



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WASHINGTON, DC, March 15, 2024:

Even in living memory, the locus of Jewish classical music has not always been Israel or the United States of America. This month, Acis is proud to release **ART SONGS OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA**, a new album of songs performed by Ian Pomerantz (bass-baritone), Byron Schenkman (piano), and Sarah Freiberg (cello). The album is “a story of stories”. It uncovers a treasury of Jewish art song through which the diversity of the diaspora experience, and the lives, countries, and compositional styles of many overlooked composers is celebrated. Many of the songs have not been recorded in the digital age and have survived only in archives up until now. Amongst them, there is queer, female, refugee, Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi representation.

Pomerantz and Schenkman’s research and performance project is one of the heart, and the album has been years in the making. It features nineteen works written by ten composers, with songs in six languages, together with piano and cello solo tracks. The liner notes come with modern translations and biographical details deepened through new research and the cooperation of surviving family members and their estates.

Pianist **BYRON SCHENKMAN** says, “This program is one of the most personally meaningful of the more than forty recording projects I have been a part of. Like so many Jews in diaspora, I was taught from an early age to hide, or at least downplay, my Jewish identity. Now it is a joy and an honor to celebrate not only my own heritage but the rich diversity of Jewish experience.”

Bass-baritone **IAN POMERANTZ** says, “The composers and poets here are a testament to the persistence of Jewish art music down the centuries and their legacy that continues into the present. We had to limit ourselves to what would fit on an album—an album that will now be a door for others into a vast treasury of music that needs exploring! We were particularly fortunate to have the involvement of the living composers, as well as several descendants and estates of those who have died, to help us bring these works to life while exploring the histories of our own families in the 19th and 20th centuries.”

THE COMPOSERS:

- * **RABBI LEON ALGAZI:** Romanian-born, Vienna-trained composer, focused on collecting and preserving music of the Romanian Sephardic tradition.
- * **SIDOR BELARSKY:** Singer, arranger, and archivist, with a major operatic career in Russia, a prolific recording artist who published several volumes of Yiddish repertoire.
- * **HENRIËTTE BOSMANS:** Queer Dutch composer and pianist, specialized in writing for cello. Staged illegal concerts during the Nazi occupation of Amsterdam.
- * **MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO:** Italian composer of Sephardic heritage who fled Mussolini’s Italy for the United States.
- * **JOEL ENGEL:** Considered the father of modern Jewish art music, collected and transcribed folk melodies.
- * **LORI LAITMAN:** Contemporary American composer, set the poetry of Abraham Sutzkever, a first-person account of life among the Jewish partisans in present-day Lithuania, Belarus & Poland.
- * **DARIUS MILHAUD:** French composer of Judeo-Provençal, Sephardi, and Ashkenazi heritage who set Jewish texts and melodies throughout his life and was dedicated to the preservation of Judeo-Provençal tradition.
- * **ILSE WEBER:** Czech composer, nurse, and poet, who composed lyrics and songs while interned at Theresienstadt. Sang *Wiegela* [track 19] for her children on their way to the gas chamber.
- * **LAZAR WEINER:** Father of Yiddish Art Song, wrote for voice and piano during the aftermath of WWII.
- * **YEHUDI WYNER:** A never-recorded work by the son of Lazar Weiner and contemporary Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer.

Acis

SCHENKMAN says: “We hope the album will help expand, enrich, and diversify (what’s been known as) the Canon of Western Music by elevating beautiful songs that are worthy of preservation, revival, study, and performance—and in turn recognize each composer and their distinct communities with a new sense of inclusion and welcome.”

EARLY PRAISE FOR THIS FORTHCOMING ALBUM:

“A masterfully performed and recorded selection of Jewish art music.” Dr. Zisl Slepovitch
Musician-in-residence at Yale University’s Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.

“Schenkman and Pomerantz capture the yearning of the Jewish spirit as it peers out through the windows of classical art song...invites the listener into the deeper mysteries of the Jewish soul.” Matt Austerklein
Cantor and musicologist, [Beyond the Music](#)

“A brilliant mosaic of the Jewish musical experience in all its variety and splendor...each song is a gem.”
Gloria J. Ascher
Associate Professor Emerita, International Literary and Cultural Studies, Judeo-Spanish, Tufts University

“Wide-ranging repertory, insightfully presented... Warmly recommended!” Joel Bresler
Publisher, www.sephardicmusic.org “over 100 years of recorded Sephardic music”

Art Songs of the Jewish Diaspora is available for purchase in physical format and downloadable studio masters from the Acis site. Streaming on all platforms from day of release.

THE ALBUM DROPS ON THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM: SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2024.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES:

[Ian Pomerantz](#) (bass-baritone)

[Byron Schenkman](#) (piano)

[Sarah Freiberg](#) (cello)

THE LABEL:

Acis is one of America’s leading independent classical record labels that boasts a roster of GRAMMY®-winning and nominated artists. Founded by twice GRAMMY®-nominated producer, conductor Geoffrey Silver (original co-founder of New York Polyphony, former Chorus Master of twice GRAMMY®-winning The Washington Chorus), the label has a track record of excellence in the fields of early music, choral, and organ, and champions both emerging and established artists in North America and Europe—particularly women and artists of color.
www.acisproductions.com

For media inquiries and interview requests please contact:

Geoffrey Silver, Acis CEO

geoffrey.silver@acisproductions.com

Tel: 646.320.8425

For print-ready images, SoundCloud, studio quality downloads, and review CD mail request, please visit:

<https://www.acisproductions.com/art-songs-of-the-jewish-diaspora-ian-pomerantz-pressdpk>

The link for consumers is:

<https://www.acisproductions.com/art-songs-of-the-jewish-diaspora-ian-pomerantz>

ENDS//