

BRAUN WINS HALLEL V'ZIMRAH AWARD

The Zamir Choral Foundation's 2006 *Hallel V'Zimrah* Award was presented to Israeli composer Yehezkel Braun, the Israel Prize winner who has written so many choral pieces that have become classics in our repertoire. Yehezkel and his wife, Shula, traveled from Israel and spent the week with us. So many of the Festival participants were thrilled to meet this legend and a steady stream of singers approached him throughout the week to thank him for the beauty he has brought to their lives.

In addition to the many performances of Yehezkel Braun's music throughout the week, a true highlight was the world premiere of his *Kobelet*, written especially for the Festival, and performed by Zamir Choral Foundation Founder and Director Matthew Lazar and his instant ensemble. ☸

A steady stream of singers approached him throughout the week to thank him for the beauty he has brought to their lives.

250 teens on stage at Lincoln Center.
More on the HaZamir 13th Gala Concert, page 8



Yehezkel Braun and Matthew Lazar embrace at Hallel V'Zimrah Award ceremonies

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FROM THE MAESTRO'S PODIUM



As a child I was fortunate. My parents understood and loved music and being Jewish. They shared this love, and instilled these feelings in their children. Because

I learned early on to appreciate the experience of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Sulzer, Lewandowski, Gershwin, and Moshe and David Koussevitsky, I learned very early about high aesthetic principles: How to apply them and how to appreciate their limits.

How to quantify, or at least come to practical human terms with, the ineffable is what all art attempts; or more correctly, it is the experience with, and therefore of, the ineffable that art attempts to represent and recreate. I came to appreciate how the process of *t'shuvah* — return, answer, repentance — could be experienced through music's pattern of return, the A-B-A construct called Sonata Allegro form; and how the singing of an octave or a unison can fuel an attempt to get closer to the One inside ourselves and achieve a calm and unified nature; and even how unique the Jewish people are for having a national anthem in a minor key.

Because music unfolds in time and gives us an outlet and opportunity for our emotional qua aesthetic process, it can lead us to catharsis. And because music, for performers, is a recreative act where one is actually making the music, I learned the difference between merely adhering to the score and participating emotionally in it; and the parallel, the difference between merely adhering to a ritual and fully participating in it.

How to incorporate what was into what is and what will be is a constant challenge. But combining our particularist Jewish knowledge with our universalist musical/aesthetic knowledge can help us develop into fuller, more balanced human beings, able to simultaneously experience the joy of community-based music making and the joy of celebrating our Jewish identity. ☸

North American Jewish Choral Festival:

A LETTER FROM ISRAEL

To all the participants at the
17th annual North American Jewish choral festival

Dear friends,

Iwish I could address each one of you by name, or at least those of you with whom I had the pleasure of exchanging a few words, or a hug, or a smile. As it happens, I know only some of you by name, some of you only by sight. But I've heard *all* of you *singing*, and singing beautifully, expressively, with all your heart, as the saying goes in *Veabavta... bechol levavcha*. And seeing you all throughout those five happy days of *togetherness*, I felt the spirit of friendship and of joy, which is the spirit of Music, emanating from each one of you and filling the huge space in which you were gathered and even beyond, across the fields around and up to the mountains. Am I too romantic? — Perhaps. But this is exactly how I felt at moments, listening to your singing.

*I felt the spirit of friendship and of joy,
which is the spirit of Music,
emanating from each one of you*



I am writing to you all, also on behalf of Shula, my girl friend, the mother of our three children and the grandmother of our ten grandchildren. We both enjoyed immensely the five days of being with you all. It was a grand experience for us, not least because it was a *Jewish* experience, an experience of being part of a great people, of a great tradition, of a great present and, I strongly believe, of a great future.

Shula and I wish to thank you all, without mentioning names, all you singers, pianists, guitarists, drummers (and all other instrumentalists who played there), conductors, sound masters (the sound amplification was excellent), all the people behind the scene who took care that this huge festival runs smoothly. And, last but not least, the staff of the hotel, especially the lovely waiters and waitresses.

