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**NATIONAL CULTURE AND MUSIC IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
THROUGH FLESH TO SPIRIT: THE MAKING OF "PROPHECY FOR
THE END OF DAYS"**

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Abstract. *Modern academic research and technological advance requires the reality of bureaucracy. In this brave new world of the managerial technocrat and the balance sheet, is music, or any art for that matter, an impractical and unprofitable, elitist and outdated luxury, we can no longer afford; one more distraction from the serious processes of higher education: promoting critical thinking and communication, math, science, history, literature and technology? In Global Culture is there any longer a meaning to national culture and tradition? Is there still a direction leading from materialism to enlightenment or is all only crass commercialism? If so, where, then, is this hidden path through flesh to spirit to be found. Is music a Way?*

Keywords: *prophecy, commercialism, higher education, music, Jewish culture*

Introduction. Each year, I receive a different group of students for my choral music course. It is comprised of students from various faculties: economic, business administration, architecture, electronics, engineering and more – a melting pot of academia. Each week the architect requests a "scale" from the engineer, at the same time the business manager asks for an additional "note" from the economist - but this time we are not speaking about a construction site or business plan, we are speaking about an artistic adventure at Ariel University.

Members of the ensemble - raw, untrained, and often atonal-non-musicians - meet weekly for rehearsals on a regular basis, and learn the importance of singing in a choir. Students must overcome common obstacles: like opening their mouths to breathe together, to bring out tones from their throats, to sing together, to stand together, and to receive instruction. They have no idea what is tone, nor rhythm, nor beat, nor a conductor, nor what it is to read music; they must learn each aspect of performance from the very beginning, from the ground up. In the course of a year, students cover traditional folksongs and original compositions - acquiring basic skills needed to perform in public.

Why this arduous path of creating a choir from nothing; composing especially for them; struggling to teach from original unknown material by rote, note by

note; week by week; and finally, bringing these students before the public, to perform with them? Why not avoid the effort and take a trained and functioning choir?

Higher Education and Globalism

The essence of higher education is no longer the ideal of a bygone age of romantic humanists, philosophers, and idealistic thinkers. Academic research and technological advance requires the reality of bureaucracy, the managerial technocrat and the balance sheet. In this brave new world, is music an impractical and unprofitable, elitist and outdated luxury we can no longer afford; one more distraction from the serious educational processes of higher education: promoting critical thinking and communication, math, science, history, literature and technology - and what of nation, culture and tradition?

As time goes on, the relationship between higher education and economic success in our information-driven global economy becomes more and more significant. Higher education promises better job options, higher salaries, economic security and stability, social prestige, better health and longer life span. There does not seem to be any relationship at all between meaningful cultural traditions that have served peoples for generations and higher education. Rather, higher education is regarded as significant for primarily commercial attitudes. If the new ideal in higher education is not cultural identification but critical thinking and global openness, does it not follow that students must be also be critically distant from their own culture and traditions? But can anyone who feels only skepticism for his own heritage and culture, ever have regard to the cultures of others?

On a deeper, more disturbing and universal level is the university a place that penetrates into the spiritual roots of all art, morality and faith; or in its supreme value attached to cool and detached analysis does it become the intellectual locomotive that drives modern society's condescending and cynical attitude to all that is spiritual? Such are the philosophical challenges the idea of music in higher education encounters on both an intellectual plane and on a deeper emotional level.

In a sense the whole argument is facetious. Can the zebra change its strips or the lion its roar? Are the English ready to abandon Shakespeare; the French, Voltaire; the Germans, Goethe; and the Russians, Tolstoy all in the name of critical thinking, global citizenship, and universal humanism? What then is the place of music in the equation: Higher-Education + X = \$/better life?

National Culture and Music in Israel Today

I return to the student members of the vocal ensemble at Ariel University of Samaria - raw, untrained, and often atonal-non-musicians – who meet weekly for rehearsals. I return to the arduous path of creating a choir from nothing, composing especially for them, and teaching it to them note by note. What is the intrinsic value of this activity at the university? In this connection, an old Chinese proverb comes to mind: "If you have only two pennies, spend one on bread, in order to live, and one on a flower, in order to know, why." Music or

culture, for that matter, is not an impractical, unprofitable, and elitist luxury. To my mind the activity has a value in and of itself, since it promotes social cohesion, improves perceptual and motor skills, and creates emotional identification. In this sense making music is an integrative activity that brings together the human being, his immediate external goals (i.e. bread or a college degree, economic stability, prestige and success) and intrinsic, existential values (i.e. flower or heritage, culture, tradition).

