

Fall 2005 HaZamir News

a project of The Zamir Choral Foundation
Matthew Lazar, Founder and Director

הזמיר HaZAMIR

THE
INTERNATIONAL JEWISH
HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

“God lives in chords like these”

The best voices from all of the HaZamir choirs came to Providence, Rhode Island for one common purpose: to make music. As our voices reverberated off the dome of the majestic Temple Emanuel sanctuary, I thought, “God lives in chords like these.”

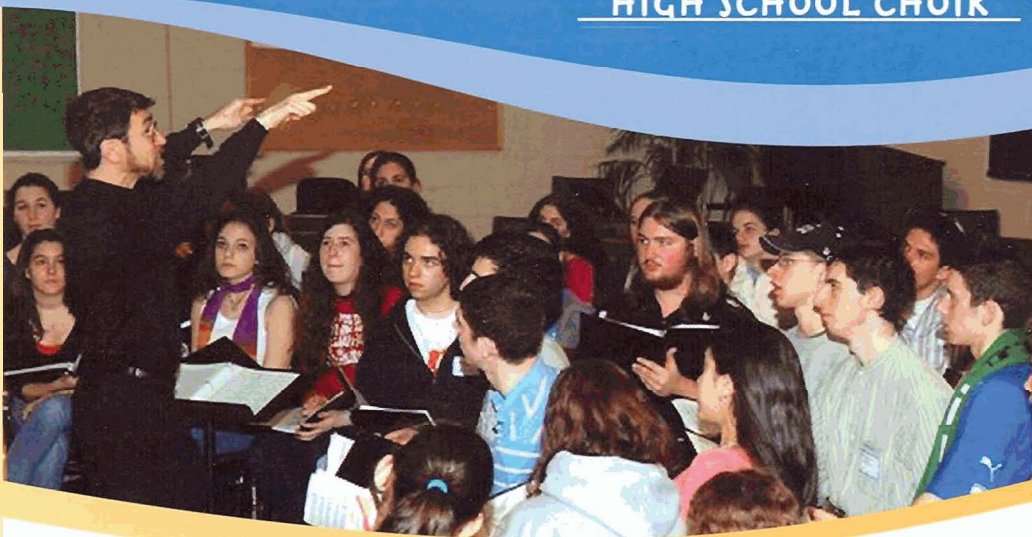
The two-year-old HaZamir Chamber Choir is an experience beyond all others. Inspiration comes at a mile-a-minute with conductor Matthew Lazar, founder of the Zamir Choral Foundation. In one piece, Mr. Lazar taught us music theory, Tanakh (Bible), history, and even something about ourselves. HaZamir Northern Jersey rehearsals are the absolute favorite part of my week, but this experience has taken my passion for Jewish choral music to a whole new level. Not only can I sing with others in glorious harmony, I can learn and challenge myself while doing so.

Over the Martin Luther King weekend, the Chamber Choir rehearsed three songs in three very different styles: folk Israeli by the unsurpassed Naomi Shemer; classical Jewish choral; and Rock-n-Roll-esque. Each song presented a different facet of Jewish singing.

The special thing about HaZamir is that we are a Jewish teen choir. This means that no matter who is next to me at rehearsal or performance, whether or not we have met before, we have an automatic connection. That feeling, in and of itself, is just incredible.

A fascinating thing about rehearsals in Providence was how much we could discover just by keeping our eyes — and especially ears — open. “Every note is a new opportunity for self-expression,” Mr. Lazar told us. Indeed!

— Hinda Eisen, HaZamir Northern Jersey



What is HaZamir?

So many of you are members of HaZamir or parents of HaZamirniks. But what is HaZamir? Well, HaZamir is one of the many projects of the Zamir Choral Foundation. It is an international group of choirs that was created by Matthew Lazar, the founder and director of the

Zamir Choral Foundation, so that Jewish high school students could sing Jewish choral music with other Jewish kids, regardless of where they went to school, or what synagogue they went to or didn't.

HaZamir started as one choir in Manhattan and now there are HaZamirs all around the US, in Canada, England and Spain.

Each HaZamir ensemble meets weekly with its local conductor and sings music that suits its members and their interests.

However, there is also repertoire that all HaZamirs learn. At the annual HaZamir Festival this music is performed by the hundreds of HaZamirniks who gather from all parts of North America, Europe, and this year, Israel. It's really overwhelming to see hundreds of Jewish teens

squeezed onto a stage in New York City performing music they learned during the year.

What a sound! What a sight!

Besides the awesome music-making of HaZamir, teens get to meet other teens from around the US, Canada, Europe and Israel and learn about similarities and differences between their cultures and traditions. Most HaZamirniks find that within minutes, any differences between them are erased by the great equalizer — **MUSIC!**

It's really overwhelming to see hundreds of Jewish teens squeezed onto a stage





WINTER FESTIVAL Reflections

Singing alone can be pleasurable for moments of spare time. Singing with a group of at least fifteen allows one to experience the beauty of different levels of harmony, and a special connection among fellow singers. Singing along with more than two hundred people under welcoming lights for a cheering audience can distribute an abundant feeling of unity among each performer. HaZamir exists to share that feeling with hundreds of teenagers from around the world, and it works to magnify it as much as possible.

