The spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels  
-- Ezekiel 1:21

"Wheels Within Wheels deepens the musical experience created at Congregation Bet Haverim by lifting the veil between the ordinary and the sacred, so that our earthy expression of musical holiness connects with the celestial resonance of the universal. Like Ezekiel’s mystical vision, the spirals of harmonies, voices and instruments evoke contemplation, awe and celebration. At times Wheels Within Wheels will transport you to an intimate experience with your innermost self, and at other times it will convey a profound connection with the world around you."
-- Rabbi Joshua Lesser

THE MUSICIANS OF CONGREGATION BET HAVERIM

Chorus

Soprano: Nefesh Chaya, Sara Dardik, Julie Fishman, Nancy Gerber, Joy Goodman,  
Ellie McGraw, Theresa Prestwood, Rina Rosenberg, Faith Russler, Sandi Schein  
Alto: Jesse Harris Bathrick, Elke Davidson, Gayanne Geurin, Kim Goldsmith, Rebecca  
Green, Carrie Hausman, Alix Laing, Rebecca Leary Safon, AnnaLaura Scheer, Valerie  
Singer, Linda Weiskoff, Valerie Wolpe, McKenzie Wren  
Tenor: Ned Bridges, Brad Davidorf, Faye Dresner, Henry Farber, Alan Hymowitz,  
Lynne Norton  
Bass: Dan Arnold, Gregg Bedol, David Borthwick, Gary Falcon, Bill Laing, Bill  
Witherspoon, Howard Winer

Band
Will Robertson, guitar, keyboards; Natalie Stahl, clarinet, saxophone; Sarah Zaslaw,  
violin, viola; Reuben Haller, mandolin; Jordan Dayan, bass, electric bass; Mike  
Zimmerman, drum kit, percussion; Henry Farber and Gayanne Geurin, percussion; with  
Matthew Kaminski, accordion

Strings
Sarah Zaslaw and Benjamin Reiss, violin; David Borthwick, viola; Ruth Einstein, cello;  
Will Robertson, double bass

Children’s Choir and CBH Community School

Chorus director: Will Robertson  
Music director: Gayanne Geurin
Thank You

It takes a shul to raise a recording. Huge thanks to the recording project team for crafting and guiding the Merkavah Project. CBH is enormously blessed with members who volunteer their immense talents, heart and soul to create meaningful music and spiritual experiences. The musicians above are the spiritual fuel that runs this “chariot.” We are so grateful for you all.

Special thanks to these folks who made this CD possible:
Sonia Ron Osio: Original Artwork
Jessica Lily: Photography
Laurie Slack: Graphic Design
Sarah Zaslaw: liner notes and copy editing
Carrie Hausman: communications, web pages, and financials
Julie Fishman: digital distribution
Lynne Norton: licensing
CBH Staff: public relations, communications, graphics, administration, website. Thank you, Allison Carter, Rebecca Goldberg, Agatha Walker, Kellie Scheer, Ellie McGraw and Amy Robertson.
Rabbi Joshua Lesser: Insight, spiritual connections

The Merkavah Project Committee: Thank you, Julie Fishman, Carrie Hausman, Ellie McGraw, Elke Davidson, Henry Farber, David Borthwick, Sarah Zaslaw, Will Robertson and Gayanne Geurin.

This album was engineered by Vic Stafford, Martin Kearns and Will Robertson. Mixed by Will Robertson at Gallop Studios. Mastering by Colin Leonard at SING Mastering, Atlanta, using SING Technology.
Recorded in and around Atlanta at Gallop Studios, Southern Tracks, 800 East, Clarkston Community Center (thanks, McKenzie Wren), Central Congregational UCC, St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church and The Friends School.
1. Achot Ketana

Traditional Moroccan words and tune. Arranged by Will Robertson. Performed by the CBH Chorus and Band.

This Sephardi piyyut (liturgical poem) for Rosh Hashanah looks from the old year to the new year. It is sung in unusual seven-bar phrases.

Achot ketana tefiloteha The little sister prepares her prayers
Orcha v’ona tehiloteha And intones her praises
El na refana I’machaloteha God, heal her sickness now
Tichle shana v’kileloteha May the year and its misfortunes now cease altogether

2. LYG (Lo Yisa Goy)


“LYG (Lo Yisa Goy)” won the John Lennon Songwriting contest in 2009. In 2011, Aviva Chernick and Jaffa Road performed it with us at the Atlanta Jewish Music Festival. Will Robertson made this choral arrangement for that occasion.

