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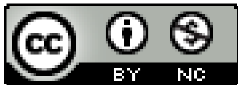

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Introduction

"I didn't know what I was craving until I found it"

> So, once before Passover I was cleaning out the laundry room. There was a lot of old tapes. Real brown and dusty. And I found a tape from a cantor, Ari Klein.[1] So, I listened to it. And I fell in love immediately. I loved it. And from there on you grow into it. And then I started going to the store and buying, every dollar that I had I would spend. And I collected over the years. There was a store on Lee Avenue, Lee Avenue Photo. And when I completed purchasing their entire stock, I started taking the bus to Borough Park, Mostly Music.[2] They had even more, larger selection. I was sent out to do a lot of errands. All the change I had I got to keep. So, with that I purchased tapes.
>
> —DAVID REICH, INTERVIEW, JANUARY 15, 2019[3]

David Reich is a thirty-eight-year-old Hasidic man, born and raised in the Satmar Hasidic neighborhood of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. His life is typical of many men in his community; he is the father of a large family and makes his living running a business as a retail distributor supplying other businesses mostly focused within the Hasidic Brooklyn enclave. He is also a committed and passionate fan and performer of "golden age" recorded cantorial music, a style of Jewish sacred music that reached its peak of popularity in the first half of the twentieth century, decades before he was born. This style is not associated with the Hasidic community and in fact is not popular or particularly well-known or understood in any segment of contemporary Jewish America—Orthodox, liberal, or otherwise.

In this anecdote, Reich offers a picture of his musical engagement as having emerged from a single, life-altering moment of discovery. For Reich, this moment of aesthetic awakening was transformative, leading toward a path of immersion in an archive of old records.[4] Reich's knowledge of the recorded style of cantorial music and his skill as a performer in this style place him in a community of Hasidic musicians for whom cantorial music has taken a central place as a frame for creative endeavors and constructing identities as artists.

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This book offers a cultural history of a tiny musical subculture within contemporary Orthodox Judaism in New York City. Yet in the telling, the story of the musical lives of *Hasidic cantorial revivalists* implicates lineages and contexts that resonate beyond their corner of the world. The story of these cantors raises broader theoretical concerns and methodological questions about how considerations of aesthetics can offer insight into histories of social change. Hasidic cantorial revivalists are one of many groups in the contemporary world to redress perceived social and aesthetic limitations in their community through recourse to an image of the past. Their story contributes to a literature on the role of music as a key to understanding processes of social change, especially in the American Jewish community.[5]

Cantorial records of the early twentieth century document a style of Jewish music that is based on older strands of folkloric prayer sounds arranged and composed in an aestheticized form and decontextualized from their role as ritual in the synagogue. This style is at one and the same time understood by cantorial music fans as a folkloric, primitivist aesthetic that harkens back to Eastern European traditions, but one that is also deeply influenced by Western classical music and opera. It is this doubleness, this spiritual and musical paradox in the sound world of early twentieth century cantors, that continues to intrigue and present opportunities for aesthetic exploration for artists in the twenty-first century. Gramophone-era records present a musical world that includes more than sound alone: the records preserve a unique style of Jewish musical aesthetics, but they also suggest a conception of the cantor as a form of Jewish personhood, an identity grounded both in ritual knowledge and musical expertise. Old records offer testimony of the existence in the past of an approach to prayer that was lent its specific sociality by the experience of music performance and listening. Gramophone-era cantorial culture presents Hasidic cantorial revivalists with attractive and novel enticements: a distinctive musical style, an identity category of the charismatic Jewish sacred music artist, and an approach to prayer characterized by an aesthetic listening experience. All three of these signature elements of cantorial culture are absent from the contemporary Jewish life that is familiar to Hasidic singers.

This book explores how Hasidic cantorial revivalists learn the musical style of gramophone-era cantors and then what they are able to do with this knowledge, working within the affordances and pushing at the limitations of their social worlds. It is a story of adventurous exploration of the archive, imaginative expression of a sensorium of novel aesthetic experience, and tentative, furtive steps toward building a sonic future based in the experience of listening to the past. On a practical level, Hasidic cantorial revival always involves work of cultural translation and recontextualization of sounds and ideas across boundaries of time and identity. The Hasidic singers studied here are, for the most part, performing their revivalist style of singing in non-Hasidic spaces. The key challenge of their journey as artists involves finding a place for their musical endeavor, usually working outside the separatist religious community in which they have lived their lives.

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The contemporary cantorial revivalists of Brooklyn were born into Hasidic enclave communities that have their foundational roots in the eighteenth century in the Russian Pale of Settlement and Poland. The founder of the modern Hasidic movement, Israel ben Eliezer (ca.1700–60), referred to as the Baal Shem Tov (Hebrew, the master of the good name) was a populist leader who sought to revolutionize the religious life of Jews by democratizing access to the Jewish mystical tradition. The revitalized spiritual experience championed by the Baal Shem Tov and other early Hasidic leaders was achieved through storytelling, ecstatic dance, and music. While Hasidism began as a revolutionary movement in Orthodox Judaism with an anti-establishment cast, by the early nineteenth century the leaders of Hasidism had consolidated authority into hereditary courts led by charismatic rabbis referred to as *tsadik* (Hebrew, righteous one, pl. *tsadikim*) or *rebbe* (Yiddish, a familiar term for rabbi). Hasidic courts functioned both as religious sects and as the centers of political and social life. Hasidic rebbes were vested by custom and fortified by institutions with a broad array of forms of authority over the spiritual and practical lives of their followers.[6]

Forms of radical pietism established by the first generation of Hasidic leaders were formalized into religious practices that were adhered to with increasing strictness by subsequent generations of Hasidim. Today, Hasidic Judaism is associated with a dedication to the preservation of Jewish life ways and customs in the context of modernization and assimilation. The artists whose work I profile in this book were raised in the Belz, Bobov, Satmar and Lubavitch communities, all sects named for their places of origin in Eastern Europe. While there are important cultural differences between these groups that I will address in the context of discussions of the cantors and their music, these Hasidic communities share in common a separatist orientation, a focus on religious life, and conservative attitudes that have a controlling influence on approaches to education and expressive culture.

