

UNIT 5  
APPENDICES

סיפורי מוסיקה  
STORIES OF MUSIC



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# APPENDIX A: TOOLS/WORKSHEETS

# Group Activity Worksheet: Gerald Cohen

## For Gerald Cohen

### Background and Early Influences

- Gerald's interview emphasized the importance of education, mentorship, and being surrounded by Jewish musical culture. This is highlighted by his reflections of his own upbringing and his role as a Jewish music pedagogue vis-a-vis HUC, JTS, HaZamir Teen Choir, etc.
  - » What does this tell you about the relationship between Jewish education and music education?
  - » How does this reflect traditional Jewish values?
- From early in his musical experiences, art music and Jewish culture were deeply intertwined, leaving little or no distinction between the two.
  - » What does this say about the role of external cultural forces on one's artistic output?

### Inspiration

- Is there anything interesting about the differences between Gerald's cantorial and art music influences?
- Text
  - » Gerald's process is often driven by a text, whether Biblical or from a prayer.
    - How does this text driven process relate to Jewish values and study?
    - What observations can you make about the relationship between music and text?
    - How is the musical setting of the text a *midrash* on the text itself?

### Personal Observations

- Does art music have a place in your current Jewish music life?
  - » If so, how? In services? High Holidays? Concerts of Jewish art music?
- What role do you see this type of music best being suited to and why?
  - » Concert/Recital Hall?
  - » Synagogue?
- Interview Quote to Discuss: What does this summarizing quote reveal about Gerald Cohen, his process, ideals, etc.?
  - » "Music for me is a deeply spiritual art, one of the most powerful ways to express as an artist and to experience as a listener the ineffable, those things that can't be expressed in words: Awe, wonder, deep love, deep joy, deep grief, gratitude for existence, God as the pulsing essence of the universe."

# Group Activity Worksheet: *Nava Tehila*

## For *Nava Tehila*

### Background and Early Influences

- As a group/organization, *Nava Tehila* is the Israeli reaction to the religious status quo, built on the ideal that all individuals can find a spiritual connection to God and Judaism through music.
  - » How does this manifest itself in the music?
- What are the values at the core of *Nava Tehila* as an organization, and how do you think the formative experiences of the founding members helped establish them (i.e. universalism, inclusion, etc.)?

### Inspiration

- Sometimes changes in Jewish music take place because of musical necessity, and sometimes they take place because of a religious or spiritual need.
  - » To what degree do you think *Nava Tehila* developed out of a musical need vs. religious need? Why?
- Text
  - » What makes *Nava Tehila*'s musical treatment of text different from that of other composers?
    - What is the role of chanting single lines of text?
- Renewal Judaism focuses on inclusion and connection to the community, how does their music reflect that?
- *Nava Tehila* was founded on the desire to take people on a spiritual journey where every individual can have their own connection to God through a communal experience.
  - » What musical tools are used to create these connections between the community members?
  - » Between the singers and God?
- Many rabbis and cantors (over 100!) have been a part of the “Levites” group at *Nava Tehila* services
  - » What effect do you think this has had on Jewish music and worship in the US?

### Personal Observations

- What, if any, influences do you see of Renewal Judaism, and the music associated, in your own Jewish experiences?
  - » How have Renewal values/ideas (and music) become a part of the Jewish mainstream?
- Interview Quote to Discuss: What does this summarizing quote by Daphna Rosenberg reveal

about *Nava Tehila*, their process, ideals, etc.?

- » “I bring something very simple that connects people to their heart. I look to connect people to themselves and to other people and to God and to other traditions and religions. I am not a musician. The music is an instrument to bring connection. Music is not a goal for me. I am a community artist. “

# Group Activity Worksheet: Basya Schechter

## For *Basya Schechter*

### Background and Early Influences

- Basya describes the various sonic elements that surrounded her during her upbringing, what effect do you think this had on her creative trajectory?
  - » Can you hear any of these early influences in the songs provided?
- What stands out as unique in Basya's musical upbringing?
- Are there particular cultural intersections in her upbringing that you find interesting?
- Much of the work that Basya does is through the lens of Renewal Judaism
  - » What is Renewal Judaism and what are some of the ideas and values that define it?
  - » How does this relate to Basya's music?
- In Basya's view, what is the relationship between music, Jewish services, and Jewish spirituality (or connection to God)?

### Inspiration

- Significant to Basya's musical progression and development, is the role of travel, and her interest in mixing musical cultures.
  - » What were some of the key places that Basya visited, and how did they become part of her musical aesthetic?
    - Things to consider: Instruments used, the melodic material (melodies), rhythmic beats, language, etc.
- Text
  - » Basya's process is often driven by an inspiring text, whether it is something she just learned, or something from grade school:
    - How does this text driven process relate to Jewish values and study?
    - What observations can you make about the relationship between music and text?
    - How is the musical setting of the text a *midrash* on the text itself?

### Personal Observations

- Can you see influences of Basya (or more broadly the role of world music) in your own Jewish music experiences?
- Do the concepts explored here resonate with other musicians (Jewish or not) that you know?
  - » I.e. The Beatles, Paul Simon, etc.

- Interview Quote to Discuss: What does this summarizing quote reveal about the artist, her process, ideals, etc.?
  - » “I traveled all through Africa by myself. I spent time in a cultural center in Harari, and I studied a little marimba there by ear, nothing formal. It was a place that people told me there Paul Simon had gone to. So I ran into places that Paul Simon had also been to, looking for new influences.

And I think that’s where I figured out that I could write my own music that was already inspired by Jewish music, but my Jewish heritage and sort of the classic rock that I was growing up with in my late high school, college and singer songwriter; and then also using cultural influences from other cultures, like Africa... that’s where it began.”

## Playlist for Peer Led Class

### The Times They Are A-Changin’ – Part 2

#### Gerald Cohen

“*Pitchu Li*” premiere performance by HaZamir at Lincoln Center, featuring Gerald Cohen on piano

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbuT3x4D9MQ>

“*Adonai Roi*” with Gerald Cohen as soloist and pianist, and Zamir Noded, Mati Lazar conducting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmtTE7d5ffA>

“*Dayeinu*” from *Sea of Reeds*, for two clarinets and piano, performed by the Grneta Ensemble

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xbr5U1-GILc>

2nd and 3rd movements of *Playing for Our Lives*, performed by the Cassatt String Quartet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sloFXf3XSLg>

“An Ordinary Breakfast” from *Steal a Pencil for Me*, performed by Ilana Davidson and Robert Balonek

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gPshXijAkQ>

#### Nava Tehila

<https://youtu.be/FMNtWoRBq10> - *Nava Tehila Ose Shalom*

<https://youtu.be/DjG1GnwHnps> - *Nava Tehila Lechu N’ranena*

<https://youtu.be/f-3pxB2JHMg> - *Nava Tehila Shiviti Havaya*

<https://youtu.be/lkPPbiYy9Og> - *Nava Tehila Lecha Dodi*

<https://youtu.be/idv-a6UYvW4> - *Nava Tehila Halleluya*

#### Basya Schechter

<https://youtu.be/zH8wELWxsTI> - Basya Schechter *Lecha Dodi*

[https://youtu.be/fG8AXHc9\\_-U](https://youtu.be/fG8AXHc9_-U) - Basya Schechter *Avrohum*

<https://youtu.be/UXuUPMbiHOk> - Basya Schechter *Ka Ribon*

<https://youtu.be/PriBYTRWKO> - Basya Schechter *Lev Tahor*

<https://youtu.be/yLwoGdDS7ac> - Basya Schechter *Or Raza*



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# APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

(From the ALEPH website: <https://aleph.org/>):

“We combine the socially progressive values of egalitarianism, the joy of Hasidism, the informed do-it-yourself spirit of the havurah movement, and the accumulated wisdom of centuries of tradition.

We value deep ecumenism; in Hillel’s words, we learn from every person and spiritual tradition.

We create innovative, accessible, and welcoming prayer experiences.

We shape *halacha* (Jewish law) into a living way of walking in the world.

And we seek to deepen the ongoing, joyful, and fundamental connection, with a God who connects us all, which is at the heart of Jewish practice.

Renewal is an attitude, not a denomination, and offers tools to all branches of Judaism, including:

- An emphasis on accessible spiritual experience;
- Contemplative practices (Jewish Renewal teachers were the first to recover meditative practices from the dusty attic of Jewish tradition, and to return them to their rightful place as central Jewish spiritual technologies);
- Davvenology, the art and practice of being a living laboratory for creative and renewed Jewish prayer, in modalities including chant and embodied prayer;
- Sage-ing, trainings and tools for rethinking aging as a journey of unearthing wisdom;
- Hashpa’ah (spiritual direction) as a tool for unpacking the holy potential of every moment and for discerning the voice of God.

