

# SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

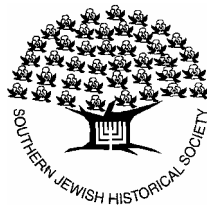
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Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel B. Heimovics, *Managing Editor*

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# Southern Jewish History

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Synagogue Music for Birmingham, Alabama:  
*Arthur Foote's Azi v'Zimrat Yoh*

by

John H. Baron

In his autobiography, the celebrated New England composer Arthur Foote (1853–1937), a Unitarian and admirer of Judaism, describes how he came to write a “complete” Sabbath service for Temple Emanu-El, a Reform synagogue in Birmingham.

In the spring of 1900 I had become interested in the musical service of the Jewish Church, as described to me by Benjamin Guckenberger, a friend who had been organist at a synagogue in Birmingham, Alabama. Before beginning, it was, of course, necessary to find out the meaning of the texts and the accentuation of the words, with regard to which some rabbis of my acquaintance were so kind as to enlighten me. The picturesque service is inspiring to a composer, and I grew very keen on the undertaking. While my conscious object was to fit the music to the feeling of the words by the use of a quasi-modal system, I was unconsciously led to a wholly different sort of writing from ever before, because of the words used—an example of the fact that (as a rule) a composer will write different types of music to English, French, or Italian words. The reason is probably that accents and rhythms differ in the different languages. I always associate Gloucester [Massachusetts] with this service, for it was written there. I have heard it a few times at Jewish temples, and I have always been glad of the experience of writing it.<sup>1</sup>

Although it is possible that Foote's piece had its premiere at Temple Emanu-El, no evidence for that has been found. Foote's key contact, Guckenberger, was appointed temple organist

probably in 1898. At a temple board meeting on August 25, 1899, his position was renewed for the next year to run from September 1 (before the High Holidays) to June 27, 1900 (through *Shevuot*), and he subsequently received renewals for each of the next two years. On March 16, 1902, Guckenberger informed the board that he was leaving Birmingham on that April fifteenth and was therefore resigning his position. Thus, if Guckenberger personally conducted the premiere of Foote's service, it would have had to take place between fall 1900 and April 1902. During the period from 1898 to 1904 there is no mention of Foote, his service, or any special choir hired to perform it in the minutes of the temple board meetings that took place several times per month. Likewise, there is no indication of any special payments made to Guckenberger, Foote, or the choir for the service, and none of the documents of the presiding rabbi at the time, Rabbi Morris Newfield, indicate any such performance. Furthermore, the newspapers, which sometimes reported on services and special events at Temple Emanu-El, remained silent about the honor that Foote bestowed on Guckenberger, his choir, the temple, and Birmingham.

Why would a non-Jewish composer of stature living in far-away New England write a service for a small southern synagogue? How does the composition fit into the musical history of Reform Judaism in the South? What does Foote mean by "a quasi modal system" and that he must set the Hebrew differently from the way he would set English, French, or Italian? Why, with such a great honor bestowed on the Birmingham Jewish community, is there no record of a performance there?

*The Historical Position of Music in Reform Services*

Jewish music in Reform synagogues in America and especially in the South circa 1900 often bears little resemblance to the *nusach*, or traditional music of Orthodox synagogues of that time.<sup>2</sup> Whereas Orthodox *nusach* was transplanted from Europe or the Middle East to American Orthodox synagogues, Reform musical practice in the United States grew largely independently from an external Jewish tradition, although some of the Reform

*Arthur Foote, circa 1895.  
(Boston Public Library/Rare Book  
Department – Courtesy of the Trustees.)*