The Hasidic singers involved in cantorial revival are not bound exclusively to the separatist communities in which they were born; their professional lives especially are characterized by movement between social worlds. Contemporary Orthodoxy in the United States can be broadly divided into two main categories—Modern Orthodoxy and separatist Orthodoxy. Hasidism falls into the latter category. Other branches of separatist Orthodoxy include groups referred to as Litvish or Yeshivish, terms that convey the centrality of traditional Jewish textual learning to the community. Litvish and Hasidic Jews are often grouped together under the umbrella term Haredi, a word used in Israel to connote separatist Orthodox Jewish communities. Hasidism is perhaps the separatist Orthodox group that is most broadly recognized in the United States with its enclave communities, its use of the Yiddish language in daily life, and its distinct forms of dress frequently depicted in popular media. In contrast, Modern Orthodoxy is a religious movement that seeks to synthesize stringent religious observance with integration into the modern nation state. Modern Orthodoxy is more culturally

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aligned with non-Orthodox Jews and the "mainstream" of American society in terms of dress, English language use, and educational and professional norms. The American Jewish community is also represented by "liberal Judaism," a broad category that includes the Conservative and Reform denominational movements, as well as many American Jews who do not affiliate with any religious group. For the Hasidic cantorial revivalists profiled in this book the non-Hasidic communities that play the most significant roles are Modern Orthodox, who look to more stringently religious Jews for ritual leadership and who sometimes employ Hasidic Jews as cantors, on the one hand, and secular Jews and Jews in the liberal denominational movements, who interact with Hasidic cantorial revivalists in the realm of concert performance, on the other.[7]

Learning about cantorial music offered David Reich multiple streams of new and exciting activity that stood outside the norms of his life. Studying the music helped him develop a set of practices as an artist, cultivating knowledge about performance in an arcane domain. His love of old records thrust him into the role of an archivist. David sought out knowledge from sources that lay beyond his typical sphere of activity. He found sites for accessing the music he wanted in out-of-the way places, devoting resources of time, money, and mental energy to forming the collection he would need to become an expert in his desired area of expressive culture. David cultivated a new set of understandings and values based on his own musical judgements and desires. He began to develop a critique of the prayer life of his community based not in the norms of rabbinic authority but rather in his own judgements formed along lines of aesthetic impulses, guided by musical desires and his newfound identity as an expert in Jewish liturgical music of the past.

> I grew up in Brooklyn, Williamsburg. I always loved music. I grew up with a lot of music. We listened to Mordechai Ben David, Avraham Fried, you know the usual, Mendy Werdiger [Ben David, Avraham Fried, and Mendy Werdiger are three of the major stars of Orthodox Jewish pop music]. No *khazones* [Yiddish, cantorial music] . . . I didn't know even that khazones exists. There was nobody, we didn't have any khazones cassettes at home.

A style of music often called Orthodox pop is what Hasidic participants in this study refer to as "normal music." Starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s, singer-songwriters in the Orthodox community such as Shlomo Carlebach and Ben Zion Shenker released albums of original songs in a quasi-traditional, or neo-Hasidic style.[8] While Carlebach and Shenker were both associated with Hasidic communities, their music resonated beyond the Hasidic world and was embraced by all branches of Orthodoxy, and eventually by liberal Jewish denominations as well. Carlebach's work was particularly forward-minded in embracing aesthetics of the folk music movement; in fact, he performed in the same New York nightclub circuit as Joan Baez and Odetta. At the same time, a push to preserve the traditional repertoire of older Hasidic *nigunim* (Hebrew, melodies, here referring to paraliturgical

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wordless songs) led to the production of a series of albums of Hasidic choirs and soloists.[9] These Hasidic music efforts laid the groundwork for a new style of recorded pop music in the late 1960s and early 1970s, pioneered by Mordechai Ben David and Avraham Fried, the two most notable names in the emerging genre, both of whom are Hasidic Jews. Ben David and Fried embraced sounds of pop, especially disco, to formulate a new Orthodox music style. A new crop of Orthodox pop stars, often drawn from the Hasidic community, arises on an ongoing basis. While Orthodox pop originated with artists in the Hasidic community, its popularity crossed boundaries between separatist Orthodox and Modern Orthodox communities. Orthodox pop is relatively unknown to liberal and secular Jews.[10]

The new pop sound was broadly embraced by separatist Orthodox Jews. Noted Talmudic scholar Haym Soloveitchik characterized the development of Orthodox pop as part of a general move away from aurality in Orthodox life toward an increasing focus on text, leading to a shift away from what he considered to be traditional Jewish life.[11] According to Soloveitchik, the appropriation of pop sounds reflected a surprising abandonment of Jewish customs in an Orthodoxy that purported to be devotedly preservationist and opposed to change. In the decades since Soloveitchik wrote, pop has become further entrenched in the community. The pop sound—based in the timbres of synthesizers, drum machines, and electric guitar, and employing stylistic elements borrowed from radio pop and adult contemporary genres—forms the public soundscape of separatist Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods, heard in restaurants and stores over PA systems, played at weddings and at celebrations presided over by prestigious rabbis and listened to by families on car stereos.[12]

In the separatist Orthodox context, where pop music is a normative style of performance, cantorial music bears a liminal status as an art form that is partly familiar through elements of shared vocabulary with synagogue prayer but not fully integrated into communal life. Cantorial music is intermittently brought to the fore of mainstream Hasidic culture through new reissue projects or performances by a handful of international cantorial stars (some Hasidic Jews from Israel) but is generally considered an underground niche style and in some cases, as in David Reich's story, was essentially an unknown.[13]

The performance of prayer in Hasidic synagogues has its own conventions and is typically led by nonprofessional singers. There are a handful of professional *bal tefiles* (Hebrew, prayer leaders) working in the Brooklyn Hasidic community whose work is sonically different and bears a different set of associations from the cantorial sound aspired to by the revivalists I focus on in this book. The revivalist sound is primarily structured around styles of performance that are preserved on old records; it is characterized by a distinctive repertoire of musical techniques and usually involves professional vocal cultivation. In contrast, bal tefiles are characterized by a more rough-hewn vocal sound and a less prominent display of the motivic vocabulary of cantorial performance, as demonstrated on classic recordings.

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I use the term *Hasidic cantorial revivalists* to distinguish the primary subject of this work from other prayer leaders in the Hasidic community. The revivalist sound can be understood as drawing from a professionalized musical form that is primarily known through mediated sources. Hasidic cantorial revival is an arcane musical field in tight dialogue with a temporally removed object of study and desire, in contrast to bal tefile prayer leading, which is a well-understood musical practice that many members of the community have some access to as performers.

While Hasidic cantorial revivalists sing mostly outside their birth community, and Hasidic bal tefiles are heard almost exclusively within the community, nigunim repertoires have a life both within and outside the Hasidic community. Nigunim, a specialized repertoire often sung without words and distinct from the prescribed prayer texts that khazones is yoked to, are sung as a paraliturgical devotional repertoire at Hasidic community events. Both older nigunim and new songs influenced by nigunim repertoires have been adopted by liberal Jewish communities, adapted to local musical styles as a popular devotional music form, and are frequently used today in prayer services.

