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## BELA HERSKOVITS, CANTOR, 54, DEAD

Concert Artist of Budapest  
Outwitted Nazis in '42

TORONTO, May 10 (AP)—  
Bela Herskovits, former chief  
cantor of Budapest and a concert  
artist of international  
reputation, died here Wednesday  
at the age of 54.

### Rescue With Poison

In 1942, when German troops  
swarmed over Hungary, Bela  
Herskovits was one of thousands  
of Jews thrown into prison. He was released when  
it became apparent that he  
would soon die of an ailment  
that required immediate surgery.

The operation was performed  
in a dingy cellar, and Mr. Herskovits  
thereafter set about attempting  
to rescue his wife, Dody, imprisoned  
for trying to help a woman doomed  
to the gas chambers. He sent her  
a quantity of poison through the  
underground. She swallowed it,  
which put her so close to death  
that the guards were convinced  
she was gone. One of them, just  
to make sure, smashed her nose.  
Friends then claimed the body  
for "burial" and she was rushed  
to a haven, where anti-



John E. Reed, 1956

Bela Herskovits

dotes brought her back to life.

The two were spirited out  
of Hungary by Dr. Franz Nagy,  
then the Hungarian Prime Minister,  
and John F. Morgan, then with the  
American consulate.

In this country Mr. Herskovits  
became cantor of the Ocean Parkway  
Jewish Center in Brooklyn and was  
"discovered" in 1955 by Eddie Cantor,  
who brought Hollywood's attention  
to the cantor's tenor voice, which  
was called "the most exciting since  
Caruso."

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer signed  
him to a five-year, \$100,000 contract,  
and he co-starred with Pat O'Brien  
in "Servant of God" and acted as  
music consultant to Cecil B. DeMille's  
"The Ten Commandments."

The cantor also performed at  
President Dwight D. Eisenhower's  
first inaugural ball and made  
a number of appearances on radio  
and television.

Mr. Herskovits was a graduate  
of the leading music conservatories  
of Hungary and held the posts of  
professor of Jewish liturgical music  
at the Goldmark Karoly College and  
professor at the Jubal Institute  
of Oriental Music.

He became chief cantor of  
Beth Sholom Synagogue in Toronto  
in 1966, but was forced by illness  
to retire some years ago.