

**European Cantors Association Newsletter No 7, December 2022****In this issue:**

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**European Cantors Convention returns to Budapest – November 2022**

Back after the pandemic, European Cantors staged its 14th Convention in Budapest in collaboration with the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities.

The venue was the beautifully restored Rumbach Street Synagogue where we also helped the Hungarian Jewish Community to celebrate its 150th Anniversary.

**One could safely say it was the biggest and the best Convention ever!**

To feel the joy and imbibe the warm and sharing atmosphere, watch this little video which **Russell Grossman** has put together which gives a snapshot of the panel discussions, the concerts, the mealtimes and the camaraderie: Click [Budapest 22 in a Nutshell](#) to view it.



Though it was hard to put into words, this is what some of the people attending said:

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**Cantor Benny Rogosnitzky of Park East Synagogue (orthodox) New York:**

Liverpool born, first trained in Johannesburg, Cantor Benny said: I can hardly find the words to describe the majesty and beauty of last Shabbat in Budapest with the wonderful extended family of ECA. It has long been my dream to join for such a conference, and I finally made it. I met so many old friends and made many new friends.

**What struck me most was the wonderful unity and sense of warmth and neshama that permeated throughout the weekend.**

As full-time Cantors, many of us rarely (if ever) have the opportunity to listen, learn, and be exposed to other Cantors' work and offerings. As I sat and listened to the awe inspiring and exquisite Shacharit service, led by my dear new friend **Beny Maissner** of Toronto, my mind and heart were transported to a different era to how Jews gathered every Shabbat to listen to world-renowned Cantors, and how much the music inspired them.

I listened with joy to an outstanding young talent Cantor **Aviya Nachshon** from Israel as he led the taking out of the Torah and to another young and brilliant musician for its return Cantor **Netanel Baram** of the Beverly Hills Synagogue, Los Angeles. To close the morning services, I was mesmerized watching and listening to the brilliant **Cantor Asher Hainovitz** of the Yeshurun Synagogue of Jerusalem who in his rendition of Musaf encapsulated everything beautiful and sacred about our music. (Asher is a cherished Patron of ECA),



*Here is Benny R, left, joined by Aviya, Beny M in the red shirt, then Asher Hainovitz and Netanel (Nati) Baram right. Some were on a panel together with Benny about 'What makes a Ruach in your Synagogue'.*

**Yes, there are different denominations within Judaism. but I walked away inspired with the knowledge that there is so much more that unites us than divides us.**



I cannot close this post without sharing how happy I was to meet **Jeremiah Lockwood** (left) an incredibly talented musician from New York who has infused new life and breathed new hope into the world of Cantorial music and I would also be remiss if I did not recognize the outstanding reading of the Torah by the super-talented **Russell Grossman** (right).



**Benny Rogosnitzky** concluded: Kudos to **Russell** also **Alex Klein, Geraldine Auerbach** and **Barbara Rosenberg** for weaving together such a historic and memorable gathering. Thank you to all of you for your warm and gracious welcome. May we be blessed to live our lives with beautiful music in our hearts, always! **Benny**



Here we see Professor **Mark Kligman** chairing a panel considering 'Is nusach still necessary in the 21st Century?' with, from left, Cantor **Sofia Falkovitch** (freelance, Paris) Cantor **Nati Baram** (orthodox, Los Angeles) **Jeremiah Lockwood** (musician and scholar, New York) Cantor **Asher Hainovitz** (orthodox, Jerusalem) Cantor **Paul Heller**, (independent, London) and Cantor **Deborah Katchko Gray** (reform, Connecticut).

**Cantor Beny Maissner** Emeritus of Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto says:

I was more than elated from the days together. It meant so much to me personally from many aspects. Being included and respected by my colleagues meant the world to me. Beny also said that **Alex, Barbara, Russell** and **Geraldine's** leadership was exceptional and heart-warming.

**Professor Mark Kligman**, UCLA, Los Angeles, said:

It was truly wonderful to be part of this important program. Learning about various cantorial traditions and performing music in an impressive schul is a special and powerful experience. I am so glad it worked so well. I'm grateful I could conduct our cantorial/orchestral performance with **Nati Baram** and also **Isidoro Abramowicz** pictured below (Isidoro left, Nati right). It is hard to describe this warm and welcoming atmosphere in words. As programs develop for future gatherings, I hope we can be part of it. Alex, I look forward to our continued partnerships, and thank you for allowing me to participate.



