

**A Message from the President**  
**THEATRE THE MIRROR TO OUR SOUL**  
**Mirror, mirror on the wall who's the fairest**  
**of them all?**

This year, the Association of Jewish Theatres gathered in St. Louis - the Gateway City - to create gateways between directors and playwrights, between communities, between theaters and between our selves and our colleagues in Israel. Gateways were explored and created.



At one point during our gathering, Ari Roth (Artistic Director, Theatre J), Robbie Gringras (Community and Culture Department, Jewish Agency, Israel) and I shared our experiences at the Towards a Vibrant Jewish Theatre conference in Tel Aviv this past December. We reflected on the differences of the theater created by our Israeli colleagues and the work we present on our stages here in North American. As we shared our insights, it occurred to me that there is one common bond between the theatre created here and in Israel - I do not see myself reflected in the works presented. From the audience came the directive to look in a mirror. Not wanting to distract from the topic at hand I let the remark pass - but - the comment begs for a response.

Theatre is a mirror - and this is what draws people to return for another glance, performance after performance, year after year, and generation after generation. We go to the theater and we create theater because it is the mirror to the soul. Theatre is a mirror that reflects, deflects and refracts. Revealing, Exposing and Drawing us in for a closer look at the blemishes and the beauty of who we are. We create Jewish theatre because it is a mirror to our culture, our history, and our people. Jewish Theatre is a mirror to the Jewish soul.

The problem is not that I haven't looked into the mirror - but that it has not reflected back an image of myself or the myriad of women that I know - married, single, straight, gay, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Orthodox who wrestle with God, with tradition, with text, with OUR/Jewish Women's history. A mirror that reflects on the meaning of "What is a Jew?" And even, "Why be a Jew?" This is the mirror that I long to see come out of our writers, our theatres.

Now I realize this is very personal --- and the beauty of the Association for Jewish Theatres is that each of us has a different mirror to the soul of our people. However, I believe our challenge is to move the mirror to different walls - to get a new image or find a new angle. To use a compact mirror, if you are prone to using a rear view mirror. Our challenge in this global digital world is to remember as well to put a mirror out on to the Jewish world beyond our continent.

As I write this, I am looking at a beautiful stain glass mirror created by Dorit Gringras. Embedded in this work of art is the pray for the home - shalom bayit (peace in the home). To our Israeli colleagues I send the pray that you are all safe and that Shalom will come home to the State of Israel.

**- Deborah Baer Mozes, Theatre Ariel, PA**

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for jewish  
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The One That Got Away - Chutzpah Festival

**AJT's Executive 2002-2003**

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# Reflections of the St. Louis Conference Meet Me in St. Louis

The 2002 AJT Conference was held February 23 - 26 in the country's heartland this year, in St. Louis, MO. Despite the time of year and location, there was a definite glow of warmth to the conference. It was hosted by St. Louis' New Jewish Theatre. There were over 30 attendees from the US, Canada, England and Israel who enjoyed a variety of sessions, presenters, readings, performances, each others company and of course FOOD. From all reports, all aspects (especially the food) were outstanding. If you weren't able to make it, you missed a good one.

Keynoter Howard Schwartz, internationally known folklorist and collector of Jewish folktales, kicked off the theme of the conference, Building a Bridge to a Global Jewish Theatre. Schwartz told Jewish stories from Afghanistan, Eastern Europe and the Middle East and helped us all to identify just what makes a story Jewish, irrespective of its origin. Presenters from the St. Louis Black Repertory Company, Hothouse Theatre and That Uppity Theatre Company provided a panel discussion on issues of partnering with other theatre companies and other organizations. Repertory Theatre of St. Louis Artistic Director, Steve Woolf led another workshop. Overall, the content of the sessions was very high and helped us to begin to think globally.

As usual there were the opportunities to schmooze and network, with theatres sharing their seasons and playwrights sharing excerpts from their scripts. One session was devoted to showcasing new

works that have a global perspective. Local actors were recruited to read 10-minute scenes from these plays. A Purim shpiel was even included.

There was more actual theatre this year than ever before. We saw the New Jewish Theatre's production of "Twilight of the Golds," the Black Rep's production of "Waiting to Be Invited," and the St. Louis Rep's production of "Proof." And if that wasn't enough, we were treated to two very special performances by two of our attendees. Welsh actor Gareth Armstrong astonished us with his one person show "Shylock," exploring anti-semitism from the perspective of the only 2 Jewish characters depicted by Shakespeare, Shylock and his friend, Tubal. This show is highly recommended to anyone who presents. And Robbie Gringras from Israel showed us the disturbing complexities of religious pluralism in Israel with his one-person show, "Shabbos." Gringras also led a session on helping to form a global Jewish network.

The New Jewish Theatre Board was actively involved in the conference, shuttling participants to shows and even hosting the gala dinner in a gorgeous home. The only thing missing was the opportunity to actually get out and see the town. As usual, we had so much to cover that little time was left for leisure. And 1/2 day had actually been added this year!!

So next year, Ari Roth, Marilyn Hausfeld and Susan Drachsler have their work cut out for them in Washington, DC. We want the same stimulating conference AND we want to see the town. Good luck Guys! We know you're up to it!

- Kathleen Sitzer

## First time at the AJT conference

by Mitchell Uscher

As a playwright and first-time participant at the Association for Jewish Theatre Conference that took place February in St. Louis, I have to say that I was very impressed. It was wonderful to meet people from all over the country who are still actively presenting and promoting Jewish theater, whatever their definition of that might be. Whether it was commiserating with other playwrights, meeting artistic directors from theater companies across the United States and Canada, or enjoying the gracious hospitality of St. Louis citizens who took us into their cars and homes, it was the people who made my conference experience so worthwhile.

While many of the panel discussions were interesting, as a writer I found some of the most fascinating talks occurred at mealtime when other playwrights informally discussed the ups and downs of trying to write - and get produced. I really appreciated the opportunity to present a piece of my musical "Mamaleh!" to the conference attendees. As a playwright, that was one of my most important goals. It was particularly gratifying to see that the artistic directors were genuinely interested in finding new plays for their theaters.

Thanks to Kathleen Sitzer, Kayla Gordon, Deborah Baer Mozes and everyone else involved with this year's excellent event. I am already looking forward to next year's conference and meeting all my new "old friends" as we continue to try to put Jewish theatre onto stages around the globe.

# My Virgin Experience in St. Louis

by Rich Orloff

As a playwright attending his first conference of the Association for Jewish Theatre, I didn't know what to expect when I arrived in St. Louis. I knew little about the member theatres beyond their season schedules. I knew even less about my fellow playwright members. Would they be professionals or amateurs?

My main question was: Would I feel at home? Only a few of my plays have Jewish characters and themes. I rarely attend synagogue, and I'm not active in any Jewish political movements or charities. But I went to Hebrew School, got Bar Mitzvahed, and think about God constantly. When I respond to the events in the world, or even my inner world, I'm aware of my Jewish upbringing and heritage.

Once I entered the hotel, my concern about acceptance, a question inherently both Jewish and human, lasted about forty seconds. Kathleen Sitzer, host of the conference and artistic director of New Jewish Theatre in St. Louis, greeted me with warmth and exuberance, even though we had never met or corresponded. At dinner, several folks recognized my name or my writing, and those who didn't were just as friendly. My first response to the organization was: What a haimish group!

As the next few days progressed, I realized that like a large but loving family, although the personalities and the accomplishments of its theaters and individual members vary widely, all are accepted and respected. The theaters ranged from those who hire Equity actors to those who proudly admit that they're community theaters. Theatre J in Washington, D.C. has developed a reputation for cutting edge theater and world premieres, while others fretted about the need for proven titles to draw an audience. Listening to the various artistic directors talk about their problems, I gained greater appreciation and compassion for the various challenges regional Jewish theaters face to survive.

Quickly, each theater developed its own identity, which was enormously useful to me as a playwright. I listened and thought: No wonder that theatre didn't want to read my play... My play wouldn't fit that theater's needs at all... Oh, I want to discuss a different play with that one...

But I was open to surprises. Bryna Wasserman, Artistic Director of a Yiddish theater in Montreal, wanted to read my comedy *HA!* The humorist in me was tickled at the possibility that the play might receive its Canadian premiere - in Montreal - in Yiddish!

The playwrights varied widely in experience, from those who had several plays produced and published to an older actor who had just written his first play. On the final morning of the conference, each playwright was given seven minutes to present an excerpt of his or her play. Although quality varied, each play showed a common commitment to the craft of playwriting and to a desire to explore the experience and meaning of being Jewish.

I thought the Holocaust play written by the older actor still needed work. When his seven minutes was up, he asked for a chance to read one monologue from the play. Being a liberal group, everyone agreed. Both the speech and the actor were riveting. The dialogue sparkled, the content was gripping and fresh, and the performance was masterful. Who knew?

By the time the conference ended, I felt like I was saying goodbye not only to colleagues but also to friends. The warmth and respect, which I had been given automatically when I walked into the hotel, I could return with enthusiasm. As both a playwright and a questioning Jew, I am constantly looking for a community in which I can fit. I think I've found one.