Prophecy as reality deferred

When, after the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E, the children of Israel were almost a scattered, landless herd, without a shepherd, throw to the winds, and brought captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar's army, they had nothing but culture to hold them together and give them any kind of identity. What was this culture – a language, a history, a word, a promise? They clung to "the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This is not poetic analogy; it is not metaphor; it is reality. In the course of time the promise of the Word became fulfilled; it became reality. In 70 years they returned to Jerusalem. In the course of the ensuing centuries: through Diaspora of the Roman Empire, the Crusades and pogroms of the Middle Ages, the Inquisition of the Age of Exploration, the Nazi Holocaust in the 20th century, and in parallel to this, the merciless atheism of Soviet Communism both before and after the Second World War – it was the Word that sustained them and brought them home again to the Promised Land (Gen. 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:7, 24:7).

The following biblical citation by Ezekiel (28:25-26), the prophet whose words gave hope to that first group of exiles 2500 year ago in Babylon were as follows: *Thus saith the Lord God: When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God.*

These exiles from the Land of Israel and Jerusalem, to whom these words were addressed, had nothing else to sustain them. Neither ethnology nor anthropology but Faith in the Word was their national culture. It instilled values that sustained them through centuries of darkness; and when the time came, inspired them to renewal: *But in the last of days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say: Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: For the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. For all people will walk everyone in the name of his god;*

and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever (Micah 4:1-1, 5 and Isaiah 2:2-3).

The image shows a musical score for a choral and instrumental piece. It is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 33-38) features Soprano I and II, Alto I and II, and Bass I and II. The lyrics are: "Ee - chu ve - na - a - leh el har A - do - moy ve - el bent e - lo - chav. Ve - yo - cho - be - mid - ra - chav ve - nel - cho - be - ohr - cho - chav. Le - chu ve - na - a - leh el har A - do - moy ve - el bent e - lo - chav. Ve - yo - cho - be - mid - ra - chav ve - nel - cho - be - ohr - cho - chav." The second system (measures 39-44) includes Soprano I and II, Tenor I and II, Bass I and II, Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass, and Organ. The lyrics continue: "hey Ya - a - kav, Le - chu ve - na - a - leh el har A - do - Ve - yo - re - nu - mid - ra - chav ve - nel - cho - be - ohr - cho - tav. Va - yo - re - nu - mid - ra - chav ve - nel - cho - be - ohr - cho - tav. Ve - yo - re - nu - mid - ra - chav ve - nel - cho - be - ohr - cho - tav." The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, dynamics (mf), and articulation marks.

MAX STERN: Prophecy for the End of Days (Ez. 28:25-26, Mi 4:1-2, 5) for mixed chorus, narrator, tuned glasses, rebaba, percussion and shofar

Reflections and Personal Background

One of the prerogatives of our time and place in Israel today has been a protracted search to integrate Western artistic aspiration within a context of Jewish identification – a quest for ancient sources of inspiration against a backdrop of 20th century horror and despair. While the concept of the sacred is universal, it has acquired unusually powerful overtones in relation to the unique origin and history of the Jewish experience. As residents of various nations, Jews absorbed cultural and behavioral norms, participating and contributing to their host cultures, while maintaining close ties to ancient texts and sacred precepts. As members of a modern body politic, all has been called into question. Too often excluded from the "all", however is a self conscious counter-stance-questioning the norms and format which comprise 20th century parlance; completing the circle by opening the possibility for a way back to ancestral springs.

Attempts at reconstruction of a national culture have been wrought with thorns, from within and from without. Today even the idea of an Israeli culture that espouses a Jewish musical identity is considered politically incorrect.

