

Supporting New Voices in Jewish Liturgical Music

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New Voices in Jewish Liturgical Music

A big issue that this research is attempting to address is that many Reform synagogues' cantors don't know anything besides Debbie Friedman. Why that is important is that these are the people that we look to, and for them to provide us with only one great composer who died 13 years ago is not enough. Some factors that have created this issue are that her melodies are made in an accessible style, with little to no chord variety. Another factor that created this issue is that her music is too popular for people interested in more serious music, and not complicated enough for ethnomusicologists.

I am fortunate enough to have been invited to become a member of Central Synagogue in Manhattan. From my experience, this synagogue does not overuse Ms. Friedman's music. I realized that I am part of a Jewish community that gives almost equal time to a variety of composers who contribute to the liturgy.

The main topics that will be covered in the report that follows are:

- Music and Religion
- Purpose of Music in a Jewish Service
- History of Jewish Music
- Too Much Dependence on a Few Composers (Friedman Issue)
- Towards a More Inclusive Approach to Reform Jewish Music

Research Methods

I approached the research for this project in a number of different ways. The first method was online research. That is how I found my inspiration for this project, which was *The Debbie Friedman Problem: Performing Tradition, Memory, and Modernity in Progressive Jewish Liturgy* by Joshua A. Edelman. This is also how I found the article that describes the contents of the typical synagogue service.

The second method was qualitative interviews. I did two of these. One was with Cantor Jenna Pearsall, one of the cantors at my synagogue. The other was with David Strickland, the pianist and music director of my synagogue. In the course of these two interviews, we talked about everything from how my synagogue chooses its music, to why a certain song will appear on the service, or will not, based on how the cantors are feeling that week, or the current events of that week. We also talked about how Cantor Pearsall and Strickland got to where they are now, in terms of their education, their backgrounds and their previous work. Finally, we spoke about why they chose my synagogue for their respective jobs.

The third method was direct observation and documentary analysis. Every Friday morning, I would observe the contents of my synagogue's order of service, and see if I could offer any suggestions for how they could do better in my service reports. What I found was that they could do a lot better. One of the areas that I thought could be improved upon was that they sometimes included too many traditional composers, meaning ones born in the early-to-mid 20th century, and didn't include enough contemporary composers, meaning those born after 1970, and with two exceptions, namely Maseng and Taubman, who were born in 1948 and 1953.

Among those who will benefit from this research are musical artists who deserve more value and support for their contributions to Jewish Liturgy. In addition, congregants who attend synagogue regularly will be inspired and impacted through an approach to music curation that is representative of a wider range of composers and musical styles.

This is useful and important because now other synagogues could begin to stop overusing the same composer, and instead change it up a little bit and rotate so their congregants don't hear the same music over and over again. Why music has been helpful to me as an individual is that in this case, it allows me to connect with my Jewish identity in a way that even the best Hebrew expression wouldn't suffice.

Section I: Music And Religion

Music and religion go together because they both connect you to a world bigger than yourself. Music can serve religious purposes because it can lift up the people that are listening to it. Music and religion also go together because they connect worshippers to the larger sound of their religion's traditions and rituals.

Another reason why the two go together is because they both have the ability to lift people and their spirits up to ecstatic fervor.

“Music and spirituality are intricately related, with spirituality often being the inspiration for the creation of music, and music so often creating the desired atmosphere for a spiritual occasion.” (*Music and Spirituality, Smithsonian Institution, 1*) What that quote means is that music and religion cannot be separated from one another, because without one, you can't have the other. It also means that music and religion relate to each other in any number of possible ways. For example, music could provide the backdrop for someone's wedding, or it could provide a comfort to someone who has just lost a loved one.

“Music has a way of filling in the gaps in thought, feeling, and emotion that words cannot do justice, which can be incredibly powerful when accompanied by a spiritual belief. Music is a nearly universal part of religion because it appeals to and heightens human senses in a pleasurable way which, in turn, allows humans to praise through a medium that makes worship more enjoyable.” (*The Desire for Music and its Importance in Religion, St Olaf Pages, 1*)

What this quote means is the essence of why so many religions hold music in the highest regard. What these quotes mean are that first, when music has spiritual and religious undertones, which help to bring the religious experience to a higher level. Second, when we hear a religious piece of music that appeals to us and makes us feel closer to God, we are enjoying our experience of whatever worship we are doing much more because we are doing it through an accessible medium, which is music.

Section II: Purpose of Music in A Jewish Service

“The term “Jewish music” encompasses a complicated and multifaceted relationship between Judaism and sound from ancient times to the present.” (*Jews and Music, Cohen, 1*).

Jewish people are connected to music in every way possible, from the music that permeates the synagogue during Friday night Shabbat services to the rousing music heard after a boy or girl has finished their bar or bat mitzvah to the celebratory dancing after a couple has tied the knot under the chuppah. The Jewish people have many different ways of expressing themselves through different prayer types.

