

SHALOM: A RECITAL OF JEWISH MUSIC

Program Notes and Translations

This evening's recital consists of compositions written by Jewish composers and/or based on texts from the Jewish culture. The program was chosen to coincide with the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

One of the foremost American composers, **Leonard Bernstein**, drew from his Jewish heritage for such works as the *Jeremiah Symphony*, the oratorio *Kaddisch* and the *Chichester Psalms*. Bernstein became the first American-born conductor of the New York Philharmonic and maintained a close association with the Israel Philharmonic throughout his life.

An interest in folk music of different cultures led **Maurice Ravel** to set two traditional Hebrew melodies in 1914. The text of "Kaddisch" is one of the masterpieces of Jewish liturgy. Ravel composed cantorial melismas around the original liturgical chant, creating a kind of Psalmody.

Kaddisch

May thy glory, O King of Kings, be exalted, O thou
who art to renew the world and resurrect the dead.
May thy reign, Adonai, be proclaimed by us, the sons of Israel,
today, tomorrow, for ever. Let us all say: Amen.
May thy radiant name be loved, cherished, praised, glorified.
May it be blessed, sanctified, exalted, thy name which soars
above the heavens, above our praises, above our hymns,
above all our benisons. May merciful heaven grant us
tranquility, peace, happiness. Ah! Let us all say:
Amen.

Another form of Jewish folk music is the Sephardic song. The Sephardim were descendants of Jews who lived in Spain before the Spanish Inquisition. After the decree of expulsion in 1492, the Jewish community dispersed to North Africa, Italy, Greece, and Turkey, where they were able to maintain their identity. The Spanish language, as spoken by the Sephardim, became known as Ladino, borrowing features and words from Hebrew, Turkish, and other languages. **Joaquin Nin-Culmell**, the son of Joaquin Nin, was a composer of Cuban heritage. Although an American citizen, he maintained a strong association with the Spanish school, exploring the full range of regional folk song. He composed the *Six Chansons Populaires Sephardiques* in 1982, based on Sephardic texts and melodies.

Yo boli de foja en foja

I fly from leaf to leaf in order to unite with my beautiful bride
I fly from branch to branch in order to unite with my beautiful bride
With your permission, my dear mother, I will go to that good hour.

Adonenu, Elohenu

Lord, Our God, created Moses our teacher,
To give us the Torah that begins with "I AM."
Moses ascended the Heavens without food, without water
Returned with the two tablets that begin with "I AM."

La rose enflorece

The rose blooms in the month of May,
My soul is drained, suffering from love.
The little nightingales sing, sighing of love,
And the passion kills me,
So great is my pain.
Come quickly, my dove,
Come quickly to me.
You come quickly, my soul,
For I am going to die.

¡Ya salió de la mar!

Now comes from the sea the beloved!
With a robe of rose and white
She entered the sea and the river
To become a shining tree.

Mi suegra la Negra

My mother-in-law, the evil one,
Always she attacks me.
I can no longer live with her,
She is awful, more than death.
One day I shall be rid of her.
One day I sat beside my husband,
She began to pinch me and to bite me.
May I soon be rid of her!

Secretos quero descubrir

There are secrets I want to discover,
Secrets of my life
The skies I want for paper,
The sea I want for ink,
The trees for quills,
In order to write my sorrows
My brothers do not know,
Nor do my cousins or parents
Leave by the door, I speak to you
Leave by the window, I speak to you
I will discover you
The secrets of my soul.

Eric Whitacre is one of the most prominent American choral composers of the present day. The song cycle, *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, was written while he was spending time in Germany with two friends, all students from Juilliard. One was a violinist and the other his girlfriend, Hila Plitmann, a native of Israel, who would later become his wife. The poems were written by her, and this trio of friends first performed the songs in 1996. Since then, he has been commissioned to compose four different choral arrangements of the song cycle.

Temuná

A picture is engraved in my heart;
Moving between light and darkness;
A sort of silence envelopes your body,
And your hair falls upon your face just so.

Kalá kallá

Light bride
She is all mine,
And lightly
She will kiss me!

Lárov

“Mostly,” said the roof to the sky,
“the distance between you and me is endlessness;
But a while ago two came up here,
And only one centimetre was left between us.”

Éyze shéleg

What snow?
Like little dreams
Falling from the sky.

Rakút

He was full of tenderness;
She was very hard.
And as much as she tried to stay thus,
Simply, and with no good reason,
He took her into himself,
And set her down
In the softest, softest place.

George Gershwin was the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants and became one of the icons of American popular and classical music. Attracted to the popular music of Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin, as well as the jazz of the early 1900's, he brought together popular and art music, within a sophisticated jazz style. Gershwin composed many songs for stage and film, as well as classical works, including the opera *Porgy and Bess*.