



A Guide to Music

at Peninsula Sinai Congregation

Religious Practices Committee

October 2, 2012

1. History

Music has played different roles in the religious and spiritual life of Peninsula Sinai Congregation throughout the shul's existence. This ranges from no music permitted under any circumstances, be it on Shabbat, Festivals, or other non-halakhic times, to having live music on Shabbat and Festivals and everything in between. In the last decade, musical instrumentation was not permitted to be used on Shabbat or Festivals, an exception being made for Simchat Torah. More specifically, various customs have been practiced permitting the use of instruments including "plugged" and "unplugged" instrumentation.

The purpose of this ritual policy is to create a framework for using music on Simchat Torah and for non-halakhic times that is consistent with other ritual policies that govern our spiritual and religious practice. Furthermore, this policy is being written with the understanding that there exists a need to continue to educate the greater congregational community as to the intricacies and nuances of using musical instruments on Shabbat and Festivals.

2. Shabbat and Festivals

Musical instruments may not be handled, moved, or played on Shabbat, the Yamim Noraim (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), or the festival days of Sukkot (first two days), Shemini Atzeret, Passover (first two and last two days), and Shavuot (both days). Musical instruments may be played during the intermediate days of the holiday known as Hol Ha-moed as well as on Rosh Hodesh so long as they do not coincide with Shabbat. Musical instruments may only be used on Simchat Torah and must follow the guidelines as listed in PSC's music policy.

3. Non-Halakhic Categories

Musical instruments may be handled, moved, or played during non-halakhic periods of time. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Holidays such as Hanukkah, Tu B'shvat, Purim, Lag Ba'omer, and other holidays that do not fall on Shabbat, with the exception being the three pilgrimage festivals as outlined above.
- Kabbalat Shabbat up until and including L'cha Dodi during the months when Kabbalat Shabbat ends before sunset. (Psalm 92 for Shabbat is the official beginning time of Shabbat in the service when before sunset)
- Events connected to religious school that do not take place on Shabbat or the three Pilgrimage Festivals.

4. Microphone and Amplified Devices

The Use of a Microphone on Shabbat and Festivals

- The current halakhic standard is to turn the system on before Shabbat/Festivals and not turning it off until after Shabbat/Festivals.
- Should the microphone become unplugged, knowingly or unknowingly, during Shabbat/Festivals, the microphone shall remain unplugged until after Shabbat/Festivals are concluded.
- All other microphones that are used in addition to the main microphone must comply with the aforementioned "plugged in" policy.

5. Music on Simchat Torah

At Peninsula Sinai Congregation, the use of musical instrumentation is permitted ONLY on Simchat Torah. Musical instrumentation is prohibited on the Sabbath and all other Festivals as defined in "Section II" of this policy. In order to truly grasp the complexity of using musical instruments on

Shabbat or on Yom Tov, a thorough analysis of the sources is required. As a part of that discussion, additional study would be necessary to understand the category of Yom Tov Sheni, the second day of Festivals added in the Diaspora, which in Israel is not observed at all and for many people in the Diaspora is treated more leniently than the first day of the holiday. With that said, the purpose of this policy is to make the use of musical instruments on Simchat Torah consistent with the religious and halakhic practices of PSC as practiced year round. As such, the RPC maintains the following guidelines for using musical instruments on Simchat Torah:

