

# Summer 2006 HaZamir News

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

הזמיר  
HaZAMIR

THE  
INTERNATIONAL JEWISH  
HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

## HaZamir at 13!

The Zamir Choral Foundation has been pleased to nurture the development of HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Choir. From its infancy as a single Manhattan-based ensemble, HaZamir has burgeoned into a movement encompassing some 16 choirs across three continents. The past year alone witnessed the establishment of HaZamir chapters in Baltimore, Cleveland, Houston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Israel; more are poised to join the HaZamir movement in the coming season. HaZamir's 13th anniversary Bar Mitzvah Gala was a tribute to Matthew Lazar, the visionary founder of HaZamir; to the talented conductors who bring the music to life; to the parents whose support makes their efforts possible; and to the singers, whose performance demonstrated that the future of Jewish choral music is assured through HaZamir.

**Heyeh v'heyeh HaZamir!**

## MUSIC SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS

The HaZamir weekend was a very intense experience for me. I got a chance to meet and sing with many other Jewish kids my age who share my love for singing. I learned a lot about music, and especially learned to appreciate my falsetto range more than I have before.

One of the things that I thought was truly amazing was how by simply hitting one note on the piano, the conductors could get that many people, let alone teenagers, to get quiet and all follow directions so well, and to produce the music that we did.

I also met several conductors who helped me and everyone else to understand the music with their analogies.

Another thing that boggled my mind was that one of the songs that we sang, *K'shetavo*, we learned the night before the performance. We heard the song sung to us once or twice, and then split up into groups and within half an hour we had learned it. Not only did we learn it that

quickly, but Mati conducted us from the piano with his head. When we came to the stage on Sunday, I was somewhat surprised to hear that there was a solo part for that piece. We may have rehearsed it one or two times with the soloist, and then we performed it. This ability to learn and be that flexible in the learning was truly inspiring. The song, *K'shetavo*, with its unresolved ending, also made me realize how much more powerful music can be than words.

— Maayan Harel, HaZamir Boston



## Six Years of Sundays

Every Sunday for the past six years of my life was identical. I would wake up, get dressed, grab my black binder and go to Manhattan HaZamir. Generally the only discrepancy between the Sundays has been my hair color. Today is different though. Today is my last Sunday rehearsal and Friday is my sixth and final HaZamir Festival. This article is my dedication to six years of inspirational composers, amazing directors, music full of meaning and, of course, talented singers.

I am proud to say that I've gone through many ranks in HaZamir. I was invited in by my first director, Daniel Henken, in seventh grade, received my first solo in eighth grade and joined chamber choir with the distinguished Mati Lazar in eleventh. The experience of improving my vocal skills along with many directors is really a rare gift and I am very grateful to have received it. My favorite

part about being able to work closely with Mati Lazar is that he taught me how to convey a message when I sing and it has made music a lot more meaningful for me.

In HaZamir I have learned to connect with God, Judaism and people through music. Every lyric and note is written and performed in a way that can only be described as poetry. I'm uplifted and inspired during every rehearsal and every performance.

Throughout my years in HaZamir I've had many joyous times and, as most teenagers, many difficult times. Knowing that I had HaZamir coming up on Sunday helped me get through the strenuous week that preceded it. I loved having a place where I'm accepted no matter how different I am (being a female tenor, a rare voice, that is

very important to me) and where I was encouraged to pursue my passion for singing with all the depths of my soul.

It's difficult to be leaving a place where I have grown immensely — physically, mentally, vocally and spiritually. HaZamir, Manhattan specifically, has been a home for me. I've gained friends and insights into life that I will take with me wherever my future may lead.

I'm happy to say that this is not the end of Zamir singing for me. I plan to join the Zamir Chorale and come back to HaZamir as an alumnus. All fancy words and explanations aside, I simply love HaZamir. I end this article with this message to all of my fellow singers, dedicated directors, friends and family: "Kulanu nashir b'yachad".

— BethAnne Prupis Kern, HaZamir Manhattan



TOP: HaZamir Founder Matthew Lazar conducts participating singers, alumni and conductors in a concluding rendition of "HaZamir." BELOW: Singing for their supper, HaZamir members serenaded the dining room staff of the Homowack Hotel where the pre-concert Shabbaton was held.

## RECOMMENDING HaZamir

HaZamir was one of the most difficult but most fun singing experiences I've ever had. Not only was the end product something I will never forget, I made many new friends along the way. The weekend itself was amazing. The performance went so well, the conductors treated us like professionals, and we made many new friends while at the same time respecting the Jewish community surrounding us.

Our choir this year was small (it was our Pittsburgh's first year participating in HaZamir), and the other members and I, as well as our conductor, Nizan Leibovitch, became very close. If you are interested in singing or choral performance at all I would strongly recommend HaZamir.

