The Hebrew Orphan Asylum Band of New York City, 1874-1941

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Community, Culture and Opportunity

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Writing a book about an orphanage provokes one to think about family. I am very lucky to have had a phenomenally supportive family and it is to all of them that I dedicate this work. In addition to the unwavering love and support of my children and parents, I especially want to thank my husband and love of my life, Marc J. Chelemer, for his guidance, advice, enthusiasm and excellent editing skills.

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INTRODUCTION

"BIGGEST LITTLE BAND IN THE UNITED STATES"[1]

In the same way that it teemed with people, smells and languages from many places, Gilded Age New York teemed with possibility and optimism. To be in America, to be an American, meant the opportunity for success. Individual success was on a par with community success, on macro- and micro- levels. New York, as a large community, felt entitled to present the biggest of any national celebration, to boast the best and most of what that there was in America. Immigrant groups, anxious to be part of the American experience and culture, erected institutions to facilitate assimilation and success. It was in this spirit, that the Hebrew Orphan Asylum was built, first modestly and then on a grand scale akin to all that New York of that age stood for. The asylum's leadership believed that they would not only house their wards, they would educate them, train them vocationally and teach them the ethics and morals that were part and parcel of the religion on which their culture was built.

As a diaspora, the Jewish people have had to manage the paradox of maintaining their distinct identity while, at the same time, attempting to assimilate into the local society. Ghettoization, limitations on types of work permitted, and local and state-sponsored oppression made that task particularly challenging for the diaspora in Europe. Those who immigrated to the United States entered quite a different environment; one that was open to their full participation and but still potentially threatening to their sense of distinction and community. The community itself was undergoing significant change, especially for those in Germany where the Reform movement was taking hold. German Jewish immigration to the United States increased in 1836, from 3,000 in 1836 to 15,000 in 1840 and then to

[1] *The Jewish Messenger*, 1902.

250,000 in 1880.[2] These people found success in the banking and manufacturing industries. With the Jewish doctrine of aiding the less fortunate, they formed the bedrock of the Jewish charitable institutions throughout the country.

Considering orphanages in the mid-nineteenth century may conjure images of a Dickensian scene of raggedly dressed children asking for more porridge, but that was not necessarily the case for orphanages in the United States, most particularly, those run by religious organizations. While memoirs of inmates report strict methods, some harsh, overall, the children were treated well and the administrators were concerned for their welfare and future. The Hebrew Orphan Asylum (HOA) opened in Manhattan in 1852 to house Jewish children with no parents, only one parent (half-orphans), or those that came from a family which could not financially support them. These definitions of an "orphan" were not limited to the Jewish community, as orphans taken in by Catholic institutions were often from single-parent homes.[3] The Hebrew Orphan Asylum, as a Jewish charitable organization, sought not only to house these young people but also to educate them in the areas of Jewish religion and culture. The HOA followed the Reform tenets of religious practice, although other orphanages adhered to Orthodox practices. The Reform denomination was (and remains) progressive in its perspective on the religion, rejecting the notion of a return to Palestine and many of the ancient practices such as the kosher dietary laws, prohibition of work on the Sabbath, and rejection of modern science as a means of answering some of life's complex questions.[4] While music is integral to Jewish worship in all of its denominations, the HOA Band represented a wholly secular approach to music education. This mirrors the phenomenon of non-religious Jewish families emphasizing music study in the decades before and after the Holocaust as a part of culture (rather than religion) building. In a Reform movement setting, the emphasis on secular Jewish life provided the atmosphere for the formation of music ensembles, the

[2] Jennifer Holt-Bodner, "Music Education in Elementary (K-6) Jewish Day Schools in the United States: Survey, Analysis, and Implications," D.E. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary, May 1989: 1.
[3] Marian J. Morton, "The Transformation of Catholic Orphanages: Cleveland, 1851–1996," *Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 88, Issue 1 (January 2002): 67.
[4] "Declaration of Principles, The Pittsburgh Platform – 1885," *Central Conference of American Rabbis*, https://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/statement-principles-reform-judaism/. Accessed August 10, 2015.

time for which would more likely have been spent on holy text study in an Orthodox home.

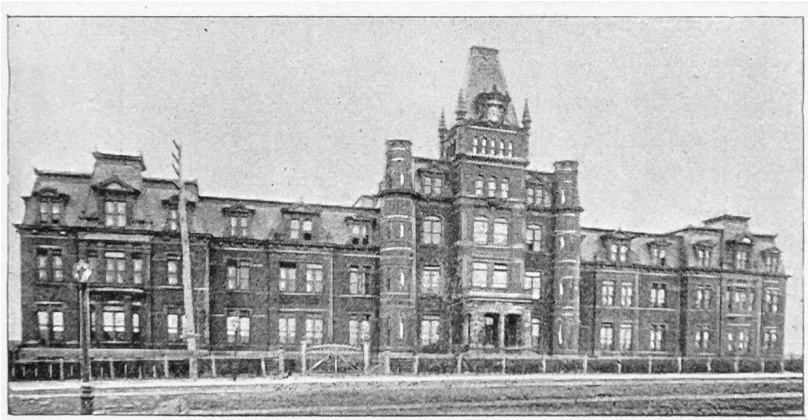

Figure I-1: Hebrew Orphan Asylum c. 1893, New York.

