

Streisand concert to bridge communities

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IT took the music of “funny girl” Barbra Streisand to unite two communities in a historic performance next week.

Temple Emanuel Woollahra’s (TEW’s) choir will join with the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir (SGLC) to present a concert of nearly two dozen of Streisand’s hits in what is believed to be the first collaboration of its kind between the gay and lesbian and Jewish communities.

Called “A Sunday with Streisand”, the concert will take place at TEW on November 26.

Over 70 choir members will be singing in the concert, which involves members of the shul’s professional choir and community choir, which is volunteer based and ranges in age from 15 to 70.

“Barbra is a common interest in the Jewish and gay worlds,” TEW Cantor Joseph Toltz told the *AJN*. “She’s a gay and lesbian icon and a Jewish icon. So, she provides a good place to meet.”

The two choirs will combine to sing upbeat favourites including *Happy Days are Here Again*, *On a Clear Day* and *Somewhere*.

In preparation for the concert, SGLC – which is based at Heffron Hall in Darlinghurst – will hold rehearsals at the Woollahra-based synagogue next week.

“This is a different experience for most people in our choir, because very few of them have even been to a synagogue before,” SGLC director Sarah Penicka said.

SGLC has collaborated with the Metropolitan Community Church in recent years, but this is their first with a Jewish choir, she said. The choir was established in 1991, and recently returned from a tour of North America.



Photo: Geoff Cohn



“It’s really special to have this outreach to a community that we haven’t worked with before. We were very surprised at first that a synagogue was prepared to have us, but building bridges is very important for the acceptance we’d like to gain.”

Cantor Toltz added: “I wouldn’t call this inter-faith, but it’s breaking down barriers and allowing the two communities to start talking to each other a bit more.”

The two choir directors first met, while studying music at the University of Sydney over 10 years ago.

Penicka approached Toltz with the idea for the collaboration and he thought it was a “great idea and very unique collaboration”.

Also performing at the event is Jewish cabaret singer Avigail Herman, who will sing eight solo songs.

The concert is supported by the TEW Cultural Fund, which is chaired



Photo: On the Scene Productions

Members of Temple Emanuel Woollahra's choir (top) and Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir will be united in song, performing Barbra Streisand hits together next weekend.

by Sydney businessman and philanthropist David Gonski.

Jewish gay and lesbian group Dayenu holds Shabbat services and special events at TEW.

“A Sunday with Streisand” will take place on November 26, at Temple Emanuel Woollahra. Bookings: (02) 9328 7833.