



New CD Captures Historic Pilgrimage

At the close of the last century, a Jewish choral movement arose out of a desire among Jews of widely divergent backgrounds to express their cultural heritage through music. The first Jewish community chorus, called "Ha-Zamir" (the nightingale), developed in Lodz, Poland, in 1899. Soon, Ha-Zamir choruses flourished in cities and towns throughout Eastern Europe.

The rise of the Nazi Party and subsequent horrors of the Holocaust silenced these voices nearly sixty years ago. With this choral legacy now almost totally forgotten in Eastern Europe, The Zamir Chorale of Boston went on a concert tour last summer to Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria, as Jewish American pilgrims seeking to learn more about their own Ashkenazic cultural roots, and, as ambassadors seeking to rekindle and celebrate the memory of this once-vibrant tradition, and to show that for US Jews, the Zamir tradition lives on, uniting in song Jews of backgrounds even more divergent than those of the original chorus.

The music of this historic concert tour has just been released on CD by the Zamir Chorale as *The Songs Live On*. The opening track transports the listener to the House of Culture of Lodz, Poland, as the original Zamir Chorus anthem, "Ha-Zamir" was sung in that hall for the first time in more than fifty-seven years.

The technical excellence of this collection, recorded live in Lodz, Krakow, Prague, Terezin, and Vienna, is matched by the choir's inspired and well-trained voices and the artistic leadership of conductor and founder, Joshua Jacobson.

Conductor Jacobson observed that "though much antisemitism still exists in Poland, the Polish people have at the same time a certain fascination with and deep appreciation for Jewish culture" One member of the largely Polish-Catholic audience at the Izaak Synagogue in Krakow, when asked why he came to the concert, responded, "I love culture. It doesn't matter if it's Jewish or Catholic or Polish or American."

The pilgrimage was powerfully important for the small population of Jews who remain in Eastern Europe, as it demonstrated that the songs emblematic of undisguised Jewish and Zionist pride once sung in their countries do indeed "live on" along with the choral tradition to which Eastern Europe gave birth.

The CD well represents the many styles seen in the Zamir Chorale of Boston's repertoire, including liturgical, classical, folk and contemporary music. Besides music that was certainly (or likely) performed by the original Zamir Chorale

one hundred years ago, The Songs Live On includes music by American composers, including a dazzling a capella arrangement of Gershwin's I Got Rhythm, plus selections representing the folk and classical music of Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria.

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Zamir is in residence at **Hebrew College**.