

GIDEON ZELERMYER

CANTOR · TENOR

BIOGRAPHY

Gideon Zelermyer has served as cantor of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal since 2004. Founded in 1846, the congregation has maintained a professional choir since 1887 and remains one of the few in the world whose services are led each week by cantor and male choir, in the tradition of the great choral synagogues of western Europe.

A lyric tenor of exceptional warmth, evenness and line, he took his degree in Judaic Studies at The George Washington University, where he began studying with the tenor Dr. Robert Baker — his first voice teacher, and his teacher still. He continued at the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute under Naftali Herstik, Chief Cantor of the Jerusalem Great Synagogue, and with the composer Raymond Goldstein and Cantor Chaim Feifel, acquiring an authority in traditional *chazanut* and *nusach hat'filah* that has marked his singing ever since. He made his operatic debut as Rinuccio in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy of Music, and a London reviewer of his UK debut called his singing “Pucciniesque.”

His cantorial singing is deeply influenced by his love and deep knowledge of opera. Since 2020 he has shared that knowledge in *A Night @ the Opera*, an online series now in its seventh year, whose guests have included Steven Pinker, Leon Wieseltier, Rabbi David Wolpe, the Canadian baritone Russell Braun and Barry Tucker of the Richard Tucker Music Foundation.

He was cantorial soloist on Leonard Cohen's *You Want It Darker*, singing the *Hineni* that opens the album, and on *It Seemed the Better Way*. The album received the 2017 JUNO Award for Album of the Year, and its title track the 2018 Grammy Award for Best Rock Performance. The two men corresponded for seven years; Cohen inscribed a self-portrait to him in gratitude for his beautiful voice. That recording has since carried his voice into *Peaky Blinders*, *Black Earth Rising*, *Billions* and, in 2026, James Blake's *Death of Love*.

The three-volume *Music of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim* series was produced by Martha de Francisco at McGill's Schulich School of Music. *Judeo-Caribbean Currents*, published by the Jewish Music Research Centre of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, preserves the liturgical tradition of Curaçao's Mikvé Israel-Emanuel synagogue, where his family has deep multi-generational roots. He is heard on two contemporary classical albums, Jaap Nico Hamburger's *Tzimtzum* and *Art Choral Vol. 10: Hallelujah* with Ensemble ArtChoral under Matthias Maute. He is also the editor of three custom Shaar Hashomayim editions of the Koren Sacks prayerbooks.

He has conceived and presented ten large-scale Shaar Hashomayim concert productions, among them Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal under Kent Nagano in the synagogue sanctuary, and has sung three world premieres. He has appeared with the Orchestre classique de Montréal and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and at the United Nations General Assembly, and has lectured at Harvard Divinity School, UCLA, Queen's and McGill.

He sings the national anthems for the Montreal Canadiens at the Bell Centre and for the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park.