

'Zochrenu Lechim' to be performed in Smithtown

Music lost for more than 65 years to receive its first U.S. performance on May 5

[By Ellen Barcel](#)

[write the author](#)

April 20, 2011 | 12:11 PM

Times Beacon Record

northshoreoflongisland.com

The rediscovery of music thought lost for more than a half-century is a cause for celebration. The U.S. debut of such music even more so. Add to that the fact that the concert is a celebration of the 75th birthday of Rabbi Emeritus Elliott Spar of Smithtown, and you have a truly special event.

The concert, "Zochrenu Lechim" (Remember Us Unto Life), will take place on Thursday, May 5, at 7 pm at Temple Beth Shalom, 433 Edgewood Ave., Smithtown.

The music was composed by Hazzan Shmuel Blaszczyk, "a prominent cantor in his synagogue in Hungary," during World War II, noted Ronda Cooper, a member of the board of directors of Temple Beth Shalom. "It was used for Shabbat and holiday celebrations. One was even a funeral piece."

But Blaszczyk, in 1944, became a Holocaust victim when he and his family were arrested by the Nazis. He was taken to Auschwitz, where he perished, but not before he asked a neighbor to hide his precious music.

"It's an amazing journey," said Cantor Judy Merrick of Temple Beth Shalom. The music's circuitous route to Smithtown began when Eva, Blaszczyk's surviving daughter returned to Eger, Hungary after the end of World War II and retrieved the music from the neighbor. Eva moved to the United States, married (now Eva Egri) had children and eventually settled in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. She stored the music in a closet where it remained for many years. Although hesitant to talk of the war, she did share her experiences with others when her granddaughter, Shira Elbaz, as a 12th-grader in 2006 wrote a school report, "My Grandmother's Wartime Experiences."

"Fast forward [from World War II]," said Cooper, "65 years. Her neighbor in Fort Lauderdale is the mother of a former member of Temple Beth Shalom, Len Romano." Romano, who is a former social studies teacher in the Northport School District, was visiting his mother when he heard of the music.



Shmuel Blaszczyk and his wife, Rifka. Below, music setting of the 23rd Psalm. The words are a transliteration of the text into Hungarian; it sounds as if you are singing the Hebrew. Illustrations from Temple Beth Shalom ([click for larger version](#))

25. Zsoltar

Sassan, lagyon.
Zenejel szerző: Blasz Gábor
Harmozással: Todor Kálmán

Mis' man le-de-vid mi' man le-de-vid mi' man le-de-vid
Gim' hi - e - ledi Vaj' cal - ho - vev' Av' ve' ve' bi - lo - im - mo -
Shode' la - ad - an - met' shes - men' kail' bi' Av' - sh' ne - av' -

soor, bin' avu' de - se jai - bi - ce - ni, al me' mi - ni - chasit
et - lo - cho - u' li - mas' an' lo - cho' le - me'
jo, Ach' le - vav' de - vev' jo' de' tu - ni' bal' jo - me'

jeh' hu' - le - ni' nif - at' jeh' av' u' jeh' - she - ni'
jeh' hu' - me' - ni' kail' rach' le - fe' naj' yel' u' kon'
chaj - jo' ve' an' - ti' ve' an' - ti' v'et' adav' noj

U' mag' le - ce - dek' lo - me' - gad'
le - au - reit' lo - au - reit' jo' - me' - ni' -

"Eva told him" said Merrick, "that she would love to hear her father's music one more time." He brought back copies to Smithtown where he contacted Merrick.

The rest is history. Cooper, Merrick and Spar worked together to make the concert a reality, inviting five other local cantors to join Merrick in presenting it. Cooper noted that "a big thanks goes to Lenny Romano for bringing the music to our synagogue."

The date for the concert, Merrick noted, was chosen for its proximity to Holocaust Remembrance Day (this year on April 12) but after Passover and its proximity to Israel Independence Day (May 10 this year).

To make sure that Blasz's daughter, now 90, can hear the music, the temple will Skype the concert to Florida "where she with her daughter Julia will be able to hear it," said Merrick. In addition, the temple plans to professionally

record the concert on CD and DVD. "A copy will go to the Holocaust Museum and to her family."

Said Merrick, "It's a historical event. I'm very excited that I'm the one the music came to. I'm a Holocaust survivor daughter myself ... I felt an immediate connection with Eva — a very mystic connection bringing this music to life."

The concert is open to the public. For tickets, call the temple at 724-0424. Tickets will also be available at the door: \$75, benefactor, first six rows, includes cocktail party at 9 pm following the concert; \$35 mezzanine, \$18 behind the sanctuary and \$10 for students under 18.