Renewal seeks to balance forward-thinking with backward-compatibility. We know we can’t drive if we’re only looking in the rear-view mirror, but neither can we move forward if we don’t know where we’ve been.”

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# APPENDIX C: CASE STUDIES

## Gerald Cohen

[www.geraldcohenmusic.com](http://www.geraldcohenmusic.com)

Composer Gerald Cohen has been praised for his “linguistic fluidity and melodic gift,” creating music that “reveals a very personal modernism that...offers great emotional rewards.” (Gramophone Magazine). His deeply affecting compositions have been recognized with numerous awards and critical accolades. The music on his most recent CD, *Sea of Reeds*, “is filled with vibrant melody, rhythmic clarity, drive and compositional construction...a sheer delight to hear.” (GappleGate Music Review)

*Steal a Pencil for Me*, based on a true concentration camp love story, had its world premiere production by Opera Colorado in January 2018; excerpts were featured at Fort Worth Opera’s Frontiers Festival in 2016. Cohen is a noted synagogue cantor and baritone; his experience as a singer informs his dramatic, lyrical compositions. Cohen’s best-known work, his “shimmering setting” (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) of Psalm 23, has received thousands of performances from synagogues and churches to Carnegie Hall and the Vatican. Recent instrumental compositions include *Voyagers*, a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Voyager spacecraft, which had its premiere at New York’s Hayden Planetarium; and *Playing for Our Lives*, a tribute to the music and musicians of the WWII Terezin concentration camp near Prague.

Recognition of Cohen’s body of work includes the Copland House Borromeo String Quartet Award and Hoff-Barthelson/Copland House commission, Westchester Prize for New Work, American Composers Forum *Faith Partners* and American Lyric Theater residencies, Hallel V’Zimrah award from the Zamir Choral Foundation, and commissioning grants from Meet the Composer, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and Westchester Arts Council.

Gerald Cohen received a BA in music from Yale University and a DMA in composition from Columbia University. He is cantor at Shaarei Tikvah, Scarsdale, NY, and is on the faculties of The Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College. His compositions are available at [www.geraldcohenmusic.com](http://www.geraldcohenmusic.com).

## Gerald Cohen (full case study)

Gerald Cohen (born 1960 in New York, NY) is currently the cantor at Shaarei Tikvah in Scarsdale, New York. He serves on the faculties of the Cantorial Schools of The Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College.

### Early Influences

Gerald Cohen began his formal music training with piano lessons at the age of 7. He notes, however, that he was “crazy about classical music from 2 or 3 years of age.” He created his first composition soon after. It was a piece for the piano that, reflecting on it now, seems to have a Jewish feeling, although he is unsure as to why that came through at that early age.

As he describes it, his childhood was filled with piano study, composition, and “lots and lots of concert going and score study. I was a real musical nerd.”

By the age of 12, he had written a “*V’shamru*” for chorus, flute and piano. “I guess I was already wanting to combine the musical and Jewish parts of my life.”

He attended synagogue from an early age; Cantor Jacob Mendelson was the cantor at his shul. He notes that it was “amazing to hear this great cantor as my first experience of synagogue music”. In preparation for his Bar Mitzvah, he learned “a bunch of the service, Torah reading, etc. I was musical and really liked leading services, so I kept doing it and adding to those skills.”

Cohen studied music at Yale where he did “intense” work in piano and composition. While at Yale, he sang in the Yale Concert Choir, a formative experience in his deep love of choral music, and learned to lead High Holiday services -- which he did at his home synagogue in Riverdale, New York.

Upon graduation, Cohen returned home where he continued to study with Cantor Mendelson and took voice lessons for the first time—discovering, while always thinking of himself as a pianist, “that maybe I was a singer as well!” During this time he received his first commission - “*Libavtini*” - a choral piece for the Connecticut Hebrew Chorale, and also had a job as a music specialist at a nursing home, giving him his first deep experience of seeing the power of music as a healing art.

His studies with Jacob Mendelson led to his first positions as a cantor, initially hired for the High

Holy Days and then beginning year-round positions. Cohen comments he thought “at first that being a cantor would be a temporary job for me while in grad school, but then I loved being a cantor so much that I stayed with it, and now have been at Shaarei Tikvah for 32 years!” He adds that this position remains part-time, so that he can continue to pursue composing and teaching.

### **Influences and Inspirations**

Gerald breaks down his influences and inspirations between the two aspects of his life.

As cantor he notes the influence of his childhood Cantor, Mendelson, whose “impassioned singing, beautiful *hazzanut*, and incredible vocal color” left an indelible mark on him. He also points to Rabbi Chaim Pearl for his “wonderful articulation of the text,” and Cantor Lawrence Avery. While I “never studied with Avery, he was a mentor, and a model for beautiful delicate singing and vocal technique and health.”

As composer, Cohen responds that there are “so, so many influences.” Mostly they are composers in the “classical” world more than in the Jewish or pop world. He points to “Beethoven, Mahler, Schubert, Britten, Bernstein, Copland, Brahms, Verdi, Mendelssohn, Bartok, Berg, Messiaen, Shostakovich, and Janacek among the many who have influenced and inspired him.

When asked about particularly influential music, Cohen responds, “Two pieces of Bernstein come to mind: *Chichester Psalms*, and the *Mass*.”

Of the *Chichester Psalms*, (<https://www.milkenarchive.org/videos/category/live-performances/chichester-psalms-live-with-members-of-the-la-philharmonic/>) Cohen states that singing it at age 13 was “one of the earliest and most inspirational choral experiences I ever had ... here was this great piece, so dramatic, rhythmically and harmonically exciting, and it was made of a Hebrew settings of Psalms. It is a piece I have continued to study and teach over the years.”

Of Bernstein’s *Mass* (<https://youtu.be/5imPUq39jlg>) he reflects, “It had its premiere when I was 11 or so. I got the record and loved this piece. It was a religious piece that was, at the same time, like a musical or an opera. It was both devout and sacrilegious, and completely eclectic in style. Many panned it at the time because of that. I’m not sure how much of all of those aspects I really got at that age. I didn’t really listen to the piece again until my 30s, when I rediscovered it and fell in love with it again. Like the *Chichester Psalms*, I have continued to study and teach it over the years.”

Asked to identify a piece that he currently finds as a source of inspiration, Cohen remarked, “It is absolutely impossible to pick one - the composers I mentioned above, as well as so many others, continue to inspire me as they have for many years.” When asked about Jewish music, he mentions three composers, “all of whose work is completely different than mine, who bring important innovations to Jewish music.”

Steve Reich’s *Tehillim* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYnOWexoa4k>) “A fascinating use of Reich’s minimalism as applied to the Psalms.”

John Zorn’s *Masada* series (<https://youtu.be/MGbUxtdLpFY>) “Zorn has created a large body of Jewish-influenced melodies, which he then uses as the basis for improvisation in many different instrumental contexts, many of the pieces with a large jazz influence.”

Joey Weisenberg’s liturgical settings and niggunim (<https://youtu.be/biyaHhwHZUK>) “Joey Weisenberg has, together with several other fine contemporary Jewish musicians, written melodies that are both inspirational in the synagogue, and beautiful in the ensemble versions that he has created and recorded.”

### **Contributions to Jewish Music**

Thinking about his own contributions to Jewish music Cohen says: “As Cantor, as I serve my congregation and the larger Jewish community, showing the beauty and emotion of the liturgy, the richness of the Jewish music tradition, and the possibilities of creating new music and new paths in that liturgy and that tradition.”

As a teacher at JTS and HUC (especially of composition): “I hope to act as a model, for the students, of a cantor who is also a creator and composer; to expose them to music and musical styles that they might not have experienced before; to give them the opportunity to write their own Jewish music, and to help them find their voices as Jewish creative musicians, whether or not they keep composing later in their careers.”

As a composer: “From early in my composing life, a central mission was to compose Jewish concert music, Jewish art music — to bring the training and sensibilities I had of a concert composer to Jewish texts and themes — and equally, to bring Jewish music and ideas into the concert world. This has happened in many different ways:”

\*Opera: Cohen has had a love of opera, and a desire to compose music to tell stories, from early on in his life. He has written two operas on Jewish themes:

[Sarah and Hagar](https://www.geraldcohenmusic.com/compositions/opera/sarah-and-hagar/): (<https://www.geraldcohenmusic.com/compositions/opera/sarah-and-hagar/>) a midrash exploring the story from Genesis, focusing especially on the stories of the two women, and also of giving Hagar and Ishmael's story a role of equal importance to Sarah and Isaac's in telling the story of Abraham and his family.