AJT Executive Board 2002-2003

Back row: L-R  
Ari Roth, Evelyn Orbach, Janet Arnold, Robbie Gringras.

Centre row:  
Kayla Gordon, Deborah Baer Mozes, Marilyn Hawsfield, Herb Katz.

Front row:  
Kathleen Sitzer, Susan Lodish, Rich Orloff.

Missing:  
Naomi Jacobs, Bryna Wasserman.

# Pitching "The Green Spoon" in St. Louis

by Michael Achtman

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As Melanie said about Woodstock, "Some came to sing, Some came to pray, Some came to flog their Jewish-themed play". Of course you must have been wondering, what's this Toronto guy coming all the way down to St. Louis to hawk his work? I thought Toronto was a big theatre town? Is this play so bad that even the tiniest Toronto theatres, even the fringes of the fringes, have turned him down already, so he'll come out here and thinks we won't notice? But you didn't say that, you were too polite. And because you were too polite, I couldn't correct you. So now I would like set the record straight once and for all:

I can't produce this play in Toronto because that's where my mother lives. And one of the characters... well, you know my mother is not an artist, she's not sophisticated in the way you would have to be to understand the finer points of life borrowing from art and art borrowing from life, etc. And I couldn't expect her --- A gay Jewish man. Check. A playwright. Check. Takes his Black boyfriend. Check. Down to a family Bat Mitzvah in Dallas. Check. Against the wishes of his cheap mother and her oppressive racist boyfriend. It's a comedy! Did you hear about the mother who sued her daughter for turning the mother's life story into a musical? That happened in Toronto.

My mother was against the idea of my going into show business in the first place.

I'm hoping for a big out of town success that she can hear about without actually seeing, you know to warm her up, get her in the right mood. Yeah Ma, it's a monster hit in Minneapolis I'd love to take you down but the entire run's sold out. A fortune I'm making! Yeah, it's being picked up by L.A. and New York, no, no word yet on a Toronto production who cares about those deadbeats? Opening night on Broadway I'm in my Versace tux, she's wearing a sparkling Donna Karan I treated her to earlier in the day at Sak's, we catch a stretch limo to 43rd Street, sail through the doors to find our seats in the red-velvet-trimmed-in-gold-leaf theatre and the lights dim and from the first punchline the laughter builds to tears are rolling down the aisle up onto the stage author! author! for the standing ovation. I take my bow and wave to her and later at Sardi's I'm the toast of the town, she won't mind. She doesn't say a word. The glasses tinkle and my mother is asked to make a toast: she stands

up and stretches out her champagne flute and with a grin says, "He owes it all to me. I always told him to write what he knows." Later back at the hotel she asks for her cut.

It also can't play Dallas. It can't play Dallas because my brother lives there, and he doesn't come off very well. Well actually Dallas doesn't come off that well. Mexico would be great. Little Jewish Theatre of Azerbaijan.

I admit it, there's a couple of family secrets maybe it's a bit indiscreet to include. I know there's some things about myself I wouldn't like revealed on a public stage -- thank God I don't know any writers. But I tried changing some of the details, and I couldn't find anything as funny. Besides, then you change it to something less funny, and for some strange reason everyone assumes it's true. The really embarrassing things nobody believes.



# "SHYLOCK" in St. Louis

by Gareth Armstrong

I've been performing my one-man play "Shylock" for nearly four years now. It started in a small studio theatre in England and has since, like a magic carpet, taken me all over the world. I've given nearly three hundred performances in countries including Austria and Israel, New Zealand and Sri Lanka, Romania and Thailand.

"Don't you get tired performing the same piece over and over again?" somebody asked me recently. I could honestly answer: "No!". What makes so many of us devote ourselves to live theatre is the fact that each time we step on a stage is different from the last. By definition each live performance is a unique experience. This is partly to do with the physical conditions of performing of course. I have played in opera houses, drawing rooms and even a Chinese restaurant and in places as different as Stratford-upon-Avon and Billings Montana. Sometimes the show has an elegant set an evocative score and atmospheric lighting. Sometimes it has none of these things and has to stand or fall by the quality of the performance or more importantly the relationship established between my audience and me.

My last performance was one of the latter. It was at the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Theatre in St. Louis. To fit the schedule it was timed for mid-afternoon (what we Brits call tea time!) in a freezing cold, barely illuminated ballroom to thirty or so delegates during a hectic schedule of meetings and outings.

It wasn't the first time I had performed to an exclusively Jewish audience but it was the first time I had played to an exclusively Jewish audience who were all involved in the theatre, each with sharpened critical faculties and particular opinions about what constitutes good theatre. Opinions which, being Jewish of course, they didn't keep to themselves. It was one of my most testing performances. And it was no push over.

The truth is Jewish audiences are not necessarily the easiest ones for my play. They are certainly the most attentive and appreciative. But not always the most responsive. Oddly enough the laughs are fewer than in a mixed or non-Jewish audience, and at first that puzzled me. It shouldn't have. The play deals with many themes, the principal one being the issue of anti-Semitism. There are some graphic and shocking illustrations of European anti-Semitism throughout the piece. All audiences are affected by these. Some of them are shocked or horrified by learning about them for the first time but for most Jewish audiences, this is not the case. They are being reminded of what they already know and the pain of that recognition manifests itself in an almost tangible silence. As the play moves swiftly between tragedy, pathos and comedy the transitions seem somehow harder, less glib, played to an audience that empathises so deeply with the subject.

It is intriguing how potent silence can be in the theatre. More potent than laughter, more potent even than applause. That silences can sound different is an impossible concept to someone who does not experience live performance. Resonant silence is I think, the most rewarding acknowledgement to an artist, and it is one of the reasons I will never get tired of performing "Shylock".



Herb Katz appearing as Yosel at our Purim Shpiel in St. Louis.



Herb Katz and Janet Arnold read from one of the new plays.

# Nice Jewish Boys and Girls on Broadway this Season

by Irene Backalenick

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The Jewish presence is strong as ever this spring season on Broadway, if you think in terms of playwrights, composers, directors, and actors. But less strong, in terms of Jewish themes. A case in point are two prolific Jewish/American playwrights-Arthur Miller and Richard Greenberg (the older and younger generations respectively).

Both playwrights make no secret of their Jewish identity, but it is rarely reflected in their works. At least, such is the case with the two current works on the New York stage-the smashing Broadway production of Miller's "The Crucible," and Greenberg's off-Broadway drama, "The Dazzle." Both are fascinating plays based on facts-the former as social commentary and the latter as a psychological study. But one would have to search long and hard to find the writers' ethnic roots revealed in these pieces. Yet one could make an argument that Miller and Greenberg's choice of material-psychology and social issues-stem from a particular Jewish sensibility.

In any event, each drama is a thought-provoking, discussion-inducing piece. And each deals with a different kind of mental illness, if you will. The revival of "The Crucible," now on Broadway at the Virginia Theatre, takes as its *mise-en-scene* the Salem witch trials. Though the trials were held some 300 years ago, they are remarkably relevant today-and in fact were used by Miller to draw parallels to the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s.

This may indeed be Miller's best work, in terms of dramatic fire. It is the tale of a manipulative teen-age girl who stirs a whole community into a frenzy. The girl pretends to see devils and witches everywhere, convincing her friends that they, too, see visions. In short order, the entire community is swept into the madness. Witchery is taken very seriously-and those who protest are seen as the enemy and punished summarily. It is a fine example of mob psychology, of how easily groups can be misled and exploited to nefarious ends.

Miller has concocted a first-class story, albeit a story with a moral. And in the hands of his stars-Liam Neeson and Laura Linney-the stage fairly sizzles with passion (both sacred and profane). Richard Greenberg's aims are very different in "The Dazzle," which is an off-Broadway Roundabout Theatre production. He has taken the intriguing real-life story of the Collyer brothers, the sons of a wealthy turn-of-the-century New York doctor. The pair had lived in seclusion for many years, and when their bodies were finally found in their Upper East Side mansion, it was amid incredible clutter and squalor. Greenberg, who has considerable skill and imagination as a playwright, creates the brothers as he imagines them to have been. He turns "The Dazzle" into a case history of an autistic man and his protective brother (which may or may not have been the actual facts). Two fine actors, Reg Rogers and Peter Frechette, play out this

pas de deux, drawing the audience into the madness as their lives evolve.

Other Broadway shows of Jewish interest now running include Bea Arthur's one-person show, Mel Brooks' "The Producers," "The Tale of the Allergist's Wife" (tale of a neurotic upper West Side Jewish matron), Richard Rodgers' "Oklahoma" (in a newly-minted British production), QED (Alan Alda's one-man show about scientist Richard Feynman), and the durable, long-running "Cabaret." We heartily recommend all of the above, except for the easily missed Bea Arthur and the Allergist's Wife.

