

From the Executive Director

Dan Rostan

There we were: performing at Madison, Wisconsin's Masonic Temple Auditorium as headliner concert, opening the 2000 divisional conference of the American Choral Directors Association. There we were: a Jewish choir from Boston in the middle of the Midwest, singing for a non-Jewish audience. And our music did exactly what music sometimes does in rare and special moments: it connected people to one another who never dreamed they could be connected.

A hundred years after the founding of the first Jewish communal chorus, we have witnessed the rise of a Jewish artistic and intellectual movement, its near obliteration in an unthinkable holocaust, and a second, more extraordinary rebirth. Back in 1899, it would have been difficult to imagine the intellectual and cultural wave represented by the HaZomir Chorus taking root, thriving, then becoming illegal in just a few decades, with its participants marked for death. But it would have been more unimaginable still to think that 100 years hence, American Jews would in good nature be elbowing gentiles to "get with it"---to discover Jewish music as the serious and substantial music that it is!

Jewish music has come a very long way in the twentieth century and so, likewise, has the Zamir Chorale of Boston. Today's Zamir is more than an excellent Jewish choir from Boston. It is America's exemplary Jewish choir. Preservers of Jewish musical culture, Zamir brings Jews to a better appreciation not only of their ethnic roots, but also of their fellow Jews. And as ambassadors of Jewish musical culture to the larger world, Zamir is helping instigate a great renaissance of respect for Jewish music, and through it, a rebirth of respect for Jews and Judaism. Who would have thought that the Jewish urge for musical expression could progress from something grudgingly tolerated by the authorities to a form of that quintessential Jewish obligation, *Tikun Olam* (world healing), in so short a time?

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