The HOA was not the only Jewish orphanage in New York and its immediate environs. Other institutions included the Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum, opened in 1876, the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society, opened in 1879, and several smaller institutions. Bands existed at these institutions as well and sometimes appeared on the same program as the HOA group. However, their activity will not be the specific focus of this book.

CHAPTER I

EXCURSIONS FOR POOR CHILDREN AND THE FOUNDING OF THE HOA BAND

The founding of the HOA Band was the result of an outing arranged for the children in August 1873: they would travel by boat up the Hudson River to Excelsior Grove, an excursion location in New Jersey, nineteen miles outside of Manhattan, opposite Yonkers, NY. This trip was part of a program sponsored by the *New York Times* to take poor children out of the city and to a location where they would be able to experience and benefit from fresh air. This effort was significant enough to be included in a summary of news from New York in the *Janesville Daily Gazette* (Janesville, WI) on September 4, 1873, where it was reported that the *Times* had supported fourteen such excursions, administering to approximately 29,993 children. These so-named "excursions" were popular at the time: the *Los Angeles Times* sponsored a boat trip each year for several years that traveled as far as Santa Cruz, approximately 255 nautical miles north, as a sort of mission to enable potential land developers to view business possibilities. The *Kansas City Times* offered a similar trip to the northeast cities of New England in an effort to become familiar with the manufacturing centers in that region.

Excursions specifically undertaken as a charitable effort were common as well. These seemed very often to be sponsored by major city newspapers. The *Morning Republican* (Chester, PA) sponsored a trip on the steamer "Clyde" for the newsboys and carriers of their papers on August 8, 1902. While traveling down the Delaware River, the boys cheered the *Chester Times* for a trip that they had gone on one week earlier. In reporting this event that day, the *Delaware County Daily Times* (Chester, PA) acknowledged the excursion guests as "hard workers…and [who] deserve to have a full day of enjoyment." Associated Charities of the District of Columbia organized an outing for mothers and children at

the expense of the *Washington Times*.[1] It is not clear if these were single mothers, but, apparently, there was quite a number that Associated Charities could not accommodate during previous events. The *Washington Times* reported on August 13, 1904 that 250 (fifty mothers and two hundred children) tickets had been issued and much was made of the point that many mothers could not get away for the week-long events sponsored by the organization at Camp Good Will and that, instead, this would provide something of a substitute. Much pride in this effort was illustrated by the article's headline: "Joyous Outing Awaits Crowds."

The *New York Times* sponsored excursions for the poor youth of New York City for at least eighteen years (1872–1890). Named "The *Times'* Excursions for Poor Children," they relied on public funding through a subscription program that raised a reported $5,000–20,000 annually.[2] They were well regarded by the public. In her diary, missionary Matilda Knowles wrote: "No one can estimate the good done, the lives saved, and the hours of happiness secured to young and old who have so few happy hours."[3] Mrs. Knowles also noted the benefit to the contributors from these excursions as she continued, "…not the least was that of softening hearts and opening purses."

Politics was not far from the efforts of the *Times*. Listings of contributors in the paper created a type of competition to keep up with one's peers. Comments from papers around the country and the world were printed to demonstrate wide support for the *Times'* charitable arm, making the paper look very good in the eyes of the populace. This was used to the owners' advantage against their competitor Horace Greeley, the founder of the *New York Tribune* and a presidential candidate in 1872.

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[1] Associated Charities of the District of Columbia, founded in 1881, was created to organize the cooperation between local charitable organizations and private donors. In addition, they organized efforts to address the needs of the poor. Contemporary to the excursions, or possibly as a component of them, was the establishment of Camp Good Will, known today as Camp Moss.

[2] *Gathering Jewels; Or, the Secret of a Beautiful Life: In Memoriam of Mr. and Mrs. James Knowles,* Ed. Rev. Duncan McNeill Young. New York: William Knowles, 1887: 219–220. The fund that supported the excursions raised, at its highest, approximately $20,000 in 1872 and began to decline in support ($10,000 in 1873, $8,000 in 1984, $5,000 in 1875 – no figures are readily available after this date). This may have been due to a change in the fundraising scheme, which appears to have changed from partial funding by the newspaper to complete reliance on private donations.

[3] Ibid., p. 219.

