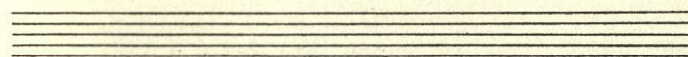


Of Jewish Music



ancient and modern

Israel Rabinovitch

*Translated
from the Yiddish
by A. M. Klein*

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OF THE EDITION DE LUXE

"OF JEWISH MUSIC"

BY ISRAEL RABINOVITCH



SIGNED BY THE AUTHOR

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the present volume there is included part of my book *Muzik bei Yidden*; the greater part, however, consists of new work, written since 1940, the year in which the Yiddish volume first saw publication.

Mr. A. M. Klein's translation speaks for itself, and I am most grateful to him for the time and effort he brought to my manuscript. His collaboration as translator I deem a special privilege.

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ISRAEL RABINOVITCH

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PART ONE

cantor, choir and organ; most of it is built on Torah cantillation and is developed in an interesting way.

Sholom Secunda, the well-known composer of operettas and of incidental music for the Jewish theatre, has written music also for the texts of Yiddish poets. His songs for voice and piano, marked by melodies whose qualities of warmth and feeling invariably win popularity, are frequently heard.

Secunda, born in 1894 in Alexandria near Cherson, and educated in Nikolayev, where his family moved in 1897, was brought by his parents to America in 1908. In Nikolayev Secunda had sung for cantors and indeed had already himself served as 'child-cantor'; this last calling of his was very useful to him when he came to New York and won himself acclaim in the various synagogues of the East Side as a cantor-prodigy. Soon, unfortunately, he lost his voice, and, becoming thus de-cantorized, betook himself to the study of music. He attended at Columbia University and at the Institute of Musical Art where, under Percy Goetschius, he studied theory, counterpoint and composition. Later he took instruction in instrumentation from Ernest Bloch.

His career in the Yiddish theatre Secunda began as choir-boy at the *Odeon*, where he was not hesitant to announce that he was also a composer. This announcement was met with incredulity until Secunda proved it in black and white by writing music for an operetta called *Justice* by Shloime Shmulevitz. The operetta was actually performed and, in fact, applauded, but Secunda still continued as choir-boy and, when necessary, as message boy.

In due course, however, while the number of his operettas continued to grow, he was recognized as one of the most important of composers for the Yiddish theatre. Some of his "numbers" received so immediate and far-flung a circulation that they were accepted as folk-songs. One of his songs, *Bai mir bist du schein*, became a popular American song, and for a while all America sang *Bai mir bist du schein*—to Yiddish words!

Secunda also wrote music for Yiddish films and composed an opera, *Shulamith*, based on Goldfaden's libretto, in which he used as themes and *leitmotifs* Goldfaden's principal melodies. He is also the author of a symphonic rhapsody, a string quartet, and a Chassidic suite for string quartet, clarinet, and piano.

Secunda's songs, though not always free from the theatrical *cliché*, are marked by sweet melody and good craftsmanship. Among his best songs may be mentioned *Zoll noch zein Shabbos*, by H. Rosenblatt, a splendid melody which, evocative of the Sabbath Afternoon Service,

conjures up the peculiar mood of the Sabbath twilight; *mima'amakim* (*De profundis*), by L. Leivick, a song, with exemplary accompaniment, of a most heart-warming melody, and *Es kumen loitere teg*, by Z. Shimel. Secunda's *chef d'oeuvre*, *Dos Yiddishe lied* (The Yiddish Song), on a text by Anshel Shor, has proved itself a veritable 'find' for concert-cantors, radio singers, and wedding entertainers. It is a song well-made and for the average Jewish listener sure to hit him 'where he lives.'

9. LABOR TEMPLE AND REFORM TEMPLE

It is clear from the biographies adduced in the chapters which have preceded that most of the creators of Jewish music in America found the ground for their labours not in the secular but in the religious spheres of Jewish life. Some there were, however, whose productivity is associated with circles definitely worldly, to wit, the various ideological movements of politics, the Socialist, the Poalei-Zionist, and the Communist.