The musical style documented on classic cantorial records is distinct both from what is heard in Hasidic prayer houses and from the pop sounds of the Orthodox Jewish music industry. Not just repertoire and musical style are different; pronunciation of Hebrew prayer texts is different from the norms of present-day Hasidic practice. Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn today generally pronounce Hebrew prayer texts with what is commonly referred to as Polish or Hungarian accents, regional variants that correlate to the origins of different Hasidic communities in Europe. However, Hasidic cantorial revivalists imitate the pronunciation of gramophone-era cantors in their cantorial performance, who employed a "standardized" Ashkenazi pronunciation that is described by Hasidic Jews as "Litvish" (Lithuanian). Another important influence on norms of golden age cantorial pronunciation is likely the prestigious central European cantors who set standards for the modern cantorial style.[14] Embracing the Hebrew pronunciation of early twentieth century cantors places Hasidic cantorial revivalist performance in a special aestheticized terrain, one that is neither Hasidic nor representative of common practice in Modern Orthodox shuls and that occupies a position that is also far removed from the practices of liberal movement synagogues, where Modern Hebrew phonology is the norm.

And yet Reich's listening experience was not a complete rupture, sealed off from the rest of his religious life and his enculturation into Hasidic life. The texts being sung on old cantorial records were drawn from an intimately familiar body of liturgy that Reich knew from a lifetime of daily prayer. Furthermore, the Satmar community does include cantors in some important communal events, such as the annual celebration of the Satmar Rebbe's freedom from Auschwitz and a mass community event held each year for Chanukah that has been conducted since the days before the immigration of the community to Brooklyn in the mid-twentieth

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century. These events connect to the community's European past, calling on the sounds of cantorial singing as a signifier of heritage.

The cantorial sound David heard on that first record was novel but not entirely unfamiliar—it is a constitutive part of the ambient Jewish culture that feeds a variety of contemporary styles and vocal music approaches. Reich told me that part of what drew him to the sound of cantorial records was that the music reminded him of a track on a record by Hasidic pop star Avraham Fried, the song "Emes" from Fried's 1988 album *We Are Ready*, which came out when Reich was a boy. The track contains a lengthy section in which Fried mimics the sound of an old cantorial performance, muting the drum machine and synthesizer that dominate the song in an extended breakdown to the spare texture of voice and organ heard on many cantorial records. The dance beat that predominates on the track, and in most of Fried's music, comes to a halt, embracing the lugubrious nonmetered rhythmic quality of cantorial recitative. Reich had taken note of this remarkably different musical style. When he first heard the cassette of Ari Klein, he was grateful that "I can finally have a full cassette of this stuff." While Reich had never been taught about cantorial music, his enculturation in the Orthodox Jewish world offered him clues about the existence of other Jewish musical worlds, priming him for the experience of discovering cantorial music.

> So, I developed into it. I started going to the store and buying, every dollar that I had I purchased tapes. I started out, you know, with Yossele Rosenblatt [1882–1933] and then I moved on to Shia [Yehoshua] Wider [1906–64], and then Moshe Koussevitzky [1899–1965], Mordechai Hershman [1888–1940]. I was getting into it. And then Moishe Oysher [1906–58]. It was a journey. It was a big part of my childhood.

Reich uses the Yiddish term *khazones* to refer to cantorial music, invoking the musical knowledge of the *khazn*, or cantor, as its own distinctive musical category. Throughout this book, I use the term *khazones*, as Hasidic cantors do, to refer to the cantorial art music documented on gramophone-era recordings.[15] Unlike the more general term *cantorial music*, which can connote a variety of styles and historical contexts of professionalized Jewish liturgy, *khazones* references the sacred music of Yiddish-speaking Jews. *Khazones* is historically linked to the Eastern European cultural context and the secondary diaspora of Yiddish speakers in the United States and internationally. Despite the profile of the Hasidic community as the champions of the Yiddish language and of Eastern European Jewish tradition, the historical memory of the community is highly selective, as its musical life makes clear.

The archive of old Jewish records offers Hasidic singers testimony about the existence of a world of star cantors who straddled the line between achievement as secular artists and sacred ritual leaders. What is now called the "golden age" of cantorial records (roughly 1901–50) emerged against a backdrop of controversy, musical rebellions, and a Yiddish culture pulsating with literary experimentation

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and political radicalism. Gramophone records made by star cantors were sold in the hundreds of thousands to a listening public on both sides of the Jewish Atlantic world—in America, Poland, and Russia. The "gramophone era," a term I will use in this book to describe the period of cantorial music as a popular music phenomenon, introduced the work of a small cohort of star cantors to a mass listening public. Jewish listeners were parched, thirsting for a sonic representation of themselves and their community.

During the nineteenth century, cantors serving elite urban synagogues embraced a new style of Jewish choral music influenced by European classical music and German romanticism. Working under the influence of Salomon Sulzer (1804–90), the first state sanctioned *Oberkantor* of Vienna, cantors throughout Europe embraced the "Vienna rite" sound, which was focused on trained choirs singing newly composed music for Hebrew prayer texts.[16] The Hasidic community never adopted Sulzer's liturgical reforms, instantiating a sense of Eastern European small towns as a bastion of older strands of Jewish music. The music of the phonograph-era cantors offered a populist response to the "choral" repertoire. The "new" cantorial sound of the early twentieth century was described in romanticized terms by cantors and their supporters as a revival of the folkloric roots of sonic Jewishness—characterized by the work of small-town *bal tefiles*, Hasidic devotional music, and the noisy heterophony of *davenen* (Yiddish, chanting prayer texts). This primitivist aesthetic was in turn reconfigured as an art music influenced by opera and performed by dramatic virtuoso singers. The conception of cantors as champions defending the sacred Jewish past against sonic assimilation is a crucial element in the mythology of the golden age that appeals to contemporary Hasidic singers.

The cantorial gramophone era was initiated by the popular discs made by Gershon Sirota in Warsaw and Zawel Kwartin in Vienna. Sirota and Kwartin were the first international stars of Jewish music.[17] Their records played a niche role in the era of early phonograph stars who were drawn from the opera world. As the historian of the phonograph Roland Gelatt noted, the sound of trained voices was particularly well-suited to the limited sound spectrum of early recording technology, bringing classically trained vocal artists to a broader level of stardom.[18] This cultural phenomenon swept up cantors in its moment. The first decade of cantorial records established the concept of the star cantor on a mass scale.

Cantors were popular music stars; some of the most successful performers were known to be nonreligious in their private lives or to have nonconforming identities associated with the world of the arts. Fandom of cantorial music was not limited to the religious; both religious and nonreligious Jewish people, men and women, secular and leftist Jews, coconstituted a listening public that avidly consumed cantorial music. Cantorial records united Orthodox and secular Jews into what Ari Kelman calls an "acoustic community," bound together by a shared set of listening habits and musical desires.[19] The archive of commercial cantorial records

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offers contemporary Hasidic musicians testimony to the diversity of Jewish experience across time. Records preserve traces of a culture of sacred performance that made room for a form of personhood barely known in the Orthodox Jewish world today—ritual leaders who were also skilled creative artists. The listening community for khazones connected ritual musicians to a broad and musically well-educated public that was knowledgeable about classical music, as well as cantorial performance. This internally diverse Jewish milieu is foreign to the current landscape of Hasidic Judaism in which secular arts education is discouraged and contact with secular or acculturated Jews is limited.

