



The Power of Choral Singing

Ani Ve'atah
You and I -
together we're going to change the world.
You and I -
then all the others will come along.
It's been said already, before me;
that makes no difference.
You and I -
together we're going to change the world.
You and I -
let's start all over again.
There will be wicked opposition.
That's nothing; it's not so bad.
It's been said already, before me;
that makes no difference.
You and I -
together we're going to change the world.

In 1971 this song by Miki Gabrielov and Arik Einstein became a popular anthem for Israelis of the "Aquarian generation." Full of fervent and naive optimism, it was the Israeli counterpart to such international pop slogans as "All You Need Is Love," "Let the Sun Shine In," and "All We Are Saying Is Give Peace a Chance."

But then came the '80s and the '90s. Ani Ve'atah (You and I) was reduced to Ani (Me). Optimism was crushed under the weight of mistrust. "All You Need Is Love" gave way to "Show Me the Money."

This culture of pessimism and egocentrism came to have dire consequences for its practitioners. As Philip Roth wrote in his 1993 novel Operation Shylock, "You know what's at the heart of the misery of a breakdown? Me-itis. Microcosmosis. Drowning in the tiny tub of yourself." [Simon & Schuster, 1993, p. 55]

Was there a way out of this "tiny tub?" How could we regain that sense of interconnectedness, of sharing and caring?

For many of us, that question is a "no-brainer." We've never lost that feeling of global interdependence, of living in harmony. We're choral singers. We understand that one voice alone cannot create harmony. We understand that even a group of many voices, if they are all singing the exact same thing, has not created harmony. We understand that the special beauty that is called "harmony" can exist only when people come together to sing their different notes at the same time, in the same place, based on an agreed-upon model, each individual submerging part of his or her ego in order to create a unified whole.

As my colleague Nick Page said so eloquently,

More and more people are returning to the choral experience. People feel the biological need to

sing with others-to use the choral art as a healing art. People ... are returning to the choral arts out of a need to touch the divine-to experience what the Hindus call "Nadha Brahma"--to feel the mysterious harmony that is manifested in all things, to become spiritually renewed. [The Choral Journal, March, 1998, p. 10.]

Ani Ve'atah is back. It is there for those who have rediscovered the writings of Martin Buber, whose "I and thou" philosophy must have in-spired our little song. It is there for those who understand the necessity of respecting and trusting the "other"--"I" reaching out to "thou." It is there for the men and women of all stripes who are involved in tikkun olam, the healing and transformation of the world.

Michael Lerner explains this concept in his book Jewish Renewal:

Human beings become more fully them-selves through a process of mutual recognition, ... God is the Force in the universe that makes possible the process of recognition, and part of what is recognized is the God within each one of us.

The historical project of the Jewish people is to be witnesses to the possibility of healing, repair and transformation of the world, and the rejection of all forms of cynicism and pessimism.... [God is] the Force in the world that makes possible the transformation of that which is to that which ought to be. [Groset/Putnam, 1994, pp. xviii-xx]

Again, we are struck by the nexus of spirituality and music. Lerner's words were foreshadowed in the seventeenth century by Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hassidic movement. The Rebbe is reported to have said, "Music is what takes you from where you are to where you want to be."

That's why choral singing is so very special. Our "community of expression" takes us to "where we want to be," using a formula that eliminates the possibility of egocentrism. Choral singing offers us a taste of that utopian harmo-ny for which we all yearn.

-Joshua Jacobson

Alumni Column

Mazal Tov to Zamir alumni:

Bill and Helen Kunin on the birth of their twins, Nat and Miriam, in January.

Rabbi Faith Joy (Smith) and David Dantowitz on the birth of their son, Samuel Isaac, in April.

Estelle Kunoff on her marriage to Joseph Epstein, in June.

Lynne (Herschfus) and Michael Blander on the birth of their daughter, Tova, in July.

Rabbi Josh Elkin on his new position as Executive Director of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education. Josh had served as Headmaster of the Solomon Schechter Day School in Newton for twenty years.

Mazal Tov to Zamir member Francine Beth (Ferraro) on her marriage to David Rothkopf on June 21.

If you have news that you'd like to share, please let us know!

- Susan Carp-Nesson, Alumni Chairperson

"The Songs Live On" A JOURNEY BACK TO OUR MUSICAL ROOTS

The Zamir Chorale of Boston is now making plans for an Eastern European Concert Tour in July of 1999. The tour will simultaneously mark the 30th anniversary of our chorale and the 100th anniversary of the first Zamir Chorale, founded in 1899 in Lodz, Poland. The 14-day itinerary of performances, cultural exchanges, and educational excursions in venues in Warsaw, Krakow, Vienna and Prague will represent a recognition and perpetuation of our cultural roots. We will be paying tribute to the great nations that gave birth to our unique choral traditions. By revisiting the cities and sites where Jewish musical culture flourished at key moments in our history, we will not only come to better understand who we are, but we will remind others that the strong voices that emanated from these halls have not been silenced.

In 1899 the 18-year-old Joseph Rumshinsky was appointed conductor of the Zamir Chorale in Lodz. Rumshinsky later recalled of the first rehearsal, "When we stood up and started to sing, a holy musical fire was kindled by the first Jewish choral ensemble in the world." Today we, with the support of our communities, carry on the tradition of expressing our connection to ancient traditions within a modern cultural framework, using music not only to stimulate aesthetic sensibilities, but also as an educational tool to explore the colorful and varied cultures that Jews have created over the past 2000 years, and as a musical banner of our ethnic pride.

We hope to create an exciting and moving documentary film of our anniversary journey. Far from simply a "concert film," the documentary will capture the range of experiences we will encounter: personal, social, musical, emotional, spiritual, religious, cultural and historical. From the Warsaw Ghetto to the Terezin and Auschwitz camps, to cosmopolitan Prague, to the famous Seitenstettengasse Temple in Vienna, we will lift our voices in joy and respectful recognition of the Jewish communities who are still there and those whose voices were silenced during the Holocaust.

We are asking our supporters, all of those who share our vision of an international Jewish cultural revival and a respectful commemoration of those who came before us, to help make the tour and film a reality through providing financial support. Opportunities exist to sponsor tour concerts in honor or memory of a loved one or community. In addition, any financial contribution at any level would be most appreciated. We look forward to representing the greater Zamir community in this important commemorative tour.

- Heather Zacker, Tour Committee Chairperson



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