

'Zochrenu Lechim' to be performed in Smithtown

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

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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](#))