The center of cantorial recording moved from Europe to New York City after World War I. The golden age records of the 1920s made in New York moved further from the "elite" choral synagogue styles of the major European metropolises, instead offering performances that were intended to evoke the culturally intimate sounds of Jewish liturgical folklore. Performances on record were tailored to the time limitations of 78rpm records, sculpting tightly scripted representations of cantorial prayer leading. Cantors such as Kwartin and Yossele Rosenblatt wrote pieces that expertly manipulated the dramatic potentials of their tenor voices, framing compositions around virtuoso melismatic passages that were considered to be the signatory sonic gesture of Eastern European cantors. Frequently, their compositions would climax in the highest vocal registers, executing a devastating emotional impact.

The careers of recording star cantors offer Hasidic singers a tantalizing vison of lives that bound together musical mastery with a successful ability to connect to an audience. Hasidic cantors are motivated by the desire to recreate such successes, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that their style of Jewish sacred performance will not be embraced by any of the institutions of contemporary Jewish life and that their conception of aesthetics and musical value is considered suspect in their own birth community.

> When I was a kid, I used to love classical music, but I had to find my way around—I would record from 106.7, the classical station, and put "lecture from Rabbi" on it [i.e., intentionally mislabel the cassette tape], so this way I could have it in my room. They wouldn't have been happy if I was listening to non-Jewish music.

For young musicians in the Hasidic community, communal focus on norms of piety and bodily comportment extend to what forms of music can legitimately be engaged with, for listening or performing. In David Reich's family, non-Jewish European classical music might not have been considered acceptable, but Orthodox pop was. David and several other participants in this project described a Hasidic home life in which old cantorial records were practically unheard of. But David's musical experience is not easily generalizable. The Hasidic Brooklyn community contains a variety of approaches to music and heritage, including families with cantorial lineages and musically conservative households that maintain a ban

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on pop music, giving musical styles that are perceived by some as more traditional an opportunity to take hold.

Yoel Kohn, whose father Mayer Boruch Kohn is a well-known *bal tefile* in the Satmar community, was discouraged from listening to Orthodox pop. His father loved old cantorial music and disparaged newer styles; however, the elder Kohn had specific parameters for what was acceptable even in classic cantorial music. For example, Yoel's father always fast-forwarded through the part of the cassette tape of *Zawel Kwartin Sings His Best Cantorial Works* when Kwartin's 1928 recording "Moron D'vishmayo" appears on the anthology. "Moron D'vishmayo," with its chordal sequence lifted from European art music sources and operatic declamatory style, sounded to Mayer Boruch Kohn like "church music." How Mayer Boruch Kohn gained his sense of what church music sounds like is unclear—but the music did not "sound Jewish" to his ears, and thus was liable to censorship.

Yanky Lemmer and his brother Shulem Lemmer, both of whom are professional singers, told me that their father, a passionate fan of old cantorial records, forbade pre-World War II Yiddish songs because they were written by nonreligious Jews and expressed anti-Orthodox messages. This experience of the Lemmer brothers accords with Asya Vaisman's ethnography in the Hasidic community that shows how older repertoires of Yiddish song, associated with secular Jews, have largely disappeared among Hasidic women. These older repertoires have been replaced by more recent songs written by current artists in the familiar Orthodox pop vein.[20]

In the Hasidic milieu, religion and religious power-holders influence all aspects of life, including the musical life of the community. Attention to hierarchies of power are important considerations in analyzing contemporary Hasidic life. Hasidic communities in Brooklyn today are explicitly organized around faith in the divine origin of Jewish law, a selective conception of traditional lifeways and the authority of rabbinic leaders. This faith is visibly expressed through public displays of piety, ritual observance, sartorial conformity, communal foodways, the study of sacred texts, sharply segregated gender roles, and a communally disciplined approach to heterosexual family life. According to sociologist Samuel Heilman, the Orthodox community is in the grips of a fifty-year "slide to the right" that places continuously expanding strictures on the personal life of members of the community.[21] Anthropologist Ayala Fader's ethnography in the Hasidic community emphasizes how a culture of religious discipline shapes "bodies and minds to serve God rather than any modern form of authority."[22] A profusion of interest in the Hasidic community in recent years has permeated popular culture, with memoir literature, film, and television representations of the Orthodox world accentuating the repression of sexuality and individual expression. These popular works purport to represent Orthodoxy to the liberal world, comfortably reifying the image of nonliberal religion as oppressive in comparison to the presumed "freedom" of liberal society.[23]

Recent ethnographic scholarship on Orthodoxy has taken a varied view on the construction of agency in the community. Earlier anthropological assessments

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of nonliberal religious communities highlighted the distance between authority and individuality, analyzing behaviors in terms of resistance and compliance. New approaches, building on what Sabah Mahmood refers to as expressions of "agency without resistance" in nonliberal religious movements, suggest that self-expression is not uniformly incompatible with communally enforced religious beliefs.[24] Not surprisingly, some of the most fecund new perspectives on Orthodoxy have emerged from scholarship on women's experiences, a historically overlooked area of research. Orit Avishai, in a study of women's ritual lives in Orthodox communities, offers the analytic rubric of "doing religion" to explore how performance of ritual law can contribute to an active construction of identity and self, challenging normative evaluative approaches to religious authority as necessitating submission. In a study of reproductive decision-making strategies among Orthodox Jews, Lea Taragin-Zeller argues for the power of ethnography to reveal the interdependence of rabbinic authorities and the communities they guide; she documents a fluid dance between agency and submission in the coconstruction of a religious community. And recent work by Jessica Roda suggests that a newly emergent engagement with Orthodox pop music by Hasidic women is creating new opportunities and identities as artists. Although Roda and I worked separately, her ethnography closely parallels the research I have conducted with Hasidic men in considering the role of music as a nonconforming creative practice within separatist Orthodoxy; our research projects also share a recent time frame and geographic location in New York City. These studies, and others, highlight the role of discourse as a means of constituting an ethical self in the context of a highly structured and rule-based religious system. Recent anthropological research in the Orthodox community is increasingly attuned to the ways in which a conception of values and valorized practices is coconstructed by authorities and members of the community.[25]

While their aesthetic orientation places Hasidic cantorial revivalists on the fringe of their community in terms of their interests, I have not found that resistance to authority is an explicit motivation for the artists who participated in this study. Hasidic singers drawn to cantorial music stretch the boundaries of acceptable behavior, but they do so to cultural and aesthetic ends that are not geared toward an overthrow of authority or a rupturing of their identities as Hasidic men. Scholars of separatist Orthodoxy have made recourse to Foucault's image of the panopticon to describe a society in which hierarchies of power and rules of conformity are maintained through public discipline and surveillance.[26] While this description of Brooklyn Hasidic life may contain some truth, it is inadequate as a rubric for analyzing and theorizing the creative lives of members of the community. More problematic for this study, a Foucauldian approach tends to gloss over the possibility of intellectual integrity for artists and intellectuals whose creative work takes place within the structure of religious authority. As Hussein Ali Agrama has argued, ethical agency is not a unique characteristic of the Western

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liberal milieu.[27] By extension, the ethical and intellectual probing characteristic of artistic creativity is not dependent on the overthrow of tradition and the adoption of a liberal sensibility.