Lo yisa goy el goy cherev Let no nation lift a sword against a nation
Lo yilmedu od milchama Let them learn no more the ways of war

I’m gonna lay down my sword and shield
By the riverside
Lay down my sword and shield

3. Zochreinu L’Chaim


Zochreinu l’chaim Remember us for life
Melech chafetz bachaim Sovereign who seeks to grant life
Vechotveinu besefer hachaim Inscribe us into the Book of Life
Lema’ancha Elohim chaim For your sake, God of Life
4. Mad World / Kol Ha’Olam Kulo

“Mad World” written by Roland Orzabal (Tears for Fears). Publisher: Chrysalis Music Group. “Kol Ha’Olam Kulo” text attributed to Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, music by Baruch Chait. Arranged by Will Robertson. Performed by the CBH Chorus, Band and Strings with soloist Brad Davidorf.

The idea to make a mashup of these songs arose from a lucky misunderstanding between Brad Davidorf and Gayanne Geurin. It turns out that the two tunes, one American and one Israeli, mesh almost perfectly, and together they form a conversation about despair and hope.

All around me are familiar faces  
Worn out places, worn out faces  
Bright and early for the daily races  
Going nowhere, going nowhere  
And the tears are filling up their glasses  
No expression, no expression  
And in my head I want to drown my sorrow  
No tomorrow, no tomorrow

And I find it kind of funny  
I find it kind of sad  
The dreams in which I’m dying  
Are the best I’ve ever had  
And I find it hard to tell you  
I find it hard to take  
When people run in circles  
It’s a very, very  
Mad world, mad world

Children waiting for the day they feel good  
Happy birthday, happy birthday  
Made to feel the way that every child should  
Sit and listen, sit and listen

Went to school and I was very nervous  
No one knew me, no one knew me  
Hello, teacher, tell me what’s my lesson  
Look right through me, look right through me

And I find it kind of funny...

Kol ha’olam kulo gesher tzar me’od  
V’ha’ikar lo l’fached klal

The entire world is a very narrow bridge  
The essential thing is to have no fear at all
5. American Tune


For “American Tune” Paul Simon uses a same Lutheran chorale tune that Bach had set more than once, centuries earlier. Will’s arrangement begins and ends with the chorus wordlessly singing one of Bach’s settings.

We first sang Simon’s “American Tune” amid the Great Recession. It resonated with the congregation, so we kept it. Then, in September 2013, we were given a chance to perform it at Emory University to open a lecture by Paul Simon himself. In the run-up to that event, Emory made a seven-minute video about CBH Chorus members’ associations with the song.

Many’s the time I’ve been mistaken
And many times confused
Yes, and I’ve often felt forsaken
And certainly misused
Oh, but I’m all right, I’m all right
I’m just weary to my bones
Still, you don’t expect to be bright and bon vivant
So far away from home, so far away from home

I don’t know a soul who’s not been battered
I don’t have a friend who feels at ease
I don’t know a dream that’s not been shattered
Or driven to its knees
Oh, but it’s all right, it’s all right
For we’ve lived so well so long
Still, when I think of the road we’re traveling on
I wonder what went wrong
I can’t help it, I wonder what’s gone wrong

And I dreamed I was dying
And I dreamed that my soul rose unexpectedly
And looking back down at me
Smiled reassuringly
And I dreamed I was flying
And high above my eyes could clearly see
The Statue of Liberty
Sailing away to sea
And I dreamed I was flying
Oh, we come on the ship they call the Mayflower
We come on the ship that sailed the moon
We come in the age’s most uncertain hour
And sing an American tune
Oh, it’s all right, it’s all right, it’s all right
You can’t be forever blessed
Still, tomorrow’s going to be another working day
And I’m trying to get some rest
That’s all, I’m trying to get some rest

6. Ahavat Olam

Prayer from the Ma’ariv service. Music by Will Robertson. Sung by the CBH Chorus.

At High Holiday services, the chorus fans out around the sanctuary to sing this, forming a container in which to “hold” the congregation. The song repeats enough times for everyone to catch on and join in on the refrain, and the sound gets fuller and fuller.

Ahavat olam amcha ahavta With everlasting love
Ahavat olam Beit Yisrael You love the House of Israel
Torah umitzvot, chukim umishpatim Torah and mitzvot, laws and justice
Otanu limad’ta You have taught us
Al kein Adonai Eloheinu And so, Adonai our God,
B’shachveinu u’v’kumeinu When we lie down and when we rise
Nasi’ach b’chuquecha We reflect upon your laws
V’nismach b’divrei toratecha v’mitzvot We take pleasure in your Torah’s words and your mitzvot
L’olam va’ed Now and always

7. Or Zarua

Text from Psalm 97:11. Music by Dan Nichols. Published by Clashing Plaids. Vocal arrangement by Will Robertson. Performed by the CBH Chorus and Band.