As described by Sacred Music Radio, “Jewish devotional music is present during religious services in synagogue. Some congregations have a cantor (chazzan), who leads the worshippers by chanting the prayers. Religious music certainly plays a big part in synagogue ritual, but it is by no means confined to shul. On some holidays, blessings and prayers are sung in family celebrations at home, while more observant Jews will chant blessings many times a day.”

For this research I interviewed Cantor Jenna Pearsall at Central Synagogue in Manhattan. Cantor Pearsall told me about the intricate manner in which Central programs their services. The process according to her is that they meet on Tuesday, and they choose from a couple of categories. They are: current events, and songs that they haven’t done for a while. Then, the cantors practice them, and the result of that is what you hear every Friday night.

Among other topics that Cantor Pearsall addressed during our interview were:

- The uses and impact of music in Jewish religious settings
- Musical components of Jewish services

“Music is integral to worship here at Central, and helps to contribute meaningful moments, and it helps us to express what we are feeling in a given week, and helps us to connect with the words of our liturgy on a deeper level”, said Cantor Pearsall.

“It is intentional. We think about the composer, and we want to balance the old, and new melodies together. Our senior Rabbi, (Rabbi Buchdahl) likes to have the familiar melodies, with the new melodies. We would try to balance the two together.” (*personal interview, Pearsall*)

The specific use and purpose of music in a traditional Jewish service is to uplift everyone who is there. Music is used in Jewish services to show the different types of prayer, the modes or melodies in which the prayers are sung, and the cantillation, which is the chanting used for the Torah and Haftorah.

“The musical components of the synagogue service are cantillation, nusah, hymns, and in some communities, niggunim.” (*Synagogue Music, Jewish Learning, 1*). This quote outlines the musical parts of the service. *Cantillation* is the system used to chant the Torah that is used on Shabbat and Yom Tov. *Nusah* is the chanting system used for the prayers in the siddur, but unlike cantillation, the rhythm is not fixed. Instead, it is free-form and the *shaliach tzibbur* has to know the melody for the particular day that he or she is singing. Hymns are the lullabies of the service. They include songs like Ein K’Eloheinu and Adon Olam. *Niggunim* are wordless melodies that are sung on Shabbat and Yom Tov and they almost always begin with Yai lai lai.

“The many forms of intoned, chanted, and sung prayer stretch along a continuum of liturgical and paraliturgical performance that ranged from the personal to the professional, from the domestic to the public, and from the everyday to the once a year (eg. The Kol Nidre prayer of Yom Kippur).” (*Music and Sacred Text, Slobin, 2*)

Another purpose of Jewish prayer and song is to provide structure to the service. For example, a traditional service structure is:

Opening Song: Its purpose is to introduce the mood or flavor of the service that is to come.

Recitation of Psalms 29, 92, 95, 96, and 98 (In Hebrew, they are: *Mizmor L'David, Mizmor Shir, L'chu N'ranah, Shiru L'Adonai, and Zamru L'Adonai*).

These psalms serve as a recounting of the week leading up to Shabbat, and L'chu N'ranah is used as a step towards the next Shabbat.

L'cha Dodi: The content talks about welcoming the Sabbath bride into our midst. At the very end, we stand to face her and welcome her in. The purpose is to welcome the bride and for us, as Jewish people, to welcome Shabbat into whatever congregation or home we may be celebrating it from.

Bar'chu: As one rabbi said, "The service officially begins with a praise prayer called Bar'chu." This praises God, and serves as the equivalent of the Hallelujah chorus in Handel's Messiah. It is the starting point of my favorite part of the service, which is called Sh'ma Urvirchotecha. This means Shema and Her Blessings.

Mi Chamocha: In a typical service, this follows V'ahavta, which tells us to love God with all our hearts. Mi Chamocha, however, is a different animal. This talks about the Jews' exodus from Egypt, and is an exact quote from the Torah, and Jeremiah, from the Jewish people's book of Prophets, or the Haftarah. The textual quotes are Exodus 15:2, 15:11, 15:18, and Jeremiah 31:10. Some versions in the Reform liturgy use all three verses, like the one for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but others will use two. My synagogue's favorite versions have between one and two verses. Those versions are: Hanna Tiferet Siegel's, and Josh Nelson's.

Hashkiveinu: As my synagogue's senior rabbi said of her favorite version of this prayer, which I've mentioned a few times in this project, "One of my favorites." This prayer is the equivalent of letting God into your house and asking him to help you build a sukkah of peace in your house. This prayer talks about asking God to let you be restored to life in the morning. This prayer dates from 860 CE, and is one of the most beautiful and beloved prayers in the Jewish religion. My synagogue has six versions of this prayer, but only one of them is their favorite.

Amidah: This is also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei*, or *HaTefillah*. This is about having a personal conversation with God, and also acknowledging our ancestors, in the second part of this prayer called *Avot v'Imahot*. In the final section of the prayer, known as *G'vurot*, we thank God for sustaining our lives through love, and for healing everyone who needs it.

