

## THE 4 M'S OF MUSIC: A PARADIGM FOR DISCUSSING JEWISH MUSIC

### MUSIC OF MAJESTY, MUSIC OF MEDITATION, MUSIC OF MEETING, AND MUSIC OF MEMORY.

(Some have suggested there should be a 5th 'M' of Music: MUSIC OF MOVING ALONG)

"Musicians the world over testify to the innate spiritual power of music. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that music used in worship invokes a certain sense of the presence of God. However...God is known in more than one way. Different kinds of music establish different modes of openness to the many sides of God.

Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller of HUC-JIR School of Sacred Music, in New York, illustrates four different ways of knowing God, each of which demands a different musical type. These are;

1) **Music of Majesty** corresponds to most of the lavish repertoire of the Western Art tradition. It is the full-bodied music of a magnificent pipe organ filling a cathedral and thrilling the people who throng there. (Think of Sulzer's Sh'ma or the final strains of Kol Nidre, or Janowski's Avinu Malkeinu). Most of this music arrived with the Enlightenment and the certainty that God would be present as a distant and majestic ruler. Reform Judaism especially developed a rich and varied repertoire of this music, which proclaimed the presence of a mighty God who rules the universe in grandeur.

2) **Music of Meditation** is just the opposite. It suggests bowing our head, closing our eyes, focusing inward rather than outward. Examples of this soft, gentle music may be found after the silent prayer in Yihyu L'Ratson. Even on occasions where majesty is the order of the day, a full service will probably include meditative moments, as a sort of musical down-time, an opportunity to know God as Elijah did, not in the whirlwind but in the still, small voice within us.

3) The most significant innovation of our time has been **Music of Meeting**; the music that invites connecting with God not on high or even within, but through the miracle of community. Music of meeting naturally invites group singing, a sure sign that we are not alone. Since, in our time, we are apt to know God best precisely through intimacy, music of majesty and music of meditation are not enough, and we desperately need music of meeting if we are to know God in our time.

4) A final way of knowing God is through the miracle of connecting ourselves backward through time. Toward that end, worship requires **Music of Memory**. Every tradition has such favourites. These too, are not necessarily the highest form of musical idiom, but they are songs that echo through history reminding us of the community that came before us. We may listen reverently or sing with all our might, depending on the song. Music of Memory may simultaneously be music of majesty, meditation or meeting, but we sing it because it is 'traditional'."

Extract taken from **The Art of Public Prayer (Not for Clergy Only) 2nd edition**

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman

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**QUESTIONS WE MAY CHOOSE TO ASK OURSELVES WHEN LEADING A SERVICE:**

- What does the text mean?
- What role does it serve at this point in the service?
- What am I trying to achieve at this moment? Overall?
- Does this piece of music help move me towards that goal?
- Does the melody match the text in an appropriate way?

<b>MUSIC OF MAJESTY</b>	<b>MUSIC OF MEDITATION</b>
<b>MUSIC OF MEETING</b>	<b>MUSIC OF MEMORY</b>

In order to find music that enables members of our communities to connect to the texts we have to be prepared to compromise. We recognise that while (progressive) synagogues may well use the same liturgy, the way they choose to express that liturgy is often very different. For example, one congregation may have a very strong and positive choral tradition, while another might be known for singing more contemporary music, most often led by one individual. When categorising music, we must remember that my music of meditation may be your music of majesty, and your music of majesty may be the Rabbi's music of memory!

**We can not box our rich heritage of music into any one category - we can but use it as a tool to be aware of the musical needs of our congregation in prayer – creating space to find the sacred in all melodies, whether we know them as 'traditional' or contemporary.**