We have already referred to the Poalei-Zionist choir organized in New York in 1911 by Platon Brunoff. Three years later a Workmen's Circle choir was established in the same city. At about the same time, Mr. Jacob Schaeffer organized in Chicago the "Jewish Socialist Gezangsverein" which later, under the influence of the Communists, was to become known as "The Freiheit Gezangsverein". And many years ago the Jewish National Workers' Alliance boasted also its choir.

It would appear that pure secularism or mere culture is not sufficient, in our circles, to move the muse. Something more is required, something in the nature of a faith, or creed; and this surrogate for religion was found in the various political ideologies which moved so many with their messages of hope and deliverance. Thus it was that the 'radical' movements provided in many instances the sought-for milieu in which the Jewish composer and musician could make his contribution to his people's culture.

Jacob Schaeffer, who was identified with the Communist camp was one who was hailed by his comrades as a 'proletarian' composer; and, in a sense, that he was. Certainly his background was proletarian: born in 1888 in Kremenitz, Volhynia, of very poor parents, he was early apprenticed to a carpenter. At the same time he served also as a choirboy in the local choir. Coming to America in 1911, he threw himself feverishly into the study of music—but only in the evenings; during the day, he had to earn his daily bread as a carpenter.

Schaeffer made progress in his studies, and in 1914 composed an oratorio, based on a poem by A. Lyesin, titled, significantly enough, "The Blood of Martyrs"; and a cantata on a poem by Yehoash called "Twilight". Other cantatas and oratorios followed: "The Twelve" (Alexander Blok); "The Two Brothers" (J. L. Peretz); "Messiah-Ben-Joseph" (B. Steinman); "October", "Biro Bidjan" and "Kein Einziger Shpan" (all of Peretz Markish); and others.

According to Israel Korenman (*Yiddishe Kultur*, December, 1946), the early works of Schaeffer still show "alien" influences; it is only in his oratorio "The Two Brothers" and in the works which follow that the composer begins to speak his own "revolutionary language." This is a statement by one who is himself a musician. Much of the literature concerning Schaeffer reads, as a matter of fact, more like party propaganda than like criticism of music. An objective appraisal of the man remains yet to be written. That he was a most interesting phenomenon in music, of this there can be no doubt; his exact status as a composer has yet to be determined.

In 1930 Schaeffer visited the Soviet Union, where he spent about three months, and had some of his works performed. During the following years his hectic activities exhausted him, bringing on his death in 1936 at the age of forty-eight.

* * *

The first conductor of the Freiheit Gezangsverein, which came to the fore in 1923, was Lazar Weiner, at that time not yet known as a composer, but already warmly appreciated as a conductor. He was the first to perform in New York the oratorios of Schaeffer. After Weiner left the choir, Schaeffer undertook its direction himself, and acted as its conductor throughout his lifetime.

Having broken with the Communists, Weiner organized and led a number of Jewish choral groups. In 1931, after the death of Meyer Posner, he assumed the leadership of the Workmen's Circle Choir in New York, which, flourishing mightily under his baton, was to serve as the centre and laboratory of his own creative work as a composer.

It is Weiner's association during many years with Jewish workers' choirs which is largely responsible for the fact that much of his work is choral in form and of social significance in content. It is, however, not because of these associations that Weiner is to be considered, as he is, a radical in composition. The experience of musicians in the Soviet Union proves beyond doubt that political radicalism need not necessarily involve radical techniques; that, on the contrary, it may frequently be joined to what in music is conservative, if not 'reactionary.'

Right at the outset of his career as a composer Weiner betook himself to the modern and indeed the radical, and although he was associated as a conductor with groups radical in the social and political sense, it is not to be assumed that these his audiences were better prepared to receive his musical radicalism, his technical heterodoxies, than the most bourgeois of the bourgeois. The truth is that in bourgeois society one was better attuned to such musical innovation than in the most radical of workers' groups. All the greater, therefore, is to be considered Weiner's achievement with the Workmen's Circle choir; he not only brought it to a high degree of competency and skill—this in itself, would have been enough—but he also used the choir as an instrument wherewith to lead the Jewish masses out of the well-beaten paths of the hackneyed. These are conquests which Weiner achieved, not only through his indefatigable energy, but above all through his mesmeric skill as a conductor.

Weiner, moreover, is of those chosen few in Jewish music who feel and demonstrate both their bond of kinship with Jewish writers and their affinity with Jewish literature. One might go so far as to say that Weiner is a musical off-shoot of that modernist movement in literature which brought to Yiddish poetry new resources of expression and colour.

