



Lowell Milken Center for  
Music of American Jewish Experience

# Bridging Traditions: Schubert's Hebrew Psalm and Sulzer's Synagogue Reforms

by Dr. Amanda Ruppenthal Stein

סיפורי מוסיקה  
Stories of Music  
College Edition

**UCLA**

Herb Alpert  
School of Music



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## Introduction

The purpose of these **flexible modules** is to introduce topics related to Jewish music into university music courses in a way that is accessible, adaptable, and pedagogically rich. Although Jewish music traditions intersect deeply with both Western music history and global music studies, they remain underrepresented in many standard music history surveys, theory curricula, and performance-oriented classes. These modules are designed to help instructors integrate this material seamlessly to expand existing units, diversify repertoires, or offer focused explorations of Jewish music life in different historical periods.

Each module combines scholarly background, analytical tools, performance resources, and curated listening examples. They are intentionally structured to serve a wide range of courses including music history surveys and topics-based seminars, both for majors and non-majors. Instructors may choose to incorporate the entire module or select particular elements: recommended recordings, score excerpts, guided listening activities, or discussion prompts.

Whenever possible, **scores** are linked to openly accessible platforms such as IMSLP. Each guide includes multiple **recordings**, linked to various platforms including Spotify, Apple Music, and/or YouTube. For each module, you will find at least one **guided listening** example, including timestamps to draw students' attention to important elements.

**Bibliographic material**, with a focus on sources published since 2000, appears at the end of the reading; articles available without a paywall are linked. Modules also include relevant **primary sources** to support historically informed analysis and discussion.

Together, these materials aim to illuminate the musical creativity, cultural contexts, and diverse experiences of Jewish communities across history. By situating Jewish music within broader musical narratives, the modules encourage students to develop a richer and more inclusive understanding of music's role in shaping identity, ritual, and artistic exchange.

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## About this Module

In 1828, Viennese reformed Cantor Salomon Sulzer (1804–90) commissioned Franz Schubert (1797–1828) to compose a setting in Hebrew of Psalm 92 for the synagogue. This module explores an example of Sulzer's compositional style together with the Schubert setting.

### Key Works

Salomon Sulzer, “En komocho,” from *Schir Zion* (1838)

Franz Schubert, Psalm 92 [Tov lehodos] (1828)

### Teaching Contexts

**Music history survey courses:** Topics related to Jews and music are often limited in Western music history textbooks and course offerings. This module enhances understanding of the Jewish musical experience in the 19th century liturgical traditions (see below listings from Burkholder et al., *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (*HWM10*)). Furthermore, a study of Jewish musical traditions encourages students to look beyond Wagner's *Das Judentum in der Musik* or the Jewish heritage/identity of composers such as the Mendelssohns or Giacomo Meyerbeer; this module provides exploration of Jewish musical traditions from positive lived experiences.

❖ Possible areas of inclusion in Burkholder, *HWM10*

- ▶ 19th century part-song—Ch. 26—use in conjunction with NAWM 142 Schubert, *Die Nacht*
- ▶ 19th century religious music—Ch. 26—use to enhance mention of Sulzer (pg. 624)

**Courses focused on Jewish music topics:** This module offers a case study in the interaction between Jewish tradition and European art music, useful for discussions of the rise of Reform Judaism, Hebrew text-setting, and Jewish cultural life in German-speaking Europe.

**Courses on music and religion:** The materials support comparative explorations of liturgical reform, sacred text-setting, and musical borrowing and adaptation. Either of these examples could enhance the understanding of the breadth of Jewish music's choral tradition.

**Choral music contexts:** These provide opportunities to expand discussion on 19th-century choral writing and performance practice. They also open conversations about how choirs today—university, community, or professional—might engage with repertoire emerging from non-Christian liturgical settings.

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## Brief Background Narrative

Considered the father of the modern cantorate, **Salomon Sulzer (1804–90)** was educated in liturgical singing in Endingen, Karlsruhe, and Düsseldorf before being appointed the cantor of his hometown of Hohenems at the age of sixteen. There, he began to introduce modernizing changes to synagogue worship, including the addition of a choir. In 1826, he was appointed cantor of the newly constructed Seitenstettengasse synagogue (Stadttempel) in Vienna. As the *Obercantor* [chief cantor] of Vienna, he led many changes in liturgical practice that reformed synagogue life in German-speaking Europe during the 19th-century. Some such reforms included refining existing liturgical music along modern rules of harmony and composing many new settings for mixed (SATB) choir. These were published in the two-volume anthology, *Schir Zion* (Songs of Zion, 1838–40 and 1865–6).

