

Music

MUSICAL MUSINGS
Eitan Freilich

Keys to priming your voice

Let's start this week with the breaking news that I did indeed have a 'Freilichen' Purim! Oh, if I had a pound for every time someone made that joke, I could have retired to a castle in Biarritz. Five times over.

I was in Israel last week working on my album and was also fortunate to sing at two simchas. After landing back at Heathrow, I went straight into rehearsals for what was a very special Friday night davening at Ohr Chodosh in Golders Green. Let's just say it was quite an experience, working with such an enthusiastic, energetic and characterful choir. Very special for me was the fact that the members, from different shuls, different areas, different communities, all joined together to experience inspirational davening. But I'll be honest with you: I haven't always jumped at every opportunity to daven at the omud. Sometimes, I feel that I just want to daven myself and let someone else lead. You'll often find me standing at the back corner of any shul, praying (literally) that I don't get noticed. But in truth, I've learned better - this is not the right way. We are so fortunate to have such incredible baalei tefillah in our communities. Members of our shuls with such golden voices, who really do justice to the incredible niggunim passed on from older, historic generations. So if, like me, you have also lacked the confidence to daven, or felt a little shy to daven centre stage, as it were, then go on - try! Take the plunge, do your best to lead the davening. Your community needs you! Yes, that's you at the back there! When passion and nerves, every fibre of your being, are thrown into davening, it can create a profound sensation of sincerity which is so overwhelming; the person davening has a responsibility for the congregation he is leading. So the next time the Gabbai offers you the opportunity to daven, say no - once, twice - and then when you are invited again, go for it, not for yourself, but to lead us all in a collective act of heartfelt davening.

Speaking of davening, I always find warming up the hardest, and I'm not talking about our recent Arctic London weather. Often it's Shacharis, early in the morning, when the last thing I feel like is singing tune after tune. But I've developed a sort of ritual to deal with warming up

the voice. Running around the house (or hotel room), crazy as it seems, up and down stairs, around the kitchen table or even jogging on the spot, definitely wakes you up and opens up the voice. When I performed in concert with Avraham Fried we even went on a jog together backstage. It gets the heart rate going and arouses the voice. Water is another useful tool. But not any ordinary water out of the tap; it must be warm or, preferably, steaming. A blissful sauna for the voice... As I always explain to people, water and food do not touch the vocal cords when you eat and drink; the only element that can touch the cords is the warm steam. It reduces inflammation, relaxes the vocal cords, soothes and comforts, and is another tool to prepare the body for singing. Yes, the body - because it isn't just the voice that sings, any more than an orator simply stands still and delivers words. Orators perform with every fibre in their body, and that's how singers sing. So shake out those nerves. It is nerves that freeze the vocal cords, make them tense and anxious. I know, I know. What's worse than someone telling you not to be nervous? Honestly, I can't think of anything. How do you make yourself less nervous? I can't answer that question either. I'd like to know myself. What I try to do is take those nerves and put them into my singing. That gives it the real feel, the feeling of being human, powerful, and yes, vulnerable too.

So now I've discussed davening and coping with nerves, let me tell you about the recent developments with my album, which wake me up with a jolt early in the morning and force me into very late nights - which basically means my voice never needs warming up because it's never had a chance to cool down!

I met with the lyricist for *Yesh Tikva* last week in Yerusholayim. We completed our last song together and now my team are sending me the musical tracks to listen to and rehearse until I am ready to record.

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PHOTO
BLAKE EZRA

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