

Music

Eitan Freilich

Bringing sunshine into our still secluded lives

You don't need me to tell you that in lockdown, time seems to go into lockdown. One day resembles another and it's hard to tell whether it's Monday or Thursday, now that the old routines have gone into cold storage. For me, things don't change on a weekly or daily basis - now it's more hour by hour. Exciting, but pretty disorienting too! Since I wrote last, I've been working on a brand new project. My vocation has always been to create music, sing at concerts and simchas and perform day to day. All that is now as illegal as robbing a bank, but only temporarily, fortunately, as I'm experiencing withdrawal symptoms not singing at weddings. On those magical occasions there is a feeling like no other, bringing joy and happiness to the special couple, along with their nearest and dearest. So I've decided to venture on a new journey while I ride out this long, tedious wait.

Within the space of perhaps one day, I chose five different chuppah songs, each in a different style: some modern, some traditional, some heimish, and phoned my musicians and friends to ask them each to record their tracks at home. I've added my vocals to their recordings and before this month has ended I'll ambitiously release them as an EP. For those of you youngsters (like me) who don't remember the 1960s, an EP is an extended play record, often referred to as an 'EP' - a musical recording that contains more tracks than a single but fewer than an LP (long-play) album. Don't worry, I didn't know either! Our five songs and the videos will be distributed across all well-known online platforms. What's the point? My aim is to provide a little ray of sunshine, hope and optimism; at a time when we can't be physically together, music can bring light and joy into our secluded lives, and serve as a reminder that we will soon be celebrating weddings and simchas once again, all together.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts about our EP. Which was your favourite? Can you tell me why? And that reminds me. You're always welcome to get in touch. We'd love to hear from you and I can promise that we will respond to all messages (the email address is at the bottom of this page). Get in touch with your thoughts and comments - I don't want you to think these articles are a one-way

monologue. On the contrary, they're just one side of a dialogue, in which I hope you'll play an active role. It's always great hearing feedback, especially since I can't get out and about as much as I used to. I was recently musing on how much I miss those walks to and from shul every day, those times for self-reflection and deep thought - that's when my best and most inspired ideas come to me (not during Chazaras Hashatz, I'll have you know).

Over the last year I've continued mentoring and providing the modest guidance I can offer to budding musicians as they follow their star and choose the path of their musical journey. Don't get me wrong; this is not to say that I am the most notable, or even a particularly notable, doer of 'chessed'. I honestly don't want to blow my own trumpet (I have a band that does this for me very nicely, thank you). No, it's these admirable, determined youngsters who are the biggest doers of 'chessed'. On reflection, it's clear to me that from the beginning of my musical journey, without the ongoing sage advice and kind support of those in the industry, I wouldn't be where I am today, and my viewpoint and understanding of music and its meaning would be impoverished. I am simply repaying a debt, and as happens so often, it's the giver who receives far more reward than the takers.

I have never ceased being grateful for the great good fortune of growing up in a musical family. Though my father, who was very musical, was sadly niftar when I was just one year old, both my grandparents had a love for chazzonus that stood me in great stead for my later career. I say 'career' but it's very hard to consider what I do as 'work' in the conventional sense. The life I lead is such a privilege; I've met wonderful people and enjoyed tremendous opportunities. I feel even more fortunate that I can often look back and realise how sad or negative moments in my life have taken an unexpectedly positive turn that I could never have imagined possible. For too many of us, the glass is half empty, but if I can pour any experience, however painful, into meaningful music, I've conquered that bad experience and the glass is now half full. Yes, I am a professional singer, yes, I put in extreme hours (as does my family), but the moment this turns into something other

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The minute you walk into a recording studio you sense the depth of the art. It's so easy to churn out albums, projects, ideas, but it's the time and dedication required to perfect each project that can set you apart - music needs to be recorded '*lishmo*'. We constantly change our arrangements and musical ideas, and I have only one unbreakable rule: egos get left at the door. If nobody speaks up freely to contribute or, for that matter, constructively criticise, we can't be the best people, the best artists, we could be. We are so much better, sharing as a band, as a family, as a community and beyond - trust me, I checked a couple of the jokes above with some of my friends to make sure I didn't offend anyone, though - such is life! - there will always be someone. This personal contact is something we're all missing so much in our current daily lives, but fortunately, the wonders of technology allow us to communicate, albeit at a distance, to interact, to better ourselves, until the glorious moment of release, when we can daven once again in our shuls and walk to and fro with a stream of ideas bubbling forth on each and every journey once again!

I think I ought to mention that as a 13-year-old I also had my



knockdowns. My youthfulness and inexperience were always a big factor while I was learning the ropes - it was these moments that knocked me into shape and gave me the experience and know-how to deal with unexpected factors that came my way, both the 'known unknowns' and the 'unknown unknowns'. It was a bit like getting fit. As my friend and PT Pete Gaffney says: in what world do we give up after trying only five times? When we start a business or launch a new product, we don't give up after a mere five views or five purchases. No, we try to adapt and push harder to reach our eventual goal. Pete is right. You don't advise people to give up working out after just five times before they can see the physical benefits and I'd say the same is true of music, and the spiritual comfort or inspiration it can provide. If I'd given up as a 13-year-old, I wouldn't have gained the experience to deal with those unrehearsed and unexpected issues life is always throwing at you. Just recently, at a very large performance where I was booked

to sing, the team booked for this event were (shall we say) not quite as ready and well prepared as the crew I'm usually used to working with. I arrived ahead of time (I am a Yekke), ready to rehearse with the band flown in from abroad, only to be told that they were running a little late. I have to confess that 'running a little late' as a synonym for 'so late it was practically all over' was new to me. I now always joke with my team that rehearsals are overrated because - long story cut short - I ended up performing to over 1,000 people without meeting, talking or rehearsing with the large band. Funnily enough, it really was one of my best vocal performances. Which just goes to show - well, what? That life throws us a few curves from time to time and facing the challenges in the right spirit can result in a truly inspirational experience for all... there is really no such thing as coincidence.

To book Eitan Freilich, please contact his team at management@efmusic.co.uk or call 0207 043 4260.