Sulzer's performances attracted widespread attention in the art music world in Vienna. In 1866, Eduard Hanslick wrote in the *Neue Freie Presse*: “[He] is one of the most popular figures of Vienna.... Even today no foreign musician leaves Vienna without having listened to the celebrated cantor. His performance, from the slightest breath to the most powerful of tones, combines the charm of the exotic with the persuasiveness of a glowing faith.”

While in Vienna, Sulzer studied composition with Ignaz Xaver Ritter von Seyfried, who had been a student of Mozart and conducted the premiere of Beethoven's original version of *Fidelio*. Seyfried was deeply entrenched in the musical life of Vienna, composed operas and ballets as well as numerous sacred works including masses, oratorios, and hymn settings. It is unclear how Sulzer came to know **Schubert**, though the 1906 *Jewish Encyclopedia* states that Sulzer was “widely famed as a singer and as an interpreter of Schubert.” It is possible Sulzer was introduced to Schubert by Seyfried or that Schubert heard Sulzer sing some of his Lieder. In addition to Schubert, Franz Liszt, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Robert Schumann, and Niccolò Paganini admired Sulzer's virtuosity. Sulzer also commissioned settings in Hebrew of the synagogue liturgy from non-Jewish composers, including Seyfried, Joseph Fischhof, Franz Volkert, Wenzel Wilhelm Würfel, and Joseph Drechsler (Kapellmeister of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna).

Sulzer's approach to synagogue writing was an ambitious balance of old and new, traditional and modern:

The old tunes and singing modes which have become traditional should be improved, selected and adjusted to the rules of art. I set it as my duty to review, as far as possible, the traditional tunes bequeathed to us, to cleanse the ancient and dignified type from the later accretions of tasteless embellishments, to bring them back to their original purity, and to reconstruct them in accordance with the rules of harmony. [Sulzer, *Schir Zion*, translated in A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development*, 249–250]

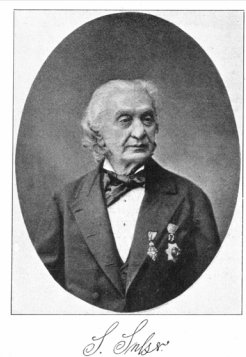
**Work:** Salomon Sulzer, “En komocho,” from *Schir Zion*

**Date:** 1838

**Ensemble:** SATB with Tenor solo

**Form:** Through-composed, with responsorial choral texture

**Text:** Psalms, liturgy, Hebrew



English	Germanicized Hebrew from original published score	Transliterated Modern [Sephardic] Hebrew
There is none like You among the gods, O my Sovereign, and there are no deeds like Yours. (Psalm 86:8)	En komôcho bo-elôhim adônoj We'en ke'ma-asecho	Ein kamokha va-elohim Adonai, v'ein k'ma-asekha.
Your rule is an eternal rule; Your dominion is for all generations. (Psalm 145:13)	Male'chuse'cho male'chus kol ôlomim u-mem schalte'cho be'chol dôr wodôr	Malkhut'kha malkhut kol olamim, u-memshalt'kha b'khol dor vador.
[God is sovereign, God has always been sovereign, God will be sovereign forever and ever.]	Adônoj melech, adônoj moloch, adônoj jimloch le'olom wo-ed.	Adonai melekh, Adonai malakh, Adonai yimlokh l'olam va-ed.
May strength be granted to GOD's people; may GOD bless this people with well-being. (Psalm 29:11)	Adônoj ôs l'ammô jitten Adônoj je'worech es ammô ba-scholôm.	Adonai oz l'amo yitein, Adonai y'varekh et amo va-shalom.
[Compassionate Creator]	Aw ho-rachamim	Av ha-rahahim,
May it please You to make Zion prosper; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. (Psalm 51:20)	Hetiwoh wire'tzône'cho es zijôn, Tiwe'neh chôômô je'ruscholajim	Heitvah virtzon'kha et tziyon, tivneh homot yerushalayim.
[for in You alone do we put our trust, transcendent sovereign—master of all time.]  (JPS, 2023 and Siddur Lev, Shalem, 2016)	Ki we'cho le'wad botochnu melech el rom we'nisso, adôn ôlomim  ( <i>Schir Zion</i> , 1838)	Ki v'kha l'vad batahnu, melekh El ram v'nisa, adon olamim.  ( <i>Siddur Lev Shalem</i> , 2016)

## Available Scores

Salomon Sulzer, "En komocho," *Schir Zion*, vol. 1, Vienna: Artaria & Co., n.d.[1838–40], 53–54. —in **Germanic romanized Hebrew; may not be accessible to modern speakers. In C clef.**

- ♦ IMSLP—[https://imslp.org/wiki/Schir\\_Zion\\_\(Sulzer,\\_Salomon\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Schir_Zion_(Sulzer,_Salomon))
- ♦ Hebrew Union College—  
[https://mss.huc.edu/phpviewer/index.php?path=music/Music\\_HA\\_Sulzer\\_\(Schir\\_Zion,\\_1838\)](https://mss.huc.edu/phpviewer/index.php?path=music/Music_HA_Sulzer_(Schir_Zion,_1838))

Sulzer, Salomon, *Schir Zion*, revised and edited by Joseph Sulzer, Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann Verlag, n.d. [1922], 95–96.

