

I am privileged to speak today in memory of our beloved Simon Sargon, whose extensive and exceptional contributions to the repertoire stand side-by-side with his commitment to Jewish artistic and spiritual literacy, encompassed within his overarching kindness as a human being. During my tenure as Cantor of Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, where he had earlier served for twenty-seven years as Director of Music, Simon was a warm and enthusiastic partnering presence. Whether in rehearsal in his studio at SMU, where he was Professor of Composition, or collaborating on a project with the Temple Emanu-El Choir, or celebrating his successes beyond the synagogue, being with Simon was an uplifting and energizing experience. At times embodying his most resolute seriousness around artistic meaning, and at times engaging us through his incisively intelligent punstering wit, Simon was ultimately dedicated to expressing the human experience through music in service to the deepening of Jewish insight and identity.

Born in Mumbai in 1938, and an immigrant to America as a young child, Simon Sargon earned degrees from Brandeis, in music, and Juilliard, in composition, with additional studies at Aspen and Tanglewood. He collaborated regularly in recital with the famous mezzo, Jennie Tourel, and he was a pianist at City Center, the Lincoln Center State Theatre, Sarah Lawrence College, and Juilliard. In 1971 he became Head of the Voice and Opera Department at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, also serving as a Visiting Lecturer at Hebrew University. Subsequently he accepted the position in Dallas, where he composed a broad spectrum of Jewish liturgical and cultural music, while leading the Temple Emanu-El Choir in tours throughout the United States and Israel, and to Jewish communities in Mexico City, Toronto, London, Dublin, Birmingham, Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna, Prague, and Budapest. Judaic and other works by Simon were performed by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and his music was interpreted abroad, an

example being his *KlezMusik* for clarinet and piano, which was heard in venues as far-reaching as Africa and East Asia.

In a summary of major works on Jewish themes provided by Neil Levin in his biographical notes for the Milken Archive, Levin lists Simon's "Symphony No. 1, *Holocaust*; the oratorio *Psalms of Qumran*; *Psalm 8*, commissioned by Yale University in honor of its three-hundredth anniversary; *Elul: Midnight—A Cantata of Penitence*, hailed by the *Dallas Observer* as 'a remarkable work by a remarkable composer . . . [that] transcends sectarian limits and takes on a universal significance . . . part of the "gift" of Judaism to the whole of mankind;' *Sing His Praise*, a Sabbath service for youth choir; *Saul, King of Israel*, an opera commissioned by the Meadows Foundation; *Renewing the Covenant*, for narrator and instrumental ensemble commissioned by the National Council of Jewish Federations for its fiftieth national convention in St. Louis; *Mizmor l'Toda*, a Sabbath eve service; and *Flame of the Lord*, a cantata based on the Song of Songs." Works recorded by Milken include his distinguished song cycles, *Sh'ma* and *At Grandfather's Knee*.

Beyond these lofty accomplishments, I think of specific compositions for the synagogue, ranging from the lyrical beauty of his *Shalom Rav* to the dramatic depth and brilliance of his four-movement *Untanneh Tokef*. What he meant to his community was of even greater scope, aptly summarized by Temple Emanu-El's Senior Rabbi, David Stern: "His creative gifts of heart and mind and his deep Jewish soul shaped our congregation's sense of the holy within the worship experience and beyond it. He nurtured a culture of love, devotion, and artistic promise within our Temple choir. He was a major creative figure in American Jewish music, but just as much, friend and teacher to all of us here at his Temple home. He was a true artist and a true mensch,

with a remarkable ability to channel, shape and share the sound of the Jewish heart.”

A revered member of the GTM who served frequently on the jury for the Young Composer’s Award, Simon was also recognized in 2003 with an honorary membership in the ACC. He took special pride in our having cited "his outstanding contributions to Jewish Music and Jewish Life," because, in its essence, Simon’s vocation was in service to the most profoundly felt dimensions of Jewish living.

Our condolences are extended to his wife, Bonnie, his daughter Olivia and her family, and the wider circle of family and friends to whom he was a devoted presence.

***Zichrono livrachah* – may the memory of Simon Sargon ever be for blessing.**