

CANTOR BENJAMIN AARON ROSNER

2236 Ehrborn Way, Sacramento, CA 95825 · cantorben@gmail.com · 305-785-8834
www.cantorben.com

Summary: Cantor, classically trained guitarist, and multi-instrumentalist, creating spiritual prayer and fostering educational experiences in Jewish culture.

Education

Jewish Theological Seminary, H.L. Miller Cantorial School/College of Jewish Music New York, NY
Masters in Sacred Music; Diploma of Hazzan, May 2010

Honors: Arlene Levy Cantorial Scholarship; Sara and Samuel Katz Memorial Prize in Liturgy and Nusach
Israel: Conservative Yeshiva (2005-2006)

Thesis:

The Birth and Rebirth of Guitar in the Synagogue and A Theory and Practical Application of Jewish Liturgical Music

Thesis Abstract:

Through analysis of prayer modes, musical examples, and instruction on how to arrange for guitar, it is my goal to express the unlimited potential of guitar to accompany traditional and non traditional Jewish liturgical music. While the guitar is pleasant as a strummed folk instrument, it has the ability to handle more complex arrangements.

University of Miami

Coral Gables, FL

Bachelor of Music in Classical Guitar; minor in Jewish Studies, May 2002

Honors: Phi Mu Alpha (professional music fraternity)

Thesis:

Music {and History} of the Spanish Jews

Publications and Media

- 2020 Melodies of Tishrei - A Season of Hope and Renewal (aired 3 times: Selichot Night Live USCJ, Talk Jewish with Me MLC and a Sacramento Jewish Community citywide pre-Hoshana Rabba production)
- 2020 Created and edited multilayer videos of boutique guitars and mandolins for howieblues84 which can found at <http://cantorben.com/videos/instruments-played-by-ben/>
- 2019 Worked with Joseph Levine, editor of *Journal of Synagogue Music*, September 2019 “N’Ginah L’Ma’aseh” recording and arranging Nissi Blumenthal’s, “Shiviti” for classical guitar and voice
- 2019 Monograph published “The Unlimited Potential of Guitar in Synagogue Music”. Symposium at The University of Chicago.
- 2018 Interviewed as expert and did editorial work for *Acoustic Guitar Magazine* October 2018 Issue, “Is the Acoustic Guitar God’s Favorite Instrument?”
<https://acousticguitar.com/is-the-acoustic-guitar-gods-favorite-instrument/>
- 2015 “Selective Use of the Guitar as Accompanying Instrument,” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, September 2015

Lectures and Concerts, solo

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- 2019 The Unlimited Potential of Guitar in Synagogue Music (Invited talk at a symposium on Jewish Music at the University of Chicago through the Kaplan Institute)
- 2019 Torah on Tap (Monthly Torah Study and Beer Tasting in memory of our loved ones past)
- 2018 Practice of Torah Cantillation and its Jewish Law and Grammar (Kashenberg Ostrow Hayward Library and Cultural Center, Sacramento, California)
- 2018 Sephardic History and Music concert/lecture (Kashenberg Ostrow Hayward Library and Cultural Center, Sacramento, California)
- 2015 Keynote speaker to introduce the Persian instruments used in movie, "Ballad of the Weeping Spring" (Kashenberg Ostrow Hayward Library and Cultural Center, Sacramento, California)
- 2017, 2014, 2012 History, Halacha (Jewish Law) and the Art of Hebrew Calligraphy (Kashenberg Ostrow Hayward Library and Cultural Center, Sacramento, California, Beth Shalom, Pittsburgh, PA)
- 2016, 2014 Hanukkah and Purim concert/lectures (Sun City Jewish Fellowship, Roseville, CA)

Concerts, produced and participated in

- 2020 Music With Friends (Zoom Production Through Mosaic Law Congregations "Talk Jewish with Me" program inviting musicians from Sacramento of many cultures to present music of comfort during the time of COVID)
- 2019 International Peace Festival Performer (Koranne Foundation, Sacramento, CA)
- 2019 Omkar Shalom - Music & Poetry of Love and Devotion from Indian and Jewish Traditions (Kashenberg Ostrow Hayward Library and Cultural Center, Sacramento, California and the Raga Academy of Sacramento, CA)
- 2017 Rick Recht (The Center at 2300, Sacramento, CA)
- 2017 Yiddish Community Concert (performance on multiple instruments) (The Center at 2300, Sacramento, CA)
- 2015 Yiddish Community Concert (performance on multiple instruments) (The Center at 2300, Sacramento, CA)
- 2015 Sam Glazer (The Center at 2300, Sacramento, CA)
- 2014 The Afro-Semitic Experience (worship service) (Congregation Beth Shalom, Carmichael, CA)
- 2013 Sephardic Music and Flamenco Dance (Beth Shalom, Pittsburgh, PA)