One is not surprised to learn, therefore, that Weiner was one of the first of Jewish composers to adopt an approach to Jewish poetry which differed fundamentally from that of his predecessors, and even of his contemporaries. Dedicated to an artistic musical integrity, little was he concerned with the possibility, in some instances the certainty, that the 'difficulty' of his music might delay, or even prevent, its general public acceptance. The risk was obvious: to turn off, in a song intended for singing, from the open diatonic highway so as to deviate into chromatic by-paths was a sure and certain method to lose an audience which had hardly progressed beyond the folk-song.

Yet the risk had to be taken. For the diatonic, fixed and frozen, is not a fit medium to communicate those nuances, those half-tones, which are the distinguishing features of true poetry, classic or modern. To treat an art-song as if it were a folk-song would be as incongruous as to teach Talmud with a kindergarten pointer. The poet Yehoash understood this problem well; writing to Joseph P. Katz—the letter is reproduced in the introduction to Katz's *Yiddishe Lieder—Alte un Naye* (1917)—he said: "The contents of your collection may be categorized under three headings: 1) non-Jewish classical composition, written to well-known poems whose texts you Judaized; 2) Jew-

ish folksongs; and 3) music for original Yiddish poems by Yiddish writers. For your folksongs I can have nothing but praise. As for the third class, your music-makers, it would appear, did exactly like that rabbi who, knowing but one sermon, applicable to the *Parsha* of one solitary Sabbath sermoned it all the Sabbaths of the livelong year. . . . Some of our composers, I am afraid, know very little about Jewish poetry."

Lazar Weiner, it is gratifying to note, is not of this monotonous company. He knows much, very much, about Jewish poetry, and his musical 'sermons' are legion. Take, for example, a poem of such profound content and such grotesque form as M. L. Halpern's *A Story Touching the World*—Weiner gave it the chromatic treatment. And, indeed, how otherwise could we have coped with its subtleties? Yet this was enough to condemn the song to remain forever unsung.

But Weiner is a stubborn man, and is not easily smitten dumb. If he could not himself sing his solos, he still could himself sing his choral compositions and cantatas. Grant him but a choir—no matter what kind of a choir—and you may be sure that under his wand, even those compositions at which his singers look dubiously, like the rooster on to the page of *Bnai Adam*, will, with God's help, finally submit to singability, and will indeed be well sung. It is only because he himself led and directed them that such cantatas as *Once Upon a Time, Man in the World, To you, America*, find their way to the ears, and eventually the hearts, of a wide Jewish audience on this continent.

Lazar Weiner hails from Cherkass, near Kiev, where he was born in 1897, the son of poor parents. When but seven years old he was entered in the synagogal choir and drew much attention to himself through his sweet renditions, and when ten he was accepted as a choir-boy in Djimitrovski's choir attached to Brodsky's Synagogue in Kiev. According to Zaleski (*Famous Musicians of Jewish Origin*; Bloch, 1949) Djimitrovski, impressed by Weiner's talent, gave him special attention even to the extent of teaching him piano. In 1911 Weiner entered the Conservatorium at Kiev where he followed the prescribed course for three years, and in 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, he emigrated, together with his parents, to the United States. Here he found employment as a piano accompanist in a studio in Carnegie Hall and continued to pursue his musical studies. Among his teachers were Frederick Jacoby and Joseph Shillinger.

While in his very first compositions, written to the texts of modern Yiddish poets, one still notes the influence of the French impressionists, especially of Debussy, there is already made manifest Weiner's inten-

tion to express himself in the idiom of his own times. In time there is noted in his compositions a special technique for the building of chords which, according to certain theoreticians, is particularly adaptable to the nature of the Jewish melos; this is the technique of quartal, in preference to triadic, harmony. Weiner, of course, is not the only modern Jewish composer to have adopted this technique, but whereas for the others it is one technique of several, for Weiner it is the technique *par excellence*, his broad highway; and this, it appears to me, is a defect which gives to his music a too stereotyped character.

One hastens, however, to add that this loyalty to a single discipline does not hinder Weiner's unmistakable inventiveness. His polyphonic choruses move with a controlled and masterly fluency. In his songs as in his cantatas one can not but be impressed by the logical consistency which prevails between the words and their tonal expression. And the achievement of these felicities is invariably marked by an ingenuity of means.

