

# The Synagogue Journal

## 1856-2006

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Shabbat Shirah

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### Issue 6 Sacred Music

#### **From a Conversation with Joseph Goldfarb**

Joseph Goldfarb spoke with Carol Levin on May 2, 2002 about music at Kane Street Synagogue during the years his father, Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, led the congregation.

#### **“Israel Goldfarb (1879-1967) Rabbi, Cantor and Influential Composer”**

Provides excerpts from an article by Rabbi Henry Michelman for the “Encyclopedia Judaica.” Henry Michelman, Rabbi Goldfarb’s grandson, was Kane Street’s Rabbi from 1967 to 1971.

#### **Origins of “Shalom Aleichem”**

Many people are unaware that Rabbi Israel Goldfarb wrote this melody. We reprint Rabbi Goldfarb’s 1963 letter on the melody’s origins. The Rabbi’s daughter, Bella Goldfarb Lehrman, reminisced on June 20, 2003 on why it was written.

#### **Music by Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb**

The Preface to “The Jewish Songster” and “Synagogue Melodies for the High Holidays” are reprinted. (Contents of “The Jewish Songster”) (Contents of “Synagogue Melodies for the High Holidays”)

#### **“Sound of Music at Kane Street”**

*Credit: The Scroll, Winter 1996*

We reprint Rachel Epstein’s article about Kane Street Synagogue’s De Rossi Singers. The choral group, organized in 1976 and named after 17<sup>th</sup> century composer Salomone DeRossi, continues to delight us after thirty years.

#### **Music at the Boerum Place Synagogue**

Notes data such as, the titles of hymns, names of chazzan and the conditions of their employment, the use of organ music in the service and the composition of the choir.

*By Carol Levin*

#### **“Welsh’s Banjo – Causes Another Panic Among the Salvationists”**

*Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, June 9, 1887, Page 6*

This lurid report describes how banjo and tambourine playing led to a riot during the days when Kane Street Synagogue (once known as Harrison Street Synagogue) was a Salvation Army barracks.

#### **“City News and Gossip”**

*Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, June 19, 1856, Page 3*

Provides details about the new organ at the Middle Dutch Reformed Church on Harrison Street. Baith Israel bought this building with the organ in 1905. In 1928, Harrison Street was changed to Kane Street.

## **In this issue ...**

We commemorate sacred music. Shabbat Shira includes the song of the Israelites in Exodus 15: "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. And Miriam chanted for them: Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously."

The first five issues of "The Synagogue Journal" focused solely on the congregation's early decades. With this issue, the Journal looks at the singing of songs for Shabbat and holidays throughout the congregation's history. The Goldfarb era is well documented with personal accounts told by the Rabbi's family about the contributions of Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and his brother, Samuel E. Goldfarb to Jewish music and education as teachers, composers and compilers of music. We learn about the congregation's choirs, cantors hired for holidays, music directors, and the tradition of choral and congregational singing.

The story of the DeRossi Singers shows the vibrancy of the congregation today. The postscript notes the current members of the choral group, that Rabbi Ray Scheindlin serves as our High Holiday cantor and that lay leaders take turns leading Shabbat services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

In "Music at the Boerum Place Synagogue," readers learn details about the service in the nineteenth century from the "Brooklyn Eagle" and the congregation's archives.

Lastly, two interesting articles from the "Brooklyn Eagle" note the musical history of the sanctuary during the stewardship of prior owners of the Harrison Street church buildings. We learn about the Middle Reformed Protestant Dutch Church's magnificent pipe organ referred to by Joseph Goldfarb, and also about the banjo and tambourine (timbrel) playing of the Salvation Army. More about the buildings on Harrison Street in Issue 7.

Carol Levin, Editor  
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## **About the Journal ...**

The Synagogue Journal" is a one-year online publication at [www.kanestreet.org/historical\\_journal.html](http://www.kanestreet.org/historical_journal.html), designed to highlight the three periods of the Kane Street Synagogue congregation: the first fifty years as Congregation Baith Israel at both the Atlantic Street and the Boerum Place sites; the middle years (1905-1956) with Rabbi Israel Goldfarb as spiritual leader of the consolidated Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes at the present location that was known as Harrison Street, and the last fifty years, as the synagogue evolved to be the Kane Street Synagogue that we know today.

