

February 4, 2014

Bringing the Sacred to the Masses

Music has played an integral part in Jewish liturgical services for thousands of years; serving at once as an aid to learning and a device to literally let resonate the voices of the community in harmony. So why were Jewish sacred works rarely performed outside of services when Bach's Passions, Mozart's Requiem and so many other Christian sacred works were routinely performed in concerts around the world?

That it finally happened in early 20th-century America is surely no simple coincidence. It was a confluence of historic levels of acceptance (albeit not without struggle) in a society and, with the rising tide of anti-Semitism in

Europe, an opportunity to bridge the gap of understanding in ways that only art can: by speaking in a language that transcends words, religion and divisive histories. It was also due to organizations like the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York and others around the country commissioning the best and brightest (Jewish and non-Jewish) composers of the day to contribute to Jewish liturgical music. The music these masters created—including Kurt Weill's setting of the *Kiddush*, Darius Milhaud's *Service Sacré* and Arnold Schoenberg's *Kol Nidre*—is featured in part one of [Episode 6 of *American Jewish Music from the Milken Archive with Leonard Nimoy*](#), streaming for free this month only.



Remember



The life and work of **Jack Gottlieb** will be celebrated in a **concert on Sunday, Feb. 23** at Hebrew Union College in NY.

Retrace



Ben Zion Shenker—"the greatest living figure of chassidic music"—**traces his musical roots** in this **Jewish Press** interview.

Reimagine



David Krakauer talks about **Jewish music in film** and his new project reimagining some of those standards in **Tablet's audio interview**.

Documenting the history of Jewish music in America—the influences and effects of one upon the other—is core to the mission of the Archive. There are few better representations of the resultant synergy than the showcased masterworks written for service and public performance in this month's episode, which serve as a bridge from Jewish sacred tradition to world-class art and understanding. This music is only enhanced by the discussions of Artistic Director Neil Levin and conductor Gerard Schwarz, who put it all into context via their insights on its origins and significance. Whether you tune in for the music and stay for the history or vice versa, you're guaranteed to come away richer for the experience.