



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

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**A Finding Aid to the  
Harold Orbach Papers**

**Manuscript Collection No. 690**



## Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	Harold Orbach Papers
<b>Dates</b>	1951-2001
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS-690
<b>Repository</b>	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Orbach, Harold, 1931
<b>Extent</b>	.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)
<b>Language of the Material</b>	English and Hebrew

## Administrative Information

### Biographical Sketch

Harold Orbach was born March 31, 1931 in Dusseldorf, Germany. He immigrated to America in 1940 after being smuggled out of Germany via the Kindertransport to England. Orbach's concert career began with a performance at New York's Town Hall when he was 18. He served his first congregation as a cantor when he was only fifteen, prior to the establishment of any school that trained cantors in this country.

Orbach is a graduate of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's School of Sacred Music, where he also received an honorary doctorate degree. In addition, he was the winner of the Katherine Long scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music, and holds a Master's degree from the University of Oklahoma. He has also served as president of the American Conference of Cantors and was the recipient of Metropolitan Detroit's 2001 Bernard L. Maas Foundation prize for Achievement in Jewish Culture and Continuity. His voice appears on fourteen recordings and has been used as background for films.

Cantor Orbach has appeared in concerts from Germany to Cuba to Japan and from New York's Lincoln Center to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles. He appeared in a special concert at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and participated in the 350th anniversary of the founding of the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere - located in Curacao. In addition to taking part in Jerusalem's commemoration of 3,000 years and receiving the State of Israel Culture Medal by the late Golda Meir, he has earned the title as one of "the most celebrating cantors."

Orbach has appeared in many world premiere performances, including the first symphony performance of Leonard Bernstein's "Dybbuk Variations," Dave Brubeck's "The Gates of Justice," Martin Kalmanoff's "A Victory at Masada," Chajes' "Out of the Desert," and Ellstein's "The Thief and the Hangman." Having sung at Israel's 25th and 50th anniversary celebrations in the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv, in Caesarea and in Jerusalem, he also participated in the 100th anniversary celebration of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College, as well as Detroit's 300th anniversary and the U.S. bicentennial concert in Philadelphia, where he appeared with Dave Brubeck and Ella Fitzgerald. Orbach was also the leading tenor of the American Savoyards and the Piccolo Opera Company.

The New York Times has described Orbach's voice as "sweet-toned singing," while the Cincinnati Post portrays him as "a great tenor voice that shines in every repertoire." The Metropolitan Opera News says that Orbach sang with "rich and vibrant tones."

The cantor at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield Hills, Michigan for four decades, Orbach married his wife Evelyn on June 24, 1951. Evelyn Orbach is a trained actress and is currently the Artistic Director for the Jewish Ensemble Theater at the Detroit Jewish Community Center. They have three daughters: Sharon, Judith, and Lila, and one son, Richard.

### Scope and Content

The collection combines biographical information, press releases, performance programs, degrees, awards, etc., together with recording of Cantor Orbach's performances. The recordings are on long playing phonograph albums and include performances with artists such as Dave Brubeck.

### Arrangement

This collection is arranged in two (2) series: A. General; B. Audiovisual Materials.

### Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

### Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Harold Orbach Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-690. Harold Orbach Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

## Index Terms

**Subjects** Cantors (Judaism) / Music  
**Corporate Names** Temple Israel (West Bloomfield, Mich.)  
**Media** Phonograph records

### Series A. General, 1957-2001

**Extent** .2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Contains newspaper articles, performance programs, degrees, and awards. Included are materials pertaining to Cantor Orbach's marriage and to his performances as both a cantor and a tenor. The series also contains miscellaneous awards, teaching certificates, and degrees received by Orbach during his 51 year career.

**Arrangement** The series is arranged chronologically.

### Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Biographical news items and press releases.

Box 1. Folder 2. Temple Israel (West Bloomfield Hills, Mich.) performance programs, 1957-2001

Box 1. Folder 3. Temple Israel (West Bloomfield Hills, Mich.) concert and lecture series programs, 1990-2001

Box 1. Folder 4. Programs for non-Temple Israel performances, 1966-1986

Box 1. Folder 5. Degrees, certificates, undated

Box 1. Folder 6. Awards, commendations, undated

Box 1. Folder --. Thesis, 1959

### Series B. Audiovisual Materials, 1967-1980

**Extent** 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of long play phonograph recordings featuring Cantor Orbach. Recordings include "The Gates of Justice," by the Dave Brubeck Trio, which is considered a seminal recording demonstrating the transcendental qualities of the merger of jazz style with religious context.

### Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 7. Music of the High Holy Days, performed by Harold Orbach.

Box 1. Folder 8. Music of Temple, conducted by Samuel Adler, featuring Harold Orbach.

Box 1. Folder 9. Gates of Justice, performed by Dave Brubeck with Harold Orbach, 1967

Box 1. Folder 10. Modern Sound of Three Faiths, featuring Harold Orbach, Rev. Diern J. Geard, and Rev. Tom Grady, 1969

Box 1. Folder 11. American Conference of Cantors presents highlights of 18/Chai Life, gala concert. Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, New York, N.Y., 1971

Box 1. Folder 12. American Conference of Cantors presents highlights of Israel's 25th anniversary in concert, Mann Auditorium, Caesarea Amphitheater Binyenei Ha'ooma, 1973

Box 1. Folder 13. International Jewish Music Library presents "Cantica Hebraica," featuring Harold Orbach. Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, New York, N.Y., 1974

Box 1. Folder 14. Masterpieces of the American Synagogue, with Harold Orbach, the  
Kenneth Jewell Chorale and Chamber Orchestra. Eric Freudigman, conductor, 1980