- ♦ Hathi Trust/University of California—  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.l0070212048&seq=7>

## Sample Recordings

**Ein Kamocha (Sulzer)**—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTORSSjZCDk>

**Uploaded:** Mar 4, 2021

**Performers:** Bet David Progressive Jewish Congregation, Sandton, South Africa

**Text:** This recording uses Joseph Sulzer's 1922 arrangement in Sephardic [Modern] Hebrew pronunciation.

### What to listen for:

<b>0:00</b>	<b>Solo</b>	Opening cantorial solo is performed quasi rubato.
<b>0:11</b>	<b>Choral</b>	Highly metrical, contrasting the cantorial solo. Soloist doubles tenor line.
<b>0:18</b>	<b>Solo</b>	Modern transliteration of Hebrew here is highly apparent in this recording.
<b>0:33</b>	<b>Choral</b>	Address how Sulzer has set the Hebrew accents against the musical phrasing and shaping. See Guiding Questions for Discussion.
<b>0:53</b>	<b>Solo</b>	Closing solo performed quasi rubato.
<b>1:09</b>	<b>Choral</b>	"Av ha-rahahim" In American synagogues, this passage is often replaced with a setting by Abraham Dunajewski in parallel minor.
<b>1:30</b>		Text-setting on "yerushalayim" [Jerusalem], creating a cascading effect, especially of the -sh [shin] sound.
<b>1:35</b>		Soprano line repeats at "Ki v'kha l'vad batahnu" [for in You alone do we put our trust] with harmonic (V7/V to V) and dynamic contrast.
<b>1:45</b>		Repetition of "melekh" [Sovereign] emphasizes text's meaning.
<b>2:10</b>		Striking unison on first "adon olamim" [Master of all time] is followed by expanded parallel harmonies to bring the example to quiet close.

## Ein Kamokha+Av HaRachamim—

<https://cantorazischwartz.bandcamp.com/track/ein-kamokha-av-harachamim>

**Uploaded:** September 23, 2019

**Performers:** Cantor Azi Schwartz (Park Avenue Synagogue, New York)

**Text:** This recording uses Joseph Sulzer's 1922 arrangement in Sephardic [Modern] Hebrew pronunciation.

### What to listen for:

<b>0:00</b>	<b>Organ Introduction</b>	Organ introduction, using the cantorial solo music
<b>0:08</b>	<b>Solo</b>	Note melodic slides on “komocho.” Organ plays in recitative-like sustain.
<b>0:17</b>	<b>Choral</b>	Highly metrical contrast to preceding rubato. Cantorial solo is more apparent, doubling soprano melody.
<b>0:23</b>	<b>Solo</b>	Extensive rubato, allowing forward movement.
<b>0:34</b>		Note the use of the <i>kekhts</i> [Yiddish, sobbing, sighing] vocal break and falsetto on “b'khol dor vador.”
<b>0:36</b>	<b>Choral</b>	Return to a more metrical style.
<b>0:53</b>	<b>Solo</b>	Cantor sings <i>ad libitum</i> , using Sulzer as a model. Additional use of <i>kekhts</i> and falsetto, with highly contrasting dynamics.
<b>1:17</b>	<b>Choral</b>	In American synagogues, Sulzer's “Av ha-rahahim” is often replaced with a setting by Abraham Dunajewski in parallel minor, which is what is heard here.

### Other Recordings Available

Salomon Sulzer, “Ein kamocha—Av Harachamim,” *Taste of Eternity: A Musical Shabbat, Pt. 2—Saturday Morning Service*

Alberto Mizrahi and The Western Wind (2008)

<https://open.spotify.com/track/7mVA7k9H0PY7AYp8VwOJ9J?si=34a15687f0474372>

Salomon Sulzer, “Ein Kamocha and Av Harachamim,” *Nashir B'Yachad—We Sing Together*  
ACC Cantors Choir (1993)

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5ETxNTstMPR4dskx0l4TX1?si=438a4cc153974b28>



**Work:** Franz Schubert, Der Psalm 92 [Tov lehodos]

**Date:** 1828

**Ensemble:** SATB with Baritone Solo

**Form:** ABA'

**Text:** Psalm 92:2–9, Hebrew

Joshua R. Jacobson remarks, "Schubert set only the second through ninth verses of the Psalm; yet the liturgy demanded that the entire Psalm be performed at the Friday evening Sabbath service. Cantor Sulzer must have instructed the composer to ignore verse one and verses ten through sixteen, as he would chant these sections by himself in the more traditional manner."

