Introduction
As a cantor for the last fifteen years, ten of them at my current synagogue, Temple Beth Haverim in Agoura Hills, California, it is important to me and a large part of my cantorate to teach Jewish music in any way I can. So, I prefer to entertain as I teach or “edutain.” I hope all of you who listen to this album will not only enjoy it, but also be edutained!

I guess you could say that this album is “bashert” or meant to be. I had a crazy idea in the shower, years ago, to put Hanukkah songs to big band arrangements. Perhaps it's because way back in Philadelphia, in the sixties, my father loved jazz so much that he had my mother, my sisters and me listening to albums of Count Basie, Les Brown, George Shearing, Henry Mancini and Marty Paich, just to name a few. We all dance around the living room to their music. Those sounds, rhythms and “grooves” penetrated our souls and stayed with us always.

For my Bar Mitzvah, I wanted to play the drums, so my parents shlepped me to Zaph's music store on 5th Street where I climbed the stairs every Wednesday to study with Jack Keenan. That's where I experienced the sounds of Buddy Rich's Big Band, Louie Bellson's Big Band and many others. Around the same time, my high school music teacher, Vince Maola introduced me to the Don Ellis Band and to Maynard Ferguson's Big Band. My life changed forever.

I used to stay up late, just to hear Doc Severinsen and the Tonight Show Band play before and after the breaks. I couldn't get enough of that big band sound.

Then there were the Big Band singers - Frank Sinatra, Joe Williams, Mel Torme, Bobby Darin, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughn, Diane Schuur - I could go on for days.

When I got married, I married into a musical family. My father-in-law, Stan Caplan, was a saxophone player who played on the road with Johnny Mathis. When I first met him, he was playing weekly in a “big band” rehearsal group. I would go and hear those incredible sounds - live, up close and even personal! The thrill was when my father would come out to L.A. from Philadelphia to hear it with me. It was heaven.

Stan would also take us to hear big band concerts and get us to listen to the latest big band CD's of Rob McConnell, Bob Florence, the GRP All Stars, Eddie Daniels and Terry Gibbs. A few years ago, Stan passed away of thyroid cancer. I dedicate this album to my father-in-law, Stanley J. Caplan, of blessed memory and to my dad, Marv Ellis, who still knows how to “groove” (he was with me in the studio when we were tracking the big band).

This album is also dedicated to the great big band arrangers (in no particular order)- Nelson Riddle, Billy May, Gordon Jenkins, Marty Paich, Neal Hefti, Quincy Jones, Don Costa, Sammy Nestico, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Tommy Newsom, Buddy Bregman, Johnny Mandel and so many others.
1. **Swingin’ Dreidel**  
   (Grossman - Goldfarb)  
   (Bridge: Cohen - Ellis)  
   I began thinking and singing these “swinging” Hanukkah songs in the shower about thirteen years ago. It wasn't until I met Emmy Award-winning composer/arranger Harvey R. Cohen, that I knew it could actually be done. I had “shopped” the idea of doing a “big band” Hanukkah album for years with people nodding and saying complementary things about the idea: However it wasn't until anyone actually heard my self funded demo, that I got any reaction. And wow, what a reaction! There wasn't a single person (Jewish or otherwise) who heard it and didn't go wild for it. I was told it was “like Sinatra does Dreidel.” Harvey suggested that the song needed a “bridge”, so we wrote one. The tune was originally called “My Dreidel,” but most know it as “I Have a Little Dreidel.” Dreidel is the Yiddish word for a four-sided spinning top. It's a really fun Hanukkah game and song.  
   Solo: Bill Liston - flute

2. **Medley: Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah/ Who Can Retell**  
   (Evronin - Folk/Eng: Minkoff)  
   (Regina - Folk/Eng: Edidin)  
   These Hanukkah “standards” are sung every year by children in the Hebrew schools and day schools around the world, and by adult and children's choirs. In this medley, Harvey did a tribute to Benny Goodman's small group which featured Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson and Charlie Christian. Steve Allen, who played Benny Goodman in the film “The Benny Goodman Story” also had a small group called “Allen's All Stars” made up of Steve Allen, Terry Gibbs, Gus Bivona, Red Mitchell, Al Viola and Frank DiVito. I was lucky enough to meet Steve Allen in 1975 at Buddy's Place (Buddy Rich's club) in New York City where he performed with a big band led by Terry Gibbs. Steve became a great friend until his passing in 2000. His son, Bill Allen at the memorial service told me that Steve always referred to me as “Kenny Ellis...funny guy.” This medley is dedicated to Steve Allen, “the mench!”

3. **Hanukkah Candles**  
   (Kenny Ellis)  
   I always wondered why there were no Hanukkah songs written for adults. Until now, the Hanukkah songs we learned in Hebrew School were all children's songs. I also wondered why no Hanukkah song ever mentioned the word “rededicated,” since that's the literal meaning of Hanukkah in English- having to do with the rededicating of the Holy Temple by the Macabbees in Jerusalem.