Scholar-in-Residences and Guest Cantor

- 2018 Sephardic Prayer and Music Scholar-in-Residence weekend (Congregation Bet Haverim, Davis, CA)
- 2018 Produced Scholar-in-Residence weekend featuring musicologist Samuel Thomas, Ph.D, including lectures on Sephardic Music and History of the Oud; accompanied Dr. Thomas on multiple instruments (Mosaic Law Congregation, Sacramento, CA)
- 2017 Produced and performed in Scholar-in-Residence weekend with Rabbi Capers Funnye, Rabbi of Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation, Chicago, Illinois, and Chief Rabbi of the International Israelite Board of Rabbis (Mosaic Law Congregation, Sacramento, California)
- 2016 Performed with Guest Cantor Ilan Mamber in Israeli music concert (Mosaic Law Congregation, Sacramento, California)
- 2015 Produced Guest Cantor weekend of Persian Jewish prayer melodies and history, featuring Hazzan Farid Dardashti (Mosaic Law Congregation, Sacramento, California)

Compositions

- 2018 Composition of liturgical "Hashkiveinu" for choir premiered at community-wide Yom Hashoah commemoration (Sacramento, California)
- 2016 Premiere of composition of "Oseh Shalom" of guitar and voice at *Shalsholet Jewish Composers Festival* (Philadelphia, PA)
- 2016 Premiere of composition of "Shavuot Piyut" for choir at *Shalsholet Jewish Composers Festival*

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(Philadelphia, PA)

Community

- 2016-2018 Sacramento Guitar Society, Board Member assisting in producing multiple concerts
2011-2013 Pittsburgh Mandolin Orchestra (solo voice, mandolin, arranger)
Ongoing Yearly Community Yom HaShoah commemoration soloist and consultant (B'nai Israel and Mosaic Law Congregation, Sacramento, CA)
2013-2018 Christians United for Israel "Night to Honor Israel" soloist (Sacramento, CA)

Musical Studies and Abilities

Voice, Tenor specializing in Jewish Religious and Cultural music:

- Studies with Julie Miller, 2018-present (Sacramento, CA and Zoom)
- Studies with Darrell Lauer, 2003 - 2019 (New York, NY and Skype)
- Studies with Sheri Greenawald, 2016 - 2020 (San Francisco, California)
- Studied with Jonathan Nadel, 2013-2016 (Davis, CA)
- Studied with Douglass Ahlstedt, 2010-2013 (Pittsburgh, PA)
- Studied with Elizabeth Cole, 2008 - 2010 (New York, NY)
- Studied with Jay Shir, 2005-2006 (Jerusalem, Israel)

Guitar, Many styles with foundation in Classical Training:

- Rene Gonzalez (University of Miami Music Conservatory, 1997 - 2002)
- Taught guitar from 1998-2010 (Miami, FL, New York, NY)
- Studied with R.J. Zimmerman in Jazz, 2012 (Pittsburgh, PA)
- Studied with Moaz Ezra, 2006 - 2009 (New York, NY)
- Studied with Tali Roth, 2003 - 2005 (New York, NY)
- Aspen Music Festival, 1997 with Sharon Isbin and Lili Afshar
- Lessons with Hazzan Menachem Kohl, Matt Faunce and Brad Richter, 1993-1997 (Chicago, IL)

Additional

- Charley Rappaport, Mandolin, 2011-2013 (Pittsburgh, PA)
- Ukulele
- Bouzouki
- Pierre Lacocque, Harmonica, 1997 (Mississippi Heat, Chicago, Illinois)
- Basic Banjo, Soprano, Alto, Tenor Recorder, Doumbek, Tof and Balalaika
- Composition and arranging of Music as requested
- Classes taken in (University of Miami), and experience in audio engineering (Subsequent research and synagogue experience, mentorship from John Hood)

Work Experience

Mosaic Law Congregation, Cantor

Sacramento, CA · 2013 - present

- Transitioned Mosaic Law Congregation ritualistically and technologically immediately after onset of

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pandemic by:

