

Teen Jewish choir members convene for 'HaZamir International' event

By Scott M. Sokol

“**S**ing brothers and sisters, sing, and with our song we will awaken the people!”

This lyric begins the anthem of the Zamir choral movement, the rallying cry of Jewish choral singers for more than a century. On Jan. 18, its stirring message will be heard in Boston from the mouths of some 225 high school singers from across the country as part of the annual “Intervisitation” of the HaZamir International Jewish High School Choir.

HaZamir is a program of the Zamir Choral Foundation, an international organization with offices in New York City. HaZamir is the brain-child of Matthew and Vivian Lazar, and began almost 25 years ago. Its mission is to provide Jewish teens with the highest caliber choral experience within a pluralistic Jewish environment. I was privileged to assist with some of the first HaZamir chapters while a cantorial student in New York. From that relatively small group



The HaZamir International Jewish High School Choir at last year's concert.

of original singers, the HaZamir network has mushroomed to comprise over 400 singers in 31 chapters across the United States and Israel. Each of these chapters meets weekly to rehearse a shared repertoire, culminating in an Annual Gala Concert in a major performance venue in New York City (this year at Carnegie Hall). Prior to that concert, singers come

together in regional, national and international gatherings to blend musically and bond socially. The first and largest of these gatherings is termed “Intervisitation,” and always takes place on the East Coast over Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. This year's Intervisitation will take place in Boston, at Temple Israel of Natick, where HaZamir Boston rehearses each week.

The current Boston chapter of HaZamir was reconvened by my wife Francene Sokol (coordinator of HaZamir Boston), Cantor Michael McCloskey (its conductor) and myself, two and a half years ago. We began with eight singers that first year, followed by fifteen singers last year and twenty this year. Our Boston chapter is extremely excited to be hosting Intervisitation

this year, which will begin on Jan. 15, when a select group of HaZamir Teen Leaders from across the country arrives to plan the non-musical aspects of the retreat during a special Shabbaton. On Sunday morning, they will be joined by an additional 200 singers from the East Coast chapters for two days filled with rehearsals, meals, services and special programs. Intervisitation culminates in a final rehearsal/performance that is free and open to the public. This open rehearsal represents an extraordinary opportunity to experience HaZamir first-hand. You will simply be blown away by the caliber of the ensemble and the enthusiasm of its singers.

The Open Rehearsal begins on Monday, Jan. 18 at 12:15 p.m. If you would like to attend the rehearsal and/or learn more about HaZamir, please write to hazamirboston@yahoo.com.

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