European music of Hamburg and that inspired by Salomon Sulzer did cross the Atlantic. Except in some major centers, there were few trained cantors available to Reform congregations in the heartland of America at the end of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, thanks to the efforts of Isaac Mayer Wise and other Reform rabbis, more and more men were entering the rabbinate and subsequently serving new congregations in small cities, such as Birmingham. The new American rabbi was minister, preacher, teacher, fundraiser, moderator, psychological counselor, sexton, and administrator, roles most of which were totally unfamiliar to the rabbi in Europe. The rabbi often had to decide what music was to be heard during services even though he had no preparation in music and lacked cantorial training. The members of the congregations came from Polish, Russian, German, French, and, sometimes, Sephardic backgrounds. When anyone in the congregation remembered the music from the Old World, it usually conflicted with what other members remembered. There was no unanimity in the musical consciousness of the congregation, and, in many cases, there was little interest in retaining traditional Jewish practice. Gradually the various liturgies these people brought with them blended into the new English-language liturgy encouraged by the new Cincinnati-trained rabbis. Nonetheless, rabbis and congregants alike recognized that they were unprepared to decide on the appropriate music for Jewish worship.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in the late nineteenth century many Reform congregations and their rabbis depended more on the professional or semi-professional musicians in the community than on cantors to select the repertory for synagogue services. More often than not, the local musicians were Christian. The local church musician could provide singers with pleasant voices and a pianist or an organist to accompany them, and the style of music usually based on Protestant hymns and classical music was exactly what the Jewish congregants found pleasing in their services. If rabbis had become more like Protestant preachers than European rabbis, it was no great leap for the music to emulate Protestant church music rather than traditional chanting and cantorials. Taste and the determination of many Reform Jews to become accepted by the



*Rabbi Morris Newfield*  
(Courtesy, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center  
of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.)

dominant Protestant community led them to make their religious services not much different from those of their non-Jewish neighbors.

The organ had become established in many American synagogues beginning with Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim in 1840, although European precedence had already been set.<sup>4</sup> Twenty years later Rabbi Wise gave halachic approval for the organ at Oheb Shalom Congregation of Baltimore. If there were an organ and church-like choirs, then composers had to be found to accommodate the synagogue songs to the performances. In some cases traditional Christian hymns were adapted with new texts to make them acceptable to Jewish theology. To some extent "reform" Jewish music from Europe was adopted. The music of Samuel Naumbourg, Louis Lewandowski, and Sulzer headed the list that also included the Lutheran-like hymns of the Hamburg reformers. But some congregations began to hire musical directors who felt compelled to write their own music specifically for these services. Such was the case of Frederick Kitziger in New Orleans at Touro Synagogue during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and Sigmund Schlesinger in Mobile at Sha'arai Shomayim synagogue from 1870 to 1906. Kitziger was Christian, but he was helped through the liturgy by Rabbi Isaac Leucht, a fellow German, who no doubt coached him through the Hebrew passages, although the service was mostly in German and English.<sup>5</sup> Schlesinger was Jewish, but there was no ostensible difference in style between his music and that of Kitziger. It all sounded like Protestant hymns.<sup>6</sup> When the first *Union Hymnal* of the Reform movement was published in 1897 under the national leadership of Alois Kaiser (1840–1908), a European-trained cantor, all the hymns were Protestant-like, a practice continued in the editions of 1911 and 1914, and modified only in the 1932 edition.

Thus, for Foote to compose a service when he did was not an unusual phenomenon. Other Christians had written for the synagogue, and the musical forces for which Foote wrote were common to both Protestant and Jewish services of the era. What was unusual was Foote's stature, which far surpasses that of

Kitziger or Schlesinger, who remain little known beyond scholars of Jewish liturgy, and the quality of Foote's work.

*The Music Director*

Benjamin Guckenberger (originally Guchenberger), a native of Cincinnati, studied at that city's famous College of Music. He also studied with George Henschel (1850-1934) of London and with others in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Before coming to Birmingham, he married a soprano, and both he and his wife were instructors at the Cincinnati College of Music.<sup>8</sup> Guckenberger was brought to Birmingham in 1895 to direct the newly-founded Birmingham Conservatory of Music.

He quickly became active in the city, organizing a large choral society and various concerts. He developed an important music festival in 1899 that had two concerts each in 1901 (April 30 and May 1) and in 1902 (April 7 and 8). For these he was extremely fortunate in bringing the famous Theodore Thomas (1835-1905) and the Chicago Symphony as cornerstones of the festival.<sup>9</sup> The programs were varied and always of a high standard. On April 30, 1901, they performed popular European works: part two of Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with Mrs. Guckenberger (as she was billed, thus her first name apparently lost to history) as a soprano soloist, the *Meistersinger* Overture by Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt's *Les Preludes*, Edouard Lalo's *Norwegian Rhapsody*, and violin solos played by Leopold Kramer. The next evening they performed Carl Maria von Weber's *Euryanthe* Overture, two movements from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, Tchaikovsky's *Theme and Variations* Opus 55, excerpts from Wagner's *Lohengrin*, cello solos played by Bruno Steindel, scenes from Grieg's *Olaf*, and, what is significant for our purposes, Beach's *The Rose of Avontown*. Amy M. Beach (1867-1944), known professionally as Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, was a member of the New England group of composers that included Arthur Foote, one of her closest friends.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Guckenberger, who prepared the Beach piece for the concert, knew the important American composers of that period as well as the European masters, and, because he had personal contact

