CANTOR LEIBBELE WALDMAN

"Synagogue Chants"
CANTOR LEJBLELE WALDMAN

SIDE ONE
1. OMAR RABI ELOZOR
2. AD HEINO
3. ASHREI
4. MORON DIVISHMAYO

SIDE TWO
1. Z'MIROS
2. HASHOMAYIM (after ZEMACHSON)
3. SHEHECHEYONU (MACHTENBERG)
4. LO SACHMOD (ROSENBLATT)

Arranged and Conducted by
OSCAR JULIUS
ABRAHAM ELLSTEIN: organ

In the years immediately following the first world war, synagogue worshippers on New York's lower east side were treated to a sight that would seem quite strange, to contemporary eyes. Conducting services on a rather regular basis was a young looking thirteen year old yeshiva bochur and a choir director only a few years his junior. So began the career of America's most famous native born cantor, Louis Waldman, and that of the Dean of Synagogue conductors, Oscar Julius.

Born in New York of a family of Galician immigrants, Waldman began his studies as a youngster at an institution later known as the East Side Talmud Torah and subsequently at the Yeshiva of Rabbi Shlomo Klieger. It was during this period that his inherent musical and hazzanic talents were first noticed.

Affectionately referred to as Leibele (as he would be throughout his career), the young khasanat began to appear with frequency in a number of local synagogues. Realizing the importance of a musical background he then studied solfege with a local east side musician, Shbatay Weingarten. A man of quite worldly experience, Weingarten was a baal teshuvah, a repentant, who had come to intensive religious life such as was prevalent on the east side, only in old age. Following his studies with Weingarten, Waldman also studied hazanat with Cantor Solomon Beinhorn, who is represented on this with several compositions.

When his voice changed during the years of adolescence, Waldman became a choirleader, conducting on the high holidays in the Wayne Street Synagogue of Jersey City, 1924, the Livonia Street Synagogue of Brownsville, 1925, the Flatbush Jewish Center with Cantor Samuel Katzman, 1926, and the Galician Synagogue of Passaic in 1927. In 1928 he assumed his first adult cantorial position, officiating on the high holidays at the Beth Israel Synagogue on Columbia Street in Cambridge, Mass. In 1929 Waldman became the yearly cantor of Temple Emanuel of Passaic, where he remained until 1934 (to be succeeded by Richard Tucker). Waldman then served one year at the Mount Eden Jewish Center with Joel Feig as his choirleader.

Cantor Waldman then elected not to accept yearly cantorial positions. Upon the recommendation of Samuel Stern, prominent choir leader, Waldman officiated on the high holidays of 1935 at the Beth Jacob Synagogue of Brownsville. Over the next quarter century Waldman officiated in many of this country's most prominent positions including the 3400 seat Hunts Point Palace (Holidays of 1936 and 1937), the Bronx Winter Garden, 1938, the Concord Hotel and Grossinger's Country Club.

While the great cantors of Europe achieved fame by officiating in prominent synagogues on a regular basis, Waldman became well known primarily because of the results of twentieth century technological advances: the radio, the motion picture, and the phonograph record.

In the late twenties and early thirties, at the beginning of Waldman's adult cantorial career, he was featured in about a dozen motion pictures, including The Voice of Israel where he appeared with Rosenblatt, Hershman, and Roitman, among others. Shortly thereafter he began to sing on a regular basis for several radio stations. First under the sponsorship of Harris Mogolevsky of The World Clothing Union, Waldman sang for over a quarter of a century on the airwaves, appearing on stations WTBS, WMCA and the station of the Forwards Association, WEVD.

During these years when record production was largely limited to RCA Victor and Columbia, most international recordings were discontinued. With the rise of local Jewish radio programming, particularly on WEVD, Waldman initiated a series of recordings, produced by Moses Asch, and issued on his label, ASCH Records. Waldman later recorded for Stinson, Disc, Banner, and following the war, RCA Victor. After RCA discontinued Jewish record production in the early fifties, Waldman recorded for ABC and later for a private label, Maloh Records. During most of these years, he recorded with Oscar Julius as his conductor and Abraham Ellstein as his accompanist.

Waldman patterned himself after Rosenblatt in many ways, including vocal mannerisms and a preference for compositions involving extensive sequential forms, interlocking phrases and saltato obligatos. Thus while he did record compositions by many cantors including Mendel Shapiro (Shavi Nafsho), Jacob Rappaport (Ato Yodea), Joshua Weiser (Shma Koleinu/Mincha) and Beinhorn (A Tiro), most of them approximate each other stylistically. Waldman, particularly in his latter years, recorded extensively compositions by Joshua Lind (Haben Yaikir Li, Ovina Malkeinu, Habeit Mishomayim) a composer who was also influenced to a great degree by Rosenblatt. Waldman also incorporated into his chanting a considerable degree, hasidic melodies, which particularly impressed him to a vast and faithful following.

Notes by Barry Serota

Thanks are due Moses Asch and Zev Kronish for their cooperation in clearing these selections for resale, as well as manager Jesse Sloan for his most kind assistance in furnishing biographical data.
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