Mi Sheibeirach prayer: This is a prayer for the sick and loved ones who need help. My synagogue has three versions of this prayer, but their favorite, and mine, is Debbie Friedman's from 1989.

Shechecheyanu: This is to give thanks for the blessings that God has given us. It also thanks him for "giving us life." (*Mishkan T'filah*, 648)

Closing Song: This is a wrap-up and a cool-down after all that work of praising and thanking God. Often, it is either Ein K'Eloheinu, Adon Olam, or Oseh Shalom. My synagogue has 17 different closing songs, but Adon Olam is their favorite.

Some Reform congregations add an Opening Song as an embellishment to this structure. And some will not even do the first half of the structure and only do the last half. For example, some Reform synagogues like Central will sing *Mi Chamocha*, and sing *Hashkiveinu*, or only recite it, as the case is with Temple Israel in Michigan, where they will sing *Mi Chamocha*, and recite *Hashkiveinu* in English. Also, with Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, they will sing the prayer for healing, and skip

Hashkiveinu, and *Mi Chamocha*. The synagogue that I am a member of, is the only one that I know of in New York that does the full musical structure that I outlined above. This varies by tradition, but most Reform congregations will use the above structure.

Some songs will add on an additional verse or even two verses, as in the case of Elana Arian's version of *L'cha Dodi*, which adds on two verses to that structure, or in the case of Maseng's version of *Hashkiveinu*, where he adds on one additional verse to this structure.

Traditional Composers of Jewish Liturgy

Before 1967 the Reform liturgy was static and mostly followed traditional conventions. Programming focused largely on traditional or older composers, and the rabbi would talk, but the congregation would not participate.

A new generation of composers born from 1929 to 1970 began to make significant changes to liturgy and its impact in Jewish music settings. The composers that were pioneers in this type of music were: Shlomo Carlebach, Naomi Shemer, Nurit Hirsh, Debbie Friedman, and Jeff Klepper.

Shlomo Carlebach (January 14th, 1925 to October 20th, 1994) was a pioneer in this style of music because the sound of the more hippie style songs in today's Reform liturgy, like Franzel's version of

Shiru L'Adonai, and Michael Smolash's version of *Ein K'Eloheinu* have that hippie style first premiered by Shlomo Carlebach on *Am Yisrael Chai*, the song that changed the way Jewish liturgical music sounded.

Naomi Shemer (July 13th, 1930 to June 26th, 2004) had a new approach which included blending different genres of music together. She also adapted a new Spanish approach, which created a new Israeli style of music that still is in use today. In this song, which translates in English to "Jerusalem of Gold", written just before the Six Day War, she uses chords taken from a Spanish folk song, which almost resemble the famous Bizet duet from the Pearl Fishers, "Au fond de temple saint." Shemer's work was a pioneer in integrating Spanish forms and style into Israeli music. She was the steppingstone to Friedman, because in one of Friedman's most famous songs, *L'chi Lach*, written in 1989, she uses a klezmer instrument which sounds like Spanish folk music.

After Shemer, came Debbie Friedman, who changed our liturgy entirely.

Debbie Friedman was born on February 23rd, 1951, and died on January 9th, 2011 at the age of 59. She grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, and from an early age, she started to train in her high school's choir, and started to make her mark in song-leading around that time.

From the early 70s to the beginning of the 2010s, she recorded 22 albums. She was mostly inspired by folk artists. She wrote for younger kids as well as adults. Some of her most kid-friendly songs include *I Am A Latke*, and the *Aleph Bet Song*. Her more adult-friendly songs include *Mi Sheibeirach*, and *L'chi Lach*.

In the year 2007, she started to coach prospective rabbis and cantors at the HUC School of Sacred Music, now named the Debbie Friedman School for her. She was a feminist, but never revealed it to the public. After she died, the NYT obituary revealed this fact for the first time.

Friedman was known for the many songs she composed for Jewish camp, but also for the synagogue. She made her songs more participatory, inviting congregants to participate and sing.

Friedman was also a pioneer in this type of music because the structure of most of today's famous Jewish songs in the Reform liturgy comes from her. That structure is:

Chorus

Verse

Chorus

Verse

Her first big hit was her adaptation of the Mi Shebeirach prayer, released in 1989. That song invited congregants to participate because the chorus is for the congregation, but the verse is for the cantor. This new structure allowed that section of the service to become more about an equal partnership between the congregation and the cantor. This had never been seen in the Jewish liturgical world before. Before this, services had been long, and the musical settings could be boring. But, after Friedman, the standard became what it is today, which is that services are much shorter, ranging from an hour and a half to two hours, and in some congregations, three hours, but that is rare today. Because of Friedman, congregants who before, weren't allowed to sing, can today sing whenever the cantor asks them or allows them to.

Section III: Defining the Problem in Reform Jewish Liturgy Today – Too Much Friedman?