A few examples will suffice. In his cantata, *Once upon a time*, there is the passage where the baritone soloist sings: "We live buried beneath the earth, like mice, and mine coal for our master and lord. . ." The music to which these words are sung suggest, in their tones, somewhat of what the words convey; it is not a precise and realistic mimesis that one hears; it is a characterization, through certain rhythmic and harmonic combinations, an evocation, a musical empathy which gives in sound the mingled experience of the mining of coal and the scurrying of mice.

The poem by J. Goichberg, upon which the cantata is built, has nothing in it which is specifically Jewish in colour; nonetheless, the music has been constructed largely upon themes that are traditionally Jewish. The justification of this method is an obvious one. When a Jew tells a story, no matter of what kind or origin, his manner of telling it, if not his articulated idiom, is bound to reveal his identity. And Weiner, too, thus reveals himself: as principal theme he uses a motive which is to all intents and purposes an echo of the prophetic mode of the Haftoras. There are also other thoroughly Jewish themes and, for good measure, a melody of European genre adopted from one of David Edelstadt's revolutionary songs. All this thematic material is brought together in a logical arrangement which moves from mood to mood in harmony with the connotations of the text of the poem. Even the harmonies alternate, in some places, from classic to modern and from modern to classic.

In his cantata, *To You, America*, words by A. Leyeles, the same

characteristics are observable. One of the passages in the poem is sung as follows:

*Through terror, shame, through tortures, ghettos, savage
blindness,
I found this land where barriers fell, like walls in Jericho*

At first we hear the dissonances with which the music makes vivid the shame, the terror, and the torture of the ghettos; but immediately thereafter, at the words "I found this land where barriers fell", the choir joins in harmonious blend with the leitmotif.

Another noteworthy feature of Weiner's cantatas is the fact that despite the constant transition from mood to mood, a necessity which gives to the tonal texture a somewhat rhapsodic character, the whole composition — through a systematic interweaving of the themes, now in one incarnation, now in another—is continually held to a strictly formal and coherent integrity.

Weiner's collection of twelve songs for voice and piano based upon the texts of modern Yiddish poets (Metro Music Co. New York 1948) affords convincing example of both his consummate originality and his maturest development. It begins with a poem, called *Yiddish*, by J. I. Segal:

*Yiddish, golden well of mine!
It was your waters that the Baal Shem drank,
And the Holy Maggid of Mezeritch
And he of Bratzlav, and the Berditchever,—
And so many of the humble poor.
In wandering the roads of many countries
And in the everlasting in-between-world
Where kindled are both truth and legends
Yiddish—O well of shining light!*

The melody for these words is at once psalmodic and implorative; its continual gravitation towards the sub-dominant is typical. The accompaniment, moreover, is entirely removed from the routine; it is not a mere side-by-side flirtation with the principal melody, but a chromatic superstructure, subject to its own melodic rules, and communicates itself as a kind of impressionist reflection of the deeply traditional mode and its associations. We have before us an art-song where the musical tones provide not merely a singing-forth of the text, but a commenting thereon.

The second song *Tarantella* is based on a text by Al-Guryah. The

tarantella dance, according to Italian folk-lore, is a sort of prophylaxis against the poisonous bite of the spider of that name. The poem sets out to convey in words an impression of the nature of this dance, and Weiner's music declares a similar purpose. The composition is set in a kind of counter-rhythm, 6:8 against 2:4; when the voices sing to 2:4 time, the piano accompaniment is 6:8. It is a most complicated composition, masterfully conceived, and in performance dynamic.

What has been said before applies also to Weiner's rendering of a poem by Jacob Glatstein, *Melalai*, a tragic lament couched in strange, pagan accents.

*Melalai,
Now who will bring our children to burial, Melalai?
O beat your head upon the pavement
O lift up your head unto great weeping
For the festive is gone from our house.
The gods have shamed us,
Melalai.*

Weiner communicates the sadness and tragedy of this poem in an idiom definitely exotic. Regardless of the chromatic character of his tonalities, which serve Weiner's purpose much better than the diatonic, the melodic line is still constructed in a manner which evokes an age-old Jewish mode of plaintiveness. What we have here is a chant in which the line ever descends chromatically, concluding in a Phrygian, or rather

Hypo-Phrygian, cadence. (See reference to old plaintive mode in Chapter XIV).