It is hard to recommend the off-Broadway shows, which come and go quickly. But "Volvio una Noche" (a Spanish-Jewish import at the Repertorio Espanol) is well worth the effort. It is a hilarious Latino take on the much-maligned Jewish mother. The show is in Spanish, but never fear-English translation via earphones is available. Which now brings us to another off-Broadway show enjoying a good run-"Mr. Goldwyn."

Certainly one of our American/Jewish rags-to-riches story is that of Samuel Goldwyn, Hollywood mogul. And now stand-up comic Alan King, writers Marsha Leiby/John Lollos, and director Gene Saks have brought that story to the New York stage.

"Mr. Goldwyn," which has just opened at the Promenade Theatre, is a pleasant, though not earth-shaking, piece. Flat at the beginning, it picks up the pace as the story progresses. For those unfamiliar with the Goldwyn bio, it is informative, but for those of us who have read up on Hollywood history, it is all-too familiar territory.

Yet it is a solid King performance. He captures the sense of the legendary producer (at least Goldwyn, as he's always been depicted). He rants on the telephone, offers astute observations on the film industry, recalls his past nostalgically, and barks orders at his secretary (played by the estimable Lauren Klein). The comic is at home on stage, and connects well with the audience, filling the sizeable house with his over-the-top performance. His famous Goldwynisms (either apocryphal or written by Leiby/Lollos-or the real thing) come pouring over the footlights. Among them are such Malapropisms as "Any one who goes to a psychiatrist should have his head examined," "Next time I send an idiot to New York, I'll go myself," "Stop already with Tony Curtis; he's just a flush in the pan," "No one should write his autobiography until he's already dead," and the oft-repeated "An oral contract isn't worth the paper it's written on."

Lauren Klein, playing Goldwyn's indispensable secretary, is a perfect contrast to her volatile boss. Clad in a spinster-like business suit, sensible shoes and glasses, she seems a proper secretary of a certain

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time and place-all briskness and efficiency. But, with flashes of humor and humanity, Klein turns Helen into something else. It is she who keeps her boss in line and afloat (a mixed metaphor which would do justice to Goldwyn himself). And we are as aware of Klein's importance to the piece as Goldwyn is to Helen's role in his life. King tends to give a one-note performance, and it is Klein as Helen who adds the varied hues to "Mr. Goldwyn."

This is a handsomely-mounted show, thanks to Saks and his design team. David Gallo's set-all burnished wood and 30-foot high book-cases and elegant period furniture which includes a huge desk-might well be the library of an English country estate. But when Helen comes in and opens the blinds, we find we are on the studio set in Hollywood, California.

Thus Samuel Goldwyn and Alan King join Arthur Miller, Richard Greenberg and all the other nice Jewish boys-and girls--on the current New York stage.



Artistic Director Ari Roth tells a Purim story.



Actor Gareth Armstrong talking about "Shylock"



Playwright - Norman Beim at the Purim dinner in St. Louis.

## Yossel the Yenta

I'm seriously considering moving to St. Louis....did you ever meet such nice people?...and sincerely so...I couldn't get over it...even the housekeeping woman thanked me 2 days in a row for moving a chair in the room about 2 feet....except for my toilet seat and bathtub problems, it was a fabulous conference....many bouquets to Kathy and her Board, all of whom were wonderful.....(Kathy, would you like to do it again in 2 years?)....I think I just heard a thud.....now, let's get down to some real dirt....who gave Kayla a "silly pill" for the conference....did you ever see her have so much fun?,,,please share the prescription.....Bryna was there, with her shawl.... does that have some religious significance, Bry?.....or maybe you just hide in it.....Mira was back, after having 2 kids....no more babies at conference time, Mira...or maybe no more babies, period.....I missed Ellen and Irene so badly...I felt a real hole without them, so next year everyone on the executive committee will call them to make sure they come.....and, of course, we always miss David...Did you see who was up early every morning exercising? ....the things you learn about people when they sweat....by the way, I could see that Susan L. is a real jock...when she told me her workout at home, I added 5 minutes to my treadmill time....Will any of us ever forget Henry's monologue?....what a special few minutes....I wish I had it on film....Rich O. asked me to mention a few items about him....sorry Rich, only room for one...his play, PRAGUE SUMMER was published in "The Best American Short Plays 1999-2000...there, Rich, I said it.....all hail Deborah, our new leader...may you rule and prosper...a new Chair Grogger will be on its way to you soon...Did anyone else notice how quiet Evy was the first 2 days of the conference...in fact, every time I looked around for her, she wasn't there..... I wish I could mention everyone's name...so,next year, in Washington, you must do something outrageous to be noticed.....til then....Who said Jewish theatres are dead?

Herb Katz (our Yossel)

# GLOBAL NEWS

## Global Jewish Theatre Network - Initial Consultation - December 2001 *Tel Aviv*

by Robbie Gringras

A fairly echoey room in the beautiful Suzanne Dellal complex, a long table surrounded by chairs, and a room full of directors. What's the first thing to happen? We shift the tables around into a circle. What would be the point of a meeting between Diaspora and Israeli theatre folk if we showed no awareness of space? But this act turned out to be more symbolic of the spirit of our gathering than we had thought. As we went around the table introducing ourselves, an Israeli municipal theatre director here, a British actor there, an Israeli playwright here, an educator and rabbi there, a Jewish theatre director here, and a representative of the Jewish Agency there - it became clear that the Diaspora and Israel had no intention of sitting on opposite sides of the table. We had circled the tables because we intended to learn from each other.

This was to be an intense couple of days. The People-to-People department of the Jewish Agency, inspired by Shlomi Ravid, had decided to put culture into the forefront of Israel-Diaspora relations, and Shlomi and I had gathered a core group of people for what we called 'an initial consultation' towards creating a Global Jewish Theatre Network. The brief introductions lasted over an hour, as excitement mounted at the breadth of experience and perspectives we had around the table. We had directors of Jewish theatres in the States and in Canada, we had a playwright/performer from Britain, we had educators who use theatre, we had directors of mainstream and of alternative theatre in Israel. Everybody was there to contribute and to listen. Professor Shimon Levi then joined us, to give us his opinions on the theatricality of the bible, our original source-text. A charismatic and knowledgeable teacher, he managed very quickly to draw us in to a fascinating discussion about how we might see the Bible as a script.

After a rushed meal in a delightful little humus bar in Neve Tzedek, we returned to the Suzanne Dellal centre for the evening programme. Chanuka candles were lit, guests were welcomed, and we moved into the Yerushalmi theatre to see a selection of Bible-Theatre. After the Torah scroll, the star of the show, was brought in and placed at the back of the stage, Iyyar and Avi of Nephesh Theatre emerged to perform part of *Ma Tanach?* A kind of cabaret performance of Bible extracts for school audiences, *Ma Tanach?* kicked off a varied and interesting evening. Though some orthodox took offense, I'll never look at the story of Joseph the same after Avi and Iyyar's rap version ('Yo, yo, yo, Yoseph...')! Marcus Freed from Britain performed a section of his witty and physical Solomon piece. Written in doggerel rhyme, full of cheap gags and caricatures, this solo show has played to Jewish communities throughout Britain. Next up was a sophisticated and impressive performance by Mili Ravid of a show directed by Professor Levi, drawing on key female characters in the Bible. Together with an original soundtrack, *VeYadeha al ha Saf* was a class

act. Finally Amichai Lau-Lavie was up, fresh from New York, giving us a taster of what he calls *Storahelling*. A cross between simultaneous translation of the traditional Torah reading, and stand-up, Amichai and his musician and cantor ended the evening by returning us to the enigma of Joseph.

The following day we were on the road. First stop at the Cameri Theatre, where we saw an extract from their new play *Atom*, and then talked/argued with the director, the writer, and one of the actors. *Atom*, written by journalist Matti Golan, is an apocalyptic look at Israel in twenty years' time, and (put very simplistically) blames the ultra-orthodox for the destruction of the world. It succeeded in irritating lots of people, and the ensuing discussion on the values of 'journalistic' theatre, the nature of Jewish theatre, and the problematic relationship between Jewish identity and Israeli identity, was fiery and fascinating. Next stop was in Haifa, where we were welcomed by Artistic Director Sinai Peter, who talked very warmly about partnerships with the diaspora and the possibility of a Jewish Theatre Festival at Haifa Theatre next Chanuka. We saw a performance by Yossi Vassa, It sounds better in Amharic, a solo show about his experience as an Ethiopian immigrant, we saw an open rehearsal of Haifa's production of *The Caretaker* in its Jewish-Arab version, and we listened to a presentation by Yitzhak Goren on *Bimat Kedem*, his mizrachi theatre company. Starved for talk-time after so much input, we cancelled our final meeting in Haifa and sat down to talk. About how the minority experience in Israel relates or does not relate to diaspora Jewish minority experiences, about whether making *The Caretaker* so time- and place-specific limits its power, and about how much more time we needed to talk!