The issue impacting today's music in Reform Jewish settings is the perceived monopoly of Debbie Friedman and her closest peers (Shlomo Carlebach and Jeff Klepper and Nurit Hirsh and Naomi Shemer) on the Reform movement's liturgy. Go onto any Reform or Conservative synagogue's website and you will often see compositions by these familiar and popular composers in most services and even recordings of any songs featuring their performances, especially Friedman.

The problem that I have with Friedman's music is that some of the melodies aren't crafted at the highest level as some of the other composers used in the Reform movement's liturgy nowadays. (Edelman, J. A. (2013). The Debbie Friedman Problem: Performing Tradition, Memory, and Modernity in Progressive Jewish Liturgy. *Liturgy*, 28(1), 6–17. For example, her two most famous tunes, *Mi*

Sheibeirach, and *L'chi Lach*, sound the same. Whereas, with one of the movement's other famous composers, Danny Maseng, his melodies are crafted at the top level, as far as their melodic construction is concerned. His two famous tunes, which are *Hashkiveinu*, and *Mah Tov*, sound

different. The difference between the two tunes is that in one, the melody goes up, and then it comes down, and in the other, it goes down for a full five bars, and finally comes back up for the second verse. That is the difference between the two tunes.

According to Joshua Edelman, in his article *The Debbie Friedman Problem*, "Steinberg never does name his target, but it is clear that Carlebach is not the one intended here. This is not only because of the denominational difference, Steinberg is Reform, Carlebach is Orthodox, but because Carlebach's guitar work would never be called "driving", and of course Steinberg is referring to camp songs." This supports the idea of "too much Friedman" because it implies that the Reform movement, with the exception of Central, overuses camp songs that have a vibe that could only be described as appropriate for young Jewish teens just starting out on their Jewish journeys. That means that according to this article, they are putting too much emphasis in their Shabbat service crafting, on young kids, instead of their base, which is mostly members who have been coming to services for years or who are just starting out, or teens older than camp age who just a few years back, have had either their bar or bat mitzvah.

Section IV: Toward a More Diverse and Inclusive Approach to Music in Reform Settings

To learn more about whether synagogues tend to rely more on traditional composers like Friedman, I researched the music at four synagogues in my area, Temple Israel in Westport, Connecticut, and Westchester Reform Temple, in Scarsdale, New York, Temple Emanu-El in New York City, and Congregation Am Tikvah in San Francisco, California and found that they all used Debbie Friedman more than contemporary composers. For example, in almost every single service, Temple Israel, and Westchester Reform Temple did Friedman's version of *Mi Shebeirach*. According to the Twin Cities Pioneer Press, Friedman's music is heard in Reform, Conservative, and even Orthodox synagogues. The synagogues that use her music a lot are Temple Judea, Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas, and Congregation Da'at Elohim, in New York City. The other songs that are used just as much as *Mi Shebeirach* are *Shalom Aleichem*, *Sh'ma/ V'ahavta*, *Miriam's Song*, and *Oseh Shalom*.

At the synagogue where I am a member of (Central Synagogue), sometimes the diversity of music programming is intentional. The musical team there is also diverse, and they try to represent the diversity of the world and Judaism. In some other synagogues, there can be a lack of diversity in Reform Jewish liturgy.

In order to get a better idea of Central's approach to music programming I directly observed and analyzed liturgy repertoire at ten services during the Fall of 2024. Every Friday morning, I would observe the contents of my synagogue's order of service, and see if I could offer any suggestions for how they could do better in my service reports. These reports are included in **Addendum A** of this research paper.

What I found was that they could do a lot better. One of the areas that I thought could be improved upon was that they sometimes included too many traditional composers, meaning ones born in the early-to-mid 20th century, and didn't include enough contemporary composers, meaning those born after 1970, and with two exceptions, namely Maseng and Taubman, who were born in 1948 and 1953.

What we need today is more diversity of composers, and less of doing the same music over and over again. An example of this stereotype would be the Stephen Wise Temple in Los Angeles. They will do the same arrangement of a particular prayer all the time, without ever varying it. 35% of American

Jews are Reform, and I think that it would be good for the ones that go to synagogue to hear a diversity of composers in the service.

According to Cantor Mary Thomas in her article “Development of Reform Jewish Music”, which can be found on Reform Judaism.org, the final decades of the 20th century were marked by an increase in the use of folk music in the synagogue, which means more usage of stringed instruments like the guitar. This also meant that some Reform synagogues started to use fewer instruments like the piano, and cymbals. Today, the stereotype of this vision is a Reform synagogue in Connecticut called Temple Israel Westport. They sometimes do Shabbat on the beach with the guitar. That is the real stereotype of what I am talking about. A notable exception to this rule is the synagogue that I livestream services from every Friday night and sometimes Saturday morning, Central Synagogue. Before the service even starts, the lights go dark, and then the band plays a little leadup music, and then whoever is going to be on, comes on and the service begins with a warmup song.

