

Hazzanut

AT THE MASORTI MOVEMENT

There are those who say that life is a game of questions and answers. That who asks is the one that searches for a path in his life. And that's what I did when I wondered: Should I dedicate myself to chazanut being a woman in Argentina?... Why not?!

That's how my career started...

My name is Ines Kapustiansky. I belong to the young generation of Bet Asaf, the school for Jazanim of the Latin-American Rabbinic Seminar, that opened its doors for so many of us to one day see us graduate.

At the end of my studies I decided to go for more and I organized my own trip to Israel, to be able to continue learning.

This was very difficult for me since there were no programs of this type in Argentina for Chazaniot, nor were they ready to accept me in any institution for the instruction of Chazanim in Israel (like singing schools, universities or yeshivot), for being a woman. While it is true that the Masorti movement considers us as individuals with equal rights and under the same conditions within the same kahal, we should also recognize that it is also true, at least in Argentina, that this idea is only now beginning to take shape. In most communities it is still rare to see a woman Chazanit on the bimah, wearing a Talit, kipah and reading the Torah, or raising her glass of wine high up to chant the Kidush. Many heads are still bothered by this ideas. I have lived this kind of discrimination in my own experience and precisely those moments were the ones that I stopped to ask "why did my parents wanted a baby girl?!"

After almost a year of investigating by all means, I was able to contact teacher Raymond Goldstein, a man who besides being renowned worldwide as an orchestra conductor and composer, showed me to have a huge heart and wonderful wisdom. I studied with him for 5 months. I traveled almost two hours to his house in Jerusalem, sometimes even twice a week, just to attend my class with him. I still don't understand how I was able to do it.

The experience was unique, I learned a whole lot. He really gave me his best with all his professionalism. I was able to get closer to full traditional Chazanut, covering each score with great love and effort.

The funny thing is that his wife, as I saw her all dressed up with a skirt and wig, turned out to be a great admirer of Yossele Rossemblat, and was studying Chazanut on her own!!

Traveling renewed my vocation for Chazanut and opened my ears to allow in me years and years of tradition, that filled me with live music. I was able to appreciate a lot more all what I had already learned in Argentina.

Now, a year later, I find myself settled down in the city of La Plata, where I perform my educational, social, cultural and Chazanut duties in the La Plata AMIA community. I keep wondering, asking similar questions to the beginning; thank G-d, every day. It is my motor. My way of imagining the future.

Another Rosh Hashanah went by, our Machzorim opened again to fill the air with Tefila and art.

I am very excited to have experienced something so profound and beautiful as the Yamim Noraim. Around the world millions of Jews are asking similar questions to mine, how wonderful!

Perhaps it is time to continue asking, who are the Chazanim in Latin America? How do I act as part of them? Am I integrated, do I collaborate with them? What can we do together to better the world in which we live in? How many women participate... and how do I feel as a woman inside the movement?

Some answers and more questions come to mind quickly. Fortunately, I don't have all the answers. I still have a lot to learn. I am certain that the path of each of us can be found inside us. A new year is already on the way. May Hashem want that we can find the answers that we're looking for, in the depths of our hearts, to feed our lives and transmit our experiences.

Hazzanit Ines Kapustiansky
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