with Foote, he may also have met Beach on one of his trips to New England.

The following year Guckenberger continued his performances of the works of the European masters interspersed with New Englanders. In addition to Wagner's *Rienzi Overture*, Cesar Franck's *Morceau Symphonique* from *Redemption*, Camille Saint-Saëns' *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*, Antonin Dvorak's *Slavonic Rhapsody* and works by Franz Xaver Scharwenka and Max Bruch on the program of April 7, 1902,<sup>11</sup> Guckenberger and Thomas scheduled Arthur Foote's *Skeleton in Armor* for chorus and quartet.<sup>12</sup> The following evening, in addition to works by Wagner, Grieg, Delibes, and Weber, Thomas and Guckenberger performed Horatio Parker's *Hora Novissima*, with Mrs. Guckenberger as soprano soloist. Parker (1863–1919) was another New England composer and close colleague of Foote. Foote had good reason to consider Guckenberger a friend by this time, since Guckenberger clearly admired Foote's music enough to perform it, although the composition of the service probably predated any arrangements for performance of *Skeleton*. At the end of the program on April 8, 1902, both Benjamin Guckenberger and his wife were honored by the chorus and Birmingham for all their achievements in bettering the musical life of the city during their seven years residence, and received wishes for their success in Massachusetts.<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Guckenberger had already established herself as a singer in New England during the previous winter, and Mr. Guckenberger had conducted a Boston Festival Orchestra as guest, probably in 1900.<sup>14</sup> The couple's decision to leave Birmingham for New England was several years in the planning, and Mr. Guckenberger perhaps used his tie to Foote as a means to make the move. Since no trace has been found of him after he left Birmingham, however, this can only be conjecture.

#### *The Temple and the Rabbi*

Temple Emanu-El was founded in 1882 by five Jewish settlers of German and central European background.<sup>15</sup> During the next decade the Jewish population of the city grew considerably along with the city's economy, and the two were, of course, interrelated.

In 1886 the congregation had eighty-five families, mostly of German background. They had come to Birmingham not only to earn a living but to help build a new city. From 1886 to 1889 Temple Emanu-El constructed its first sanctuary, and the leader of the American Reform rabbinate, Isaac Mayer Wise, laid the cornerstone. Financial problems led to delays, and two rabbis came and departed before its completion. One of the five original settlers, Samuel Ullman (1840-1924?),<sup>16</sup> served as president and kept the congregation alive even when a scandal involving a rabbi caused a temporary split in the congregation.<sup>17</sup> From 1890 to 1894, Ullman served as the unordained rabbi of the congregation, where he remained an important official for the rest of his life. In 1891 Temple Emanu-El officially became a Reform congregation, although it had clearly identified with the Reform movement from its inception in 1882.<sup>18</sup> The first Orthodox Jews from eastern Europe began to arrive in 1882 and formed an Orthodox congregation in 1889.<sup>19</sup>

Frank O'Brien organized Temple Emanu-El's first choir, "which included members from five different faiths: one Methodist, one Roman Catholic, one Baptist, two Episcopalians, and only one Hebrew." In this ecumenical fashion the choir followed the typical situation in most Reform congregations of the time, where the choir members were drawn from the pool of professional singers in the community regardless of religion. Professor Fred L. Grambs performed as the first organist. After Guckenberger left in 1902, Grambs, a local band leader, served as choir director at the temple, with Norma Schoolar, soprano, Annie B. Altman, alto, Wyatt Heflin, bass, and B. L. Michaelson, tenor. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Corinne Handley and Edna Gockel were the organists.<sup>20</sup> The organ used in the early days of the synagogue seemed too old by 1898, when the president of the congregation, Burghardt Steiner, "recommended that our ladies form themselves into an organization for the purpose of saving money with a view of purchasing a new organ, for the present organ cannot last but a year or so longer, even with the continued expenditure of money for repairs."<sup>21</sup> Yet the same organ seems to have been repaired in 1900 and no new organ is again mentioned or accounted for in the financial records.<sup>22</sup> Thus