- All musical instruments must be brought into the synagogue before the holiday starts. If the holiday is preceded by Shabbat, the instruments must be brought into the shul before Shabbat.
- Musical instruments fall into the “melachah—halakhic” category of work on Shabbat, lest a person come to carry them or fix them should they break. Consequently, they are not permitted to be touched, carried, and one is not permitted to derive benefit from them as they are not in the spirit of the Sabbath or Festival. Therefore, when brought into the shul, they must remain in one of the storage spaces on either side of the sanctuary until after Shabbat is over. Because this category of work is eased on Simchat Torah, instruments may be carried and played as they are in the spirit of the day, as long as all guidelines herein are met.
- In order for amplifiers or microphones to be used, they must be plugged in and turned on before Shabbat/Holidays begin. If they become unplugged during Shabbat/holiday, they must remain unplugged. Amplifiers and microphones must remain on for the duration of Shabbat/Holiday and may not be adjusted on either day.
- The following guidelines come from a paper authored by Rabbis Elliot Dorff and Elie Spitz entitled “Musical Instruments and Recorded Music as Part of Shabbat and Festival Worship”:
 - Repairing instruments, such as changing strings and reeds, shall not take place on Shabbat or Festivals.
 - Tuning of string and wind instruments, where the tuning is temporary and necessary each time the instrument is played, is permitted.¹ Tuning of a piano, organ, or other keyboard instrument, for which the tuning lasts for many rounds of playing, is not permitted on these sacred days.
 - Volume control may be altered, so long as the instrument was plugged into the amp prior to the beginning of the Festival.
 - Musical arrangements must be made to ensure that the music chosen and the volume used are appropriate to the spirit of the holy day.
 - Carrying is forbidden on Shabbat from one’s home to synagogue unless there is an *eruv*.²
 - Carrying is permitted on a Festival, however, if said instrument requires being plugged in to an amplifier, it must be brought to the synagogue and plugged in before the start of Shabbat/Festivals.³
 - Musicians may not be paid on Shabbat/Festivals.
 - A Shofar may never be blown on Shabbat.
- Following the use of instruments, instruments and equipment must remain in the shul and may not be unplugged until after the Festival is over.

¹ For purposes of this policy, while the guidelines provided by Rabbis Dorff and Spitz apply to both Shabbat and Festivals, for PSC they will only apply to Simchat Torah as musical instruments are not permitted to be used on Shabbat and other Festivals.

² Because Foster City has no *eruv*, all instruments must be in the building before Shabbat to be used on a holiday after Shabbat ends.

³ Non-amplified instruments (that don't have an electrified pick-up): saxophone, flute, acoustic guitar, may be carried and brought into the shul on Festivals only, not on Shabbat. If, however, you want your instrument plugged in and amplified, it must be brought into the synagogue prior to Shabbat/Festivals.

PSC Music Policy—Executive Summary

Music has played different roles in the religious and spiritual life of Peninsula Sinai Congregation throughout the shul's existence. The purpose of this ritual policy is to create a framework for using music on Simchat Torah and for non-halakhic times that is consistent with other ritual policies that govern our spiritual and religious practice. Musical instruments may not be handled, moved, or played on Shabbat, the Yamim Noraim (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), or the festival days of Sukkot (first two days), Shemini Atzeret, Passover (first two and last two days), and Shavuot (both days). Musical instruments may be played during the intermediate days of the holiday known as Hol Ha-moed as well as on Rosh Hodesh so long as they do not coincide with Shabbat. Musical instruments may be handled, moved, or played during non-halakhic periods of time. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Holidays such as Hanukkah, Tu B'shvat, Purim, Lag Ba'omer, and other holidays that do not fall on Shabbat, with the exception being the three pilgrimage festivals as outlined above.
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- All musical instruments must be brought into the synagogue before the holiday starts. If the holiday is preceded by Shabbat, the instruments must be brought before Shabbat.
- Musical instruments fall into the halakhic category of “melachah-work” on Shabbat, lest a person come to carry them or fix them should they break. Consequently, they are not permitted to be touched, carried, and one is not permitted to derive benefit from them as they are not in the spirit of the Sabbath or Festival. Therefore, when brought into the shul, they must remain in one of the storage spaces on either side of the sanctuary until after Shabbat is over. Because this category of work is eased on Simchat Torah, instruments may be carried and played as they are in the spirit of the day, as long as all guidelines herein are met.
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 - Volume control may be altered, so long as the instrument was plugged into the amp prior to the beginning of the Festival.
 - Carrying is forbidden on Shabbat from one's home to synagogue.
 - Carrying is permitted on a Festival, however, if said instrument requires being plugged in to an amplifier, it must be brought to the synagogue and plugged in before the start of Shabbat/Festivals.
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