

My Favorite Pieces of Jewish Choral Music

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Session Breakdown

- This session will explore Jewish Choral Music appropriate for Middle School, High School, and beyond. Session attendees will leave with help on language, history, and a variety of Jewish Choral Music Resources.

Language Guides

Hebrew vs Yiddish

- Hebrew is a Semitic language (a subgroup of the Afro-Asiatic languages, languages spoken across the Middle East), while Yiddish is a German dialect which integrates many languages, including German, Hebrew, Aramaic, and various Slavic and Romance languages.
- While Yiddish does use some Hebrew words and is written in the Hebrew alphabet, Yiddish is actually more closely related to German and Slavic languages than it is to Hebrew.
- Yiddish was known as mame-loshn, mother tongue, because it was the language that was used daily as the conversational, home and business language amongst Jews in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Hebrew was considered loshn-koydesh, holy tongue, and was used mostly for liturgical purposes such as prayer, by Jewish communities all over the world — but was not spoken between Jews.
- Today, Hebrew is spoken by about 10 million people worldwide and is Israel's first language. Hebrew is utilized both as a conversational language and as a language for religious purposes.
- There are about 3 million Yiddish speakers worldwide today.

YIVO Yiddish-English Transliteration

VOWELS

a as in *lot*

e more *let* than *lot*

i, y= between *lit* and *leek*

o as in *lawn*

u as in *loot*

DIPHTHONGS: pronounce each
component vowel separately

ay (a-y) as in *life*

ey (e-y) as in *late*

oy (o-y) as in *loiter*

CONSONANTS: as in English, except

r (guttural or dental roll;

otherwise more 'd' than 'r')

kh (guttural; not like German)

zh as in *pleasure*

n (*gn, tn, etc.*) nasal; no vowel sound

Hebrew Pronunciation Guide

VOWELS

a as in *father*

ai as in *aisle* (= long *i* as in *ice*)

e = short *e* as in *bed*

ei as in *eight* (= long *a* as in *ace*)

i as in *pizza* (= long *e* as in *be*)

o = long *o* as in *go*

u = long *u* as in *lunar*

' = unstressed vowel close to *a* or unstressed short *e*

CONSONANTS

ch as in German *Bach* or Scottish *loch* (not as in
cheese)

g = hard *g* as in *get* (not soft *g* as in *gem*)

tz = as in *boat*

h after a vowel is silent

Repertoire Suggestions

Az Der Rebbe Geht – Arr. by A.W. Binder

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: SATB + Piano

Level: HS Primary, MS Intermediate

Notes: Chassidic Folk Song, Yiddish

This was a popular song for children to sing. When the rabbi sings, children sing. When the rabbi dances, children dance. When the rabbi laughs, children laugh. But when the rabbi talks, children listen.

Ani Ma-amin (I Believe) – Ronna Honigman

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: SA + Piano

Level: MS Primary

I Believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even if he be delayed, I will await him.

Stand Strong – Laure Akers, Arr. Comisar

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: Solo Voice & SSA Choir (Also available SATB)

Level: MS Advanced, HS Intermediate

Notes from the composer: *Stand Strong* was inspired by my work with the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, an organization that creates bridges between Jewish and Muslim women. By raising our collective voices, we create potential for cultural movements that transcend boundaries of race, religion, gender, and sect.

A Chanukah Dreidle – Michael Isaacson

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: SATB Talking Chorus and Piano

Level: HS Advanced

Notes from the Composer – This *Chanukah Dreidl for Talking Chorus* is meant to spin out the Chanukah Story while engrossing the listener in the sonic pyrotechnics. In Order to achieve this, the talkers must also be dedicated actors who sustain the momentum and intensity of the piece from the moment the tempo is set until its dynamic conclusion by dramatically enunciating and shaping every word so that it crackles, sizzles and bubbles; having fun relating this story.

A Chanukah Prayer for Children – Ryan Brechmacher

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: SATB Divisi + Piano (Also available SSA)

Level: HS Advanced

Chanukah Prayer For Children combines an original text in English with the tradition Hanukah hymn Maoz Tzur (Rock of Ages). The English speaks of the Hanukah lights as a call for all peoples to unite for peace. The Hebrew reminds us of the legend of the Hanukah miracle. Although the piece requires divisi, the voice leading is not difficult. The melody requires the ability to sustain long phrases. The tone should be warm throughout.

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Di Zun Vet Aruntergeyn - Ben Yomin, arr. Zuckerman

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: SATB a cappella

Level: HS Intermediate

Language: Yiddish

The sun will soon set beneath the hill; silently love will come upon loneliness that sits weeping upon a golden stone. The golden peacock will come and take us all to the place for which we yearn. Night will come and lull us all into eternal slumber.

Jerusalem is Mine – Kenny Karen, arr. Lazar

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: SATB divisi + Piano

Level: HS Advanced

This piece was written as part of the Jerusalem 3000 Celebration, originally for Cantor and guitar. This arrangement has many opportunities to feature soloists or solo sections of the choir.

Chanukah in Santa Monica – Tom Lehrer arr. Jacobson

Publisher: Transcontinental

Voicing: TTBB + Piano (Also available SATB)

Level: HS Intermediate

Chanukah in Santa Monica was originally written for and sung on Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion* radio show in 1990, allegedly to counterbalance *White Christmas*, and to remedy the lack of Hanukkah songs. Its lyrics feature some of Lehrer's most clever (and most far-fetched) rhymes, such as 'I spent Shavuot in East Saint Louis' and 'Rosh Hashona I spend in Arizona, and Yom Kippur way down in Mississippi.'

Please note the cut from 29 – 54 for today's session

Additional Repertoire Ideas

- Al Shlosa D'varim - Arr. Allan E. Naplan
- Bidi Bom - Arr. David Eddleman
- Dodi Li - Arr. Brant Adams
- Five Hebrew Love Songs - Eric Whitacre
- Oseh Shalom - Arr. Andrew Parr
- Samachti B'omrim Li
- Shalom, Pacem, Peace - Arr. Ruth Elaine Schram
- Sim Shalom - Ruth Morris Gray
- Tumbalalaika - Arr. Audrey Snyder
- Yih'yu L'ratzon - Arr. Jonathan Comisar
- Zum Gali Gali - Arr. Victor C. Johnson

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