Music in the Synagogue.

By A. W. Binder.

In this article Mr. A. W. Binder, a noted American musician and Director of Music for the Y.M.H.A.'s of New York, discusses the place of music in the Synagogue. In the field of Jewish music, Mr. Binder's operettas and arrangements of Palestinian, East European and Synagogue music have become authoritative.

The story is told of a young man living in Poland who was unable to secure a wife from a religious family, because he could not play the kiddish tune of the Sabbath and that of the holy days. For in former years this was an important part of the educational equipment of the Jew.

Almost every Jew knew how to chant all of the home services; knowing also the different tunes and modes of each. It was quite frequent to find a large number of men in a community who could read the Torah with the traditional trope, and could lead the religious service at any time of the year with the proper tunes and proper modal prayer-motifs. Some of the ordinary tradesmen in a community could, in many cases, do even better than the salaried cantors. And if per accident the BaalT'hiloh or the cantor would change, or mistake one traditional tune for another, snickering and humming could be heard from all parts of the synagogue. One could rest assured that that cantor would not be re-engaged for the following year, or if he were a real Baal T'hiloh he would not be allowed to mount the pulpit again.

We are even told of the wife who refused to allow her husband to drink the kiddish wine, because he had made a mistake in the kiddish melody.

The Prayer-Motifs.

In past generations the nusach or modal prayer-motifs were adhered to with great religiosity. The Jew could not conceive of Sabbath Eve service without the beautiful mode which was associated with V'shorn. How could he truly believe that it was the Sabbath day without the Vissmach Moshe mode, or the Mishberach style? What would Passover be without its traditional Seder and synagogue tunes, or Hallel mode? And would the New Year or Day of Atonement be complete without its sacred chants, like those of the Kiddish, the Pi'utirin, the Avodah, or the Ne'elah?

These are but a few of the traditional modes which were zealously guarded by our forefathers. For in Rabbinic literature we very often come across passages which tell us of these like in our own day who attempted to bring into the synagogue secular and popular melodies of the day. Many were the attempts to substitute these for the extinct traditional modes, and many were the Rabbinic assaults which these innovators encountered. For the Rabbis maintained that in these traditional Nishcoath lay the spirit of the Jew. Take these away from the synagogue, and you rob the synagogue of a most precious and most spiritual heritage. For in our prayers and in our melodies the innermost soul of the Jew finds expression.

As time went on and the art of music developed these modal prayer-motifs came into their own. With the development of choral music, and the reinstatement of the choir and organ into the modern synagogue, Jewish musicians took to the task of developing the choral art of their houses of worship. Many were the cantors and choirmasters who undertook the task of composing music for the synagogue. All sorts of styles and schools developed:

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But it was not until the appearance of Solomon Sulzer, the famous Viennese cantor in 1826, that the attempt to utilize the synagogue nusach in the newly developed synagogue choral music was made.

Sulzer's chief contribution through his two volumes of "Shir Zion" lies in the fact that he laid the foundation for the manner and style through which the nusach could be embodied in the classical forms. More so in his treatment of the recitatives for the cantor than in his choral parts. His logical successor to this task was Louis Lewandowski (1823-1894), who in his two volumes of "Todah V'shornah," developed the style and foundation which Sulzer began to build, but in a much broader manner. Then came Naum­bourg in Paris, and Weintrub in Koenigs­burg, who were able to weave these precious modal prayer-motifs, not only into the sections allotted to the choir, but the synagogue composer par excellence was really David Nowakovsky of Odessa. Nowakovsky was a man who, in his own quiet way, sat in Odessa and composed work after work for the synagogue in which he was choirmaster, and the late Pinchas Minkowsky, the cantor. This was the nusach that lives. For in his only two short published works, which consist of "Shir David," a Sabbath Eve service, and Needah (the closing services for the Day of Atonement), and a few manuscript works which have been circulated around the Jewish musical world, one feels such musicianship, such grandeur and above all, such wonderful Jewish spirit expressed, as never before. One must only hear his "Ana Tavshir" (Day of Atonement Service) for double choirs to realize the immensity of his Jewish soul and his marvellous musicianship.