So, here is my addition to the Hanukkah song catalog which I lovingly dedicate to my wife, Laura and my two sons, Adam and Aaron. It includes a gospel choir featuring Brenda Lee Eager, Cynthia Bass, Cyndney Davis with a
A Note From Kenny:
My hope and prayer is that this album will bring people of all backgrounds and faiths closer together for an exciting, fun-filled and peaceful holiday season.

What is the festival of Hanukkah?
Hanukkah commemorates the first struggle for religious freedom in the history of the world. It was the Jewish people's first declaration of their right to worship as they wished and their willingness to die for this right.

For lyrics and translations please visit: www.kennyellis.com

Hanukkah symbolizes the fight against totalitarianism in all forms. The struggle was waged in a particular context, but its implications were and are universal - a festival of liberty and freedom.
“soulful” vocal solo by Brenda Lee Eager. Solo: Mitch Holder - guitar

4. Sevivon Sov, Sov, So
(Kipnis - Folk/Eng: Ellis)
Benny Goodman's classic Sing, Sing, Sing with that wonderful Gene Krupa drum solo has always been a favorite of mine. So, from Sing, Sing, Sing to Sov, Sov, Sov! I have also loved Cab Calloway with his unique style. We incorporated his famous “call and response” section with the band. The word “sivivon” is Hebrew for spinning top and “sov” means spin. Soloists include: Wayne Bergeron - trumpet, Joel Peskin - clarinet, Albie Berk - drums

5. Ocho Kandelikas
(Flory Jagoda)
Ocho Kandelikas was written by Flory Jagoda in Ladino, the language of her ancestors. Flory grew up in Sarajevo, where a community of Sephardic Jews flourished in the years before WWII. She had exciting memories of Hanukkah. In the Sephardic community, on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, there were “matching parties,” while the young sang and danced, their parents and grandparents enjoyed planning their children's weddings. Little almond cakes were eaten to assure luck and happiness, not to mention a good “match.” The next year at the wedding, the bride was customarily asked, “At which Hanukkah party did you meet your betrothed?”

6. Children of the Macabbees
(Marcello - Trad.)
For years, my family listened to an Israeli Hanukkah album which began with this version of Maoz Tzur. I instantly fell in love with it because it is so unusual. It was first notated by Venetian musician Benedetto Marcello in Italy in 1724. Although it is not as well known, this melody has gained popularity in recent years.

You can also hear my love of the Swingle Singers in this one, not to mention Harvey's talented arranging in classical as well as jazz. The English comes from the actual third verse of Maoz Tzur written hundreds of years ago. Solo: Joel Peskin - flute

7. Medley: Hanukkah Swingin' Holiday/Pour the Oil
(Kipnis - Folk) (Kipnis - Nardi)
These two songs we sing every Hanukkah and could also be considered “standards”. In this
Thank you:

For sharing my dream - Harvey R. Cohen, Stu Goldberg, Ray Scherr and Steve Vai for allowing me to fulfill that dream. At Favored Nations - Karen Hogan, Jason Scherr, Brett Merritt, Celeste Moses, and Neil Citron. At Temple Beth Haverim - Rabbi Gershon Johnson, the professional staff and Board of Directors. My family - for the love and support of my unbelievably patient wife, Laura, who has been hearing about this dream for so many years, my wonderful sons Adam & Aaron, my sisters, Cheryl, Bonnie and of course, Dad. My Uncles Nathan and Charles Ellis who keep me and Dad laughing. My friends Tony and Lauren Dow, who are always there for me and Nili Ziv, who always steers me in the right direction. For your great advice on this album: Hyman Katz - never hesitating to share your expertise and years of experience with me.

To all the musicians for pouring their hearts into this project.

To Reba “Ivie” Ellis z”l, my beloved mother, who loved to hear me sing and was my biggest fan. To Stanley J. Caplan, z”l, my father-in-law, who’s love of Judaism, big bands and this project spoke volumes to me. And to Jeffrey Swartz, z”l, our wonderful friend who left us way too soon.
medley, Harvey was able to do a tribute to the
great Big Bands of the 1940's. Benny Goodman,
Woody Herman, Les Brown, Billy May, Glenn Miller
and Artie Shaw. Both songs lyrics were written by
Israeli poet and writer of children's books, Levin
Kipnis. Solo: Joel Peskin – tenor saxophone

8. Hanu-calypso
(Ellis - Cohen)
In my “funny file” - a shoebox made up of matchbook
covers, napkins, tiny pieces of paper and spiral
notebooks of all sizes- I wrote down in a margin
sometime back in the '70's, “Hanu-calypso”. I always
felt that there was a connection between those two
words that I could one day write a song to. When we
were looking for songs for this album, I remembered
that word I created and suggested it to Harvey and a
song was born. Solo: Joel Peskin - flute