We welcome submissions of reminiscences, letters and photographs to help shape the BIAE story. For a list of themes for upcoming issues and to read past issues, please see "Archives," located under the banner.

Special thanks to Kane Street Synagogue webmaster Dugans for putting the Journal online, and to The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online™, Brooklyn Public Library for articles about our predecessor Congregation Baith Israel and Jewish life in nineteenth century Brooklyn.

## From a Conversation with Joseph Goldfarb

When my father came here, and almost the entire time he was here, he served in two capacities, one was rabbi and one was cantor. In those years it was more common to find people who could do both, serve well as both a rabbi and as a cantor. And there became fewer and fewer over the generations, and now there are extremely few. When he came here, he was hired to be the rabbi, yes, and to speak on public occasions, and also to lead the musical service, the *davenning*.

When he was a young man, my father came here from Europe at the age of fourteen, he had learned music from an uncle who was a cantor. He was able to read music, and later on, when he went to college, he took music lessons when he was at Columbia with one of the foremost musicologists that they had there. When he came here, he led the service without a choir because they didn't have a choir then. But before then, when he was a young man, he used to lead professional choirs for the cantors on the lower East Side. There was a big tradition of big-name cantors in the lower East Side Synagogues ... and from time to time, he used to lead choirs with them. When he came here, he was without a choir for some time. And then they wanted more music in the service, so they organized a children's choir. It was two-part singing for boys, and one of the things I liked about this shul is that they had a choir loft in the back. That [pointing upward] was originally an organ loft. I remember at one point seeing the organ pipes, they were never electrified, which meant that you had to have somebody on the side pumping the bellows.

The first few years of the Congregational Singers the caps [captains] sat in the front row and they could turn around and lead. And the others sat in the second, third and fourth rows. There were boys singing two-parts. The choir sat in the front pews on the left aisle. When girls were added to the choir, some of the men objected to the mixed voices, and as a compromise, the choir was moved to the balcony. The choir, girls and boys, stood in front of the silent organ and faced the congregation.

When they wanted to have singing with a choir as part of the service, my father suggested that a brother of his conduct the choir. I had an uncle whose name was Samuel Goldfarb and he lived in the neighborhood. He organized a children's choir, no girls, a boys choir. And they performed here for Saturday morning services. I don't know if they did it Friday night services usually, and they also performed on the High Holy Days. For the High Holy Days they would enlarge the choir by bringing in professional singers, a professional bass and a professional tenor to fill out four parts so they had better harmonies. That continued for a while, my Uncle Sam Goldfarb was the leader. At other times, they had different leaders. They had Meyer Machtenberg who was one of the foremost Jewish choir leaders. He was here some period of time. And then they had a man by the name of Abraham I. Kalb. He came here and he was the conductor for a number of years.

Along about the year 1928, possibly 1929, some of the members came to him and said, "You know Rabbi Goldfarb, we like your *davenning*, we enjoy your service very much, but we've heard it year after year and maybe we could have something new for a change. You can go out, you'll still be the rabbi, you'll still be the cantor year round. But for the Holy Days we'd like to bring in someone else, just for a change." So, my father said, "OK, if you want to do that, he'd still have his job to do as rabbi and be the cantor." So, they hired a cantor and he has a choir with four voices. He came and they *davenned* for Schlichos night and then he started to *daven* for Rosh Hashanah. And at the end of one service in the morning the first day of Rosh Hashanah, they came to him and said, "Rabbi Goldfarb, we don't like this man at all. We don't want him to continue. We will take care of our obligation to him, but will you please take over and continue this service that way we are accustomed to hearing it all the time?" So of course my father said, "No, he would not do something like that. They made a promise and how would it appear to the public, It's a public rebuke not to have him continue." So he finished it off, and he finished all the Yom Tov. And after that, they never called for another man to substitute. They never had the choir anymore, because Mr. Kalb was not available then and none of the other choir leaders who had been here before were available.

