Lev, Varda

## Varda Hadassah Lev

(née Sherman) died on September 6, 2018. A loving wife and mother, she was also a gifted and passionate pianist, music and Hebrew educator, talented polylot, and patroness of the arts in the grand tradition of the European salon mistress, with a note-perfect knowledge of classical music repertoire and tireless dedication to tikkun olam. She published several memoirs in Hadassah Magazine and the Pakn Treger. Born in Jerusalem in 1932 to Earl Mayo Sherman, and to Anna (née Grossman) Sherman, a pioneering Hebraist and first woman instructor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, she moved with her family to New York City in 1936. She deepened her knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish learning under the tutelage of her parents, and attendance at Camp Massad, which proffered Hebrew and Jewish knowledge to Americans and refugees during and after WWII. She was one of only three girls first to be Bat Mitzvaed in the US. She studied piano and Humanities at the High School of Music and Arts and University of Pennsylvania, and received her M.A. from the Teacher's College at Columbia University. She taught kindergarten in Harlem, New York, enlisting her musical knowledge toward a unique early childhood pedagogy, which she then brought to the Kibbutz Gesher Haziv. While raising her young family in New York City, she honed her musical skills with musical luminaries whom she accompanied or hosted in her home. Upon moving to Providence, she taught traditional Jewish and Israeli music at the Temple Emanuel Hebrew School. She inspired decades' worth of youth in her Hebrew choir and private piano instruction; formed a Klezmer youth band; transposed scores for her students from numerous Hebraicized musicals, and designed and played piano for performances based on Jewish tradition.

She enlisted her musical expertise as a board member of the Rhode Island Chamber Music Committee, bringing world-renowned artists to vthe area. A modern-day Mme. de Sévigné, she converted her Victorian home into a musical and cultural salon. Her soirées benefited organizations such as Community MusicWorks, whose illustrious members brought classical music education to children in need. She hosted, accompanied in musical rehearsal, and organized recitals for the Beaux Arts Trio, the Muir String Quartet, the Moscow Male Jewish Choir, the Amadeus Trio, Richard Goode, Joshua Bell, Yitzhak Perlman, and many others.

She was also an eshet chayil who opened her artistic salons, celebrations of the Jewish holidays, and Old World kitchen to local and international communities, friends, and the "stranger at the gate;" an engaging raconteuse of refinement but also witand empathy.

A valued member of Temple Emanuel for 40 years, she brought to the community her gifts as a lyrical chanter of liturgical trope in many aliyot, pedagogical Hebrew and musical expertise, cultural enrichment lectures, and charity initiatives. She participated in annual Ulpans sponsored by the Jewish Board of Education, and an advanced Hebrew study group performing exegesis of Biblical and contemporary Israeli texts. She also donated and helped curate the Percelay Museum's collection of her brother Ori Sherman's artworks, including magnificent Ketubbot and his illustration of the Aramaic song that ends the Seder, Chad Gadya.

She is survived by her husband, Robert Lev, her daughters Leora Lev, Rebecca Murray, and Zoe Shireen Lev, her grandchildren Rachael, Heather, Michael, and Anabelle, and great grandchildren, Masho, Redeit, Avery, and Mya.