As if to rub salt into the wounds, on our way back to Tel Aviv we had a presentation on the bus by Roi Rashkess and one of his actors from *Boi Kallah* - a production from Akko theatre created and performed by Orthodox yeshiva graduates. One actor stood in the aisle as the bus dodged the intercity traffic, and performed a monologue from the show, and then extracts from a videoed performance were played on the TV as we stood in Tel Aviv traffic! *Boi Kallah* managed to break through our exhaustion and gave us all a fascinating glimpse into the incredibly vibrant world of Orthodox Jewish theatre that is bubbling around the edges of the Israeli theatre's mainstream. That night we saw a gala performance of *The Love of Itamar*, produced by the Orna Porat Children's Theatre, where Israel's Minister of Culture, Matan Vilnai, welcomed us in his speech.

The final day was a day of business. A day of sitting down in a fairly claustrophobic no-windowed conference room of the Diaspora Museum, and working out where to go from here? Several interesting people joined us for our final deliberations - among them Hagit Rehavi, director of the Orna Porat Children's Theatre, Danny Horovitz, playwright, director, and initiator of the last International Jewish Theatre Festival in Tel Aviv in 1982, and Professor Yehuda Morali, who has just set up a Jewish Theatre MA course at the Hebrew University. We talked and argued in small groups, we talked and argued in large groups, and came up with a huge array of great suggestions.

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The key suggestions (ie the ones with which nearly everyone agreed) are being worked on as I write. The Jewish Agency agreed to take me on as a half-time worker to push and make sure things happen. And as part of that commitment they also very kindly sent me to your AJT conference in St Louis, in order to firmly cement our relationship. (I had a great time - thanks for having me.) We are currently in the process of creating a state-of-the-art Jewish theatre website that will be more than just a computerised publicity flyer. In the words of Motti Sandak, our expert consultant, it will represent a cross between a world Jewish theatre shopping mall, and a museum. Full of resources, current news, and opportunities to network online. We're hoping this will be up and running by the summer.

Our December gathering itself ended with an informal chat with Israeli playwright Motti Lerner, and a whole load of visiting cards being exchanged. It had been an intense and rich 50 hours, which felt like about three weeks. Thanks to all you Americans and Canadians for coming: Kayla, Bryna, Stephen, Ari, Deborah, Amichai, Evelyn - thanks to Galit and Jay the team at the People-to-People department for support and administration - and thanks to Shlomi Ravid, the brains and the heart behind the whole venture. Looking forward to seeing you all in Washington next year!

## Vancouver, Canada • Chutzpah! 2002

### A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

by Brenda Leadlay

Chutzpah! The Lisa Nemetz Showcase of Jewish Performing Arts has just wrapped up an incredibly successful 2nd year with another 14 days of music, theatre, dance, storytelling, stand-up comedy and lots more chutzpah!

Although still in its infancy, this upstart of a festival has put the Norman Rothstein Theatre and the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver on the map. With over 5,000 people in attendance, participation nearly doubled in the 2nd year and we established ourselves as a definite presence to watch on the local, national and international performing arts scene.

This year the festival saw significant developments in programming - we offered entertainment for children (the Juno award winning duo of JUDY AND DAVID) - we presented nearly a dozen international artists including the San Francisco-based acapella group VOCOLOTT (who brought audience members to their feet) - we co-produced an original play with Vancouver's hottest theatrical sensation (the Electric Company Theatre) - we produced a theatrical delight called "Chutzpah! LIVE" (created for and during the festival) - we had Sex in Yiddish with Torontonian Michael Wex and - we added two more popular cabaret nights - one for jazz enthusiasts and the other for comedy fans. Not to mention our stellar opening night with Avi Hoffman's award winning one-man show "Too Jewish?" which left audience members begging for more.

One of the highlights of this year's festival that garnered nation-wide media attention was the spectacular play in the

swimming pool - Kendra Fanconi's THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY - co-produced with the Electric Company Theatre, The Norman Rothstein Theatre and Only Fanconi Productions. This site-specific visual and audio feast was so well received by the festival-going patrons that people were scrambling to get tickets before the show was even half way through it's run. All 14 shows played to capacity audiences who were left astonished and delighted by the original and innovative spectacle that told a story of submerged Jewish identity and a girl with a fish where her heart should be. The play received a four star review from the Toronto Globe and Mail and has attracted the attention of other theatres across the country including the prestigious WORLD STAGE festival.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY also marked the first time that the festival took on a producer's role, a role that we hope will continue as the festival receives additional financial support from organizations like the Canada Council and Heritage Canada, as well as increased funding from the corporate sector.

Once again Chutzpah! caught the attention of the Vancouver public with its striking underwater image of actor Kendra Fanconi on bus shelters, its line-up of national and international players and its glossy 26-page brochure. Media sponsorships from CKVU-TV, Bravo TV, CKNW radio, Shaw Cable TV, CBC radio, CBC Television, the Vancouver Courier and the Jewish Western Bulletin, (as well as two new corporate sponsors - the Plaza 500 Hotel and Bank Hapoalim) also helped to raise the festival's profile too a national level.

The demographics of our audience also changed to include a broader age range (from 6 months to 85 years) and a culturally diverse population of both Jewish and non-Jewish people. We also attracted a significant segment of young adults to programs like WHIPLASH - a dance show featuring hip-hop and stomp-style tap dance and THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY - the site-specific play in the swimming pool.

The festival did extremely well on the financial end of things too - especially considering that our fundraising goals were slightly under what we had budgeted. Larger than hoped for attendance figures inflated the box office revenues and left us with only a small deficit - approximately 2% of a budget totalling \$223,000. We are grateful to the Jewish Community and the many individuals in both the private and corporate sector who so generously lent their financial support to this endeavour.

Perhaps one of the most successful elements of the festival (one that was not visible to most festival-goers) was the incredible support and encouragement that the JCC staff showed towards the festival organizers and theatre staff. Without the collaborative spirit of the aquatics supervisor, Dave Ibbott, and our graphics designer, Alla Elperin, the festival would not have been the success it was. It was truly inspiring to see all of the staff get behind the festival and make it their own. What a great place to work!

The ambiance at this year's festival was greatly enhanced with the extended hours offered by Chagall's restaurant and the opportunity to smooze with the artists that their service provided. It gave the community a feeling that they were an integral part of the event.

# New York

## The Storahtelling Project: Jewish Ritual Theatre Revived

### Open a Curtain: Find A Story

Every week, in synagogues worldwide, precious curtains are pulled back, revealing the scrolls that tell the story of the Jewish people. Known as 'The Reading of Torah', (Hebrew: Kriat HaTorah - lit. 'The Calling Out of Torah') - this storytelling ritual is now among the oldest on earth. The Reading of Torah was originally presented as an engaging performance, accompanied by simultaneous translation and commentary into local language. This tradition gradually disappeared from synagogue life, and is now being revived by the Storahtelling Group. Storahtelling brings the Reading of Torah into the 21st century by recreating the theatrical experience it once was. In a radical fusion of theology and Storahtelling features traditional Hebrew chanting, non-traditional English translation, 'audience participation' and original liturgical music.

Founded in NYC in 1998, Storahtelling is a non-profit experimental theatre group, comprised of artists and educators, reclaiming the art and rituals of sacred Jewish storytelling. The Storahtelling model presents a pioneering way of sharing and re-examining the legacy with each new generation, bringing Torah front and center once again in the modern Jewish world.

Ongoing presentations take place in NYC and across the U.S., Israel and Europe.

STORAHTELLING: Jewish Ritual Theatre - Revived!

Amichai Lau-Lavie, Director

111, Eighth Avenue, 11th Floor, NYC NY 10011

212.284.6776 [www.storahtelling.org](http://www.storahtelling.org)

Resident Project of UJC/JESNA's Bikkurim:

Incubator for New Jewish Ideas

## AUSTRALIA

### SALTPILLAR THEATRE (Melbourne, Australia)

Saltpillar Theatre Company was founded in 1986 by a group of Melbourne University students who were involved in the AUJS (Australian Union of Jewish Students) Comedy Revue. Through observing the talent of the community they resolved that the time for the establishment of a Jewish based theatre group was long overdue.

By 1988 the company staged its first production with the premiere of an Australia play, *On Edge* by Yvonne Fein. Since then, Saltpillar has developed into a unique Melbourne based theatre company. It is committed to fostering and developing talent in people in all areas of the theatre including actors, directors, writers and production personnel. The company stages at least one production every year and is committed to fostering and developing new Australian work through the Samuel Weisberg Playwriting Development Fund.

Saltpillar has delighted audiences with the Melbourne Premiere of Neil Simon's *Biloxi Blues* (1989); the Tony Award winning musical *Falsettos* by Stephen Sondheim, William Finn and James Lapine (1995) - winner of four Victorian Music Guild Awards; Neil Simon's hilarious *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* (1997); the critically acclaimed *Kindertransport* (1999) by Diane Samuels and Motti Lerner's *Exile in Jerusalem* (2000). This year the company is producing a self-devised piece of theatre exploring themes related to the younger members of the community.

Saltpillar is a unique theatre company in the Melbourne theatrical landscape. It continues to produce exciting, fresh and professional work and yet receives no government funding or major corporate sponsorship. It still survives while other companies have fallen to the wayside. However, the company does face a constant struggle to survive financial and to search for new material. It is no different to any other theatre company around the world.

