*The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue: Volume Three A: The Sabbath Eve Service* by Sholom Kalib. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), ISBN 1-8156-2927-3. Part One: The Sabbath Eve Service (Beginning), lviii, 700 pages; Part Two: The Sabbath Eve Service (Conclusion), xxv, 584 pages; Part Three: Annotative Commentary, xxi, 348 pages.

Syracuse University Press has recently issued the third volume in Sholom Kalib’s ambitious five volume (twenty book) project on *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*. Volume One was devoted to history and definition. Volume two presented the weekday services. And now volume three brings us music for the Sabbath Eve service. Parts four through nine of volume three (already outlined in the introduction to the current volume) will cover the services for Sabbath Morning, Sabbath Afternoon, for Special Sabbaths, and paraliturgical hymns (z’miros).

Sholom (a.k.a. Sylvan) Kalib (b. 1929 in Dallas, Texas) is a renowned cantor and music theorist. Since his retirement from Eastern Michigan University in 1999, Kalib has devoted most of his energies to completing this vast anthology under the aegis of his Jewish Music Heritage Project (http://www.jmhp.org). The stated purpose of the project is “to document, catalog, and disseminate one of the great sacred musical traditions of the world, namely that of the Eastern European Synagogue, which is now in real danger of being lost forever.”

As in volume two (reviewed by me in JSM ??), three Eastern European traditions are here represented and identified: the east-central traditions of Galicia (Czech, Slovak and Hungarian), the eastern traditions of Lithuania (Polish and Russian), and the “warm devotional” traditions of the Hassidim in Volhynia. The current volume also includes music by Salomon Sulzer and other Central European composers. The renditions are further classified as to the extent of improvisatory embellishment on the bare outlines of the nusah. Level one is “incipient *chazzônus*: the most elementary usage of traditional cantorial technique.” Level two, “intermediate *chazzônus,*” represents “the more gifted *ba’al* *t’filô*.” And level three, “advanced *chazzônus,*” presents “extended as well as virtuosic recitatives of the professional *chazz’n*.” As an extension of level three, Kalib also provides liturgical choral compositions by noted hazzanim.

This is a huge project. There are 830 entries in the current volume, representing 228 sources: anthologists and composers. Plus there are 316 pages containing detailed musical analysis of each of the entries. Kalib himself is represented by 166 selections, far and away the largest contribution. Some of the entries are the editor’s transcriptions from recordings, both commercial and private. Some were copied from published sheet music. And others were taken from “partituren” – cantors’ handwritten collections.

Kalib has included many settings of the same text. For example, there are 17 illustrations of *bame madlikin*, and 34 of *bôr’chu*. Why so many? Kalib provides his reasoning: (1) to illustrate the diversity within the tradition (2) to illustrate different approaches to tone painting and to the overall spirit of particular passages, (3) to illustrate a variety of *nusahim*, and (4) to document and preserve these compositions, and to perpetuate the reputations of their creators.

Kalib writes in his preface, “With the gradual attrition of the *kôhôl* and the concomitant replacement of it by Anglo-acculturated generations bereft of the knowledge and background needed to experience genuinely devotional intonation and interpretation of prayer, this line of communication between *chazz’n* and *kôhôl* became severed, and has ceased to exist. The resultant vacuum, also explained in volume 1, was gradually and increasingly filled by congregational singing, in an unrelenting trend toward simplistic, lighthearted tunes.” And that’s just a small sampling of his critique of current trends in synagogue music, a critique that becomes increasingly harsh and explicit.

Allow me to state from the outset, I’m a fellow curmudgeon. I also lament the dwindling of *nusah*-knowledgeable congregants and practitioners. I also decry the near-universal rejection of our attempts to illustrate the sacred text through musical drama and beauty. I also rail against the idea that every moment of synagogue music must be exclusively taken over by congregational singing of metered prayer tunes, many of which are insipid, inappropriate, and just don’t fit the words.

*The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue* is a wonderful resource for cantors and *ba’aley tefillah*. However, because of the editor’s approach, it does not meet the standards of academic ethnomusicology. Kalib writes, “The purpose of the present work is perpetuation of the tradition in its zenith form through systematic documentation.” But he has allowed himself the freedom to make numerous changes in his transcriptions. His changes include alterations of rhythm to suit proper prosody, and changes in accompanying harmony and voicing. In many cases he removes organ parts to make the music acceptable in Orthodox congregations. In some cases he creates a pastiche by combining bits and pieces from different compositions. He notes that such “improvements” have been common practice in the tradition, and that such alterations should be made only by a person “thoroughly knowledgeable and imbued with the spirit and practice of the musical-liturgical tradition,” which he certainly is.

