

Hazzan Steven W. Dress, an accomplished cantor with a lifelong connection to Jewish Greater Boston, will return to Congregation Agudas Sholom (the Walnut Street Shul) in Chelsea, MA, to lead this year's High Holiday services. As a teenager, he frequently accompanied his grandfather, Charles Handlin, z"l, to the Walnut Street Shul, where learning *Shabbat zemirot* and synagogue customs contributed to shaping his future.

Hazzan Dress's cantorial journey began under the mentorship of Hazzan Charles Lew, z"l, at Temple Shalom in Medford, MA. Inspired by Hazzan Lew's authentic Ashkenazic cantorial style, which emerged from the pre-WWII Bialystok *yeshiva* world, Cantor Dress developed a deep love for *hazzanut* and *Yiddishkeit*. He mastered *nusah ha-tefillah* and cantillation under Cantor Lew's guidance, laying the foundation for his ensuing 40-year career. Walnut Street shul's spiritual leader, Rabbi Kalman Lichtenstein, z"l, seemed to appreciate Charlie Handlin's grandson's davening style since it was closely reminiscent of his own roots, noting he and Hazzan Lew attended the same *yeshiva* (albeit at different times in their respective lives).

Cantor Dress's dedication to *t'fillah* and teaching evolved from his early days as an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, where he led services, tutored *b'nai mitzvah*, and even taught a Jewish liturgy course during his senior year. His cantorate advanced from part-time roles to a full-time position at Temple Am David in Warwick, RI, marking his transition from the business world to a lifelong commitment to *avodat kodesh* (sacred service). Once he fulfilled its entry examinations and requirements, the Cantors Assembly (CA) welcomed him as a qualified member.

Hazzan Dress's pursuit of knowledge led him to earn a Master's in Jewish Studies from Hebrew College in Brookline, MA. Additional music theory, Hebrew, Judaics, and pastoral counseling courses at local and Israeli colleges, *yeshiva*, and *ulpanim* considerably broadened his knowledge and professional standing. He also studied voice and *hazzanut* for 17 years under the tutelage of the iconic Cantor Gregor Shelkan, z"l.

In 1991, Cantor Dress, joined by his wife Myrna and their children, accepted the invitation to serve as *hazzan* of Temple Israel (TI) in Sharon, MA. Widely recognized for his gift of engaging and retaining teenage synagogue participants, he personally prepared 1,700 *b'nai mitzvah* and taught *Torah* cantillation to hundreds of teens and adults. With light doses of humor, Hazzan Dress sensitively employed a holistic approach to his students. His adult *Torah* readers appreciated his methodology, helping them overcome inherent inhibitions. Cantor Dress, a lyrical tenor, released 2 CDs, *Together as One* and *Hazarat HaShatz*, and an educational cantata video, *Mo'adim L'Simha*, that resulted in TI receiving two Solomon Schechter Cultural Arts Awards. He was proud that the *Rinat Yisrael* Chorus he established evolved into TI's talented lay-led core group of *Purim Shpielers*.

Beyond the synagogue, Hazzan Dress organized many concerts that benefited the CA and other charities. He performed as a soloist with the Moscow Male Choir, Boston's Zamir Chorale, and at annual *Yom HaShoah* commemorations. He served six years as New England Region (NER) CA Chair, three years as NER Board of Cantors President (C/O/R), and two terms on the CA National Executive Board. With RI Jewish Federation Soviet Jewry Task Force participants, Hazzan Dress led *Shaharit* services at the Lincoln Memorial during the 1987 Washington, DC massive march. He led the 40th Israel Independence Day songfest before 10,000 people at Boston Common. He served for about 30 years as Jewish chaplain for chronically ill patients at the RI Medical Center, Cranston, RI. As a *Masorti* Board Member, he was the American chairman of "Operation Mazal Tov," Israel's *B'nai Mitzvah* educational initiative that benefited profoundly special needs youngsters and families.

Hazzan Dress was proud that hundreds of congregants and guests joined him and Myrna on eight two-week guided Israel tours, including *b'nai mitzvah* and other lifecycle celebrations. Participants distributed raised funds and shared meaningful time with *Masorti's* profoundly special-needs children, Hadassah Medical Center's epilepsy researchers, Fuchsberg Center's *yeshiva*, and new *olim* from Ethiopia. As AIPAC activists, he and Myrna joined Florida's Boca Raton Synagogue (Orthodox) upon retirement largely because of its shared commitment to the AIPAC mission and passion for Israel.

Cantor Dress's publications, musical compositions, and awards—including an Honorary Doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary and citations from the MA House and Senate—further attest to his devotion to perpetuating a vibrant Jewish future. His upcoming visit to the Walnut Street Shul symbolizes the continuity of tradition and the enduring impact of his concern and influence beyond the communities he directly served.

Now, as TI's Cantor Emeritus, *Hazzan* Dress and his wife Myrna are delighted to return north to the Walnut Street Shul during this sacred season. They are grateful to soon daven with and for you, inspired by his great-grandparents and grandparents of blessed memory, who so loved this magnificent congregation and community!