Danny Gesundheit: [dgesundheit@hotmail.com](mailto:dgesundheit@hotmail.com)

## HOLLAND

### CONCERTGEBOUW IN AMSTERDAM

The month of March has seen Yiddish songs received to new acclaim in Europe. Adrienne Cooper, Zalmen Mlotek and Stuart Brotman premiered *'Enchanted Journey: Songs from Yiddishland'* to two standing ovations at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, among the most celebrated concert halls in the world.

The concert, weaving new arrangements of folk songs with works by contemporary poets and composers, was recorded for radio broadcast and for CD release. Cooper and Mlotek went on to give additional concerts and workshops for singers and choirs throughout Holland and then on to London, where they performed a benefit concert for the national Jewish Music Institute, hosted by Lord Sydney and Lady Rosa Lipworth and welcomed by Lady Valerie Solti, widow of the late great Maestro George Solti.

Zalmen Mlotek stayed on in London to present Yiddish song workshops at the University of London's famed School of Oriental Studies (SOAS) and to begin preparing the Jewish choirs of London for a summer festival under the auspices of The Jewish Music Institute.

In April, at the invitation of the Israeli Ambassador, Cooper and Mlotek will present excerpts from their Holocaust commemorative concert *'Ghetto Tango'* at the Israel Embassy in Washington D.C., in the Embassy's Chamber Concert Series, which has included among others, the late Isaac Stern, Yefim Bronfman, and Gil and Orly Shaham.

For information on how to book this performances please contact [moishe@goldenland.com](mailto:moishe@goldenland.com) or call 212-683-7861.

## LONDON

### 3-day International Conference on Jewish Theatre

18th, 19th & 20th June 2002

Venue: Institute of Archaeology Lecture Theatre

31-34 Gordon Square (corner of Gordon St), London WC1

Full program available shortly before the conference from The Institute of Jewish Studies University College London, Gower St,

London WC1E 6BT

tel. 020 7679 3520; fax. 020 7209 1026

e-mail [uclhvtm@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:uclhvtm@ucl.ac.uk);

webpage <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish/fijs>

## TURKEY

The Jewish theatre group Dostluk Yurdu Dernegi founded in 1966 in Istanbul, Turkey has recently produce the premiere of the new version of the twenty three years old Sephardic musical comedy "Kula '930" January 9th in Istanbul.

"Kula '930" is a very well known musical comedy. It's first performance was in 1979 in Istanbul. It has been performed in many theatres in Turkey and Israel. It's written by Izzet Bana (singer- Los Pasaros Sefaradis), Selim Hubes (guitars and strings - Los Pasaros Sefaradis), Jojo Eskenazi (playing "Moiz" since 1979) and Yuda Siliki in the Turkish Ladino. The songs performed by the seven musicians orchestra are Ladino songs of the 19th and earlier 20th century and many of it are originals to the Kula (Galata Tower) district of Pera in the European side of Istanbul. The eighty-five amateur spirits forming the cast, directors, musicians, singers, actors, dancers, make-up artists, tailors are Jews of Turkey wanting to make the Ladino culture survive and doing this by this big production performed to six hundred persons audience twice a week.

If you would like more information about Los Pasaros Sefaradis please see our website at: [www.sephardic-music.com](http://www.sephardic-music.com)

## ISRAEL

Nepesh Theatre in Israel will be touring North America in the spring of 2003. The touring show is called *It Sounds Better in Amharic* starring Yossi Vassa. The one-man play tells a moving, personal account of a 700-kilometre journey by foot from Ethiopia to the refugee camp in Sudan, and then finally flying to the Holy Land. Nostalgic memories of life in Ethiopia are mixed with hilarious perspectives towards the adjustments that must be made when moving to modern day Israel. Nepesh Theatre is offering a special price for AJT members. For further information please contact: Howard Rypp Tel: 972-50394971, Fax: 972-3-5444617 or email: [nepesh@inter.net.il](mailto:nepesh@inter.net.il)

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## Exciting news from AJT Theatres

The Arizona Jewish Theatre Company received a grant from American Express to attend the National Arts Marketing Project in Chicago from March 6-10 and April 10-14. The intensive workshops in marketing are offered to mid-size organizations where American Express has a major presence. AJTC was the only organization in the Phoenix area to receive a grant, which sent Janet Arnold and David Ellenstein to the Windy City at no cost to the theatre. Through the information discussed at the workshops, the company is to develop a long-range marketing plan, and is then eligible to apply for up to \$25,000 for an implementation grant. The good news is that the information is available to all small and mid-size arts non-profits through the following website: [www.artsmarketing.org](http://www.artsmarketing.org)

Arts Marketing.org is the leading marketing source for nonprofit arts organizations. It's a joint project of Arts & Business Council Inc. and Arts & Business Council of Chicago, and is sponsored by American Express, with additional support from AT&T. The site is invaluable in helping your organization address its daily marketing needs and longer-term marketing issues by building improved skills in marketing, earned income creation and audience development. Be sure to check out the site! And remember, most cities have a Business Volunteers for the Arts program which can provide your organization with much-needed assistance in a wide-variety of areas---for free! Check with your local Arts Commission to see if BVA is in your area.

Arizona Jewish Theatre Company is proud to announce that David Ellenstein has been named Artistic Director, starting with the 2002-03 season. David has an extensive background as a Director and Equity Actor throughout the country. He will direct 2 shows for AJTC during the 2002-03 season. David lives in Los Angeles and will split his time between LA and Phoenix this first year. He and his wife, Denise, are expecting their first child in June.

Jewish Theatre of Grand Rapids received Best Play and Best Set Design awards in October 2001 for the production of "Old Wicked Songs. The Grand Awards are Grand Rapids equivalent of Tony Awards for excellence in Community Theater.

Winnipeg Jewish Theatre - Kayla Gordon was nominated for the Canada Council of the Art's John Hirsch award for promising young directors.

News from The Saidye Bronfman, Montreal, Canada  
The Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts presented a Gala tribute to Dora Wasserman C.M. The Saidye, home of the Yiddish Theatre since 1967, honored Dora and her remarkable legacy. The event took place April 30, 2002 and was a huge success. Congratulations to Dora on her remarkable accomplishments

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## 2002-2003 Seasons

### Center Stage Theatre (Louisville)

THE SECRET GARDEN - book and lyrics by Louisville native Marsha Norman - August 1-11

CABARET - music and lyrics by John Kander and Fred Ebb  
November 7-17

BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS by Neil Simon - February 27-March 9

### Center Stage (Rochester)

SCHTICK - A Queer Entertainment with Sara Felder - October 19 & 20

LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR by Neil Simon - Dec. 7-31

THE TROUBLE WITH PEGGY (Guggenheim) Donna Blue Lachman  
Feb. 8 & 9

THE CHOSEN - Aaron Posner & Chaim Potok - Mar. 1-22

DINNER WITH FRIENDS Donald Margulies - May 3-17

### Arizona Jewish Theatre Company (Phoenix)

AWAKE & SING by Clifford Odets- directed by David Ellenstein  
Nov. 2-17  
DOOR to DOOR by James Sherman - Directed by James Sherman -  
Dec. 28-Jan.12  
OLD WICKED SONGS by Jon Marans - Directed by David Ellenstein -  
Feb. 8-23  
KING LEVINE - by Richard Krevolin - Director TBA - March 29-April 13

### Jewish Theatre of Grand Rapids

THE CHOSEN - Dec. 12 - 22  
ROSENSTRASSE - April 24 - May 4  
TWO BY TWO - June 19- 29

### Winnipeg Jewish Theatre (Canada)

THE CHOSEN by Aaron Posner & Chaim Potok - Oct. 10 - 20  
FILLER UP by Deb Filler - November 28 - Dec. 8  
THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD by Howie Wiseman - March 23 - 27  
YIDDLE WITH A FIDDLE - May 8 - 18  
A new musical based on the 1936 Yiddish Film.  
Book & Lyrics: Isaiah Sheffer. Music: Abraham Ellstein

### Theatre Ariel (Philadelphia)

On Tour For Children and Families:  
OLD TALES/NEW SPARKS adapted by Lisa Silberman & Daniel Brenner  
TALES FROM THE EAST adapted by Gabrielle Kaplan-Meyer - premiere's  
May 2003

On Tour For Teens and Young Adults:  
ARIELPROV - Theatre Ariel's improv troupe  
YOURS, ISRAEL - by Gabrielle Kaplan-Meyer - premiere's Dec. 2002

On Tour For Adults:  
10 IMAGININGS OF SARAI and HAGAR by Gabrielle Kaplan-Meyer  
ARIELPROV - Theatre Ariel's improv troupe  
HER STORY/OUR STORY - by Howard Rice, Mark Lowenstern & Janet  
Ruth Falon  
In development: MAGIC JEWS by Fred Siegel

### At the National Museum of American Jewish History

A MUSE in the MUSEUM: Journeys in American Jewish History by  
Louis Greenstein  
THEATRE LOVES CONVERSATION - 3 evenings of new Play Readings

