

## Geraldine Auerbach (née Kretzmar)

I was born at home in Kimberley in January 1940. I have an older brother Theodore who was born in October 1936. Kimberley days seemed endless to me with roasting sunshine in summer and freezing knees, above our bobbysox, in winter.

Aged just 17, I left Kimberley at the beginning of 1957 for the exciting metropolis of Johannesburg to do a BA at Wits. I then spent a year in Cape Town in 1960 and got a Secondary Teachers Certificate from UCT. I taught for a year in Johannesburg at Barnato Park School in 1961.



### Marriage and Teaching Art in London



I met the wonderful **Ronnie Auerbach**, first at a Habonim Camp and later when I was teaching in Johannesburg, and he was doing his medical house jobs. After our marriage in February 1962, we immediately set sail for London where Ronnie had his paternal (Auerbach) grandparents who had escaped from Frankfurt in 1936 before the war. Ronnie specialised as an ENT surgeon. After our three children, born in the 1960s had started school, I taught art at a girl's school in Harrow from 1974 to 2000.

### Jewish Music Festivals



From 1983, I found myself discovering and celebrating Jewish music. It started by my being invited to help create a Jewish Music Festival for Bnai Brith. From the first Festival in 1984, I found that Jewish music seemed to be a red-hot cable running from the Bible to infinity and that people wanted to be warmed by its glow. So, I spent the next 30 years endeavouring to provide it in all the ways that I could. The festival became a biennial month-long event from 1984 to 2000. Over 80,000 people attended 675 of our concerts and recitals in prestigious concert halls during 10 pioneering Jewish Music Festivals and also at our annual Southbank Jewish Culture Days. New works were commissioned, and many first UK

performances were presented. Highlights have included Kadish for Terezin by Ronald Senator at Canterbury Cathedral in 1986, Ernest Bloch's Sacred Service in York Minster in 1990 - and again at St Paul's Cathedral in 1995, conducted by Yehudi Menuhin.

Eventually all the work I did in Jewish music together with incredible artists and musicians, trustees, helpers and supporters, culminated in the establishment of the Jewish Music Institute

(JMI) that was invited to be based at SOAS University of London in 1999. I would love you to read the JMI Newsletter of 2010 – the last one that I compiled and edited which is a comprehensive report of my nearly 30 years at the helm of Jewish music in the UK <https://www.jmi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/JMI-Newsletter-Autumn-2010-optimized.pdf>



In this collage of episodes of my life, on the **top left** is my dear husband, Ronnie the strength behind it all. Below him I am with Yalta Menuhin and Bruno MontStJean (filmmaker of Yehudi Menuhin film). Going down the left there is me with my MBE medal in 2000. Below that is the establishment of a Jewish music library at City University with me on the left; then Malcolm Williamson the Master of the Queens Music; Alexander Knapp the first Joe Loss Lecturer in Jewish Music, (first at City University then at SOAS, University of London); then Sydney Fixman Director of music at West London Synagogue; and Professor Malcolm Troup, Head of City University Department of Music

who was responsible, with me, in setting up this lectureship. **Down the right side**, under our two daughters and then our family together and next to our son who is in the middle, I am with Larry Adler when we celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Royal Festival Hall, Then Malcolm Troup again is peeping out, and **bottom left**, me with Edmund de Rothschild at a concert at a Rothschild home, Gunnersbury Park, where his daughter Charlotte de Rothschild soprano sang. In the middle I am presenting a bound book of Jewish Music Festival programmes to Prince Philip at St Paul's Cathedral when we presented Bloch's Sacred Service conducted by Yehudi Menuhin in 1995. Behind us, fittingly, are my parents, Beryl and Noel Kretzmar.



## **Jewish Music Institute (JMI)**

From the Bnai Brith Jewish Music Festivals, we recorded special events and I imported recordings to create 'Jewish Music Distribution' making Jewish music available to the trade, libraries and the public by mail order. We got involved with Professor Malcolm Troup in presenting Jewish music at City University, London. We established a Jewish music lectureship there in 1991. Eventually by 1999, my endeavours were consolidated into what became the Jewish Music Institute (JMI) at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London of which I was the Founder Director.

Once in academia, we concentrated on the educational side rather than performance aspects, of Jewish music, supporting the Joe Loss Lectureship in Jewish Music, presenting International Conferences, workshops and Summerschools. All this can be seen at [www.jmi.org.uk](http://www.jmi.org.uk) – which flourishes today, though I retired at the end of 2011.

## **Meeting the Queen**

I was honoured to be appointed MBE in the Queen's birthday honours in 2000 for my services to music and was delighted to be made an Honorary Fellow of SOAS at graduation in 2008.



