

BELIEFS Values

# In training

## Young cantor hopes to find home at Temple Israel

BY REENA FULKA  
SPECIAL WRITER

When Cantor Harold Orbach and cantorial student David Katz chant the liturgy from Temple Israel's bimah, their lyric tenor voices tend to blend together as one.

As a newcomer to the clerical team, Katz was quick to discover that the harmony at the nation's largest Reform temple isn't limited to the sanctuary platform.

"This is a pretty remarkable place in terms of people and the sense of warmth, and that's what we'd like for our family down the road," said Katz, who plans to move to Oakland County with his wife, Julie, next summer. "The opportunity to even be considered for the position here is one of the biggest honors you could have."

In mid-July, the Long Island resident began a one-year internship that keeps him jetting to the West Bloomfield temple for the weekend — then back to New York during the week to complete ordination requirements at Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music.

"Everybody's reacted extremely warmly to his talent, to his personality," said Orbach, the sole cantor at the temple for 36 years. "With four rabbis and one cantor and an ever-expanding program, we needed to add another person to our staff. Our intent and hope is that this is the beginning of his

stay at Temple Israel, not so much an internship. We hope he'll join our staff on a full-time basis."

A Phoenix native who once made a game of imitating voices, Katz was a freshman at Arizona State University before he actually began pursuing opera studies. In time, he realized that his gift was worth sharing. "An artist is always craving his art and giving it away," said Katz. "It's incredibly rewarding."

Though he enjoyed honing his craft in college musicals and Phoenix theater productions, Katz soon found that stints in the secular world left him less than fulfilled.

"It's a one-time shot," he said. "After a while you develop, but there's not a relationship emotionally and spiritually that you have with a family congregation. It's much more fulfilling here in every way."

"My real desire in life is to be a family one day and to be to my family... to be a husband to my wife, and a father to my children," he continued. "That is my priority. Being away all the time is not taking care of that."

In his new role at Temple Israel, Katz works hand-in-hand with Orbach and Rabbi M. Robert Sykes of West Bloomfield, Harold Loss of Bloomfield Hills, Paul Yedwab of Commerce Township and Joshua Bennett of Birmingham.

ingham.

"The unique aspect is the relationship between all the clergy," said Orbach, a Bloomfield Hills resident. "The clergy team of four rabbis and I have enjoyed wonderful camaraderie and we hope to extend that to our new clergy in years ahead."

Like the six clerics in Temple Israel's 56-year history — including founding Rabbi Leon Fram — Katz has expressed an interest in establishing lasting roots among the growing congregation at 5725 Walnut Lake Road. For now, though, he says, "I'll take it one step at a time."

Another high point for the budding artist is the opportunity to work with Orbach, a German immigrant and 1948 winner of the Katherine Long Scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music. A member of the second graduating class at Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music, Orbach is the school's first seminarian to house a cantorial school, Orbach went on to help develop the Jewish American cantorate of today.

"The beauty of it is that we both have our own style," said 30-year-old Katz. "I'll be able to clean and take from him the things to better myself and grow, and also have the opportunity to seek and ask."

In the fall, Katz and Orbach will officiate at simultaneous Friday night worship services — alter-



STAFF PHOTO BY JEFF KAPLAN

**Tenor duet: David Katz (left) will become the sixth member of Temple Israel's clerical staff when he completes his one-year cantorial internship with Cantor Harold Orbach.**

nating each week between the traditional and informal. They will individually lead the chants during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), when services held in the sanctuary and social hall draw 6,000 individuals.

In addition to officiating at services and lifecycle events for the 3,000-family congregation, the cantorial team is responsible for creating the curriculum for Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and planning the temple's 17 annual cultural events. In the greater commu-

ty, the cantors are involved with inter-religious, inter-racial and multi-ethnic programming.

Among Orbach's many honors is the State of Israel Culture Medal presented by former Prime Minister Golda Meir. Though he continues to sing at concerts around the globe, Orbach seems most at home among the Temple Israel community.

"There's a very big difference in singing for people that you'll never meet again and singing for your family, your congregation," explained Orbach, who took his first stab at cantoring at age 15.

"I decided early in my career, after traveling and singing for strangers and staying in hotel rooms, that this wasn't how I wanted to spend my life. It was being able to combine the emotional needs with the talent that led me to the cantorate."

For Katz, the rewards of the profession are the same. "It's about giving away what you've been given... being there for the family, the congregation and giving away the gifts," added Katz. "And there's no better place to do it than a safe, warm and congenial than this congregation."

# Weekend encounter challenges, entertains and teaches area youth

BY REENA FULKA  
SPECIAL WRITER

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12

With this Bible message as their theme, 100 youth in grades 6 to 12 will embark on a four-day, counter-cultural experience at the second annual Youth Encounter Weekend at First United Methodist Church in Birmingham.

Students attending the Aug. 14 through 17 event will "Challenge the Assumptions" that church is boring, parents don't know anything, church is just for old people and that we can't know much about God. The program also features a riverboat ride, pool party and talent show.

"The purpose is to have a great time and to challenge the kids," said the Rev. Mark Hook of Bloomfield Hills, youth minister.

"We want them to realize that God does have a plan for each of their lives and that they can

know about that."

The Encounter Weekend is open to the greater community. All sessions meet at the church at 1589 W. Maple, Birmingham. The cost is \$45 per student and reservations are required.

A riverboat cruise down the Detroit River kicks off the weekend activities on Thursday, Aug. 14.

The evening runs from 5 to 10:30 p.m. and features submarine sandwiches and a dance.

On Friday from 6 to 11:30 p.m., guest speaker Mark Jordan of Peoria, Ill., introduces

the list of assumptions to be challenged in small group discussions.

The evening of dinner, music and sing-along winds down with a slide show of the cruise and other youth activities. Parents are encouraged to attend the one-hour presentation beginning at 10:30 p.m.

"Everybody's face will be in the slide show," said Hook, a Birmingham native who returned to Oakland County to serve his home church two years ago.

A pool party and picnic follow

a second presentation led by Jordan during the 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. session on Saturday.

The youth take center stage in a talent show later in the day, when the group convenes from 6 to 11:30 p.m. Family and friends are welcome to witness the fun.

The weekend concludes with the 8 to 11 a.m. assembly on Sunday, which includes an 8:30 a.m. worship service and a theme discussion led by Jordan.

Now in its second year, the youth encounter weekend is already expected to double its former roster from 50 to 100

teens. The success may hinge, in part, on the fun-filled spirit of the group and its leaders.

"Someone once said that it's a sin to bore a kid with the gospel message," added Hook. "If we could get the message out to kids that you do matter, and let other people know that they matter, then I think we'll start seeing differences."

For more information or to make reservations for Youth Encounter Weekend 1997, call (248) 646-6407, ext. 3130.



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