

## **A Music Story for the Season -- Guess Which One?**

By John Dickerson

December of 1969 found me in a new assignment at JFK airport. I had served as #2 in my division since 1966 and now I was #1. Our division ran the International Arrivals Building that measured two times the Empire State Building if laid end to end. One of our responsibilities was sponsoring the annual yuletide programs. Traditionally, this involved local schools and organizations that would perform Christmas carols. The Port Authority provided the bus transportation and ice cream for the participants after the performance. The whole show would take about one hour and people seemed to like the idea.

With my new responsibilities and a son who happened to play in the school band in Palisades Park, NJ, it occurred to me that something more than caroling should be tried. By some coincidence, the Palisades Park Band some 25 miles away was chosen to play in the main rotunda of this huge building for all those waiting for overseas arrivals. Passengers would come in to the rotunda at the rate of 2000-3000 per hour.

On the appointed day, three busloads of students from Palisades Park arrived to a fairly crowded terminal. The two men that handled these programs for me were Jewish. They were not overcome with the matter, but mentioned the fact that the ice cream portions would be memorable if that big group could come up with a "Jewish tune". **The challenge was set!**

I spoke to the band conductor Adolph Mansolilo (not Jewish, as you might guess"). He smiled saying-"**NOT A PROBLEM**".

The concert got underway promptly at 6:00 PM with a burst of youthful energy that brought people to the rotunda from all over this huge building. As the father of one of the clarinet players, **and completely unbiased**, I thought they were great. After about 30 minutes of traditional Christmas music, they were really on a roll. I did catch the eye of one of my two men in charge of the operation. It really looked like he was **waiting for the tune**.

At 6:45 PM, the tune came.

The Palisades Park Band, under the direction of its Italian conductor, began with all its might, to play Havah Nagilah; just as the over 300 passengers from the El Al airline flight cleared Customs and entered the rotunda. What a sight! The passengers and their waiting friends started to do the traditional Hava Nigilah dance in that big lobby. Others just stood by and applauded.

**Who said this was a Christmas program?**

**The Palisades Park students got double ice cream!**