this old organ was probably that which would have been used for any performance of the Foote service. All the choirs and music directors mentioned in the congregation's records were professional, and all the musicians were paid.<sup>23</sup> A volunteer choir is mentioned only in the rabbi's letters to the board of the synagogue and, not being paid, there is no financial record of it. This means that the synagogue possessed a professional choir whose members were capable of performing polyphonic art music (complex multi-voice music) at a much higher level than would an amateur congregational choir, and therefore was in a position to perform a musically sophisticated synagogue art work by a composer such as Foote.

Morris Newfield (1869–1940) was born in Homanna, Hungary, the son of a poor Talmudic scholar.<sup>24</sup> After considerable rabbinic schooling in Europe, he came to the United States in 1891 in order to enter Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Newfield was determined to continue in the tradition of his father as a Jewish scholar, but he also hoped to better his economic position. On graduation and ordination in 1895, he was appointed rabbi of Birmingham's Temple Emanu-El, where he achieved his two aims and remained for the rest of his life. Both Guckenberger and Newfield, coming from Cincinnati, arrived in Birmingham the same fall. The rabbi possibly already knew Guckenberger in Cincinnati, if not personally, at least by reputation, and the brief but significant association of the two in Birmingham may have been a result of that tie.

Newfield's concern with the music of the service seems to have been mixed. In 1897 he noted that the temple board had established a volunteer choir for Saturday morning services the previous year in the hope that it would boost attendance,<sup>25</sup> and that this plan had already showed signs of working. In 1898 he reported that the volunteer choir under Edna Gussen was inspiring, and the same choir under a "Mrs. Rosenhaim" was "ever effective" during the young people's service for Yom Kippur. Apparently, the rabbi's interests were solely with the volunteer choir since he did not mention anything about Guckenberger and the professionals in his annual reports to the temple board. Also,

apparently, attendance at Friday night services was sufficient and the music beyond question, so that he concentrated his energies on building the Saturday service and its music.

A Mrs. Newfield was singing in the volunteer choir in 1898, but what relationship, if any, she had to the rabbi is uncertain, since he was still unmarried in that year. When the rabbi did marry in 1901, he chose as his bride Leah Ullman, Samuel's daughter. She was a voice student at the Birmingham Conservatory and worked directly with Guckenberger. On June 15, 1899, she sang Beethoven's *Adelaide* with Guckenberger accompanying at the piano. The following March she sang a complete recital assisted by pianist Edna Gockel. The city was still so small that the few professional musicians who resided in Birmingham inevitably would be ubiquitous, and, with the synagogue providing a number of them with employment, their close circle could be found there as well as at the conservatory.

#### *Foote's Musical Service*

Foote set fifteen liturgical portions of the Sabbath service (see examples in the Appendix on pages 56–58). Of these, the first thirteen follow in order the common practice of many Reform congregations in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>26</sup> That is, the Friday night services sometimes included portions that traditionally were from the Saturday morning services, because attendance was often poor on Saturdays and rabbis wanted to make sure that Reform Jews would not forget entirely the Saturday liturgy. While in the traditional liturgy the main service was on Saturday morning, in Reform temples the main service was on Friday nights. Many Reform Jews did not observe the Sabbath as a day of rest, because they kept their stores and offices open on Saturday, the key shopping day. Thus, they could attend services only on Friday evenings. In some cases rabbis shifted the Saturday morning services to Sunday morning, but in most cases they took parts of the Saturday service and performed them on Friday evenings. Chief among these transfers was the *Kedushoh*, the Torah reading, with its surrounding pieces, and the

singing of the two most beloved hymns, *En Kelohenu* and *Adon Olam*.