The most notable thing about this cycle of songs is its compositional versatility. Each one of these poems is treated according to a melodic and harmonic plan all its own: where the text requires the folk-manner, there it is, in its full traditional emphasis; there where the theme is general, universal, the treatment too is apparently removed from the Jewish traditional, although even here, it must be confessed, one suspects its existence behind the facade of modern tonal technique. Thus another of Glatstein's poems, *Tzela-Tzeldi*, differs radically in its harmonies from *Melalai*; where *Melalai* was at once archaic and modern, this poem is treated neo-classically throughout.

To be signalized as a shining thing in this cycle is *Der Sholem Zochor* composed on a text by Itzik Manger. The melody is taken from the old folksong which the poet himself used for theme and is splendidly developed by Weiner. The special humour of the piece certainly does not escape the composer who achieves in this song a happy harmony of word and tone.

By way of contrast there are two poems by Chaim Krul, poems of sorrow and anguish, which Weiner masterfully renders into song. Both are set, aptly enough, in that counter-rhythmic form to which we have already adverted it; it is a form which serves wonderfully to communicate that shattering of spirit which issues from the words of the poem.

Then there is a poem full of humour and folksy grace, Lutzki's *A Beard*:

*The white beard
Wishes to escape from the old Jew's chin and jowls
To the windy out-doors—
It flutters like a flag.
Under the trembling fingers
Of his left hand
The cap on his head billows and puffs
And chuckles and rolls in laughter
Into his right ear.*

Weiner's device for the musical illustration of this poem is an archaic motif set against an accompaniment of arpeggios which simulate a windy world.

Minkov's poem, "*Ich hob far dir a sod a Zissen*" Weiner renders in a modal melody with a harp-like accompaniment which serves as

a kind of plucking forth of innuendo and suggestion. In one of the passages he goes even further:

*And ceaselessly I weave my dreams, my dreaming,
Most secret labyrinths of reverie . . .
Comes day, and all is flown: where shall I find you?
For there you stand, and there you're gone, escaped from me!*

The accompaniment is marked by a dynamic pulsation at the exclaimed *There you stand!* and then leaps, with harp-like saltation, at the words *And there you're gone, escaped from me!* Thereafter, all returns to the arpeggios, as in the beginning.

Leyeles' poem, *Monotone*, is rendered in simple melody with—as was to be expected—monotone accompaniment.

The collection concludes with a moving elegy: *El Molai Rachmim*, text by Ephraim Auerbach. Not only does the melody of this composition lament and weep in traditional manner, the chords of the accompaniment do likewise and the whole gives the impression of something deeply-felt, deeply-lived.

And finally there is a religious work, a Friday evening service according to the Reformed Prayerbook, called *Shir l'Leil Shabbath*, published by Mills Music Inc., New York, 1948. Written in the so-called Neo-Hebraic style, it is modally archaic in its themes, although contemporary in execution: Beginning with *Toiv l'Phoidoith*, we immediately recognize Weiner's characteristic manner—something similar was heard in *Once upon a time*—the harmony moves in fourths and fifths. *May the words* is marked by the most startling ingenuities. Thus in the short organ introduction there is heard a sort of *Akdomos* motif joined polyphonically to a second melody; the same is heard again in the organ accompaniment; and the whole gives the impression of something tantalizingly mysterious.

V'shomru is set in the true mode, but in a form archaic—the prayer is kept throughout in the ancient church Dorian scale—the scale from D to D, without the B $\flat$ of the D minor. This is quite a strict formalization of the traditional mode which has only in part, but not throughout, as in Weiner's composition, the major sixth. This, however, does not prevent a complete exemplification of the traditional Sabbath mode; the composition as a whole is indeed a splendid one.

One of the finest examples of the Neo-Hebraic is Weiner's *Mi Chomocho* where the archaic manner is maintained in its full glory by means of quartal harmony. A fine effect is achieved at the words: *Noro sehilos, oiseh feleh*. This epithet — "fearful in praises, doing wonders"—is at first communicated in a secret soft pianissimo sung by

the higher voices; then, as in a mighty echo, it is heard again, fortissimo, from the lower voices. It is as if one had heard at first the soft voice of revelation, hardly audible, in a moment through a mighty echoing confirmed and boldly stated. In this case, dissonant harmony—if one may still use the old phrase—is as if ideally ordained for precisely this mystical effect.