Greeley was an ardent anti-slavery spokesperson and went on after the Civil War to stand for the rights of those less advantaged. Despite that, a German columnist in the *Times* took him to task by for not having thought of the excursions for poor children. Writing on July 31, 1872, the correspondent said:

> In inaugurating these children's picnics the TIMES [*sic*] has achieved a merit which cannot be too highly praised. We would pronounce the same verdict if the Greeley organ, the *Tribune*, had been the author of this kind of charity toward our very poor, and all of the praise bestowed upon the TIMES must be doubly counted, when it is considered how much Greeley likes to put himself forward as the patent philanthropist and social reformer…the *Tribune* claiming the social field as peculiarly its own, is again excelled and defeated by its adversary, the TIMES.[4]

It should be noted that Mr. Greeley left a bequest to the Children's Aid Society, although the will was contested. It is not clear if the Children's Aid Society received the funds, although to allow it would have been in line with Greeley's interests.

The HOA had been sponsored for one of the *New York Times* excursions on July 16, 1873. The event was considered such a success by the organizers that they that extended an invitation to two other orphanages, the Jewish Orphan Asylum and the Industrial School and the Union Home and School for the Orphans of Soldiers and Sailors, for another excursion, this time on August 6, 1873. The children must have been thrilled to leave the tumult and confines of the city and experience the expanse of the wide Hudson River and the natural world of the Palisades Mountains and parkland.

The Union home participants brought their band with them, a group that the *New York Times* described as an "excellent band."[5] It was a relatively new organization, having been formed in February of that year.[6] They seemed to have played most of the day, both at the docks while the children disembarked as well as alternating with a professional band hired for the event. They certainly made an impression on the children of the HOA, especially when the band played marches, for which the children expressed

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[4] "A German View," *Oestliche Post,* July 31, 1872 in *The New York Times*, August 3, 1872.
[5] "The Jewish Children's Picnic," *New York Times*, August 7, 1873.
[6] "The Orphans of War: The Union Home and School for Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphans," *New York Times,* April 12, 1873.

Figure 1-1: The View of the Palisades from the Hudson River at Excelsior Grove. *Photo: Carol Shansky*

great enthusiasm.[7] A visit to the asylum, located on Amsterdam Avenue between 136th and 138th Streets, at the end of the month by the Union Home children and their band was the catalyst for the decision to create a similar ensemble at the HOA.[8] In early 1874, the trustees used their own money to buy instruments for a brass band of twenty. They debuted at the annual trustee meeting in April of that year in a performance that reportedly went very well.[9] They performed the next year at Temple Emanu-El for a "cultural evening." A performance at Temple Emanu-El was not insignificant for the band. Founded in 1845 as the first Reform synagogue in the United States, it held particular meaning for the New York Jewish community. As the HOA's religious affiliation was aligned

[7] "The Jewish Children's Picnic," *New York Times*, August 7, 1873
[8] Bogen, p. 70.
[9] Bogen, p. 71.

with the Reform movement, a performance at Temple Emanu-El would have lent a certain credibility or approval of this new ensemble.

Despite what seemed to be a successful start, the band appears to have lasted only a short time. There was music instruction of some kind, most likely in a group setting such as a band, until 1881.[10] However, the band did not appear in public, as there is no mention of the band in any of the local newspapers or in the *Annual Reports* of them having performed. In 1883, when a cornerstone was laid for a new building for the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, an event at which the institution band would certainly have played, the Seventh Regiment Band provided the music.[11] Hyman Bogen, a former resident and important chronicler of the HOA, mentions disbandment by 1885.[12] It was an interest in "bringing some agreeable change into the daily routine and monotony of an orphan asylum" that provided the impetus to reorganize the band in 1888.[13] Another reason was the George Washington Inauguration Centennial in 1889.

The centennial celebration of the inauguration of George Washington was marked by events around the country. New York City, as the site of the inauguration, aimed to produce the largest-scale event of all. Flowers, flags, and banners decorated major landmarks and public and private buildings. The desire was for New York to be "a mass of color and fluttering movement."[14] President Benjamin Harrison, Mrs. Harrison, the Vice President and his wife, along with members of the President's cabinet and Supreme Court Justices came to the city for the three days. Plans were made to have President Harrison arrive by retracing George Washington's path of one hundred years earlier. Departing from the Governor's Mansion in New Jersey, Harrison traveled by boat as part of a naval parade featuring naval warships and merchant steamers. After disembarking, he moved on to Wall Street, the site of the first inauguration, followed by a visit to St. Paul's Church where Washington had worshipped after his ceremony. Having only recently been elected to the Presidency, Harrison would certainly benefit from the very public display. From April 17 to May 8, there was an exhibition on "Historical Portraits and Relics" and

[10] Further detail on the years from 1874–1881 is provided in Chapter VI.
[11] "New Hebrew Orphan Asylum," *New York Times, May 17, 1883*.
[12] Bogen, p. 116.
[13] Baar, Hermann, "Report of the Superintendent" *Proceedings of the Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society of the City of New York*, New York: Stettiner, Lambert & Co., 1889: 45.
[14] *Illustrated Programme of the Centennial Celebration*, New York: J. S. Ogilvie: 7.

from April 29 to May 1, there were daily activities such as literary readings, banquets and visits to the exhibition. April 30 featured a huge military parade and May 1 a massive "Industrial and Civic Parade," the latter being an event in which the HOA Band of about thirty boys participated.[15] The *New York Times* of October 24, 1888, had declared that at least 250,000 people were expected to attend what they referred to as a "monster display."

