SIROTA SINGS AGAIN
SIROTA SINGS AGAIN - Gerson Sirot 1874-1943
Possessor of a remarkable tenor robuste voice, Cantor Gerson Sirot of Warsaw developed a worldwide reputation early in his career. He was considered by many to be the greatest tenor voice of the nineteenth century. Non-Jewish critics regarded him as the only cantor who could be ranked with classical singers, often comparing him to Enrico Caruso.

Sirot was a cantor in Odessa. At about the turn of the century he moved from there to the Great Synagogue of Vilna. Eight years later he was called to the Great Synagogue of Warsaw (the Talmach), where he officiated for nineteen years. During Sirot's years there, services at the Talmach Synagogue were religious musical events to which thousands flocked, closely associated with him in both Vilna and Warsaw was Leo Low, choir conductor and composer.

Sirot came to America only on short concert tours, the first in 1912. Unlike many other famous cantors of this period who settled in the United States, Sirot remained in Warsaw. There he was killed, together with his wife, on the last day of Passover, an obvious enough, on which thousands would fill the Great Synagogue to hear him chant Yizkor, the Memorial Service for the Dead.

TYPICAL OF CRITICAL COMMENTS ON HIS ARTISTRY ARE THE FOLLOWING REMARKS BY ARTHUR E. KNIGHT, WRITING IN THE BRITISH "RECORD COLLECTOR" OF JANUARY, 1955:

"He was one of the most highly trained tenors of all time - his output was a one-time tour de force; before the public, he ran his scale, fabulous!... his facility and coloring of notes unrivalled by any other recording tenor."

On this record are two selections from the Friday Evening service, five from the liturgy of Sabbath Morning, two festival and holyday chants, and three varied songs from Sirot's repertoire.

SIDE ONE
FRIDAY EVENING

1. SHAM'OCH VATISMACHT TSIYON - Zion has been heard - The last four verses of Psalm 97, chanted in the Kabbalistic Shabbos (Welcoming Sabbath).

Zion has been heard and rejoiced, And the cities of Judah have been glad.
Because of Thy judgments, O Lord,
For Thou, O Lord, art supreme over all the earth.
Thou art highly exalted over all gods.

Light is seen for the righteous,
And rejoicing for the upright of heart.
Return, O Lord, to the heart of Israel,
And celebrate His holiness in praise.

V'SHOM'RU - And the children of Israel - The weekly reminder of the covenant with the Eternal to keep the Sabbath Day holy; (Ex. 31:16, 17)
The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, Observing the Sabbath throughout their generations.
As an everlasting covenant,
It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever.
That six days the Lord made heaven and earth And on the seventh day He ceased from his labor and rested.

SABBATH MORNING

3. KI HU L'VAADO - For He alone - A prayer of praise to the Almighty, the Creator of light, said before the Sabbath in the proclamation of the Shabbat.

For He alone worketh mighty deeds and maketh new things.
He is the Lord over struggle, sowing righteousness, and reaping victory.
He createth healing and is revered in praises.
He is the Lord of wonders.
Who maketh the heavens changes the days.

Every day continually
As it is said,
O give thanks to Him, that maketh great lights, For His loving kindness endureth for ever.
O cause a new light to shine upon Zion, And may we all be worthy soon to enjoy its brightness.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Creator of the luminaries.

4. R'ZEL - Accept - A prayer for the restoration of the Temple service. The music is a composition of Isaac Schlesinger, Leo Lord's choirmaster as choir master in the Great Synagogue of Warsaw.

Accept, O Lord our God, Thy people Israel, and their prayer.

Renesse the service into the inner sanctuary of Thy house.
Receive in love and favor the offerings of Israel, receive their prayers.
May the worship of Thy people Israel be ever acceptable unto Thee.

5. Y'H ROTSON - Blessing of the new month - The Jewish calendar is based on twelve lunar months, the first beginning on the first day of the New Moon. This is a prayer for blessings during the coming month, recited on the Sabbath immediately preceding the New Moon (Shabbos Mevuchim). As a formal prayer, the text is only about two hundred years old. It has become a text much embellished by cantors, and one that touches the hearts of the worshippers, who often regard it as the most solemn prayer of that Sabbath.

SOME OF THE SONGS FEATURED ON THIS RECORD WERE COMPOSED BY THE FOLLOWING ARTISTS:

1. "My heart is sore grieved within me; And theerrors of death are fallen upon me.

