

Radlett Reform Synagogue Choir AGM report up to April 2020

We continue to sing on the 2nd Shabbat morning service in every month irrespective of whether we 'coincide' with a Bar or Bat Mitzvah or not, as well as for Rosh Hashanah, Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur. At least, that was true till our national 'lockdown'.

Jessica Wachtel, Claire Bamford and Stephen Starr have recently been singing with our choir, and that has been a great boost for us. We have been glad that most of our long-standing membership has stayed with us.

Our particular thanks to Carmel Byers, Debbie Behrens, Helen Shabetaj, Lawrence Blaston, Pauline Morris, Sara Young, Tim Beasant, Vanessa Freedman and Yael Lynn, for reappearing throughout the year come rain or shine, all of whom have done so for very many years. Helen is a music teacher and professional accompanist, who now sometimes conducts our choir as well.

Our biggest change before the lockdown, has been the advent of our new Cantor Sarah Grabiner - we first met her as a choir on 14th July 2018. She has suggested many newish melodies in addition to our more usual ones. She guided us to take part in a Friday evening service on 25th October 2019, which was billed as an opportunity to celebrate our choir with a Chavurah supper afterwards when she stood up and praised us. Some of our members and Cantor Sarah took part in a national Holocaust Day memorial concert that Cantor Sarah organised very successfully on 26th January 2020. On 8th February 2020, Cantor Sarah helped us to make a lot out of Shabbat Shirah for the Song of the Sea, Ex 15:1-18.

We were planning extra rehearsals, but only fitted in one on a Sunday afternoon 1st March 2020, before the Lockdown took effect on 23rd March 2020. Since the lockdown, we have of course had to suspend singing as a choir. On 18th April 2020 though, we were at a Radlett Reform Synagogue on-line Saturday morning service where Andrew Blankfield, his wife Bernadette, and his daughters Susie and Izzy formed a lovely quartet to act as an alternative choir for our sung prayers.

This is Carmel's 40th year of singing alto with our choir, and my (Alan's) 40th year of conducting it. We did not expect our 40 years to end in a 'lockdown'! We have continued to 'appear' as a choir via the internet once a month in selected sung prayers, that Cantor Sarah has organised and collated for us via Youtube.

If you are thinking about joining us, the music is very enjoyable and we have a great 'group spirit'. The Hebrew in our sheet music is in English phonetics, and the rehearsal schedule is not onerous: We meet for one hour before our once monthly Shabbat morning choral service, and on occasional evenings and Sunday afternoons, particularly before the High Holy Days. Do contact one of us if you are interested via the office

office@radlettreform.org.uk

Alan Byers and Andrew Blankfield