

L.A.'s Jewish Symphony

Quick, think of your favorite piece of Jewish music. If "If I Were a Rich Man" came to mind, you may want to consider expanding your Jewish music literacy.

Well, you're in luck.

The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony is alive and well and performing in a synagogue, theater, symphony hall, university auditorium or high school near your home in the not so distant future. Headed by

Artistic Director Noreen Green and Executive Director Wendy Prober, the orchestra performs

solely works of Jewish content.

Green first conceived the idea of a Jewish Symphony while in residence at the Aspen Music Festival a handful of summers ago.

"I was inspired to create a program of all Jewish music," she said. "I assembled a full orchestra, and we performed one evening in a hilltop religious center. The response was enormous. At the end of the evening, my

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Wendy Prober, left, has recently taken over as executive director of the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony, above. For tickets to the group's upcoming "Cinema Judaica" series of concerts, March 6-9, call (310) 476-9777, ext. 203.

mentor, Murry Sidlin, approached me, saying, "This is your life's work."

In the five years that have passed since that hilltop revelation, the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony (LAJS) has begun to carve its identity as a bastion of Jewish music and Jewish music education. In addition to its three annual concerts, LAJS has a chamber ensemble, a day-school music program and a youth orchestra, and it ambitiously seeks to commission new works of Jewish content.

Prober has recently taken over as executive director, handling all of the symphony's bookings and fund raising. "I recently heard of a synagogue holding an event where they were playing

Beethoven," said Prober, herself an accomplished pianist. "And I felt like they really missed an opportunity to involve their community with music of Jewish content and composition."

The LAJS is achieving just that. In addition to its upcoming concert, "Cinema Judaica," which features film scores on Jewish themes (running March 6 to 9 at the University of Judaism's Gindi Auditorium), the LAJS will also appear at the West Valley JCC on March 28 in "An Evening of Music and Laughter." A piece by Aaron Zigman, composed in response to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, will be performed.

The symphony seeks out private benefactors and receives some public funding from the Los Angeles Arts Commission, said Prober, and is looking to corporate and foundation grants. — **Lori Schneide**, Contributing Writer



Artistic Director Noreen Green created LAJS five years ago.