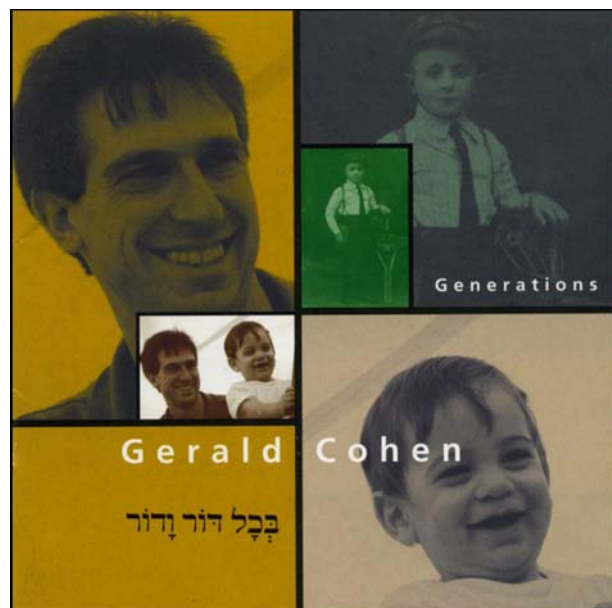


NWCR879

Gerald Cohen

Generations



- Trio for viola, cello, and piano (1999) (21:14)
- I. Slow, mysterious - Broadly (8:22)
 - II. Fast (6:01)
 - III. Slow, calm (6:51)
- Maria Lambros, viola; Michael Kannen, cello; Marija Stroke, piano
- Four Songs on Hebrew Texts*, for voice and piano (1992-1999) (16:04)
- Y'varech'cha (May you be blessed) (Blessing for children) (3:38)
 - Ad matai (How long?) (Psalm 82) (3:51)

- Adonai ro'i (The Lord is my shepherd) (Psalm 23) (3:26)
 - V'haarev na (May the words be sweet) (5:09)
Gerald Cohen, baritone; Marija Stroke, piano; Michael Kannen, cello (track 4)
- String Quartet No. 2 (1991) (25:00)
- Lively, graceful (8:28)
 - Elegy: Slow, hushed (8:59)
 - Very fast (7:33)
Curtis Macomber, violin; Calvin Wiersma, violin; Daniel Panner, viola; Michael Kannen, cello
- V'higad'ta L'vincha (And You Shall Tell Your Child)* (1996) (16:32)
(based on the Passover Haggadah)
- V'higad'ta l'vincha (And you shall tell your child) (2:18)
 - Avadim Hayinu (We were slaves to Pharaoh) (3:19)
 - Ha lachma anya (This is the bread of affliction) (1:43)
 - Dayeinu (It would have been enough) (3:19)
 - B'chol dor vador (In every generation) (2:33)
 - L'fichach (Therefore we should thank) (3:20)
Kathryn Palange, soprano; David Abrams, clarinet; Gregory Wood, cello; Alice Lee, piano; Syracuse Children's Chorus; Barbara Tagg, conductor

Total playing time: 78:58

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Notes

We remember and we imagine. We memorialize the past and nurture hopes for the future. We use tradition as raw material for the new and the innovative.

These ideas are the motivating forces in Gerald Cohen's music. He is a composer, but he is also a cantor, a teacher, and a parent. All of these pursuits involve a passing on of traditions—musical, religious, family—so that others may carry them into the future.

From life comes art, and so it is natural that the pieces on this disc are all, in one way or another, involved with the idea of tradition passed on. There are contemporary settings of traditional Jewish texts. There is a memorial to a late father and a blessing for a young child. Even the musical building blocks—the forms and the language—reflect an engagement with tradition, making new ideas comprehensible by their relationship to the old.