What is striking about the text that Foote set is that twelve of the fifteen portions are in Hebrew. Many Reform congregations at the time had reduced the Hebrew texts to only the *Shema* and used English translations or paraphrases for the rest. Mark Cowett, Rabbi Newfield's biographer, points out that in Birmingham "90 per cent of the service was conducted in English and the rest in Hebrew."<sup>27</sup> By 1902 the struggle between English or German texts had been finally resolved by eliminating the German, and the weighing of Hebrew versus English was still heavily in favor of the latter. The Hebrew text usually appeared in the *Union Prayer Book* (first edition 1895) side by side with the English, but, as Cowett observes, the Hebrew was ignored in practice. Thus, Foote's decision to set Hebrew rather than English is unusual for the time and for Birmingham, a typical assimilationist community with a relatively small Jewish population. The fact that Foote was writing his piece in New England, however, and that his advisers were rabbis of his acquaintance, probably from Boston, may have meant that the rabbis by whom he was influenced did not know the practice in Birmingham; there is no evidence he ever consulted with Newfield.

The transliteration of the Hebrew into Roman letters shows clearly that Foote's Hebrew consultants were of German background; the *y* sound, for example, is written with the usual German *j* letter, and the *v* sound is written with the usual German *w*. The single English text in Foote's setting is the passage "May the words" that always follows the Silent Reading; the *Union Prayer Book* includes no Hebrew for it in 1895 or in later editions. Thus, in this case, there would have been no choice but to use English.

Foote states how excited he was to set a language other than French, Italian, or English because he recognized the subtle musical differences each language has when sung. Of particular interest to him were the rhythmic differences between European languages and Hebrew, and he strove to set the text so that the accents and rhythmic flow of the language would determine the



musical rhythm. In nearly every case he was very successful, as in the *Shema* where the setting looks like that in a typical eastern European cantor's script, i.e., the music is written in three-two meter but flows independently of the musical meter following the non-metrical Hebrew declamation. There is freedom from strict musical meter altogether except when it coincides with the Hebrew accents. This occurs not only in the solo passages, when it is relatively easy for Foote to notate the rhythmic peculiarities of the Hebrew, but also in choral passages where he must also be practical in keeping four different singers together. Only in the final choral passage of *Adon Olom* do the musical accents on "Adoshem" fall on the second, rather than third syllable.<sup>28</sup> Despite this slip, Foote is much more sensitive to Hebrew recitation than some of the other non-Jewish composers of the time, such as the widely popular Kitziger in New Orleans, or even than Jewish synagogue composers like Schlesinger, who were so concerned with sounding musically literate that they allowed the bar line to control them, i.e., they forced the rhythm of the spoken Hebrew to be distorted to fit the musical meter (often regularly recurring accentual patterns of trochees, which are feet of two syllables of which the first is long and the second short).<sup>29</sup>

The difference between Foote's setting of Hebrew and that of English is clear when we look at *May the Words* and the last two works in his service. The natural rhythmic flow of the English text of *May the Words* (see page 58) fits snugly into a regular three-four musical meter even though the text has a variable flow of accented (longer, shown by the / slash) and unaccented (shorter, shown by the . dot) syllables.

. . / . . / . . / . . . . .  
 May the words of my mouth, and the me-[/]ditation of my  
 / . . / . . . . / . /  
 heart be acceptable in thy [//] sight, O Lord;  
 . / . / . / .  
 my strength and my redeemer.

First of all, the English text has clear patterns of accented and unaccented syllables that are not characteristic of most Hebrew poetry. Secondly, the two basic patterns in this short text, ( . . / and / . ) are easily transferred to standard western musical patterns within triple musical meter. The two textually irregular patterns (between the [//] signs) suggest to the musician a more rapid declamation by the division of quarter notes into eighth notes, a division that allows the overall triple musical meter to remain constant. Thus, unlike the Hebrew examples, both the English text and its musical setting remain “regular” simultaneously from the standpoints of each system, whereas in the Hebrew setting the “correct” rendition of Hebrew prosody requires an irregular flow of the music.

Since most rabbis kept the Friday night service short, some well-known prayers were recited only once or twice a month instead of every week. Such was the case with the *V'Shomru* (no. 14) and *How Goodly Are Thy Tents* (no. 15). In the case of no. 15, Foote states clearly that his rabbinic consultants used this text (probably as the opening psalm to the service) only on the third Friday night of the month. The unwavering musical rhythm (accents falling unrelentingly on the first beat of each measure or the first of each pair of eighth notes) recalls that of the Protestant hymn where strict adherence to an unchanging musical meter fits the English textual rhythm.