Still, I must mention one name. At the final evening, when I was presented with the *Hallel V'Zimrah Award*, it was Velvel Pasternak in person who gave me the great *Sbofar*, and I was so excited and shy, that I did not (I'm afraid) thank him properly. Dear Velvel, it was a very great moment for me, and I promise you that I am going to practice the blowing of this fearfully noble horn.

*Love to you all from
Shula and Yehezkel*



**Hallel V'Zimrah Award
winners Yehezkel Braun
(2006) and Velvel
Pasternak (2004)**

Love from Shula and Yehezkel

An Unforgettable & Glorious Experience



Matthew Lazar prepares his instant choir for their premiere of Yehezkel Braun's *Kohelet*



Debbie Friedman and Jack Mendelson exchange points of view during a "Fine Tuning" session



Matthew Lazar and Yehezkel Braun

The 2005 Festival saw noted Israeli arranger and composer, Gil Aldema, (pictured at the piano) receive the Zamir Choral Foundation's *Hallel V'Zimrab* Award for his contributions to Jewish choral music. Aldema traveled from Israel to attend the Festival, and in addition to receiving the award, also conducted a workshop on his arrangements of songs by Naomi Shemer and others. After receiving the award, he sat at the piano and led Festival participants in an



unforgettable open sing of Israeli songs by Shemer, Ehud Manor and others, all of whom he had closely known. "It was incredibly moving — the kind of thing you'll tell your grandchildren about," said one participant. "I sang the Israeli songbook with Gil Aldema!"

Bravo to Matthew Lazar and his staff! — BRW, New York (Veteran)

North American Jewish Choral Festival:

My Musical Adventure

This summer I attended the North American Jewish Choral Festival, one of the highlights of my life. From the word go I was hooked. As I stepped into the Hudson Valley Hotel, the entire foyer had been transformed into a giant *shuk* (market). The major music publishers were there, displaying their books with songs for choirs, children, festivals, simchas, and klezmer. You name it, they had it. There were CDs galore as well as Judaica stalls and information desks.

At the opening ceremony, music was distributed by Matthew Lazar, the founder and director of the NAJCF. As he stood on the stage and raised his arms, 500 choristers joined voices in song. It was wondrous. Imagine being in a room surrounded by five hundred people who can sing!

Every morning, all assembled for a massed session of community singing, where three different members of the faculty taught a song each, and so by the end of the Festival we'd experienced a wide variety of teaching styles and personalities. These people are at the top of their fields — the ones whose names appear in our music books, as the arrangers or composers. Later, we were split into five choirs, according to our sight-reading ability, ranging from beginners to professional singers, musicians and cantors. Musical talent was in abundance. The five choirs spent six sessions during the week with their conductors. I was in

Eleanor Epstein's choir. She is an extraordinary teacher and we were all besotted. At the start of each session, she would sit down at the piano and begin to play, without saying a word. There would be a hush in the room, and we would just be able to DO it. She was funny, unpredictable and often had us choked with emotion at the beauty of the sound we were able to produce under her guidance.

Festival Steering Committee member Rabbi Dan Frelander was always cheerful, funny and sweet. He gave us regular updates



Cantor Yaakov Motzen, Matthew Lazar, Cantor Nancy Abramson, Debbie Friedman, Cantor Jack Mendelson and Dan Frelander join in an impromptu late-night sing in support of Israel during its most recent war

Matthew Lazar with Ed Finkel



Josh Nelson performs



Yehezkel Braun and Jim Ball

Linda Borsykowsky, Matthew and Vivian Lazar, Al and Temma Kingsley



I have not stopped raving about my musical and emotional experience this past summer. – PF (First-timer)

An Unforgettable & Glorious Experience

on Israel, and we constantly offered up prayers and dedicated songs, which made a welcome change from the wave of anti-Israel feeling we get in the UK every time there is a crisis in the Middle East, not only in the press, but from members of our congregation and other Jews.