Let’s have a closer look. Example 1E is *Ma Tovu* attributed to S. Sulzer. And yet the editor has chosen Joseph Sulzer’s arrangement of his father’s music, rather than the original. Furthermore, this *Ma Tovu* was originally published in a section for *Shalosh Regalim*, not Shabbat.

Example 10A-2d combines two different settings by Lewandowski of Psalm 92, *Mizmor Shir L’yom Hashabôs,* with the organ accompaniment removed. The first 60 measures are a transcription of Lewandowski’s setting number 24, again with the organ accompaniment removed. Kalib recomposed measures 55-60 in order to accommodate the modulation to the well-known *Tzadik Katômôr* from Lewandowski’s setting number 21.

Given that the editor has chosen to include so many settings of each text, the reader is occasionally puzzled by some glaring omissions. Where are the well-known settings by Lewandowski of *L’chô Dodi*, *V’shôm’ru*, and the *Kidush*?

Kalib has it in for congregational singing. He writes, “Omitted from this and all volumes of the present work are any examples of congregational singing … The role of the congregant was to *dav’n* (pray with conviction), not to sing together with the *chazz’n* or choir. … Congregational singing was introduced in the United States around 1914 in an attempt to accommodate a growing element either ignorant of the liturgy or disinclined to devotional prayer.” He’s right, but has he gone too far? There are certainly many examples of hymns and responses sung by the *kahal* that predate the twentieth century. Furthermore, Kalib has included some congregational tunes, but has omitted many of the best-known ones. He refers to the singing of *Y’did Nefesh* before *Kabbalat Shabbat* as “a travesty of gravely serious proportions.” The “lamentable” congregational singing of *L’chô Dodi* “has cheapened and vulgarized the sublimity of this extraordinary liturgical poem.” And the “inferior congregationally-sung melodies” for *Môgen Ôvos* has “wiped out the sublimity” of the text.

None of his examples of *Adon Olôm* are congregational melodies; all are compositions for cantor and choir. He includes Gerowitsch’s setting of *Adon Olôm* but complains that “Throughout most of the twentieth century, the most widely sung melody for *Adon Olôm* was a simplified version of the soprano line of the Gerowitch composition.” But was it? Gerowitsch himself actually labeled the tune as “AW” (Alte Weise), suggesting that he had created an extended composition out of a melody that was already well known to the masses.

Kalib has included a selection of *Z’miros Lel Shabôs*. *Shôlom Alechem* is presented in eight settings (including the well-known Goldfarb composition, re-arranged to accommodate the tripled performance of each stanza), *Eshes Chayil* in 4 settings (omitting, of course, that of Ben-Zion Shenker), *Askinu S’udôsô*—4, *Azamer Bish’vôchin*—3, *Kol M’kadesh Shvii*—6, *M’nuchô V’simchô*—8, *Ma Y’didus*—2, *Yom Ze L’yisrôel*—3, *Kô Ribon Ôlam*—8, *Tsôm’ô Nafshi*—3, and *Tzur Mishelo*—12. Why did he choose to include Shabbat table songs? It seems to contradict his premise of focusing on elaborate musical settings of liturgical texts rather than congregational singing.

Sadly, the author sometimes resorts to cliché rather than informed research, making generalizations rather than relying on data from surveys. Kalib reports that “sensitive intonation by a master chazz’n and/or choir” evoked “momentary solace” within “the God-fearing Jewish masses of Eastern Europe.” Does the author really know what “feelings were evoked within the masses”? He may be retrojecting his positions onto a vanished culture when he states “chazzanic as well as choral renditions of the entire *Hashkivenu* text were particularly looked forward to by the Eastern European Jewish masses.” That may be an overstatement. Was he there? Did he interview witnesses? Does he know how many of them were looking at their watches instead?

A few words about Kalib’s transliteration. By eschewing regional dialects in favor of a standardized Ashkenazic pronunciation, he has imposed an artificial consistency on source materials that represent a variety of linguistic traditions. He states that he has based his pronunciation transcription on “that of Vilna, Lithuania, … considered the most scholarly and literary of eastern Europe.” But Kalib would have been more scholarly if he had not neglected dagesh hazak — וְיִתְהַלָּל is transcribed "v'yis-ha-lôl" instead of "v'yis-hal-lôl”. And by transcribing מַלְכוּתֵהּas mal’-chu-se he has omitted the mappik and confused vocal sh’va for silent sh’va.

Despite these drawbacks, Kalib is to be commended for his efforts to preserve the great traditions of Eastern European hazzanut. The many volumes of his project belong on the shelves of every library, every school music department, every synagogue and every cantor.