So, he *davenned* by himself without a choir. After a year or two of that, everyone agreed that the service was too empty and hollow, just a solo voice, and it became too monotonous after a while. Besides being very much more difficult for the singer, a cantor likes to have a choir because it fills in spaces. It gives him a chance to catch his breath and to relax in between things. My father called Kalb back and suggested they form a group called the BIAE Congregational Singers. These would be young people so there was a social element to the thing, and they would sing those melodies that many of them remembered from earlier years. About that time, my father published a publication called Synagogue Melodies for High Holy Days, which contained the stuff that most of the people here knew. They won't be upstairs, they won't be a formal choir. They'll sit down in the congregation. And during services they sat in the front left hand section, not against the wall, but in the center on the left side. They had a goodly number of people. They used to have, 15, 18 people come around to sing. They would have rehearsals year round, like a social group. They would come together on Thursday nights, and Kalb would train them. He came once each week. When yontif came, they were trained, ready to perform and they went ahead.

After singing two-parts for a while, they decided to do some songs with four-part arrangements. Of course, it sounded much better and they had the voices for it because it was all adults. The only thing that was in question, was the fact that

it was women singing in the choir, mixed singing. My father didn't like the idea too much of having mixed voices. In the Orthodox tradition it's verboten, you're not allowed to have women's voices. So what do you do for a compromise? They moved the singers upstairs, up in the back. The reason is, that nobody sees them. Nobody has to look at them. And when you listen to the voices, it's very hard sometimes to distinguish between a child's soprano and a woman's soprano. Sometimes they sound so much alike that it's hard to tell the difference. They had the singers and they went back up to the organ loft, which became a choir loft, at the head of those winding stairs.

All the inner workings (of the organ) were taken out of it, the keyboard removed, everything else, and it's a closet up there to this day, unless it's been changed. They moved that whole thing away a little distance so there was enough room in front of the base of the organ, enough room for a choir to fit. And we had chairs up there. They were visible and everyone turned around to look at them.

I sang in that choir for many years. I sang with them when they still were a children's choir, for about a year or two. I must have been very young at that time. And then, I didn't sing with them at first when they were downstairs here, but I did join them later on after my voice changed, and we were up there for many years. They probably went upstairs in 1931 or '32. Then, more and more of the pieces were sung to four-part harmony. And we had a whole book, a copy of everything that the group performs for their leader to have. It's got a lot of songs that are standards. It's got a lot of things that had special arrangements. It's got a lot of original compositions.

At the point where they were developing, they had some pretty good-sized groups. But then, some of the members moved out of the neighborhood, the young people started families of their own and the active participation varied from occasion to occasion. But since we sang mostly the same things year after year, they developed a practice of drop-ins, those who had been with us one year and been away two or three years, on *yontif*, these are people who drove and rode on the holidays anyway, this was no barrier to them. So they would stop off, come upstairs and all of a sudden in the middle of something, there was a new voice here, a new voice there. It varied. I would say the maximum they had was twenty voices.

Kalb had the kind of voice that was just enough in range and in quality to be able to substitute for any part. He could be a soprano; he could be a bass; he could be anything in between. When the ranks were weak, he was able to supplement it with his own voice.

The choir wore black robes with white collars. Somebody took care of them, laundered them and brought them back.

Those were very happy years for me.

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**Carol Levin** conducted a series of oral histories for the synagogue. This excerpt is from a May 2, 2002 conversation held in the sanctuary. Joseph Goldfarb is the son of Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, who served this Congregation from 1905 to 1965.

## Israel Goldfarb (1879-1967) Rabbi, Cantor and Influential Composer

By Rabbi Henry D. Michelman

Born in Sieniewa, Galicia, Poland, Israel Goldfarb came to New York at the age of 14 and within a decade graduated from Columbia University. He was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (1902), in the distinguished first graduating class of Solomon Schechter. He received his musical training at the Institute for Musical Arts, the forerunner of the Juilliard School of Music.