I can recall first joining our local HaZamir in Southern Maine. I had been involved for only a few months, and I had never met a more accepting group of people. The six hour ride from Maine to New York was actually enjoyable because of them. The trip was a time for me to get to know the people I had been singing with, to observe, listen and reflect. And of course there were the breaks for all of us to get together, eat, and socialize as a group.

And then there was the sleeping arrangement at the HaZamir Winter Festival in the New York Metropolitan area. Our "bedroom" was a massive gym which at night was cluttered with

All [of us] were
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one confident voice

about one hundred sleeping bags, mats and duffel bags kicked everywhere during our sleepless night. Our seemingly endless rehearsals were trying on our energy and our voices. Each person in the chorus was pushed to his or her limit.

During the two days of rehearsing, friendships became closer. During the actual concert, all the many singers on stage were connected to make one confident voice which spoke not only to the audience, but which stirred emotion within us, the singers, as well. It was only when the last note was sung, the basses, tenors, altos, and sopranos using one superior pitch in each range, that an almost indestructible feeling of pride came over us.

Our throats were raw, and dark circles were nested under our eyes, yet we felt taller than kings. This was what made the HaZamir gala concert so rewarding to participate in. Everything that came before the concert was worth it because of this one moment. There was no way I could have predicted this; however, I wouldn't have missed anything from this entire experience, from fatigue to finish.

—Laura Howard,
HaZamir Southern Maine





New Kid on the Block

Since my mother is on the Board of Directors of the Zamir Choral Foundation, I thought I would just accompany her to see how the kids from HaZamir Manhattan sounded at their first rehearsal. Little did I know that I would be joining the group! My mother said, "Go up on stage and sing with the kids." I was a little nervous but it turned out okay!

There was a group of kids who all seemed to have nice voices, but I was amazed at how good our voices sounded together. We started rehearsal with a warm-up: we stretched and then we started to vocalize. Then we worked on music. I thought I could sing soprano or alto. Since there were fewer altos, our conductor told me to sing alto. I'm glad that he did. How do sopranos sing that high? Singing harmony was new to me and took some practice.

I came home that day really excited about HaZamir. And I still love it!

— Sarah Sue Landau,
HaZamir Manhattan

We loved the HaZamir concert in 2/05.
Thank you for making this happen.
Our daughters can't wait to
participate in years to come.



Our Unsung Heroes

When we think of HaZamir, our singers and conductors immediately come to mind.

However, another group is central to our success:

HAZAMIR PARENTS!

Aside from active involvement in the weekly doings of HaZamir, parent representatives from each HaZamir helped keep our annual Festival organized, took photos, videotaped and directed traffic. They chaperoned at the festival at meals, rehearsals and, like all the HaZamirniks, gave up part of a night's sleep while they rotated keeping everyone safe. We thank all the parents who gave of their time throughout the year and particularly at the HaZamir Festival.

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!





HaZamir is a project of the Zamir Choral Foundation

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and click on HaZamir

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Small...and Proud

What can you say about our wonderful small group? Well, we love to be involved in everything as much as possible! We love to sing at Bar and Bat Mitzvahs because we want every Bar/Bat Mitzvah boy or girl to remember the wonderful music. "Raise Our Voices for Israel," a big concert taking place in our community, is our chance to let people who don't know us hear the wonderful music we sing. Being part of HaZamir is an amazing thing and we hope to get many more kids involved in our fun, amazing songs. And we hope to keep coming back!

—Hannah Oshinsky,
HaZamir New Brunswick

JUST RELEASED! THEY'RE HERE! Winter Festival CD

- I enclose a check for ____ CDs at \$22* each
 Please charge me for ____ CD(s) at \$22* each * includes shipping and handling

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Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Return this form to Zamir Choral Foundation, 120 Riverside Drive, Suite 1Y, New York, NY 10024



**Save
the
Date!**

Annual Hazamir Festival
celebrating our
bar mitzvah year
Friday-Sunday, May 19-21, 2006
Gala Concert at Lincoln Center
Sunday, May 21, 6 p.m.

Winter Intervisitation

Southern Region

Where other groups had nice, large buses, we traveled in two snow-covered vans, setting out on a cold winter's morning. Many CD's and fast food stops later, we arrived in Providence, Rhode Island. We were immediately greeted by: "You're the group from Maine aren't you?" Somehow everyone just knew — it's like we were famous.

Soon rehearsals started. It was great: even though I had never met most of these people, it sounded good when we all sang together. It was interesting to work with the different conductors — from Boston's Cantor Osborne constantly telling us that "squeezing our buttocks" would help us sing better, to Cantor Mayer from Providence standing on various objects (including a tricycle) while conducting. And there was always food after the singing; the chocolate fondue fountain was pretty awesome.

