

Special Services and Musical Programs

Presented at Beth Tzedec, Toronto Canada

Produced By: Cantor Paul Kowarsky

The great philosopher Rousseau once wrote: "There is a period of life when we go back as we advance." The progress that we made in our Congregation recently necessitated the gleaning from past tradition –

- A special Cantorial Shabbat where a guest *Chazan* came to *daven* in our *shul*;
- A Chassidic Shabbat where the Sanctuary became, in a sense, a Chassidic "*Shtibel*";
- A Yiddish program, where we sang beautiful new music to poetry depicting an era gone by.

Shabbat Shira

This Shabbat, designated the "Shabbat of Song", was once again attended by many visitors, in addition to our own members. The choir was joined by the choral group under the direction of Gordon Kushner. As the program indicated, liturgical music, old and new was presented, including compositions by Mr. Kushner and me. This was a service in which we tried, in the words of the Psalmist, to "sing unto G-d a new song". At the luncheon hosted by the congregation for the Cantors and choir, we continued the mood of singing together. This, as in previous years, was a true Shabbat of Song.

Chassidic Shabbat

We introduced an annual Chassidic Shabbat a few years ago, when the theme of the guest speaker from the pulpit was "Chassidism". Rabbi Beigel spoke on a Chassidic theme from the pulpit, and the service was filled with Chassidic melody, sing-a-long melodies, bringing to the service a mood of joy and exultation. As the Psalmist says: "*Iv'du et Hashem b' simchah*" - "serve the L-rd in joy and gladness". We certainly did on the Chassidic Shabbat at Beth Tzedec. During the *Musaph* service the choir stood around me on the Bimah and in the spirit of the day we joyously sang together with the Congregation. People walked out of the Service humming to themselves. I'll just add in parenthesis, that a particular family have requested that the B'not Mitzvah of their twin daughters be held on the next Chassidic Shabbat at Beth Tzedec.

Shabbat Zachor

On this the Shabbat of Remembrance, when the Torah reading speaks of the belligerent acts of the Amalekites against the Jews in the desert, we remember the present-day plight of our fellow Jews in Syria and other parts of the world, where they are locked in by tyrannous leaders who block their departure for Israel.

Special Services and Musical Programs

Presented at Beth Tzedec, Toronto Canada

Produced By: Cantor Paul Kowarsky

On a commission by Leonard and Lanette Cepler, Cantor Jerome Kopmar of Dayton, Ohio composed music to a text in the Siddur where we pray that G-d will bring all of our people from the four corners of the Earth to freedom.

This magnificent musical work premiered at Beth Tzedec on *Shabbat Zachor*, and Cantor Kopmar himself was brought in to conduct the piece. A moving, religious experience was had by those of us who sang, and by the congregants who participated in the service. The powerful address from the pulpit by Judy Feld Carr on the subject: "Forgotten Hostages of the Jewish World: The Jews of Syria" was the "cherry on the top" of this very special Shabbat of prayer, remembrance and hope.

A Literary Musical Evening on Contemporary Canadian Yiddish Poetry

Mr. S. Simchovitch, who was the curator of our museum and librarian for many years, recently published an outstanding book of his Yiddish poetry entitled "Tzaar und Treist" (Sorrow and Consolation).

Another member of Beth Tzedec, Mr. Gurion Hyman, composed music to eleven of those poems. His music shows a true understanding and feeling for the emotions expressed in Mr. Simchovitch's poetry which was read and discussed. The speakers delivered an overview of Yiddish poetry with an emphasis on Canadian works. Cantor Joseph Cooper and I sang a selection of Yiddish songs which included the poetry of Simcha Simchovitch as set to music by Gurion Hyman.

The evening which was attended by a large crowd in the Mezzanine Auditorium, was hailed as a great success, one which should be repeated often.

The Victor and Renee Topper Cantorial Shabbat

I have always felt that my congregants should be afforded the opportunity to be lead in prayer by renowned Cantors from other synagogues in order to broaden their concept of liturgical music and Cantorial art.

Through the generosity of Victor and Renee Topper, and the tireless efforts of our Executive Vice-President, Jack Orenstein, Beth Tzedec inaugurated the first Cantorial Shabbat on May 27, 1989.

Chazzan David Lefkowitz of New York's prestigious Park Avenue Synagogue was the guest Cantor. His davening was warm and meaningful, and portrayed a different personal approach to the service and the music. Cantor Lefkowitz and the choir conducted by Gordon Kushner, created a most beautiful blend of liturgical music, and the atmosphere in the Sanctuary was one of excitement and spiritual fulfillment.

Special Services and Musical Programs

Presented at Beth Tzedec, Toronto Canada

Produced By: Cantor Paul Kowarsky

On that Shabbat Rabbi Friedberg formally installed the new officers and Board of Governors of the Synagogue, and Cantor Lefkowitz with the choir sang a very special rendition in their honour.

The introduction of this special "Cantorial Shabbat" has added a very important element to the ever growing reservoir of special lectures, services and cultural events available at Beth Tzedec.

The Joseph and Faye Firestone Annual Concert

Several years ago, through a generous endowment by Joe and Faye Firestone, we introduced an annual concert at Beth Tzedec. Each year the concert features different artists, presenting unique and interesting programs.

In the past, Cantors Kirshblum, Maissner and I presented an evening entitled "Chazanim go Chassidic". On another such occasion, Cantor Joseph Cooper and two visiting Cantors appeared in a program of Yiddish music.

More recently, the Firestone concert featured the Dardashti Family from Baltimore. Cantor Farid Dardashti, his wife and three daughters staged a magnificent performance of family entertainment before a very large crowd in the Sanctuary.

The gratitude of the congregation is extended to Lanette Cepler, concert chairman, and her dedicated committee for the phenomenal effort they put in so as to ensure the great success of the evening. In the words of Faye Firestone: "It is always a privilege to be associated with success."

International Choral Festival Shabbat

During June, the City of Toronto was host to a Festival of International Choral Music, featuring choirs from all over the world. The official program of the festival provided the opportunity for visitors to attend a service at Beth Tzedec with Cantor and Choir.

On June 24, the Choral Group joined the Choir in the Sanctuary, and the chanting and singing of the prayers was geared to the presentation of a service comprising a large variety of different forms of liturgical music. Gordon Kushner and I attempted to portray the worship of G-d by all peoples. In the words of the Psalmist: "*Shiru Lashem Kol Haaretz*" - ("Let all the peoples of the land sing unto the L-ord"). From the response of the congregants and visitors after the service, we may have achieved just that.