

### Lewandowski, Louis

Louis (Eliezer) Lewandowski (1821–1894) was the most significant 19th-century composer of synagogue choral music. He spent his first twelve years in the town of Wreschen, (now in Poland, then in the eastern sector of Prussia). After his mother's death, his father sent the lad to Berlin to serve as an apprentice and *meshorer* (choir boy) to Cantor Asher Lion (1776–1863) at the Heidereutergasse synagogue. Lion's choir was a primitive one, comprising a few singers who would improvise supporting harmonies. But Lewandowski stood out from the others, in both talent and ambition. And he came to the notice of Alexander Mendelssohn (first cousin of the composer Felix Mendelssohn), who arranged for him to study at Berlin's Royal Academy of the Arts.

By 1840 the “enlightened” congregants at the synagogue expected Cantor Lion to organize a proper choir, such as could be heard in concert halls and in churches. Lacking the requisite musical literacy, Lion handed that task over to the nineteen-year old Lewandowski, who thereby became the first professional independent choir director in the history of the synagogue. Within five years Lion was replaced by the worldlier cantor Abraham Jakob Lichtenstein (1806–1880). Lewandowski was now not only training and conducting a full four-part choir of men and boys, he was also writing music for them – both new compositions and arrangements of traditional melodies that he was learning from Cantor Lichtenstein. In addition, Lewandowski was also training cantors at the Teacher Training Institute.

In 1866 Berlin's Jewish community inaugurated a new synagogue on Oranienburgerstrasse, capable of seating over 3000 worshippers, and equipped with a huge organ, one of the finest instruments in all of Berlin. Lewandowski began adding organ accompaniment to the pieces that he had already written for his choir and cantor. In 1871 his first anthology of synagogue compositions was published, and he soon became recognized as the premier composer of synagogue music. In 1865 the Jewish community awarded him the title of Royal Prussian Music Director, and in 1890 the Academy of Arts bestowed on him the title of Professor. Three years later he retired.

Lewandowski's published compositions reveal a high level of sophistication. On the one hand, he labored to retain the traditional melodies of the Eastern European synagogue that he learned from Lichtenstein, to preserve them in notation and provide them with harmonic arrangements. But at the same time, he was writing original choral motets in the German Romantic style, which betrayed no influence of the modal and unmetered Jewish chant.

Most of Lewandowski's compositions were written for Berlin's liberal synagogue – settings of litur-

gical texts in Hebrew and German, many of which have their source in the Hebrew Bible. Among his most popular compositions are his “Hallelujah” a setting of Psalm 150 and “Enosh,” based on verses from Psalm 103. He also published compositions that were written for a general audience. Most prominent is his *Eighteen Liturgical Psalms* for soloists and choir with organ accompaniment, published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1879.

**Lewandowski's published music:** ■ *Psalm 41: zur Feier der Einweihung des neu erbauten jüdischen Krankenhauses zu Berlin. Für Singst. und Klavier* (Berlin 1861) [composed for the inauguration of the Jewish hospital in Berlin] ■ *Psalter: zweistimmige Motetten, Hymnen und Psalmen für Schule und Gotteshaus* (Berlin 1862). ■ *Köl nidrêh: für Pianoforte oder Piano und Violine*; op. 6 (Leipzig 1865). ■ *Kol Rinnah u-T'fillah: ein- und zweistimmige Gesänge für den israelitischen Gottesdienst* (Berlin 1871). ■ *Chanukka-Hymne: im Urtext / nach der alten Sangweise für Singstimmen und Piano-Forte* (metrical rendering by A. Horwitz; Leipzig ca. 1875). ■ *Todah W'simrah: vierstimmige Chöre und Soli für den israelitischen Gottesdienst; mit und ohne Begleitung der Orgel (ad libitum)*, vol. 1 (Berlin 1876). ■ *Achtzehn liturgische Psalmen: für Soli und Chor mit Begleitung der Orgel* (Leipzig 1879). ■ *Mi Addir: hebräische Melodie für eine Singstimme mit Orchester, Piano-Forte, oder Harmonium-Begleitung*, 2 Viol., Viola, Bass, Clarinetto u. 2 Corni (Berlin ca. 1880). ■ *Augenblicke der Weihe: neun kleine Stücke für Harmonium, Orgel oder Klavier*; op. 44 (Berlin ca. 1880). ■ *Todah W'simrah: vierstimmige Chöre und Soli für den israelitischen Gottesdienst; mit und ohne Begleitung der Orgel (ad libitum)*, 2 vols. (Berlin 1882). ■ *Hebräische Weisen: für Klavier*; op. 45 (Berlin ca. 1892). [one long composition] ■ *Synagogen-Melodien: für Harmonium (Orgel oder Klavier)*; op. 47 (Berlin 1895). [5 compositions]

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