Cohen avidly weaves together several different traditions, including the “classics” of Western music (especially the music of Beethoven and Brahms); the musical traditions of the twentieth century (some crucial composers in that regard are Mahler, Bartók, Britten and Copland); the traditions of Jewish

texts; and the traditions of Jewish liturgical and secular music. His comprehensive knowledge of Western art music informs his specifically Jewish works, and the echoes of his cantorial training and his cultural heritage appear, as if inevitable, in his pure concert music. His music reflects all of these traditions, creating a musical voice that is distinctly his own.

In the end, however, a musical work does not succeed because of its origins or preoccupations. Cohen's music succeeds so beautifully because it lives and breathes with vitality, energy, tenderness, and sincerity.

The two chamber works on this recording are large-scale compositions, deeply felt and expertly crafted. Both pieces consist of three movements which are motivically connected and which build from movement to movement to form a compelling whole. The most recent work on this recording is the Trio for viola, cello and piano, which was composed in 1999 for the performers on this recording. The composer writes, “One important inspiration for this piece came from the challenge of writing for this specific combination of instruments, which differs from the ‘standard’ piano trio by replacing the more usual violin with the viola. The great

advantage of this combination is the focus on the beautiful warmth and particular intensity of the viola and cello, and the wonderfully close relationship between the sounds of these lower strings.”

The work is in three uninterrupted movements, with a central scherzo surrounded by slow movements. The principal ideas of the entire piece are heard early in the first movement: the quiet chords and repeated notes of the opening, the melancholy theme heard in the viola soon after, and finally the more energetic theme in the cello later in the movement. That theme eventually transforms into the main theme of the scherzo, a movement featuring Cohen’s love of lively shifting metrical patterns. The last movement, in which a sense of quiet calm slowly builds to a return of the previous movements’ passions, ends with melting poignancy.

Many of Cohen’s vocal works, including the two heard here, are settings of Jewish liturgical texts, but are as suited to the concert hall as to the synagogue. The *Four Songs on Hebrew Texts* are among the many solo settings that he has composed, often originally for himself to sing, and it is a special feature of these recordings to hear Cohen both as composer and performer. Two of the songs were inspired by deeply personal events. The melody of “Y’varech’cha,” with the mood of a lullaby, was originally written in 1995 on the birth of his son, Daniel. The text is a blessing used on many different occasions, together with a special blessing usually recited for one’s children at the beginning of the Sabbath. “Adonai ro’i” is a setting of Psalm 23 and was written in 1989 for the funeral of a close friend, Marcia Scharf. The text of this Psalm is mainly a poem of comfort, with only a single, vague reference to death, but it has always been used in Jewish liturgy as a funeral/memorial psalm. The setting heard here is the original one, but the song has also become widely known in versions for chorus, children’s chorus, and voice and orchestra.

In contrast to the personal genesis of these first two songs, “Ad matai” was commissioned in 1999 by the Cantors Assembly, with the text—Psalm 82—as a specific part of the commission. Cohen says, “I was assigned to write a piece on this psalm, and then found myself strongly drawn to its dramatic and bitter cry for social justice. The musical images came from the force of those words.” The text of “V’haarev na” comes from the early part of the daily morning service. The song begins with a “recitative” section in a cantorial style, and then evolves into a meditative reflection of gratitude for God’s gift of Torah, and for our capacity to study and to learn. Cohen explains that in writing “V’haarev na” and “Ad matai,” “my aim was to use traditional cantorial elements, and then to expand the musical language in a way that still feels tied to that tradition.”

V’higad’ta L’vincha (And You Shall Tell Your Child) was commissioned in 1996 by the Syracuse Children’s Chorus, and is based on the text of the Passover *Haggadah*. The *Haggadah*, or “telling,” is the text that is used at the Seder, the family meal—full of discussion, ceremony, and song—

that is the central feature of the Passover celebration of freedom and rejoicing.

About this piece, the composer writes: “One of the most significant themes of the Haggadah, emphasized in my choices of text for the piece, is that we all must experience the story of the deliverance from slavery as if we ourselves had lived through it; we must then tell our children that story so as to pass it down, vividly, from one generation to the next. (The text of the fifth movement focuses on this idea of transmitting tradition and is inspiration for the CD title, *Generations*.) Children are thus the central figures in the Seder, and it seemed most appropriate to write a setting of the text for children’s chorus.