(<http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20000705>)



English	Germanicized Hebrew from original published score	German, 1870
It is good to praise GOD, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most High,	tôw l'hôdôs ladônoj ul'sammer leschimecho eljôn	Lieulich ists, dem Ewgen danken, Höchster! deinem Namen singen!
To proclaim Your steadfast love at daybreak, Your faithfulness each night	l'haggid babôker chasdecho we-emunos'cho balelôs	Des Morgens deine Güte rühmen, Des Abends deine Vatertreue;
With a ten-stringed harp, with voice and lyre together.	ale osôr wa'ale nowel, ale higgojôn b'chinôr	Unter Saitenspiel und Psalter, Zum Danken von der Harf' erweckt.
You have gladdened me by Your deeds, O ETERNAL One; I shout for joy at Your handiwork.	ki simmachtanni adônoj b'folecho b'ma'ase jodecho arannen	Herr! deine Werk' ergötzen mich! Frölich sing' ich deine Thaten.
How great are Your works, O ETERNAL One, how very subtle Your designs!	mah god'lu ma'asecho adônoj m'ôd ome'ku machsch'ewôsecho	Wie groß sind deine Thaten, Herr! Wie tief die göttlichen Gedanken!
A brute cannot know, a fool cannot understand this:	isch baar lô jedo uch'sil lô jowin es sôs	Die Unvernunft sieht dies [M. Mendelssohn: das] nicht ein: Undenkende begreifen nicht;

English	Germanicized Hebrew from original published score	German, 1870
though the wicked sprout like grass, though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever.	Bif'rôach reschoim k'mô esew wajjozizu kol pôale owen l'hi schom'dom ade ad	Wenn Frevler grünen gleich dem Grase: Wenn alle Uebelthäter blühen; Damit sie ewig untergehn:
But You are exalted, O ETERNAL One, for all time. (JPS, 2023) <a href="https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.92?lang=bi&amp;with=Translations&amp;lang2=en">https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.92?lang=bi&amp;with=Translations&amp;lang2=en</a>	w'attoh morôm l'ôlom adônoj [l'ôlom]	Denn du bist ewiglich erhaben, Gott! [ewig!]

## Available Scores

**IMSLP**—[https://imslp.org/wiki/Psalms.92%2C\\_D.953\\_\(Schubert%2C\\_Franz\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Psalms.92%2C_D.953_(Schubert%2C_Franz))

- ♦ *Franz Schubert's Werke*, Serie XVII, No.19, edited by Josef Gänsbacher and Eusebius Mandyczewski. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1892.—**in Germanic romanized Hebrew, may not be accessible to modern speakers**
- ♦ *Der 92. Psalm (Lied für den Sabbath)*. Vienna: J.P. Gotthard, 1870.—**in German, using psalm translation of Moses Mendelssohn [available here]**

## Sample Recordings

### Tov Lehodos—Schubert—The Zamir Chorale of Boston—

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ed8lC-KL\\_30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ed8lC-KL_30)

**Uploaded:** Mar 4, 2021

**Performers:** The Zamir Chorale of Boston; Joshua Jacobson, conductor; Cantor Scott Sokol, soloist

**Text:** This recording uses Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation; text is translated on video.

#### What to listen for:

0:00	Introduction	Zamir conductor Joshua Jacobson gives an introduction to the recording.
3:10	A	Mixed chorus, no organ, listen for Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew, homophonic texture allows for clarity of Hebrew text, listen for text-painting on “To proclaim Your steadfast love at daybreak, Your faithfulness each night.” (Ps. 92:3).
3:55		Brief imitative entrances on “With a ten-stringed harp, with voice and lyre together” (Ps. 92:3) create a text-painted evocation of multiple instruments and voices praising God. The choir in this recording does not pause at the G.P. fermata.
4:30	B	Change of key from C to F.
4:38		Cantorial soloist enters quasi-responsorially “You have gladdened me by Your deeds, O ETERNAL One; I shout for joy at Your handiwork.” (Ps. 92:4)
4:59		Imitation becomes more tightly overlapping.
5:18		Schubert changes the texture here, introducing the cantor first and using the choir as the response on “A brute cannot know, a fool cannot understand this; though the wicked sprout like grass, though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever.” (Ps. 92:7–8). Declamatory nature and repeated pitches evoke the text’s meaning through musical praise with tight, sometimes overlapping responses.
5:50		The final phrase of Ps. 92:8 follows a brief tutti pause and subsequent cascading falling octaves.
6:33	A’	C major returns
6:56		Longer imitative passages.
7:12		Brief, coda-like passage “for all time” indicated as <i>piano</i> in the score; functions as a conclusion; (Lack of “Amen” perhaps because this is not the full psalm).