As anthropologist Dorothy Holland has noted, projects of personal development are constructed within the confines of historically contingent identities and communities. Rather than being comprehensible exclusively through a lens of resistance to the social settings individuals are born and enculturated into, "the development of self-understandings (identities) on intimate terrains . . . [are] an outcome of living in, through, and around the cultural forms practiced in social life."[28] Hasidic cantorial revivalists are challenged by an aesthetic need that they address through the prism of the social norms they have been educated in, grasping on to a recognizably Jewish art form with a basis in religious ritual and sacred texts. That their musical expression is sometimes perceived as a form of rebellion against religious norms is a source of pain and tension in the lives of Hasidic cantors; indeed, this places serious limits on their ability to imagine futures for their music. Piety, on the one hand, and skepticism about rabbinic authority, on the other, are two extremes along a spectrum of responses to the strictures of Hasidic life. Hasidic cantorial revivalists dance along this spectrum, responding to the pressure to conform to communal norms in ways that are contingent, contextual, and geared toward finding ways to reconcile their desires as musicians with the rules of communal life.

> There are opportunities that come along that allow me to express myself in music. There's opportunities—there's no plan . . . There's always a love for it. I was born with a love for it, but I didn't know what I was craving until I found it. When I found it, I was, *oh, this is what I like.*

Singing khazones is a project of aesthetic self-cultivation that takes place within the confines of the Hasidic community. The singers who participated in my research are passionate about memorializing and perpetuating the music of the cantorial golden age, but are in some ways surprisingly quiet about the specifics of the cultural milieu they revere. Cantors of the phonograph era were often secular or secularizing Jews whose work was consumed on mass-mediated records that blurred the line between sacred and secular experience. Golden age recorded cantorial music addressed listeners with a form of sacred music that placed aesthetic beauty on the same level as the religious mandate of prayer, an inversion of the normative values of the Hasidic community. Hasidic singers play with these contradictions through evasion and context-specific compromises.

The commodified and aestheticized version of Jewish prayer associated with old records continues to be critiqued for its perceived transgressions against the purity of synagogue prayer experience and the displacement of the sacred into "immoral" settings. These criticisms and the dents they can make in the reputations of singers place limits on the kinds of performance opportunities that Hasidic cantorial

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revivalists pursue. As I learned while following the careers of the artists profiled in this book, and especially when trying to produce concerts, Hasidic cantors are careful and strategic about when and where they will perform, and mindful of the criticism they may encounter from members of their birth community or their own families.

For example, Yoel Kohn foreswore any performance opportunities outside the Hasidic community in deference to his father's wishes—that is, until he broke with the community completely a few years ago. Yanky Lemmer has had to sustain online disparagement of his performance activities. In both these cases the defining issue was gender and the perceived immorality in performing for audiences with mixed-gender seating. Because cantorial performance brings Hasidic singers into contact with audiences outside their birth community, the potential for violating rules of behavior is greatly increased. For Hasidic singers, pursuing khazones is a disruptive act; the history of cantors as artists who pushed boundaries and social norms in their pursuit of an aesthetic vision resonates in the lives of Hasidic singers who are working in the context of a bounded world of religious ethics.

. . .

My research with Hasidic cantors began in the summer of 2015, when I drove out to Swan Lake, New York, a small town in the Catskill Mountains, to meet Cantor Yanky Lemmer for the first time. Lemmer and his family were vacationing in a bucolic bungalow resort of the variety that is patronized exclusively by Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn. I was already a fan of Lemmer from his YouTube videos and was aware of his prestigious cantorial position at the Lincoln Square Synagogue in Manhattan. Before starting the interview, Lemmer ran in to his bungalow and came out with a pile of 78-rpm records. The records were mostly missing dust jackets and were bundled together in a flimsy plastic shopping bag. Some of these records were a hundred years old. Yanky explained that these were a few loose ends from his collection that he had brought on vacation. He pulled out a record of Gershon Sirota. This particular disc was a later American reissue of a recording made by the famed Warsaw-based cantor in Europe before World War I. Then Lemmer went back inside and came out with an even more fanciful treasure. It was a hand-cranked Victrola, the size of a suitcase. He had bought it at a vintage electronics show in New Jersey.

As he set it up and started to crank, a gang of little boys streamed over from a nearby field to see what was happening. Lemmer spoke to the children in Yiddish, showing off his unusual possession. He let one of the boys give the crank a few turns. The Victrola had no volume control knob; its only settings were on and off. The needle lowered down onto the record and I was immediately impressed by how loud and clear its sound was. The presence of the hundred-year-old record by Gershon Sirota, the famed Warsaw cantor, piping out of the resonant horn was vibrant and traced an arc of excitement through the air.

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At this first meeting with Lemmer, he described to me the interest in cantorial music among Hasidic singers:

> There is a very interesting phenomenon right now that Hasidim are more interested in khazones than any other sect . . . So I'm not exactly sure [when that started], but probably with the . . . sort of with the demise of Yiddish culture. Plus, the explosion of access to media, there had to be something for Hasidim to grab onto. It couldn't be whatever was left of Yiddish culture because a lot of it was secular or profanity, in a Hasid's view. Heretics wrote the stuff, stuff like that. They had to hang onto something. They couldn't hang on to classical music because, oh it's *goyish* [Yiddish, non-Jewish]. So, we went to khazones. And khazones is the most pure form. (Yanky Lemmer, interview August 9, 2015)

In his introduction to the scene of Hasidic cantorial revivalists, Lemmer outlined some of the tensions that would guide me in my research for the next few years. He presented a series of dualisms that drew attention to their fragmentariness, gesturing at a picture of a nebulous *something* that Hasidic singers find in the cantorial legacy and seek to make their own: cantorial music is specifically Jewish, yet it holds a similar allure to the high aesthetic of forbidden non-Jewish European classical music; it is a product of a predominantly Yiddish-speaking world nearly destroyed by the Holocaust (never mind that Yiddish was the native language of almost everyone at the bungalow colony that day), yet it manages to escape the castigating glance of contemporary Hasidic Jews who decry the secularism of much of early twentieth century Jewish culture; it is "the most pure form" (of what, exactly? of Jewish music? of prayer? of modern Yiddish culture?), and yet it is something that is outside the norms of the conservative and preservationist Hasidic world that members of the community have discovered because of newly acquired access to digital media. Enticed by these attractive paradoxes, Hasidic singers look to the canon of classic cantorial records for pathways toward an elevated aesthetic out of which they can constitute an identity as artists and ritual leaders.