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**Cantor Deborah Katchko Gray**

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties in Ridgefield, CT (reform) said:



It was warm, authentic, menchy and welcoming. I loved getting to know the cantors and loved sharing my grandfather Adolf Katchko's music with an appreciative group. Deborah, pictured left is the second woman to have been appointed (previously) to a Conservative community. She also started the Women Cantors Network in 1982, to help share the love of cantorial music she grew up with.

**Barbara Rosenberg BEM** one of our organising team, described her experience in Budapest to her friends thus:

The Cantors Convention was ‘beyond wonderful’. Even better than I had expected, and I knew it would be good.

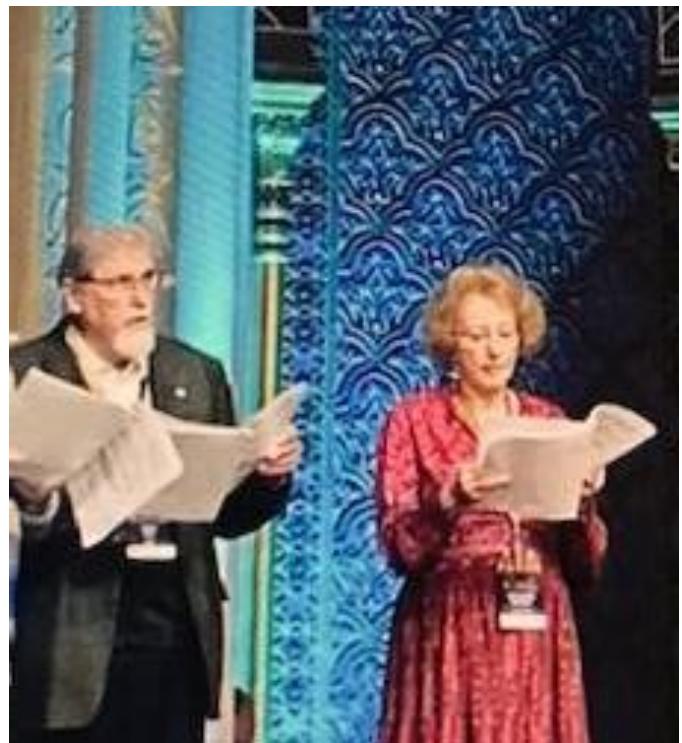
I hadn't realised that our Hungarian hosts, led by the dedicated Rumbach Manager, **Henriett Kiss** (below) would provide absolutely EVERYTHING, including four young students who were there every day at our beck and call.

This meant all I had to do was see that the hundred delegates and presenters knew where they had to be, try to get them back into their sessions after tea and meals and generally I could just ENJOY the convention.



Where  
to  
start?

*Below we see Barbara, pictured with the Israeli composer **Max Stern** singing in Cantor Beny Maissner's choral ensemble of ancient Jewish music on the Saturday evening of the Convention*



Perhaps with the venue itself. The newly refurbished Rumbach Street Synagogue, celebrating its 150th anniversary, has been redecorated in its original Moorish style.

The video [\*\*Budapest 22 in a Nutshell\*\*](#) (click the link) gives you an idea of its beauty. Needless to say, the acoustics are superb. It is now used as a cultural and education centre.

The highlights were the **Shabbat services** of course, with all those chazzanim singing to the rafters.

And what was special was that the panels and concerts included women. Everyone got on famously. Some of the women are experts in their fields and were shown the respect they deserve. Most of the men were orthodox, but open-minded.

## EUROPEAN CANTORS ASSOCIATION

*The future of synagogue music*

Patrons: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis Cantors Naftali Herstik, Joseph Malovany, Asher Hainovitz Director Alex Klein: [alex@cantors.eu](mailto:alex@cantors.eu)



*On this panel (left) on 'How to teach nusach today', we had, from left, Prof **Mark Kligman** of UCLA, Chair, with **Amalia Kedem** from the National Library of Israel; Cantor **Isidoro Abramowicz**, Head of Cantorial Studies at the Geiger College at the University of Potsdam; **Beny Maissner** Cantor Emeritus, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto; **Alina Treiger**, Rabbi and Cantor of Oldenburg, Germany; and **Alex Klein**, Director of European Cantors Association.*

**A real highlight of the final Gala Concert** was the superb professional chamber choir from a nearby town, the **Kecskemet Singing Circle**, conducted by **Peter Erdei** who came to sing the premiere of composer **Max Stern's** setting of *Avinu Shebashamayim*.



