

ESSENTIAL VOICES USA

Judith Clurman, Music Director & Conductor

in cooperation with



The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music
at Hebrew Union College, New York City

-present-

THE COMPOSER SPEAKS: SHULAMIT RAN

March 13, 2011 from 7-8:30PM

Essential Voices USA (EVUSA) inaugurates its new series, **The Composer Speaks**, with the music of **Pulitzer Prize** winning composer **Shulamit Ran**. Developed by EVUSA's conductor **Judith Clurman**, **The Composer Speaks** will present composers in concert and workshop events. In addition, the audience will be taught a melody by the composer and then be invited to sing along during the performance. They will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the composer.

EVUSA will sing various **World** and **New York Premieres** by Shulamit Ran. **Shirim L'Yom Tov** (*Four Festival Songs*) will be featured, in celebration of their publication on **Judith Clurman's G. Schirmer Choral Series**. These four a cappella pieces were composed in 2003 and 2005, two at a time, for the Bar Mitzvah occasions of the composer's sons, David and Yaron. The movements are called: **Shiru L'Adonai** (Haftorah Bereshit, Isaiah XLII); **Yom ha-Shishi** (Haftorah Bereshit, Genesis I, II); **Ma Tovv** (Parashat Balak, Numbers XXIV); and **Hazneia Lechet** (Haftorah Balak, Micah VI).

Two short homophonic works scored for SATB chorus, **B'chol Dor Vador** and **Min Hameitzer** were commissioned by the **Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music's** director, **Cantor Bruce L. Ruben**, for this workshop performance. They will receive their World Premieres. Both pieces celebrate freedom. **B'chol Dor Vador**, is based on a text from the **Passover Haggadah**: In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had come out of Egypt. **Min Hameitzer** is a setting of Psalm 118:5: Out of my distress, I called upon the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free.

Tzadik KaTamar, for cantor, chorus and keyboard, was commissioned by Beth Emet – The Free Synagogue in Evanston, Illinois in 2010. For this performance **the audience will be taught the choral refrain and sing the New York Premiere**, along with **Student Cantor Joshua Breitzer** and **EVUSA**. **Tzadik KaTamar** ('The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree') was written to honor Rabbi Peter and Elaine Knobel in commemoration of the Rabbi's 30 years of service to the congregation. Cantor **Arik Luck**, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, sang the first performance at Beth Emet in June 2010. In this evening's performance, we will also hear the World Premiere of Shulamit's four-part setting of the refrain, composed as a gift for Cantor Ruben and Judith Clurman.

Ad Sciendam will also receive its **New York Premiere**. Commissioned, by the **University of Chicago**, with funding by Don Michael Randel and Carol Randel, the work received its first performance on October 9, 2009, in celebration of the University's 500th convocation. The text, taken from the first book of Proverbs, is a combination of English, Hebrew and Latin.

Tickets for the event can be purchased online, by clicking onto **essentialvoicesusa.com** or by paying cash at the door, on the day of the concert. The cost is \$20 for general admission and \$50 for preferred seating and an autographed copy of the **Shirim L'Yom tov** score. **Photo Identification** is required for admission to Hebrew Union College and seating is limited.

In future programs of **The Composer Speaks**, composers across the spectrum of musical styles and generations will be represented. In some programs, the audience will be invited to experience a new work in progress. For the next project, EVUSA has invited composer **Joshua Schmidt**. Joshua is writing a work, based on the writings of **Walt Whitman** for EVUSA, soloists and string quartet. Schmidt's work **A Minister's Wife** will be presented at the **Lincoln Center** this spring.

BIOGRAPHIES

Shulamit Ran, a native of Israel, began setting Hebrew poetry to music at the age of seven. By nine she was studying composition and piano with some of Israel's most noted musicians, including composers Alexander Boskovich and Paul Ben-Haim, and within a few years she was having her works performed by professional musicians and orchestras. As the recipient of scholarships from both the Mannes College of Music in New York and the America Israel Cultural Foundation, Ran continued her composition studies in the United States with Norman Dello-Joio. In 1973 she joined the faculty of University of Chicago, where she is now the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Music. She lists her late colleague and friend Ralph Shapey, with whom she also studied in 1977, as an important mentor. Winner of the 1991 Pulitzer Prize in composition, she has been awarded most major honors given to composers in the U.S., including first prize in the Kennedy Center-Friedheim Awards competition for orchestral music, two Guggenheim Foundation fellowships, grants and commissions from the N.E.A., the Koussevitzky Foundation at the Library of Congress, and many more. Her music has been played by major orchestras including the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, and the American Composers Orchestra. Maestros Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Christoph Von Dohnanyi, Zubin Mehta, Yehudi Menuin, Gustavo Dudamel, and various others, have conducted her works. Between 1990 and 1997 she was Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, having been appointed for that position by Maestro Daniel Barenboim. In 1994-1997 she also served as the fifth Brena and Lee Freeman Sr. Composer-in-Residence with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, culminating in the performance of her first opera, *Between Two Worlds (The Dybbuk)*. The recipient of five honorary doctorates, Shulamit Ran's works are published by Theodore Presser Company and by the Israeli Music Institute and recorded on more than a dozen different labels, including several all-Ran discs. For further information, visit <http://music.uchicago.edu/people/faculty/ran.shtml> and <http://www.presser.com/Composers/info.cfm?Name=SHULAMITRAN>

