

# HASSIDIC MELODIES

*Interpreted by*

SIDOR BELARSKY



# Hasidic Melodies

Interpreted by

**SIDOR BELARSKY**

1.

**A MAISSELE (A Story)**

P. Hirshbein—L. Weiner

**L'KOVED DEM HEILIGN SHABES (Honoring Sabbath)**

S. Belarsky

**MLAVE MALKE LID (Sabbath at Sunset)**

G. Eisenberg—J. Davidson

**ELIYAHU HANOVI (Elijah the Prophet)**

S. Belarsky

**YO RIBOIN OLAM**

S. Belarsky

**YADI-BIDI-BAM**

S. Zelser—Leon Weiner

2.

**DER FILOSOF (The Philosopher)**

Folk Song—H. Kopit

**MIKDASH MELECH**

S. Belarsky

**YIDDISH LOSHEN (Yiddish Language)**

E. Schindler—S. Kelemer

**NIGN UN HAYDOLO**

S. Secunda

**SAMCHEINU**

J. Fisherman

**BAAL SHEM TOV'S ZEMERL**

(Song of the Baal Shem Tov)

M. Basin—J. Rumshinsky

The emergence of Hasidism led to one of the most spectacular religious revivals in modern Jewish History. Hasidism arose in the eighteenth century, mainly in Poland and the Ukraine, as a movement of religious enthusiasm and ecstasy. It established democratic religious fellowships centering on inspired leaders, or zaddikim, whose preachments were directed toward helping their followers reach closer to the Divine. At the peak of its power, the Hasidic movement claimed the support of nearly half the Jewish masses.

No knowledge of the Hasidim (The Pious) can be complete without some insight into the life of its extraordinary founder, Israel Baal-Shem (Israel the Wonder-Worker) about 1700-60, the founder of the new mystic cult, Hasidism, which was to influence Jewish life for two centuries. He was directly in the line of the traditional Jewish mystics, but he endowed his cult with a poetic earthiness and a love of life and people which the old ascetic cabalists lacked. As a young cheder-boy he would often wander over the countryside escaping from the wretched reality into daydreams. He became, even at an early age, an incorrigible weaver of poetic fancies, a lover of nature in a mystical way. The legend has it, he was able to heal the sick, to cast out demons and to foretell the future. The Dark Ages had settled like a starless night upon the Jews of eastern Europe. Confined in crowded ghettos, the great majority of Jews were sunk in the most abject poverty and ignorance. As if in answer to this universal need of the plain Jews for a comforter, Israel Baal-Shem appeared. He journeyed devotedly, an itinerant preacher, from town to town and from village to village. "To laugh, to sing and to dance with the intention of praising the Almighty, he declared, was the highest form of prayer." He put the heartfelt love of God above all religious worship and even above the study of the Torah.

Hasidism sought wisdom, not

knowledge; insight, not system; experience, not doctrine. The core of its teaching was the concept of joy, of a life given over to religious fervor and ecstasy. Arising in a period of great unhappiness and unrest, Hasidism cut through the gloom, and held out the hope that through joy, song and dance all could find unity with their God. In this day, Hasidism has assumed an importance, not for its theological doctrines, but for its emotional refreshment.

In this album, Sidor Belarsky once heard will be remembered; here he has returned to the people a sense of the magnificence of their own cultural heritage. The melodies which he sings here have become famous throughout the Jewish world and speak for themselves. In a very real sense the singer and the song have arisen from the same earth. Once a cheder boy himself and also attending the synagogue he has not forgotten the chants and songs sung by his people. It is rare when the virtuoso becomes a restorer of this type of music as well as its interpreter. He has always been interested in the development of the music of his people—an interest which is fully manifested in these recordings. Sidor Belarsky has won repeated acclaim in every phase of vocal art. Belarsky, a graduate of the State Conservatory of Leningrad, and a former leading basso of the State Opera of that city, came to America in 1930 and since that date has steadily built a major reputation in a variety of musical forms. He has been featured with the San Francisco Opera Co., The American Opera Company of Los Angeles and the New York City Center Opera Co., he has appeared in performances with numerous symphony orchestras, and was selected by Arturo Toscanini to star with the NBC Symphony in their presentation of *Fidelio*, which has now been recorded. In concerts he has sung throughout Europe, the Middle East, Canada, South Africa and South America, which has made him a favorite in every corner of the world.