— Rachel Shapiro, HaZamir Pittsburgh

## First Year in Texas

I live in Houston, Texas where there has never been a HaZamir choir until this year. We have a small group of ten singers, but we are all committed to this choir through having our Jewish and music connection with each other. After spending so many years in a choir at school singing Christmas songs, I love being with skilled singers singing Jewish songs and having that Jewish bond that makes HaZamir such a rewarding experience. We have been rehearsing and performing for only five months, but ever since our first rehearsal, I could never stop coming. Our director Dr. Ganz makes rehearsals fun and is dedicated to our choir's success. It has been a wonderful experience and I am sure that I will continue singing with the choir for the rest of high school.



— Avital Bisk, HaZamir Houston

I cried from the first "Ha-" to the last "Mir"  
— Parent, HaZamir New Jersey





LEFT: An "elderly" Cantor Charles Osborne is helped to the stage by "aging" members of the HaZamir Alumni Ensemble.  
 MIDDLE: HaZamir conductors take a bow.  
 RIGHT: Talia Lefkowitz and Sophie Landau, HaZamir Manhattan.

## Sensing Something Very Positive

When my daughter started to attend HaZamir practices with Pittsburgh HaZamir, I had no idea what she was getting us involved in. Singing Jewish music was certainly a benefit as she has been in other choirs where the musical selections were predominately Christian themes with token Hebrew, African and French songs added to the program. Singing with other Jewish teens was also a plus because she attends a school where she is in the minority.

I was not convinced she would follow through with HaZamir; after all, Sunday afternoons had been dedicated to shopping at the mall and hanging out with friends.

But something started to happen after a few weeks of rehearsals. Choral practice was something she looked forward to and when I would pick her up after a rehearsal, she was giggling and smiling and actually looking forward to the next rehearsal when she would see her new friends again.

Sensing that something very positive was happening, I decided to be the chaperone for the Pittsburgh group. Many people asked why I would do such a thing. To be honest, I asked myself the same thing but then decided to ask "why wouldn't I do it?" How often does a mother of a teenager have the opportunity to get to know her daughter's friends by spending 14 hours with them in a car? How often does a parent have the chance to see how her child interacts with new people from different places? How often

does a working mother get the chance to be served a five course meal on a Friday night and not have to do the dishes? For all of these reasons plus more, the HaZamir Shabbaton was just what I needed.

Great things happened to the Pittsburgh group at the Homowack Hotel. While we initially felt like outsiders (next year PGH will have their own HaZamir shirts) it did not take long before we started to make friends. As everyone's comfort level increased, so did our enthusiasm and self-confidence. By the time Havdalah arrived, we were connected to our friends, religion and spirituality in ways some of us had not felt for a long time. Clearly, we were experiencing something very special. As a parent, I was privileged to experience this with my teen and her friends.

There really are no words to describe the concert at Lincoln Center. The joy on our children's faces and the beautiful music cannot be adequately expressed with words. You just had to be there and I am glad I was there.

The drive back to Pittsburgh was different from the drive to New York. Yes, we were tired and the girls did not sing any of the songs they had been rehearsing. But when one of the girls said, "I can't wait till next year's HaZamir concert," I felt blessed as I plan on being a chaperone again. Thank you, to everyone who is involved with HaZamir.

— Ronda Fisch, Parent Chaperone  
 HaZamir Pittsburgh

The joy on our children's faces and the beautiful music cannot be adequately expressed with

I just want to offer a hearty **yeshar koach** to all who were involved with the HaZamir weekend and concert. Our son had a wonderful time, learned a lot, made some new friends, and was just a little taller when he came off the stage at Tully Hall than when he went on it 2 hours earlier.

— Parent, HaZamir Boston

BELOW: Alum Jeremy Taub (HaZamir Boston) solos in "Abram."



We were given tremendous nachas from our son's **exuberant** description of his experience on the Festival weekend. He described being touched spiritually and intellectually by the entire process, the learning you provide with the conducting and choral work, the davening, the hevra. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. This is a rare gift.

— Parent, HaZamir NJ

Maestro Matthew Lazar conducts the HaZamir Chamber Ensemble.



Just came home, still floating on the voices of those angelic teenagers. What a glorious concert! What a magnificent creation!

— Audience Attendee

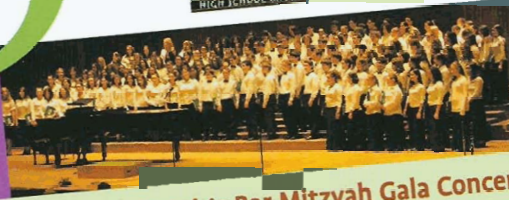
Lee Ganor (HaZamir Israel) solos in "Emek"



# The Gala Concert CD is here!

## HaZamir Gala 13th Anniversary Concert

Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center



Thru the sounds of HaZamir's Bar Mitzvah Gala Concert Live from Alice Tully Hall featuring:

- HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Choir
- The HaZamir Chamber Choir, and
- The HaZamir Alumni Ensemble

Start the New Year with the harmonies of the next generation!