The Industrial and Civic Parade was divided into multiple divisions such as merchant, industries, educational, and political, etc. with sub-divisions for specific ethnic groups and the variety of cultural contributions they had made to American society. For example, the German group of approximately 10,000 men had five sub-divisions covering immigration to the United States, singing groups, Wagner, and ancient German tribes. There were plans for 15,000 men to represent Irish societies, while another 5,000 would stand for Scandinavian ones.[16]

The Industrial and Civic Parade included a contest for school groups marching in the parade. This was only for boys engaged in military-style marching, as schools that had their own bands do not appear to have been in existence within the New York City Public Schools until the twentieth century. For example, the HOA Band served in the capacity of "school band" for Grammar School No. 46 on December 24, 1889, for the ceremony marking the laying of the cornerstone of its new building at the corner of St. Nicholas Street and 156th Street. This also happens to be the school that the younger orphans attended, so, in fact, the band created a sort of link between the two institutions.

It is possible that other juvenile institution bands marched in the Industrial and Civic Parade as well. The comment in the report of the Library of Tribunes in 1889 that "the school bands in fact were a great

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[15] Bowen, Clarence Winthrop, ed. *The history of the Centennial celebration of the inauguration of George Washington as first president of the United States*. D. Appleton, 1892: 100, 383; Jesse Seligman, "Report of the President," *Proceedings of the Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society of the City of New York.* New York: Stettiner, Lambert & Co., 1888: 15.

[16] *Illustrated Programme of the Centennial Celebration*, New York: J. S. Ogilvie: 21–22.

resource"[17] supports this assumption. It is assumed that the word "school" was loosely applied and that the bands were from institutions that did have educational components, such as the HOA. It is likely that these juvenile institution bands were used to escort students from the public schools, thus, creating the conflation. In addition to the Asylum's Cadets Corps, the HOA Band appears to have marched for School No. 10 of Brooklyn.[18] School No. 10 may have been the first of the public schools in the Education Division of the parade, which lists the order as being headed by J. Edward Simmons, President of the Board of Education, after which "Columbia College, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of the City of New York, the New York University, the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and the public schools followed."[19] Having school students marching in this style was apparently a source of debate. The "marching" done by school students was merely to keep them organized while moving around a school. This type of marching was military and precise and would require training. At the ceremony presenting the awards to the captains of the groups, President Simmons of the New York City Board of Education said, "…The celebration of Washington's inauguration was so important an event in the history of the Nation that the board thought it might deviate somewhat from the strict rules."[20]

A factor in the keen interest in being involved in the centennial may have been the overall Jewish perspective on assimilation and Americanization of that time. The majority of those in the Jewish community were German in origin and had largely accepted the tenets of the new German Reform movement referred to earlier. That their religion was an ethnicity and, therefore, made them unique and outside the mainstream of society was rejected in an effort to demonstrate that they were, indeed, fully loyal and patriotic Americans. Elizabeth Rose wrote, "If they presented themselves as just like other Americans in all but religion, they reasoned, then America's

[17] "Washington Centenary Celebrated in New-York, April 29, 30–May 1, 1889, *Library of Tribune Extras,* Vol. I, No. 5 (May 1889): 79.
[18] *Report of the Sub-Committee on Army, Centennial Celebration of the Inauguration of George Washington as First President of the U. S...April 30th and May 1st, 1889,* New York: Centennial Celebration, 1889: 117.
[19] *Appleton's Dictionary of Greater New York and Its Vicinity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1898: 607.
[20] "In and About the City," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1889.

commitment to religious freedom would ensure their acceptance."[21] Certainly, a marching band holds many of the representations of patriotism and American identity.

Figure 1-2: The Hebrew Orphan Asylum Band, c. 1891[22]

The formation of a band could also lend a sense of community and belonging for the young people who, otherwise, would have lacked in that area. Bands at orphanages and other institutions established for the care of minors were becoming more common at the end of the nineteenth century, although there were already bands at the House of Refuge on Randall's Island in New York City (c. 1852), the Farm and Trades School of Boston

[21] Elizabeth Rose, "From Sponge Cake to 'Hamentashen': Jewish Identity in a Jewish Settlement House, 1885–1952," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Spring, 1994): 5.

[22] W. A. Rogers in Abram S. Isaacs, "The Jews of New York City," *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1816 (July–Dec. 1891): 773.

Harbor (1857), and the Chicago Reform School (1862).[23] Humphreys observed, "there is evidence of string and woodwind instruction in federal Indian mission schools in 1852."[24] The *Annual Report of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society* of 1888 reports that "we thought it appropriate to enliven the weekly gymnastics or drilling exercises of our boys through musical accompaniments…"[25] No matter the reason for the formation of a band at the HOA (and there appeared to be many), there was some support from the community as $110 was donated in 1888 by two different parties directly to support the band, and the words "32 beautiful military suits for the band"[26] were entered into the HOA's books in May 1889. They may well have been purchased for the centennial event.