“The piece begins with a chant-like presentation of the biblical verse that instructs us to tell our children the story of the Exodus, and then moves, as does the Haggadah, from the oppression of slavery to the joy of deliverance. That joy is expressed especially in the famous text “Dayeinu” (“It would have been enough . . .”), set here as a lively dance, and in the final “L’fichach,” which gives thanks to God in a procession which grows from a quiet beginning to an exuberant conclusion.”

Cohen’s String Quartet No. 2 was commissioned in 1991 for the Franciscan String Quartet. A composer writing a string quartet at the end of the twentieth century inevitably confronts the overwhelming traditions of that genre. For Cohen, “it was perhaps the pull of this tradition that led me to cast the first movement in sonata form—with its patterns of presentation, development and recapitulation—and also to have major and minor triads as important dramatic elements in a piece that is not tonal in the traditional sense.” That formal structure is used in this movement to create an engaging, musically dramatic narrative that is by turns tender, playful, and intensely driving. Also influenced by sonata form, the third movement is a whirling scherzo of runs and repeated-note figures, with some lyrical interludes and a central section that is a slower, whimsical dance.

It is in the central slow movement that other elements from Cohen’s life emerge. This movement was composed as an elegy for his father. It is based on a synagogue melody that he had written earlier for a central prayer of the Jewish High Holidays, “Hineni” (“Here Am I”), in which the cantor expresses humility before God in being an emissary for the congregation. Once again, Cohen’s varied roles as composer, cantor, and family member come together in this piece. He says, “I used this music to communicate my thoughts and feelings about the process of mourning, and about my father, Matthew, who was and is essential to my connection with Judaism.”

Gerald Cohen’s music speaks to us through its ability to respond to the personal, translating these emotions through his musical craft into an art that is expressive, important and vitally alive. That is the touchstone of his work, and its connection to a living, ongoing tradition.

—Michael Kannen

Texts

Y'varech'cha (Blessing for Children)

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha,
Ya'air Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka,
Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.
Y'sim'cha elohim k'efrayim v'chim'nashe,
Y'simeich elohim k'sara, rivka, racheil, v'leia.

Ad matai (Psalm 82)

Elohim nitsav baadat el,
b'kerev elohim yishpot.
Ad matai tishp'tu aveil,
uf'nei r'shaim tisu?
Shiftu dal v'yatom,
ani varash hatsdiku,
pal'tu dal v'evyon,
miyad r'shaim hatsilu.
Lo yadu v'lo yavinu,
bachasheicha yithalachu,
yimotu kol mosdei arets.
Kuma Elohim shofta haarets,
ki ata tinchal b'chol hagoyim.

Adonai ro'i (Psalm 23)

Adonai ro'i, lo echsar,
binot deshe yarbitseini,
al mey m'nuchot y'nahaleini.
Nafshi y'shoveiv,
yancheini v'maglei tsedek, l'maan sh'mo.
Gam ki eileich b'gei tsalmavet,
lo ira ra ki ata imadi,
shivt'cha umishantecha heima y'nachamuni.
Taaroach l'fanai shulchan
neged tsor'rai,
dishanta vashemen roshi,
kosi r'vaya.
Ach tov vacheseid yird'funi
kol y'mei chayai,
v'shavti b'veit adonai l'orech yamim.

V'haarev na (Torah Blessing)

Baruch ata Adonai eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu
b'mitsvotav v'tsivanu laasok b'divrei tora.
V'haarev na Adonai eloheinu et divrei torat'cha b'finu uv'fi am'cha
beit yisrael.
V'nihye anachnu v'tseetsaeinu v'tseetsaei am'cha
beit yisrael, kulanu yodei sh'mecha, v'lomdei toratecha
lishma.
Baruch ata Adonai ham'lameid tora l'amo yisrael.