Some other contemporary composers, such as Craig Taubman, have written settings of *Mi Shebeirach* that are more true to its original text. Debbie Friedman’s version strays from the original Hebrew text after “*Mi shebeirach avoteinu*,” in favor of her own poetic translation. Friedman doesn’t use the original Hebrew text as the baseline for her sung Hebrew-English version. Instead, she uses a New Age translation, with only the original first line coming straight from the original Hebrew text. After that, she uses her own translation of the prayer, but her translation is not how the 10th and 11th century sages, who are our ancestors, would have intended or envisioned the prayer.

Taubman, a more contemporary voice, stays true to the original text, even when it goes into English translation. It is important that a prayer when translated into English uses the original translation because if you use the poetic translation, it could cause the people who know the original to form a

different perception of what that prayer might mean, as opposed to the original which causes people to think that the prayer is absolutely part of the Jewish liturgy.

I think that in this case, creativity may not be the best thing because as our liturgy evolves, and more and more songs based on our liturgy veer further and further from the original translation, the meaning is lost because the prayer, whatever it may be, is cloaked in a poetic cloth. This means that the prayer is not real because the translation is too poetic, and too far away from the original meaning of whatever prayer we are talking about.

Therefore, it would be better if they used Taubman's version of *Mi Shebeirach* more often, because it stays true to the original translation of the Mi Shebeirach prayer. Although Taubman was born in 1953, he is contemporary because of his non-traditional chord choices. For example, in his version of Mi Shebeirach, he uses Em and Eb7 chords, which are both not in the key. As a contrast, Debbie Friedman's version uses only chords within the key. That is significant because if you only include chords within the key, to the average untrained ear, it can sound too similar to other songs. But, if you include chords outside the key, the song can sound unique, and no one else could have written it, other than the actual composer.

Supporting New Voices in Jewish Liturgical Music

People don't like or listen to contemporary music in religious settings because contemporary worship music has more chord variety, including chords in any given piece of music that are non-familiar (sound strange to those who don't hear often). That means that the chord might sound traditional, but it is not, due to a number of factors. First, it could be a chord outside of the key of the piece. Second, the chord could be within the key, but it could have a seventh or a ninth added to its top, making it sound "weird". Finally, it could be that the chords vary too much from the music that people are used to hearing in worship settings today. Some solutions to find a more inclusive approach to programming lesser-known voices include:

The following are recommendations for expanding awareness and support of the full range of the great composers who have or still contribute to Jewish Liturgy:

1) Invest in Research:

- a. Library or Online searching: Use Google, or YouTube, or any music service, and do some research into who are the great contemporary Jewish composers who have written pieces composed in the last 20 years or so. Also, you could pick up any book that talks about those composers, and that could give you an idea on what to program.
- b. Listen actively at services and identify works that seem to engage and inspire congregants more than others.

What this means is looking through all the music that you have sung, and thinking about “How could I choose something that would uplift my congregants and make them feel ecstatic after the piece has finished.” Too often today, cantors will choose pieces that the congregation doesn’t want to sing. What that means that either the congregants don’t feel like they are expected to sing in the service, or the music in the service is too loud or too soft, or the worship leaders are straying from the original melody and ad-libbing out of control. Another thing that you could do is pick a piece that makes your congregants feel welcome, and if its original key is either too low, or too high, pitch the piece either up, or down, so that its range falls within the typical range of your congregation, which is an octave and a 4th from A to D.

2. Education of the Music Team and Performers

What this means is after you have put together a service for your congregation that doesn’t bore them out of their minds, and leave the whole synagogue asleep and quiet is then you have to get together as a team, including whatever other instruments you use, and give the instrumentalists their lead sheets that they can use to learn the pieces. Then, you rehearse the service with the other members of the team, and then you wait for Shabbat services to begin so that you can showcase these pieces to the congregation.

Having your cantors sing these pieces in actual services

What this means is that the worship leaders will first learn these pieces, and after rehearsals they will have a chance to soak in and get their feet wet with whatever pieces they have chosen. Then it's time for Shabbat services. This is when your worship leaders and team will showcase the new and improved pieces that they have chosen.

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Addendum A Central Service Reports

Service for September 13th, 2024

Friday Night Service

Music List:

1. Achat Sha'alti by Chava Mirel(born 1976)
2. L'chu N'ranah by Adolph Katchko(1886- 1958)
3. Mizmor L'David by Shlomo Carlebach(1925- 1994)
4. L'cha Dodi by Rick Recht(born 1970)
5. Bar'chu by Craig Taubman(born 1953)
6. Mi Chamocha by Daniel Mutlu and Nina Faia(late 1970's)
7. Haporeis Sukkat Shalom by Stacy Beyer(late 1970's)
8. Adonai S'fatai by Davidson
9. Elohai N'tzor by Danny Maseng(1948)
10. Mi Shebeirach by Lisa Levine(late 1970's)
11. Od Yavo by Moshe Ben Ari(born 1970)

The first song, Achat Sha'alti was a good choice for this time of year, but its placement in the service was incorrect. This song is meant to go as a meditation because its tempo is much slower than any of the other songs on that service. The services at this time of year are meant to include a slower song as their beginning, but Psalm 27 is meant to go either at the end of service, or the meditation right after the Amidah.