[Steal a Pencil for Me](https://youtu.be/8dBgECEHhpc): (<https://youtu.be/8dBgECEHhpc>) A love story, set in the concentration camps of Westerbork and Bergen Belsen, based on the true story of Jaap and Ina Polak. Jaap and Ina fell in love while imprisoned in these camps; they later moved to the United States, where Cohen knew them for many years as members of his congregation, and realized that their story would make a powerful opera. This was "the first opera of mine to receive a fully staged production. It was so thrilling to get to tell an important story through music and drama, and to see it come to life so amazingly by all of the cast and production team."

\*Music for chorus, and for vocal solo: Cohen has written "lots of choral and vocal solo music, on a wide variety of Jewish texts, from settings of the liturgy, such as many psalms (*Adonai Ro'i, Hariu Ladonai, Lo Lanu, Pitchu Li*) and siddur texts, to modern English reinterpretations of Jewish texts (such as poems of Rami Shapiro and Norman Fischer) to a piece such as "I felt my legs were praying," which uses the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel after he marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma. I write for a wide variety of choirs, amateur to professional, thereby creating opportunities for different types of choirs. Choral music has certainly been an area where my Jewish music has made its way into the non-Jewish wider world, both in churches and in secular choirs."

Cohen points to "*Adonai Ro'i*", his setting of Psalm 23, in particular as a special case. He expresses his amazement at seeing it used in so many different places, seeing how it makes a connection to people when they are in mourning or at a time of remembrance and reflection. He notes that it is a "used in Jewish, Christian and secular settings."

\*Instrumental Music: Cohen has written many pieces of chamber music that are based on Jewish ideas and/or melodies. A few of these are:

[Playing for Our Lives](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sloFXf3XSLg): (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sloFXf3XSLg>) A tribute to the music and musicians of Terezin, the concentration camp near Prague—the music tells the story by weaving together elements of a Yiddish folk song, a lullaby from the opera *Brundibar*, and



Verdi's *Requiem*—the last, a piece performed by a choir of the prisoners as a note of defiance to their Nazi captors.

Yedid Nefesh: (<https://soundcloud.com/geraldcohenmusic/yedid-nefesh-trio-for-clarinet>)

The liturgical poem *Yedid Nefesh* is a mystical poem about passionate longing for connection with the Divine. Cohen's piece uses a beautiful Sephardic melody for the poem as the basis for a musical meditation on that idea.

Sea of Reeds: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWiWGIKlSE>) Cohen wrote *Sea of Reeds* for a wonderful young trio of two clarinetists and a pianist, the Grneta Ensemble. He created purely instrumental settings of several of his vocal compositions, including "Adonai Ro'i" and "Dayeinu". This piece has become very popular among clarinetists, again bringing Jewish music to the wider general public.

Cohen says, "For all of this varied music,—opera, vocal, and instrumental—I guess there is a larger overarching theme. Music for me is a deeply spiritual art, one of the most powerful ways to express as an artist and to experience as a listener the ineffable, those things that can't be expressed in words: Awe, wonder, deep love, deep joy, deep grief, gratitude for existence, God as the pulsing essence of the universe.

"And Judaism, and thus Jewish text/thought/music/culture, is one of my key 'native languages' of expressing those things as well. So in all my work, I am on some level working for expressing those ideas and emotions, and my Jewish being is a key part of this. So, a recent piece like "Voyagers," which is a celebration of the Voyager spacecraft and the music sent on its voyage through the Voyager Golden Record, is part of the same expression, which I feel is essentially spiritual, even though there is nothing explicitly Jewish about it."

And of course, Cohen contributes to Jewish music through his working with groups like HaZamir: the International Jewish Teen Choir, as well as by presenting concerts of Jewish music, through ASJM (the American Society for Jewish Music), the Jewish Theological Seminary and his own synagogue.

### **Creative Process**

Of his own creative process in the creation of Jewish music Cohen says, "In some ways it's hard to differentiate between composing Jewish music and composing any other music."

“One key for me is knowing that I am writing a piece for specific performers and for a specific performance. Much, though not all, of what I write is commissioned — and while yes, getting paid is important and appropriate for a composer – the part that really gets my creative energy going is thinking about the performers I am writing for, the concert I am writing for, and yes, having a deadline! Some might think that the specificity of a commissioned piece might stifle “free creativity”, but for me that is just what opens up creativity, as it means what I am writing is something that will definitely have a life off of the paper, that performers who care about the piece will spend time bringing it to life, and that hopefully an audience will take pleasure in hearing it.”

“Deadlines help in making sure that you know you have to find a point where you say the piece is finished—even if you know that you could keep tinkering with it, the deadline says — OK time to stop and send it out into the world (of course there can be revisions later!). As far as the actual composing, I cherish, though cannot always get, large blocks of time to work — so at least once a year I go on a composing (& hiking) retreat.”

“If I am writing a piece with a text, a huge part of the process is choosing a text—often going through many possible ideas and discussing them with the collaborators before deciding. I am finding these days that I am drawn to texts that are both deeply Jewish and deeply universal. Very often one particular phrase in the text calls out a particular musical response from me, and then the piece gets built from that.”

“Instrumental pieces are somewhat different, as there is no text guiding the structure of the piece. They tend to take me longer in the initial gestation process; I am more likely in those pieces to do pages and pages of preliminary sketches, trying to find the natural shape of the piece.”

“Writing congregational tunes is quite different than other projects—very often for that, I am thinking about the fact that I am wanting a new melody for a certain text for my congregation some particular week, and then just let the text get into me until a melody kind of pops out. Then the wonderful thing is that you get to try it out right away with the congregation, and see if it works! Usually I can feel whether a melody will ‘work’ after singing it with a congregation a few times.”

Reflecting on his contributions to Jewish music, Cohen says he is “pleased to have written many pieces that bring the love of Jewish themes to concert music,” and within the synagogue world,

his “joy of having written many new melodies sung by cantors and congregations all over the world.” Within his own congregation, “of being part of their communal and musical life for more than three decades, introducing many new melodies to them, and teaching them about the historical context of music used in the synagogue, from ancient to current times — and also producing concerts.” And as a composition teacher at JTS and HUC, “the satisfaction of encouraging students in their writing new music, finding their own Jewish voices, and thinking in new ways about possibilities in Jewish liturgical music.”

And finally, working with a choir such as HaZamir — “HaZamir is an amazing organization, in that it brings together hundreds of teens every year from all over the U.S. and Israel, throughout their entire high school years, to sing great Jewish choral music. I have had the pleasure of composing three new pieces for them, and am so heartened to see what the enthusiasm of these young people will mean for the future of Jewish music.”

When asked how Jewish music has changed, Cohen responds:

“There are obvious differences in music in the synagogue, with trends towards more participation, more influence of pop and neo-Chassidic styles.”

“In the classical/concert world, I see a very distinct difference. When I was growing up and in grad school, we were still in the time of “high modernism”—where for the most part atonal music ruled, and anything melodic was seen as quaint and not to be taken as seriously.”

“Stylistically, things really began to change and open up beginning in the 90s, and as a result, both music that has a particular Jewish feel, and music that is melodic (and music certainly can be melodic and still complex and modern) has become much more part of the concert music world.”

### **The Future**

While not wanting “to give particular prognostications” Cohen sees “Jewish Music continuing to thrive and change and find new forms of expression.”

“In synagogue, I expect that the trend of congregational participation will continue; and maybe also the new emphasis on mindfulness, meditation, etc., may result in music and services that are more oriented in that way.”

“As far as concert music, I am hoping that Jewish and non-Jewish composers, performers and listeners will continue to find value in bringing Jewish musical and cultural ideas as part of their music, and that other cultures will do the same.”

“For myself — I hope for the rest of my life to keep creating as a Jewish composer, and as a cantor and teacher; and to get people to think of Jewish music as being a very broad palette that can be an important part of the synagogue, concerts, community choirs, etc.”

### **Musical Selections**

Select 2 from the following selections for your presentation of Gerald Cohen.

“*Pitchu Li*” premiere performance by HaZamir at Lincoln Center, featuring Gerald Cohen on piano

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbuT3x4D9MQ>

“*Adonai Roi*” with Gerald Cohen as soloist and pianist, and Zamir Noded, Mati Lazar conducting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmtTE7d5ffA>

“*Dayeinu*” from *Sea of Reeds*, for two clarinets and piano, performed by the Grneta Ensemble

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xbr5U1-GlLc>

2nd and 3rd movements of *Playing for Our Lives*, performed by the Cassatt String Quartet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sloFXf3XSLg>

“An Ordinary Breakfast” from *Steal a Pencil for Me*, performed by Ilana Davidson and Robert Balonek

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gPshXijAkQ>

## Gerald Cohen (abbreviated case study)

Gerald Cohen, an American composer and cantor, has worked at Shaarei Tikvah in Scarsdale, New York since 1987. Cantor Cohen also serves on the faculties of the Cantorial Schools of the Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College. He composes opera, choral and solo vocal music, chamber and orchestral music, many on Jewish themes. Recognition of Cohen's body of work includes commissioning grants from Meet the Composer, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and American Composers Forum.