2. "A D'N TOIRE MIT GOTT - A lawsuit against God - A popular Chassidic song in Yiddish known also as the Kaddish of Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev. To this famous Chassidic personality both text and melody are ascribed. This anguished outcry against the world's injustice to the Jews has become a classic of the Jewish concert repertoire. With the fervor of the truly faithful, Reb Levi Yitzchok envisions himself dying. As he sinks into the grave, he feels himself left alone without the Lord of the Name. The opening and closing passages follow:

3. "Good morning, Master of the universe!
4. "And may all the nations of the earth be quieted...
5. "The stars shine brightly...

5. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in kindness and truth, He keeps kindness to the thousands generation, Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, And accepting the repentant.

SIDE TWO

1. V'CHOL HACHAYIM - And everything thatliveth - The concluding paragraphs of the Sixth of the Seven Benedictions in the Amidah (Silent Devotion) of the Sabbath, a prayer of thanksgiving for the Holy One's unfailing mercies. In repeating this prayer the cantor adds the ancient Priestly Blessing recited in the Temple.

And everything that liveth shall give thanks unto Thee, O Lord.
And shall praise and bless Thy great name in truth, O God, our salvation and our help.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Whose Name is All-Good.

As it is said,
The Lord bless thee and keep thee, The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, And be gracious unto thee, And give thee peace.

AHRIAS AND SONGS

2. HAAZINO ELOHIM (Psalm 55) - Give ear, O Lord - The first four verses of Psalm 55, set to a moving Italian art song attributed to Alessandro Stradella, entitled May the sound of their feet be歌声. Hebrew words have been fitted to the music so aptly that the melody seems almost to have been written for the text.

Give ear to my prayer, O God, And hear my supplications.

Atten unto me, and answer me;
I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked.
For they cast injury upon me, And with wrath they hate me.

HOLIDAY CHANTS

5. AMIDAH ASHKENAZI - The Lord, the Lord - "Hasty Ashkenazi" variant, the thirteen Trumotot (prayers) of the Amidah, the central prayer of the daily and Sabbath services. They are recited by the cantor in a fast monotone.

The Lord, the Lord is a merciful and gracious God, Slow to anger and abounding in kindness and truth, He keeps kindness to the thousands generations, Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, And accepting the repentant.

6. KEL MOLLEI RACHAMIM - Dr. Max Nordau - Memorial prayer - After Theodore Herzl this brilliant journalist, writer and philosopher was the most influential and striking personality in the Zionist world. He died in Paris in 1923. Sirot's rendition of the memorial prayer was justly famous, and on this disc the prayer for Dr. Nordau is presented, in a sense, as a requiem for Sirot himself, whose life was tragically ended, like the lives of millions of others in Poland, by Nazi brutality.

O Lord, who art full of compassion, Who dwellest on high, Grant that every breath of Thy Divine Presence In the exalted voices among the holy and pure Who sing as the brightness of the firmament To our teacher, Dr. Max Nordau, Who has gone to his eternal home For all who have offered charity in memory of his soul, O shelter him forevermore under the cover of Thy wings, And let his soul be bound up in the bonds of eternal life.

The Lord is His inheritance; May His spirit rest in peace, and let us say, Amen.

Notes by D. Rembinder

The JEWISH MUSIC ARCHIVES SOCIETY has as its purpose the preservation and dissemination of the rich treasures of traditional Jewish music. It reissues distinguished records of the past that are no longer obtainable, publishes and records rare folk and synagogue music.
Sirota Sings Again

1. Shom'oh Vatismach Tsiyon - Zion Has Heard
2. V'Shom'ru - And the Children of Israel
3. Ki Hu L'Vado - For He Alone
4. R'zei - Accept
5. Y'hi Rotson (Rosh Chodosh) - Blessing of the New Month
6. L'Dor V'Dor - Unto All Generations

Cantor Gerson Sirota
JEWISH MUSIC ARCHIVES
Sirota Sings Again

CG 591
33 1/3 RPM
SIDE 2
LONG PLAYING

1. V'CHOL HACHAYIM - And Everything That Liveth
2. HAAZINO ELOKIM - Give Ear, O Lord (Ps. 55)
3. A DIN TOIRE - A Lawsuit Against God
4. E LUCEVAN LE STELLE - And the Stars Shone
5. HASHEM, HASHEM - The Lord, The Lord
6. NAZLE MOLEI RACHAMIM - DR. MAX NORDAU -
Memorial Prayer
Cantor GERSON SIROTA