The second choice, L'chu N'ranah was a good choice because of this song's structure. It fits well with the other songs because its tempo gets faster as the verses go by. It also goes well with the other songs because of how many verses it has.

The third and fourth choices were good, but could have been better in terms of their tempo. What I mean is that the third song was too slow for this time of year, and it also wasn't one of the principal Psalms of Kabbalat Shabbat. The fourth choice was good and it also matched up with the other Psalm, L'chu N'ranah.

The choices for Sh'ma Urvirchotecha were good, and they could not have been improved upon. The reason is that their tempi matched up. Their tempi ranged from 67-74 beats per measure, which is an ideal range for an evening service like that.

The final four choices were good, and they matched well with the melodies from Sh'ma Urvirchotecha because their tempi were similar. This was the problem with the first, third, and fourth choices. Their tempi were too contrasting. Think of the service like a great sonata of classical music. First, you have the fast movement, then you have the slow movement, then you have the Scherzo, or other fast movement, and then the final movement. You would never take these movements out of order, or play them out of order.

Traditional is a composer that was active in the 1960's through to the 1990's. Traditional is also Jewish songs that use the traditional chord progressions like 1-4-5-1. An example of this is Debbie Friedman's version of Mi Shebeirach, where the chord progression is 1-6-3-4-5. This piece also uses no seventh or ninth chords, which makes it very traditional. Another example is Friedman's version of Mi Chamocha, where the basic chord progression is 1-2-3-1, which is very traditional. Rare is a composer that is active today, but isn't played too often. Contemporary is a composer that is active from 2001 to today. Contemporary is also Jewish songs that have so to speak "traditional" chord progressions. Two examples of this are the Maseng version of Hashkiveinu, which has in its introduction before the singer comes in, a 1(tonic) followed by a 4(subdominant) with a 9th on top, which immediately makes this piece not traditional. Another example is an arrangement of Psalm 96 by Jordan Franzel where the piece's time signature changes from common time to $\frac{3}{4}$ for one measure, which also makes that piece not traditional.

Service for September 20th, 2024

Friday Night Service

1. Esa Enai/Achat Sha'alti by Andrew Bernard(1943-2021)
2. L'chu N'ranah by Josh Warshawsky((late 1970's)
3. Hariu by Davidoff and Epstein
4. L'cha Dodi by Laufer
5. Bar'chu by Noah Aronson(1990 or earlier)

6. Mi Chamocha by Ari Posner(born 1970)
7. Hashkiveinu by Josh Zweiback(born 1969 or earlier)
8. Adonai S'fatai by Davidson
9. Oseh Shalom by Judith Silver(born 1974 or earlier)
10. Mi Shebeirach by Nava Tehila
11. Shechecheyanu by Tzvika Pik(1949-2022)
12. Ein K'Eloheinu by Ari Posner and Michael Smolash(born 1970)

The first choice, a mashup of Esa Enai and Achat Sha'alti was a good choice, although not where Psalm 27 is supposed to fall in the service. Usually, in Elul, you'll conclude with Achat Sha'alti to bring the service to a solemn close, but in this case, they chose to start with it.

The second choice, Josh Warshawsky's arrangement of L'chu N'ranah was a great choice. I say that because in this context, where you have a relatively slow song as your opening, this choice was relatively uptempo compared to the other choices that I'll be mentioning later. Also, it was a great choice because it showed how the ancient Israelites would have sang joyously to Adonai.

The third choice, an arrangement of Psalm 98, was also a great choice. The reason is that this song is relatively slow in comparison to the other two choices. Also, the vocal line is a nice blend of a nigun and words of the actual Psalm.

The choices for Sh'ma Urvirchotecha were also really good. This section of the service is supposed to convey to us to let the Shabbat queen be in our midst, then calling everyone to prayer, and eventually praying for a good night's sleep, and that is exactly what these four choices did.

The final five choices were also really good. These take you from the Standing Prayer to the Closing Song, and these choices conveyed the atmosphere of that section of the service. The atmosphere of this section is supposed to be solemn, in the Mi Shebeirach, and the cantors' choice conveyed that emotion. The final choice, Ein K'Eloheinu, showed that festive atmosphere that is supposed to be felt as we have the Shabbat bride in our presence.