**Key Contributions:** Gerald's contributions to Jewish music are threefold – as a cantor, a teacher of cantors, and as a composer of Jewish art music.

**Bio:** Gerald Cohen was 'crazy about classical music' from the age of 2 or 3. He started composing at age 7, around the time he first started taking piano lessons. Gerald was also a 'synagogue-going kid from an early age', and had the good fortune of having Hazzan Jacob Mendelson as his cantor from the formative ages of six through twelve. At age 12, he wrote a *V'Shamru* with chorus, flute and piano, and says 'so I guess I was already wanting to combine the musical and Jewish parts of my life.' He also started leading services from the time of his Bar Mitzvah.

Gerald majored in music at Yale, then, at about the same time he began his graduate studies in composition at Columbia, he also started studying *hazzanut* with his former cantor, Jacob Mendelson, and soon had his first positions as a cantor, initially for the High Holidays, and then year round. From the beginning, Gerald wanted his cantorial position to be part-time, so that he could also compose music, and teach at JTS. 'From early in my composing life, a central mission was to compose Jewish concert music, Jewish art music—to bring the training and sensibilities I had as a concert composer to Jewish texts and themes, and equally, to bring Jewish music and ideas into the concert world.'

Gerald has continued over his career to pursue this mission in both vocal and instrumental music, and to serve both his synagogue community as a cantor, and the next generations of cantors as a teacher of musical skills and composition.'

**Influences:** As a cantor: 'Jack Mendelson, whose impassioned singing, beautiful hazzanut and incredible vocal color' was of greatest influence. As a composer: 'So, so many influences!!'

Classical music was of primary influence, including Beethoven, Mahler, Schubert, Britten, Bernstein, Copland, Brahms, Verdi, Mendelssohn and more. Singing in choruses, including wonderful choruses at music camp and in college, were vital to his development as a choral composer.

**Key recordings or compositions:** Cohen has written two operas on Jewish themes: *Sarah and Hagar* (based on Genesis) and *Steal a Pencil for Me* (a Holocaust love story). He has also written many songs based on liturgical texts that are used both in synagogues and by choirs in concert, the best known being his setting of Psalm 23. Instrumental works on Jewish themes include *Playing for our lives*, *Yedid Nefesh* and *Sea of Reeds*.

**Current projects:** Gerald is working on a recording of his works for string quartet, performed by the Cassatt String Quartet, and has recently written choral pieces for HaZamir, the North American Jewish Choral Festival, and The Western Wind. He is also starting to plan for his next operatic project.

## ***Nava Tehila***

<http://www.navatehila.org/35897/About-Nava-Tehila1>

*Nava Tehila* is a Jerusalem based NGO for Jewish Renewal. One of our main foci is creating musical and engaging prayer spaces where people feel comfortable to come as they are.

*Nava Tehila's* musical spiritual leaders generate new prayer modalities, compose new music for prayer, and train Jewish leaders, including rabbis, cantors and students, in the art of musical and innovative prayer leading.

The *Nava Tehila* leaders travel to Reform, Conservative and other communities in Israel, the US and Europe to share the ideas that have proven so successful in drawing in not only non-affiliated Jews, but also speaking to long term members of these communities.

We have produced two albums of music for Shabbat and High Holidays prayers, and run a resource website that offers prayer leaders free access to sheet music and recordings of our new material.

Our prayers are egalitarian and inclusive. We welcome people of other religions and “spiritual, but not religious” people who want to pray and sing with us. Our prayer is experiential because we are constantly seeking ways of connection to the Living God in each and every moment. We meet for Kabbalat Shabbat once a month in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Baka’a, as well as for the Holidays.

Under the umbrella of our organization we offer Beit Midrash programs: classes and workshops in Jewish spirituality, meditation, Kabbalah and *Chasidut*.

### **Musicians**

#### **Daphna Rosenberg – Vocals and Guitar**

Daphna is a singer, guitarist and a main prayer leader at *Nava Tehila*. She composes new music to prayers and to poetry. Daphna specializes in musically leading life-cycle ceremonies and is active in the area of spiritual care for the ill and dying and in creating heart-to-heart connections between people from different cultures and traditions. Daphna is now involved in leading and organizing Jewish meditation retreats with “Or Halev” in Israel.

### **Yoel Sykes – Vocals and Guitar**

Yoel is a main prayer leader in *Nava Tehila* and has composed dozens of new melodies to prayers, influenced by a variety of musical cultures. Yoel is a master of improvisation and an extraordinary vocal soloist and guitar player. Yoel studied music at the Center for Eastern Music in Jerusalem and Flamenco guitar in the Fundacion de Christina Heeren school of Flamenco Arts in Seville, Spain. Yoel has just moved to Denver, Colorado to pursue rabbinical studies with ALEPH.

### **Ruth Gan Kagan – Vocals and Facilitation**

Ruth is a rabbi and a teacher of *Chasidut* and Kabbalah. She is the spiritual leader of *Nava Tehila* community and the creator of the musical-spiritual style that has become identified with the ensemble. In the context of the ensemble Ruth facilitates the performances, Kabbalot Shabbat, and chant circles, in which she weaves magical journeys of meaning for the participants. At ceremonies and weddings, the ensemble includes the musicians only and Ruth joins them only for events in which she facilitates the ceremony.



## ***Nava Tehila* (full case study)**

*Nava Tehila* ('Beautiful Praise') is a Jerusalem based Jewish Renewal community focused on creating musical and engaging prayer spaces where people feel comfortable to come as they are. From its inception through the vision of Rabbi Ruth Gan Kagan, *Nava Tehila* was created as a community where people from different faiths would feel comfortable. (Its initial name was *Kabbalat Shabbat for All Nations*.) As an example, every time they meet, there are students from a Catholic Beatitude seminary who attend their prayer service.

Ruth created the first service in January 2005, with *Kabbalat Shabbat* on Shabbat Shira. Over the course of the next year, she invited Daphna Rosenberg and Yoel Sykes to both join her in leading services and in the creation of music for the services. It was the first spiritual community in Israel that combined a space structured in concentric circles and included chanting as a major part of the prayer experience, along with introducing prayers with *kavanot* (words of intention). No amplification is used, necessitating a large number of prayer leaders (which they call the 'Levites') with the intent of engaging everyone in singing.

*Nava Tehila's* stated purpose of seeking paths of connection to the living God in each and every moment has led to the creation of new prayer modalities and new liturgical music that has influenced synagogue music and worship in congregations in Israel, the U.S. and Europe.

The vision of *Nava Tehila* is to have every prayer serve as a transformational journey engaging the mind, heart and spirit. While the creation of music for its services focused initially on *Kabbalat Shabbat*, over time its composers have expanded their focus and have also written melodies for *Yamim Noraim* (the High Holidays) and *Shaharit* (the morning prayer service).

**Rabbi Ruth Gan Kagan** is the founder and spiritual leader of *Nava Tehila*.

Ruth was born in Jerusalem. She grew up 'always singing' in a Zionist Orthodox family and is a descendent of a long line of Lithuanian rabbis on her mother's side. While not a professional musician, Ruth has a good ear and can carry a tune. She was always interested in music as an expression of herself.

While Ruth studied law at the Hebrew University, she decided not to work in the field of law. Instead, she immersed herself in Torah studies at the Hartman and Pardes Institutes in Jerusalem. During this period, as a young parent, she became deeply aware of the impact of

music as a result of musically focused ‘mommy & me-like classes’ that she attended with her children. Ruth liked it so much that she became trained to conduct the classes herself, and created her own ‘cottage industry’ where she offered these classes in multiple locations.

Always a spiritual seeker, Ruth became involved in interfaith activities that led to representing Judaism at various international forums as well as being amongst the first Israelis to travel and study in India and Nepal.

Ruth and her husband, Dr. Michael Kagan, author of “The Holistic Haggadah,” were part of the first wave of New Age activists in Israel. Ruth and Michael’s main interest became the renewal of Judaism. Together they taught classes and workshops in Israel and around the world.

In the Nineties Ruth met Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, the founder of the Jewish Renewal Movement, and became one of his closest students. In 2003 Ruth received her rabbinical ordination from Reb Zalman through the *ALEPH* Rabbinical Seminary, of which she is now a faculty member.

