

U'K'RATEM D'ROR

Music: Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller
Text: Leviticus 25:10

וְקָרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר
לְחֹן: בְּנִגּוּי אֵלֶן שִׁילֹר
מִלִּים: וּקְרָא כֹה:י

INTRO

This resource will help guide you as you rehearse your chapter through the learning of *U'k'ratem D'ror*. It is our hope that this document will make it easier to bring some of the “*midrash*” of the music alive from week-to-week so that when we come together as a HaZamir community, we will all have common understandings of the texts and music we learn together. Please keep these points in mind as you use the following guide:

THE TEXT: Centered and bordered on this page, you will find the complete text for *U'k'ratem D'ror*.

1. CONTEXT: This section provides a brief overview of the context in which *U'k'ratem D'ror* was composed. You will find useful information to share with your singers about the origin of this song as you teach it to your chapter.

2. CONTENT: This section provides guides for how some sections of the music may be interpreted. Many of these suggestions come directly from our maestro, [Matthew Lazar](#). As you are learning the referenced sections with your chapter, you may consider the following exercise:

- Experiment with your singers by rehearsing passages *first without* prompting them to keep in mind one of the interpretations.
- Prompt your singers to **audiate** (to hear in the mind's ear) that interpretation.
- Rehearse the passage again, with the interpretation in mind.
- Follow up by asking your HaZamirnikim for descriptive feedback about the differences between each “take” of this passage.

3. CHEVRUTA QUESTIONS (PAIRED STUDY): In this section, you will find a number of questions you can ask your HaZamirnikim to discuss with each other during rehearsals. This rehearsal activity is not something that should distract from the overall flow of rehearsal; rather it provides an occasional moment for HaZamirnikim to learn from one another and to solidify their own understanding of the materials they have been presented with.

וְקָרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל-יִשְׁבֵּיהָ U'k'ratem d'ror ba'aretz l'chol yoshveha
Proclaim liberty throughout the land,
To all its inhabitants throughout the land.
Justice shall roll down like the water
and righteousness like a mighty stream.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

HaZamirnikim will be able to...

- perform *U'k'ratem D'ror* with musical sensitivity, adhering to both markings in the music and instruction from their conductor.
- maintain their own part both in local chapter rehearsals/performances and in international rehearsals/performances.
- express general knowledge of the context in which the piece was composed.
- express an understanding of the musical markings in the score while demonstrating the ability to execute those markings.
- demonstrate ability to explain the composer's intentions based on understanding of the style of the music, any text painting, and compositional techniques used in the piece.

ASSESSMENT

Informal Assessment: can be performed by the conductor during the course of rehearsal by prompting HaZamirnikim with questions relating to the content included in this guideline and by critically evaluating sections of the music during rehearsal (ex. Conductors may prompt their HaZamirnikim to pay special attention to the rehearsal of a difficult passage, then the conductor can ask for musical feedback (using the learned vocabulary) from the singers).



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1. CONTEXT

“Proclaim Liberty throughout the land, to all its inhabitants.” This passage from Leviticus 25:10 is talking about the Jubilee Year, when slaves go free, land sales revert to their original owners, and any number of other celebrations take place. This passage also inspired the patriots of the American Revolution who were so moved by this text that they inscribed it on the Liberty Bell. There, it can still be seen on display outside Philadelphia’s Independence Hall (and HaZamir Philadelphia’s chapter shirts!). This passage from our Bible stands for the forward-looking strength of the United States – a strength that was tested on September 11, 2001, when terrorists attacked the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center as well as the Pentagon in Washington, DC (and would have hit another target if it were not for the brave passengers on the fourth hijacked flight, who sacrificed their own lives to bring down that plane in a Pennsylvania field).

Following those attacks, the Zamir Choral Foundation took to heart Leonard Bernstein’s words following another devastating moment in American history, the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy:

“This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.”

Mati Lazar approached Benjie Ellen Schiller and asked her to compose a piece that would respond to the events of 9/11 from both an American and a Jewish perspective. Cantor Schiller was specifically inspired by one of her congregants who had been injured in the New York attacks, but fought his way back to health through hospitalizations, surgeries, and rehabilitative therapies. That congregant was in the concert hall when the Zamir Chorale premiered “*U’k’ratem D’ror*” in December 2001.

Though the complete work was initially comprised of three

movements, we are singing the exhilarating final movement which not only “proclaims liberty,” but also connects it to the words of the prophet Amos (who died 745 BCE): “Justice shall roll down like the waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream (5:24).” This passage, from the Prophetic section of the Bible, has inspired contemporary leaders of all faiths. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. included this passage in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Cantor Schiller cleverly sets this section in a gospel-style chant that provides the emotional climax of the piece.

2. CONTENT

- The piece begins with a single rolled chord, followed by a rising cascade of the main motif, a short musical idea that returns throughout the piece, proclaiming liberty in Hebrew. This exciting, rhythmic idea is then paired with the same text, “proclaim liberty,” in English, which speaks to human resilience. The quest for freedom is an eternal quest of the human spirit.
- The emotional center of this piece is the repetition of the words, “Justice shall roll down like the waters,” (in a gospel style) intending -- by repetition -- to drive home the eternal hope of this prophecy.
- The end of this piece displays poignant moments of text painting. While the choir is musically pleading for “righteousness,” the musical line descends, illustrating the idea that while righteousness begins in the heavens, bringing righteousness to fruition is our responsibility as individuals here on Earth. Then, to close the piece the composer uplifts our spirit by providing an ascending musical line for the words, “like a mighty stream;” which provides the emotional force necessary to help us do our part to be true advocates of liberty and justice for all.
- The very last words the audience hears in this piece are “proclaim liberty,” written as a short fanfare. This represents our call to action to be the champions of righteousness throughout the land.

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3. CHEVRUTA QUESTIONS (PAIRED STUDY)

1. What does it mean to you to be free? What do you think is the significance of “proclaiming liberty throughout the land” and the inclusion/distinction of “for all its inhabitants”?
2. This piece was written in response to 9/11, and this movement declares its message with energy and hope, offering both performers and audience members a chance to reflect on this tragic event in a more uplifting light. Was there a time when you or someone you know were able to turn a challenging moment into a hopeful message or lesson?
3. When we sing a piece in both Hebrew and in English, do you find that you relate to the piece differently? If so, how? If not, why not? How does this piece and its words resonate for you as an American or Israeli, and as a Jew?
4. The bridge (middle section) of this piece consists of a choral “vamp” and an improvisational solo. How does being open to the idea of improvising - thinking on your feet - relate to your personal way of proclaiming liberty?