In addition, there were a variety of master classes, demonstrations and lectures to attend. One of the most interesting to me was the conversation between Debbie Friedman (composer of many of the popular songs we sing in the Reform Movement today), and Cantor Jack Mendelson, one of the most celebrated American cantors. They debated the place of popular, easy-to-relate-to songs in the synagogue service, as opposed to the traditional chants. It got quite heated and there was plenty of input from the audience.

In the evenings we were entertained by invited performers. Starting with "The Pirates of Penzance" sung and acted in Yiddish, which had us in stitches; through professional choirs; folk singers; and on the last night, culminating with Joshua Nelson, an African-American Jew who treated us to a performance of foot-stomping, rousing "Kosher Gospel." He had the whole audience clapping, cheering and rocking in the aisles. Who said Jews don't have soul?

This year the special guest was 84 year-old Israeli composer, Yehezkel Braun. We performed his music at every opportunity and it was a privilege to show him how much pleasure he has given to so many people. At the concluding concert, the instant choir consisting of the best sight-singers (conducted by Lazar) performed the world premiere of Yehezkel's exquisitely beautiful oratorio, set to the words of *Kobelet* (Ecclesiastes).

There was nothing left to top that, and it was the fitting finale to an unforgettable experience.

Roll on next summer!

Barbara Rosenberg



HaZamir LA conductor Kelly Shepard with his wife, Naomi, and the Lazars



Beth and Marty Aron



The Lazars with Howard and Judith Mayer



Matthew Lazar with Yehezkel and Shula Braun and Phyllis and Richard Rosen

Dennis Gilbert with Matthew Lazar



Members of the New Yiddish Chorale perform "Di Yam Gazlonim"



Here we are, all Jews from all streams of observance, working and sharing together in an incredible atmosphere. Thanks so much for all your hard work. – JR, Minneapolis, MN (Veteran)

North American Jewish Choral Festival:



Makhelat HaPishpishim (the Children's Choir) and their director, Ellen Allard



Matthew Lazar with Steering Committee members Dan Frelander and Marsha Bryan Edelman

You can't get such a glorious experience anywhere else in terms of numbers singing, the quality of the singing and the moving choice of repertoire.

— BBS, Ottawa, CAN (First-timer)



Enthusiastic audience members



Festival attendees singing the "Jewish Halleluyah Chorus" (Lewandowski's Psalm 150)



David Burger, composer/guitarist

I loved everything. This has been a life-altering experience for me. I thought I had experienced the gamut of Jewish life before this. Now it's complete. When can I sign up for next year? — BMP, Brooklyn, NY (First-timer)

An Unforgettable & Glorious Experience

Mati warms up the Festival participants



Community Sing



Festival interns from Gratz, HUC and JTS cantorial schools

The Robyn Helzner Trio performs with Eleanor Epstein and Zemer Chai



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*If you love Jewish music,
you've got to be there!*

All I want to do is sing for joy after this experience.

Thank you so much. – GG, Rockaway, NJ (Veteran)

NEWS FROM HAZAMIR

2005-06 was a watershed season for HaZamir. Not only did the International Jewish High School Choir celebrate its bar mitzvah year with a gala festival concert at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, but the HaZamir movement has doubled its size in less than two years! Since 2004, HaZamir has grown from eight choirs to sixteen. There are currently chapters in Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, East Brunswick, Fairfield County CT, Greater Washington, Houston, Hudson Valley NY, Israel, London, Los Angeles, Manhattan, North Jersey, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Providence, with more chapters in formation, and the outside world is starting to take notice. HaZamir has been invited by the United Nations to perform at the UN Annual Holocaust Day of Commemoration in January.