## Tov LeHodos— Schuberts Only Original Composition in Hebrew —

<https://youtu.be/TUZwDLeACko?si=xWjpT5FKnoeJ53G8>

**Uploaded:** May 2, 2011

**Performers:** Magevet (Yale Jewish A Capella Group) and Hazzan Emanuel Perlman

**Text:** This recording uses Sephardic (Modern) Hebrew pronunciation.

### What to listen for:

0:00	A	Mixed chorus, no organ, listen for Sephardic [Modern] pronunciation of Hebrew and how this differs from the Zamir recording.
0:45		Imitative passage with text-painting, slightly faster than Zamir.
1:16	B	Cantorial soloist enters.
1:51		Cantor's operatic style shows evidence of the 19th century vocal tradition.
2:07		Contrasting <i>piano</i> at "though the wicked sprout like grass, though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever" is emphasized in this performance.
2:24		Declamatory <i>fortissimo</i> at "it is only that they may be destroyed forever" with large leaps and responsorial texture emphasizes the drama.
2:48		Note the use of the <i>krekhits</i> [Yiddish, sobbing, sighing] vocal break and falsetto, evidence of the Eastern European cantorial style blending into high reform German in modern performance. Encourage students to compare this cantor with Azi Schwartz in the Sulzer recording.
3:06	A	Encourage students to compare the effect of the full choir in the Zamir recording with this smaller, a cappella style version. Note also contrasts in tempo and closing <i>ritardando</i> .

## Other Recordings Available

Franz Schubert, Psalm 92, D. 953, *Psalmus: Psalms in Christian Jewish dialogue*

Deutsche Kammerchor, Michael Albert (2015)

<https://open.spotify.com/track/4SOF3WbNrj1wWN6wh3KJrp?si=96eb6c7e423d40aa>

Franz Schubert, Psalm 92, D. 953, *Mass in A-flat*—**IN GERMAN**

John Eliot Gardiner, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, the Monteverdi Choir (1999)

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3Xu9bFPDD7XQ36hAQGntBL?si=4ba1df089a03437a>

Franz Schubert, Psalm 92, D. 953, *Schubert: Hyperion Song Edition 31*

The Holst Singers, Stephen Layton (1998)

<https://open.spotify.com/track/4fwMLt2VD8F5Tht6l1Ctm?si=9d196f40f984418c>

## Guiding Questions for Discussion

The following prompts are designed to support flexible use in the classroom. They may serve as starting points for class discussions, guided reflections, written responses, or extended essay assignments.

## Historical and Cultural Contexts

- ? What was the significance of Vienna as a musical and cultural center during Sulzer's time? What musical works/styles/genres might the Viennese be able to see at the same time as Sulzer was active?
- ? From Schubert's setting, what can you tell about the general practice of choral and solo singing in the Viennese synagogue in the early and mid-19th century?

## Sulzer—Style and Musical Analysis

- ? How does Sulzer navigate emphasis on grammatical accent against metrical accent? Students may find it helpful to try conducting along with the second choral entrance at "Adonaj Melech, Adonaj Malach." Without the score, many students instinctively place the downbeat one beat later than written.
- ? How does Sulzer text paint the Hebrew through melodic elements of phrasing and dynamics or through harmony?

## Schubert—Style and Musical Analysis

- ? How does Schubert's musical style in Psalm 92 differ from NAWM 142 *Die Nacht* (or another part-song of the instructor's choice)?
- ? How does Schubert use text-painting to emphasize the meaning of the Psalm's text?
- ? What might be some challenges for Schubert, who did not speak or understand Hebrew, in setting this text?

## Both Works—Performance and Interpretation

- ? How and in what context(s) might this work be performed today? What changes might be made in considering historical informed performance, textual meaning, or modern accessibility for listeners?
- ? What challenges might a [secular, university, Jewish, community, etc.] choir face today in performing works for 19th century German-speaking synagogues?
- ? How do these works expand perceptions on European Jewish music's interaction with art music?

## Recommended Bibliography

[link provided when available without paywall]

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