May you be blessed (Blessing for Children)

May Adonai bless you and watch over you,
May Adonai cause the light of His face to shine upon you, and be
gracious unto you,
May Adonai lift up His face to you, and grant you peace.
May God bless you as Ephraim and Menasheh,
May God bless you as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.

—translation, *Gerald Cohen*

How long? (Psalm 82)

God rises in the court of the mighty
pronouncing judgement over judges:
"How long will you pervert justice?
How long will you favor the wicked?
Champion the weak and the orphan;
uphold the downtrodden and destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy,
save them from the grip of the wicked."
But they neither know nor understand;
they wander about in darkness
while the earth's foundations are shaken.
Arise, O God, and judge the earth,
for Your dominion is over all nations.

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Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals
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The Lord is my shepherd (Psalm 23)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for the sake of His name.
Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil, for You are with me,
With rod and staff you comfort me.
You have set a table before me in the presence
of my enemies,
You have anointed my head with oil,
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

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May the words be sweet

Praised are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who has
made us holy through His commandments, and commanded us to
occupy ourselves with the words of Torah.
May the words of Torah, Adonai our God, be sweet in our mouths
and in the mouths of Your people the House of Israel.
And may we, and our descendants, and the descendants of Your
people, the House of Israel, all come to know Your Name, and to
study Your Torah for its own sake.
Praised are You, Adonai, who teaches Torah to His people Israel.

—translation, *Gerald Cohen*

V'higad'ta L'vincha

Text from the Passover Haggadah

1. V'higad'ta l'vincha bayom hahu leimor: baavur ze asa Adonai li, b'tseiti mimitsrayim; ki v'yad chazaka hotsiacha Adonai mimitsrayim.
2. Avadim hayinu l'faro b'mitsrayim, vayotsieinu Adonai eloheinu misham b'yad chazaka uvizroa n'tuya. V'chol hamarbe l'saper bitsiat mitsrayim harei ze m'shubach.
3. Ha lachma anya, diachalu avatana, b'ara dimitsrayim. Kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichul, kol ditsrich yeitei v'yifsach. Hashata hacha, lashana haba'a b'ara d'yisrael. Hashata avdei lashana habaa b'nei chorin.
4. Kama maalat tovot lamakom aleinu!
Ilu hotsianu mimitsrayim, Dayeinu!
Ilu kara lanu et hayam, Dayeinu!
Ilu sipeik tsorkeinu bamidbar arbayim shana, Dayeinu!
Ilu keirvanu lifnei har sinai, Dayeinu!
Ilu natan lanu et hatorah, Dayeinu!
Ilu hichnisanu l'ereis yisrael, Dayeinu!
5. B'chol dor vador, chayav adam lirot et atsmo k'ilu hu yatsa mimitsrayim. Sheneemar: V'higad'ta l'vincha bayom hahu leimor: baavur ze asa Adonai li, b'tseiti mimitsrayim.
6. L'fichach anachnu chayavim l'hodot, l'haleil, l'shabeiach, l'faer, l'romeim, l'hadeir, l'vareich l'alei, ul'kaleis, l'mi sheasa lavoteinu v'lanu et kol hanisim ha'eilu. Hotsianu meivadut l'cheirut, miyagon l'simcha, meiveil l'yom tov, umeiafeila l'or gadol, umishbud ligula. V'nomar l'fanav shira chadasha, Hal'luya!

Gerald Cohen was born in 1960 in New York City. His early studies focused on both piano and composition, and he received a B.A. in music from Yale University in 1982. He began his career as a cantor while pursuing graduate studies at Columbia University, where he received a D.M.A. in composition, with distinction, in 1993. His principal composition teachers included Jack Beeson, Mario Davidovsky, George Edwards, and Andrew Thomas; his cantorial studies were with Jacob Mendelson.