We were honoured to host the concert premiere of this special prayer for the State of Israel. Composer **Max Stern** is taking a bow with the wonderful choir and conductor who are all applauding him. Listen and look here: [Avinu Shebashamayim Max Stern](#).

There were concerts every evening, and a few daytime ones as well. All the visiting cantors has a chance to perform, as did the two visiting choirs: **Jonny Greenstein's Kol Rina Choir** from Jerusalem and the **London Cantorial Singers** conducted by **Alan Freedman**.

We also had two delightful **children's groups** from the local Jewish schools, to open two of the concerts. Here below are children from the **Lauder School** with **Eszter Biro**.



There was a terrific **masterclass** with two distinguished cantors giving advice to the three brave singers **Alina, Nati** and **Aviya**. The final entrant was octogenarian **Elkan Presman** former choirmaster of Wembley United synagogue London, who came onto the platform and proceeded to wow everyone in the room with his strong, clear, emotion-filled rendition. Both the teachers, **Isidoro Abramowicz** and **Beny Maissner**, stood up at the end, shook his hand and said to the other three, 'this is exactly what we have been trying to teach you. Here you have heard it demonstrated by a chazzan whose life-long experience has put everything into practice'.

*Below we see from left, Rabbi /Cantor Alina Treiger, Elkan Presman (with a sliver of Cantor Aviya Nachshon of Israel behind him) and Elkan's son Gavin, looking on appreciatively*



**Barbara** continued: I was equally fascinated by the session entitled '**The Katchko-Alter Nusach.**' They were two prominent chazanim of their time who codified nusach in America and mentored and taught many generations of chazzanim in the mid-to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Israel Alter was in Johannesburg during our youth in the 1950s).



Two of the delegates, **Adolph Katchko**'s granddaughter, **Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray** (on the left) and **Israel Alter**'s nephew, **Cantor Beny Maissner** (right) showed and sang examples of their take on the same piece, to illustrate their individual styles. Convention ended on a lighter note, with clips of **Mickey Katz**, the Jewish musical comedian, 'Dovid Crocket' etc., Katz's family had endowed the Chair in Jewish Music at UCLA, where the presenter **Mark Kligman** holds the position.

Those were just some of the highlights. Half a dozen of us stayed in the Barcelo Hotel, which was terrific, and I would recommend it to anyone visiting Budapest. As you can see, all the hard slog, and missing all those sunny days when I could have been out walking were more than worth it. **Barbara Rosenberg BEM**



*Jonny Greenstein's Kol Rina Choir from Jerusalem, specialise in British Choral Music of the Victorian era, as printed in the famous 'Blue Book', first published in 1879 and used for more than 100 years throughout the British Commonwealth.*

Rivka, Kol Rina's manager, said that the members were 'inspired and awed by so much beauty in the Rumbach shul and had made wonderful contacts within our small Jewish music world – and the Shabbat was memorable!!' Many remarked that **the diversity of denominations was unique and very important.**

## Choral Ensembles



People enjoyed mixing and matching and working together in small groups on particular choral works with a great choirleader. **Beny Maissner**'s group worked on ancient manuscripts, **Johnny Greenstein** on the material from the famous 'Blue Book' of British choral music, **Alan Freedman** on an acapella male group exploring new Lecha Dodi and **Jeremiah Lockwood** on new creative approaches. Above is Alan Freedman (centre with microphone) with his popular acapella group including members of the Cantorials and soloist Robert Brody, 4<sup>th</sup> from right tugging at his jacket

Alex Klein, Director of ECA says:



Our 14th Convention in Budapest was a **huge success** for many reasons. **For me** it was coming from the darkness of Covid19 into the light; as our prayers say 'from sadness to joy, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom'. **The joy** of actually meeting Zoom friends for the first time and seeing old friends again, meant that dreams can come true!

**Special** for me was that there was no politics, no religious divide, just one people singing and praying as one, brought together by our love of Jewish liturgy past, present and future.

The joy of Shabbat, improvisation of davening with music of prayer being the glue that keeps us together.

How can this not be the way forward in bringing people back to shul? I only wish that the powers that be in UK could witness the joy the real deal brings to our people. Our synagogue traditions keep us together.