In 2006, she published with Reb Zalman, “Jewish Renewal – Integrating Heart and World” (*Kirvat Elohim, Yediot Achronot*) the first book in Hebrew describing the principles and practice of Jewish Renewal for the Israeli readership. Ruth wanted to sit in the crossroads between people who come from the religious world and those who come from nothing, but are interested in spirituality. ‘I want to touch Israelis, to help people feel that it is their inheritance. Music touches them and awakens their spirituality.’

Reb Ruth teaches classes and workshops in Jewish Spirituality in Israel and around the world.

Ruth met Daphna Rosenberg and Yoel Sykes when they individually sought her out as a spiritual director/coach. Both, as Ruth describes them, were extremely gifted musicians. She invited them to *Kabbalat Shabbat*, asked them to play and help lead, and the creative team of *Nava Tehila* was born.

**Daphna Rosenberg** Daphna was born in Canada, but her parents made *aliyah* when she was 3 months old. She was raised in what she describes as a modern Orthodox, but liberal home. As a young adult Daphna left Israel for seven years to travel the world. She lived in a variety of different religious communities learning their sacred chants, e.g. Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist. It was during these travels that Ruth discovered her own spirituality. After many years as a

wandering troubadour Daphna returned to Israel and reconnected to her Jewish roots through music. Daphna composes music to prayers and poetry and is a prayer leader in the *Nava Tehila* community. In her music one can hear the influence of folk and rock with a touch of klezmer. Daphna is active in the areas of spiritual care for the ill, in creating heart to heart connections between people and dialogue circles between Israelis and Palestinians. Her liturgical compositions are popular in communities throughout the world.

**Yoel Sykes** is also one of the original main prayer leaders at *Nava Tehila* and has composed dozens of new prayer melodies influenced by a variety of musical cultures. Yoel is a master of improvisation and an extraordinary vocal soloist and guitar player. Yoel studied music at the Center for Eastern Music in Jerusalem and Flamenco guitar at the Fundacion de Christina Heeren School of Flamenco Arts in Seville, Spain. Yoel currently resides in Denver, Colorado where he is pursuing rabbinical ordination through *ALEPH*.

### **Early Influences**

Ruth grew up in an Orthodox community where there was a great deal of singing. Singing was an instructional methodology in school. And at home she recollects singing *z'mirot* around the *Shabbos* table. On many occasions, Ruth witnessed both her *abba* and her grandfather lead services. The combination of these things proved to be both musical gifts and leadership role modeling which laid a foundation for her.

Early in her marriage, when she was 28 years old, she and her husband came to Boston where he attended graduate school. While there, they joined a *havurah* called *Minyan Shalem*, and Ruth stepped into the role of prayer leader for the first time.

**Daphna** also points out that she did not have any special musical training. As a child she did study some classical piano. Jewish music, however, was not a part of her childhood. Rather, she was surrounded by classical music and jazz.

**Yoel** who also grew up in a modern orthodox home found the music of the synagogue boring. He studied piano from the ages of 6-10; and at 15 started learning to play the guitar. At 19, Yoel attended a music oriented school in Jerusalem where he was first exposed to musical styles from around the world. That experience, according to Yoel, really opened up his eyes and his ears.

## Musical Influences

**Ruth:** Shlomo Carlebach was a major influence for Ruth. She met him through some student interfaith activities in which she was involved. Carlebach introduced her to the transformative power of music and worship. When Ruth launched her Kabbalat Shabbat services, she primarily used his melodies, until she, Daphna and Yoel began to write their own.

Sister Ruth Heflin, a Baptist minister who had a ministry in Israel in East Jerusalem was another major influence. Ruth attended their worship services and saw Sister Ruth involved in praising and worshipping. She was profoundly touched by this experience. The sister, it turns out, was a friend of Carlebach. Sister Ruth would go with him to hospitals to visit soldiers. She had a deeply spiritual influence on Ruth who says, with great admiration, ‘She was a prophet.’

**Daphna** At the age of 30, Daphna found herself in Italy in a ‘rainbow/hippie community’. On her third night there, she dreamed of playing guitar - a dream that became a reality when a friend in the community taught her to play. The first song she learned to play was an Italian spiritual focused on St Francis of Assisi. She started singing Jewish and Hebrew prayers within a Franciscan Catholic community. Soon, she found herself to be troubadour, traveling the world, meeting people and singing lots of prayerful songs. She lived for a time in Hindu and Buddhist communities where she learned their sacred chants.

After 7 years of travel, Daphna returned to Israel in search of a community for herself. A friend introduced her to a Jewish Renewal community in the Judean desert – a yeshiva like an ashram – where she observed Yom Kippur. Daphna was touched by the combination of Judaism, spirituality and music. Here she found a community she was yearning for: one that was both very spiritual and grounded in Judaism. One of the leaders of this community was a singer, guitarist, and prayer leader. Daphna asked her to be her formal teacher of guitar. It was here that Daphna created her first meaningful compositions.

3 years later, a personal crisis led Daphna to Reb Ruth in search of spiritual guidance. Ruth had seen Daphna leading music in chanting circles. They spent their first few months together working on spiritual direction, personal life skills and kabbalah. Soon Daphna was helping Ruth lead Kabbalat Shabbat services and composing new liturgy. She would go through the Psalms and choose a *passuk* (passage) to which she felt connected, pick up a guitar and the music would emerge. Many of these initial compositions are still used by *Nava Tehila*, as well as congregations around the world. And this style of musical composition remains the way that

music is created for *Nava Tehila*.

**Yoel** At 19 Yoel enrolled in a music oriented school in Jerusalem. Here he was exposed for the first time to musical styles from around the world. That experience, he notes, really opened up his eyes (and ears). Through the connections he made at school, Yoel started attending various events where people gathered, sat in circles and sang chants from different cultures. Some of these chants, he points out, were in Hebrew. These experiences touched him spiritually.

He soon sought out ‘Rabbi Ruth’ as a spiritual counselor (think coach). This was during the pre-*Nava Tehila* period when Ruth had first started organizing monthly Kabbalat Shabbat services in her home. Ruth invited Yoel to create music and help lead these early services.

### **Creative Process**

**Ruth** As Ruth describes it, a teacher of hers, Hadassah, asked her to compose music by identifying a *passuk* (a biblical passage) that inspired her, and seeing what musical inspiration emerged. Using that approach, Ruth would sit with Daphna & Yoel, siddur in hand, and ask them to choose *passuk* to use as the inspiration of a chant or melody. In that manner they have created and continue to create liturgical chants and melodies.

### ***Nava Tehila’s* Contribution to Jewish Music**

**Ruth** As Ruth describes it, *Nava Tehila’s* contribution is not necessarily the music but rather the larger music/prayer experience. It is, she says, both ecstatic and meditative, which was not found outside of Orthodox circles in Israel. Ruth, Daphna and Yoel work intentionally to allow a whole range of human emotions. “We let people experience [the music/prayer] in their bodies and move.” *Nava Tehila* creates an environment where the community has to sing - purposefully avoiding amplification - which necessitates a large core of musicians. This, Ruth points out, allows people to grow with the music. It also sends the message that everybody counts. She describes it as creating a prayer experience which in essence is a ‘shepherding experience’.

Additionally, Ruth mentioned that most rabbinical and cantorial students who go to Israel for the year of study spend significant time at *Nava Tehila*. Well over 100 of them have served as ‘Levites’. The students time at *Nava Tehila* creates relationships that go beyond their Israel experience. *Nava Tehila* has been brought to over 150 synagogues in the US to conduct trainings.

**Yoel** agrees, pointing out that, from his perspective, their major contribution is focusing on the use of chants as a way to access prayer and a spiritual experience.

In speaking of her personal contributions **Daphna's** notes, "I bring something very simple. I don't write very complicated things. I wasn't a musician from the moment I was born. I bring something very simple that connects people to their heart. I look to connect people to themselves, and to other people, and to God and to other traditions and religions. I am not a musician. The music is an instrument to bring connection. Music is not a goal for me. I am a community artist." Daphna points out that her music is in service to the community. Music is prayer and, therefore, doesn't have to be complicated or sophisticated.

Of *Nava Tehila's* contribution, Daphna points out that it begins with the fact that they are Israeli. There is, she says, lots of music in the liberal Jewish world. When Carlebach and Debbie Friedman were contributing, new Jewish music for prayer wasn't big in Israel. Liberalism was in its infancy in Israel. We're Israeli, Daphna notes, and *Nava Tehila's* music is very influenced by world music: by African, Indian, East European music. Israel has influences from world music.

Further, she says, their music is an interpretation of the words. As native Hebrew speakers, we know what the words mean and we have deep connections to them.

