



The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism

Follow –up Survey:
Further Detail on
Use of Musical Instruments
on
Shabbat / Yom Tov

67 / 30 kehillot answered
February, 2013

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The Vision

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is a community of kehillot -- sacred communities -- committed to a dynamic Judaism that is learned and passionate, authentic and pluralistic, joyful and accessible, egalitarian or traditional.

Our kehillot create the conditions for a powerful and vibrant Jewish life, empowering Jews in North America to seek the presence of God, to seek meaning and purpose in Torah and mitzvot, to fully engage with Israel, and to be inspired by Judaism to improve the world and the Jewish people.

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism creates the spiritual, intellectual and managerial network that enables each of our kehillot to fulfill its sacred mission and connects all our kehillot with a common sense of community, shared mission and purpose. Together with other centers of energy identified with Conservative Judaism, we articulate and disseminate our approach to Judaism.

The Mission

To transform and strengthen our kehillot in their effort to:

- **inspire meaningful prayer**
 - sustain a culture of lifelong Jewish learning
 - nurture religious and spiritual growth
 - promote excellence in kehilla leadership

To ensure educational excellence true to the vision of Conservative Judaism for children and adults in our kehillot

To engage the next generation of kehilla leadership.

To encourage and build new kehillot.

As we developed the initial survey on use of musical instruments on Shabbat and/or Yom Tov members of the Cantors Assembly proposed a few more detailed questions on the subject. Rather than lengthening that survey, we asked if the respondent would be willing to answer a few more questions about using musical instruments.

From that response, we sent invitations to a second survey to 358 people. Of that group, 67 took the survey. The survey sought answers only from USCJ member congregations currently using instruments on Shabbat or Yom Tov; 30 answers met that qualification.

Question 1 reflects answers from all 67 who answered. The remainder of the survey is based on 30 answers.

1. We currently use musical instruments during services on Shabbat and / or Yom Tov.		Response Percent
	No	55.2%
	Yes	44.8%

Comments?	
Friday night only	17%
Few times a year	20%
Monthly	10%
Kabbalat Shabbat only	17%
Children's' service only	7%

As in the initial survey, the answer “yes” is nuanced. As we see in the comments, among the kehillot which use instruments, many made it a point to note they restrict use to specific times and services.

I am	Response Percent
cantor	30.0%
executive director	16.7%
rabbi	16.7%
president	13.3%
ritual chair	13.3%
Other (please specify)	13.3%
music committee chair	0.0%
answered question 30	

In this survey, the greatest number of responses came from cantors / hazzanim. The “other” group was past presidents, ritual committee members or others active in the kehilla.

We are in USCJ district:		Response Percent
	Central	16.7%
	METNY	13.3%
	Mid-Atlantic	23.3%
	Northeast	13.3%
	Northern Pacific	0.0%
	Pacific Southwest	13.3%
	Southeast-Seaboard	20.0%
answered question 30		

The responses reflected a reasonable cross-section of the continent.

Who initiated the process to include instrumental music on Shabbat / Yom Tov? [check all that apply]		Response Percent
Rabbi		57.1%
Hazzan		39.3%
Way before my time / don't know		25.0%
Members of kehilla		17.9%
Ritual committee		14.3%
Music committee		3.6%
Officers		3.6%
answered question		28

Among this group, it was the rabbis more than any others, who promoted the beginnings of instrumental music. Note that 1/4 of the group stated that instrumental music has a long enough history that its beginnings are not known.

What process was followed as the issue was being discussed?	Response Percent	
Ritual Committee studied the issue, discussed then voted.	60.0%	
No discussion; decision made by rabbi / hazzan.	28.0%	
Was part of the founding principles	16.0%	
Kehilla at large studied the issue, then voted.	8.0%	
answered question		25

For 68%, adoption of instrumental music followed a process of study then voting.