For the past 30 years I have played a key role in the ongoing development of Israel's musical culture as composer, educator, performer, and music critic. The ideals of creating a Jewish culture in Israel inspired me to leave my "quiet life" as a professional musician in New York City and begin to wander in the desert of Israel. I listened to traditional religious songs sung by the people, studied Yemenite cantillation, and the North African instrument *Ud* which besides the Arabs, was used by the Jews of Morocco. From the inspiration of the desert, folklore, and the Bible, I created a series of compositions: *Ha'azinu, Creation of the World, Mosaic, Bedouin Impressions, Nebhel & Kinnor, Jacob and the Angel, Prophet and King* – which combine traditional elements with the methods of modern serious music.

I viewed my engagement as a professor of music at the university as an opportunity to extend these ideas about music and culture into the realm of higher education, both through lectures courses on: *Jewish Music, Israeli Music, and Bible and Music*. No less though was the possibility to integrate the creative process and the learning environment within the more participative activity of a choral music course. In this way I was both composer and teacher, using materials I had created as a vehicle to engage, educate and empower the students on many levels: 1. technical music- literacy skills of reading musical notation; 2. performing know-how which included singing, listening, and following a conductor; 3. and an aesthetic perspective that relates directly to the student's historic cultural identity: Namely, performing a musical composition that involves the integration of biblical text, traditional and original Jewish music, and a conceptual idea of *Peace*, a dream conceived by the Prophets of Ancient Israel, that there would be time when, *Nation would not lift up sword against nation (Is 2:4, Mi 4:3)*, a time when there would be no war.

Education as Prophesy in Practice

The challenge to bring these high ideals to bear upon young men and women in their early twenties is not easy, for their primary purpose in coming to the university is seeking a bachelor's degree in a subject area that they can hopefully, parley off for a profession. How does one integrate the values of historic heritage with market-economy? Is it possible to mix Divine imperative seem under the microscope of cool and detached analysis and psychological fantasy? Is it possible to integrate dream with reality? Is it necessary or superfluous, dispensable or imperative?

To be a citizen of the global world one must be something; what is that something? The university is an ideal environment which offers the possibility of such integration. Participation in a music activity is a potentially possible *Way* towards integrating individual needs for emotional enrichment and cultural identification with peer group approval; personal ambitions and professional goals with the broader needs of community, society and nation? The path I

chase is one of engagement – a creative engagement between the living student with the ancient sources and values of the people.

Higher Education has the potential to lead students to their heritage, to engage them in a creative search and raise them to the level of artists. But it is a road strewn with thorns and pathways that may often lead nowhere if not carefully conceived and directed. Only by patient work, practice, and repetition we create a human- artistic vehicle to inspire the student to give voice to something he or she or they never thought possible – an encounter with the glory of their heritage. But it is an encounter beyond the intellectual and analytical. It is a biblical heritage, an idea that is met in a different kind of classroom, not as something dry and stale from a canonized book, learned only for the purpose of filling in an answer on a multiple choice exam - but as a living and vital experience: studying, singing, performing.

National Culture as Respect

In its most elevated manifestation culture is fundamentally respect. When the student has respect for his culture and his heritage he has respect for the culture of others. Musical performance, both in its preparation and execution, is a human deed experienced as culture. The search for the quality of sound, the striving for perfection (however distant), and aesthetic beauty (however intangible) is the real passion that animates the student beyond the purely academic, functional and analytic dimensions of higher education. What is the way to look see the student in order to follow this approach?

Perhaps the imagery of Michelangelo's painting on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, *Creation of Adam*, is a starting point. As God reaches out to Adam, instilling him with life; Adam reaches back to God in faith. Between them and connecting them is a spark. It is this spark that we must grasp and understand if we are to acquire the wisdom involved in the process of education. We need to realize that even the least student is great, because he is animated by the Divine, and therefore his potential is unlimited. If I am able to see the spark in each one of them, it is, then, my obligation, yea, and my privilege, to bring out this light and to give it voice.

They, the students of Ariel University in all their diversity are the living Jewish People, flowering and growing in the Land of Israel today. They are the future generation who will pass the message on to the generations that follow. The saying, *One must be something, in order to do something*, attributed to legendary nineteenth century German poet, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, echoes this sentiment. It is my conviction that musical activity in the framework of the university is an empowering activity that offers a possibility to give substance to the entire higher education experience.