Israel Goldfarb was Rabbi and cantor/composer of Congregation Baith Israel Anshe Emes, founded in 1856, now known as the Kane Street Synagogue, the oldest continuing congregation in Brooklyn, New York. From 1905 to 1956 when he was named rabbi emeritus, he introduced his music as he composed it at liturgical services. He died knowing that his grandson, Rabbi Henry D. Michelman, was to be named his successor. He came to a congregation that had just completed a merger of German/Jewish immigrants (Baith Israel) and Eastern European immigrants (Anshe Emes) that was moving to new quarters in a converted church on Kane Street. His music helped to unite divergent parts of the congregation and eased the many transitions.

Goldfarb was often called “the father of congregational singing” because in those earlier years the idea of congregants singing in an organized fashion was not popular nor accepted in many traditional synagogues. Generally, cantors did not create and introduce melodies into the liturgical service for all to sing. The vogue was cantors and professional choirs. He formed a young people’s choir, men and women, which served a social and a religious function under synagogue auspices.

In 1907 Rabbi Goldfarb introduced choral music into his synagogue with Meyer Machtenberg, the well-known synagogue choral conductor leading the choir. Machtenberg stated that Goldfarb was familiar with the difficulties posed by the choirs of the day, and knew the increased demands made by the new school of professionally trained musicians. He felt strongly about congregational participation in the services through singing. He composed music that untrained worshipers could learn easily and enjoy singing in synagogue and at home.

His congregation was called the “mother synagogue of Brooklyn” because generations of members went forth from Kane Street to create congregations in other communities in Brooklyn. They took with them the Goldfarb music and the traditions of congregational singing. Rabbi Goldfarb brought his congregation into the Conservative movement, and it became one of the founding members of the United Synagogue of America.

As early as 1919 and throughout the 1920's, after conducting services in his synagogue and presiding over his own Shabbat table, Israel Goldfarb often walked over the Brooklyn Bridge on Friday nights to the *Oneg Shabbat* at the newly formed Young Israel, housed in the Educational Alliance building on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He brought with him his melodies. And then he walked back to Brooklyn, so that on *Shabbat* morning he would be back in his own *shul*. His brothers – Joseph, Saul, Benjamin, and Samuel – also were active in the Young Israel movement in those early years. They, too, served often as lay cantors in synagogues, infusing Young Israel and other congregations with the kinds of melody-making and singing that were to become models for subsequent generations. Goldfarb first cousins – the Speros, the Hoenigs, the Rhines – legendary families in the Young Israel Movement, also were accomplished singers who helped to strengthen the then fledgling Young Israel movement’s commitment to congregational singing, a practice not popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

He composed the world famous melody for the sabbath evening hymn “Shalom Aleichem” in 1918. It was copyrighted and published for the first time later that year in his “Friday Evening Melodies.” Its popularity, along with his music for “Magen Avot,” “Va Y’chulu,” “Alenu,” “Av Horachmim,” “Zachreinu l’Chayim,” “Mi Chomochah,” “Yimloch Adonoi,” “B’Sefer Chayyim,” and “V’al Kullom” spread so rapidly throughout the world that “many came to believe this music was handed down from Mount Sinai by Moses,” Goldfarb said.

He was the composer of many of the melodies for the Sabbath, Festivals and High Holy Days synagogue services. They are so universally sung that most believe they are “traditional.” Tens of thousands of *The Jewish Songster* (1919), and *Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve* (1920) were used in synagogues and schools throughout the country. They contained songs which were easy to sing and appealed to a new generation of American Jews.

Israel Goldfarb taught “Hazzanut,” the Cantorial Arts, at the Jewish Theological Seminary for decades before the establishment of its cantorial school. He developed a curriculum for training cantors for Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary.

