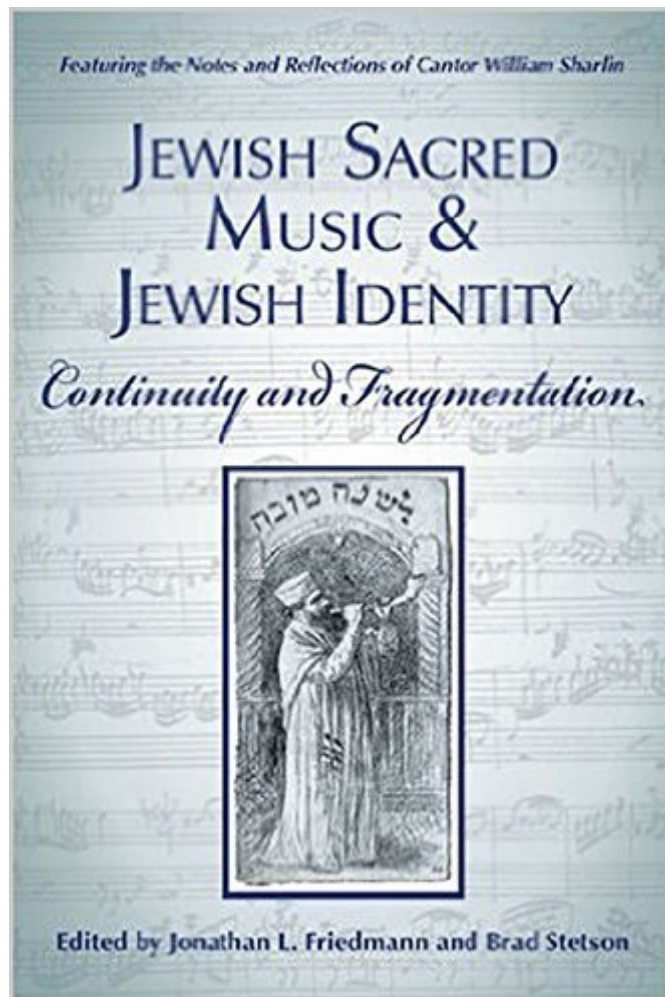


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Jewish Sacred Music And Jewish Identity: Continuity And Fragmentation



Synopsis

Jewish Sacred Music and Jewish Identity explores complex issues of religious pluralism and the preservation of Jewish identity in the context of American culture today, drawing on the perspective of the Cantor's office. Featured among other entries are the collected writings of Cantor William Sharlin, well-known and influential scholar, cantor, composer of synagogue music, and former professor at Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles. Now cantor emeritus at Leo B'ck Temple in Los Angeles, where he has served since 1954, Cantor Sharlin is a link between the traditions of the past and the transformations of the present, and a long-time observer of music's role as both preserver and innovator of Jewish worship. The essays presented here are sure to engage readers interested in the place of music in religion, and those concerned with the state of religion in the post-modern world. Most of what has been written about Jewish sacred music is primarily descriptive, largely unconcerned with the impact of the changing nature of synagogue song on Jewish religion and identity. Indeed, for all that has been written about the Americanization of Judaism—•from ritual changes to the emphasis on social ethics—•critical analysis of developments in synagogue music has been largely ignored. This volume presents a much-needed social-theoretical approach to Jewish sacred music in the post-modern synagogue, and concludes that music, far more than an aid to ritual, is a prime indicator of the state of American Judaism today, and will play a crucial role in its future transformation. Jewish Sacred and Jewish Identity will appeal to Jewish professionals—•cantors, rabbis, and educators—•as well as those interested in the broader fields of Jewish studies, contemporary religion, musicology, and American religious diversity. This book is a useful text in courses on Judaism, American religion, and sacred music. It provides a unique perspective on the state of American Judaism through the eyes of the cantorate. Rather than a historical survey of Jewish sacred music in America—•a topic discussed in other volumes—•this book presents the insights and personal philosophies of cantors working in the contemporary synagogue. In addition, its substantial glossary amounts to a primer in Judaism, making this book useful even for those unfamiliar with the Jewish religion.

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Customer Reviews

In terms of Jewish culture, it isn't very often that we are privy to the thoughts of the cantor. More familiar are those ideas formed and presented to the congregation by the rabbis. In 'Jewish Sacred Music & Jewish Identity' the cantor's voice is heard in the analytical sense, particularly pertaining to the role of traditional music in worship. The book begins with a general look at the philosophy and history of music in Jewish worship. The following chapters continue the discourse, but are told through the writings cantor William Sharlin. Overall, this was an exceptionally interesting and insightful read. It offers strong ideas in terms of where Jewish services are headed and how to preserve their holiness for future generations through music. A must-own for cantors, cantors-in-training, university religious studies and music history libraries.

This is an important book for anyone who is serious about Jewish music. It addresses the major issues facing synagogue music today, including what the use of pop music in services says about Jewish identity, and how both tradition and innovation are essential to the character of Jewish sacred music. Cantor Sharlin came to my synagogue many years ago as a scholar-in-residence, and spoke brilliantly about the role music plays in Jewish religious life. I am thrilled that a collection of his insightful writings has finally been published.

A culture's music is its theme song of identity. "Jewish Sacred Music & Jewish Identity: Continuity and Fragmentation" is a deftly insightful examination of traditional Jewish music with its respects to religion and how it has changed over the years with the assimilation of the cultures around them. Also with a focus on one of the greatest minds in Jewish music Cantor William Sharlin and his place in the history of it, the book is a deft look at the genre as a whole. "Jewish Sacred Music & Jewish Identity" is a must for anyone who wants to more closely examine the relationship between culture, religion, and its music.

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