Although the contest for school groups was for their classmates in the Cadet Corps that were marching, the band was to march as well, bolstering the effect of the cadets' performance. The time they had to organize, rehearse and perfect in advance of the competition was certainly tight. Band director George Wiegand instituted extra rehearsals through the fall and winter and the band members were excused from duties such as dorm cleaning.[27] This type of privilege continued throughout the history of the band, demonstrating that the advantages of being in the band were understood on a very basic level. Preparations and anticipation for the event enveloped the school; it was truly a community effort. This is indicative of the nature of living in an orphanage, as many former residents would later recall that the sense of belonging and community was an important memory and contribution to their adult life. The band and its activities would come, in so many ways, including with this competition, to represent the community of the HOA.

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[23] Phillip M. Hash, "The Chicago Reform School Band: 1862–1872," *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Autumn, 2007): 253.
[24] Jere T. Humphreys, "Instrumental Music in American Education: In Service of Many Masters," *Journal of Band Research*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring, 1995): 40.
[25] Herman Baar, "Objects of Practical Usefulness Which Are Taught in the House," *Proceedings of the Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society of the City of New York.* New York: Stettiner, Lambert & Co., 1888: 45.
[26] Ibid., pp. 56–58.
[27] Bogen, p. 117.

The contest was held as part of the parade by fifty judges who were stationed along the parade route.[28] Immediately after the centennial festivities had ended, awards were given to a variety of participants in the Industrial and Civic parade: the gold medal to the Public Schools of New York represented by 4,000 marching students and the silver to the Veteran Firemen. Banners were given as well to Columbia College, the Free College of the City of New York, the Operative Plasterers' Association, the German-American Butchers' Industry and the Hebrew Orphan Asylum.[29] Clearly, the HOA was not considered fully an educational institution.

A ceremony to present the banner to the orphans was conducted in November of that year, with both parade organizer General Butterfield and Civil War general William T. Sherman in attendance.[30] Sherman, a good friend of the banker, financial supporter and President of the HOA, Jesse Seligman, had been present at the centennial festivities and gave a speech at this presentation. This would not be the last time the band had the honor of being in Sherman's presence. They marched in the long funeral parade to honor him in New York on February 19, 1891.[31]

Excursions would continue to be a part of the band's experience. Some were sponsored by those affiliated in some way with the HOA, others were to benefit other children but the HOA Band was engaged to provide musical entertainment for the day. Marching in parades, a mainstay of brass bands and later school marching bands, would also continue to occupy the members of the HOA organization. But the band would be more than a marching ensemble. It became a particular source of affection for its members and pride for the Jewish community at large.

[28] "In and About the City," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1889.
[29] "Centennial Prizes Awarded," *New York Times,* May 11, 1889.
[30] "A Well Won Banner," *New York Times,* Nov. 29, 1889.
[31] Boyd, James Penny, *The Life of General William T. Sherman*, Publishers' Union, 1892: 595.

CHAPTER II

"A WELL DESERVED REPUTATION": THE BAND IN THE GILDED AGE

After the Inaugural Centennial competition, the band continued to thrive and to enjoy increasing accolades from the HOA and the surrounding community. The intense work the children and their instructors put in to be ready for the centennial parade and competition seemed to have become the norm by which they conducted their rehearsal and performance life. This intensity and dedication paid off, as they became a fixture at Jewish events such as ground breaking ceremonies for new synagogues and Jewish community centers. It is clear from contemporary newspaper accounts that the band developed a very positive reputation in New York City, often being described as the "famous" Hebrew Orphan Asylum Band. The inmates[1] of the asylum who were not in the band benefitted from what the ensemble had to offer as well. In an example of this, in August 1889, the children were treated by Louis Stern, one of the directors, to an excursion up the Hudson to Iona Island[2] where the band "entertained the children in a most excellent manner."[3]

Activity by the band continued immediately after the presentation of the banner by the Centennial Committee on November 28, 1889. The band came to serve in multiple roles: as a Jewish community band, a community band for upper Manhattan, and a *de facto* school band in the years before the full development of the school band movement and viable ensembles within New York public schools. Its performance at the Hebrew Fair of December 1889 is indicative of the types of Jewish community activities for which the band was utilized. The group not only

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[1] The term "inmate" was commonly used to refer to residents of the orphan asylum both at the HOA and other institutions and should not be confused as being derogatory.

[2] Iona Island is a part of Bear Mountain State Park today. The HOA had a long relationship with the area. See Chapter V.