Or zarua latzadik Lightbeams are seeded for the righteous
Ul’yishrei lev simcha Happiness for those steadfast of heart
8. La Hora

By Roberto Juan Rodriguez. Performed by the CBH Band.

Cuban Jewish musician Roberto Juan Rodriguez specializes in blending Latin and Jewish sounds. In “La Hora” you can hear those klezmer and Cuban strains dancing together. Though to English-speakers’ eyes the title seems to refer to the Israeli circle dance the hora, it's also simply Spanish for “the hour” or “time.”

9. Swing Down Chariot

Arranged by Will Robertson after the Golden Gate Quartet’s version (1940s) of a traditional spiritual. Performed by the CBH Chorus and Band with soloists Ned Bridges, Bill Witherspoon and Brad Davidorf.

Thanks to the “Swing Down, Sweet Chariot,” we often associate chariot imagery with Christianity, but in fact the chariot in question makes its appearance in the Hebrew Bible: in a wild prophetic vision in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. This more lighthearted song on the same theme, “Swing Down Chariot,” begins with a smooth barbershop quartet and then gets swinging.

Why don't you swing down, sweet chariot
Stop and let me ride, Swing down, chariot
Stop and let me ride, Rock me, Lord, rock me, Lord
Calm and easy, I got a home on the other side

Ezekiel went down in the middle of a field
He said he saw an angel with a chariot wheel
He wasn't so particular 'bout the chariot wheel
He just wanted to see how a chariot feels

   Why don't you swing down, sweet chariot...

Ezekiel went down and he got on board
Chariot went a bumpin’ on down the road
Zeke wasn't so particular 'bout the bumpin’ of the road
He just wanted to lay down his heavy load

   Why don't you swing down, sweet chariot...

Well I got a father in the promised land, I won't stop until I shake his hand
Rock me, Lord, rock me, Lord, Calm and easy
I’ve got a home on the other side

Why don’t you swing down, sweet chariot...

10. Terk (Yoducha Rayonai)

Traditional Turkish/Balkan tune. Arranged by David Borthwick. Performed by the CBH Strings.

Congregation Bet Haverim sings the words “Yoducha Rayonai” to this melody. Turks call the song “Uskudar.” Bulgarians, Albanians and others also think of it as their own. (See the 2003 documentary Whose Is This Song?) There’s a Sephardi love song on this melody, too. And it’s a type of wordless klezmer tune called a terk. Our violist, David Borthwick, made this arrangement for string quintet, incorporating a middle section from yet another klezmer number, “Araber Tanz.”

11. Hareni Mekabel Alai


The positive statement of Judaism’s golden rule: Love your fellow human being as yourself. When this song is done live, we use a loop pedal to add layer upon layer of guitar, voice and violin.

Hareni mekabel alai Behold, I take upon myself
Et mitzvat haborei The instruction of the Creator:
V’ahavta l’reyacha kamocha “You shall love your fellow human being as yourself.”
V’ahavta kamocha

12. Sanctuary


This declaration of faith echoes Psalm 23:4: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”

Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow
Thou art with me
Though my heart’s been torn on fields of battle
Thou art with me
Though my trust is gone and my faith not near
In love’s sanctuary thou art with me

Through desolation’s fire and fear’s dark thunder
Thou art with me
Through the sea of desires that drag me under
Thou art with me
Though I’ve been traded in like a souvenir
In love’s sanctuary thou art with me

Through the doubter’s gloom and the cynic’s sneer
Thou art with me
In the crowded rooms of a mind unclear
Thou art with me
Though I’ll walk for a while down a trail of tears
In love’s sanctuary thou art with me

13. Yedid Nefesh

Traditional piyyut (liturgical poem) for Shabbat. Music by Will Robertson.

Sung by the CBH Chorus.

Yedid nefesh av harachaman — You who love my soul
Meshoch avedecha el retzonecha — Sweet source of tenderness
Yarutz avdecha kemo ayal — Take my inner nature
Yishtachaveh el mul hadarecha — And shape it to your will

Like a darting deer
I will flee to you
Before your glorious presence
Humbly do I bow

14. Shed a Little Light

By James Taylor. Published by Country Road Music, Inc. Performed by the CBH Chorus and Band with soloist Brad Davidorf.

