

**Report COZ 10: August 23, 2020: Rachel Adelstein and Daniel Padley**  
**Anglo-Jewish Singing Communities: Past, Present, and Future**  
**Dr Rachel Adelstein and Dr Danielle Padley**



Rachel is an ethnomusicologist based in New Haven, Connecticut. Her research focuses on contemporary Jewish liturgical music and ritual practice.

**COZ 10: Tuesday 25 Aug 2020**

**Dr Rachel Adelstein**  
Ethnomusicologist & Managing Editor, *Musica Judaica Online Reviews* with

**Danielle Padley**  
Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Cambridge

**Anglo-Jewish Singing Communities: Past, Present, and Future**

From the Victorian era to now, Anglo-Jewish communities have used song to negotiate their identity as Jewish and British. Danielle and Rachel discuss a variety of approaches to this challenge.”



Danielle's research explores the music-making activities of the Victorian Anglo-Jewish community. She is also a singer and directs *Kol Echad* Hebrew Choir in Cambridge.

**This session can be heard here:**

<https://www.facebook.com/138818510938797/videos/795038457938803>

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**Dr Rachel Adelstein** Ethnomusicologist & Managing Editor, *Musica Judaica Online Reviews*. Based in New Haven, Connecticut. Her research focuses on contemporary Jewish liturgical music and ritual practice. with

**Danielle Padley** Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Cambridge Danielle's research explores the music-making activities of the Victorian Anglo-Jewish community. She is also a singer and directs *Kol Echad* Hebrew Choir in Cambridge.

**Report by Charles Heller**

Geraldine introduced the featured speakers: Rachel is an ethnomusicologist specializing in contemporary Jewish liturgical music and ritual practice. Danielle has just completed a PhD on **Charles Verrinder and Victorian Anglo-Jewish music-making**.

**Danielle** outlined how she became interested in Verrinder, through his very familiar *Essa Einai*. She wanted to explore the inter-faith attitude of this Victorian church organist, and extended her study to the aspirations of the Anglo-Jewish community. Much material came from the archives of the *Jewish Chronicle* and the West London Synagogue (WLS) and from genealogical websites.

In the early 19th century non-orthodox shuls began wanting to have a choir. This was mirrored by the Tractarian movement in the Anglo-Catholic church which also encouraged choral singing. But the kind of music to be sung was left undefined. Jews also asserted their Britishness in such activities as concert-going and joining choral societies.

Verrinder preferred women singers to boys, perhaps because it avoided the issue of rapid turnover as boys' voices broke, but as it turned out there was still a turnover as lady singers preferred to leave the choir when they got married. There was also an issue of whether it was best to have ladies in the choir hidden behind a screen.

Some members of the congregation felt the choir silenced the congregation, others liked listening to a good choir. Verrinder had classes for the congregation to learn the choir's repertoire but there was not much interest. His most famous piece *Essa Einai* is easy for a congregation to sing as it has a small range and is hymn-like.

The preface of the Blue Book

[Http://shulmusic.org/sheetmusic/bluebook/index.htm](http://shulmusic.org/sheetmusic/bluebook/index.htm)

and also of the Spanish-Portuguese collection *Talelei Zimrah* stresses the ideal of each family practicing this new choral repertoire at home. Children could join in as the music was printed with tonic sol-fa which they learnt in school.

Danielle stressed the practice of Rev David Woolf Marks at the WLS of not having a cantor, but rather a rabbi speaking the liturgy.

Danielle has discovered the names of 3 women choristers at WLS who went on to have important musical careers:

L. Abraham joined the choir in 1870, her father was the WLS secretary. She became Leonora Braham and created the roles of Yum Yum and Patience for Gilbert and Sullivan.

Julia Ehrenberg became Giulia Warwick who also sang for G & S.

Louisa Van Norden became Louisa Dukas whose nephew was Paul Dukas.

Danielle reviewed some secular choral groups:

In the 1890s Verrinder was the conductor of the **Hebrew Choral Association**. He conducted what may have been the only performance of his piece *Israel in Adversity and Deliverance*, which he had composed for his degree at Oxford.

Other secular groups included the Jewish Working Men's Club Choir and the Liverpool Choral Association. There was also a **Bayswater Choral Society** which may have been part of the Jewish community.

The question arises: might these choirs have been formed because Jewish singers were not allowed in other choirs?

