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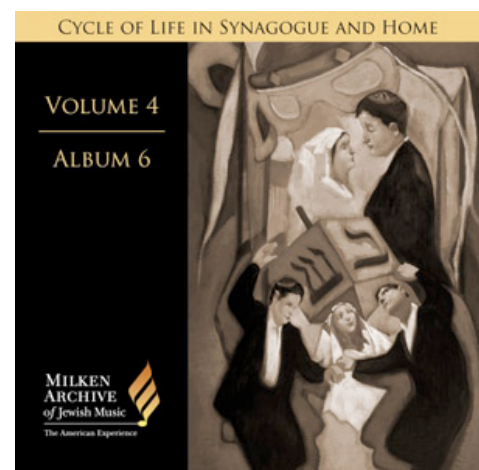
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Milken Archive of Jewish Music Virtual Museum Introduces Volume 4, Part 4: Sacred Services for the Sabbath Eve

New album features compositions by Helfman, Katchko, Freed, and Gottlieb

Prayer in Judaism is perhaps best understood as both a natural and a highly developed mode of communication with God—both an act of faith and an expression of one’s inner spirituality. Thus, it should come as no surprise that virtually every period and community in the recorded history of Judaism has offered fresh contributions to the forms, types, and styles of prayer, as well as to its musical counterparts. With [the latest installment to the *Cycle of Life in Synagogue and Home*](#) (Volume 4 of the Milken Archive of Jewish Music: The American Experience), listeners are treated to an exploration of sacred music for the Sabbath Eve with works by four key American Jewish composers: Max Helfman, Adolphe Katcko, Isadore Freed, and Jack Gottlieb.

The album opens with [Max Helfman’s *Shabbat M’nuha*](#), a series of four standard liturgical responses sung here by Meir Finkelstein and the New York Cantorial Choir, with McNeil Robinson on organ. As a whole, the settings betray a folk- and dance-like sensibility and also contain some interesting if not entirely unpredictable harmonic moves. Though he died more than fifty years ago, Max Helfman remains one of the most influential figures in the history of American Jewish music. As the Milken Archive’s artistic director Neil W. Levin has noted: “Nearly every one of Helfman’s liturgical works is a miniature masterpiece, and together they form one of the most significant contributions to the American Synagogue.”



Adolphe Katchko was already an established cantor in Europe when he immigrated to America in 1921. He is among the ranks of the “Golden Age” of Hazzanut (cantorial art) in America, which includes such luminaries as Yossele Rosenblatt, Mordechai Hershmann, and David Roitman among others. Yet Katchko was also among the few of

that cadre known for composing for choral as well as cantorial voices. His Sabbath eve service, *Avodat Aharon*, serves as a case in point. The four excerpts included on this album are sung by Cantor Raphael Frieder—a fitting match for Katchko’s own voice, which Neil W. Levin has described as “a transparent, flexible, and lyric baritone.”

Isadore Freed described his role in creating his 1954 *Salomone Rossi: Sacred Service* merely as the transcriber. In reality, Freed was at least the service’s arranger, and, one could argue, its co-composer. Salamone Rossi was a late-Renaissance/early-Baroque Italian Jewish composer so esteemed by the ruling class that he was exempt from the restrictions and subjugations that commonly applied to Jews. Though known mostly as a composer and developer of Baroque musical forms and aesthetics, Rossi also composed a series of contrapuntal choral settings of Hebrew liturgy under the title *Hashirim asher lishlomo*, which was published in Venice in 1623 but was largely unknown to American congregations prior to Freed’s reworking of it. Sung here by Cantor Raphael Frieder (accompanied by the English Chamber Choir and Christopher Bowers-Broadbent on organ), the performance highlights Freed’s goal of preserving Rossi’s music intact as much as possible, while adapting it to a performance format for Reform synagogues.

The album concludes with the nine-track, 27-minute *Love Songs for the Sabbath by Jack Gottlieb*, which he dedicated to his teacher, the aforementioned Max Helfman. (See also a video excerpt from the Archive’s oral history project where [Gottlieb discusses Helfman’s influence](#).) Featuring tenor Karl Dent and Tovah Feldshuh as narrator, the service is a result of Cantor David Putterman’s famous commissioning program at the prestigious Park Avenue Synagogue. With its 1965 premiere, Gottlieb joined the ranks of some of America’s leading composers who had participated in Putterman’s program, including Kurt Weill, David Diamond, and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. *Love Song’s for the Sabbath* combines poetry by the medieval Spanish poet Yehuda Halevi, Hannah Sennesh and others, with standard liturgical texts. Said famous Yiddish theater composer Sholom Secunda of Gottlieb’s service in a review for *The Jewish Daily Forward*: “The more I heard, the more overwhelmed I was by the young composer’s talents and his dramatic music and all the more forgot where I was: in a synagogue, or in an opera house?”

Taken together, the recordings featured on this album reveal the joyous and thoughtful body of music that has emerged in America from the productive combination of music and prayer. Look forward to future releases in *Volume 4: Cycle of Life in Synagogue and Home* from the Milken Archive of Jewish Music: the American Experience.

Founded in 1990 by philanthropist Lowell Milken, the Milken Archive of Jewish Music reflects the scope and variety of Jewish life in America. The Archive’s virtual museum www.milkenarchive.org is an interactive guide to music, videos, oral histories, photos and essays.

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