

ARTS
HIGHLIGHTS
THIS WEEK

Zim's Jewish music

Making Jewish music 'Zimply' wonderful

-12-

VIOLET SPEVACK Columnist

The incomparable "zim-bidi-bim-bam" man, singer and songwriter Sol Zim, will be belting out his eclectic repertoire of Hebrew and Israeli songs, Yiddish and Hasidic melodies, operatic arias and Broadway show tunes at a concert this Sunday evening (April 17) at B'nai Jeshurun, where he will headline the bill with Cantor Ed Berkovits.

No stranger to Cleveland, the multi-talented Zim has delighted audiences the world over with his resonant tenor voice, charismatic personality and dazzling showmanship.

This reporter and longtime fan caught up with the peripatetic Pied Piper of Jewish music in a recent phone interview. What is great, warbled Zim, is that his music is being sung all over the country, not only by fellow cantors, but also by everyday folk. He has done original arrangements of such liturgical pieces as "L'Dor V'Dor," "Adon Olam," "V'Shomru," and "Sim Shalom," which are now standards at synagogue services.

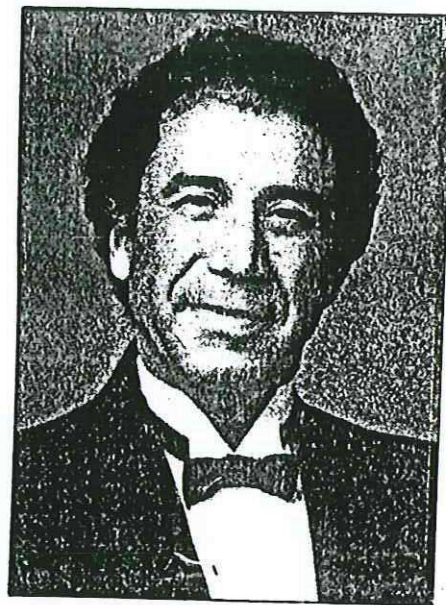
Zim, who has earned a reputation as one of the top ten cantors in the country, has served as cantor of the Hollis Hills Jewish Center in Long Island since 1964.

The indefatigable concert performer related that he has not slowed his pace over

A man with a mission ... to keep Jewish music alive.

the years. In fact, he has a current lineup of concerts from Florida to California, and virtually all of the states in between. "Can you picture," he says, "a jam-packed hall in El Paso, Texas, with 110 school kids on stage with me singing their hearts out with wonderful Jewish music ... or annual concerts in Cunningham Park in Queens which attract 10,000 people of all ages?"

Zim recalled the exhilaration of his recent concert tour in South Africa, sponsored by the Jewish Federation and the Hebrew Day Schools. In both Johannesburg and Capetown, he performed non-stop for 2-1/2 hours with a ten-piece orchestra and 120 youngsters from five different day schools. He had coordinated the program with the music director and rehearsed with the young students just the day of the show. It turned out, he said, to be an unforgettable meeting of Jewish hearts, beyond his wildest expectations.



Sol Zim, who will perform at B'nai Jeshurun April 17, has delighted audiences the world over.

Concerts in Israel, he adds, are always special, his most memorable experience being the time he conducted a Havdalah service at the home of the late prime minister, Menachem Begin.

Zim is clearly a man with a mission ... to keep Jewish music alive, to infuse the younger generations with the rhythms and refrains of synagogue music and to install them with *ruach* (spirit). His mission is to make Jewish music more accessible, singable and hummable. To that end, he has devoted his talents as a composer and music arranger, combining the traditional with a more contemporary sound and a more modern beat.

He emphasizes that attending services in a synagogue is not a spectator sport, but one in which everyone should participate, even if it's only with a "bim-bam" or "la-la-la." He chuckles as he recalls that he was the one who started that kind of singing in his synagogue many years ago and everyone laughed. Now they're all doing it! "It's the music of the '90s," says Zim.

Zim has composed and arranged hundreds of Jewish and popular songs. He has produced some 20 albums, tapes and cassettes and published nine songbooks of his original music. He is currently writing a Broadway show (show angels already in the wings) based on the story of his life.

Like his concerts, it promises to be "zimply" wonderful!