Oleinu l'shabe-ach begins with a cantor-solo, the modal melody whereof is accompanied by chords of open fifths which create an effect exotic. At *v'anachnu koireem* there follow responses from the choir couched in orthodox thirds set against a quintal accompaniment. One gets the impression that Weiner is putting the statement of an attitude into the mouths of the choirsingers: "In this prayer where everybody and all bow down before the *Adon Hakol*, the Lord of All, let us sing in the manner of past generations, for of these matters they knew better than we . . ." It is quite possible, of course, that Weiner had no such intention, that all he was interested in was the purely musical effect; if so, he builded better than he knew, and uttered more than he sang.

The whole work ends with a fine composition for the text of *Adon Olom*. Although one senses to a certain degree the influence of Bloch's *Sacred Service*, particularly in the rhythmic formulation of the melody, this *Adon olom* as a whole bears a character totally different from Bloch's; it is more simple and hymnlike.

As a full-length composition, Weiner's Friday evening service constitutes a successful attempt to communicate the essence of our traditional service, not by way of literal rendition, but in a recreated and purified form. And its Hebraism, not an invented one, flourishes and has its roots in the living tradition.

For Weiner this approach was not a new one; he had already made it in connection with his secular work. Indeed, it is an interesting paradox of contemporary Jewish musical history that it should be precisely the "Yiddishist" who should prove himself to be so competent a Hebraist. One may seek far and in vain to discover a composition more Hebraic in its character than Weiner's splendid choral song *The Words of the Prophet* (text by L. Magister). The same characterization is true also of a number of passages in the cantata *To You, America*, and in *Once Upon a Time*.

It remains only to note that Weiner's work, both in the number of its pieces and in the variety of its forms, is substantial and that he has written for most of the instruments—for piano, which is his own special medium, for voice and piano, violin and piano, cello and piano, a

prelude and fugue for a complete orchestration. His latest work is a cantata *Prologue to The Golem* by H. Leivick.

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Another talented conductor and composer who divides his creative activities between the Reform Temple and the "Labour Temple" is Max Helfman. After the death of Shaeffer it was Helfman who took over the leadership of the Freheit Gezangsverein, which later changed its name to *Philharmonic Folk Choir*, contributing much, both as conductor and as composer, to its progress until several years ago when he resigned. He wrote for it special music; he also wrote music to accompany the choreographic numbers of a social tendency which it used to put on the stage. Nonetheless, Helfman, it must be stated, was not entirely swallowed up by this substitute for religion, the real thing continued to have its attractions for him, and it is in the latter field that this most creative work was accomplished.

Born in Poland in 1901, Helfman was brought to America when he was but eight years old. His religious education, begun in the country of his origin, was continued in New York, where he attended also the public schools and served as a choirboy for cantors. In a number of music schools which he attended and where he proved to be an outstanding scholar, winner of prizes and bursaries, he obtained a thorough grounding in his chosen vocation. A three-year fellowship to The Curtis Music School in Philadelphia afforded him the opportunity to learn under authorities in their fields the various disciplines of his art. Since that time Helfman has won himself considerable renown through the accomplishment, as musical director of The Brandeis Youth Foundation, of a number of projects of high educational value. The principal objective in this work, in fact, is to create in Jewish youth of musical talent a desire to devote that talent to its own national music.

Among Helfman's religious compositions there is a service for Friday night called *Shabbas Kodesh*—a truly magnificent thing. Here we have music in which loyalty to tradition and technical expertness go hand in hand, where the authentic Jewish melos is poured forth in purest musical form. Rightly has Helfman realized that in liturgic music simplicity is of the essence, and that simplicity is not coarseness but the highest degree of refinement achieved through masterly effect. Although this work is varied in its moods—all traditional—Helfman does succeed in maintaining thematic kinship between part and part. It is to the unrelenting consistency of style that must be attributed the achievement of this organic integrity.

