



# Illumination from the past and present



Chazan Yossele Rosenblatt

Lazer Levy

IF I HAD to choose the ideal Chanukah musical treat this year it would be "**Great Cantors of the Golden Age**," a musical treasure that one could have only fantasized about until very recently. At long last the unparalleled talent of the most famous cantors of the golden age is now available on DVD. It features and brings back to life the finest artists in the history of liturgical Jewish music. This digitally restored compilation, includes rare footage of sound and visual recordings of the most famous *chazonim* from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Giants such as Moshe Koussevitsky, who sings with ease his very own composition "*V'liyerusholayim Ircho*", Mordechai Hershman, who was one of the most beautiful tenors in the history of liturgical music, sings "*Mimkomcho*", Dovid Roitman with "*Av Horachamim*", Adolf Katchko, who sings "*Kol Nidrei*". Then there is Gershon Sirota with his last recording "*Hoshana*", the Russian-born Joseph Shlisky with his masterly "*Uvashofor Godol*". Luminaries such as Liebele Waldman and Moshe Oysher are also featured in this collection.

This masterpiece of Jewish history would not be complete without showing unique footage of probably the most influential cantor of all time "Yossele Rosenblatt".

Chazan Rosenblatt, who was born in the Ukraine in 1882, was without doubt one of the most significant figures in the cantorial world both in terms of spirituality and musicality. He possessed a magnificent tenor voice of great beauty and extraordinary range, with a remarkably agile falsetto. In addition, he had perfect pitch and could read the most difficult musical score at sight. The sweet timbre of his voice, the superb control he displayed, particularly in coloratura passages and his trademark "sob," inspired his congregants and thrilled his concert audiences. Much of what he sang and later recorded were his own compositions, significantly influenced in their tunefulness by his Chassidic background. In this remarkable collection we hear and see Yossele performing "*Hashem Zechoroni*" and "A Yiddische

Mama". The highlight of these recordings is when Chazan Rosenblatt went on his tour of Eretz Yisroel in the last few weeks of his life. One can't help being emotional when one sees this great and distinguished personality singing at the "*Mokomos Hakdoshim*" including the *Kosel*, Chevron and Kever Rochel. Sadly, Roseblatt suffered a heart attack after his last tour to the *Yam Hamelach*, and passed away soon after at the young age of 51. One can see visual recordings of his last tour at the *Yam Hamelach* and of his *levaya*.

This release stands as a tribute to those cantors' legendary artistry and all who cherish liturgical music.

#### ALSO WORTH CONSIDERING:

**Hasc 20-** Once again this annual highlight of Jewish music features a discography of artists who are the *creme de la creme* in Jewish music today. This spectacular performance was staged at the the Avery Fisher Hall in New York last January.

Avraham Fried was one of the key performers at the concert and featured highlights of his colourful repertoire including classics such as *Forever One*.

*Chazan Yitzchok Meir Helfgot*, probably the most sought-after cantor today, amazed the audience with his phenomenal voice and range.

*Shalshelles Junior* once again brought joy to the audience with their angelic voices. They sang *Modeh Ani* and other favourites.

Then there was *Dedi* who enthralled the crowd with his charismatic stage performance, singing and dancing a few of his favourites.

*Ohad Moskowitz*, known for his wide range, delighted the audience with some of his hit tunes.

Baruch Levine, the well-known composer, made an appearance and sang one of his popular compositions *Vezakeinu* with his sincere and sweet style.

Dovid Gabbay, enhanced the evening as he sang his most popular song *L'gabbay* complete with the accompaniment of Scottish snare drums and a bagpipe.

The highlight of Lipa Shmelczer's performance was his rendition of the "Diet Song".

One of the magic moments for me was when Fried, Dedi, and Ohad sang together a Yossi Green Medley. The climax though was Fried and Helfgot's powerful duet of *Tanya* and *Vos Vet Zein*, which literally brought the house down.

**Yitzy Spinner**, a promising young singer from the US, has just released his debut album called *You And I*. Yitzy started to sing as soon as he could talk. Since then, he hasn't stopped. His singing career began when he became the "Miami Boys Choir's" youngest member when he was only eight years old. He has appeared on over fifteen albums in collaboration with other performers. He has performed live in concert with many other Jewish artists in many countries. He has studied voice training with prestigious *chazonim* and voice coaches. Spinner recently took a position as full-time *chazzan* in

Westchester, NY. Being a composer as well as a singer, he was persuaded by friends and family to release a CD. It was worth waiting. This new album has twelve new exciting songs, all composed by Yitzy himself. Definitely one for the Chanukah present collection.

The **Piamentas** have been on the cutting edge of Jewish music for several decades. Their latest effort, *Yihiyu Leratzon* maintains the momentum in fine style. The group is primarily comprised of two of the most popular and gifted artists performing together, with backing musicians creating the band. Yossi Piamenta, a guitar virtuoso with a heart of gold has revealed to us over the years what it means to take a *simcha* on the next level. His style, which has been honed over the years, combines modern musical modes with Hebrew lyrics. In this he has found international success. Avi Piamenta, Yossi's brother, who now resides in Yerusholayim, is a famous flautist. He has been part of the Piamenta foundation since the early days of the group. His modest, yet vigorous, style brings to the oeuvre a brilliance of technique which does nothing to detract from the warmth of his delivery. The group, which gained fame with songs like *Asher Boro*, and *Siman Tov*, have been working on a fusion of traditional Sephardi melodies with a more contemporary style. Their latest release - eleven tracks in all - allows one to explore the richness of the Piamenta sound, hear.

Wishing all readers "A Frielichen Chanukah"!

**Lazer Levy is a music arranger, music teacher. His own band Kol Rinoh Music is based in London, where you can have between 1-5 musicians at your simcha 02088003180 / 07800853694**



YITZY SPINNER

CHAIM HERSH BSc MRICS  
CHARTERED SURVEYOR

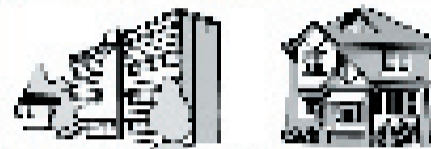
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