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**Henry D. Michelman**, the grandson of Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, served as rabbi of Kane Street Synagogue from 1967 to 1971. This article was written for the “*Encyclopedia Judaica*”

## Origins of “Shalom Aleichem”

**People throughout the world have been singing Rabbi Goldfarb’s “Shalom Aleichim” since 1918, thinking that it was a traditional Hassidic melody. The rabbi wrote the following letter on May 10, 1963 in response to an “inquiry about the origin of the melody of Shalom Aleichem. “ The letter is at the Ratner Center Library at JTS.**

“Dear Hazzan Pinchas Spiro,

Please be assured that the melody originated with me and me alone.

I composed the melody forty-five years ago this month (1918), while sitting on a bench near the Alma Mater statue, in front of the Library of Columbia University in N.Y. I began to hum to myself. I fished out a sheet of music-paper from my briefcase and jotted it down. It was on a Friday, which may be the reason why the melody and the words came to my mind simultaneously. Besides, I was working at that time on my “Friday Evening Melodies” which was published in 1918, in which it was printed for the first time. The popularity of the melody traveled not only throughout this country but throughout the world, so that many people came to believe that the song was handed down from Mt. Sinai by Moses.

I have received innumerable (sic) requests from Rabbis, Cantors and composers to give them permission to use the melody in their music collections, and I was liberal enough to grant such permission. Some were generous enough to acknowledge the authorship. A great many publishers, some in Israel, not knowing the origin of the melody, simply wrote “traditional” or “Hassidic.” But the fact remains that I am the composer, and the melody has been copywrited (sic) by me and recorded at the Library of Congress in 1918.

I went to this length in writing to you in order to silence once and for all the many claims to the contrary.”

**Bella Goldfarb Lehrman, daughter of Rabbi Goldfarb, expounded on ‘why’ her father wrote the melody during a conversation on June 20, 2003.**

My Uncle Samuel Goldfarb was at that time, I don’t know exactly what his title was, but at that time there was a Bureau of Jewish Education in the greater New York area, and he was in charge of the music department. I don’t know exactly what his duties were, but he was in touch with all the schools in greater New York. I guess that meant Northern New Jersey, the whole area. One day he called my father and he said there was going to be a wide, mass meeting of all of the kids. All the Jewish children that they could get hold of who would come together at Madison Square Garden and participate in some kind of a program.

I don’t know if it was to do with Palestine. There were so many mass meetings in those years. Every other day there was something else, but this was particularly for kids. This was for the school children. Naturally, the school kids couldn’t come alone, so the parents were there. He told my father that he wanted something new to teach. Something catchy and melodic that they would learn easily and that they would be able to sing in unison when they got to this mass rally. He didn’t give him any guidelines, as far as I know, just something appropriate for a Jewish school.

My father was at Columbia at that time... he was there having his lunch, brown-bagging his lunch, and sitting on the campus during lunchtime. He was looking for something to write on, and all he could find was a letter in his pocket. So he took the letter out and opened up the envelope and began to pencil in the musical scale and began to hum to himself. And that’s how he hummed through Shalom Aleichem.

And he went home. He didn’t play the piano, he used to play it out with one finger and sing it. He called his brother and said what do you think of this? His brother loved it, so he sent it to him. And his brother had it copied and he sent it out to all the schools that were in his jurisdiction. And when they got together at the mass meeting, the kids sang it and the parents sang it, and by the time the day was over, it was a national hit.

## **Music by Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb**

*During the early twentieth century, this Brooklyn synagogue had the great fortune to have the Goldfarb brothers, Israel and Samuel Eliezer Goldfarb, as resident composers and compilers of Jewish music. We reprint "The Compilers" messages written in the preface of two books that changed the way American Jewish students, congregations and choirs sang.*

**"The Jewish Songster"** was first published in 1918. The following preface is to the fifth revised edition.

"That the "Jewish Songster," as originally published in 1918, filled a great need, is evidenced by the fact that thirty thousand copies have found their way into religious schools and homes throughout the country.

