raymond Goldstein

Pinchas Minkowsky – **Adon olam** – for choir, cantor and organ

Odessa Mama– popular songs in Russian and Yiddish, for voice and piano

In Ades (In Odessa). Lyrics: Louis Gilrod and Peretz Sandler; from the musical *Volodke in Ades*; folk song, often included in the klezmer repertoire.

Хаим, лавочку закрой! [Chaim, close the shop!]. Odessan folk song.

У Черного моря [On the Black Sea]. Lyrics: Semyon Kirsanov (Семёном Кирсанов), music: Modest Tabachnikov (Модест Табачников)

Proshtshay, Odessa [Farewell, Odessa!]. Folk song.

The Music of Hebrew Odessa

Bein nehar Prat linhar Hidekel for voice and piano. Lyrics: Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Music: David Nowakowsky

Shabbat HaMalka for a-cappella choir. Lyrics: Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Music: Pinchas Minkowsky. Arrangement: Sarah Shoham

Shir HaMa'alot for a-cappella choir. Psalms 126. Music attributed to Pinchas Minkowsky. Arrangement: Raymond Goldstein