### ***Nava Tehila's Impact on Liturgy***

**Ruth** points to the *Nava Tehila* method (*shita*) of leading a chant based *Kabbalat Shabbat*: taking a *niggun* and singing it for a long time – using fewer words, more music and singing for 9 minutes at least. Every prayer, she says, is a transformational journey. Oftentimes, a song/melody is introduced with a *kavana*. The journey, Ruth notes, is to weave a *kavana* to connect worshippers to the words they are singing. She wants people to use the words to engage the mind, but, also, to get beyond the words. It is not just the music. The narration (engaging the mind as well) is also important. This, Ruth points out, is particularly Jewish.

**Daphna** adds that what is special about what they do is that it is "God oriented." Their goal is to give [worshippers] permission to have a personal connection to God and pray. She notes that they push a lot in their focus on a personal prayer experience. Through the incorporation of chanting and *kavanot* in concentric circles of prayer. They strive to create a Neo-Chassidic, ecstatic prayer experience. They rely on "Levites" trained prayer facilitators who help create their prayer environment. Many of these "levites" have gone on to become rabbis and cantors,

bringing the *Nava Tehila* experience to a growing number of communities around the world. Their way of praying, Daphna says, has touched many communities around the world.

### **Future Projects**

As of November, 2019 this core prayer team finds itself in transition. While Ruth continues to build the *Nava Tehila* community, Yoel has moved to Denver where he is pursuing rabbinic studies through *ALEPH* and Daphna, who has lived in Pardes Hannah for the past 6 years, is planning on creating a *Nava Tehila* like community there.

### Musical Selections

Select 2 from the following selections for your presentation of *Nava Tehila*.

Oseh Shalom

Lechu N'ranena R&B

Shiviti Havaya 

Joyful L'cha Dodi

Halleluyah Psalm 148

## ***Nava Tehila* (abbreviated case study)**

*Nava Tehila* ('Beautiful Praise') is a Jerusalem based Jewish Renewal community focused on creating musical and engaging prayer spaces where people feel comfortable to come as they are. From its inception through the vision of Rabbi Ruth Gan Kagan, *Nava Tehila* was created as a community where people from different faiths would feel comfortable. (Its initial name was *Kabbalat Shabbat for All Nations*.) As an example, every time they meet, there are students from a Catholic Beatitude seminary who attend their prayer service.

Ruth created the first service in January, 2005, with *Kabbalat Shabbat* on *Shabbat Shira*. Over the course of the next year, she invited Daphna Rosenberg and Yoel Sykes to both join her in leading services and in the creation of music for the services. It was the first spiritual community in Israel that combined a space structured in concentric circles and included chanting as a major part of the prayer experience. No amplification is used, necessitating a large number of prayer leaders (which they call the 'Levites') to engage everyone in singing.

The goal of *Nava Tehila* is to have every prayer serve as a transformational journey engaging the mind, heart and spirit. Its services are described as both ecstatic and meditative, a style which was not available outside of Orthodox circles in Israel prior to their founding.

While the creation of music for its services focused initially on *Kabbalat Shabbat*, over time *Nava Tehila's* composers have expanded their focus and have also written melodies for *Yamim Noraim* (the High Holidays) and *Shaharit* (the morning prayer service). As Ruth describes it, a teacher of hers, Hadassah, asked her to compose music by identifying a *passuk* (a biblical passage) that inspired her, and see what musical inspiration emerged. Using that approach, Ruth sits with Daphna & Yoel, siddur in hand, and asks them to choose a *passuk* to use as the inspiration of a chant or melody.

**Key contributions:** The *Nava Tehila* method (*shita*) is to take a *niggun* or melody and sing it for a long time – using fewer words, more music and singing for 9 minutes at least. Oftentimes, a song/melody is introduced with a *kavana* (words of intention) to connect worshippers to the words they are singing. Ruth wants people to use the words to engage their minds, but, also, to get beyond the words. It is not just the music. The narration is also important. This, Ruth points out, is particularly Jewish.

Of consequence, most rabbinical and cantorial students who go to Israel for a year of study



spend significant time at *Nava Tehila*. Well over 100 of them have served as 'Levites'. The students' time at *Nava Tehila* creates relationships that go beyond their Israel experience. *Nava Tehila* has been brought to over 150 synagogues in the US to conduct trainings in their approach to prayer.

### **Bios:**

**Rabbi Ruth Gan Kagan** was born in Jerusalem into a Zionist Orthodox family that was 'always singing'. While not a professional musician, Ruth has a good ear and can carry a tune. She was always interested in music as an expression of herself. On many occasions, Ruth witnessed both her *Abba* and her grandfather leading services.

Early in her marriage, when she was 28 years old, she and her husband went to Boston where he attended graduate school. While there, they joined a *havurah* called *Minyan Shalem*, and Ruth stepped into the role of prayer leader for the first time.

As a young parent, she attended musically focused 'mommy & me-like classes' with her children which made her deeply aware of the impact of music. Ruth liked the classes so much, she became trained to conduct the classes herself, and created her own 'cottage industry' where she offered these classes in multiple locations.

Always interested in things spiritual in nature, Ruth became involved in interfaith activities. She oftentimes represented Judaism at various international forums. Ruth was also among the first Israelis to travel and study in India and Nepal.

In the 90's, Ruth met Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (one of the founders of the Jewish Renewal movement and an innovator in ecumenical dialogue). In 2003, she received her rabbinical ordination from Reb Zalman through the *ALEPH* Rabbinical Seminary, where she now serves as a faculty member.

Ruth 'wanted to sit in the crossroads' between people who come from the religious world and with no religious background, but are interested in spirituality. 'I want to touch Israelis to help people feel that it is their inheritance. Music touches them and awakens their spirituality.' In 2005, after many people said to her, "Nu, when are you going to do something?", she recognized that it was time to start something. Ruth knew it had to be musical and it had to be *Kabbalat Shabbat*, which has a positive connotation for all Israelis. She launched her effort on

*Shabbat Shira*, mostly using the music of Shlomo Carlebach. She then started experimenting and decided to do it every month.

Ruth met Daphna Rosenberg and Yoel Sykes when they individually sought her out as a spiritual director/coach. Ruth describes them both as extremely gifted musicians. She invited them to *Kabbalat Shabbat*, asked them to play and help lead, and the creative team of *Nava Tehila* was born.

**Daphna Rosenberg** was born in Canada, but her parents made *aliyah* when she was 3 months old. She was raised in what she describes as a ‘modern Orthodox, but liberal home’. Daphna points out that she did not have any special musical training. As a child she did study some classical piano. Jewish music, however, was not a part of her childhood. Rather, she was surrounded by classical music and jazz.

As a young adult, Daphna left Israel for seven years to travel the world. She lived in a variety of different religious communities learning their sacred chants, e.g. Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist. It was during these travels that Daphna discovered her own spirituality and picked up the guitar for the first time.

When Daphna returned to Israel, she searched for a community for herself. A friend introduced her to a Jewish Renewal community in the Judean desert where she was touched by the combination of Judaism, spirituality and music. One of the leaders of this community was a singer, guitarist and prayer leader, and Daphna became her student. It was here that Daphna created her first meaningful compositions.

**Yoel Sykes** grew up in a modern orthodox home and found the music of the synagogue ‘boring’. He studied piano from the ages of 6-10; and at 15 started learning to play the guitar. At 19, Yoel attended the Center for Eastern Music in Jerusalem where he was first exposed to musical styles from around the world. That experience, according to Yoel, really opened up his eyes. He also studied flamenco guitar at the Fundacion de Christina Heeren School of Flamenco Arts in Seville, Spain. Yoel recently moved to Denver, Colorado where he is pursuing rabbinical ordination through *ALEPH*.

## Influences

**Ruth:** Shlomo Carlebach was a major influence for Ruth, who introduced her to the

transformative power of music and worship. When Ruth launched her *Kabbalat Shabbat* services, she primarily used his melodies, until she, Daphna and Yoel began to write their own.

Sister Ruth Heflin, a Baptist minister who had a ministry in Israel in East Jerusalem was another major influence. Ruth attended their worship services and saw Sister Ruth involved in praising and worshipping. She was profoundly touched by this experience.

**Daphna:** The sacred chants from the different religious communities Daphna discovered through her travels deeply influenced her.

**Yoel:** Through the connections he made at school, Yoel started attending various events where people gathered, sat in circles and sang chants from different cultures. Some of these chants, he points out, were in Hebrew. These experiences touched him spiritually.

**Key recordings:** *Nava Tehila* has produced three albums: *Waking Heart*, *Dancing in the Glory*, and *Havayah*. They have also created a 'Musical Prayer Archive' where their music, free sheet music and chord sheets may be found.