9. Rock of Ages
(Trad.)
Maoz Tzur, which translates from the Hebrew as
"Rock of Ages", is traditionally sung after reciting the
Hanukkah blessings and kindling the Hanukkah
lights. It is by far the oldest “rock” song known to
mankind. The lyrics were written about 800-900
years ago in Europe. The tune that is considered to be
"traditional" in most parts of the Jewish world today,
is an adaptation of a German folk song. "Maoz Tzur,"
tells of the many times G-d saved the Jewish people.
The setting for this song came as I was driving on the
freeway one day. I was listening to a jazz station on
the radio and the Quincy Jones arrangement of "Killer
Joe" came on. As I listened to it, I started singing
"Maoz Tzur." I immediately called Harvey on my cell
phone and the rest, as they say, is history!
Solos: Kirk Smith - bass, Mitch Holder - guitar

10. 'Twas the Night Before Hanukkah
(Anon./Ellis - Cohen)
I believe it was around the time of my Bar Mitzvah,
someone sent our family the first funny Hanukkah
card (this was rare in those days). I thought it was so
funny that I kept it in my "funny file." Until I got my
first computer and I copied the words of this card. It
had become so old and faded that I decided to toss it
out. I read this poem to my congregation at Hanukkah
time and I even included it in Hanukkah programs I
did around the country. It always got laughs and was
well received. Now I see it all over the internet in
various forms. I think the original (with some updates
and some of my own changes) is still the best. By the
way, on the back of the card, it said that the writers
name was “Anonymous.” Sounds Greek to me! I
updated the words. The music was written by Harvey
and the incredible piano solo is by Stu Goldberg.

A special note about Stu Goldberg. There is no way
that Harvey and I could have ever done this album
without the super talents of Stu Goldberg. He not only
played piano and keyboards for all of the tracking
sessions, he also engineered the demos of "Swingin'
Dreidel" and "Ocho Kandelikas" and helped co-
produce the entire album. Thank you Stu for flying in
from Canada to work on this album with us. We love
you!

Tracks 1, 8 & 10 - KPE Music (ASCAP)/Olive Eye Music (ASCAP)
Tracks 3 & 4 - KPE Music (ASCAP)
Album Concept by: Kenny Ellis
Executive Produced by: Ray Scherr
Produced by: Harvey R. Cohen, Stu Goldberg and Kenny Ellis
Arranged and Conducted by: Harvey R. Cohen
Engineered by: Stu Goldberg and Neil Citron
Photography by: Kevin Estrada
Art Design by: Giulio Costanzo

Recorded at:

Mixed and Mastered by: Neil Citron at The Mothership Studio - Hollywood, CA

Musicians:
Kenny Ellis - vocals
Stu Goldberg - piano/keyboards/percussion
Mitch Holder - acoustic / electric guitars
Albie Berk - drums
Kirk Smith - acoustic bass
Larry Antinino - electric bass**
Wayne Bergeron - trumpet
Roy Wiegand - trumpet
Jon Lewis - trumpet
Randy Aldcroft - trombone
Ira Nepus - trombone
Joel Peskin - alto saxophone/tenor saxophone/clarinet /flute

John Mitchell - tenor saxophone/ baritone saxophone
*Bill Liston - alto saxophone/flute/piccolo

Strings for Hanukkah Candles and Children of the Macabbes:
Ruth Bruegger - violin
Razdan Kuyumjian - violin
Ralph Morrison - violin
Marcy Vaj - violin
Margot Alcroft - viola
Maurice Grants - cello

*Swingin' Dreidel & Ocho Kandelikas
**Hanukkah Swingin' Holiday, Ocho Kandelikas, Sevivon, Sov Sov,Sov, Rock of Ages

Background Vocals:
Hanukkah Candles & Children of the Macabbees - Brenda Lee Eager, Cynthia Bass, Sydney Davis
Swingin' Dreidel & Sevivon, Sov, Sov, Sov - Harvey R. Cohen
Sevivon, Sov, Sov, Sov - Stu Goldberg
All Tracks - Kenny Ellis
KENNY ELLIS
Hanukkah Swings!

1. Swingin' Dreidel (3:15)
2. Medley: Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah/Who Can Retell (3:21)
3. Hanukkah Candles (3:39)
4. Sevivon Sov, Sov, Sov (3:19)
5. Ocho Kandelikas (2:45)
6. Children of the Macabbees (3:45)
7. Medley: Hanukkah Swingin' Holiday/Pour the Oil (3:38)
8. Hanu-calypso (2:32)
9. Rock of Ages (4:18)
10. 'Twas the Night Before Hanukkah (3:07)

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