In between these great masters, and in our own day, there have been and are still such men as Grunzweig, Gerovitch, Lowen Lamm, Shorr Rose, Zivi, Birnbaum and the very talented Samuel Alman of London and many others of merit.

In our own country the greatest contribution to synagogue music has been made by the late Joseph Stark, who for many years was the cantor of Temple Emanuel of San Francisco, was imbued with the spirit of the synagogue and its music from early childhood. This opportunity he later on used, when he took to composing synagogue music, to the, at that time, new version of the prayer book, now known as the Union Prayer Book. Of the majority of his works, it may be said that they are not only distinguished for their musical value, but also for the fact that they adhere in detail, or in spirit, to the traditional musical modes of the synagogue.

These great men of genius realized the importance of genuine "Music for the Synagogue." The leaders and the Rabbis of most of the modern synagogues of Europe realized the all important part which music played in Jewish worship; that the proper music at the proper time, not only set the right tone and the right spirit, but was really the backbone of the service and the background to the sermon.

In our country conditions are deplorable. There is, first of all, very little realization of the importance of the traditional Nusach of the various services. We sometimes hear a Rosh-Hashana "Kedushah" on an ordinary Sabbath, as well as other changes that are similarly sad. We are constantly borrowing melodies from secular sources, and in reform synagogues seventy per cent. of the music which has been composed for the Union Prayer Book, of the music which is sung, has been composed by non-Jews.

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**Activities at Paarl.**

**ANNUAL MEETING OF JEWISH LIBRARY.**

*(From a Correspondent.)*

On Sunday morning, the 10th inst., the first annual meeting of the Paarl Jewish Library took place in the Talmud Torah Hall. There was a very fair attendance over whom Mr. M. Lazar, Chairman of the Library, presided. Mr. S. Helman acted as secretary.

The Chairman delivered his report, and from this it could be seen that there had been much activity performed during the year by the Committee. The membership campaign had been quite successful, over fifty members having been enrolled. A sum of close on £40 had been collected and spent on books. The collection of books was a fine one, and provoked interest among members to read. Over three hundred books had been given out during the last two months.

The Chairman thanked the members of the Committee for assisting him in the work. Those who had been of particular service were Messrs. Radin, Heiman, Swiel, B. Shapiro, S. Rabinowitz and M. and J. Bach. Mr. M. Bach then delivered the financial statement. It was clear that the Library was in a fairly solid financial position.

Both reports were adopted unanimously.

The election of a new committee took place with the following results: Chairman, Mr. S. Rabinowitz; Vice-Chairman, Mr. M. Lazar; Treasurer, Mr. Moses Bach; Secretary, Mr. Max Bach; Committee: Messrs. H. Radin, J. Berman and B. Shapiro. Messrs. Swiel and Trope (Wellington) were elected as auditors.

The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to the chair.

**General.**

Mrs. Lily Frishman recently visited Paarl in connection with her late husband’s works.

Mr. I. Gersterkorn, of Palestine, spent the last week-end at Paarl, and he succeeded in raising a substantial amount for the Bnei-Brak Colony.

Master Gerald Goldstein, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein, of French Hoek, celebrated his Barmitzvah last Sunday, after having read his Portion at the Paarl Synagogue on Saturday. An “At Home” was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein at French Hoek, where Mr. L. Berman acted as chairman. Those who spoke on the occasion were Rev. Sterliza, Messrs. M. Lazar, I. Gersterkorn, Mr. Semon, E. Horwitz and others. The Barmitzvah and his father suitably replied.

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**Worcester Jewish Ladies’ Society.**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

*(From a Correspondent.)*

A general meeting of the Worcester Jewish Ladies’ Society and re-election of office-bearers was held on April 12th. There was a good attendance of members. The report and balance sheet, showing a satisfactory state of affairs, was adopted.

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**Jewish Success in Municipal By-Election.**

**MR. S. SCHER.**

The heartfelt congratulations are extended to Mr. S. Scher, of Simonstown, on his success in the municipal by-election at Simonstown this week. There were three candidates for the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. H. J. Petts, and Mr. Scher was elected by a comparatively large majority.