As the day went on, we started sounding better; we worked pretty hard. Eventually it was "bedtime." Although sleep scarcely took place (possibly due to the ice cream and sugar that we ate just before bedtime), we were up and ready to sing more the next day. Although we sounded okay at the start, it really was amazing to hear how much better we sounded by the end of the second day.

We had improved musically, met new people, and had a great time. I think we're all looking forward to next year's festival. A big "thank you" to all the people in Providence who did so much to feed and house us — and made that awesome fondue fountain! See you all next year!

—Bess Beller Levesque,
HaZamir Southern Maine

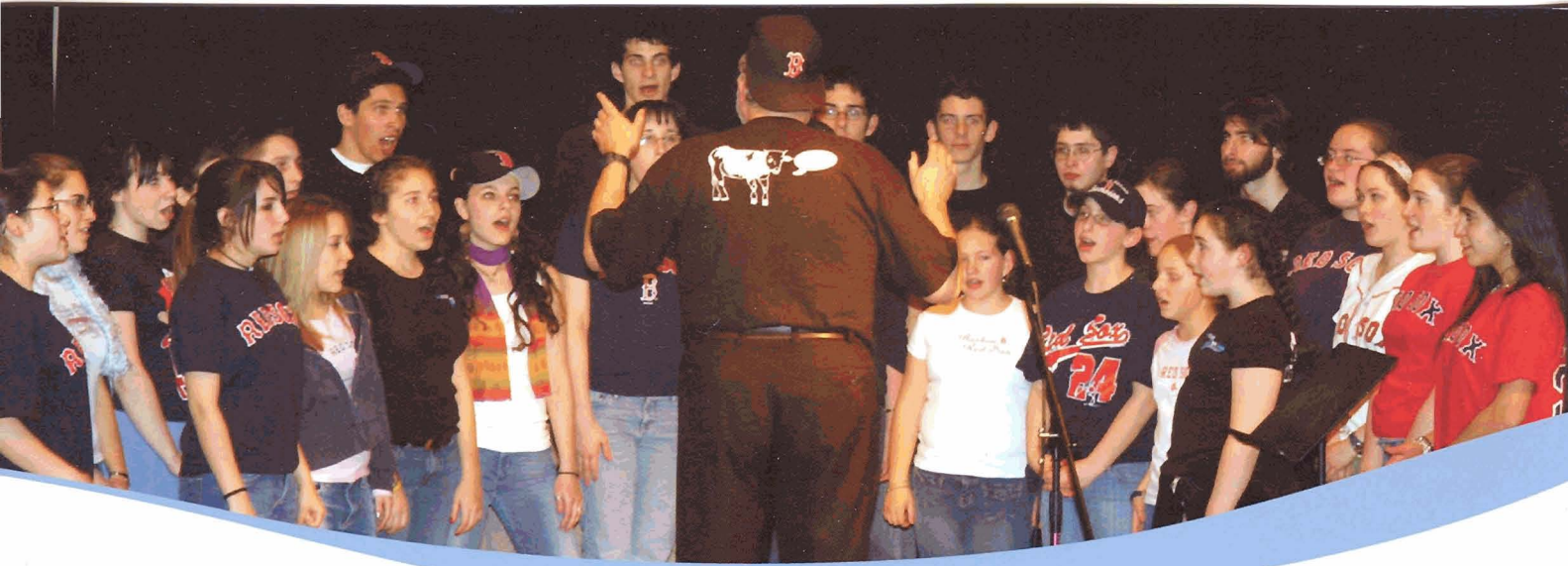
Northern Region

On January 16th, HaZamirniks from five chapters of HaZamir got together for a southern regional rehearsal in West Caldwell, New Jersey. From 11 AM until 8 PM we sang, ate, played games, ate some more, and sang yet again. We got to wrap each other in newspaper, sit on balloons, do funny tasks, and just enjoy each other. With all the conductors present, we got through seven full songs in five hours. That has to be a record!

We reunited with old friends, and met new friends — almost like a mini Winter Festival. It was an amazing day for everyone and definitely should be done again. Soon!

—Kati Steiner,
HaZamir Manhattan

Singing with HaZamir was such an important part of my high school years!
— L.B., HaZamir '02



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Zamir Choral Foundation, Inc.
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New York NY 10024

Welcomed into HaZamir

Every Sunday, I enter the cafeteria at Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy ready to sing. A year ago, I never would have imagined singing in another Jewish choir after six years in my synagogue choir, years I enjoyed but that were behind me. I did not know what to expect when I learned about HaZamir, yet I decided to try it.

What I found was not the rigorous, conforming choir I expected, with dull music sung from old, torn sheets. No, it was more like a jolly community, to put it simply. It was a group of friends filled with humor and spunk, united by a cantor who, I must admit, was pretty cool. And the music! Nachamu, Ivdu...I never knew Jewish music could be so beautiful, fun, exciting. To sing it struck a note in me (pun intended, sorry guys).

I found joy in being a part of something so beautiful and united. I was welcomed into HaZamir and I never looked back.

—Rachel Saks,
HaZamir Northern Jersey

