

Sh'ma – February 2015
Rabbi Matthew Berger

The Power of Music to Create Community

I grew up surrounded by music. One of my earliest memories is sitting beneath my mom's Steinway hearing her play pieces by Chopin, Mozart and Beethoven. As a journalist and an educator, she taught piano lessons at home for 30+ years. Likewise my dad played the trumpet in the local Jewish Community Center Jazz Band for decades. One of the great things about being a rabbi and a musician is the ability to use these blessings in concert with one another. Every week, I enjoy using music to express the beauty of Jewish tradition through voice and guitar. Music is wonderful vehicle to connect to people regardless of age and deepen their love for Judaism.

This month Congregation Beth Shalom welcomes Ellen Allard, a talented and energetic Jewish musician and educator. Sponsored in part by a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, Ms. Allard will be our *Barish Scholar in Residence* the weekend of February 13th-15th. I've had the privilege of knowing Ellen for a number of years as a fellow musician and as a friend.

Ms. Allard, who resides in Massachusetts (a.k.a. the land of colder winters), states that her primary goal as a musician and educator is "to use music to bring people together, to build community and to help people (little and big) relate to each other in a way that pretty much nothing else can do." I've seen Ellen connect with children and adults in many contexts – from national conventions to live concerts to intimate worship experiences. All I can say is prepare to be amazed and wowed!

The *Barish Scholar in Residence* weekend will begin on Friday, February 13th at 7:30 PM with *Wow Worship!* at CBSW. This is an innovative and inventive full sensory musical service infused with great energy. Participants of all ages will enjoy this musical service that will take us beyond the prayer book.

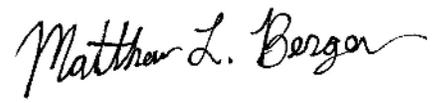
On Saturday, February 14th at 10 AM, parents, grandparents and children alike will rock with Ms. Allard during the *Totally Tot Shabbat* service. Later that day the entire community is invited to a free musical concert at 4 PM, which will conclude with an end of Shabbat *Havdalah* ceremony and light refreshments. CBSW has invited Congregation Jewish Community North as well as the interfaith community to join us.

Finally on Sunday, February 15th, Ms. Allard will lead a morning presentation, *Sing It! Say It! Stamp It! Sway It!* and headline a concert at *Yom Limmud* (Day of Jewish Learning) at Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston.

The Reform Movement is blessed with a rich history and tradition of distinguished cantors, dynamic Jewish composers and engaging performers. Ellen Allard has rightfully taken her place among these great musicians. Don't miss this wonderful weekend filled with opportunities to see, hear, and experience the power of Jewish music to uplift our spirits, our lives and our community.

***Sh'ma* – February 2015**
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B'shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew L. Berger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "g".

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