The work begins with *Mah Toivvu*—a thing, not only splendid in

itself, but one which carries within itself all those thematic seeds which are to sprout forth, grow, and flourish in the course of the whole Service. *L'cho doidi*, which follows immediately thereafter, is heard, naturally enough, as a direct corollary of the *Mah Toivu* theme, with the modification, of course, that its development is continually controlled so as to harmonize with the special content of its text. They are things of beauty—Helfman's renditions of the stanzas beginning *L'cho doidi*, *Hisor'ri* and *Boyi v'sholom*. The *Borchu* is in the traditional manner, as is also the *Shma Yisroel*. In the choral *Mi Chomocho*, Helfman achieves, with an economy of means, great triumphs of sweep and imagination. The same is true of *Hashkeevainu*—warmly Jewish as it is, simple—and yet of a deceptive simplicity, for all here has been raised to its aesthetic altitude only by dint of great control and purifying effort. *V'shomru*, too, is a wonderful composition, fantasy playing about the tradition, rather than the tradition itself; the polyphonic mastery of choral song as well as the archaic beauty of the cantorial solo rendering "For a sign it is, between me and the children of Israel, forever" provide passages of great art. The traditional character of his *Kaddish* is, in a Reform Temple, nothing less than a refreshing of the soul. The *Kiddush* is in the cantillatory style, and the *Adon Olom*, although after the manner of the folk, appears to be but another formulation of the elements which had already made their appearance in the Service. The work as a whole bears the hallmark of good composition—all therein is ramified and spread out from the one root and stem.

Among his secular pieces there is the cantata *The New Haggadah* (text by Itzik Feffer) in which the composer achieves a great pathos of lamentation in elegizing the six million martyrs of recent times. This is, moreover, not the usual music of mourning, for here there is not only the inditing of sorrow, but also an indictment of crime. With dramatic power its choruses move onward to reach their tragic climactic heights where all is a weeping and a ululation, not only for the passing of the six million of Jewry, but for the corruption and degeneration of the whole race of mankind.

10. JOEL CHAJES

Throughout the Jewish world the name of Joel Chajes, composer, pianist, and conductor, is everywhere associated with Israeli song; no wonder; songs of his, such as *Yafim Halailoth b'Canaan* (Palestinian Nights), *Adarim*, and *Galil* are sung and enthusiastically received wherever Jews congregate. This—to be the singer of the Return—is

in itself a great achievement, but Chajes' successes transcend even that distinction.

One has but to listen to an Israeli song to realize that here there is something *sui generis*, that with its new light and liveliness has entered our life, for this song is the song of the straightened back knowing an erectness it has not known for centuries, the song of joy, creative, on the march, moving towards redemption and destiny. It is, to all intents and purposes, the response to that prophetic imperative which in Jewish life has been iterated and re-iterated through the medium of the *L'cho Dodi*: *Arise, my people, from the dust! Put on thy beauteous raiment!* In the songs sung in Israel, our people does indeed lift itself from the varied dusts of exile, does indeed rouse itself to banish that lugubrious self-pity which too frequently has been the mark of exilic song. Israeli song, moreover, is now distinguished, for the first time in two thousand years, by notes long stifled in our midst—the pastoral note, the sweet quietude of idyllic life, the love of the soil, the zest of creation. And all of this—the spirit of reborn Israel as well as its special melos—Chajes has made his own, and no matter where Chajes may hereafter dwell, his place as a creator of contemporary Israeli song is assured.

Keenly conscious of the history of his time, Chajes brings its outstanding events to expression in music. One of his cantatas, *Zion, Rise and Shine* is, as it were, a kind of musical greeting of the messianic advent. Nor has he ignored the sombre prelude, the long cauchemar of fear and agony which preceded the sudden breaking of the dawn. His *Psalm 142*, published in 1941 by Transcontinental, splendidly performed two years earlier at New York's World's Fair, communicates the pathos of the Psalmist's words:

I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make supplication.

I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. . .

Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

This cantata, masterly in its technique, is yet of a most eloquent simplicity. The composer, it appears, intentionally sought to reach the heart of the people through accents simple, forthright; elaboration might have constituted a wall between composer and audience; as it is, in clear pulsations heart speaks to heart.

Of greater complication and compositional development is Chajes's cantata of consolation, *Zion, Rise and Shine*. The themes for