



Report Coz 9, 18 August, Mimi Sheffer and Ofra Yitzhaki

Report by Professor Jehoash Hirshberg plus websites of the participants

	<p style="text-align: center;">COZ 9: Tuesday 18 August 2020</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cantor Mimi Sheffer</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Israeli born and trained classical singer Mimi became Cantor in New York and then of the New Synagogue Orianiernburger Strasse in Berlin</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr Ofra Yitzhaki Pianist</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Doctorate from Juilliard & member of the faculty Tel Aviv University. An avid performer of new and Israeli music,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Performing the music of one's own people as part of a classical musician's search for artistic identity</p>	
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COZ (Conversations on Zoom) has proved itself much beyond its emergency role in the hazy Corona reality. It has created the opportunity for international musicians working in the broad field of Jewish music to get acquainted, report about their activity and share ideas. Moreover, the format of Zoom has created the important possibility to listen to the music itself, not only hear about it.

COZ on 18 August was the great hour of the performers. Soprano Mimi Sheffer from Berlin and pianist Ofra Yitzhaki from Tel Aviv interviewed one another about their individual performing activity and about their rich collaboration during the past five years, especially since the productive Leeds conference Magnified and Sanctified to which both I and Mimi had been invited.

One of Mimi's most significant recent project has been the revival of the large repertory of the ca. 80 Lieder that Paul Frankenburger - Ben-Haim (1897-1984) composed in Munich before his forced immigration to Palestine in 1933.

One of my first steps when I started working on the first edition of my Ben-Haim monograph (Tel Aviv: Am Oved 1983) was to interview Ben Haim – by then ill and confined to a wheel chair following a horrible car accident in Munich. There, at his apartment in Tel Aviv, I discovered the treasure of the German Lieder he fortunately brought with him upon his immigration, among his other, chamber and symphonic works. Ben-Haim and his wife, Hely,

immediately conceded to my suggestion to transfer all the precious material to a Ben-Haim Archive at the National Library in Jerusalem.

The first singer who performed a few of the Lieder was the late Cila Grossmeier, who did it for the composer at his place. Singer Varda Kotler later issued a CD of several Lieder and several of the Israeli art-songs. Yet Mimi Sheffer and Ofra Yitzhaki undertook the comprehensive ongoing project of performing all of Paul Frankenger's Lieder. The new edition of my Hebrew monograph of Ben-Haim (2019) is attached to an audio site with all his works, which includes Mimi's recordings made so far.

Mimi has also related to her other projects of vocal works by Jewish composers. She has been making admirable efforts to solicit financial help for executing her concerts, festivals and recordings of this large and worthy repertory. The Zoom format allowed us to listen to her rich, mellow voice performing a few samples of it.

The two artists then alternated, and Mimi interviewed the excited, highly inspired young pianist Ofra Yitzhaki who has been overflowing with performing and recording projects of Israeli music. One especially imaginative project which I attended was the diverse musical profile of Frank Pelleg, one of the most dedicated performers of Israeli works (such as the debut of Ben-Haim's large scale Piano Concerto); other than that he was a pioneer harpsichordist, organist, a motivated performer of Schoenberg's music, composer of incidental music, and a commentator. Ofra revived Pelleg's programs of Israeli music, combined with Bach's Four Duets.

More than thirty researchers, librarians, and performers from several countries participated in the international COZ which was a lovely, friendly event. I commend Geraldine for carrying on with this wonderful initiative.

Report by: Jehoash Hirshberg, Jerusalem

Mimi Sheffer says: A lot of the information can be found on our website:

www.kol-juedischemusik.com .

Ofra Yitzhaki writes, Dear Geraldine,

Following up on our last correspondence, I did some work and finally uploaded on my website information and some recordings connected to my work in the field of Jewish/Israeli music. Now it can all pretty much be found there, by clicking the buttons under "Israeli Music":

<https://www.ofra-yitzhaki.com/israeli-music1.html>

I especially included some information regarding my programs that involve piano music and texts (with an actor) since, as you said, they really give a glance into the special story of this musical creations (also to 'non-musical' audience). They all have versions in Hebrew, English and German and I very much hope to perform them to audiences in Israel and abroad (once we can perform anything, at all):

<https://www.ofra-yitzhaki.com/literary---musical-events.html>

I wish to thank you also for the lovely COZ discussion with Sam Adler. He was my Doctorate advisor and it was such a delight to see him after so many years (and especially to see that he hasn't change a bit...!).

All the best to you and of course Shana Tova and beautiful Holidays to you and your family.

Yours,

Ofra

Dr. Ofra Yitzhaki

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