[3] *The Jewish Messenger*, August 16, 1889.

performed two matinees on December 11 and 18 as part of the "Children's Matinees" but also gave an evening concert on December 17. The band was credited with having "discoursed sweet music to the general satisfaction."[4] This was followed almost immediately by their service as a community band for New York as they marched as part of the processional at a cornerstone-laying event for a new public school at the corner of St. Nicholas Avenue and 156th Street, which would be called Grammar School No. 46, the school that HOA inmates would be attending.

Student bands were already a desired part of events involving public schools and civic engagement, as demonstrated by the Washington Centennial parade. It, once again, served as the school band in an appearance at the Teachers' Fair on December 10, 1890. A concert, the expected product of all school music programs, was presented to the institutions' supporters and managers, such as Jesse Seligman, on December 29, 1889, a mere seven months after winning the parade banner. Their performance, in conjunction with the asylum choir, "took a prominent part, and all their selections were enthusiastically applauded."[5]

The HOA Band continued to be a feature of numerous events around New York City and continued to gather positive support. It is clear by the number of times the band is mentioned in the local newspapers that they were a hard-working, very well-trained group of young men.[6] There were a number of significant events for which the band was engaged that inform us not only of the band's success but also of the civic and cultural life of New York City during the Gilded Age.

Major Events, Engagements and Travel

A common circumstance for which the HOA Band was engaged was fundraising events sponsored by Jewish charitable organizations. There were a number of these in New York, the city in the United States to which the highest number of Jewish immigrants arrived. United Hebrew Charities (enveloping six charitable organizations), B'nai B'rith, the 92nd Street YMHA, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Montefiore Home for the Aged and Infirm, the Educational Alliance, and Mount Sinai Hospital

[4] "Fair Notes," *The Jewish Messenger*, December 20, 1889.
[5] "At the Hebrew Orphan Asylum," *New York Times*, December 30, 1889.
[6] Girls did not have the opportunity to play in the band. The HOA did have a choral program in which girls were able to gain music education experience.

were the most prominent, but there were also many others. The HOA Band would provide musical services for these organizations multiple times.

The B'nai B'rith ("Children of the Covenant") organization was founded in 1843 with the mandate of providing financial and training support to destitute Jews in America. District 1, located in New York City as the first area of the B'nai B'rith lodge, supported The Home for the Aged and Infirm in Yonkers. The HOA Band performed a concert as part of their summer festival in July 1890 and would continue to perform there on a regular basis.

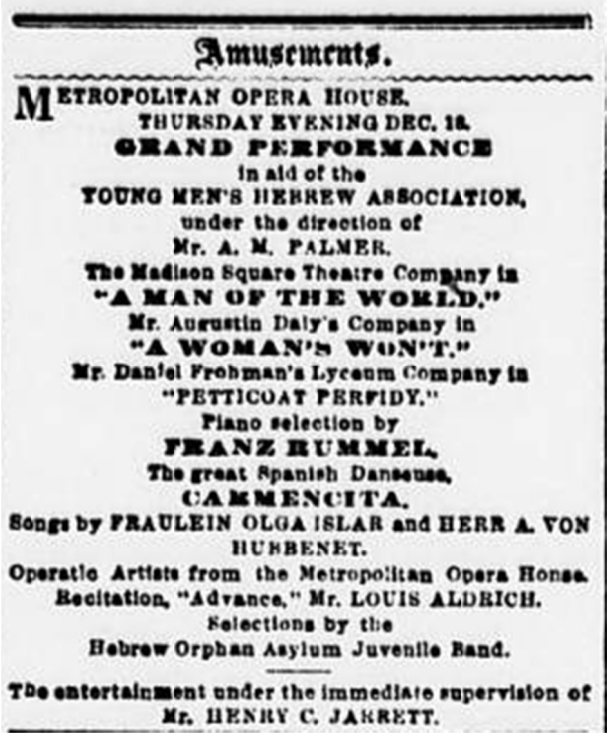
A much flashier event was that of The Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), which held a "Grand Performance" fundraiser at the Metropolitan Opera House on December 18, 1890. The event was heralded by an impressive advertisement in the "Amusements" section of the *New York Sun*. The HOA Band would be performing along with the Madison Square Theater[7] Company, pianist Franz Rummel, and company members of the Metropolitan Opera. The Madison Square Theater Company was formed by Daniel Frohman, the business manager of the Madison Square Theater, which was noted by Paul Kuritz as "the best equipped playhouse in America."[8] The company was one of several that Frohmann formed as itinerant groups to perform in cities around the United States presenting what was currently showing in New York.

Franz Rummel (1853–1901) was an internationally known artist who was frequently heard in New York's busy concert scene. The son of pianist Joseph Rummel (1818–1880), he was schooled at the Brussels Conservatory and made four tours of the United States (1878, 1886, 1890, 1898). The tour of 1890, the year of the YMHA benefit, was a busy one. He was heard in Boston on October 16 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, performing the Concerto in E ♭major, No. 5 by Beethoven and performed the work again along with the Concerto No. 1 in E ♭major by Liszt in New York at the Lenox Lyceum on October 30. November 15 had him performing the Beethoven concerto with the New York Orchestral Philharmonic Society, led by Theodore Thomas. On December 13, in

[7] n.b. "Theater" is variously spelled "theater" and "theatre" in American entertainment titles. The spelling used is that used by the particular company in question.