It was one of the best concerts of my life... A true blessing. Thank you to HaZamir for making this wonderful experience possible for the kids.

— Parent, HaZamir Boston

**HaZamir** is a project of the **Zamir Choral Foundation**

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### HaZamir Newsletter

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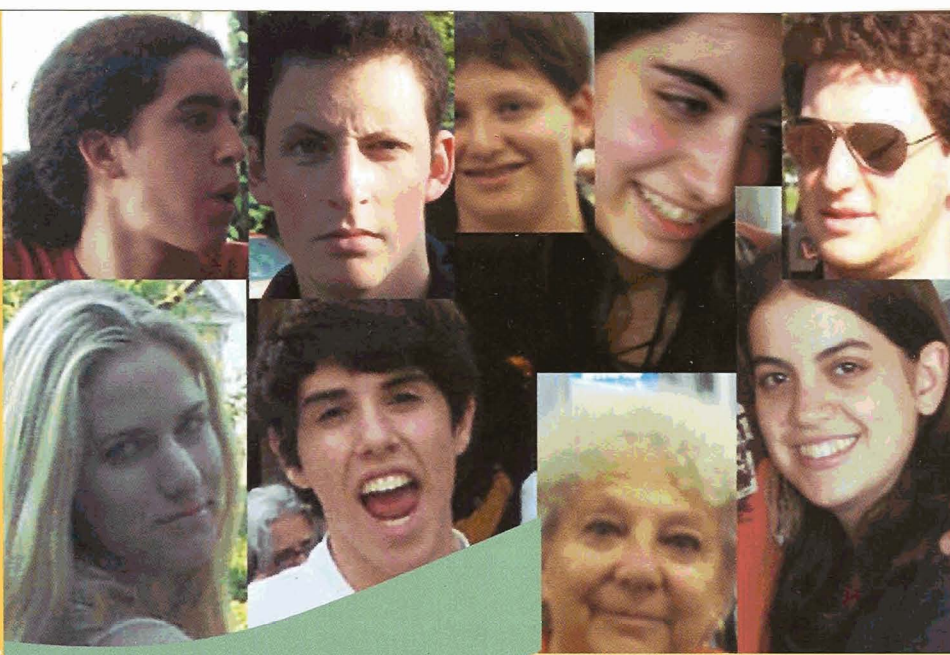
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The HaZamir Bar Mitzvah Gala CD is available for distribution through synagogue gift shops and other retail outlets. For further information, contact the Zamir Choral Foundation at 212-362-3335 or e-mail ZamirFdn@aol.com



LEFT: Israeli singers and chaperone joined HaZamir's celebration. ABOVE: Saul Frankford (HaZamir Philadelphia) solos in "Peace by Piece."

## From Israel, With Love

Dear HaZamir Friends,

First of all, we would like to thank you all for the warm welcoming that you gave us throughout the whole time we spent with you. We enjoyed every moment of this trip; Staying at the Homowack hotel was tremendous fun, especially because of how the corridors made us feel as if we were staying at "Hogwarts". For the New Jerseyians of you, we would like to say how much we loved staying with you guys. Special thanks to all the families who hosted us and made us feel right at home. We had a great time meeting you and making a lot of friendships which we shall never forget.

This festival helped us connect to our roots and brought us closer to the religious side of us.

Above all, the experience of making this fabulous music with you all made this trip special and unforgettable. We hope to come back next year. Until then, goodbye and take care!

— Inbal, Assaf and Yarden

*P.S. We are working on a HaZamir Message board, where we can keep in touch and chat until our next festival. Use the link at left!*

What a **joy** it was to hear the voices of HaZamir! They truly lifted their voices on high and sang unto God many beautiful songs. I was thrilled to be present. It filled my soul to hear the voices of Jewish youth. I think it is an inspiring way to keep our youth connected. Many blessings to Maestro Lazar for his vision and dedication. You are indeed a Tzadik!