1. Avinu Malkeinu by Danny Maseng(born 1948)
2. L'chu N'ranah by Ken Chasen(born 1965)
3. Shiru L'Adonai by Nina Faia and Daniel Mutlu(late 1970's)
4. L'cha Dodi by Aaron Bensoussen(born 1977 or earlier)
5. Bar'chu by Yoel Sykes(born 1949)
6. Mi Chamocha by Shlomo Carlebach(1925-1994)
7. Hashkiveinu by Craig Taubman(born 1953)
8. Mi Shebeirach by Lisa Levine(born late 1970's)
9. Adon Olam by Amsterdam(Traditional Sephardic folk tune)

The first three choices were good because they matched in terms of tempo and mood. They had that kind of festive texture that you would only experience at this time, meaning the High Holidays. These first three also brought a nice key contrast, as the first and the last were in major keys, while the middle one was in a minor key. The next four choices were all good except for the arrangement of the final prayer. In my opinion, this prayer has nothing to do with kids and playing and one day. This arrangement diminishes the prayer, in my opinion, and also, in my opinion, makes the prayer into an afterthought in this otherwise festive service.

The final two choices were just like the first two, except for the key contrast. They were very festive, and had that High Holiday flavor that so many Jewish people who are observant probably like about the music at this time of year.

Service for October 2nd, 2024

Erev Rosh Hashanah

1. We Return by Elana Arian and Noah Aronson(born 1982 or earlier)
2. Avinu Malkeinu by Danny Maseng (born 1948)
3. Bar'chu(Traditional)
4. Standing on the Parted Shores(Traditional) and Mi Chamocha(Traditional High Holiday version)
5. Hashkiveinu by Danny Maseng(born 1948)
6. Adonai S'fatai(Traditional High Holiday version)
7. Yih'iyu L'ratzon by Elana Arian(born 1982 or earlier)
8. El Na Refa Na La by unknown
9. Shechecheyanu by Tzvika Pik(1949-2022)

10. Human Heart by Coldplay(born 1975 or earlier)
11. Avinu Malkeinu by Lewandowski((1821-1894)
12. Aleinu by Solomon Sulzer(1804-1890)

The first seven choices were all good because they didn't think when planning this service that one particular style should dominate over another style. The contemporary rhythm of these choices made each melody sound like it was flowing. Usually, there is an imbalance in the services, but with this one there wasn't.

The final seven traditional choices were all as festive as they sounded. The festive melody for Mi Chamocha really capped off the that section of the service. Also, the melody at the end, where it was talking about the new year, really made the atmosphere look like any great religious festival.

Kol Nidre 6:00 PM October 11th, 2024

Kol Nidre Service

1. Standing on the Parted Shores and Mi Chamocha(Traditional High Holiday version)
2. Hashkiveinu by Danny Maseng(born 1948)
3. V'shamru(Traditional High Holiday version)
4. Adonai S'fatai by Paul Allard and Ellen Allard(born 1954 or earlier)
5. Or Zarua(Traditional High Holiday version)
6. Kol Nidrei by Louis Lewandowski(1821-1894)
7. Avinu Malkeinu by Louis Lewandowski(1821-1894)
8. Aleinu by Solomon Sulzer(1804-1890)
9. Adon Olam(Traditional Sephardic folk tune)

Most of this service was traditional, because on Erev Yom Kippur, you need all of the traditional melodies that most of the congregants who go once a year want to hear. I'm talking about Mi Chamocha, Avinu Malkeinu, and Kol Nidrei. I'm also talking about Adon Olam, that closed this service. They want to appeal to the half of the congregation that only comes once a year and keeping most of the service traditional is one way to do that.

The half of the service that had contemporary melodies, had their best ones. I'm talking about most of the melodies, including the congregation's favorite version of Hashkiveinu, Standing on the Parted

Shores, and a few others. These showcased the diversity of the repertoire of the service before Yom Kippur proper.

Service for November 15th, 2024

Friday Night Service

1. Hava Nashira by Rob Aronson(unknown birth year)
2. L'chu N'ranah by Ken Chasen(born 11.10.1965)
3. Zamru L'Adonai(unknown)
4. L'cha Dodi by Daniel Mutlu(unknown birth year)
5. Bar'chu by Chava Mirel(born 2.29.1976)
6. Mi Chamocha by Josh Nelson(born 1978)
7. Hashkiveinu by Danny Maseng(born 1948)
8. Adonai S'fatai by Davidson(unknown)
9. Elohai N'tzor by Danny Maseng(born 1948)
10. Nachamu Ami by Shlomo Carlebach(born 1929)
11. Adon Olam by Amsterdam(unknown birth year)

This service was one of my synagogue's best in terms of counting because it was almost equal, in terms of contemporary and traditional melodies. The first three choices were a nice mix of melodies, because they all had different flavors. The first one had the feel of a raucous opening of an opera, or a great Romantic symphony. The second one was slower, as if you were slowly dancing along to some great ballet piece, and the final one was a little somber, as if hinting to the crowded sanctuary that pretty soon they would be praying for their loved ones(as in the Mi Sheibeirach prayer).