In the Hasidic community, the culture of old cantorial stars is viewed with some suspicion. A recent article about Jewish records by a Hasidic author that appeared in the Yiddish-language *Forverts* newspaper repeats accusations against cantors that could have been written a century ago:

> I am, however, not convinced of the holiness of khazones. The real source of the singer, their vocal sound, with their rich, purposeful voice, comes from Italian opera—the pop music of the old days. It is true, people didn't idolize cantors with the same coarse wildness as they idolized the "pop stars," but that doesn't mean the source of khazones is holy. And who were these khazonim of the cantorial golden age? Were they *tsadikim* [Hebrew, righteous men]? It's well known many of the khazonim were pure *goyim* [Hebrew, non-Jews], "hot boys." Not for nothing did the rabbis teach that music can draw one down to hell. Such well known cantors as Zawel Kwartin, Mordechai Hershman, Pinchik, Samuel Malavsky didn't even wear a Jewish beard, barely kept the Sabbath, and perhaps other transgressions.[29]

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The author of this article exhorts against the greats of cantorial music, echoing the century-old claims that recording star cantors of the golden age had one foot planted in the secular world. The argument that cantorial records bring the Jewish sacred into unholy proximity with commercial secularism is relevant in the contemporary Hasidic community. As Yanky Lemmer explained to me, "Look when I grew up, this was the narrative. The *khazonim* [Hebrew, cantors] of the golden age they were all *fray* [Yiddish, free, not religious] and *goyim, mamish* [Hebrew, an intensifier], they didn't mean a word they said, blah, blah, blah . . ." In the eyes of some members of Yanky's birth community the ethical profile of cantorial records and the artists who made them are still under scrutiny.

The work of Hasidic cantorial revivalists and their approach to the cantorial legacy as a contentious art form, pursued by artists despite it being an object of suspicion of impiety, has caused me to reflect on the received narratives that I have taken in, unquestioned, in a lifetime lived among cantors. My grandfather, Jacob Konigsberg (1921–2007), was an important cantor in his generation—throughout the five decades of his career he held prestigious positions throughout the United States, including as High Holiday cantor at the Chicago Loop Synagogue for over thirty years. His recordings are late classics of the genre. He was born as late as one could possibly have been to have still been enculturated in the Yiddish-speaking immigrant milieu in which cantors were a central facet of Jewish popular culture. My grandfather held an attitude of deep contention with organized Jewish communities and could not bend his unflagging commitment to his own nonconformist artistic identity to fit the norms of any institution. In general, he would not step foot in a synagogue if he himself was not leading services, a stance I later learned was not uncommon among "star" cantors. At the same time, he held a deep belief in the truth of the cantorial tradition, the value of its great artists, the integrity and reality of "Jewishness" as a sound that could be recognized and evaluated, even if it could not be defined.

My grandfather first led services as a seven-year-old *vunderkind* in the synagogue in Cleveland founded by his own grandfather. His education as a cantor continued by listening to gramophone records with his uncle Jacob Lefkowitz (1913–2009), also a cantor. My uncle Joshua Konigsberg and my first cousin Zachary Konigsberg all followed the family profession, contributing to a sense of biological continuity associated with the music. Within our cantorial family structure, the *reality* of tradition and the unity of a continuous stream of cantorial knowledge represented in part through bloodlines were accepted as an unquestioned truth.

Despite this belief in the authoritativeness of tradition, I felt there to be a tension in the space between my grandfather's deep antipathy to authority, his maverick position as a permanent outsider, and the master narrative of cantors as upholders of a "truth" about Jewish community and communal sound. I could not name this tension or explore it in historical context. Instead, I adopted a useful narrative about cantors as champions of the primordial Jewish past and their music as a key

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to a mythic Jewish premodernity. This narrative helped me to describe my own musical creativity, which drew on my grandfather's music and gramophone-era cantors, as a form of musical traditionalism.

At the same time, I was aware that the vision of cantorial authority being rooted in ancient lineages did not coalesce with certain historical facts. Cantorial music is a product of modernity and the figure of cantors as folkloric master artists emerges from discourses of Romanticism, nationalism, and Herderian conceptions of the folk. The key "texts" in the cantorial tradition, as I understood it growing up, were gramophone records, products of mass media and popular culture, not an oral tradition. These paradoxes prompted me to play with the tradition. As the leader of the experimental rock band The Sway Machinery I approached khazones with an agenda of recontextualization, reconstructing sounds I had learned in my family or from old records through techniques of musical bricolage, drawing on more contemporary genres to spin new stories around the music. At the same time, in my early writings about cantorial music, I adhered to a romanticized ideology of cultural purity in my fantasies about the "roots" of my musical heritage.[30]

Becoming acquainted with the work of Hasidic cantorial revivalists and analyzing their musical endeavor as a form of *revival* have helped me gain a needed perspective on the problematic concept of tradition. Hasidic cantorial revivalists use the image of heritage and tradition to create new musical and personal agentic paths.[31] The term *revival* is descriptive of their creative process; it highlights the nonlinear temporality of their work. Their learning process is focused on listening to old records—touching the past through mediated experience—not on biological lineages or forms of musical education that are fostered by institutional structures regulated by elders within the community.[32] Cantorial knowledge marks its possessor as a distinctive kind of person, an artist whose work stretches the boundaries of normative behavior, in the context of a social milieu that ostensibly prioritizes conformity and the maintenance of communal structures.

Revival in the American Jewish musical context invokes the image of the klezmer revival, a major music scene that has evolved over the period of the last forty years. In addition to igniting music scenes and star artist careers internationally, the klezmer movement also produced important theorists of revival such as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Mark Slobin. Starting in the late 1970s with the work of young urban secular Jewish musicians who were the children and grandchildren of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, older sounds of Jewish instrumental wedding music inspired the construction of a new genre of music. Klezmer has been discussed by musicians and critics as a form of heritage reclamation in the context of rapid acculturation. Early artists in the klezmer scene saw their work as a form of resistance to the totalizing effects of the immigrant embrace of capitalist American culture through recourse to an image of the Jewish past. Their new-old Jewish dance music would produce a "structure of feeling," creating a suture across the divide of generations and the amnesia of assimilation.[33]

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The Hasidic cantorial revival parallels the freshness and youthful excitement of the early klezmer revival, but it functions in a radically different American Jewish milieu. The embrace of khazones speaks to the cultural knowledge and experience of separatist religious communities and the focus of Hasidic Jews on liturgy and prayer as integral to Jewish heritage. While klezmer players of the 1980s sought alterity from the American mainstream, Hasidic cantorial revivalists today are pursuing an aesthetic path that will offer them aesthetic and creative freedoms within the context of a community that has achieved a separatist lifestyle, at least in its official discourse and public profile. What is operational for Hasidic cantorial revivalists is the fact that their community places restrictions on forms of individual freedom other American Jews take for granted. While reclamation of heritage is an important motivator for cantorial revivalists, the challenge that is specific to Hasidic cantorial revivalists is the need to articulate an artist's identity that can still manage to function within the framework of separatist religious life. With a startling insight into the complex history and aesthetic modernism of khazones, Hasidic cantorial revivalists have staked their intervention into Jewish heritage around the figure of the golden age cantor.