Who plays instruments for you? [check all that apply]		Response Percent
Members		75.9%
Non-members		55.2%
Hazzan		51.7%
Rabbi		34.5%
Other synagogue staff		10.3%
Music students from nearby schools		6.9%
Education Director		0.0%
Executive Director		0.0%
Youth Director		0.0%
answered question		29

Who is responsible for finding your musicians?		Response Percent
Hazzan		69.2%
Rabbi		30.8%
Music committee		7.7%
Ritual committee		0.0%
Other (please specify)		7.0%
answered question		26

Compensation: Are your musicians:	Response Percent	
volunteers - MEMBERS of the kehilla	41.4%	
some paid / some volunteer - MEMBER	31.0%	
paid - not members of the kehilla	13.8%	
paid - MEMBERS of the kehilla	6.9%	
some paid / some volunteer - non-member	6.9%	
volunteers - not members of the kehilla	0.0%	
answered question		29

Most kehillot use volunteers to play the music. Even in the split group, the comments suggest that most of the musicians volunteer.

Our musicians [check all that apply]		volunteer	Paid
		Response Percent	
report renewed commitment to synagogue life		42.9%	9.1%
demonstrate increased interest in Jewish observance		14.3%	18.2%
report increased interest in traditional davenning		0.0%	0.0%
report decreased interest in traditional davenning		0.0%	0.0%
are dependable for services		71.4%	100.0%
are dependable for rehearsals		28.6%	72.7%
bring family along for the service		57.1%	45.5%
are active in other areas of kehilla life		57.1%	27.3%
answered question		7	11

The ages of our musicians [check all that apply]		volunteer	Paid
		Response Percent	
under age 12		0.0%	11.8%
13-17 years old		40.0%	47.1%
18-29		30.0%	23.5%
30-39		10.0%	52.9%
40-49		50.0%	82.4%
50-59		90.0%	76.5%
60+		30.0%	29.4%
answered question		10	17

In these two questions we compare responses for volunteer or paid musicians. The volunteers tend to be older. Being a musician seems to have no impact on interest in traditional davenning, and only a slight impact on observance. Yet, results show an impact on commitment to synagogue life.

Our musicians are paid [check all that apply]		Response Percent
as a fixed budget line item		81.3%
from grants		6.3%
from individual donations		6.3%
from rabbi's discretionary fund		6.3%
from cantor's discretionary fund		12.5%
from endowment fund		6.3%
answered question		16

Kehillot which have music on a regular basis make room for it in the budget.

Who finds and arranges the music?		Response Percent
Cantor / Hazzan / Cantorial soloist		84.0%
Rabbi		28.0%
Choir director -paid		12.0%
Music director - paid		8.0%
Music director - volunteer		4.0%
Choir director - volunteer		4.0%
answered question		25

“Rabbi” was not a choice given in the question, yet 28% provided that answer. The hazzan takes the lead in this area.

Who rehearses the musicians?		Response Percent
	Cantor / Hazzan / Cantorial soloist	88.0%
	Music director - paid	16.0%
	Rabbi	16.0%
	Music director - volunteer	8.0%
	Choir director -paid	8.0%
	Choir director - volunteer	4.0%

answered question 25

“Rabbi” was not a choice given in the question, yet 16% provided that answer. The hazzan takes the lead in this area.

Who conducts the musicians at the service?		Response Percent
	Cantor / Hazzan / Cantorial soloist	75.0%
	Choir director	40.0%
	Rabbi	30.0%
	Music director	25.0%

answered question 20

If instrumental music is an integrated part of your kehilla's identity and budget....		
	Yes	No
Is there a musical theme or vision for each year?	0	100.0%
Is there a standing arts committee that works with the cantor/music director?	8%	92%
Is there an attempt to tie the instrumental music to a Shabbat or holiday theme?	58%	38%
Is there an attempt to review impact of instrumental music on worshippers?	27%	73%
Is there a review to see if the goal of instrumental music is being met?	15%	85%

answered question 26

Comments?
We have not put into place the appropriate review process for goals.
We are just beginning to introduce music - too soon to answer these questions.
We don't have a different theme each year; we have a different theme each week.