### Jewish Theatre of The South (Atlanta)

MIKLAT by Joshua Ford -Oct 2 -27  
or THE ADJUSTMENT by Michael Folie  
HERSHEL & THE HANUKKAH GOBLINS by Linda Kaufman & Carla Silen  
Nov. 26 - Dec. 8, 2002 based on the book by Eric Kimmel  
THE PRICE by Arthur Miller - Jan. 29 - Feb. 23  
THE SUNSHINE BOYS by Neil Simon - April 30 - May 25

### The Eugene S. & Blanche R. Halle Theatre (Cleveland)

MAN OF LA MANCHA - Oct 5 - Oct 27  
CHERRY DOCS BY DAVID GOW- Jan18 - Feb 2  
THE CHOSEN BY AARON POSNER AND CHAIM POTOK - Mar 15-30

### New Jewish Theatre (St. Louis)

THE CHOSEN - Oct 3 - 20  
LOVING LEAH - Dec5 - 22  
LEBENSRAUM - Feb 13 - Mar 2  
HELLO MUDDAH, HELLO FADDAH! - May 1 - 18

### Theatre J (Washington, DC)

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN By Ariel Dorfman -Oct. 30 - Dec 1  
THE LAST SEDER By Jenifer Maisel - Jan. 7 -Feb. 9  
Winner of the 2001 Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays  
Award  
JUMP/CUT- A co-production with Woolly Mammoth Theatre  
Feb. 24 - March 30  
A world premiere by Neena Beber, Winner of the Weissberg Award  
THE MAD DANCERS: A PLAY WITH MUSIC & ECSTATIC DANCE By  
Yehuda Hyman - April 29 -June 1  
Winner of the 1999 Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays  
Award  
IN THE DARK by Motti Lerner June 16 - July 13  
Adapted for the American Stage by Ari Roth  
Part of Voices from a Changing Israel, With a workshop Readings of  
ASHER'S COMMAND By Marilyn Felt - Winner of the 2001 Kennedy  
Center Fund for New American Plays Award  
Other workshops include:  
THE FIFTH OF JANUARY By Irene Wurtzel  
THE AMERICAN SYMPHONY OF ANITA KATZ-MARTINEZ by Ari Roth

### The Schenectady JCC Staged Reading Theater

THE CHOSEN  
JEWISH SHORTS (Five one act plays)  
KUNI LEMI (A new translation by Joel Berkowitz)  
ANNE FRANK AND ME

Paul Soles in  
*Visiting  
Mr. Green*  
Winnipeg  
Jewish Theatre



Marvin Kaye in  
*Hello Muddah,  
Hello Fadduh!*  
Winnipeg  
Jewish Theatre



# Playwright's Corner

Note: All plays are full-length unless otherwise noted.

## COUNTY OF KINGS A play by Edward Eric Ash

The play takes place in the Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum during the 1930's, where two brothers attempt to deal with the system. After seven years in the orphanage, they are forced to live with their father. When World War II begins, events drive the boys to take different paths. Four sparse sets. 4 m, 4f, 2 boys. COUNTY OF KINGS is scheduled for a staged reading later this year at West Valley Jewish Center in West Hills, CA. Contact the author at [sunnyanded@earthlink.net](mailto:sunnyanded@earthlink.net)

## NO OTHER GODS: A MIDRASH ON MOSES

a short play by Norman J. Fedder  
The life of Moses is presented "story theatre" style. Tragedy mixes with comedy and Biblical situations with contemporary dialogue and issues. Written to be performed in any space. 2m, 2f. Contact the author at [fedder@ksu.edu](mailto:fedder@ksu.edu)

## A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS a play by Norman J. Fedder

A tragedy of modern American Jewish life, based on an actual incident: the murder of a prominent Midwestern rabbi, on the bimah of his synagogue, by one of his students - who then killed himself. One set. 3 m, 3f. Contact the author at [fedder@ksu.edu](mailto:fedder@ksu.edu)

## HEARTS OF FIRE a family comedy by Susan Horowitz

Inspired by the story of Chanuka, Deborah, a teenage street vendor with a pet bear, disguises herself as a boy to join the Maccabee army. She falls in love with Ben, Judah's nephew, who's engaged to Bathsheba, who loves Achilles, a soldier who serves the mad General Apollonios, who wants to sacrifice Bathsheba (Judah's ward) in the Temple! Unit set. 3f, 4m, and anyone who can play a bear! Contact the author at [drsue@drsue.com](mailto:drsue@drsue.com), (212) 732-0487, or visit her website, [www.drsue.com](http://www.drsue.com)

## ONE OF THE FEW a play by Patricia H. Lin

Set in Nazi-occupied Poland between the years 1943 and 1944, the play focuses on the developing friendship between two women: a Polish Jewess who finds herself, inadvertently, on "the other side of the Wall", and her reluctant protector, a Polish Catholic housewife. One set. 2 f, 3 m. Produced by the Center Company in Fairfax, VA in 2001. "Intimate and funny" - Washington Post. "A story that holds out hope for tolerance and rebirth" - Washington Jewish Week. "Lin's underlying cry for religious tolerance reverberates in today's world." - The Fairfax Times. Contact the author at [patlin00@hotmail.com](mailto:patlin00@hotmail.com).

## BEYOND ME: A SONG CYCLE IN THE KEY OF SURVIVAL a musical by Suzanne Tanner Meisel

A biography, in 24 musical numbers, of Rachel Goldman Miller's indomitable spirit, despite losing 93 relatives to the Holocaust and her son to AIDS. As a child she was forced to wear a yellow star in Paris. After moving to America, love and motherhood help to fill her faith with optimistic hues, until her youngest son reveals he has AIDS. BEYOND ME has been written as a one-woman operetta (performed by the author) with a supporting quartet of actor/singers. Two acts, 24 musical numbers, minimal staging necessary. Contact the author at [suzannetanner@aol.com](mailto:suzannetanner@aol.com) or (310) 472-1176.

## BROWN PIGS AND BURGERS a comedy by Rachelle Neuman

This slice-of-life comedy celebrates the value of undying friendships and the spirit of small-town America. The delicious ensemble of characters delights the soul as the play's restaurant, Piggies, nourishes the palate. One of the characters, Buster Simmons, says it best: "Growing up in a small town is like getting bubble gum on your shoe; you never quite get it off." For Rebecca, keeping her Jewish identity strong while remaining a vital part of the community is quite a balancing act. Originally produced at the Woodlawn Theater in San Antonio. One basic set, with additional side scenes. 4 f, 4m. Contact [PrimaDonaProductions@hotmail.com](mailto:PrimaDonaProductions@hotmail.com), (210)822-3552 or the author at [sterlingneuman@netzero.com](mailto:sterlingneuman@netzero.com), (210) 492-2447.

## HA! a comedy by Rich Orloff

Rich's three most popular one-acts: OEDI, a vaudeville retelling of "Oedipus Rex" which asks "What if Oedipus had a Jewish mother?" - THE NEWS FROM ST. PETERSBURG, a Chekhovian spoof about the effects of a rumor in 1905 Russia - and THE WHOLE SHEBANG, which asks "What if the entire universe was just a science fair project and the student was God?" THE WHOLE SHEBANG was published in Best American Short Plays 1994-95 and has had over 70 productions in the United States, Canada, Scotland, India, Austria and Germany. OEDI was published in Best American Short Plays 1997-98. Three very simple sets. 3 m, 2 f, 1 either. The plays can be produced individually or as a group. Contact Melissa Hardy at the Bret Adams Agency, [badamsltd@aol.com](mailto:badamsltd@aol.com), or the author at [rich@richorloff.com](mailto:rich@richorloff.com), or visit his website, [richorloff.com](http://richorloff.com).



### **DELIXMAX a play by Harvey Ostroff**

In 1983, Max Farber, a survivor of Auschwitz, runs a deli in Montreal. With the rise of the French Separatist movement, he fears a possible return to the horrors of Nazism. During a severe ice storm, he and a friend decide to teach a lesson in the meaning of true oppression to his French-Canadian waitress and her nationalist boyfriend. But the lesson gets out of hand. The play was a finalist for Western Washington University at the ACTF.

Unit set. 3m, 2f. Contact the author at [stagewritings.shaw.ca](mailto:stagewritings.shaw.ca)

### **MY MUSIC a play by Harvey Ostroff**

A love story about Yossel Zaiger, a talented violinist came to Canada in 1910 with his bride Hilda and outlived his family. It is an odyssey spanning nearly 75 years, starting from the time they arrive as "greeners" in Montreal. At the end of his life, witnessed by a social worker sent to take him to a home, his mind returns to 1909 when he was a fiddler in the village of Zhitomir courting his bride-to-be. The final act, entitled YOSSEL'S MUSIC, was produced at Studio 58.