My engagement with the work of this cohort of singers emerges from an activist stance in relationship to the preservation of khazones. I hold a deeply rooted sense of reciprocity with the cantorial legacy, and a concern with the aesthetics of prayer in the contemporary American synagogue. In my own music, I have attempted to tell a story about the radicalism of Jewish liturgical music; I understand cantorial performance as a site where boundary-crossing between communities can be achieved and in which conceptions of the sacred and the aesthetic are gloriously blurred. Furthermore, in my music and scholarship I am motivated by a methodological approach that seeks transformative experience in the voices that can be reclaimed from the archive. The special quality of research that is based in communication with dead artists from earlier generations has a transformative impact on the methods and outcomes of archival delving. I understand Hasidic cantorial revivalists as embodied research practitioners whose methods of reanimating sounds from the archive of old records has lent them unique powers to vivify and illuminate the meaning of cantorial history.

The innovative approach taken by these singers to animating the archive has been instrumental in shaping my own ethnographic practices during my work on this project. Throughout the years of my research, my use of traditional methods of participant observation have been enhanced and transformed by working with learning practices inspired by the cantors' own approaches. I have cultivated a practice of embodied research through deep listening and embodied transcription of old recordings that is modeled on descriptions of learning the cantors have told me about in interviews. Experimenting with their approaches to music-making has played a role in helping me access their musical worlds and their conceptions of the meaning of the music, and to enter into a phenomenology of the learning experience.

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I have approached this research project from the stance of advocate and, at times, musical collaborator. Over the course of the years of this project, I have produced numerous performances with the cantors nationally and in Europe and produced an album of their music. My goals in working with the cantors have extended beyond a purely academic engagement. In producing the concerts and album project, I have sought to make space for their music in environments, such as universities, academic conferences, and even rock clubs, that expand the reach of their work. I am keenly aware that my presence in the cantorial revivalist scene furthers my own agenda of experimentation and aesthetic independence from the normative—I am comfortable with the discomfort of my blurry role in relationship to the "object" of my study, an area of fluidity, creativity, and exchange that is subject to the vicissitudes of music careers, communal restrictions, and the affordances of chance and luck.

My desire to understand and support the work of the cantors has, on occasion, led to conflict about the meaning of the work they are undertaking. The narrative I have arrived at in describing their work has, at times, been in contention with the self-understanding of the cantors. This is particularly relevant to the use of the term *revival*. For most of the cantors I worked with, *revival* holds a questionable valence that they could not embrace, largely because their career experiences have been characterized by marginalization and precarity. I find the term *revival* to be useful to describe the ideologies that support the work of artists who work with heritage art forms. *Revival* speaks to the repair that the cantors seek by bridging across time to find a model for contemporary aesthetic and social needs.

What I have sought to communicate in this book is the energy and intellectual vibrancy of their work that has been undertaken in the face of frequent rejection and commercial failure. For the cantors, the implied optimism in the image of life renewed rang false. My enthusiasm for their music is driven by what I perceive as the undercurrents of utopianism that resonate in the choice to pursue nonconforming aesthetic pathways. For the artists this perspective does not adequately account for the social and economic aspects of their undertaking, which are persistently and naggingly present in their creative lives. I have sought to balance my critique, based in ethnography, with the self-understanding of my research participants in the presentation of their stories.

The work of Hasidic cantorial revivalists lends a perspective that revises conventional narratives about Jewish liturgical music. Their performance style presents khazones as a meditative listening genre; their approach to the music invites a deeper inquest into the mediated listening habits associated with early twentieth-century sacred gramophone culture. The invocation of cantorial repertoires as the basis for nonconformist art practices demands a reappraisal of contemporary professional cantorial ideology that has sought to establish an association of cantors with an ideology of conservative cultural maintenance, characterized by normative conceptions of tradition. The exploratory approach to the archive of cantorial

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records and revival of music from a period characterized by intense musical creativity and competing stylistic approaches undermines the contemporary professional cantorial concept of a totalizing "correct" prayer performance, dependent on institutions for its faithful reproduction.

The musical lives of Hasidic cantorial revivalists point toward the internal diversity of historic forms of Jewish prayer sound. The sound worlds of the past they animate and the heterogeneity of musical forms they access raise new questions about how the current norms of Jewish prayer music have come into being, and what social structures and hierarchies music in the synagogue supports. Hasidic cantorial revivalists turn to an early twentieth-century aesthetic that renews questions about the representation of Jewish collectivity through sound. Their celebration of the khazones aesthetic highlights the shifts in the contemporary music of the synagogue away from Jewish particularism. Over the course of the twentieth century, synagogue musical traditions have emerged in the United States that downplay virtuosic soloist vocal performance. This development is typically discussed in terms of a democratizing move from performance to participation, with professional cantors sometimes pegged as being resistant to progress.[34] Such an approach bypasses discussions of Jewish aesthetics and the role of sonic particularism in establishing collectivity and supporting an ethos of mutual aid, a conception that was central to the way khazones was discussed and consumed in the period of its greatest popularity.

Hasidic cantorial revivalists intentionally harness their talents to an art form that they understand as representative of Jewish prayer and a lineage of sacred artists. Theorizing agency as intrinsically yoked to resistance is inadequate to the task of analyzing their cultural productivity. Instead, I have come to understand the Hasidic cantorial revival as a kind of local contentious practice, inclined toward imagining and reconstructing sounds of Jewish collectivity and building identities through reference to this sound.[35] Singers who seek to redress the perceived aesthetic and spiritual limitations of their community by becoming cantors do not choose this liturgical music idiom because they are trying to dismantle the authority of sacred tradition. On the contrary, they believe that their work, which engages both textual and oral/aural traditions, holds a greater truth in representing the potentials of prayer to express interiority and sophisticated frameworks of emotional engagement. Hasidic cantorial revival is resistant not to Hasidic Judaism, per se, but to binaries in Jewish experience between conceptions of performance and ritual, and between the vast creative potentials in the archive and the muted reception of audiences.

Opportunities for the kinds of activities that would substantiate and legitimize a cantorial revivalist economy are extremely limited. The absence of a clearly defined community of reception complicates the work of revival and draws attention to the utopian quality of their creative longings and the uncertainties implicit in devoting a lifetime to an art form that lacks an audience. None of the cantors

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I spoke to, even those with conspicuously successful careers, make their living exclusively from singing khazones. Hasidic cantors are keenly aware of the limitations on achieving conventional career success from their musical ambitions, and yet they are strikingly committed to their work. At the core of this book is an impulse to understand the means and ends of cantorial revival and its position that lies between religious act, self-disciplined art practice, and rebellious boundary pushing at the norms of American Jewish life.