Foote's choice of harmony is inspired. Within the confines of a simple, standard-practice harmonic system that was known to all composers in the nineteenth century, he avoids trite and trivial progressions and spices up passages just enough to make them fresh without jarring the congregants' sense of standard musical practice. For example, in the *Kedushoh* (no. 5), which is in D major, he ventures into the unrelated key of B-flat major during the *Hal'lujoh* (see examples on the following pages). The progression from D major to B minor to B-flat major and back to D major is both simple and elegant, and it offers harmonic variety not usually found in contemporary synagogue choral music.

The musical setting for solo alto, four-voice mixed choir, and organ is normal for the time in Reform synagogues as well as in

*"Jimloch Adonoi l'olom" from the Kedushah (no. 5).*  
*From Arthur's Foote's Music for the Synagogue.*

*"Jimloch Adonoi l'olom" (continued).*  
*From Arthur's Foote's Music for the Synagogue.*

Protestant churches.<sup>30</sup> Most choirs in Reform synagogues included women and men together, and since cantors (exclusively men at this time) were unavailable except in the largest cities (which definitely did not include Birmingham), the solo part would be given to the best singer available. This may have been Leah Newfield or, perhaps, even Mrs. Guckenberger, and Foote may have had this in mind when he composed his service. In any case, the solo part could have been taken by a tenor by transposing it down an octave (as was the case at a Sabbath morning performance of Foote's service at Temple Sinai in New Orleans in June, 1940).<sup>31</sup> The organ part is written so that it could be played on the piano, although Foote indicates "manual" or "great" and "pedal" at some points. ("Manual" and "great" are common terms for organists indicating specific keyboards of the organ on which they are to play, while "pedal" indicates to the organist that he or she is to use the foot keyboard.)

What distinguishes Foote's service from that composed by many of his contemporaries is the sensitivity of the music to the text and its harmonic inventiveness; i.e., his choice of chords and notes is not hackneyed and his progression from one chord to the next shows a clever and tasteful variety. Here we have one of the country's greatest masters of music applying his genius to the Reform service, and the variety of harmony and rhythm coupled with great sensitivity to the text and ritual far exceeds those elements in the music of so many others of the time. The piece centers around D, both major and minor, as a tonality, meaning that the tone, D, is the focal point for all the chords and melodies.

From these keys he smoothly modulates during the service to A major, B minor, and B major on the one hand, and on the other to F major. This results in a musical cohesiveness to the service as a whole, even though the thirteen or fifteen portions are separated in the actual ritual by non-sung texts, or regular cantillation. As a Christian composer of religious music, Foote had centuries of precedence for this in the composition of the Ordinary of the Catholic Mass, where its separate parts (*Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*), separated in time by other liturgical portions, sung or not, often would be related musically.

*Temple Emanu-El, circa 1910.*

*The Temple, (1886–1912), at Fifth Avenue, North, and Seventeenth Street.*

*(Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives, Catalog #10.76.)*

The flow of the voices, particularly of the solo voices, is within the traditional Jewish prayer style. It shows a distinctly western European *nusach* in its avoidance of the augmented second, a particular interval between two successive notes, such as C to D-sharp, that is characteristic of much eastern European Ashkenazic music and often utilized by both Jewish and non-Jewish composers who want their music to sound Jewish. There are a few instances of chromaticism (such as using sharps and flats for color effect) as in the *Kedushoh*, but essentially the music is diatonic (in the simplest terms, such as using only white keys on the piano) with suggestions of the pentatonic (such as using only black keys on the piano).<sup>32</sup> This style is what Foote describes as “quasi-modal.” In a few instances, melodic motives are carried over from one portion to another; for example, the solos in the *Sh’ma* and the *Bor’chu* recur in the first solo in the *Mi Chomocho*.