Unit set. 7m, 2f. (Or 3m, 1f, in multiple roles.) Contact the author at [stagewritings.shaw.ca](mailto:stagewritings.shaw.ca)

### **THE BUBBEH a one-act drama with humor by Harvey Ostroff**

Esther Birnbaum, a typical Yiddish bubbeh, and Clara Penner, a realtor in her sixties, meet in the semi-private room they share in the ICU after both have suffered heart attacks. Clara is in denial about aging and refuses to admit that she is now a grandmother, while Esther dotes on it. Unit set. 3f.

### **THE ZAIDEH a one-act drama with humor by Harvey Ostroff**

Eli Golden has not seen his harsh, unforgiving father for 17 years. The zaideh now lives in a home and suffering from the beginnings of Alzheimer's. Eli decides to visit his father, now living in a home and beginning to suffer from Alzheimer's, and brings his modern teenage son, who has never met his zaideh. The meeting becomes difficult and revealing but also comical.

THE BUBBEH and THE ZAIDEH can be performed individually or together. Contact the author at: [stagewritings.shaw.ca](mailto:stagewritings.shaw.ca). You can also read portions of his plays at <http://members.shaw.ca/stagewritings>

### **THE INTERVIEW a play by Faye Sholiton**

The play takes place in the Ohio home of Bracha Weissman, a strong-willed Holocaust survivor who is about to give testimony for an oral history project. When the meeting with her interviewer, a child of survivors, unwittingly triggers memories of unresolved issues with her own daughter, the two confront their unwanted legacies and begin the process of healing. THE INTERVIEW won the Dayton FutureFest competition, Midwest Playwrights Festival, and the Charlotte Festival of New American Plays. It has had five productions, including the Halle Theatre in Cleveland.

Unit set. 3f, 1 m. Contact the author at [fsholiton@ix.netcom.com](mailto:fsholiton@ix.netcom.com)

### **MAMALEH! a musical by Mitchell Uscher**

Filled with laughter and tears, MAMALEH! tells of the story of the lifelong friendship among Jewish women of different generations, encompassing everything from turn-of-the-century immigrants coming to America to modern matriarchs contemplating the complexities of the 21st Century. MAMALEH! played Off Broadway as well as sold out performances in Florida and California. New York Times wrote, "MAMALEH! is sweet. Its heart is in the right place." Available both for production or as a touring show that can be brought to your theater. One set. 2-5 f, depending on the version of the show. Contact the author at [MTPROD@aol.com](mailto:MTPROD@aol.com), or toll-free at 866-2MAMALEH (866-2626253).

### **ALEXANDRA OF JUDEA BY L.D. LEFF**

Matricide, fratricide, and infanticide. Cannibalism, mass crucifixions, a civil war, and a volley of citrons. This is the true story of the Hasmonean Dynasty - the house of Maccabee. Alexandra of Judea is based on works by the Judeo-Roman historian Flavius Josephus. The play is written in iambic pentameter, using formal scenes. There is a simple single set. Props and technical requirements are minimal. There are 19 speaking roles: 13 men and 6 women. With doubling, these roles may be played by 8 men and 4 women (12 total). The play was written in Israel during the Al Aqsa Intifada. It premiered in April, 2001 in a staged reading at Jerusalem's CenterStage Theater. Contact: L.D. Leff at [Lauri@tek-law.com](mailto:Lauri@tek-law.com); 818-761-6143

### **PLAYS BY RICHARD KREVOLIN**

**THE BERGS & THE B.'S** -- Love, lies and the Internet among two fifty-something Jewish brothers and two fifty-something Italian sisters on the Upper west side of New York City. A simple set with 5 actors.

**TROTSKY'S GARDEN** -- A two-act magical realist play filled with romance and the intrigue of a political assassination. Serious drama in which Trotsky is forced to reconcile with his Jewish heritage. A four-actor piece that needs fairly sophisticated production values.



**LAMENTATION (A PLAY ABOUT OUR TOWN)** -- A comedy about what happens in a small town in New Hampshire when a sexually confused Jewish seventeen year old boy falls in love with his drama teacher while they are rehearsing a production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. 7 actors.

**KING LEVINE** -- A modern day Comedic King Lear. A frozen food millionaire has to divide up his kingdom among his three daughters before he retires. When his daughters exile him into the Jewish home, it is up to Levine to appeal to his baby daughter, a radical lesbian, for help. This is a 2 person play in which all three daughters are played by the same actress. Simple staging.  
contact at [Krevolin@usc.edu](mailto:Krevolin@usc.edu)

### **HE'S HAVING HER BABY BY JOAN LIPKIN**

*He's Having Her Baby* is a gender-reversed, pro-choice musical comedy about Joey, a 15-year old boy from a broken home who becomes pregnant his first time out with Liz, the captain of the field hockey team. Through ignorance and circumstances other than choice, a baby boy is born. The play then deals with the aftermath of young, single, impoverished parenthood as Joey tries to contend with child-care, social isolation, and sexual harassment on the job. When he finally meets a possible mate, and accidentally becomes pregnant again, he makes a different decision this time. Through gender reversal and musical comedy, the show creates an entire universe and demonstrates the importance of reproductive freedom.  
3m/3f and a piano accompanist. Contact at [JLipkin@aol.com](mailto:JLipkin@aol.com)

### **THE GREEN SPOON** A comedy by Michael Achtman

A gay Jewish Torontonian brings his Black lover down to his neice's Bat Mitzvah in Dallas, surprising his mother and her ailing, 72-year-old boyfriend. The Bat Mitzvah girl thinks it's "cool" and welcomes them from the Bima, but the rest of the clan isn't so sure. A family affair with a difference. 1f/4m  
Contact at: [machtman@sympatico.ca](mailto:machtman@sympatico.ca)

### **CONSPIRACY IN THE SYNAGOGUE** by Andreea Valean

"Conspiracy in the Synagogue", a successful title, says the old man, even when no Jew will be left. They will all be sure that, even dead, the Jews are conspiring something in there as they've always done. And so it is. The old man, the chief of the Jewish community from a small town and its only member comes to the Synagogue to meet with all of his friends that have died a long time ago. The old man will recall memories from the past, will play Taroc, will dance, will fight, laugh and cry with characters visible only to him. Apart from his best friends Freud, Einstein and even Lenin will visit him. Up to the end the public will not be able to conclude whether the old man is senile or the characters are indeed real.  
A play about loneliness, about a world that died, about friendship and betrayal and most of all about love. For more information contact:

Cristiana Ripeanu (519) 748-6426; [cristoiu@hotmail.com](mailto:cristoiu@hotmail.com)

### **TALES FROM THE REBBE'S TABLE** by Flora Atkin

was chosen to help celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of ADVENTURE THEATRE, Glen Echo Park, MD. All eight plays selected for this banner year, are award-winning productions, and box office successes. Originally commissioned by the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, this award-winning MUSICAL has been performed in Boston and North Carolina as well as had several productions in the greater Washington, D.C. area.

The Tailor's Crowded house, Sollie Buys a Goat, and a Jewish Wedding at which the Rebbe appears in two disguises are tales familiar to older generations, but new to young theatre goers. These stories, with problems only the Rebbe can solve, delightful in themselves, gain in richness and depth as they are woven into the lives of three families whose houses cluster around the courtyard of a synagogue of an Eastern European shtetl in the days when our great grandparents were children.  
New Plays, Inc. Box 5074, Charlottesville, VA 22905 is the publisher.

### **RELIGION OUTSIDE THE BOX**

"Religion-Outside-The-Box this is not the stuff you learned in Sunday school" is Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer's 90-minute, interactive, theatrical show.

The Jewish Journal described his debut performance as "in a word, revolutionary!" In the show, the 32-year old reform rabbi weaves a combination of Borscht Belt-style humor and Eastern Philosophy in his attempt to help people understand and feel at peace with the world. "Religion ought not shackle and limit people in their coming to an understanding and appreciation of reality. It should set them free."

The audience bonds to the rabbinical performance artist early on as he explains what led him from being a bar-mitzvah boy who memorized his Torah portion to being a religious leader turned stand-up philosopher. Mayer is a true showman, not afraid to mix his depth of learning in philosophy and religion with his early training as a magician.

Throughout the two acts there is laughter and audience participation. But, perhaps the most wonderful part of Religion-Outside-The-Box is that people leave a little wiser than they were when they came.

For further information on "Religion-Outside-The-Box this is not the stuff you learned in Sunday School" check out the web-site at [www.religion-outside-the-box.com](http://www.religion-outside-the-box.com) or call Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer at 818-692-2376

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## ONE PERSON SHOWS:

### BOYCHIK:

A Play about Fathers, Sons, Ping-Pong and Pickled Herring A touching tale of a secular sons reconciliation with his orthodox Jewish father. this play ran off-broadway and now is designed to be produced around the country starring Richard Kline (3's Co.). Richard has done it on for a single performance or longer runs. The play lasts 80 minutes and can be performed on a stage or on the bima.