**Future Projects:** As of November, 2019, *Nava Tehila's* core prayer team finds itself in a bit of a transition. Yoel and Daphna will continue to conduct trainings together. Ruth will continue in her leadership role. Daphna, who has lived in *Pardes Hannah* for the past 6 years, is planning on starting something like *Nava Tehila* in her area. They recently released their third album, *Havayah*.

## Basya Schechter

<https://www.pharaohsdaughter.com/bio.html>

Blending psychedelic sensibility and a pan-Mediterranean sensuality, Basya Schechter leads her band, Pharaoh's Daughter, through swirling Hasidic chants, Mizrahi and Sephardic folk-rock, and spiritual stylings filtered through percussion, flute, strings and electronica. Her sound has been cultivated by her Hasidic music background and a series of trips to the Middle East, Africa, Israel, Egypt, Central Africa, Turkey, Kurdistan and Greece.

She began retuning her guitar to sound like a cross between an Arabic oud and a Turkish saz, with harmonic minor melodies, and odd time signatures. With the many amazing musicians, named below and others as well she has recorded four albums, three with Pharaoh's Daughter and one instrumental exploration with Persian santur player, Alan Kushan. PD also appears on three Tzadik label compilations: Voices in the Wilderness, the 10 year anniversary of Zorn's Masada compositions; a collection of Sasha Argov music; and, a Brazilian Jewish composer from earlier in the 20th century, Jacob Do Bandolim.

Pharaoh's Daughter has toured extensively through America, Eastern and Western Europe, as well as Greece and the UK. This past summer, Pharaoh's Daughter had the honor of debuting at Central Park's Summer Stage series in August 2004, and has played such prestigious stages as Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park, and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. Basya was the recipient of numerous compositional and project grants from NYSCA (New York State Council of the Arts), American Composers Forum (for Trance, and multilayered sound and video installation collaboration with filmmaker Pearl Gluck) and the American Music Center.

## Basya Schechter (Full Case Study)

Basya Schechter grew up in the Orthodox community of Borough Park, Brooklyn, New York. She is the founder of the band “Pharaoh’s Daughter”, (Basya is the name given by the rabbinic commentators to Pharaoh’s daughter who retrieved baby Moses from the Nile.) The music of Pharaoh’s Daughter, according to Basya, blends a “psychedelic sensibility and a pan-Mediterranean sensuality,” in “swirling Hasidic chants, Mizrahi and Sephardi folk-rock, and spiritual stylings filtered through percussion, flute, strings and electronica.”

Basya was ordained as a cantor through *ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal*. She currently serves as cantor at *Romemu* in Manhattan, *Romemu* Brooklyn and also at the Fire Island Synagogue.

### Early Influences

Growing up in Borough Park according to Basya, music was “part of the air I breathed. I was learning Jewish music from day one. At every *simcha* we had bands, lots of klezmer bands; at *bar mitzvahs* and weddings we always had Jewish music there. At recess we would just sing Jewish songs together. The girls sang in a Jewish choir. We would sing harmonies together. Our fun was to sing. We got together on Shabbos, Friday nights and Shabbos afternoons. There was music after we ate, and *z’miros*. Everything we learned Torah-wise was set to melodies. We learned Torah in sing-song and chant; we memorized Hebrew grammar with melodies.”

While she had no formal musical training, Basya notes that she was “pretty quickly indoctrinated into the harmonic landscape of thirds up, thirds down, fifths up, counter melodies. It was a singing and music culture without it being an education.”

Learning to sing harmonies was especially significant. “I loved singing harmony. As soon as my father would sing, I would like to sing it higher or lower. I think part of it is finding your voice within a multitude of voices. I think it’s about finding the creative kind of musical line that’s very much your own. I think I was very interested in different opportunities for my own creative experience within the songs that we were singing, so that I was always doing some kind of harmony. It was just naturally what I did.”

### Musical Influences

Basya notes that “growing up I listened to Mordechai Ben Dovid [Mordechai Werdyger an American Hasidic Jewish singer and songwriter]; Avraham Fried [Avraham Shabsi Hakohen

Friedman better known by his stage name, Avraham Fried, also a popular musical entertainer in the Orthodox Jewish community.]; Miami Boys Choir [a contemporary Jewish religious music boys choir.]; and Deveykus [an American “doom metal” band from Philadelphia formed in 2012 by trombonist Dan Blacksberg and guitarist Nick Millevoi, later adding guitarist Yoshie Fruchter, bassist Johnny DeBlase, and drummer Eli Litwin. Deveykus’ music combines *niggunim*, traditional wordless Hasidic melodies, with a drone/doom metal and free-jazz style influenced by bands like Earth and Sunn O))). Their name is a Yiddish spelling of *devekut*, a genre of slow, meditative *niggunim*.]

Her father’s love of Israeli music was also influential. She grew up listening to Poogy [known in Israel as the rock band Kaveret, which performed originally from 1973 to 1976. The band is notable for representing Israel in the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest and for its often humorous songs and unique style of music. In Israel, Kaveret is widely considered a breakthrough band in Israeli rock and pop history.], Simi Tavori, and Tzvika Pik.

In 10th grade Basya notes that she, “tricked her father” into sending her on a coed Orthodox tour in Israel ... “There everyone listened to English music, so I was exposed to all this new music. I had never heard any of that before.” By the end of high school, Basya’s musical interests had branched out to include classic rock artists such as Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and the Doors. While attending Columbia, Basya participated in the “Post Script” which she describes as “a little den of singer songwriters.” It was during this time that she first picked up the guitar and began writing her own songs.

She spent her junior year abroad in South Africa and was “exposed to a lot of African influences; Mozambican and Zimbabwe influences. That is where I was exposed to Dollar Brand jazz [Abdullah Ibrahim (born Adolph Johannes Brand and formerly known as Dollar Brand) who is a South African pianist and composer. His music reflects many of the musical influences of his childhood in the multicultural port areas of Cape Town, ranging from traditional African songs to the gospel of the AME Church and ragas, to more modern jazz and other Western styles. Ibrahim is considered the leading figure in the subgenre of Cape jazz. Within jazz, his music particularly reflects the influence of Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, and Miriam Makeba [nicknamed Mama Africa, was a South African singer, songwriter, actress, United Nations goodwill ambassador, and civil rights activist. Associated with musical genres including Afropop, jazz, and world music, she was an advocate against apartheid and white-minority government in South Africa.], and Hugh Masakela [Hugh Ramapolo Masekela, (4 April 1939 – 23 January 2018), was a South African trumpeter, flugelhornist, cornetist, singer and composer who has been described

as “the father of South African jazz”].

“I was exposed to that kind of music by people who really combined cultural influences with jazz; I saw the fusion possibility.”

“I hitchhiked between South Africa and Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi; I traveled all through Africa by myself. That’s where I figured out that I could write my own music that was already inspired by Jewish music, my Jewish heritage and the classic rock that I was growing up with; and then also use the cultural influences from other cultures, like Africa. I started to mix already written songs with a palette of Hasidic music from childhood, Israeli music, classic rock and ,then, world music.”

Following college Basya spent a lot of time “hitchhiking all over the Middle East and Africa, South America. I’d spend lots of time really soaking up these cultures.” Upon returning from Morocco and Turkey she started experimenting with the tuning of her guitar in order to make it sound like an oud or a saz. And then she actually started playing the oud and the saz, and using those instruments to “write melodies that were an influence from everywhere I was coming from.”

Up to this point, Basya’s writing had been completely in English. But then “some of the melodies that I was writing didn’t work out with English lyrics so well. Every time I’d sing English lyrics to some of these melodies I was writing, it’d sound corny. And because I grew up in a Torah environment where we had to memorize different verses of *p’sukim* from *Navi* (prophets) and *Chumosh* (Torah) and *t’fillah* (prayers), I had tons of text memorized. I had all these melodies that were a part of my new ways of composing melodies, and so I started to marry the new melodies that I was writing with the texts that I memorized and were part of my Jewish education. That was the beginning of my Jewish music journey. That’s when I started writing using texts from *z’mirot* and *chumosh*, from *Mishlay* [Proverbs] and *Pirkei Avot*, and *Shir HaShirim* [Song of Songs].”

### **Musical Influences**

Of her musical influences, Basya points particularly to the music of Mali. “Malian music is emotional; the melodies are cyclical versus linear. I think western music is very linear. Malian music creates patterns, which is where I hear music as well myself. It’s something that is like a tuning fork. I feel like the tuning fork of my spirit aligns with West African music, Middle Eastern music, Balkan music. It’s not a head thing, it’s a heart thing. It just struck me immediately; I just

felt it immediately.”

Basya points to a few songs and musicians in particular:

El Atlal - Umm Kulthum (<https://youtu.be/5z8LvG5tfOE>), Al-Atlal (The Ruins) is a poem written by the Egyptian poet Ibrahim Nagi, which later became a very famous song sung by famous Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum in 1966.