Conductor and vocal educator **Judith Clurman** has conducted and collaborated with orchestras, dance companies, and music festivals, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's, New York City Ballet, Mostly Mozart Festival, Lincoln Center's Great Performers series, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the American Songbook Series, and the New York Pops on their Carnegie Hall subscription series. She served as founding conductor for the New York Concert Singers and Project Youth Chorus, and music director for Prism Concerts and the 92nd Street Y's *Music of the Spirit* program, broadcast nationally on NBC and PBS. At The Juilliard School, she served as Director of Choral Activities from 1989-2007. Judith has commissioned and premiered the music of America's most revered contemporary composers, including Milton Babbitt, William Bolcom and Jake Heggie. As Associate Music Director of Sesame Street, her work with The Muppets, cast members and prominent guest artists earned her a 2009 Emmy nomination for Outstanding Achievement in Music Direction and Composition. She was also the Co-Director for Harvard University's *Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway* festival and was a guest lecturer/conductor at England's Cambridge University. Currently, she is the creator, music director and conductor of Essential Voices USA, a collaborative performing ensemble recently named chorus in residence for the New York Pops' Carnegie Hall subscription concerts. Judith is working with Kelli O'Hara on a Christmas album and conducting an Americana album with her Essential Voices USA. She was named National Public Radio's Artist-in-Residence for the month of February, 2011. In addition, she is a member of the faculty of an annual seminar for music critics as part of the National Endowment for the Arts Classical Music Workshop, sponsored by the Columbia University School of Journalism. More information: www.judithclurman.com

Student Cantor **Joshua Breitner** is currently a fifth year student at Hebrew Union College and a student cantor of Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold, Maryland. In addition, he was the first-ever cantorial intern at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York and appears on Pulitzer Prize-winner Yehudi Wyner's album of sacred music. As a featured soloist, Joshua has sung at Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, the 92nd Street Y, the JCC of Manhattan, and on Israel's "Kol HaMusica" classical radio. He has collaborated with luminaries like Debbie Friedman and Elie Wiesel and recently presented a recital honoring composer Jack Gottlieb's 80th birthday. The mid-Michigan native holds voice degrees from the University of Michigan and the New England Conservatory and completed YIVO's Weinreich Program in Yiddish at New York University. He lives in Astoria with his wife, mezzo-soprano Donna.

Essential Voices USA (EVUSA) formerly The Clurman Singers, is a vibrant organization with a mission to promote the love of music and further the art of ensemble singing. Led by conductor and music director Judith Clurman, the New York-based group has a flexible roster of professional vocal fellows, volunteers, and students performing a wide range of musical genres. During the 2010-2011 concert season, Essential Voices USA began their three year New York Pops residency with the November 19th Stephen Sondheim 80th Birthday Concert at Carnegie Hall. They were also featured in the Leonard Bernstein celebration at Symphony Space in October. Their recording of *Mr. President*, a collection of sixteen works based on words of texts of our presidents, was featured on National Public Radio, for the entire month of February, 2011. Their recording of *Peace*, a song by Howard Shore based on the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, featuring high school children and volunteer singers, and recorded at the Washington National Cathedral, will be released in 2011. Future plans include a workshop on a work for chorus, string quartet and soloists based on the words of Walt Whitman with composer Joshua Schmidt (Josh's show *A Minister's Wife* opens this spring at Lincoln Center Theater), a recording of Americana, and a continuation of their residency at Carnegie Hall subscription series.

Participation in EVUSA requires previous choral experience, sight-reading skills, the ability to memorize music, and the willingness to attend rehearsals. For further information, contact essentialvoicesusa@gmail.com.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) is the intellectual, academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. **The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music**, which is part of HUC-JIR, directed by Dr. Bruce L. Ruben, offers a five-year program of full-time graduate study leading to the degree of Master of Sacred Music and investiture as a cantor. The all-encompassing program prepares students for the Twenty- first century cantorate, with courses in liturgical music, general musicianship, Judaica, and professional development. The school's faculty are among the finest exponents of the diversity of liturgical music, ranging from of Eastern European chazzanut, to Classical Reform choral repertoire, to the contemporary folk idiom.

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