As Atlantans we are always conscious of living in the city where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born and preached. In many ways our synagogue aims to live up to his values. We have sung “Shed a Little Light” for Shabbat Shirah (Sabbath of Song), the annual Jewish celebration of freedom and music, which usually falls right around Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Let us turn our thoughts today
To Martin Luther King
And recognize that there are ties between us
All men and women living on the Earth
Ties of hope and love, sister and brotherhood
That we are bound together
In our desire to see the world become
A place in which our children
Can grow free and strong
We are bound together
By the task that stands before us
And the road that lies ahead
We are bound and we are bound

There is a feeling like the clenching of a fist
There is a hunger in the center of the chest
There is a passage through the darkness and the mist
And though the body sleeps the heart will never rest

Shed a little light, oh Lord
So that we can see
Just a little light, oh Lord
Gonna stand it on up
Stand it on up, oh Lord
Gonna walk it on down
Shed a little light, oh Lord

Can’t get no light from a dollar bill
Don’t give me no light from a TV screen
When I open my eyes
I wanna drink my fill
From the well on the hill.

Do you know what I mean?
Shed a little light, oh Lord...
There is a feeling like the clenching of a fist...
Let us turn our thoughts today to Martin Luther King...

15. Shiru L’Adonai


Will Robertson composed this after an intense Yom Kippur service at which he conducted CBH musicians in part of Steve Reich’s Tehillim, a famously difficult work for four solo singers and assorted instruments. Its changing meters and odd melodic jumps were stuck in his head for weeks afterward, and he found himself wanting to hear the full choir sing something similar. So he wrote it. What we’re hearing here is the first part of a longer piece that he intended as kind of a choral etude, or study.

Shiru l’Adonai shir chadash Sing out to God a new song!
Shiru l’Adonai kol ha’aretz Sing to God all the earth!
Shiru l'Adonai barchu shemo
Bas’ru miyom l’yom yeshuato

Sing to God—bless God’s name
Bring news, day after day, of divine help

16. Gonna Get Through This World


“Gonna Get Through This World” was written in stages. Woody Guthrie penned the lyrics back in 1945; then in 2003 the Klezmatics came up with the music, and finally Will Robertson made our choral arrangement.

Yai dai dai...

I’m gonna get through this world
The best I can, if I can
I’m gonna get through this world
And I think I can
I’m gonna work in this world
The best I can, if I can
I’m gonna work in this world
And I think I can
I’m gonna get through this world
The best I can, if I can

I’m gonna walk in this world...
I’m gonna talk in this world...
And I think I can, and I think I can

I’m gonna get through this world
The best I can, if I can
I’m gonna work in this world
The best I can, if I can
I’m gonna get through this world
The best I can

Yai dai dai...

I’m gonna clean up this world...
I’m gonna leave this world behind...
And I think I can, and I think I can

I’m gonna clean up this world
The best I can, if I can
I’m gonna leave this world behind
The best I can, if I can
I’m gonna get through this world
The best I can

Yai dai dai...

17. The Sun Shines on Everyone

By Snatam Kaur. Sung by the CBH Children’s Chorus (Gayanne Geurin, director) and the congregation at the CBH Community School, accompanied by Will Robertson and Mike Zimmerman.

In this call-and-response song, the Children’s Chorus calls, and everyone else responds. Here “everyone else” means the other children, parents and teachers who were at the CBH Community School’s family minyan on a recent Sunday morning.

The sun shines on everyone
It doesn’t make choices

When it rains, it rains on everyone
It doesn’t make choices

The one spirit lives in everyone
It doesn’t make choices

And we pray, we pray for everyone
We don’t make choices

18. Ella’s Song

By Bernice Johnson Reagon (of Sweet Honey in the Rock). Published by Songtalk Publishing Co. Sung by Gayanne Geurin with the CBH Chorus and Band. Middle verse written by chorus member Bill Witherspoon.

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Until the killing of black men
Black mothers’ sons
Is as important as the killing of white men
White mothers’ sons

We who believe in freedom cannot rest...
I know it's love that makes a family
There's no law that's gonna take that away
But when they move to steal your freedom
It hurts everybody, straight or gay

We who believe in freedom cannot rest...

Not needing to clutch to power
Don't need the light to shine on me
I need to be one in the number
As we stand against tyranny

We who believe in freedom cannot rest...

---

19. Hashkiveinu Lullaby

Prayer from the Ma'ariv service. Music by Will Robertson. Sung by the CBH Chorus.

Will Robertson’s daughter was a baby when he set the evening prayer Hashkiveinu in a lilting 6/8 time and marked it “gently swaying.” The resulting song was featured at the 2013 Shalshelet festival in Miami. Composers of Jewish music from all over the world submitted songs. “Hashkiveinu Lullaby” was one of just 30 songs selected for inclusion.

Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l'shalom
V'ha'amideinu malkeinu l'chaim
Ufros aleinu sukat shlomecha

Help us to lie down, Adonai our God, in peace
And let us rise again, our sovereign, to life
Spread over us the shelter of your peace