The booklet which at first was only in the nature of an experiment, proved beyond a doubt the need of a comprehensive hand-book of Jewish school and folk-song texts that would meet with the requirements of the modern Hebrew School. Furthermore, the strides that Jewish education in America has made over the Jewry of the world since the close of the great war, turned our attention to the inestimable educational, social, and spiritual values of Jewish school and folk music, and brought forth a wealth of new material that very rapidly became popular among lovers of Jewish music.

In order to meet this new situation, and to make this new material accessible to the hundreds of religious schools in America, the editors have revised the old "Jewish Songster" so that in its present edition it practically assumes a new form.

The Songster as now constituted is divided into two parts. Part I consists of "Festival Songs" in Hebrew, (liturgic and secular) English and Yiddish. Part II consists of "General Song." A vast amount of new material was selected with great care and a number of new festival groups were added.

The editors acknowledge their indebtedness to Mr. Abraham I. Kalb, Music Director of The Central Jewish Institute, and the Harlem Hebrew Institute, for his valuable assistance in the selection of the new material, as well as to Mr. S. Ginsberg, of the Text Book Department, Bureau of Jewish Education, for technical advice.

**"Synagogue Melodies for the High Holidays"** was published in 1926

At the request of a number of Rabbis, Cantors, and some of our National Jewish Youth Associations, such as "The Young Peoples League of the United Synagogue of America" and the "Young Israel" groups, this collection of "Synagogue Melodies for the High Holy Days," has been prepared.

The booklet is by no means exhaustive and complete in its composition, nor does it represent ALL of the many versions of our "Skarbove Niggunim." It is only an experiment, which, if successful, will be worked out in greater detail in future editions.

It is, we believe, for the first time that an attempt is being made, in this form, to place into the hands of the Jewish worshipper a simple copy of the much cherished traditional melodies which have always found an echo in the Jewish heart and touched the most responsive and vibrant strings of the Jewish soul.

In preparation and organization of these melodies for Congregational singing the compilers had the following aims in view:

- (1) Close adherence to the old Jewish traditional form.
- (2) Simplicity of arrangement.
- (3) A vocal range suitable for the average voice.

If this booklet results in a more orderly, decorous and inspiring Divine Service, participated in and enjoyed by old and young, we shall feel compensated to the highest degree.

## **“The Sound of Music at Kane Street”**

By Rachel Epstein

Take a one-question quiz: Salamone Rossi is: The perpetrator of the latest design craze from Milan b) The hot chef of a new trattoria in Chelsea c) The Renaissance composer whose music enlivens our services during the High Holidays.

The answer is “c.” Although you do not have to know the name to appreciate the music, Rossi’s story (who is known both as “Rossi” and “DeRossi”), as related by Miryam Wasserman, a founding member of our synagogue’s De Rossi Singers and her son Gabriel, is an interesting one. Born in Venice in 1576 Rossi was a court musician in the Palace of the Doges as was his sister, who was an opera singer. His compositions included madrigals and instrumental music and he collaborated on operas with Monteverdi. Rossi was so highly regarded that the court exempted him from wearing the badge that would mark him as a Jew.

Jewish liturgical music, in fact, is only a small percentage of Rossi’s oeuvre and one that required a champion to be performed in his lifetime. That champion was Leone Modena, a rabbi, musician, alchemist and friend of Rossi. It was Modena who convinced Rossi to publish his Jewish music which includes psalm settings, a three-part and a five-part kiddusha, a mussaf and an erev Shabbat service, and a morning and evening call to prayer. Even with an advocate, however, Rossi’s music has never been popular in synagogues where compositions by late 19<sup>th</sup> century cantors such as Lewandowski and Sulzer, also sung occasionally by the De Rossi Singers, are more typical.

The De Rossi Singers began 20 years ago as a quartet with Shelley Stein, who was a voice major in college, Harry Davis, who performs with the City Opera, Ray Scheindlin, our Chazzan for the High Holidays, and Ms. Wasserman, who studied voice for several years, and sang with the Dessoif Chorus and who now sings with the Brooklyn Philharmonia Chorus. Current members, in addition to Ms. Wasserman, are Mort Kahn, Rena Schklowsky, Shoshana Silverstein, Marion Stein, Steve Stellman, Rob Stulberg and Bob Weinstein.

