

'Songs of Celebration,' an outstanding evening of musical entertainment

More than 1,200 Atlantans filled the sanctuary of Ahavath Achim Synagogue with applause as they enjoyed the Second Annual Atlanta Jewish Male Choir community cantorial concert, "Songs of Celebration: Hear Our Voices," on Sunday evening, November 14. The choir, led by Choirmaster Barry Herman, featured the magnificent voices of Chazzan Steven Leas of London and Chazzan Joel Fox of Ahavath Achim. A grand finale of "Halleluyah," conducted by Maestro Yoel Levi, principal guest conductor of the Israel Philharmonic orchestra and music director emeritus of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, ended the evening on a joyous note and an emotional high. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was the beneficiary of the concert's net proceeds.

Chazzan Steven Leas of the Great Portland/Central Synagogue of London returned to the Ahavath Achim bimah for a second year. His rich voice and spirited presentation added great depth to the beautiful singing of the choir. Chazzan Leas was joined by AA's Chazzan Joel Fox, who brought his well-known élan to the performance.

WABE-FM's program director and "Second Cup Concert" host Lois Reitzes set the mood for the musical evening with her insightful comments on the selections; versatile keyboardist Judy Cole provided skilled accompaniment for the varied program.

This year's concert featured music both familiar and new, festive and contemplative. The concert opened with a series of traditional wedding pieces, followed by beautiful renditions of the principal prayers of the Shabbat evening service. Following the intermission, in a change of pace, the cantorial pair enter-

beautiful was "Etz Chayim" and the upbeat "Adom Olam," as arranged by chorister Warren Jacobs.

As if all that were not enough, the crowd was brought to its feet when Maestro Levi led the choir in "Halleluyah," which effectively displayed the depth, richness, and musicality of the choir, a group that continues to develop and improve with each year.

In 2002, Meyer Janet enlisted Barry Herman, his friend and colleague from their native South Africa, to establish the Atlanta Male Jewish Choir as a successor to their former Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir. The 14-man group includes former South Africans, Atlanta transplants, and natives who celebrate the joy and beauty of Jewish music with reverence and dedication.

The proceeds from each of the volunteer group's concerts are designated to benefit a particular Israeli organization. This year's event raised more than \$30,000 for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra at a time when the Israeli government has reduced its arts funding.

The dedicated members of the Atlanta Jewish Male Choir are Choirmaster Barry Herman, Founder Meyer Janet, Mark Brooks, Erez Chanin, Dennis Coburn, Trevor Edelson, Bernie Idov, Warren Jacobs, Herschel Lawson, Rael Levin, Jonathan Lewin, Albert Maslia, Dennis Matzkin, and Ralph Sher.

The coordinating committee for the concert was co-chaired by Dr. Sam Schatten and Steven Zier, who, along with their hardworking, dedicated committee, managed and promoted a most successful event. The committee members were Bruce Baum, Stanley Daniels, Bobby Ezor, David Feldman,



Chazzans Steven Leas and Joel Fox sing a duet



Lois Reitzes introduces a selection

tained with a panoply of selections ranging from "O Sole Mio" to moving tributes to Israeli composers Naomi Shemer and Uzi Hittman. Then the Atlanta Jewish Male Choir took center stage again, singing prayers from the Shabbat morning and Mussaf services with warmth and sensitivity. Particularly

Stephen Garber, Lynne Greenfield, Tom Greenfield, Valerie Habif, Dick Halpern, Barry Herman, Carol Janet, Meyer Janet, Jack Lieberman, Marilyn Lieberman, Marla Shavin, and Janis Zagoria.

The concert, which seems to be emerging as a popular annual event at Ahavath Achim, is but one of many cultural enrichment programs scheduled at the synagogue this season. AA's highly regarded chamber music series will enter its 25th season with a program of modern music, "From Gershwin to Fats Waller," featuring cellist Benjamin Karp and pianist Cliff Jackson on Sunday, March 13. Also this spring, Ahavath Achim will host a major concert at the synagogue performed by the Georgia Philharmonic Orchestra. The Goodman Institute, featuring stimulating educational programs by outstanding Atlanta scholars, is holding both winter and spring sessions this year; the winter term began on January 11. The speaker for Ahavath Achim's 18th Annual Leo and Berry Eizenstat Memorial Lecture on Sunday, April 3, will be Tom Friedman, author and *New York Times* columnist.



Maestro Yoel Levi leads grand finale, "Halleluyah"

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