Plans are now being made for the two-day regional intervisitations. The high school singers are also well into their weekly rehearsals in preparation for the annual Festival in April, when all HaZamir chapters spend the weekend together and perform Sunday night in New York City. Mark your calendars: The gala concert this year will be on Sunday evening, April 22, at New York's historic Central Synagogue. The new HaZamir CD from the Gala 13th Anniversary Concert is now available for purchase through the Zamir Choral Foundation office.

With the 14th HaZamir season underway, we take pride in the contribution our HaZamir chapters are making to their local communities and to the international HaZamir movement. ☸



HaZamir singers perform at Lincoln Center

A HAZAMIRNIK SINGS OUT



I'll never forget what it felt like to stand on the stage at Lincoln Center — 250 Jewish kids from all over the country and even Israel — singing our

own music for the world to hear. Our many voices sounded as one, but loud and strong in that impressive hall full of people who had come to hear us sing. I was no longer just a member of the small local choir of 20 that had come together every Sunday at the Manhattan JCC to rehearse, rain or shine, what seemed like a frighteningly long list of hard four-part-harmony songs. I was now part of something much bigger. We had spent the previous two days in non-stop rehearsals, making music and new friendships along the way. We davened together; we ate together; we hung out together; and we sang together. I've never felt as proud as I felt that day when I walked onto the stage at Alice Tully Hall, took a deep breath, and sang my first note. I can't wait for this year's festival weekend. ☸

Talia Lefkowitz, HaZamir Manhattan

14th Annual Gala Performance

by HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Chorus

Sunday, April 22 at 7:30 p.m.

Central Synagogue, 65th Street at Fifth Avenue

Featuring HaZamir ensembles from Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, East Brunswick, Fairfield County CT, Greater Washington, Houston, Hudson Valley NY, Israel, London, Los Angeles, Manhattan, North Jersey, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Providence



A watershed season for HaZamir

FOUNDATION PROGRAMS INSPIRE

One of the tests of any communal organization is the extent of its impact beyond its own participants. One of the primary missions of the Zamir Choral Foundation has always been to inspire other choral communities to present innovative, inspirational programming that connects its members

choir to perform high caliber repertoire on a professional level. Under the baton of Matthew Lazar since 1972, Zamir has inspired the establishment of many other choirs in America. The Zamir Chorale was the first Jewish choir to sing mixed and by heart, a performance goal to which many choirs across the country now aspire.

The North American Jewish Choral Festival

In 1990, Lazar envisioned a forum for the burgeoning choral movement which had arisen from the two day choral festivals he had established eight years earlier. He expanded that in-gathering of choirs by including individual singers into what became the North American Jewish Choral Festival. The NAJCF, with its format of community sings, instant ensembles, major workshops and “one-shots,” and diverse performances, has proven so successful that now, cities in the US are holding their own mini-choral festivals and helping to promote the popularity of Jewish choral music.

The Festival introduced the idea of a world-wide Jewish choral movement and spurred the establishment of many other choral ensembles around the U.S. Some of these ensembles are community choirs, open to singers at all levels of experience, and others are semi-professional choirs but all bring their love for Jewish music to audiences throughout their communities. At every festival, there are 4–5 new start-up choirs that request time to perform.

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Cantor Sheldon Levin conducts Makhelat HaMercaz, a new community choir that he and co-director Cantor Anna Ott introduced at the 2006 Choral Festival.

and audiences to their Jewish heritage while maintaining the highest level of musical performance. The Zamir Choral Foundation, under the leadership of its founder and director, Matthew Lazar, has been the pioneer in much of the Jewish cultural programming in America and we are pleased that communities around the country are replicating programs initiated by the Foundation.

One of the primary missions of the Zamir Choral Foundation has always been to inspire other choral communities...