Rachel extended the question: Does the term "**Jewish Choir**" imply it has Jewish singers, or that it performs Jewish repertoire?

Rachel played the familiar *Tsadik Katamar* by Lewandowski as an example of a choral piece that has become accepted as congregational. Rachel outlined her research in asking members of the Jewish community what is their knowledge of synagogue music. She asks her informants an open-ended question: "What is your favourite piece, the one that goes like this..." and the informant will sing along. People know tunes but do not know where they come from or their composer.

Rachel introduced the semiotic term *index*, a signifier for particular informants. Each tune becomes an index to a particular person. Meir Finkelstein's *Ledor Vador* will be indexed to one informant, De Sola's *Adon Olam* will be indexed to another.

Denise Neapolitan added in the Chat column that this is how traditional tunes get their names eg the Irish tune called "Tobin's Favourite".

Danielle returned to *Essa Einai*: many congregants sing it "wrong" by adding the alto countermelody at bar 6 to the main melody.

Rachel continued this topic of altering a tune which is an inevitable process — there is a limit to prescriptivism. **Kol Echad**, the Cambridge choir, conducted by Danielle, sings *Essa Einai* as written in the Blue Book.

At a Reform music festival different choirs got together to sing *Essa Einai* and they discovered each choir sings it differently. The mistake is part of the tradition. Danielle drew attention to the clash of E# and E in bar 11 and discussion established that this clash originated not with Verrinder but in Alman's edited version in the Blue Book. Was it intentional or, as suggested by Alex Knapp, a misprint?

A member of the Zoom audience provided a quote attributed to Glinka: "Music is created by the people and we composers only arrange it."

Rachel remarked: Anglo-Jewish shul music sounds like it has been there forever but it has very mixed origins.

Rachel played *Ein Keloheinu* by Joseph Finlay

[Http://josephfinlay.com](http://josephfinlay.com)

This is an example of Reform music that could be taken up as a congregational melody.

Rachel mentioned the importance of guitar accompaniment in Reform services. Every cantor studying at HUC-Jewish Institute of Religion School of Sacred Music is required to play guitar. Reform has a concept of hazzan-at-a-distance. Women cantors have come to the fore in the 21st century:

[Https://www.kolnefesh.org.uk/our-chazan](https://www.kolnefesh.org.uk/our-chazan)

[Https://frsonline.org/biography/2014/12/03/cantor-zoe-jacobs](https://frsonline.org/biography/2014/12/03/cantor-zoe-jacobs)

[Https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/sarah-grabiner-ordained-as-uks-second-reform-cantor](https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/sarah-grabiner-ordained-as-uks-second-reform-cantor)

The meeting was opened to the general audience:

**Alex Knapp** drew attention to Verrinder's setting of *Ane Ani* in the Reform Yom Kippur liturgy as an example of outstanding synagogue music.

**Robert Brody** expanded on the theme of women choristers with an anecdote concerning Dudley Cohen, the choir director at Hampstead Synagogue, the last Orthodox London synagogue to have a mixed choir. When the Chief Rabbi (Rabbi Brodie) came to visit on Sukkot, Dudley told him: "You will be pleased to know there is no mixed choir today!" "Why is that?" Inquired the delighted Chief.

"It's Thursday, and all the men are at work."

[Note: There is also the story concerning another visit by the Chief to Hampstead, who asked the then conductor Willy Scharf if men and women sang together.

“The men and women do sit together”, Willy said, “and during your sermon they might sleep together, but I cannot say they really sing together...”]

Rachel continued the theme of old Jewish jokes with this one:

A matron in the US Deep South invited twelve soldiers from the local army base for Sunday lunch but insisted that no Jews be included. On the Sunday, twelve African-American soldiers showed up at her door. “Did I invite you?” asked the matron.

“Oh yes, Ma’am,” said their leader, “Captain Cohen sent us.”

The discussion mentioned the contribution of another Victorian synagogue composer, Charles Kensington Salaman, who is buried in the Reform section of Hoop Lane Cemetery, London. Salaman had ongoing copyright fights over his celebrated *Mah Yedidot* which was published in various settings.

**Geraldine** drew the discussion to a close by recalling an anecdote told to her by the new conductor of the choir at the Stadt Tempel, Vienna, Sulzer’s own synagogue. At his first rehearsal he opened his copy of Sulzer’s music and began to conduct. Immediately the choristers objected and said: “We don’t sing it like that.”

*Notes kindly taken by Charles Heller*