— Fan of Jewish Music

I have taught and supervised teachers for over 25 years. The conductors who worked with the students over the weekend weren't just extraordinary musicians — they were extraordinary teachers. In my book, anyone can sing (not true); but to be a great teacher is much rarer — and at the end of the day, much more important. **These were masterful teachers.**

—Parent chaperone, HaZamir Cleveland

For me, this experience was **inspiring** as I saw how high quality music making combined with an emphasis on **core values** related to young teens in the most **fun and enjoyable way.**

— First year HaZamir conductor

**Thank you** to Mati and to all the central organizers and conductors! Your leadership and grace — and everyone's sustained efforts as well as evident talent — created a weekend and a concert that meant a great deal to **participants (volunteer-parents as well as singers)** and to the future of **Jewish choral music.**

— Parent chaperone, HaZamir Baltimore

Conductor Isabelle Ganz with Avital Bisk and Nathan Colbert of HaZamir Houston



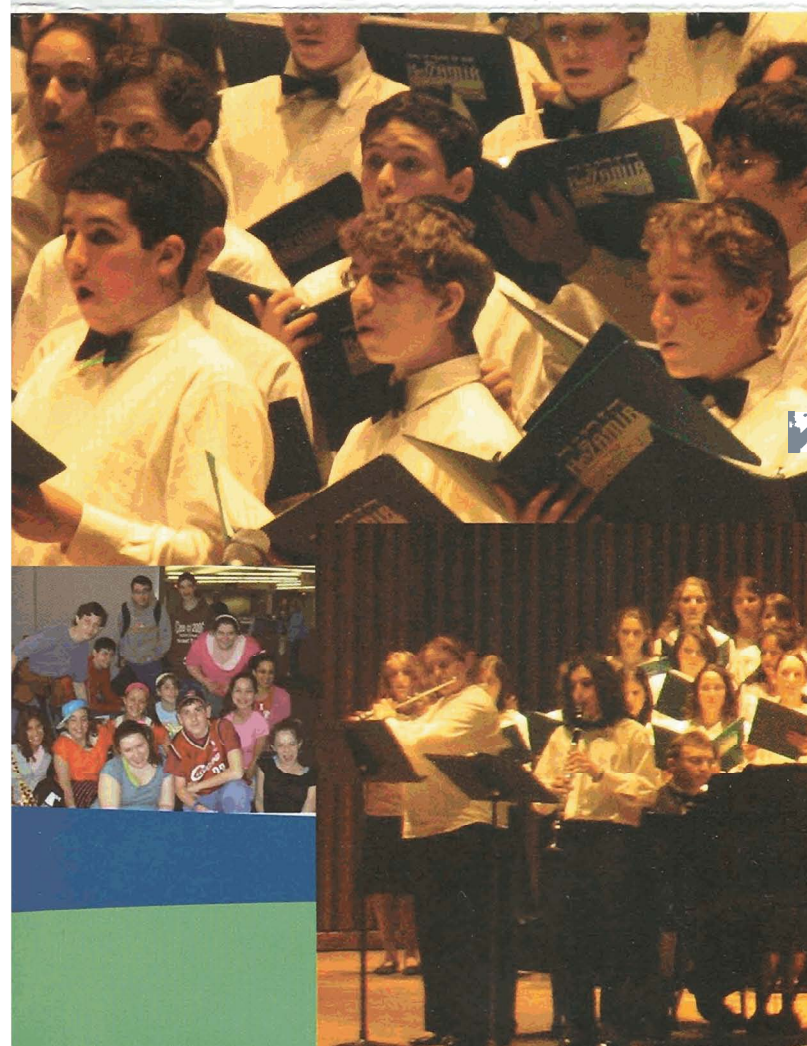


In HaZamir I have learned how to connect with God, Judaism and people through music.

— BethAnne Prupis Kern, HaZamir Manhattan



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## Keeping the Faith

So you walk into this room, you've been here a couple of times so you know your way around. A couple of other kids come into the room, they look about your age, but you're not quite sure. An adult steps into the room, she introduces herself and hands out music. You don't know this music, but she tells you that you're going to be learning it. You feel insecure in this place with all these other people around you, but you follow everyone else. You don't want to name yourself the baby of the group.

A few months later, this is just a memory. We walk into the room together, laughing and smiling, having a good time. The director is there — we warm up and start to sing. All around us everything else is quiet except for the sound of the piano and 14 wonderful voices. The first song ends, we are all silent, listening to the stillness around us. Tears fall down my face. God surely must have given us this gift. I can see I'm not the only one crying. We all connect through those silent tears. We start another song, just as beautiful and just as moving. We keep our faith as strong as our voices. We tell the story. The tears keep falling down our faces as we sing. From a distance it looks as if we are very upset, but if you looked closer you'll see the smiles on our faces. We cry tears of happiness and rejoice in the music we make when we come together.



We are not God, we are not angels.  
We are HaZamir.

— Heather Adato, HaZamir Cleveland

Gail Terman (HaZamir Boston) and Atid Kimelman (HaZamir North Jersey) and pianists Beth Robin and Stephen Glass accompany "Malu Asamenu Bar."