. . .

The chapters of this book are organized around communities in which music-making takes place. The chapters move along a spectrum of intimacy—from experiences of private record-listening and archival-delving, to public spaces of ritual and performance. The communities structured by cantorial revival can be virtual, connecting musicians to golden age artists across divides of time and across digital space, or they can take place "in real life," in physical spaces that are shared by cantors and their listeners. The work of Hasidic cantors hinges on the multiple meanings that emerge from the experience of animating the archive through performance; the relationship of singers to the Jewish sonic past gives them special affective powers, but simultaneously places limits and skeptical expectations on what public spaces their work can legitimately occupy.

In chapter 1, I explore how early twentieth century cantorial records have come to offer the framework for a musical practice in the present day that expresses nonconformist artistic impulses. I offer a history of cantorial records as a prehistory of the present-day revival, focusing on the history of contention and controversy that surrounded innovative technologies and sacred sound. Cantorial recording stars embraced a new technology that was condemned by critics as undermining the cultural coherence of Jewish liturgy by decontextualizing ritual sound from its place in the synagogue. At the same time, records offered an "imagined ethnography" of the Jewish past that was recognizable and desired by a mass Jewish listening public. I suggest that these popular intellectual currents—of chastisement, on the one hand, and utopian aspiration, on the other—inform the way cantorial music operates on the imagination and aesthetic desires of contemporary Hasidic cantors. I offer a further contextualization of today's Hasidic cantors with an historical outline of the relationship of cantors to Hasidic Judaism. The chapter concludes with an ethnographic account of how records are used in learning practices.

Chapter 2 explores how Hasidic singers develop the skills needed to facilitate working in a synagogue as a professional cantor. For singers who aspire to attain pulpit positions, a learning pathway is needed to bridge the gap between performing music learned from old cantorial records and the ritual norms of the contemporary synagogue. Over the course of the twentieth century, professionalized American cantors working in training seminaries have developed an ideology about what melodies and modal improvisatory forms are appropriate for each

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textual segment of the liturgy, referred to as *nusakh hatefilah* (Hebrew, manner of prayer). In order to learn the style of prayer music employed in synagogues that hire professional cantors, singers from Hasidic backgrounds must find instruction. Noah Schall, a nonagenarian cantorial pedagogue who had personal relationships with famed cantors of the gramophone era, offers lessons in nusakh and has taught several of the cantors who participated in my research. For singers from Hasidic backgrounds, Schall's instruction provides access to musical skills, ideological indoctrination in "correct" nusakh, and enculturation in the community of professional cantors. An exploration of Schall's sacred music ideology will illuminate how his instruction helps revivalists move along a learning path from interpreters of old records to performers of the prayer-leading style associated with professional cantorial practice, adopting Schall's ideology of nusakh as a key element in their cultivation of a cantorial musical disposition. In keeping with their immersion in the archive, revivalists utilize their instruction in Schall's idiosyncratic and nuanced approach to the music of professional cantorial nusakh as a way of interpolating sonic artefacts of golden age records into their work as prayer leaders.

In chapter 3 I discuss how Hasidic cantorial revivalists construct services in synagogues where their soloist cantorial repertoire based on old records is not a normative part of the culture of prayer. As is also the case for cantors across Jewish American denominations, there is a disconnect between the knowledge cantors have when they are initially employed by congregations and the musical skills they implement in the actual services they lead, requiring them to attain new forms of expertise on the job. In this chapter I will discuss the four main musical categories that inform Hasidic cantorial revivalist conceptions of prayer leading: (1) The prayer music they are enculturated in from their upbringing in the Hasidic community; (2) The prayer-leading style associated with gramophone-era cantors; (3) The professional nusakh associated with published anthologies of cantorial music that are taught in cantorial training institutions; (4) The most dominant form in the contemporary synagogue, the folk-pop participatory music that has become ascendant in the past fifty years and that all contemporary cantors must reckon with in their prayer leading. Hasidic cantors undertake a self-directed program of study of classic cantorial records in order to address personal aesthetic desires. In their congregational jobs they are expected to perform in a liturgical style that is removed from this area of expertise. Across American Jewish communities, cantors must cultivate a repertoire tailored to local tastes, usually geared toward facilitating group singing; this well-established phenomenon of synagogue life plays out in distinct ways in the musical careers of Hasidic cantors. While cantorial revivalists may be hired for their unique access to an archive of sacred Jewish music, in practice they are required to fulfill the normative musical expectations of the current American synagogue.

Chapter 4 will explore the sites in which Hasidic cantors perform their historically informed concept of cantorial sound. While synagogues are by and

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large inhospitable to a prayer-leading style that draws on the style of classic cantorial records, performances outside synagogues provide opportunities to experiment with musical content by forming temporary communities organized around cantorial revivalist musical practices. I will discuss three main sites for Hasidic cantorial performance: the internet, the concert stage, and the *kumsitz* (Yiddish, music-making party), attending to how cantors utilize the potentials of each of these music-making spaces to cultivate their artistry and connect with a listening public. Although the normative definition of a cantor is a ritual functionary in a synagogue, for performers interested in historically informed styles of Jewish sacred music contemporary synagogues are not welcoming of their work. I argue that in nonritual performances the cantors are able to articulate a philosophy of sacred listening that is no longer legible in most American synagogue spaces.

Interspersed into the chapters of the book are three interludes that offer portraits of some of the cantors I worked with during my research. These interludes are intended to provide a window into the lives and careers of living artists whose work involves struggle, sacrifice, and moments of profound achievement. The main body of this book is structured by arguments I have constructed that place revivalists in conversation with the archive of old records and the history of American Jewish life. The ethnographic interludes sketch some of the texture of creative life, touching on elements of artists' stories that do not fit easily into a narrativized version of their work or that foreground their priorities and interests over my own investment in creating a linear argument. By attending to the words and experiences of cantorial revivalists, I hope to draw the reader into deeper communication with the elements of surprise and paradox that animate the story of these wonderful artists.

The nonconformist undertaking of Hasidic cantors is geared toward a style of music-making and a form of ritual community that do not currently have a home in any of the worlds that are available to the artists. Whether intentionally or not, cantorial revivalists are inventing a musical community that echoes the unregulated expressiveness of Jewish liturgical popular records of the golden age. Their unmethodical and idiosyncratic movements in this direction cut against the grain of social norms of contemporary Jewish ritual practices. By attending to intimate dialogues of artists with the archive, I hope to shed empathetic light on their idealism, their creativity, and the power of their explorations to achieve transformations in their own personhood and in the communal experience of sacred listening.

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