### THE LAW OF RETURN:

The Meyer Lansky Story (written with Joseph Bologna). The true story of the gangster Meyer Lansky's life and his attempts to emigrate to Israel. This play is a powerful drama with comedy. It was a Streisand Award Winner. Contact at [Krevolin@usc.edu](mailto:Krevolin@usc.edu)

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## News of AJT Playwrights

Sandy Asher's new play for young people, *SOMEBODY CATCH MY HOMEWORK*, debuted in April at the Vandivort Center Theatre here in Springfield, MO. Inspired by the humorous (and sometimes serious) poems of David L. Harrison, the play is also scheduled for a tour by the University of Wisconsin next spring. Another play by Sandy, the futuristic "Joan of ARK", opened in May in Salt Lake City. The plays' a recent winner of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education's Unpublished Play Reading Project Award.

Rich Orloff has a new website with excerpts of all his plays: [richorloff.com](http://richorloff.com). In the spring, his two-character Jewish drama with humor, *SHEDDING LIGHT*, was one of five plays to be included in the Spotlight series at the new Manhattan JCC.

James Sherman's *DOOR TO DOOR* was recently produced by the Pittsburgh Jewish Theatre and was very well received in Stuttgart, Germany, and will be done next season at the Arizona Jewish Theatre. *THE GOD OF ISAAC* is coming up at the Minnesota Jewish Theatre. *ROMANCE IN D* was a huge success for the Flat Rock Playhouse in North Carolina last fall. His new play, *THE OLD MAN'S FRIEND*, has won this year's Streisand Festival of New Jewish Plays and will be presented in La Jolla in June. The premiere production opens at the Tony Award winning Victory Gardens Theater on May 24.

We apologize for any omissions and errors!  
Yours, Kayla Gordon - Editor

## CALL FOR PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

Information is being gathered for a directory of plays of Jewish interest appropriate for young audiences. To have your plays listed, please submit the following by (FILL IN A DATE MAYBE A MONTH OR SO AFTER THE NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED) to Sandy Asher,  
721 South Weller Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802  
or email to [sasher@drury.edu](mailto:sasher@drury.edu):  
In 75 words or less (total, please!)

TITLE

PLAYWRIGHTS' NAME (IF A MUSICAL, CREDIT BOOK, LYRICS, MUSIC)

CONTACT INFORMATION (NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE, E-MAIL OF PLAYWRIGHT OR PUBLISHER)

ONE-ACT OR TWO?

NUMBER OF MEN, NUMBER OF WOMEN? DOUBLECASTING POSSIBLE?

NUMBER OF SETS (AREA STAGING OR UNIT SET POSSIBLE?)

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PLOT

For a look at a similar directory, see the American Alliance for Theatre and Education's Directory of Award-winning Plays by going to USA Plays for Kids at <http://usaplays4kids.drury.edu> and scrolling down to the "Links" section at the bottom of the homepage.

Our directory will be distributed at the conference and also made available on-line at the Web site.

## CALL FOR WORKSHOP/ PLAY DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANTS

The Omaha Theater Company for Young People is commissioning member Sandra Fenichel Asher to conduct a writing workshop with middle school students and adults at their local JCC and then create a script to be called "To Life: Generations of Growing Up Jewish."

Ideally, Sandy would also conduct a series of similar workshops at JCCs in various locales to gather additional stories. Local Jewish theaters would then assist in the development of the script through readings and/or productions.

For more information on the process and how to get involved, please contact Sandy at [sasher@drury.edu](mailto:sasher@drury.edu).





Delegates at the conference in Tel Aviv • December, 2001



*Sweeney Todd* - Center Stage in Rochester

## A NEW WEBSITE FOR AJT

We are happy to announce that we are in the process of redesigning our website with an official launch date of June 15, 2002. AJT has now become a global organization with members in the United States, Canada, Australia, England, Israel and Europe and our new website will help us get the word out to new members.

As a new benefit to membership and a part of our mandate to increase the visibility and viability of Jewish theatre we're excited to announce that we are offering our members their own web page on our new site. We have put together an example of a member page for everyone to view at <http://www.wjt.ca/aj/member.html>

To build these pages we need to gather some vital information from our members. Please take a few moments to email the following information directly to our web designer Denise Young at [dmy@dmystudio.com](mailto:dmy@dmystudio.com) by June 15, 2002.

- Write "Member Page" in the subject line of your email.
- Name of Member (Theatre, Playwright, other Organization or individual)
- If you are an individual member, please include the name of your profession.
- Address
- Phone Number
- Fax Number
- Website URL
- Mission statement or brief bio of 75 words or less
- 2002-2003 Theatre Season (if theatre company)
- List of plays written (if playwright)
- A single photograph with the appropriate credits

Denise may also be contacted (323) 466-6485 if you have any questions and would like to reach her in person. She also has a website <http://www.dmystudio.com>.

# Jews in Oklahoma and Oklahoma on Broadway

-Irene Backalenick

It is strange that Rodgers and Hammerstein's first, and most famous, musical would feature an unsavory Jewish character. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein are themselves Jewish. Perhaps they did not mean Ali Hakim, the peddler in "Oklahoma," to be Jewish. They gave him a vaguely Middle Eastern name and persona. But over the years he has frequently been performed by a Jewish actor and played as a Jew.

Do we need one more negative Jewish stereotype? Do we need a character is conniving, sneaky, devious, greedy-and, above all, an Outsider? I think not. But we have it. How this slipped by the Anti-Defamation League and other activists is strange indeed. Perhaps it's because "Oklahoma" is such a happy, well-meaning show that no one takes umbrage. Or perhaps it's because "Oklahoma," which launched the golden age of the American musical, is such a glorious paean to our country.

In any event, "Oklahoma," with a firm place in musical theatre history, will go on forever. Its current incarnation is the British production now at the Gershwin Theatre on Broadway. Presented by Cameron Mackintosh and the Royal National Theatre, the production began life at the NT in London in 1998. Certainly the best talents in the business have contributed to its success. Trevor Nunn (NT's

artistic director) directs the show, and the estimable Susan Stroman (whose Broadway credits include "The Producers," "Contact," and "The Music Man") provides the choreography.

"Oklahoma" is a tale of the westward expansion, this time into the Oklahoma territory, which brings with it the homesteaders and the cattlemen--and their differences. One Rodgers/Hammerstein song says it all in "The Farmer and the Cowman." The very slight story focuses on the Curly/Laurey romance, which is threatened by the seedy Jud. Curly is a cowboy, while Laurey lives on her Aunt Eller's farm, where Jud is the hired hand. The comic counterpoint is provided by the flighty Ado Annie, who is torn between the sturdy cowboy Will and the peddler Ali Hakim. In short, there are two romantic triangles. But these romantic shenanigans are simply an excuse for the glorious songs and Stroman's vibrant company dance numbers. This is a darker, more realistic "Oklahoma" than we've seen in the past, largely due to the admirable work of Shuler Hensley, who plays the menacing Jud. Hensley stands out in a generally competent, though not remarkable, cast. Josefina Gabrielle, as the heroine Laurey, is most effective when she's on her feet. Unlike earlier Laureys, she can dance, as well as sing and act. And Stroman has created a lovely dream ballet which gives her a chance to shine. Also notable is the design team's work. Anthony Ward's sets (enhanced by David Hersey's lighting) come sweeping down across the plain.

For a whole new generation who may not yet have seen "Oklahoma," this is a chance to experience a first-rate, thoroughly professional production.

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## The One that Got Away,

a play in a pool, premiered at this year's Chutzpah! Festival in Vancouver with a 100% sell-out run to critical acclaim. Now this show is looking for presenters for our tour of North America coming soon to a swimming pool near you!

*The One that Got Away* is the story of a girl with a fish where her heart should be, and her travel through the past to a town that drowned. The Globe and Mail calls it, "A beautifully scripted, fantastical story," and gave the show a four out of four-star rating. The Vancouver Sun said, "Row, row, row your butt down to see this strange beauty for yourself, because no amount of description can convey the magic floating through many of its moments."

Promtional materials, video clips and script are now available. *The One that Got Away* is a co-production by the Electric Company, the Norman Rothstein Theatre and The Only Fanconi.

Contact Kendra Fanconi, at 604 215-7487 or [kendraf@axion.net](mailto:kendraf@axion.net) for more information about touring or mounting independent productions.



## ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH THEATRE MEMBER INFORMATION SHEET

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYWRIGHT       PRODUCER       DIRECTOR       COMPOSER  
 CRITIC       DRAMATURG       STUDENT

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE INCLUDE A FEW LINES ABOUT YOUR CONNECTION TO AND INTEREST  
IN JEWISH THEATRE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR THEATRES

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

THEATRE (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

WEBSITE \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to : JCCA

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 - Large theatres (over \$100,000 budget)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 80 - Mid-size theatres (over \$50,000 budget)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50 - Small theatres  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50 - Individual members  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 18 - Students

Membership is valid from January 1,2002 - December 31, 2003  
Mail form, information sheet and check (made payable to JCCA) to:

Janet Arnold  
Arizona Jewish Theatre Co.  
444 W. Camelback Road #208 • Phoenix, Arizona 85013  
Ph. 602-264-0402 • Email: azjtc@aol.com

See you in Washington in March 2003

Save the Date!  
Association for Jewish Theatre  
2003 Conference  
March 8-11, 2003  
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