The group first performed on Shabbat Shira, when the Torah portion tells of the singing of the “children of Israel” as they crossed out of Egypt via dry land that had been the Red Sea. In addition to Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur Rossi’s music can also be heard on the three pilgrimage holidays – Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot – and on Shabbat Chanukah.

The singers do all this with only two or three rehearsals, which is quite remarkable since choral singing, as I learned from Miryam Wasserman, involves learning the music, which the singers can do on their own, and blending, which can only happen during full rehearsals in the space where the performance is to occur.

For Ms. Wasserman singing on Kol Nidre, when the music enhances “a pretty charged night of the year,” is the highpoint of the group’s calendar. She also remembers with great fondness a Jewish Museum lecture by composer/conductor Hugo Weisgall on Salomone Rossi for which the De Rossi Singers performed the music.

For Marion Stein, who also sings with the New York Choral Society and De Goldene Keyt (the golden chain), a new Yiddish chorus led by Zalman Mlotok, “Singing enhances my praying experience and doing it in our shul among people we’ve known for a long time is a very satisfying spiritual experience.”

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*This article originally appeared in “The Scroll” newsletter, Winter 1996.*

*2006 Post script: The De Rossi Singers continue to delight the Congregation after thirty years. The choral group currently is directed by Laurie Yorr. Recent members include: Elise Bernhardt, Nigel Febland, Ellen Gottlieb, Sheila Rabin, Lisa Sack, Rena Schklowsky, Ira Skop, Natan Skop, Adina Solomon, Gella Solomon, Eliot Solomon, Marion Stein, Beth Steinberg, Steve Stellman, Rob Stulberg and Miryam Wasserman. Rabbi Ray Scheindlin serves as our Chazzan for the High Holidays. Lay leaders take turns leading Shabbat services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.*



## Music at the Boerum Place Synagogue

A brief note about sacred music during the nineteenth century Congregation Baith Israel did not have the financial resources to have a chazan for the weekly Shabbat services. They hired Chazan during holiday periods - the High Holidays, Passover and Shavuos. The names of the Chazan, their salaries and other details of their employment are recorded in the Trustee minutes, which are primarily written in English except for the 1880s, which were recorded in German.

Our records include Chasan Newman (9/28/1862) Adolph Ressler (1862) Chasan Ebersohn (1863) Chasan Hahn (1./10/1864) Chasan Herzman (8/6/1865) Chasan Newman (9/01/1865) Chasan N. Davidsen (7/15/1866) Chasan Goldsmith (8/12/1866), Chasan Solomon (9/21/1866) Chasan Wolf Levy ( 5/18/1867) Chasan Pulvermeyer 1881, Chasan Janover (1882) Chasan Abraham Jonas Fisher (1883) Chasan Friedman (1883) Chasan Levitt(1884), Chasan A. Collman (1886) Chasan Jacob Korn (1887) Chasan Wolfsohn 1887) Chasan Isaac Sternfle 1888) Cantor O. Millard (1902).

The trustee minutes reveal a few titles of hymns sung by the students and the congregation, as well as from Brooklyn Daily Eagle articles about events held by the congregation. Hymns were sung at the dedications, confirmations and school events. They were in English, German or Hebrew.

**Sunday School Association Minutes**, 1877, page 28: "Adon Olum," "Onward, Upward," "Songs of Praise" and "None Like God."

Page 45: "Yidgal sung for the first time at the shul"

From a school event December 1877: "Blest be thou, oh God of Israel," "Ardo Ollam " (sic), "The Pity of the Lord" and "Zigdal"

Confirmation services on Shavuos in May 1890 included the singing of "The Flower of Truth Blooming Here."

# WELSH'S BANJO

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## Causes Another Panic Among the Salvationists.

Captain Tyrrell Prays for Reporters and  
Faints—A Lively Scene at the Harrison  
Street Barracks.