The second half of this service, had more of that same mix that I talked about earlier. The version of L'cha Dodi by my synagogue's senior cantor, starts with a descending guitar strum, followed by a couple of ascending guitar chords. It can seem like it is traditional, because of the strum, but that same strum belies a more sophisticated structure. This version is traditional, on the surface, but contemporary if you look deeper. The version of Bar'chu that was done on this service was the one by Chava Mirel. It had a very rich texture, because of its key, which was Ab Major. The melody itself was very simple, and hinted at the next two melodies. The version of Mi Chamocha that was done was the one by Josh Nelson. Like Mutlu's version of L'cha

Dodi, it began with a strum. Except, that its chord progression is different. This progression goes down, and then up, and then down again. When the cantor comes in, she comes in on the second beat. The overall song is very upbeat with a pop/rock flavor. The next piece is what was termed by my synagogue's senior rabbi, Angela Buchdahl "One of my favorites." This is Central's favorite version of the prayer that asks God to shelter us in his sukkah of peace. The title of this next prayer is called Hashkiveinu. It is by the Israeli- American composer Danny Maseng. This particular version debuted at Central in 2018. In this performance, it was in its original key of E Major. It begins with a short, about 16 second introduction. Then, the cantor comes in. After that, this version has a very decorative line for the cantor. In its third verse, this version goes up to a high C#, as if God is literally sheltering us in his sukkah. After that, this version has a recapitulation, in which all of its themes are recounted, and it ends on its tonic note, in this performance, because it was in its original key, it ended with a long E, and then it finished.

The final four choices were of the same mix as the first and second halves of this service. They were all contrasting melodies. One was in minor, with a descending melody. While, the final three, were in major, with melodies like Hashkiveinu, or L'cha Dodi.

Addendum B: Balance of Composition (Traditional, Contemporary, New)

Counting	Name of the Service	Traditional	Rare/New	Contemporary
	Ki Teitzei 9.13.24	3	3	5
	Ki Tavo 9.20.24	3	5	3
	Nitzavim 9.27.24	5		4
	Erev Rosh Hashanah	7		7
	Kol Nidre 6:00PM	13		4
	Sukkot Chol Hamoed	6		6
	Bereshit	3		8
	Noach	2		9
	Lech Lecha	5		6
	Vayera	5		6

Addendum C

New Voices in Reform Jewish Liturgy

We should know about more contemporary, and diverse Reform Jewish composers because they are the ones who could be making a much larger contribution to the Reform services than they are now. Among rarely heard composers are those listed here:

Danny Maseng(1948)

<http://www.dannymaseng.com/order.html>

His music is performed regularly, and it is very popular also.

His version of Hashkiveinu is successful because the melody is simple, but it is not simplistic at all. This version uses three verses, which is unusual, because normally with this prayer, you will have two verses, but this one adds a third verse, which is unique.

Maseng's music is very folk-like, He has been invited to the ACC, and Congregation Agudus Achim. He has a great reputation. Hashkiveinu, Mah Tov, Elohai N'tzor Born in Tel Aviv(Yafo), Israel, Maseng is Jewish by conversion.

Chava Mirel(1974)

<https://www.chavamirel.com> Her music is also very popular, and it is performed frequently in the month of Elul. Her version of Achat Sha'alti is successful because the guitar riff, and the singing is wonderful. This version is unique because it uses all verses of the Achat Sha'alti psalm from the Tanakh. Her music is also very folk-like. She has sung with both of my synagogue's top cantors. Born in America, Chava is Jewish by blood.

Julie Silver (1975) <http://juliesilver.com/music/> Her music is performed as regularly as all of the other composers on this list.

- c. Her arrangement of Shiru L'Adonai is unique because it starts with Hebrew, and for the second, and third verses, she includes English, which is just as unique as Maseng with his version of Hashkiveinu having three verses all in Hebrew. Her music is more pop-like, and more like youth camp music. Born in America, Silver is Jewish by blood.

Chava Mirel(born 1976) is a Jewish American composer, cantorial soloist, and songwriter. Her influences include another Jewish American composer, Noah Aronson. Her famous compositions include her arrangement of Psalm 27, Verse 4, Hebrew: Achat Sha'alti, and her English and Hebrew version of the Call to Prayer that begins the section of the service known as Sh'ma Urvirchotecha, English: Shema and Her Blessings.

Josh Nelson(born 1978) is a Jewish multi-instrumentalist and songwriter. His influences are Debbie Friedman and Craig Taubman. His famous compositions include his setting of the Israelites' song of freedom, Mi Chamocha, as well as the song that cantors in most Reform synagogues sing as they pass the Torah scroll from generation to generation, L'dor Vador.

These other voices are not as famous as the first three, but they should still be more known throughout the Jewish community, then they currently are.

Steven Sher(1953-2020)

Craig Taubman (1958)

Jeff Klepper(1958)

Shir Yaakov(1978)

Michael Smolash(1980)

Ari Posner (1970)

Jordan Shai Franzel(1970)

Judith Silver(1971)

Dan Nichols(1969)

Yossi Zweiback(1975)