Mr. Scher came to South Africa from Russia about thirty-one years ago, and has since then lived at Simonstown. He is a well-known business man there and owns considerable property. He has always taken a keen and active interest in communal affairs and for the last fifteen years has been the Chairman of the Simonstown Hebrew Congregation and Zionist Society. Mr. Scher is the moving spirit in all Jewish endeavour in the suburb.

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**Jews and the Quota Act.**

**A LETTER FROM DR. MOSES GASTER.**

Rabbi E. M. Levy, of Durban, has been good enough to allow us to publish the following extract from a private letter he wrote to Rabbi Dr. Moses Gaster, the famous ex-Chief Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in London. Dr. Gaster’s comments on the South African Immigration Quota Bill should prove of interest to readers:

*“... And the local politics and the law of exclusion which has been introduced affecting mostly our own people coming from the Eastern parts of Europe. It is no exaggeration to say that they have contributed to a very large extent to the prosperity of South Africa, but what distressed me most is that I have heard—and I will hope it is not true—that many of the Jews there favoured that law of exclusion. Well, it is a boomerang. It will hit them very soon. People ought to be grateful for the liberty which has been won for them before and they ought to be the last to try and curtail it. One small change in the currency and all their money will disappear and all their riches will melt away.

“Wherever the Jews have become intolerant they have no right to expect mercy from others or tolerance from others.”*

*(Continued from First Column.)*

The following Committee was elected to hold office for the ensuing year: Chairlady, L. Sandler; Secretary, Mrs. N. Donia; Treasurer, Mrs. J. J. Wilk; Miss H. Levin; Committee, Mesdames A. J. Gross, Sandler, H. Simon, J. J. Sennett, B. Shirken, Misses S. Boudrie and A. Cohen.

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**Obituary.**

**MRS. N. WOLMAN.**

A cable from Marseilles this week announces the death of Mrs. N. Wolman, recently of Muizenberg and for many years a resident of Wynberg, which took place on the 11th inst.

Mrs. Wolman, accompanied by her husband, was on her way to Palestine to visit her son who is settled there. She took ill on board, and after spending several days in a hospital at Port Said, was being taken to England. She succumbed on the way.

The deceased was a very well known personality in the Peninsula. She was an exceedingly great help to her husband who is a devoted social and charitable worker and a keen and active Zionist, and performed very valuable communal service herself. Before the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Wolman on their trip in February, a farewell was given to them at Wynberg, and the Keren Havesod campaign was launched there.

Mrs. Wolman has passed away in the prime of her life. To her husband, her three sons and other relatives the deepest sympathy is extended in their sad bereavement. She is, we understand, to be buried in Jerusalem.

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**MUSIC IN THE SYNAGOGUE.** *(Continued from Previous Page.)*

With such a wealth of material as is our heritage from the pens of Sulzer (Lewandowski), Naumberg, Weintraub, Nowakosy, Stark and others, is it necessary to go to non-Jewish sources for music to accompany Jewish worship? Can we hope to retain that wonderful traditional spirit which pervaded the synagogue of our fathers by injecting foreign elements into the synagogue of to-day? If we are to retain it we must come to realize the important part which music must hold in the synagogue. We must realize, as did our forefathers, that our old modal prayer-motifs must be retained for every service and holiday and every other event in Jewish life. Even the reinstatement of the reading of the portion of the week or the Sabbath and holidays with the very old system of cantillation will bring back into the American Temple a Jewish tone which in many instances is greatly lacking.

We are often told that the great masters of synagogue music composed only for the orthodox ritual, and that their works are not suited to the new version of the Union Prayer Book. To this we must answer that musician ship, plus some knowledge of Hebrew, mixed with a little judgment (for this surely ought to be part of the equipment of a dealer of music in the synagogue) can adopt any one of their works for use in our modern synagogues.

So that, with the portals of this tremendous and valuable library of synagogue music open to our eyes and ears we are enabled to draw from the genius and spirit of love and inspiration which these men poured into their works. Let us zealously guard our traditional melodies, for they are the sound-posts of our Faith.