- Training Rabbis and others to work with Zoom and YouTube streaming
- Creating and Scripting Virtual Services including High Holidays, Shabbat, Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, Simchat Torah
- Worked with professional video editor to create videos of members singing biblical cantillations including Torah, Haftarah, Ruth, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes.
- Producing Music Videos for Prayer Service including a S'lichot music video which was aired by USCJ and the Cantorial Assembly on Youtube.
- Worked with leadership to create social and educational lecture series over zoom called, "Talk Jewish with me"
- Leads variety of dynamic weekday, Shabbat and holiday services in range of styles and settings, including but not limited to,
 - Traditional Shabbat or weekday minyan service (leading alone or with lay leaders, with a balance of congregational singing and traditional hazzanut)
 - Non-traditional Friday Night Services: playing multiple instruments, singing, and conducting five different ensembles.
 - Shababababa Friday night service (playing guitar, ukulele or banjo; co-lead with education director, Sacramento PJ Library director and Cantorial Intern)
 - Leads or facilitates services with different Jewish traditions (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, Yemenite, Persian, etc), sometimes engaging guests cantors from out of town.
- Coordinates B'nai Mitzvah Programs
 - Acts as primary tutor to most families teaching nusach, trope and prayers.
 - Supervises additional/supplementary tutors
 - Significantly updated program with revamped handbook, date picking process, and policies to reflect the needs of the 21st century
 - Students continue leading services and chanting Torah after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- Cantillation
 - Reads Torah, Haftarah, holiday, and megillot regularly,
 - Assigns all Biblical Readings.
 - Teaches all forms of Trope and relevant Hebrew grammar to Adults privately and in classes
 - Teaches classes on Sofrut (Hebrew Calligraphy and its halachah) and inspects Torahs.
 - Created new Shalosh Regalim Megillot books with graphic designer and my own photography
- Collaborates with lay leaders and KOH Library and Cultural Center to produce a range of educational and community musical experiences
- Founded MLC2030, a group at Mosaic Law Congregation, which creates social, social action and religious programming in and out of the synagogue and in homes for young adults in their 20s and 30s
- Participates in range of life-cycle events and actively pursues pastoral care opportunities
- Represents synagogue at community functions locally and nationally (See CV for details)
- Works with Membership Team; 100 new member-units from 2013 until now.
- Supervised the upgrade of sound systems which can now create separate mixes in multiple rooms, outside and on livestream simultaneously.
- Teaches adult students training to become professional cantors.
- Works with Education Director to create dynamic education of tefillah and Jewish music for students

Congregation Beth Shalom, Cantor

Pittsburgh, PA · 2010 - 2013

- Led variety of dynamic weekday, Shabbat and holiday services in range of styles and settings, including but not limited to,
 - Traditional Shabbat or weekday minyan service (leading alone or with lay leaders, with emphasis on

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- congregational singing)
- Shabbat Alive Friday night service (with band and/or choir participation during Kabbalat Shabbat)
- Shababababa Friday night service (playing guitar or mandolin; co-lead with another rabbi)
- Taught davening and leining skills to B'nai Mitzvah and adult students
 - Provide extensive support to B'nai Mitzvah students and their families
- Planned and delivered adult education programs and private lessons in Jewish culture and music
- Read Torah and holiday megillot or assigned readings as needed
- Collaborated with lay leaders to produce a range of community musical experiences, including pre- and post-shabbat concerts and open mic series
- Engaged unaffiliated and/or unengaged young professionals through collaboration with local Young Professionals' group and personal outreach, including hosting events in my own home
- Participated in range of life-cycle events and actively pursued pastoral care opportunities
- Represented synagogue at community functions

Temple Beth Rishon, Cantorial Intern

Wyckoff, NJ · 2007-2010

- Led dynamic Shabbat services in collaboration with other clergy, choir, and assorted musicians
- Performed range of musical settings, including original compositions, in synagogue and community services and concerts
- Taught prayer melodies, and Torah and Haftarah trope to B'nai Mitzvah students
- Educated Sunday School students about holiday, traditional, and folk music
- Developed Sunday School music curriculum for future synagogue use
- Created advanced teen choir and coached individual students for participation in services

Door To Door Tutoring, Tutor

New York, NY · 2006-2010

- Taught Hebrew language, liturgy, holidays, and culture to students age 6 to 13
- Prepared students in all areas leading up to their B'nai Mitzvah
- Engaged and educated unaffiliated families

The Jewish Center of Sussex County, Visiting Cantor

Newton, NJ · High Holidays 2007, 2009

- Led traditional Shacharit, Musaf, and Maariv services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
- Collaborated with Rabbi and lay leaders to provide warm services for intimate Congregation

Ohel Ayalah, Cantorial Student

New York, NY · 2006-2007

- Led in-demand High Holiday services designed for unaffiliated Jews
- Conducted large, community-wide Passover Seders
- Helped envision and launch independent Friday night minyan geared toward young adults

The Great Synagogue, Chorister

Jerusalem, Israel · 2005-2006

- Participated in this internationally-known choir, under the direction of Naftali Hershtig and Eli Jaffe
- Performed in televised tour concerts in Holland and Germany

Hartford Hillel Foundation, Jewish Campus Service Corps Fellow

West Hartford, CT · 2002-2003

- Created educational, social, and religious programming tailored to Jewish students' interests to engage and empower students to participate in Jewish life