## **Family**

Our three children were all born in London: our older daughter became an expert and writer on medieval Norse and Viking mythology, as well as a musician and music manager. She married guitarist and singer-songwriter, Bert Jansch in 1999. Sadly, at the end of 2011 they both died of cancer and now lie buried together in Highgate Cemetery. Our son lives in London and has two children and our daughter Karen and two daughters also live close-by.

## **My parents, Noel and Beryl Kretzmar.**

Beryl (nee Bergman) was born in Kimberley in 1909 and lived there all her life. She helped her father in his diamond office, then, as mother and wife she did much social and cultural work in the city. She was the President of the Union of Jewish Women Kimberley branch for many years and became a Life President. She died in 1989 aged 79 and is buried in Kimberley. (See link to her family story below)



She married Noel Kretzmar (born in 1899) on 17 February 1935 in Kimberley (honeymoon picture above). His parents had come from Birzh in Lithuania in 1903 and settled in Malmesbury, in the Western Cape. Noel arrived in Kimberley in 1926 to set up a GP practice, having just qualified in Medicine and Surgery in Edinburgh. In 1944 he was the President of the shul. In 1948 he became the first specialist surgeon in Kimberley. After Beryl died, and after over 60 years of medical practice in Kimberley – at the age of 90, he opened a new chapter of his life in Johannesburg where he was nearer to his son Theodore. Noel died in Johannesburg in January 1998 aged 98 and a half. He is buried in Kimberley West End Cemetery next to his beloved Beryl. (See link to his family story below)

**Creating other platforms:** All the while I was building up the Bnai Brith Jewish Music Festivals (see leaflets above) and the Jewish Music Institute with all its various forums and focus groups, dealing with specific genres of Jewish music – there were other platforms and organisations that acknowledge me as the instigator or facilitator for their establishment and say that without me they may well not have happened. (Some of these have run their course, and others are still flourishing today).

These included

- Jewish Renaissance Magazine (2001) <https://www.jewishrenaissance.org.uk/>
- The South African, Jewish Music Centre in Cape Town with Stewart Servater, Fay Singer and Ivor Joffe (1991) re-established 2021
- Jewish Culture UK (2003 – 2007)
- Jewish East End Celebration Society (2003) <https://www.jeecs.org.uk/>
- The Jewish Music Centre in Brazil – with Nicole Berger (2008)
- The Hans Gal Society <http://www.hansgal.org/hansgalsociety/32>
- International Ernest Bloch Society (2006) <http://ernestblochsociety.org/>
- 'Simcha on the Square' (2006-2008) <http://www.ukstudentlife.com/Ideas/Album/Simcha.htm>

### **After retirement from JMI**

After I retired as Director of JMI at the end of 2011, after nearly 30 years of bringing Jewish music to the notice of Jews and the British public, there were new platforms that I have initiated or facilitated:

- The European Cantors Association and its Academic Wing (2012) [www.cantors.eu](http://www.cantors.eu)
- The Bert Jansch Foundation (2013) [www.bertjanschfoundation.org](http://www.bertjanschfoundation.org)
- The Kimberley Jewish Community website and Newsletters (2013) <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Home.html>
- Rev Malcolm Weisman memoirs <http://malcolmweisman.org.uk/> (2015)
- Magnified and Sanctified – two International Conferences on the music of Jewish prayer with Leeds 2015 Summary [here](#) : full report [here](#) . University and Hannover University of music and dance 2019: <https://www.ezjm.hmtm-hannover.de/de/aktuelles/meldungen/magnified-and-sanctified/>
- The class of 60 Wits medical graduates Newsletter, website and reunion (2020) [https://wits\\_medical\\_alumni\\_1960.mailchimpsites.com/](https://wits_medical_alumni_1960.mailchimpsites.com/)
- Bnai Brith First Unity Lodge virtual lodge during lockdown (2020)
- International Forum for Jewish Music Studies (IFJMS) (2020) <https://jewishmusic.hcommons.org/>
- Conversations on Zoom (2020) <https://jewishmusic.hcommons.org/conversations-on-zoom-coz/>
- Community History On-Line (CHOL) (2021)

**My work in Jewish music as well as my parents' and grandparents' and husband's stories are on this website on these links:**

- **My Millennium Jewish music memoirs** [Newsletter #38 April 2021](#)
- **My comprehensive survey of my work** in Jewish music <https://www.jmi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/JMI-Newsletter-Autumn-2010-optimized.pdf>
- **My mother** [Kretzmar, Beryl \(née Bergman\)](#)
- **My father** [Kretzmar, Noel](#)
- **My maternal grandparents** [Bergman, Jacob and Amalia, \(née Friedlander\)](#)
- **My Husband Ronnie Auerbach** [Auerbach, Ronald](#)

(GYA story updated October 2021)