Zamir Chorale

It is well known that the Zamir Chorale, established in 1960 by Stanley Sperber, was the first independent Hebrew singing



Zamir Chorale in Concert

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The Zamir Choral Foundation has been the pioneer in much of the Jewish cultural programming in America.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Zamir Choral Foundation is proud to welcome the following new members to the Board of Directors:

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ZAMIR NEWSLETTER:

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 Vivian Lazar
 Elena Neuman Lefkowitz

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Jim Ball
 Rachel Banai
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Design and Production:

Joelle Silverman Miller



Edward J. Finkel is Vice-President of Development Consultants, Inc., a leading national fundraising counsel and management firm serving not-for-profit organizations throughout North America. Ed is a graduate of Boston University and Hebrew College (Boston) Prozdor. He and his wife Anita are the proud parents of two HaZamir of North Jersey alumni (Sherri and Zahava) and a HaZamir Chamber Choir Alumnus (Zahava). Ed volunteers as Business Manager for HaZamir of North Jersey and has been instrumental in helping to establish two international HaZamir choirs in England and Spain. He also is a Board Member of Masorti Olami and active with the Boston University Alumni Admissions Volunteers.



Elena Neuman Lefkowitz is a documentary filmmaker and former journalist who has been singing choral music for as long as she can remember. She has worked on three documentary films for PBS and written features for *Insight Magazine*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Forward*, and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. She is a graduate of Cornell and Yale Universities and was appointed by President George W. Bush last year to serve a five-year term on the governing council of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Elena began singing Jewish choral music with Zemer Chai, The Washington Jewish Community Choir, under the direction of Eleanor Epstein, and joined the Zamir Chorale upon moving to New York two years ago with her husband, Jay, and their three children. Daughter Talia joined Manhattan HaZamir last year and Elena became the parent representative for the choir. She filmed HaZamir's Bar Mitzvah Festival weekend, the footage from which she is merging with a promotional video she made for HaZamir last year.



Howard Mayer is active in commercial real estate in Connecticut and Florida, and serves as a business management consultant and advisory board member for several companies. A graduate of Brooklyn College, majoring in business administration, he serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations. Howard and his wife, Judith, travel to Israel every year with the Bridgeport, CT Federation mission, bringing clothing, household items and toys for olim to their sister city of Afula. Howard and his grandson also traveled to Uganda where they set up a Micro Bank to provide loans to members of the Abayudayah Jewish community there. The Mayers are members and active in five synagogues in the US, and have joined the Fuchsberg Conservative Center in Jerusalem. They are the proud parents of

three children, one of whom (Cantor Brian Mayer) is the conductor of Hazamir Providence, and grandparents of eight. Howard has been instrumental in setting up a HaZamir chapter in Fairfield County, CT.



Cantor Jacob Ben-Zion Mendelson is a faculty member of both the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the Hebrew Union College, and is the Cantor of Temple Israel Center of White Plains, NY. He is the immediate past president of the Cantors Assembly, the largest group of cantors in the world, and has appeared as both soloist and lecturer in many forums, including the North American Jewish Choral Festival. Most recently, Hazzan Mendelson was profiled in an award-winning documentary, *A Cantor's Tale*, currently playing in film festivals around the world.



Mark Raphael is serving as the Zamir Choral Foundation's new treasurer. Mark is the audit partner of Raphael & Sanders, LLP. He concentrates his practice on providing audit and business services in the coop housing area and entertainment related companies. Mark has served as Chairman of the employee benefit committee of Nassau Chapter of NYS Society of Certified Public Accountants and as President and Treasurer of a co-op board where he previously resided. In addition, he is an active member on the Board of Trustees of his synagogue and served as an officer for six years. Mark continues to be a member of various organizations, including the Council of NY Cooperatives and the NYS Society of CPA's.