The mystery remains as to whether or not the service was ever performed in Birmingham. Foote mentions hearing the piece on several occasions, but he does not say where. Rabbi Newfield's silence on all aspects of the piece strongly suggests that it was either unknown to him or at least not performed in Birmingham. He was so interested in Jewish-Christian relations that this wonderful opportunity of ecumenism would hardly have passed by unobserved by him if there had been a performance in Birmingham. It is even stranger that a piece dedicated to his own temple choir and music director, his wife's teacher, would have elicited no interest whatsoever. Could there have been a rift between Newfield and Guckenberger? Since the service was published by Arthur Schmidt, one of the most important music publishers in America, and since it was written by such a famous composer, there would have been ample opportunity and incentive to have it performed at every Reform temple in America, including Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham. The quality of the music and the appropriateness of the setting would make it ideal for continued performances today.

Foote was Unitarian, but in Birmingham there was no Unitarian Church circa 1900.<sup>33</sup> When a young woman who was Unitarian died in Birmingham in 1898, it was Rabbi Newfield, rather than any Christian clergyman, who officiated, "representing as he does, a faith closer akin to Unitarianism than any other Birmingham minister." This spiritual proximity between Unitarianism and Reform Judaism that apparently was understood in Birmingham at the turn of the twentieth century probably was also felt by both the composer and those Jews who were involved in helping Foote in creating his service. Foote did not compose anything else that could be construed as Jewish, but his one contribution is further evidence of the ecumenicism that was prevalent at the time in liberal circles throughout America and that Foote clearly espoused. In turn, the ecumenicism of the musical portions of the Reform synagogue liturgy during the period from at least 1870 to at least 1930 is evidence of this fundamental philosophy of American Reform Jews.

## Appendix

*"Sh'ma Jisroel"*

(*Arthur Foote: Music for the Synagogue, p. 10.*)



*"Bo-ruch"*

(*Arthur Foote: Music for the Synagogue, p. 11.*)

*"Response to Silent Prayer"*  
(*Arthur Foote: Music for the Synagogue, p. 18.*)

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Wilma Reid Cipolla, ed., *Arthur Foote 1853–1937: An Autobiography* (New York 1979), 92–93.

<sup>2</sup> The following discussion of the music of the American Reform synagogue is based on Emanuel Rubin and John H. Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture* (Warren, MI, forthcoming), chapter 11.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: the Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana and Chicago, 1989), 37–49.

<sup>4</sup> Allan Tarshish, “The Charleston Organ Case,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 54 (June 1965): 411–449.

<sup>5</sup> John H. Baron, “Frederick Emil Kitziger of New Orleans: A Nineteenth-Century Composer of Synagogue Music,” *Musica Judaica*, 5 (1982): 21–33.

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Zietz, *The Gates of Heaven: Congregation Sha’arai Shomayim, The First 150 Years* (Mobile, AL, 1994), 45 (with a portrait of Sigmund Schlesinger on page 47), and William Tuckman, “Sigmund and Jacob Schlesinger and Joseph Bloch: Civil War Composers and Musicians,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 53 (September 1963): 70–75. Both Kitziger and Schlesinger borrowed well-known secular music by such composers as Beethoven and Donizetti and used them in Jewish liturgical situations with added or new words.

<sup>7</sup> Fletcher Anderson, “Foundations of a Musical Culture in Birmingham, Alabama, 1871–1900,” *Journal of the Birmingham Historical Society*, 6 (January 1980): 2–17.

<sup>8</sup> *Birmingham News*, April 8, 1901, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas founded the Cincinnati College of Music in 1878 and was conductor of the Chicago Symphony from 1891 to 1905. At the time of his appearance in Birmingham he was one of America’s most prestigious musicians.

<sup>10</sup> *The Rose of Avontown*, opus 30, was her most often performed work. See Walter S. Jenkins, *The Remarkable Mrs. Beach, American Composer*, John H. Baron ed. (Warren, MI, 1994), 46. Beach’s personal papers in the University of New Hampshire Library include a copy of the review of the piece from a Birmingham newspaper.