Since the publication of an account of the arrest of the bad man with a pistol in the Salvation Army barracks, Harrison street, there has been more or less of a sensation in the neighborhood. Last evening there was an unusually large attendance at the army headquarters. The scene in the place the night before and the fact that the neighbors had circulated a petition with numerous signers to be presented to the authorities, asking that the nuisance be removed, was food enough for the Salvation soldiers to discuss and talk about. Another scene, not on the programme, occurred last evening.

Captain Alice Tyrrell was in charge of the meeting, as usual, and Banjo Tommy, who tortures the instrument and his hearers at the same time, was on hand with his wheezy toned instrument. There was a choice delegation of prominent Smoky Hollowites from the Sixth Ward who had come to have some fun, and they had it. Captain Alice opened the meeting with the announcement of a hymn. Her tambourine and the banjo accompaniment of Banjo Tommy started the ball and in a few seconds there was a howl going up from the inside of the old church that could be heard a block away. The Smoky Hollowites were a lot of lusty lunged fellows who were bent on having a good time. Their untutored ways carried terror to the hearts of the female warriors against sin and iniquity. Captain Alice begged the young men to keep order, but when she sent up a devout prayer for the newspaper reporters of Brooklyn in general and for the reporters of the EAGLE in particular the savages from the Hollow broke forth in unchecked bursts of hilarity and cheers.

Banjo Tommy, of the Salvation Minstrel, seems to be an object of special hatred to the neighborhood. His appearance is not attractive to any degree, his eloquence is inferior to his appearance and his music is maddening. Last night he fairly excelled himself. His long, bony fingers literally tore the notes out of the unfortunate machine. It was not long before the crowd became so worked up that they arose in a body and rushed toward the platform. Tommy fled in dismay, leaving the banjo behind him. Souvenirs of the dismantled instrument can now be had at a hundred places in Smoky Hollow. Captain Alice yelled "Police!" at the top of her voice and brought Officers Finn and Rorke to the scene. When they entered the church the sight was appalling. Captain Tyrrell was on the platform, surrounded by a howling mob; Banjo Tommy was up in the organ loft in hiding; female warriors of the valiant army, clad in blue mother hubbards and fire and blood bonnets were fleeing for their lives, and above all was seen the wreck of Tommy's banjo as it was torn to pieces by the crowd. Detective Finn drew his club and cleared a passage for himself through the aisles to the stage. When he had almost reached it saw the gallant Captain Tyrrell reel backward and fall as if dead. He sprang to her side and found her unconscious. Picking her up in his arms he carried her to the front of the church, while the officers, who had been attracted by the disturbance, drove the crowd away. Detective Finn dashed water in her face and did all in his power to revive her. His efforts were unavailing. Ambulance Surgeon Shepard, of the Long Island College Hospital, was summoned and soon brought the captain to her senses. She was not injured but was nearly frightened to death. By that time the street was jammed with people and the police were called upon to clear the way. The crowd was finally dispersed and the church closed. If the Salvationists continue their meetings in the church lively times may be looked for.

## City News and Gossip

Persons residing in the 13th and 14th Ward can have the EAGLE left at their residences by sending their address to this office, or by leaving their names at any of the following places: At CHARLES VAN CLEIF's newspaper stand, Grand street ferry; GEORGE BIRDSALL's newspaper stand, Peck Slip ferry; or at B. McCARREN's, corner of North Seventh and First streets.

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ORGAN EXHIBITION.—An organ exhibition and concert at the Middle Dutch Reformed Church, in Harrison street, near Court, last night attracted a large audience, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather. The organ, which is an excellent one, is from the manufactory of Messrs. Hall & Labagh, New York, and is one of the largest in Brooklyn. Messrs. Erben and Weisheit executed some of the difficult compositions of Rink and Hesse in a manner worthy of commendation. The Choir of the Church, assisted by the choirs of St. Peter's Church, in this city, and St. Paul's Church, New York, sang a number of pieces, to the evident gratification of the persons present.