Phyllis Rosen has been an active volunteer for many Jewish organizations and served on several boards of directors, but has a special love for the Jewish choral movement. She was a music major at the High School of Performing Arts and started out as a music major at Brandeis, before switching to chemistry. She later earned an M.S. in Secondary Education from Yeshiva University. Phyllis attended the North American Jewish Choral Festival in the early 1990's and as she explains, "I went and, as they say, the rest is history." She joined Shirah (The Jewish Community Chorus on the Palisades, conducted by Matthew Lazar) in 1996 after attending the NAJCF in Israel, and also sang in the Zamir Chorale for two years. Phyllis and her husband, Richard, raised three musical children, and three of their grandchildren have already started down the musical road. They will no doubt benefit from the new music commissioned through the Foundation's Jeanne R. Mandell Endowment for New Music generously established by Phyllis and Richard. ☸

Welcome new board members

FOUNDATION PROGRAMS
INSPIRE *continued from page 9*

HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Choir

HaZamir had its beginning in 1987 with the formation by Matthew Lazar of the All City Jewish High School Choir. In 1993 Lazar transformed this New York City based choir into HaZamir, which has become an international teen choral movement with chapters world wide. Today, Jewish high school choral singers are clamoring for the creation of HaZamir ensembles in their communities.

December 24/25 Programming

Many Jews face the familiar December dilemma when most cities shut down on December 24th. While some have chosen to go out for Chinese food and a movie, Matthew Lazar has provided a Jewish cultural alternative. In fact, the Zamir Chorale's annual December 24th concert, in 1983, was the first Jewish cultural programming in New York City on that evening. The December 24th concert has been followed by a December 25th Open Sing. For over 15 years the New York Jewish community has been singing its

own exuberant Jewish "Halleluyah Chorus" and participating in Zamir's Open Sing that rivals the many Messiah sing-ins around the country. Now, other cultural institutions in New York and across the country provide Jewish programming of their own on these two days.

Cultural Missions to Israel

Zamir has been taking singers to Israel since 1967. Zamir has never cancelled a trip to Israel because of the "Matsav" (situation). In fact during Israel's darkest moments, Zamir initiates cultural support of the State of Israel. During the three years of the last Intifada, The Zamir Choral Foundation brought five missions to Israel.

The Zamir Choral Foundation enjoys the support of many people, from the Foundation Board of Directors to the individual singers, conductors, professional and lay leaders who take part in and benefit from our programs. Through their efforts, the Zamir Choral Foundation remains a resource for the choral world and a source of education, entertainment and inspiration to the entire Jewish community. ☸

The Zamir Choral Foundation offers SINCERE APPRECIATION TO THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTERS:

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Good & Welfare

Mazal Tov to

Debbie and Joel Berger on the marriage of their daughter, Tara, to Brian Dawson
Dr. Leora Fishman (1968-74) on her marriage to Dr. Roy Gould
Muriel Jorgenson on the birth of a grandson, Daniel Israel Indivi
Alan Iny (2000 -) on his forthcoming marriage to Roberta Griff
Janis Daniels Klein (1975-76; 1998 -) on the birth of a grandson,
Jonathan Andrew Friedman
Helaine Ledany (1998 -) on the birth of a grandson, Mika Eliezer Ouaknine
Tina (1968-72) and Uri (1968-72; 2004-) Lemberger on the birth of a grandson,
Milo Jones Lemberger
Nili Schiffman (2001 -) on her marriage to Ethan Isenberg
Robin and Vice President Rabbi Gerald Skolnik (1968-73) and HaZamir Cleveland
conductor Cantor Laurel and Chanan Barr, on the marriage of their children,
Hillel Skolnik (HaZamir 1997-2001) and Sharon Barr

We extend our heartfelt condolences to

David Fishman (1968 - 1970; 1979-83; 1999 -) and Dr. Leora Fishman (1968 - 1974)
on the loss of their father
Caroll Goldberg (2000 -) on the loss of her father
Vivian Lazar (1964 - 68; 1998 -) on the loss of her father
Uri Lemberger (1967 - 72; 2004 -) on the loss of his mother
Len Moskowitz (1998 -) on the loss of his mother
Dr. Rashi Shapiro (1998 -) on the loss of his father
Cantor Deborah Tanzer-Cohen (1971-1977; 2003 -) on the loss of her mother

May they be comforted among the mourners for Zion and Jerusalem.

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