A CONCERT WITH THE GREAT CANTORS

SIROTA
ROITMAN
ROSENBLATT
KAPOV-KAGAN
HERSHMAN

ROTHSTEIN
KARNIOL
A CONCERT WITH THE GREAT CANTORS

Among the early immigrants who came to the Western World from Eastern Europe during the early 1900's, were cantors with voices whose equal are seldom heard today. Their arrival marked the start of a new Jewish era known as "The Golden Age of Cantors."

Mordechai Hershman, Benzion Kaplan-Kagan, Yechezkel Karnioll, David Roitman, Yossele Rosenblatt, Shloimele Rothstein and Gershon Sirota, all were famous as masters of the synagogue liturgy. Karnioll, Roitman and Rosenblatt attained world fame, not only for their unusual voices, but also for their ability to compose music. Much of the liturgy chanted today in the synagogue was composed by them.

**Mordechai Hershman**—Hershman was famous for his ability to sing Jewish folk and cantorial music. While Hershman was serving in the Russian army, a special service was scheduled at the Vilna Synagogue for the success of the Russian armed forces. The service was attended by many high ranking military officials. Upon completing the service, Hershman's commanding officer was so impressed that he released him from military duty so that he would be able to devote his full time to cantorial music.

**Benzion Kaplan-Kagan**—Kaplan-Kagan's unusual dramatic spinto tenor voice of extensive range and flexible coloratura won praise from many connoisseurs of fine music. His ability to chant the Synagogue Liturgy with a unique clearness of diction made him known as one of the most outstanding cantors of the twentieth century. A few years before his death, the Jewish Ministers Cantors Association scheduled a concert at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Kaplan-Kagan sang his well known rendition of the Midas Horachamim and Havdalah and received the grandest ovation of the evening.

**Yechezkel Karnioll**—Karnioll was praised by critics for his unique style and interpretation of our sacred prayers. In 1928 a concert was arranged for him in the Warshauer Synagogue where he was accompanied by a chorus of two hundred cantors. That concert is remembered to this day as one of the most outstanding events in cantorial history. Karnioll's compositions are well known but because of their intricacies can only be copied by a select group of gifted cantors.

**David Roitman**—Roitman attained great fame for successfully blending the artistry of a Baal Tefillot together with that of a great cantor. He was able to sing the liturgy with the clarity of a spoken sentence. When hearing his unusual falsetto, one would think that musical instruments were playing. Roitman decided to immigrate to America, and the American Consul at Bucharest was so impressed with his beautiful voice that he was granted visas for his entire family as well.

**Yossele Rosenblatt**—Rosenblatt was praised by the leading critics of his time for his unusual coloratura, unique originality of style and richness of expression. While on a concert tour in Chicago, he was heard by the General Director of the Chicago Opera Association, Cleofonte Campanini. Campanini was so deeply impressed by Rosenblatt's voice that he offered him $1,000 a night to sing the role of Eleazar in La Juive. Rosenblatt refused this offer and a later one by the same company at $3,000 a performance because of his strict religious convictions. His more than five hundred and fifty original compositions of Hebrew liturgy have been incorporated into the services of most synagogues throughout the world.

**Shloimele Rothstein**—Rothstein became widely known for his folk singing and remarkable imitations of Yossele Rosenblatt. The beauty of his sweet tenor voice attracted the attention of various synagogue officials resulting in many attractive offers. He made extensive concert tours and sang in some of this country's leading synagogues. His phonograph records of Yiddish folk songs and cantorial selections which were released by RCA Victor and Columbia records earned him a world wide reputation.

**Gershon Sirota**—Sirota was famous for his powerful tenor robust voice of operatic quality. Critics acclaimed him as the only cantor who could be compared with the famous opera soloists. Indeed, he was compared many times to the great Enrico Caruso. The noted music critic, Arthur E. Knight, described Sirota in the British "Record Collector" of January 1955 as follows: "... he was one of the most highly trained tenors of all time—his octave leaps, perfect three note runs up the scale, fabulous trills... his facile coloratura (are) unrivaled by any other recording tenor." Sirota refused to settle in America and only came to the United States on short concert tours. He was brutally murdered with his entire family in Germany during World War II.

This great era was not destined to endure for long. With the death of the twentieth century cantors, people were deprived of an art priceless to Jewish culture and music. Few cantors recorded their music. Today these recordings are collector's items and the original discs are extremely rare.

Appearing on this disc is a collection of ten of the most famous masterpieces of the great cantors. This recording was expressly engineered to recapture for the listener the full flavor of an actual concert as it was performed many years ago.

The latest technical advances have been employed to best represent the original voices in both range and quality of sound. Special engineering skills were used to make it possible for the Greater Recording Co., Inc. to offer you a recording of superior quality and the highest attainable standards.

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