[8] Paul Kuritz, *The Making of Theatre History*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988: 348.

Brooklyn, Rummel performed Schumann's A minor Concerto with the Theodore Thomas Orchestra. He then performed soon after, on December 16, 1890, the day before the YMHA event, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music when he performed Concerto No. 4 in D minor by Rubenstein on a concert in front of an orchestra conducted by Max Spicker. Rummel's tour was not confined to Boston and New York; he performed in St. Louis, Buffalo and Montreal as well. For the HOA Band to share a program with a pianist described by *The Monthly Musical Record* in their obituary of him (June 1, 1901) as "a pianist of high excellence", as well as what were likely very high quality singers from the Metropolitan Opera and the national presence of the Madison Square Theater Company, speaks volumes about the perceived high quality of the band.



Amusements.

METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE.
THURSDAY EVENING DEC. 18.
GRAND PERFORMANCE
in aid of the
YOUNG MEN'S HEBREW ASSOCIATION,
under the direction of
Mr. A. M. PALMER.
The Madison Square Theatre Company in
"A MAN OF THE WORLD."
Mr. Augustin Daly's Company in
"A WOMAN'S WON'T."
Mr. Daniel Frohman's Lyceum Company in
"PETTICOAT PERFIDY."
Piano selection by
FRANZ RUMMEL.
The great Spanish Danseuse,
CARMENCITA.
Songs by FRAULEIN OLGA ISLAR and HERR A. VON RUBBENET.
Operatic Artists from the Metropolitan Opera House.
Recitation, "Advance," Mr. LOUIS ALDRICH.
Selections by the
Hebrew Orphan Asylum Juvenile Band.

The entertainment under the immediate supervision of
Mr. HENRY C. JARRETT.

Figure 2-1: *New York Sun*, December 17, 1890

The band was in high demand for Jewish institutional events outside of New York City. In December 1890, the band was invited to Boston by Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schindler to participate in the ceremonial events to dedicate the Home for the Aged and Infirm as part of a benefit for the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Boston (the "Benevolent"). This charitable organization was founded in 1864, one of several formed in response to the immigration wave of the late nineteenth century. Braverman tells us that "in addition to traditional unions, Boston's Jewish workers organized benevolent associations that cared for them and their families in case of accident or death."[9] Susan Ebert commented: "the Benevolent became the official component of Boston's growing social service community."[10] It is another testament to the rising reputation of the HOA Band that they were engaged for a fundraising trip out of town for this prominent organization.

This was an exciting event for the band, which the Jewish press described as "surely a pleasant compliment for our boys."[11] They traveled by train, accompanied by asylum Superintendent Hermann Baar and staff member Morris Tuska. Myer Stern, Secretary of the asylum, had traveled to Boston ahead of the group to ensure that the arrangements were in place for a safe journey for the children. Martin Cohen, one of the band directors, led the band at their performance in the Hollis Street Theatre, one of the venues for the Benevolent's dedicatory events. They were not the only act on the program; piano and vocal soloists, as well as the delivery of recitations and readings, were included. In all, they performed six pieces, approximately half of the total program. The concert was billed in the advertisements as a "Grand Sacred Concert." The use of this wording may have been because the concert took place on a Sunday, which could otherwise have been offensive to some constituencies in Boston. This titling format was not isolated to this performance. When faced with a similar challenge, Sousa used this convention and included some music that would be considered religious.[12]

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[9] William A. Braverman, "Community and Philanthropy," in *The Jews of Boston.* Jonathan A. Sarna, Ellen Smith, Scott-Martin Kosofsky, eds. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005: 24.

[10] Susan Ebert, "Community and Philanthropy," in *The Jews of Boston*, Jonathan A. Sarna, Ellen Smith, Scott-Martin Kosofsky, eds. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005: 224.

[11] *The American Hebrew* December 26, 1890.

[12] Paul Edmund Bierley, *The Incredible Band of John Philip Sousa*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006: 33.

HOLLIS ST. THEATRE.

ISAAC B. RICH, ... Proprietor and Manager

SUNDAY NIGHT,

DEC. 28, 1890,

GRAND SACRED CONCERT

IN AID OF THE

Hebrew Benevolent Association.

A GREAT PROGRAMME.

THE NEW YORK HEBREW ORPHAN ASYLUM
BAND OF 50 MUSICIANS.
Mr. HENRY NEVILLE,
Miss BENZING,
ROWLAND BUCKSTONE,
Mrs. DAN'L SHELBY,
Miss MINNIE VAN BUREN,
Mr. BENZING,
MOSES J. MEYER and
Mr. CARL FAELTEN.

SCALE OF PRICES.