<sup>11</sup> *Birmingham News*, March 21, 1902, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Originally for orchestra, it was composed in 1891, premiered by the American Composers Choral Association in New York on April 28, 1892, and performed again by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer on February 3–4, 1893. See Wilma Reid Cipolla, *A Catalog of the Works of Arthur Foote 1853–1937*, in *Bibliographies in American Music Number Six* (Detroit 1980), 45. The concert was reviewed in *Birmingham News*, April 8, 1902, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Birmingham News*, March 15, 1902, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1901, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (University, AL, 1974), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi: Morris Newfield and Alabama, 1895–1940* (Tuscaloosa, 1986), 30 and 51, gives two different death dates, 1920 and 1924, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. For extensive biographies of Ullman cf. Margaret E. Armbruster, *Samuel Ullman and "Youth": the Life, the Legacy* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), and "Samuel Ullman: Birmingham Progressive," *Alabama Review* (January 1994): 29–43.

<sup>18</sup> Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 14, claims that Temple Emanu-El affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1887.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 54–55.

<sup>20</sup> Edna Gussen (nee Gucken) succeeded Guckenberger as director of the Conservatory as well. See *Birmingham News*, April 12, 1902, 16. According to Lester Seigel, chair of the Fine and Performing Arts Division at Birmingham-Southern College (the successor to the Conservatory of Music), she remained "organist at the Temple until the mid 1930s" and is best remembered as "the composer of the Alabama state song, with words by Julia Tutwiler." Seigel, e-mail message to author, November 21, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> File no. 817.1.1.1.1: Report to the City by B. Steiner, pres., Aug. 12, 1898, Temple Emanu-El Records, Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives and Manuscripts (hereafter cited as Temple Emanu-El Records).

<sup>22</sup> File no. 796(2).1.2: minute books 1892–1913, minutes for January 10, 1900, Temple Emanu-El Records. According to Seigel, the temple building was sold to a church in 1913 and razed about 1940. The present Temple Emanu-El building replaced the original in 1913.

<sup>23</sup> File no. 796(2).1.2, minute books 1892–1913, Temple Emanu-El Records, meeting of October 21, 1902, reports on a strike by the temple musicians, which was quickly settled.

<sup>24</sup> Cowett, *Newfield*, 1. The biographical information given here is based on Cowett's book, and additional information is taken from letters and other materials in file no. 817.1.1.1.1, Temple Emanu-El Records.

<sup>25</sup> The board minutes do not mention the creation of the volunteer choir. Although some congregations put new emphasis on the Friday evening service and others created new Sunday morning services, many rabbis, including Newfield, tried to maintain at least a short Saturday service.

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of the changes accepted in the first *Union Prayer Book* (1895) approved by the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis, see Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia, 1971), especially 586–591.

<sup>27</sup> Cowett, *Newfield*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> Another "mistake" is the suggested accent on "go-*ali*" in *Adon Olom*, but here the unaccented "a" could be considered a pick-up to the accented "li."

<sup>29</sup> Although Rabbi Isaac S. Moses' *The Sabbath-School Hymnal: A Collection of Songs, Services and Responsive Readings for the School, Synagogue and Home*, 14th ed. (New York, 1921), was written for a London congregation, it was popular in some southern Reform synagogues, such as in Alexandria, Louisiana. It was essentially unchanged since the sixth edition in 1904 and the seventh in 1907 and was mostly in English, with a selection of Hebrew hymns added at the end of later editions. Nearly every piece is in four-part traditional harmony with an occasional alto solo in the Hebrew selections. There are even a few brief cantillations for the solo voice. While the Protestant-like hymns suit the English text (Moses states that he took special care to translate German texts into English for

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hymns originally written in German), the Hebrew prosody is seriously damaged with the imposition of such a style of music on the Hebrew texts. As in the cases of Schlesinger and Kitziger, Moses shows none of the sensitivity and inventiveness of Foote.

<sup>30</sup> This setting occurs regularly in the services of Kitziger and Schlesinger, while in Sulzer the tenor is used more often instead of the alto solo, because Sulzer was writing for his own voice.

<sup>31</sup> The author's copy of Foote's service is that used in the Temple Sinai performance in 1940. It is heavily edited in pencil, presumably by the then music director, Henry S. Jacobs.

<sup>32</sup> The pentatonic scale is common among many ethnic groups around the world but is rare in traditional folk and classical music of the West. Thus, when nineteenth-century composers wanted to sound "ethnic," they often used pentatonic scales. Since Mussorgsky and Debussy, however, pentatonic scales have become more common in western art music.

<sup>33</sup> Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 20.