Cohen's music has been commissioned by chamber ensembles including the Franciscan String Quartet, the Degas String Quartet (with trombonist Haim Avitsur), the Wave Hill Trio, the Lambros/Kannen/Stroke Trio, the Bronx Arts Ensemble, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic Brass Quintet; by choruses including the Canticum Novum Singers, the Syracuse Children's Chorus, the Zamir Chorale of Boston, and the Usdan Center Chorus; by the Cantors Assembly of America, the Westchester Youth Symphony, and by the Battery Dance Company, which performed his *Songs of Tagore* on tours of India and Eastern Europe. His music has also been performed by the San Diego Symphony, the Westchester Philharmonic, the Riverside Symphony, the Plymouth Music Series Orchestra, the New York Concert Singers, and many other ensembles and soloists.

Cohen has received commissioning grants from Meet the Composer/National Endowment for the Arts and from the New York State Council on the Arts/Westchester Arts Council; completed residencies at the MacDowell Colony, the Millay Colony, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Yaddo; and has been awarded Yale University's Sudler Prize for outstanding achievement in the creative arts. His music is

And You Shall Tell Your Child

1. And you shall tell your child on that day, saying: it is because of what Adonai did for me when I went out of Egypt. For with a mighty hand did Adonai bring you out of Egypt.
2. We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Adonai our God brought us out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And the more one talks about the exodus from Egypt, the more praiseworthy it is.
3. This is the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat; let all who are needy come and celebrate the Passover. Now we are here; next year may we be in the land of Israel. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free people.
4. How many acts of kindness God has performed for us!
If God had brought us out of Egypt, Dayeinu!
(It would have been enough for us!)
If God had split the sea for us, Dayeinu!
If God had sustained us in the wilderness for forty years, Dayeinu!
If God had brought us before Mount Sinai, Dayeinu!
If God had given us the Torah, Dayeinu!
If God had led us to the land of Israel, Dayeinu!
5. In every generation, each person should feel as if he or she had actually experienced the exodus from Egypt. As it is written: And you shall tell your child on that day, saying: it is because of what Adonai did for me when I went out of Egypt.
6. Therefore, we should thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, honor, bless, extol, and adore the Power who performed all of these miracles for our ancestors and for us. God brought us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to celebration, from darkness to great light, from bondage to redemption. Let us then sing a new song to God, Halleluya!

—translation, *Gerald Cohen*

published by Oxford University Press and Transcontinental Music Press.

Cohen lives with his wife Caroline and son Daniel in Yonkers, New York. He is assistant professor of music at the H.L. Miller Cantorial School of the Jewish Theological Seminary and cantor at Shaarei Tikvah Congregation in Scarsdale, NY.

Cellist **Michael Kannen** was a founding member of the Brentano String Quartet, with whom he performed throughout the world and on radio, television, and recordings. He has appeared at chamber music festivals across the country and with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Kannen has collaborated with artists such as Jessye Norman, Hilary Hahn, and Paula Robison, and was a member of the Meliora Quartet and the Figaro Trio. He is currently a member of the Apollo Trio and is on the faculty of Dartmouth College.

Violist **Maria Lambros** has performed throughout the world as a member of three of the country's finest string quartets. She was most recently a member of the Mendelssohn String Quartet and was a member of the renowned Ridge String Quartet, which was nominated for a Grammy Award for their recording of the Dvořák Piano Quintets with pianist Rudolf Firkušný. Lambros was also a founding member of the Naumburg Award-winning Meliora String Quartet, which recorded Mendelssohn's Octet with the Cleveland Quartet. She has performed with the Guarneri, Cleveland, Juilliard, Muir, Brentano, Borromeo, Colorado, and Orion Quartets, among others, and is currently associate professor of viola at the Conservatory of Music at Purchase College.

Violinist **Curtis Macomber** is one of the most versatile soloists/chamber musicians before the public today, equally at home in repertoire from Bach to Babbitt. He was a member of

the New World String Quartet from 1982–93 and is a founding member of the Apollo Trio. His most recent recordings include violin/piano sonatas of Amy Beach and John Corigliano on Koch International and *Songs of Solitude* for CRI, an all-solo disc named one of 1996's best instrumental solo recordings by the *New York Observer*. Macomber is presently a member of the chamber music faculty of the Juilliard School, where he earned B.M., M.M., and D.M.A. degrees as a student of Joseph Fuchs. He also is on the violin faculty of the Manhattan School of Music.