This is, perhaps, the most important question in the survey. Use of musical instruments should not be an end in itself, rather a way to create more meaningful services. These kehillot do not measure to see if the greater goal of meaningful worship (however they define it) is being aided by use of instruments.

The instrumental music is planned with the following in mind:			
	Yes	No	N/A
Adult choir	33%	33%	30%
Teen choir	7%	33%	48%
Children's choir	22%	30%	40%

answered question

27

Instrumental music is part of [check all that apply]		Response Percent
	Main Friday evening service	65.5%
	Tot Shabbat, Friday evening	44.8%
	Scheduled "special instrumental music" Shabbatot only	44.8%
	Alternate Shabbat morning service	24.1%
	Tot Shabbat, Shabbat morning	20.7%
	Tot Shabbat, Friday morning	17.2%
	Children's junior congregation	13.8%
	Adult meditation program (percussion)	10.3%
	Friday evening BEFORE Shabbat only	10.3%

	Alternate Friday evening service	10.3%
	Main Shabbat morning service	10.3%
	Teen minyan	0.0%
		answered question 29
Other (please specify)		
There is guitar at tot Shabbat and also at a family Shabbat service.		
Youth Kabbalat Shabbat and Youth Shabbat services		
Purim and Selichot, but these don't pose any halakhic challenges.		
One Friday night and one Saturday morning a month		
Purim, Simchat Torah		
We only use guitar on Shabbat morning and only for the misheberach prayer.		
Kabbalat Shabbat only (regardless of time)		
Also alternate HHD service and organ at the main HHD services.		
High Holidays		

When instrumental music is used, is there an alternative without instrumental music?	
	Response Percent
No	77.8%
Yes	22.2%
answered question 27	

What genres of instrumental music do you use [check all that apply]	
	Response Percent
Acoustic folk, American (example, guitar)	89.3%
Neo-Hasidic (includes klezmer)	57.1%
Acoustic classical (example, violin and flute)	46.4%
Acoustic folk, Israeli	42.9%
Rock and roll	14.3%
Sephardi/Teimani	14.3%
Multi-cultural/New Age	14.3%
Jazz	10.7%
Ladino/Spanish	10.7%
answered question 28	

Other (please specify)
It's hard for me to classify it.
...we use a djembe, but do not play African music. We use a flute for a few things but the music is folk, not classical.
Primarily Debbie Friedman, Finkelstein, Taubman, Recht and the like
multiple styles of music
African, Gospel, Bluegrass
Sol Zim, Danny Masseng, Janowski, Taubman, Friedman
There is often a variety of musical influences at play.

The results of this section are not surprising; worship time is time for spiritual “comfort foods” more than experimentation. Another possible reason is that the music needs to be in the skill set of the volunteer musicians. Most striking is the drop-off from 43% to 14% at rock-and-roll.

Which synagogue occasions are occasions for special musical programming, which include instrumental music? Check all that apply:	
	Response Percent
Simhat Torah hakafot evening	64.0%
Purim	64.0%
Hanukkah Concert	64.0%
Synagogue Fund-raiser	48.0%
Yom HaShoah Program featuring music	20.0%
Shabbat Shirah	16.0%
Cantor's Assembly Fund-raiser	16.0%
Yom Ha'Atzma'ut Concert	12.0%
Simhat Torah hakafot morning	8.0%
Sukkot - Concert in the Sukkah	8.0%
USY Fund-raiser	8.0%
Women's League Fund-raiser	8.0%
answered question	
25	

Most striking in this question is the difference in instrumental use between Simhat Torah evening and morning. Likely this reflects the more traditional nature of services on Simhat Torah morning. Also striking is the same level of instrumental use on Simhat Torah (Yom Tov) and Purim (neither Shabbat nor Yom Tov) and Hanukkah (which could be on Shabbat).