The album “Ko Sira” by Oumou Sangaré (born February 25, 1968 in Bamako, Mali) Sangaré is a Grammy Award-winning Malian Wassoulou musician, sometimes referred to as “The Songbird of Wassoulou”. Wassoulou is a historical region south of the Niger River, where the music descends from age-old traditional song, often accompanied by a calabash.

(<https://youtu.be/QrxvossLVpg> )

Ali Farka Touré, [Ali Ibrahim “Ali Farka” Touré (31 October 1939 – 6 March 2006) was a Malian singer and multi-instrumentalist, and one of the African continent’s most internationally renowned musicians. His music is widely regarded as representing a point of intersection of traditional Malian music and its North American cousin, the blues. The belief that the latter is historically derived from the former is reflected in Martin Scorsese’s often quoted characterization of Touré’s tradition as constituting “the DNA of the blues”. Touré was ranked number 76 on Rolling Stone’s list of “The 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time” and number 37 on Spin magazine’s “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time”.] (<https://youtu.be/pJUE03aeaQ4> )

### **Creative Process**

“I start from ideas. Someone might say to me, ‘Oh, I have this book of Abraham Joshua Heschel poetry. Imagine someone setting Heschel’s Yiddish poetry to music. Do you want to give it a try?’ And I’m like, ‘Oh, cool!’. And I’ll read the poetry book for eight months, and then all of a sudden I’ll be in that space that it’s internalized that I can start composing.”

“Or, I have an idea with a collaborator. I’m working on our second album with this rapper, Eden Perlstein. Our first idea project was to do *Kabbalat Shabbat* with rap, because those are such poetic based texts to begin with, and to expand the meaning of that poetry from that mystical poetry to what he can do with rap and create another layer of poetry that’s individual.”

“I’m not the composer who writes the most sing-a-long friendly music. That’s not my niche. I’ve written more sing-a-long friendly songs since I’ve been a cantor then beforehand. Most of my



stuff is sonic, landscape and layered melodies, but not necessarily stuff you sing along to. I've written more sing-a-long stuff lately, but none of that is recorded as much."

### **Contributions to Jewish Music**

"I was one of the first among many that were really able to create a global feel in Jewish music, versus American or Hasidic or klezmer. I think the biggest thing is the global sound and being able to have modern, not just world music, but I also use a lot of contemporary sounds like worldtronic elements within that.

I'm able to really integrate ways of bringing Torah into music in creative ways. Like, for example, I did this piece called "Taitch" on Out of the Reeds, which is one of my first Jewish albums, where I took the experience of yeshiva kids singing, chanting, from Hebrew to Yiddish, which is how we learn Torah growing up, and I made it into a percussion musical piece that gives people an insight, a window into that cultural experience of yeshiva kids learning by creating a musical piece that takes that practice and puts it into a song.

And I took the trope from *Aicha* and put it into a song. A lot of people say that their first experience understanding Lamentations was through hearing it through my song. I was able to make the trope into a melody that was beyond just a trope experience.

I took the Yiddish poetry of Abraham Joshua Heschel and set that to music. I worked on different *piyyutim* from like Saadyeh Gaon and a lot of z'mirot from a lot of Sephardic writers."

### **Her Impact on Liturgy**

"*Razza di Shabbat* is a kabbalistic prayer that talks about uniting the *ha'Kodesh baruch hu* with the *shehina*, and it's talking about the secret of Shabbat is that she is Shabbat. It's a feminine celebration of the secret of Shabbat, and it's the unification; it's the moment that brings us to *Barchu*. It's not in every siddur. It's a piece of the *Zohar* that is in some *siddurim*. It's in the Renewal *siddurim*. And I saw it and I loved the text so I composed a melody to it and people love it."

"There's a prayer I did at BJ (B'nai Jeshurun, Manhattan) --I was working at BJ as a percussionist-- and they took a piece of one of my songs, *Lev Tahor*, ([https://youtu.be/\\_kqIQE1PI9U](https://youtu.be/_kqIQE1PI9U)) the *Al Tashlicheinu* part of *Lev Tahor* from the album, *Haran*, and they continue to use it as one of the staples of *Yom Kippur* from the *Shema Koleinu*. It's like a musical motif that repeats. And, now we do it at *Romemu* as well. I've written a lot of stuff for High Holidays.

People are using my *P'tach Lanu Sha'ar* for *Ne'ilah*. (<https://youtu.be/9ZV9GY12gso>) A lot of people use it. It tends to be progressive synagogues that use these melodies; Renewal, JEN (Jewish Emergent Network), Conservative and Reform, too."

### **Future Projects**

Among her current projects is a collaboration on the works of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov with rapper Eden Perlstein.

"I love his teachings. Nachman of Breslov is brilliant. His teachings are super psychedelic, psycho-spiritual. They are totally aligned with how I think and feel. They're brilliant. They're beyond brilliant, his teachings. And some of the texts that we're using, I just love them. I think it's a very cool entry point for a lot of people who don't know or have access to Nachman of *Breslov* -- music, this is an entry point for them. We're using the actual text from the teachings so that people can say that they really know the text from the teachings. The one that everyone knows is *Kol Ha'Olam Kulo, Geshet Tzar Me'Od*. That's his most famous one. We're thinking of using that one too, but there are so many other ones that are so amazing and interesting. And Eden does these incredible raps that are deeper dives into the texts and their meanings. Our dream is to launch this next fall (2020).

I'm also working on a *Shir HaShirim* album with Pharaoh's Daughter."

### **Musical Selections**

Select 2 from the following selections for your presentation of Basya Schechter.

Lecha Dodi/Darshan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydtLqA7R498>

Avrohum/Dumiyah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF-uP94evWI>

Ka Ribon/Haran

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_RU7RK0TmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_RU7RK0TmU)

Lev Tahor:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kqIQE1PI9U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kqIQE1PI9U)

Or, Raza:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIR1gneh6l>

## Basya Schechter (Abbreviated Case Study)

**Basya Schechter** was ordained as a cantor through *ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal* and currently serves as cantor at *Romemu* in Manhattan, *Romemu* Brooklyn and also at the Fire Island Synagogue. She is also the lead singer and founder of the band, Pharaoh's Daughter, whose music combines swirling Hasidic chants, Mizrahi and Sephardi folk-rock, and 'spiritual stylings' filtered through percussion, flute, strings and electronica.

Additionally, Schechter is one of the creators of *Darshan*, a music project inspired by the mystical poetry and songs of the Jewish tradition by breathing new life into ancient Hebrew and Aramaic texts through a combination of rap commentary and musical *midrash*.

Basya has been the recipient of numerous compositional and project grants from NY State Council of the Arts and the American Music Center.

**Key contributions:** Basya was one of the first musicians in the Jewish music world to create a global feel in Jewish music.

**Bio:** Basya grew up Orthodox in Borough Park, NY. She says, 'Jewish music and learning and culture – I was born into it. I was learning Jewish music from day one'. Jewish music was part of everyday life – she learned Torah and memorized Hebrew grammar with melodies; sang *z'miros* every *shabbos*; at every *simcha*, they would sing. Her father was also a singer who performed in places and would bring her along to sing harmony. She most enjoyed singing in harmony with others. Basya says, 'I didn't have any formal Jewish musical education, and Jewish music education was the air I breathed. It was part of who I was; it was just everywhere.'

In college, Basya 'picked up the guitar' and taught herself how to play. She also began writing songs. And during college, she got the 'travel bug' and spent her junior year in Africa, where she traveled throughout the continent by herself. She attributes those travels as deeply significant musical influences, opening her eyes to music which 'really combined cultural influences with jazz. I saw the fusion possibility'. As a result, she started writing songs which mixed the musical cultures that so intrigued her with her own.

Post college on, she hitchhiked all over the Middle East and South America, and spent time in Morocco and Turkey. She started play instruments from those countries, like the oud and saz. Initially, all the songs Basya wrote were in English. But a few years after college, as she was

writing music reflecting all of these new musical influences, she felt that English lyrics did not work well. It was at that point that she started marrying her new melodies with the texts she had memorized as a child growing up.

**Key recordings:** (with Pharoah's Daughter) multiple albums including *Haran*, *Dumiyah*, *Queen's Dominion*, and *Out of the Reeds*. (with Darshan) Raza.

**Current projects:** Basya is working on an album about Nachman of Breslov in partnership with her collaborator in Darshan, ePRHYME (aka Eden Pearlstein). This album combines actual texts from Reb Nachman's teachings with the rap-based commentary of ePRHYME and Basya's music. She is also working on a new *Shir HaShirim* album with Pharoah's Daughter.