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Fenoy

**Nine-year-old Joshua Bloch
has his t-shirt autographed
by rocker Rick Recht after
Sunday's concert at Temple
Beth Israel in Claremont.**

Spreading faith through a love for music

How does one cultivate faith in today's youth? Faith for a generation of people conditioned to live in a society where celebrity is news, where information is gathered in a single click and the senses are flooded with an overflow of information. For Cantor Paul Buch of Temple Beth Israel, the answer lies with music.

"Music can touch your soul and reach into places in your being that no other form of expression can," he said. "It penetrates the soul."

Cantor Buch, who plays guitar, drums and, admittedly, only "some" piano, was born with a love and appreciation of music. Growing up in Buffalo, New York, his parents enrolled him in a community music school at the tender age of 4 years. Throughout his life, his parents took him to symphony concerts and Broadway shows which instilled a deep appreciation of music.

"Anybody who has known me for more than 5 minutes knows that music revolves around me all the time," he said.

In his effort to introduce new "pop-style" Jewish music at Temple Beth Israel, Cantor Buch arranged for Rick Recht, the top-touring musician in Jewish music, to perform Sunday before a multi-generational audience.

For Jewish youth, Mr. Recht agrees that music is the most effective way of helping teens foster a relationship with their faith.

"Christian rock is about 30 to 40 years ahead of us," Mr. Recht said. "But the Jewish community is catching up by utilizing music to strengthen our youth's connection to their faith."

Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Mr. Recht developed a strong Jewish identity while attending Traditional Congregation, a conservative synagogue, and later in high school, when he joined the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), where he was deeply influenced by Jewish music.

"Music is used in times of mourning or in times of celebration," he said. "Music is the soundtrack behind all experiences in the Jewish world."

Mr. Recht is currently the Artist in Residence at United Hebrew Congregation in St. Louis, Missouri and is married to his wife of 8 years, Elisa. The couple has 2 sons, Kobi, 6, and Tal, 3.

After releasing 2 secular albums, Good Thing and Reality, Mr. Recht returned to his Jewish roots with his debut Jewish album, Tov, in 1999. His most recent album, Knockin' Holes in the Darkness, was recorded live in 2007. Mr. Recht writes his own songs with music and lyrics that are intermingled with Hebrew and Jewish text.

Delivering about 150 performances a year, Mr. Recht and his band tour nationwide at Jewish festivals and Jewish day and overnight camps for youth, as well as temples throughout the United States. His touring experience included an appearance at the 11th Los Angeles Jewish Festival in 2003 in front of an estimated audience of 30,000.

For his album "Tear Down the Walls," which was recorded Memphis in 2006, Mr. Recht assembled a group of Jewish teens at a charter school operated by a non-profit organization that also operates the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. The students, along with a group of African American students, recorded "Avadim Hayinu," which blends Hebrew lyrics describing the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom.

During his 2-hour lively performance, Mr. Recht urged members of the synagogue to join in the music by singing along and standing arm in arm. He and his band merged the lyrics to Bob Marley's "One Love" with Mr. Recht's song "Tear Down the Walls" as audience members sang along.

"It's time to break down the barriers," he declared. "Break down the barriers between humans and humans, nations and nations. Let's leave this world a better place than when we came." *(story continues below)*

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**Jewish rocker Rick Recht,
along with children from
the audience, performs at
Temple Beth Israel in
Claremont on Sunday.**

Taylor Elhai, 15, is a sophomore at Claremont High School and is currently a member of BBG, B'nai B'rith Girls, the women's order of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), an international youth-led high school sorority for Jewish youth.

"I see with my Christian friends how music plays in," Ms. Elhai said. "It's great that way."

Shayna Tzouveleakis, a new member of BBG, saw Mr. Recht at summer camp last year and has been a fan ever since.

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"I love his music," she said. "He puts spins on prayers I have heard my whole life. He makes me think about it."

The BBYO is for high school freshmen to seniors and, in addition to BBG, includes a male fraternity called AZA or Aleph Zadik Aleph. As members of the national organization, students take part in community service projects that are designed and executed by the students.

Heather Rose, a graduate student at Cal State Fullerton, is currently an advisor to BBG. The emphasis of the BBG, according to Ms. Rose, is for female students to focus on social and community service activities, as well as educational, religious, and recreational activities. The 6 areas of focus, or folds, are creativity, sisterhood, recreation, Jewish heritage, social action and community service.

"We try and get them to think about what's out there," Ms. Rose explained. "We help them plan events that include all 6 folds. We listen to what they are saying."

The concert Sunday was designed as a way to bring generations together and, in a fun way, prepare for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

"We wanted to have an event that motivated the spirit of the community," Cantor Buch said. "As we are going into this serious period of introspection for the next 10 days, it seemed like a perfect time for a show like this. I'm glad we were able to pull it off."

Brenda Rosenfeld, together with Tina Brooks, helped organize Mr. Recht's performance date at the Temple. However, Ms. Rosenfeld is reluctant to take credit for originally locating the singer.

"Paul keeps track of the current Jewish music," explained Ms. Rosenfeld. "He has played music for the young people in our Temple for years, infusing them with the Jewish spirit. It's delightful learning. For Paul, it's all about the music."

In addition to Mr. Recht's concert, Temple Beth Israel has hosted several other performances over the years including the Yuval Ron Ensemble, a Jewish and Arabic group comprised of Christian Armenian artists who have been actively involved in creating musical bridges between people of various faiths and ethnic groups.

"Who's next? I don't know," the Cantor explained. "But it will be another spoke on the wheel of Jewish musical expression."

—Kathryn Dunn

Temple Beth Israel is located at 3033 N. Towne Ave., Pomona. For more information, call Cantor Paul Buch at 626-1277.