Once again, the 150-year-old Rumbach Street Synagogue came alive, filled with the joy of song. We were delighted to have the Rumbach Rabbi, **Peter Deutsch** and members their community with us. The superb shabbat davening by several of our visiting cantors, and the torah chanting of **Daniel Tunkel** and **Russell Grossman**, were a huge pleasure to all who attended the convention.

You will note in the video the mix of attendees, from student **Ariel Cahn** aged 18 to **Elkan Pressman** and **Moshe Dubiner** well into their 80s and still able and ready to sing. (Moshe is on the right with one of our three amazing accompanists, **David Prager**). The others who helped on the piano were **David Silkoff** of London and **Zoltan Neumark** of Budapest. **Alex Klein**.



**David Silkoff** wrote to say what a fantastic experience it was participating in The European Cantors Convention; he said: It was wonderful to work with the many talented cantors from all over the world who were all so friendly and also to listen to the lectures which gave us so much insight into the essence of Jewish music and Chazzanut. I also enjoyed listening to the many choirs. Thank you for organising this marvellous event. **David Silkoff**



*Rachel Wetstein and Daniel Tunkel left, welcomed guests with their exquisite flutes. Right Geraldine Auerbach, ECA communications director, Newsletter editor and convention programme coordinator, exhorting the troops.*



ECA was delighted to have warm messages of congratulations and good luck for the Convention from our Patron, Chief Rabbi **Ephraim Mirvis** of Great Britain and the Commonwealth; and also, from the Chief Rabbi of Hungary, **Robert Frolich** as well as President **Andras Heisler** of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish communities.

## Next year in Hannover .....

Save the dates of 8-13 November 2023 when ECA Convention joins the Jewish communities of Lower Saxony in Hanover to commemorate the **85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Kristallnacht**





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### **The European Cantors Association** *Bringing together all who love Jewish liturgical music and the power it brings to prayer*

**The European Cantors Association (ECA) is an independent organisation** established in the United Kingdom in 2012. It is a framework for cantors, prayer leaders and interested lay people across the spectrum of Jewish worship, to engage in dialogue, training and profile-raising to ensure that the beautiful and unique music of Jewish prayer continues to enhance synagogue services for generations to come. ECA's work is endorsed by several distinguished rabbis and cantors and recognises best practice wherever it exists.

**ECA partners with several international organisations** to create programmes that are relevant to cantors of today and those they work closely with. ECA presented a Zoom series in 2021 and 2022, The Voice of the Cantor (VOC) tackling some of the burning issues in the cantorial world today and interviewing cantors round the world who have made their mark. ECA's Academic Wing presents International Conferences 'Magnified and Sanctified Music of Jewish Prayer' in partnership with universities (Leeds University 2015, Hanover University of Music and Dance 2019)

**ECA arranges European Cantors Conventions** along orthodox lines in the UK and European cities. These are recognised for providing deep learning and generous sharing in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Sessions deal with what is most relevant to the cantor and prayer leader of today. Teachers and presenters are chosen for their experience and expertise and are of the highest calibre. Delegates are able to secure professional feedback.

Daily services are held, shacharit, minchah and maariv. Egalitarian daily services are provided if required. Shabbat Choral and cantorial services are arranged in conjunction with local communities. All food served is kosher. Shabbat services as well as concerts are open to the public who share the love of synagogue music past, present and future.

**All who are interested** in the music of the synagogue and the role and art of the cantor or prayer leader are welcome to join the European Cantors Association and attend its activities.

**ECA Membership is free.** To join [download the membership form](#)

**Donations are welcome** to support ECA scholarship programme

**To make a donation,** Transfer to the ECA's Bank:

Sort code 40-20-14, Account name: European Cantors Association

Account number 91408429 (International Bank Account Number GB60MIDL40201491408429)

**ECA has an active YouTube** channel where you can see all the previous VOC programmes; the Jolles Encyclopaedia Book launch; Chief Rabbi Mirvis affirming how important nusach is; the Julian Klein Memorial Concert of 2008 at Finchley Synagogue and more: click [ECA videos](#).

**For further and continuing information** on the European Cantors Association, join the [ECA Facebook](#) group or send your email address to [russell@cantors.eu](mailto:russell@cantors.eu) to be put on the Newsletter circulation list. Also see the

ECA Website: [www.cantors.eu](http://www.cantors.eu) Twitter: [@eurocantorsassn](https://twitter.com/eurocantorsassn) Instagram: [europeancantors](https://www.instagram.com/europeancantors/)

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Newsletter #7 compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, December 2022