Orchestra, $3 00 Balcony, $2 00 General Admission, $1.00. Choice seats now on sale at the box office of the theatre

Figure 2-2: *Boston Daily Globe*, December 27, 1890

Once again, the band was on a billing with major artists. Not much is known about the singers Mrs. Daniel Shelby or Mrs. Ada May Benzing. Jacob Benzing (presumably the husband of Ada May) and pianist Moses I. Myers were soloists working in the Boston area. However, Minnie Van Buren, Rowland Buckstone and Henry Neville were well known to audiences in Boston and other U. S. cities, and Neville had a substantial career in London as well.

It appears that there may be spelling errors in the concert advertisement printed in the *Boston Daily Globe* of December 27, 1890. Minnie Van

Buren is more likely Minna Van Buren, a soprano soloist in the Boston area. The Grand Sacred Concert may have been an early public performance, as her name begins to appear more prominently the following year. In 1891, she performed as part of a program of operatic selections on a program at the Boston Opera House and was featured soon after as part of a benefit concert at the Hollis Street Theatre, the same location as the Hebrew Benevolent Association concert. Among her later activities were singing at the YMCA's Women's Auxiliary meeting on February 10, 1898, and as a soloist with the Narragansett, Rhode Island Choral Society in the summer of 1893.[13]

A recitation was offered by Rowland Buckstone, an actor who was fairly well known nationally. He gave a well-received performance at the Baldwin Theatre in San Francisco in 1886 and went on to perform regularly on the New York theater scene immediately after as part of E. H. Sothern's company of actors. He appears to have been an actor comfortable in comedic roles, performing in "The Great Pink Pearl" and Shakespeare's "As You Like It" at the Lyceum Theatre in New York (1897), as well as a one-act farce at the Broadway Theatre in November 1890 in a performance of the play "The Maister of Woodbarrow," a play by Sothern (who also played the lead). A critic from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of January 20, 1891, remarked about Buckstone, "If the spectators could know how young an actor is Rowland Buckstone…they would have given double praise to a characterization which in itself was highly praiseworthy." As to why a significant actor such as Buckstone would agree to be on a program such as the Grand Sacred Concert, which was really a revue, we could posit an answer that, as E. H. Sothern was producing "The Maister of Woodbarrow" at the Hollis Street Theatre in Boston the same week as the Grand Sacred Concert, it seems most likely that Rowland Buckstone would have been in Boston as part of the Sothern troupe. Rowland Buckstone passed away in April 1913, apparently during a residency in a psychiatric hospital in New York, having been committed there after becoming distraught over the death of his wife.

Henry Neville (1837–1910), also mentioned on the Grand Sacred Concert program, was another significant artist of his day. Neville was a well-known, successful British actor who had established himself on the London theater scene, both as an actor and manager. His invitation to visit

[13] *Cambridge Tribune* June 12, 1897; *Musical Yearbook of the United States*, Vol. X, 1892–1893: 85.

the United States was akin to the invitation Haydn received to go to London. Intending to remain for an extended visit to the US, Neville established a base in Boston in 1890, where he produced and performed his play "The Soudan," which was an Americanized version of "Human Nature" in which he played Captain Temple to much success at the Drury Lane Theatre. He would continue that role in "The Soudan" for 137 performances before taking a break for a tour of the southern states. He returned to Boston in the later part of 1890 and, once again, took up the role of Captain Temple for 169 more performances before returning to London in 1891. Again, it stands to reason that an actor of this stature would be available to give a recitation on a benefit program because it was convenient to his or her primary work.

Clearly, the organizers of the Grand Sacred Concert subscribed to the idea that having participants who had a "headline" name (and a few local "big names") on a bill would draw people in. It appears to have been successful, as *The Jewish Messenger*, a New York area publication, when reporting out-of-town activities under the title "Boston," said "The New York Hebrew Orphan Asylum band won another success at the concert Sunday evening, and a large sum was gained for a worthy object" (January 9, 1891).

The trip to Boston was not a one-off occurrence in terms of travel. Closer to home, but not without travel challenges in an era before tunnels and bridges in and out of Manhattan, were trips to cities in New Jersey to perform for Jewish institutions. On October 21, 1891, the band played for the dedication of the Plaut Memorial Hebrew Free School in Newark, NJ. They traveled by train on the Newark and New York Railroad to the Broad Street Depot in Newark, where they were met by the Board of Trustees of the Hebrew Free School. The band played the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from "Tannhäuser" by Wagner for the opening of the ceremony. In 1897, the band traveled twice to Paterson, NJ, to lend their music to the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society. They played several pieces each time and were described in *The American Hebrew* of May 21 as "the justly celebrated band of the New York Hebrew Orphan Asylum. The band consists of thirty-five pieces and came here with a fine reputation which was fully sustained."

The Hebrew Orphan Asylum Band continued to perform for Jewish community events such as the Hebrew Technical Institute commencement exercises, United Hebrew Charities, and the Krakauer Society, one of the