Violist **Daniel Panner** has performed at music festivals in Marlboro, Tanglewood and Aspen. He is assistant principal violist of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and is a member of the contemporary music ensemble Sequitur. As a member of the Whitman String Quartet, Panner received the 1998 Walter W. Naumburg Chamber Music Award and served as teaching assistant to the Juilliard String Quartet for two years. He has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and has taken part in numerous tours with Musicians from Marlboro and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Panner currently teaches at the Juilliard School and the Queens College Conservatory of Music.

Pianist **Marija Stroke** has performed at the Caramoor, Moab, and Chamber Music Northwest festivals, on a solo tour of the Soviet Union, in concerti with the Vienna Mozart Orchestra, and with Solisti New York at the OK Mozart Festival. She has played in recitals at Carnegie's Weill Hall, Wigmore Hall, Merkin Hall, Metropolitan Museum, the 92nd Street Y; with Elastic Band; and with the Apollo Trio at Bargemusic, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and Mostly Mozart Festival. Stroke's recordings include music of Adolphe with the Brentano Quartet (CRI) and the Grieg

sonatas with Curtis Macomber (Arabesque).

Founded in 1981, the **Syracuse Children's Chorus** has become an international model for performance and choral music education. They have performed in China, Europe, Canada, and across the United States. The chorus performs frequently with the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, has premiered over fifty works, and is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and Meet The Composer. These activities reflect the role the young musicians assume in sharing their artistry and contributing to the development of the American choral tradition. The chorus's artistic director/-founder Dr. **Barbara Tagg** is an affiliate artist at Syracuse University where she conducts the Women's Choir. She serves on the national boards of Chorus America and the American Choral Directors Association and has been honored for her commitment to excellence, music education, and the choral art.

Violinist **Calvin Wiersma** has performed at summer chamber music festivals in Vancouver, Rockport, Portland, Crested Butte, Bard, Interlochen, Caramoor, An Appalachian Summer, June in Buffalo, and at Music Mountain, as well as at the Aspen Music Festival. He was a founding member of the Meliora Quartet, winner of the Naumburg, Fischhoff, Coleman, and Cleveland Quartet competitions. Wiersma is a member of the Lochrian Chamber Ensemble and the Ensemble Sospeso and has appeared with Speculum Musicae, Ensemble 21, Parnassus, and the New York New Music Ensemble. He is the artistic administrator of the American Russian Young Artists Ensemble, an international chamber music group of young professionals from Russia and the United States.

Production Notes

Trio, *Four Songs*, Quartet:

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman

Recorded in the Recital Hall of the Conservatory of Music, Purchase College, Purchase, New York. Trio recorded on February 10, 2000; *Four songs* recorded on February 15, 2000; Quartet recorded on October 18, 2000.

Trio, *Songs*: assistant engineer, Jennifer Munson; editing assistant, Jeanne Velonis.

Quartet: assistant engineer and editing assistant, Jeanne Velonis

Hamburg Steinway piano supplied by Mary Schwendermann Concert Service, New York

V'higad'ta L'vincha, Trio for viola, cello, and piano and String Quartet No. 2 are published by Oxford University Press.

"Y'varech'cha," "Ad matai," and "V'haarev na" are also published by Oxford University Press in the song cycle *Come Before God with Joyous Song*. "Adonai'ro'i" is published by Transcontinental Music Press.

V'higad'ta L'vincha was commissioned by the Syracuse Children's Chorus as part of the Meet The Composer/National Endowment for the Arts program Commissioning Music/USA, with support from the Helen F. Whitaker Fund.

This recording has been made possible through the generous support of the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University as well as individual supporters, many of whom are present members of Shaarei Tikvah Congregation, Scarsdale, New York, and its predecessor congregations.