

ROLLIN R. SIMMONS
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Music connects people to each other, to their inner selves, and to God. As Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, “The wave of a song carries the soul to heights which utterable meanings can never reach.” Music enlivens our prayers and helps us teach our Jewish narrative. As a cantor, I will guide congregants in the various stages of their Jewish journeys, based on my experiences as a student at HUC-JIR, a student cantor, a b’nai mitzvah tutor, a hospital chaplain intern, and a special education teacher. I hope to work closely with a clergy team, creating meaningful and innovative worship and life cycle ceremonies that combine the richness of Jewish musical traditions with contemporary styles. I will also combine my experience as a cantor and an educator to create diverse and accessible learning environments for children and adults. I am looking ahead with great anticipation to becoming an integral part of a new community, through the sharing of story and song.

EDUCATION:

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music, New York, NY

- Candidate for Investiture, May 2010
- Master’s in Sacred Music, May 2009
- Cantorial Thesis: Creating Meaningful Interfaith Worship, advised by Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman

Lesley University, Cambridge, MA

- Master’s in Education, Moderate Special Needs 5-12, May 2005

Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

- Bachelor of Arts, Cum Laude, May 2001
- Major: Art History Minor: Italian

Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italy

- Junior Year Abroad, Spring 2000

SYNAGOGUE EXPERIENCE:

Student Cantor, *Temple Emanu-El*, Dallas, TX

August 2009 - Present

- Works as *hazzan sheini* with Cantor Richard Cohn
- Co-leads worship services for Shabbat, festivals, High Holidays
- Teaches b’nai mitzvah preparation classes to students and families
- Mentors K-2 music teacher
- Composes music for services and for religious school

B’nai Mitzvah Tutor, *Central Synagogue*, New York, NY

June 2009 - Present

- Prepares materials for students of varying levels
- Designs learning strategies for students with special needs

Student Cantor, *Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation*, New York, NY

August 2008 - June 2009

- Co-led worship services for Shabbat, festivals, High Holidays
- Worked closely with organist and pianist to select diverse musical settings for services
- Led monthly Tot Shabbat services
- Taught music in the religious school (Grades 1-7)
- Co-led wedding ceremonies with rabbi

Cantorial Intern, *Temple Israel*, Boston, MA

Summer 2008

- Co-led Shabbat worship services
- Gave sermons, led Shabbat morning Torah studies
- Tutored B’nai Mitzvah students
- Co-led with and shadowed rabbis and cantor at life cycle ceremonies

- Student Cantor for Women's Seder**, *Stephen Wise Free Synagogue*, New York, NY April 2, 2008
- Student Cantor**, *Community Synagogue*, Port Washington, NY September 2006 - May 2008
- Worked as *hazzan sheini* with Cantor Claire Franco
 - Co-led worship services for Shabbat and High Holidays
 - Taught Sunday school music classes and junior choir
 - Tutored Hebrew curriculum one-on-one
- Student Cantor**, *Congregation Children of Israel*, Augusta, GA September 2007
- Worked closely with rabbi and music director to plan and lead High Holiday services
- Cantorial Soloist**
- Shabbat services, *Temple Israel*, Boston, MA May 2002 - May 2005
 - Shabbat services, *Temple Shir Tikva*, Wayland, MA Fall 2004
 - High Holidays, *Temple Israel*, Boston, MA September 2004
 - Shabbat services, *Temple Beth Shalom*, Peabody, MA Summer 2004
 - High Holidays, *Temple Beth El*, Providence, RI September 2003
- Assistant Teacher**, *Temple Israel Education Program*, Boston, MA March 2003-June 2003
- Worked one-on-one with students with special needs in multiple classrooms
 - Created art and music projects for sixth grade classes

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE:

- Special Education Assistant**, *Acton-Boxborough Regional High School* September 2003-June 2005
- Supported students with learning disabilities in a learning center and in inclusive classrooms
 - Created study guides, graphic organizers, and lesson plans to teach learning strategies to high school classes
 - Provided administrative support to the learning center supervisor

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Jewish Funds for Justice Course, Clergy Leadership for Public Life** Fall 2007
- Training in congregation-based community organizing
- Evergreen Healthcare Clinical Pastoral Education Program**, Kirkland, WA Summer 2007
- Chaplain Intern

VOLUNTEER AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE:

- HUC Student Association** (School of Sacred Music Co-President) 2007 - 2009
- Created and coordinated programming to encourage building community
 - Designed all publicity for school events
- HUC-JIR Worship Working Group** January 2007 - Present
- Planned school-wide programming relating to spiritual development
 - Designed and co-led creative worship services for school events
- HUC-JIR Pesach Project**, Former Soviet Union April 2006
- Co-led community seders and developed relationships with Ukrainian Jewish youth
- Ethiopian Absorption Center**, Mevasseret Tzion, Israel September 2005 - May 2006
- Supported families, developed programming for children
- Zamir Chorale of Boston**, Boston, MA Jan. 2002 - June 2004
- Performed in the Boston area, toured in Italy
- 150-mile Bike Ride for Multiple Sclerosis** 2002 - 2004
- Was a top-fundraiser for the ride from Boston to Provincetown
 - Sang the national anthem at the start of the event

SKILLS:

- Computer: Proficient in Macintosh and PC environment, Microsoft Office, iWork
- Musical Instruments: Guitar, Flute

HONORS AT HUC-JIR:

- Rabbi Malcolm Stern Memorial Prize for a student who has contributed the most to the school (2009)
- Rabbi Solomon Goldman Memorial Prize in Liturgy (2009)
- Temple Beth Elohim of Wellesley Hills Prize for general excellence in cantorial performance (2008)
- The Allen Sever Prize for promoting contemporary Jewish Art Song through performance (2008)
- Rabbi Herbert Hendel Memorial Prize for general excellence (2008)
- Dr. Michael and Jennie Canick Award in Hebrew Language and Literature (2007)

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST