

A Message from the President

Next year in Vienna

An interesting rallying cry to say the least.



At our recent conference this past February in Phoenix, AJT member and Jewish Theatre of Austria founder and Artistic Director Warren Rosenzweig extended to all of us more than an invitation - he gave us a strong directive. Come to Vienna next spring to show your collective support for the Nestroyhof Initiative. Help rescue and restore a Jewish theatre landmark that was Aryanized in 1940 and neglected and exploited thereafter. Raise your collective voice for the rebirth of Austrian Jewish culture, and for the strength and vibrancy of European Jewish life. We listened. And we voted. And we agreed to heed his call.

Will it take some extra legwork for each of us to get to this conference? Extra finances? Extra time? Of course. But we are being presented with an opportunity that will reflect on more than just our own individual theaters and communities; it is an occasion to bring attention to Jewish theatre and Jewish culture worldwide. And we in the Association for Jewish Theatre are uniquely positioned to do this. Additionally, this will be the first time that an AJT Conference has been held anywhere other than North America. It will be a wonderful gesture by those of us in the US and Canada to make that trek across the ocean, as our fellow AJT members in Europe and Israel have done on so many occasions in order to be with us in the past.

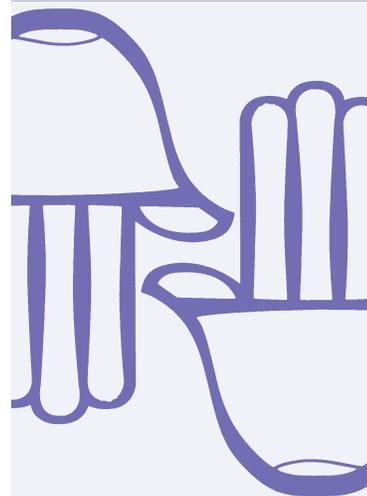
Warren Rosenzweig and his Jewish Theatre of Austria would seem to be impossibilities. Oxymorons. Living contradictions. Misplaced relics from the past. But they are real and they are present. And hopefully, they are future. Founding a "Jewish Theatre of Austria" is either an act of great naiveté or an act of bravery. I know Warren quite well. He is not naïve.

Let's all be brave.
Let's go to Vienna.
We have so much to learn.
And so much to share.
I can't wait to see you all there...

—Mira Hirsch

association
for jewish
theatre

Summer 2006



AJT

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MALAMUD AND PALEY, WORD FOR WORD

BY AARON DAVIDMAN

At the last AJT conference in Phoenix I gave a short report about a new work Traveling Jewish Theatre has produced in the Word for Word style. Here is a summary of the project.

Family Alchemy: Malamud and Paley Stories on Stage marks Traveling Jewish Theatre's return to two authors who made a significant impact on American Jewish culture throughout the 20th Century. Grace Paley and Bernard Malamud, each master of their crafts, have delighted readers for decades with their prose. Staging original short stories by remaining faithful to the letter—presenting it “word-for-word”—is a theatrical form that audiences have grown accustomed to here in San Francisco. The critically acclaimed and inventive theatre company called Word for Word has explored short stories over the last decade by a diverse group of authors like Tobias Wolf, Amy Tan, and Michael Chabon to name a few, and has collaborated with a number of local theatre companies, including TJT.

Through our collaborations with Word for Word we discovered the inherent theatricality of a number of short stories by both Bernard Malamud and Grace Paley. The first evening produced in 1999 consisted of Malamud's *The Jewbird* and Paley's *Goodbye and Goodluck*. The second evening produced in 2003 was called *Windows and Mirrors* and explored Paley's *Wants and Conversations With My Father*, Malamud's *Spring Rain* and the almost expressionistic story *Finkelsteins Fingers* by the German writer Maxim Biller. Each of those evenings were collaborations with Word-for-Word, directed by their members and/or performed by a combination of TJT and W4W actors. Most recently we produced *Family Alchemy* on our own, though it was directed by a long-time Word for Word collaborator Joel Mullennix. This evening consists of *Mother* and *The Story Hearer* by Grace Paley and Bernard Malamud's classic *The Magic Barrel*.

Audiences love this form and the critics have praised our treatment of the texts. To be clear, this is not story-theatre, though every “he said and she said” remains. The text is divided up in the first days of rehearsal. We look for which character can activate the line beyond just “reporting.” That is, who can illuminate something about the character by saying the text. That character gets the

line. At the end of the day we wind up with a text shared among the company of actors (four actors in *Family Alchemy* playing multiple parts in different stories). Sometimes sentences are broken up and spoken by successive voices. Sometimes multiple characters share a whole line in unison. The best way I can describe this form to someone who hasn't seen it is to say that the character embodies the narrative. He or she doesn't so much “narrate” the story as much as reveal their inner thoughts, unless the prose is particularly narrative, like in Grace Paley's *Story Hearer*. In this instance Naomi Newman plays the central character who tells the audience a story within which other characters emerge. Her character steps in and out of “scenes” as the narrative progresses. But the performer is charged with the task of making the text live on stage. While it's a challenge to learn the text, there is such delight in speaking the rich language of these literary masters.

Some folks wonder what is to be gained by presenting fiction in this way. First, when we read a story more than once, we get so much more out of it. The experience of the narrative deepens because we get to know the story better. By watching a story brought to life on stage it's as if we've read it maybe ten times. Why? Because the performance company has read it fifty times and has made choices in every line that opens up the text and brings out nuance. The audience can sit back and enjoy the Technicolor experience. Second, reading fiction is normally a private, solitary affair. Yet many of us have such passion for literature that we love to talk about the books we read in an attempt to share the experience with others. How delightful to be able to enter the story together in the theatre. We all know traditional plays offer this experience. At TJT we're pleased with the effect that offering short story in such a manner has had on the realm of shared experience in our community.

Aaron Davidman is the Artistic Director of Traveling Jewish Theatre. More information about this work can found at www.atjt.com.

PRODUCERS TACKLE TOUGH ISSUES

BY KATHLEEN SITZER

About 20 participants in the Producers' Affinity Group tackled a number of tough issues at this year's conference in Phoenix. Sitting in a circle in the sun in the warm February air was a pleasant way to approach a discussion of a variety of shared issues and concerns.

The first topic was royalties. It appears that the licensing organizations are beginning to crack down on producers and the charging of professional royalties is becoming much more common. Whereas the "amateur" rates are a fixed fee per performance, the "professional" rates of 5-10% of gross can be much more of a burden for the producing company. Some negotiation is possible but it's never clear cut. Much of this has to do with the definition of "professional." While many of us that are not Equity companies do use Equity actors on special contracts, we do consider ourselves professional as opposed to being community theatres.

This was followed by an extended discussion about the challenges of collaborations. Although there were many takes on the topic, the bottom line was really pretty simple with three dictums coming out of the discussion: 1) write it ALL down, 2) be VERY specific and 3) work with someone you like. More often than not, the two (or more) producing entities are not line for line comparable. This certainly makes for disparities of budgets and raises many questions of who is responsible for what. Consequently, it is essential to have very detailed and frank discussions as well as budgets. In-kind options should be taken into consideration for each group with dollar values attached to each. The same considerations apply to co-productions. The biggest advantage for all involved is that collaborations and

co-productions make any production more grant worthy and can assist in building audiences as well as adding PR value - especially from the multi-cultural perspective. Generally speaking, the benefits of collaborations are worth the hassles if you can handle it.

After getting through that difficult issue, we moved on to something, much more pleasant, albeit not simple. In a nod to our Playwright members, we discussed the possibility of trying to put together an American Jewish Theatre Festival in one venue. Several options were mulled over. One was a 10 Minute Festival in one location with a single theme. Another was to have each theatre commission a 10 minute piece to be produced at a festival. Although no consensus was reached, a sub-committee to continue to develop this concept was established. Members are Mira Hirsch, Deborah Baer Mozes, Evelyn Orbach and Warren Rosenzweig. In the meantime, many of the producers will be looking more closely at work of our member playwrights.

The final topic of board development did not stop at development. How to get board members involved and active, how to increase contributions, how to develop fundraisers were all thrown into the pot. But time was running short. Bottom line on this topic was that Board members want to know specifics of what to do and what you expect of them.

So in this brief session, serious issues were addressed and much good information was shared.

Kathleen Sitzer is the Artistic Director of New Jewish Theatre in St. Louis, MO.



Edward Einhorn and Mira Hirsh reading a scene from the anthology "Nine Contemporary Jewish Plays" edited by Ellen Schiff and Michael Pasnick



Sally Hogan and Amber Robins dancing "The Attic" from "The Anne Frank Project", choreographed by Fran Cohen.

FOR AJT WRITERS: WRITE, SUBMIT, DON'T KVETCH

BY HINDI BROOKS

Last year at the New York conference, a small group of the attending writers dealt with their frustration in getting their work seen by AJT theatres. And that's where it ended - frustration. This year in Phoenix - same issue. But a totally different result.

The conference started with a recital of what the AJT theatres had produced in the preceding year and what the plans were for productions to come. We sat in a circle - producers and writers. The producers recited. The writers sat in quiet desperation. Why? Not one of the writers there was mentioned. Not one of our plays was listed. It was as if we weren't there.

But on the following day, when we separated into two groups - writers and producers - We, the writers, were not silent. We started the meeting by voicing our disappointment. Why didn't any of the producers mention us or our plays? Why are so many of them mounting the New York favorites - *Brooklyn Boy*, *The Chosen*, etc?

The beginners among us had little or no understanding of the financial needs of the theatres. The seasoned writers did understand, but were still disappointed.

When we finished kvetching, Laurie Braun, who was chairing the meeting, led us in some positive thinking. What could we do to change the situation? We came up with several suggestions. Some implausible, some with possibilities. We finished the meeting ready to do battle in the combined meeting that was to follow.

We marched into that meeting - ready to present our ideas and to fight for them. And found out that we and the producers were in sync. They understood our frustration. And they agreed with our main proposal. If writer members added to their scripts and the envelopes in which they sent them a declaration that they were AJT members, their scripts would go to the top of the "to read" files. No promises of production. But a step closer to it.

And many of the producers protested some of our findings. They had produced AJT writers. They wanted to do more.

When I got home, I e-mailed the AJT producers and asked them: What had they produced from AJT writers? Which writers? I got positive answers from Theatre Ariel, Arizona Jewish Theatre Company, Jewish Theatre of the South, Winnipeg Jewish Theatre and Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company. Each of these has produced and is producing plays by current and past AJT writers.

Theatre Ariel is committed to new works by AJT writers, mostly from PA. (However, they did my non-PA play, *In Spite of Everything*, and then got it published by Dramatic Publishing.) Theatre Ariel is currently touring two AJT plays. Their reading series has included other plays by AJT members.

Arizona Jewish Theatre Company has produced and had readings of several AJT plays. They found these writers through AJT!

Jewish Theatre of the South has produced plays for adults and children by past and current AJT writers. They are particularly interested in children's plays. Jewish children's plays - written by Jewish AJT members.

Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company premiered an AJT writer's play last fall. And is interested in more. Winnipeg Jewish Theatre has produced 2 children's plays as a direct result of an AJT conference. Also WJT produced 4 mainstage plays by AJT playwrights, most of which were newly commissioned plays.

But they aren't the only ones. In 2004-2005, AJT printed a survey on all the AJT theatres and how and what to submit to them. It's called PLAY SUBMISSION DATA FOR MEMBER THEATRES OF AJT. Copies of it were available at the Phoenix conference. I'm sure you can get a copy through our Playwrights Representative, Aaron Schloff <aaron@schloff.com>, who compiled it.

We are now including the names of playwrights who are AJT members in the theatre's upcoming season listings.

So enough kvetching. Get your material out there. And good luck.

AN AJT PLAYWRIGHT'S BLUES

By BARBARA TRAININ BLANK

As a relatively new playwright and relatively new member of AJT who attended the conference in New York, but not in Phoenix, and lives in relative geographic isolation from other individual members and member theaters, I feel a bit "presumptuous" writing this.

On the other hand, a member is a member. Permit me to "think aloud" a little, having received the go-ahead (thank you, Norman) to submit a "playwright's blues" about what AJT has been providing and can potentially provide, in lieu of a newsletter article.

Though I'm not sure how this would play out, it would seem that a closer bond could be forged among playwrights and between them and member theaters. Although theaters have to consider the bottom line and audience retention, perhaps there are ways for them to encourage the commis-

sioning of new plays and the production of both these and existing plays by member playwrights. Certainly, if a member playwright writes to a theater, that playwright might expect a hasty reply, even if his/her play is not accepted.

Perhaps there is a way playwrights can strengthen formal or informal ties among themselves, either through face-to-face meetings or e-mail communication.

It would seem that one of the purposes of AJT is to encourage such relationships and communication. If activities are going on of which I'm not aware, please forgive me for not knowing and for writing what I've written. I'd love to hear feedback from playwrights and theaters. Thanks for hearing me out, and all the best in your creative endeavors.

B'hatzlachah!

WHAT'S NEW IN JEWISH THEATRE IN CANADA

By KAYLA GORDON

Just released.....

Modern Jewish Plays - 6 plays about Israel - Edited by Jason Sherman

"Jews are modern people. On every subject we are rational, we are children of enlightenment. Except. about Jews." *Masada*, by Arthur Milner



SIX PLAYWRIGHTS
"You are sovereign. You are the one who thinks, feels, decides and kills."

The Murder of Isaac
by Motti Lerner,
(AJT member)
translated by Miriam Shlesinger

SIX TAKES ON
ISRAEL
"I'm going to do my best to save your skin. But I need

your help. I need you to tell me what you really did during the war."

The Trials of John Demjanjuk: A Holocaust Cabaret, by Jonathan Garfinkel (AJT member)

FROM THOSE WHO'VE BEEN THERE

"At least I was still in Israel and no matter how hopeless and bloody the country gets, simply being in Israel still counts for something back here among the folks who aren't."

Hand in Hand, by Simon Block

THOSE WHO LIVE THERE

"I'm treating you with respect. I only beat you up because I thought you were a Jew. One of those bleeding-heart leftists from the Theatre Department."

Shooting Magda (The Palestinian Girl), by Joshua Sobol

AND THOSE WHO DON'T

"There are no answers, Nathan. Only positions. What's yours?"

Reading Hebron, by Jason Sherman (AJT member)

It's a great book - fabulous plays and a great "Outro" (instead of an introduction) by Jason Sherman.

The publisher is Playwrights Canada Press.
www.playwrightscanada.com.

AJT CONFERENCE NEXT YEAR IN VIENNA

By WARREN ROSENZWEIG, JEWISH THEATRE OF AUSTRIA

CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH THEATRE IN VIENNA, MARCH 20 TO 23, 2007

TIKUN OLAM
FESTIVAL OF INTERNATIONAL JEWISH THEATRE IN VIENNA AND GRAZ, MARCH 18 TO 26, 2007

The decision to hold the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Theatre in Vienna in March 2007 is a decision to contribute greatly to an exciting cultural cause in Europe and one that concerns the future scope of international Jewish theatre.

I am honored for the opportunity to act as host for the upcoming conference in the culturally and historically unique setting of Vienna, where we will also enjoy the cooperation of a large team of international associates and professional partners. The compact program will include distinguished keynotes and many of the usual favorites: roundtable and affinity group discussions, playwright's forum, solo performances, international workshops, and much more. At the same time, the Jewish Theatre of Austria is proud to offer a dynamic schedule of special events of outstanding creative merit and pronounced social significance for our AJT membership as well as for the general public.

I am grateful for the strong support of the AJT Executive Board and the many other AJT members who, at the final plenary session of our inspiring and marvelously organized conference in Phoenix last March gave their unanimous assent on behalf of this challenging plan.

Since late 2001, the Jewish Theatre of Austria has been working to establish a year-round festival of international, intercultural performances that center on contemporary Jewish experience in the former Jewish Theatre in Oscar Marmorek's "Nestroyhof". As is now widely known, this masterpiece of Jugendstil architecture was "Aryanized" in 1940. But the site of the Jüdische Künstler spiele from 1927 until shortly after the Anschluss is no longer threatened by further destruction or neglect. It is finally clear that this stolen Jewish theatre - a jewel of Austrian cultural heritage - must be restored as a theatre again. It *will* be a theatre again.

The question now is will it be an "*international Jewish*" theatre, as the Jewish Theatre of Austria has persistently advocated for years (www.nestroyhof.org). In answer to what Ari Roth has described as a "rallying call," we are about to partake in the repair of a broken piece of Western European culture.

The core conference program will be focused and yet rich in its diversity and quality, while selected parts of the program will also be accessible to the general public in 2007. Some of the many public highlights of the conference will include, for example:

A street theatre tour of the historic ghetto district once known as the "Judenstadt", "What is International Jewish Theatre" - a two-part discussion with artistic directors, playwrights, and performers from around the world, a lecture by Israeli Playwright Motti Lerner on "The Politics of Jewish Theatre", a talk with the children of the founding directors of the Jüdische Künstler spiele of the Nestroyhof, a public press conference...and more.

There will also be numerous extras, including several sponsored meals and receptions, sightseeing, and music events. This will be a particularly exciting occasion for playwrights and producers, who will have the chance to meet, exchange, and network with many new colleagues from across the globe. During the conference, members will receive free passes for seating at all events of the Jewish Theatre of Austria's concurrent "Tikun Olam Festival of International Jewish Theatre" that is presently planned to include productions from Israel, North America, Europe, and Russia. Most performances will be presented in English, while others will be supported by translation, as needed.

Hotel accommodations will be quaint, comfortable, and centrally located, and will include kosher Viennese breakfasts. We are already lucky to have the participation of several distinguished key partners, including diplomatic cultural representatives from numerous countries and the cooperation of some of Vienna's most highly respected venues. We will also enjoy the generous assistance of a variety of other prominent local hosts. Finally, several extraordinary international artists and performance groups have already expressed their eagerness to join us in Vienna.

As a result of this broad show of support and the many commitments that we already have, I anticipate that the (average) total cost of participation for our North American membership (including travel, conference fees, hotel, and meals) will likely compare with the average cost of participation recently in Phoenix.

Heal what is injured that it may begin again renewed. As a conference participant in Vienna in March 2007, you will make many new international contacts and will share in a one-of-a-kind cultural and theatrical experience. As a member of the Association for Jewish Theatre, your participation will echo an ancient, founding principle of civilization: "Tikun Olam - Repair the World".

PROPOSALS/SUBMISSIONS

AJT Members are encouraged to submit solo performance proposals and other proposals for the conference. Please send proposals by email to Deborah Baer Mozes at dbm@netreach.net and Jorghi Pol at jorghi.pol@jta.at.

To participate in the Playwright's Forum, member playwrights should kindly send to Norman Fedder at fedder@ksu.edu

To submit a proposal for the "Tikun Olam Festival of International Jewish Theatre", please send a short query or outline by email to Warren Rosenzweig at wr@jta.at.

Snail mail (DVDs or videos):
Jewish Theatre of Austria
Rossauer Gasse 4
1090 Vienna, Austria

NOTE: Do not send any original copies of physical material or material that you want returned. Please include an email address or a self-addressed post card (without postage) for notification of receipt.

Information on hotels and registration should be out some time this fall. Please make sure we have your current email and address information.

You can email her at k-gordon@shaw.ca, with any recent changes.

9 CONTEMPORARY JEWISH PLAYS, EDITED BY ELLEN SCHIFF AND MICHAEL POSNICK BY NORMAN J. FEDDER

What a simcha it was for me to enjoy this variegated and invigorating anthology of selections from the numerous plays that the National Foundation for Jewish Culture has encouraged American professional theatres to develop and produce through its "New Play Commissions in Jewish Theatre." And so well accomplished by our own Ellen and Michael!

God of Vengeance by Donald Margulies revivifies, in a 1920's New York City setting, Sholem Asch's Yiddish drama about a Jewish brothel owner who hopelessly attempts to achieve religious redemption by marrying off his daughter to a Torah scholar.

Nora Glickman bases *A Certain Raquel* on the Yiddish letters of a prominent Argentine prostitute in the early twentieth century, dramatizing her successful struggle against the deception and exploitation by white slave traffickers of immigrant Jewish women.

Elise Thoron's *Green Violin* explores - in drama, song, and dance - the creative relationship between the legendary Soviet Yiddish actor, Solomon Mikhoels, and the renowned Russian Jewish painter, Marc Chagall, whose paintings were the inspiration of Mikhoels' unique theatre art.

Ari Roth's *Life in Refusal* is about a woman academic's ambiguous relationship with Soviet refuseniks and her Jewish/Russian heritage.

See Under: Love by Corey Fischer reshapes into phantasmagoric drama the holocaust novel of Israeli, David Grossman, where good and evil inexplicably interchange in the soul of humanity to both its destruction and redemption.

In *The Action Against Sol Schumann*, Jeffrey Sweet brings to the stage the excruciating dilemma of the children of a holocaust survivor, who has been a wonderful father and pillar of society, when it is revealed that he had been a sadistic concentration camp kapo.

Motti Lerner's *Exile In Jerusalem*, laments the pitiful condition of two refugees from Nazi Germany in the holy land - one a scholar/critic, the other the "greatest German poet of the twentieth century," Else Lasker Schuller - bereft in this (to them) alien country of their language, audience, and income.

In *Asher's Command*, Marilyn Clayton Felt deftly renders the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians by focusing on the complex personal relationship between an Israeli general and a Palestinian auto mechanic in connection with a tragic encounter between Jewish settlers and Arab villagers.

Finally, in *The Last Seder*, Jennifer Maisel utilizes the traditional family celebration of freedom from bondage as a catalyst for a wife, four daughters, and their significant others - of conflicting temperaments and relationships - to come to terms with the mental disintegration of their husband and father.

Kol ha-kavod to Ellen and Michael!

WHITE FIRE: JEWISH THEATRE AND THE MIDRASH

BY EDWARD EINHORN

According to the Zohar, The Torah was written with black fire upon white fire. The black fire is the written word. The white fire is midrash. The midrashim are commentaries, sometimes in the form of laws and interpretations, and very often in the form of aggadic midrash—stories that expand on the writings. For example, The Haggadah, as you can tell from the name, is one long aggadic midrash. It also is part of a long tradition that stretches into contemporary Jewish theatre—exploring the world of ideas through storytelling.

The Hebrew word *drash* means, literally, to seek, so a midrash is a seeking of sorts. It is a seeking for answers, a seeking for insights, and ultimately a seeking for even more questions. Midrashim often don't agree—they are there to inspire discussion, but never provide a final answer, because a new midrash can always be written that says the opposite of the last.

There is something pre-postmodern about a midrash. Postmodernism takes everything, from pop culture to ancient literature, and uses all these sources to comment on each other. Midrash is a commentary that makes the ancient stories relevant to contemporary life.

I work a lot with midrash, in my theatre. Sometimes I comment directly on the Bible, or even on the midrashim that already exist in the Talmud. Sometimes I comment on the legends that exist in Judaism. Sometimes I comment on Shakespeare, or the *Wizard of Oz*, or whatever intrigues me about a noteworthy work of literature. It is not uncommon to do so, in theatre nowadays. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is a midrash of sorts about *Hamlet*, and *Wicked* is a midrash on the *Wizard of Oz*.

Of course, these plays are not written exclusively by Jews (though interestingly, Tom Stoppard is Jewish and so is Stephen Schwartz, one of the main creative voices behind the musical). But I find it a particular appealing and relevant approach to bring to Jewish subjects.

My recent book of plays, *The Golem, Methuselah, and Shylock*, contains four midrashim, of sorts. *Golem Stories* is not only a midrash on the ancient legend, but it also uses and comments on midrashim (which the Rebbetzin tells) throughout the text.

The Living Methuselah is a more straightforward midrash, riffing on the Biblical characters of Methuselah and Serach, the two longest lived people in the Bible. *A Shylock* comments, of course, on the *Merchant of Venice*, and *One-Eyed Moses and the Churning Red Sea* is a more traditional midrash again.

What they all try to do is examine an idea that lies buried within the original story. Theatre is best when it challenges people's ideas, and often those ideas come from the stories and traditions of the culture. What better way to examine the entrenched, almost unconscious assumptions that we all make, then to examine the stories that those assumptions originate from? What better way to both celebrate and question, two things that so near to the heart of both theatre and Jewish thought?

When I was writing *A Shylock*, I realized that though what I wanted to say something about *The Merchant of Venice* might be original, the idea to write a midrash about it was far from new. I saw two productions based on the character, and read about many more. What better way to deal with such a thorny character, one that may not have been written by a Jew, but has been so intertwined with Jewish identity over the years? What better way to simultaneously acknowledge both the anti-Semitism and the oddly sympathetic speeches Shylock is given to say?

I also came across something called bibliodrama. Peter Pitzele came up with the idea some years ago, and it has become a well liked way to study the bible. Here, the participants improvise a drama on the spot, role playing the roles of the men and women who appeared in the Bible, imagining them in alternate scenarios, and coming to understand the characters and the Bible in a completely new way.

What else is a Purim spiel but a dramatic midrash about the *Book of Esther*? Taken in its original form, the *Book of Esther* can be disturbing at times. Without midrash, we would be left with a story in which, for one thing, a woman is punished for not dancing on her behest of her drunk, unreasonable husband. Midrash makes it possible to change that portrayal, to comment on the portrayal, and yet to preserve what is interesting and relevant about the Megillah today.

In the end, I would argue, most theatre has an element of midrash to it. No play can exist in a vacuum. Every play must in some way acknowledge the wealth of what has come before, and in acknowledging that, its story in some way comments on the stories that already exist, both ancient and modern.



Phoenix Conference
Hope Ozer, editor/
publisher of "Tatum
Sun Times" and Mark
Stanton of Mark
Stanton Public
Relations speaking on
"21st Century Marketing
and PR on a Shoestring
Budget"

ISRAEL ZANGWILL: THE FATHER OF MODERN JEWISH DRAMA

BY NORMAN J. FEDDER

Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) is remembered as British Jewry's renowned novelist and leader of the Jewish Territorial Organization. However, less is known about his considerable achievement as a playwright on the West End and Broadway.

Of particular significance are the three plays he wrote about Jewish life, the well-received productions of which did much to dispel the negative image of the "Stage Jew" then prevalent - while exploring religious, ethnic, and social issues that remain relevant to this day. Anticipating the great Yiddish playwrights of the early twentieth century - such as Anski, Asch, Hirshbein, Pinski, and Leivick - Zangwill might rightly be called, "The Father of Modern Jewish Drama."

In *From the Ghetto to the Melting Pot: Israel Zangwill's Jewish Plays* (Wayne State University Press, 2006), Edna Nahshon has produced a well researched and much needed collection - with ample information on the production history of the plays and incisive critical commentary. We owe to her the discovery and publication of the presumably lost manuscript of *Children of the Ghetto* and the original versions of *The Melting Pot* and *The King of Schnorrers*.

Along with providing a rich portrait of nineteenth century Jewish life in London's East End, *Children of the Ghetto* (1899), based on Zangwill's popular novel with the same title, provides a telling conflict between an Orthodox rabbi and his free thinking divorced daughter over her wish to marry a Cohen, forbidden by Jewish law:

HANNAH: . . . Let us have done with Jewish law. This must be a break, a complete break, don't you see, dear? All this ceremony - it has always coiled stifflingly round my soul - we must break away from it all. Must we not eat bread on board [the ship we escape to America on] instead of Passover cakes? Yes, we have kept our last Passover. This is our Exodus - we go out towards a free new life. . . . [to herself] And yet . . . when I look at the peaceful Passover table with its quaint dishes, I almost see [the Angel of my childhood faith] hovering over it. . . Ah, why is religion so cruel? Why is this terrible alternative forced upon me - to stab my parents or David.

In *The Melting Pot* (1908), the Jewish violinist hero eloquently champions the United States as the crucible in which persecuted refugees like himself, a survivor of the Kishineff Pogrom, will leave behind the inter-ethnic enmities endemic to their European origins and "melt" into one prejudice-free people. The success of the production turned its title into a metaphor for the American immigrant experience:

DAVID: America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand . . . in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatred and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to - these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians - into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.

Based on another of his popular novels, *The King of Schnorrers* (1925) is an hilarious comedy dramatizing the triumphs in chutzpah of the Sephardic beggar, Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo Da Costa, against the Jewish establishment - both Ashkenazic and Sephardic:

MANASSEH: . . . A *schnorrer*! . . . Ay, I should have said [I am like] one of these [other beggars]. But (*with withering contempt*) they are unworthy of the poverty with which the Almighty has blessed them. Godless grovellers, was it for this that the Almighty ordained that the poor shall never cease out of the land? Do you not know that without the poor to give charity to, the rich would never get to Paradise, that each poor man is a rung in the Jacob's ladder by which the rich man may mount to Heaven? . . . *Schnorring* is the only occupation that is regular all year round. Everything else may fail - the greatest commercial houses may totter to the ground; as it is written, "He humbleth the proud." But the *schnorrer* is always secure. Whoever fails, there are always enough left to look after *him*.

I met Edna - a leading scholar of Jewish Theatre and a Professor of Hebrew at the Jewish Theological Seminary - as she was about to embark on this ambitious project; and I applaud her now on the occasion of her completing it, recovering so successfully for our knowledge and enjoyment such a literary and Judaic treasure!



Stephanie Satie performing "Refugees" as part of the Solo Performer's Showcase at the Phoenix Conference

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

By ROBBIE GRINGRAS

You see, it all begins with Mohammed.
Not the prophet... The baker.
Mohammed the baker. This guy that I met...
What happens next?

It's a question any storyteller is desperate for the audience to be asking itself. But at the same time it's a question that I as a writer and performer ask myself before, during, and after the creation of every new show. After the performance - the next day, next week, next year - how will my show have affected the behavior of the audience, its beliefs, the way it lives? What happens next? After I have performed this show, what kind of job offers am I likely to receive, what festival will invite me, what theatre will I play, what might my income be? What happens next?

I have always romanticized those artists who don't play the "what happens next" game - those true artists who just stick with their own internal integrity. Their show may or may not strike a political chord, change lives, make a million bucks - but it's a case of luck or cosmic positioning, and not as a result of a conscious effort on the part of the artist. And hey, if the artist ends up poor and unappreciated, that's just the way it goes. At least they are true to their vision.

When I sat down to write "The Situation Comedy" that I realized that all of the shows I'd created over my sixteen years in the business had always been influenced by the "what happens next" consideration. Recently, I had toured extensively with a play that challenged the role of women in Judaism through the Talmudic tragedy of Bruriah as well as a solo show that had exposed the pain and violence of Israel's secular-religious strife. It wasn't as if my past shows had always been cheerful. It wasn't as if I was the community's yes-man. "The Situation Comedy," though, was something else. Writing it taught me what it really meant to be "true" to a vision, and to hell with the consequences.

To be honest, I'd been trying to avoid writing a show about the Israel-Palestine conflict for two years. "The Situation" as it had come to be known - the oppression of Palestinians, the suicide bombings, the pain and terror of everyday life in our region - was a subject that kept screaming in my veins, and that I tried desperately to dodge. After ten years of living in Israel I had nothing wise to teach, I certainly had nothing commercial to sell - all I saw when I looked into the topic was a howling black hole that gave me the shivers. But I couldn't escape it.

When I started writing, we in Israel had just lived through a crazy month, leading up to the violence of Pesach 2002. Over 100 people had been blown up in suicide bombings throughout the country, culminating in the blood-curdling attack on a communal Seder at the Hotel Park in Netanya. It was a terrible time. From the small to the large, from the way in which one phoned home more often when in town, took more taxis than buses, said a warmer thank you to security guards, our daily lives had changed.

It had become impossible even to mourn bombing victims properly, since one knew that the next attack was following fast around the corner. The radio stations had run out of sad songs to play every other day, as we Israelis tuned in every half-hour for our death-fix of the news. And more and more we found ourselves readjusting the circle of our existence, adapting sophisticated economic jargon to our emotional state: "How am I? Macro or micro? On the micro level, the kids are fine..."

The BBC World Service once asked me whether I had begun writing the show for "therapeutic" reasons. It was only in answering that I realized my purposes had perhaps been, if anything, *anti*-therapeutic. I was driven to create the show not in order to process the pain, nor necessarily to understand it. I had sat down at the computer in order to try to *feel* the pain. The only way to survive day-to-day life in Israel had seemed to be to muffle the cries. In our house at least - and I know we weren't alone - we'd begun turning off the TV with news of bombings. We'd stopped listening to the broadcasts of choked eulogies by friends and families of the deceased. The only way to stay alive, it seemed, was to work very hard at ignoring the death all around. It had begun to suffocate me. Not out of masochism, but out of respect for the victims and their loved ones, I needed to delve into the pain.

And so for the first time in my professional life I found myself beginning to write with the brakes off. Like driving down a winding mountain road (we have lots of these where I live in the Galilee, so the image kept cropping up) with your foot only on the gas. Exhilarating, powerful, and somewhat suicidal. I began

to create a show that demanded loyalty only to my sick screaming vision of a one-man tragic comedy about a suicide bombing.

I was looking for the laughter of shame. What if a clown tried to imagine how a baker might become a suicide bomber? What if this innocent baker has his house demolished - by accident?

YOSSI: [*clambering over the rubble*] Hold it right there, terrorist!

MOHAMMED: But I'm not a terrorist. I'm a baker.

YOSSI: Says here you're a terrorist.

MOHAMMED: Noooo...Next door. Next door! Mohammed the Terrorist? Next door. I'm Mohammed the Baker. ..You just knocked my house down...

YOSSI: Ooops. Sorry about that...

CLOWN NARRATOR: And then the next morning, Mohammed receives a letter.

Official Army notepaper: "Dear Mohammed the Baker. We the Israeli Army would like to apologize for the accidental demolition of your home. We are terribly sorry, and it won't happen again..."

Could we laugh at that? Could our laughter express our shame, or would it deny it?

I was looking for the laughter of pain. I envisioned a clown telling the tale of the bombing itself: of how Mohammed the Baker, explosives belt strapped around his waist, tries to get on a crammed bus. He doesn't take into account the traditional push and shove of Israelis standing in line.

CLOWN NARRATOR: He puts his foot up onto the crammed bus but the driver yells out, "Full up! Fuck off!" [presses button] The doors close [*whoosh!*], smacking Mohammed [*smack!*] on the forehead, and he falls, cracking his head on the sidewalk [*crack!*]. Mohammed is out cold. But the driver notices! "Casualty in the field!" he cries, and jumps out of the bus to look after Mohammed. Several other people get out of the bus because they once met a doctor... Others jump off the bus just to tell the others that they're doing it wrong! And all the rest of the passengers come out, but only to watch... So when Mohammed begins to come round he finds himself entirely surrounded by over 50 well-meaning, queue-hating Israelis asking him if it hurts, and beginning. To loosen. His clothing...

QUEUE-HATING ISRAELI: Oh my God, it's an explosives belt. It's a terrorist! They run away, and Mohammed runs after them. I wondered how I might turn the whole scene into a Benny Hill sketch, together with silly music and a cartoon chase. They run round in circles, Mohammed pointing and giving chase, and a whole string of characters run from him - the fat man, the sweating man, the juggler, the elephant, the giraffe...

I imagined it all funny. Terribly, painfully, funny. I imagined a clown trapped by his own desire to make others laugh, destroyed by his search for the philosopher's stone that might conjure humor from horror. Could we laugh at him? Could the laughter be an expression of our pain, or might it belittle the pain?

These were questions I knew would only play out in a theatre, in front of an audience. I tried not to ask myself what might happen next. I tried not to imagine the damage the show might do to my career, the enemies I might make, the money I might lose, and the emotional wreck I might become. If I had, I might never have done the show.

I went full out. I worked on the script and my performance with Peta Lily, a Britain-based director who is a master in a sick kind of physical comedy. I needed her to help me be funnier than I normally am. I can be witty, but I needed to be a clown. I employed her to do battle with me, to make sure I didn't go "educational." "Oh God, I hate you for that!" she once exploded at one of my re-writes. "Stop looking for balance! This is theatre, not a fucking news broadcast. It has to be true to the character and anything else makes you a big fat liar."

And so "The Situation Comedy" turned into a solo show blending three stories into one. The Story of the Baker, where a simple baker falls into terrorism through the incompetence of the Israeli army, and with the help and encouragement of his neighbor, Mohammed the Terrorist. The Story of the Medic, where our clown unwittingly ends up giving the kiss of life to the terrorist himself. (His response: "Doh!") And The Story of the Father: After having tried, and failed, to save the terrorist's life, our clown learns that his own daughter had been at the bomb site. Still making jokes, still quipping away, he confronts a "Son of Frankenstein" forensic pathologist, and ends up having to identify the remains of his murdered daughter by only a fingernail:

CLOWN: What is that?
PATHOLOGIST: Exactly. What is it?
CLOWN: What is this, a test? It's a, it's a, it's a flake. It's an almond. It's a broken. It's a. [horror] It's a fingernail.
PATHOLOGIST: Correct! Very good...
CLOWN: It's someone's fingernail.
PATHOLOGIST: [prompting] "Someone's"?
CLOWN: Someone who's lost a fingernail. Why I am looking at this? [realization dawns] Where's my daughter? Where's my daughter!
PATHOLOGIST: [apologetically] It was a very big bomb...

The clown breaks down, while still trying to make the audience laugh.
And so it was, for the first 20-odd performances of "The Situation Comedy": This lovely clown stood in front of his audience and told them in as entertaining way as possible how his beloved daughter had been blown to pieces by a suicide bomber that he himself had kissed. Even writing this now, I'm quite appalled by the idea. But at the time I knew I couldn't write anything else. The extremes of atrocity and absurdity had to be as intertwined on the stage as I felt they had become in real life.

The response to my performances was extreme. Audiences laughed a lot for the first half hour, and by the end were wiping away tears. After the show people talked of how they felt like they'd been beaten up. Like they couldn't breathe. Couldn't speak. That the show was too much. Excruciating. And those were the people who liked it. The more critical used words like "appalling" and "disgraceful."

In the non-Jewish world, there were critics (mainly in left-leaning publications) who couldn't accept the show's political nuance: though the show touches on the evils of the occupation, it mainly focuses on the horrors of terrorism. For some Brits this was too even-handed. As Amos Oz admonished audiences at the same festival in Edinburgh: Europeans ridicule the simplistic morality of Hollywood movies, but they can't cope with complexity in the Middle East.

More disturbing to me was the response of the Jewish world. Some communities were brave or foolhardy enough to book the show: San Francisco was a friend, campuses around the world, Vancouver's Chutzpah Festival, and leading Jewish theaters in the States. But many educators and community leaders steered well clear. One man saw it as his duty to send group emails round the Jewish communal establishment, warning people never to book the show. Though the "P" word was never mentioned, I know that the play's sympathetic treatment of a Palestinian made me no friends.

But I believe that the show's love/hate reception was less to do with politics and more to do with the way in which the Jewish community copes with pain and shame. Sometimes it felt that the greatest opponents of my show in the Jewish educational world were immigrants from the US and UK living in Jerusalem, maybe because Jerusalem and its surroundings have paid such a dear price during this latest Intifada. Living in Jerusalem, one is far more likely to meet people who have lost loved ones, and to fear for one's own safety and that of one's children, more than in Tel Aviv, more than in the Galilee - and certainly more than in Edinburgh or New York. Given this daily reality, there are perhaps certain core questions that the heart of the Jerusalemite or perhaps any immigrant to Israel asks every moment of the day, but that the head is desperate not to hear. *Was it worth it?* whispers the heart. *Maybe moving to Israel was just a terrible mistake?* weeps the soul. The Jewish world's difficulty in facing the complexities of the Israel-Palestine conflict isn't only due to political conservatism: the problem is also spiritual.

And so in my isolation I found myself in the role I had romanticized for so long: the pure artist, who operated without asking what happens next. I felt terribly brave. And also rather lonely. I couldn't work out what had changed. As I said, it wasn't as if I had been the community's yes-man. But this show had clearly stepped over a line. Now, again, but differently than ever before, I asked myself, what do I do next? What happens next *for me*?

I could have held strong. I could have continued to blame the community for being unable or unwilling to swallow the pill I had prepared for it. Or I could have washed my hands of the community entirely, and of (my perception of) its need to face "The Situation." But too many people I respected were beginning to criticize not only my intentions, but my methods. They felt that the show itself was too cruel - in particular its ending. They felt that to expect an audience to fall in love with, and to fully empathize with, a man who subsequently loses his daughter in a terrorist attack, was too much. Emotionally, it achieved the opposite of its intention. It was like taking someone's hand to an open fire: they will pull away.

They had a point. It may well have been that after entering into the world of "The Situation Comedy" and grieving the horrific murder of the daughter, the audience had nowhere to go. As John Dewey wrote in *Experience and Education* (1938), "Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience." The final full stop of her death might have locked doors of experience shut, rather than springing them open. However much I had tried to follow my individual artistic vision to its ultimate

conclusion, in the end I realized that I was unable to leave the "what happens next?" question unaddressed.

And so I changed the ending. The daughter now lives. The clown does try to identify his daughter by a fingernail, but it turns out there has been a mistake, and it is someone else's daughter. Not the ultimate happy ending, I'll admit, but enough to allow the audience to leave on two legs, not on all fours. In the end making the decision to change the ending was quite easy. Leaving the daughter alive paradoxically allowed audiences to grieve her more. I also changed the title of the piece to "About the Oranges," less threatening, less raw than throwing the "situation" and "comedy" together in the title from the start. These decisions were part of my answer to the question "What happens next?"

With its new ending I performed the show to various Jewish educational and communal establishments throughout the world, for a grueling 24 shows in 25 days at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and at festivals, theatres, and campuses throughout North America and Britain. I even perform the show around Israel in its Hebrew translation.

I have known great moments with the show. The gig in Vancouver when the timing of every laugh and every silence fell into place like liquid. The encouragement of the social worker who counsels survivors of terror, and who applauded my attempt to break the taboo that chokes her clients. The young German man at Edinburgh who could not leave at the end because he was crying too much. The opening night in Hebrew, when the shared laughter of pain grew and grew as the show went on - deep loud cleansing Israeli laughter that reminded everyone of their commonality rather than their differences.

Rather than spoiling my "true artist" vision, I think I actually improved the show by asking the question of "what happens next?" I found that building a show's climax upon the death of a loved one had been too simple. Almost lazy. After all, even a cold objective newspaper report about victims of terror is enough to reduce a strong man to tears - so why didn't I just read them a news article? What did art have to offer that was greater than that?

But at the same time, "About The Oranges" destroyed me. It really was anti-therapeutic, as I'd joked two years previously with the BBC. There wasn't enough space between me and the character. He wasn't me, but he was close enough. I did make aliyah like the character, and I have even been offered the job he is trying for in the play. I have a daughter, and I do fear for her in this mad part of the world.

Perhaps my biggest mistake was to cast myself as the actor. Without being aware of it, I'd been driven by the "what happens next" right from the outset. I had wanted an insider to be around to answer any questions that might arise after the performance. I had wanted the audience to leave with a mixed message: On the one hand the show is about the suffering of an immigrant to Israel, but on the other hand it is performed by exactly such an immigrant. I had wanted to force the audience to face the show's challenges by enforcing its authenticity with an Israeli performer on stage. At the time, it had felt like the most natural decision in the world. But I now realize none of these were artistic reasons to cast me as the actor: They were all driven by the "what happens next."

An actor from the outside could have approached the show cleanly. He might have been able to service the text without becoming emotionally enslaved by it. Perhaps the honesty, the ambivalence, the humor and the generosity of the play might have flowed better without the tortured writer getting in the way? With myself on stage I fear that sometimes the audience is watching some form of public self-exorcism, rather than a piece of theatre. Though I myself have, thank god, not lost anyone to a terrorist attack, nevertheless I do, like all Israelis, suffer from terrorism. My nightmares and my daily fears are driven by the satanic echo of the suicide bomber's blast.

Recently the show has begun to scare me. It's come to feel like some form of a monster, demanding my blood and pain, feeding on my deepest fear and anger. I'm reminded of how an Indian poet once described the art of acting as *chakshuyajna* - visual sacrifice. I fear that sometimes this sensation of going on stage to a sacrificial altar of my own making affects the performance, damaging the experience of the audience. I know that the audience can only be liberated from the pain of the show through their own laughter. But sometimes I worry the audience members might not laugh if they notice how hard the clown is crying underneath.

Robbie Gringras is a writer, performer, and educator living in the Galilee with his wife and two kids. As writer, director, and performer his work has been seen in theaters throughout the world. He is currently touring with his new show "That's Why I'm (Still) Here." *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh) called "About the Oranges," the subject of this essay, a heartbreaking prayer for peace."

A DIRECTORY FOR ALL SEASONS

By SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

AJT's Directory of Plays of Jewish Interest for Young Audiences isn't just for kids anymore. In fact, it never was! Like the four that preceded it, the most recently updated Directory - available on the AJT Web site in June, 2006 - is packed with scripts written with young people in mind, but sure to please entire families.

Since its debut in Washington in 2003, the ever-expanding Directory has been distributed in hard copy at AJT gatherings, American Alliance for Theatre and Education national conferences, and the Bonderman Playwriting Symposium at Indianapolis's Indiana Repertory Company. It's also available electronically as an e-mail attachment and has been posted on-line since the creation of AJT's Web site at <http://www.afjt.com>. A link is provided from Drury University's USA Plays for Kids site as well, at <http://usaplays4kids.drury.edu>. Although there's been no formal survey of the Directory's impact, I've had "grapevine" reports that it's inspired inquiries, productions, and even new AJT memberships.

Individuals, theatre organizations, and publishers are welcome to suggest plays for inclusion by submitting them to me (sandyasher@earthlink.net) in the body of an e-mail or as a Word attachment. Those submitting plays are asked to consult the Directory itself for the standard format (no more than 75 words), and to limit suggestions to plays written with young audiences in mind, pre-school through high school. (*Brighton Beach Memoirs* might well be enjoyed by young audiences, but it was not written especially for them and would not qualify.)

Whether you're searching for plays for next season or playwrights to whom you might like to offer commissions, the directory contains all you need to get started: contact information for both playwrights and publishers, plus synopses of well over 100 scripts, including length, cast size, and technical requirements.

What kinds of scripts? You name it, we've got it!

There are full-length, straight plays, such as Sharyn Shipley's *The Dybbuk of B'nai Torah* and Deborah Lynn Frockt's *The Book of Ruth*.

You'll find all manner of musicals, from Frumi Cohen's comical *Frankenteen* to Hindi Brooks's biblical *Captain Noah* to

Victor Eyodus's *The Story of Esther* set in Soviet Russia.

One acts abound from skits to full programs, from small cast to huge:

David Eliet's *Magda and Joseph* asks the question "What could I have done?" and plays alone or with its companion piece, *The Spirit of Life*.

The delightfully daffy Chelmites show up in several guises, including *Capture the Moon* by Ernest Joselovitz and Michael Bagdasian, *Tales for the Rebbe's Table* by Flora B. Atkin, and my own *Wisemen of Chelm*.

Modern teenagers grapple with questions affecting their Jewish identity in Nancy Gall-Clayton's *Discovery*, Barry Kornhauser's *Stop and Small the Rosens*, Robert Caisley's *Letters to An Alien*, and my own *Today I Am*, five one-acts based on stories by Carol Matas, Lois Ruby, Jacqueline Dembar Green, and others.

You'll also see adaptations of well-loved books: Barbara Cohen's *Molly's Pilgrim*, adapted by Sandra Eskin; Lois Ruby's *Number the Stars*, adapted by Douglas W. Larche; Eric Kimmel's *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*, adapted by Linda Kaufman and Carla Silen, to name only a few.

Some of the plays listed are well-known and often produced (James Still's *And Then They Came for Me*; Cherie Bennett's *Anne Frank and Me*). Others are newer and perhaps awaiting that all-important first, second or third production before publication, among them Monica Raymond's *HIJAB*; Miri Ben-Shalom's *I Want the Whole World to See That I Can Cry*, and, yes, my own *To Life: Growing Up Jewish in America*.

So give a look for yourself, and help spread the word about the Directory - and about AJT - by sharing your copy, alerting others to the list on-line, or sending it as an e-mail attachment. It's a valuable resource, it's a recruiting tool, and it's absolutely free!

Download the directory at www.afjt.com.

ROUND-UP OF JEWISH THEATRE IN NEW YORK

By IRENE BACKALENICK

What do we have by way of Jewish theatre in New York, as summer gets under way? What are the long-running shows, the newcomers, the Broadway spectaculars, the brave little off-Broadway dramas, the present and future hits, the efforts that do not quite make it, the experiments that make theater history?

In general, this is a sparse time for Jewish productions. Several one-person shows, among them the excellent *Family Secrets* of Sherry Glaser have recently closed. But Broadway never fails. Certainly the biggest Broadway news this spring has been the staging (or rather restaging) of Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing*. This tale of a Bronx Jewish family in the Depression years is a lovely revival, which pays homage to Odets' genius and to the play's historical significance. Granted that the Bronx and/or Yiddish accents are missing, but the portrayals, particularly that of Zoe Wanamaker as the indomitable Bessie Berger, are right on target. At the moment, alas, the show is slated to close on June 11, but there's always hope of an extension or a road show. But *Bridge and Tunnel*, fortunately, enjoys a longer Broadway run—playing until July 9. This brilliant one-woman performance, with its collection of ethnic characters, began its life off-Broadway, but cried out for wider recognition. Among Sarah Jones' hilarious portrayals are Jewish characters which are sensitively treated....And though *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial* can hardly be called a Jewish play, it does deal with ethical issues, as spelled out by writer Herman Wouk and director Jerry Zaks....More clearly Jewish in feeling is Mel Brooks' hilarious *The Producers*, which goes on and on charming audiences, hopefully forever.

The Kurt Weill/Bertolt Brecht ground-breaking show, *The Threepenny Opera* plays until June 25, despite mixed reviews for this particular production. The show, which attempts to turn "Threepenny" into "Cabaret," misses the mark - despite Jim Dale's mesmerizing number which comes too late. Yet it is an opportunity to see this rarely-produced classic....*The Wedding Singer* is an energetic new musical which has its funny moments (as in one Jewish wedding scene), and offers two appealing young players in the leads. But it is disappointingly predictable, and its songs do not soar....Disappointing, too, is the new show of Lisa Kron—a Jewish Lesbian writer who has mined her family background to good effect in the past. This time around Kron focuses on allergies and family relationships, but gets too involved in

experimental staging techniques. Consequently she never delivers the emotional impact of which she is capable.

Off-Broadway has several pieces to offer, although shelf life is likely to be even shorter—depending on ticket sales and producer backing....Nonetheless, at the moment Anulla by Emily Mann is holding forth, once again digging into Nazi history. In this case the story spins around a Jewish woman who passes for Aryan in Nazi Germany. (At the Theater at St. Luke's until June 11.)....The rather tasteless and highly popular *Jewtopia*, now almost two years old, continues its solid off-Broadway run. The show deals with a gentile boy who longs to meet Jewish girls. This, for some reason, seems to be a turn-on for audiences....And Sandra Bernhard, vitriolic and compelling as ever, continues her one-woman show (*Sandra Bernhard: Everything Bad and Beautiful*) until July 9.

Upcoming off-Broadway shows are topped by the luscious Israeli performer Meital Dohan. Dohan spends most of the show semi-naked in a bathtub, while complaining bitterly of her treatment in this country. The show has its wildly funny moments, but even during its many lulls, she is something to see. Shows dates are yet to be announced....*Theda Bara and the Frontier Rabbi* is also due for a summer return run to New York. This charming tale of the one-time femme fatale of film (but really a nice Jewish girl) offers up painless, pleasant entertainment. Again, no dates yet announced.

Although the off-Broadway scene is volatile, with shows likely to close quickly, new offerings (oft-times Jewish in concept) are constantly surfacing. It is best to check out such New York publications as "The Village Voice" and "Time Out."

And even when the shows are not specifically Jewish, the Jewish presence is pervasive. Consider such writers and composers as Richard Greenberg, Herman Wouk, Adam Guettel (Richard Rodgers' grandson), Neil Simon, Richard Adler, Mel Brooks, Jonathan Larsen, Stephen Sondheim, Kurt Weill, Rebecca Feldman, Rachel Sheinkin. Their works currently light up the New York stage—and await your visit.

HIGHLIGHTS ON YIDDISH THEATRE

THE DORA WASSERMAN YIDDISH THEATRE

MONTREAL, CANADA

By BEN GONSHOR

Much has been written and said about the state of Yiddish language and culture in the world today. Is it dying, dead, is there a future? For Montreal's Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre there's just no time to join the conversation... they're too busy.

In the latter part of the 1940's, after the decimation of the Yiddish actors and their audiences in Europe and the descent of Yiddish to the level of a patois among North American Jewry, Dora Wasserman resolved to resurrect a Yiddish theatre. This theatre has continued and evolved since its first performance in 1956 with a mission to dramatize the Jewish experience; to sustain Yiddish language and culture in Canada and around the world; and to foster intercultural understanding through the arts.

Today, The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre is stronger than ever, present as a vital reminder that the Yiddish language is "alive and well" in North America, especially in Montreal. Frequent tours of the U.S., Canada, Europe, Israel and Russia have solidified its international reputation.

In Montreal, the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre has seen tremendous critical and public success over the years, including playwright Michel Tremblay's belief that Dora Wasserman's production of his legendary *Les Belles Soeurs* was his favourite. Under the leadership of Artistic Director, Bryna Wasserman, Dora's daughter, the company continues to attract seasoned enthusiasts and newcomers alike to the Yiddish language and culture. Its productions range from classical to contemporary, from the *shtetl* to the present day, performed by a multi-cultural, community-based company. Presented in Yiddish with English and French supertitles, all the company's productions are accessible by audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

2006 has been a productive season for The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre. In March, its youth arm, Young Actors for Young Audiences (YAYA) presented *No More Raisins No More Almonds: Children's' Ghetto Songs* to over 2000 students from across the Montreal region, the vast majority of whom were non-Jews. YAYA has become a vital tool for building the next generation of both Yiddish theatre performers and audiences in Montreal.

Also in March, The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre presented its production of *Fiddler on the Roof* to the Montreal Board of Trade. The VIP evening served as a priceless

opportunity to expose nearly 300 of Montreal's business elite, many of whom had never heard of The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre, to its mandate, mission, and of course to its unique productions. The evening was an unqualified success and important relationships were established, ones that will hopefully be nurtured into support for the company going forward.

At the time of writing, the company's annual production at The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre had yet to take place. However, rehearsals were well under way for the June production of Sholem Asch's legendary drama, *God Of Vengeance*, directed by Bryna Wasserman.

In the fall of 2006, the company will embark on a tour of Europe where it will present both *God of Vengeance* as well as its 2007 production, *Those Were The Days*, the award winning musical revue by Zalmen Mlotek and Moishe Rosenfeld.

It might come as a surprise for many to see so much activity by a theatre company committed to Yiddish. However, for The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre this is all part and parcel of fulfilling the mission created by its founder, the late Dora Wasserman. And thanks to the tireless efforts on behalf of this mission by the company's members, the actors on stage, volunteers in the community, and its steadfast patrons, The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre's best years might still lie ahead.

Ben Gonshor is Director of Marketing and Communications at The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre, in Montreal.



EXCITING DAYS AHEAD FOR THE FOLKSBIENNE YIDDISH THEATRE

By ZALMEN MLOTEK

The Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre is poised to become The National Yiddish Theatre, offering more productions of classic and new work, expanded touring, a national membership campaign and soon, a true home of its own.

The Folksbiene's 91st Season opened with an encore run of the Drama Desk Award nominated *On Second Avenue* starring Mike Burstyn. Season highlights included the New York debuts of international Yiddish performers Rafael Goldwasser from Strasbourg, France in *S'Brent* and a cabaret performance from the British singer Gwendolen Burton; a concert presentation of Abraham Goldfaden's *Bar Kokhba*; a workshop of *A Night in the Old Marketplace* adapted from I. L. Peretz with a new score by Frank London of *The Klezmatics*; a return performance of *ESN: A Yiddish Cooking Show* and the world premiere of a new musical comedy *Purim in Khelm*.

The Outreach Program presented performances from Di Folksbiene Trupe throughout the New York City metropolitan area, as well as upstate New York, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. The Troupe has performed at colleges, temples, community centers, senior residences and is particularly dedicated to performing for groups of Holocaust survivors. In the process, The Troupe is serving as a training ground for a new generation of Yiddish Theatre artists.

The Folksbiene is currently rolling out a National Membership Campaign. Like many other cultural and arts organizations, the membership program will reward our supporters with access to special events, gifts and discounts at participating restaurants, museums and retailers. Our members will also have the unique opportunity to play a part in the resurgence of interest in Yiddish theatre by hosting performances in their communities throughout the country.

We are currently planning our 92nd Season which will feature five main productions. The season will open with *Di Yam Gazlonim* the Yiddish adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*. International offerings will include the American premieres of *A Zivug Fun Himl* from Israel's Yiddishpiel and *Menakhem Mendl: Der Troymer* from Der LufTeatr in France. Based on the success of the

concert presentations of *A Night in The Old Marketplace* and *Bar Kokhba*, we will offer fully staged productions next season. We will supplement our offerings with staged readings and concerts of rarely heard works. The Outreach Program will continue to bring Yiddish performances to new audiences as well as audiences who would not otherwise have access to Yiddish Theatre.

The Folksbiene is moving closer towards the goal of having a home to call their own. Plans are advancing on the construction of a new Yiddish Hoyz which will house The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring and The Forward as well as The Folksbiene. The new building will feature a state-of-the-art theater space as well as a permanent display on the history of Yiddish Theatre.

The Folksbiene has grown remarkably in the last several years: audience attendance has been consistently rising, a wider variety of productions have been offered and touring capability has been established. As a national organization with a home of their own The Folksbiene will have an added measure of stability towards ensuring that this, once in sharp decline, art form will continue to forge links between a generation of Jewish immigrants and their prospering offspring. The future looks very exciting indeed.

The current season will conclude on June 12th with "*Broadway Salutes Yiddish*", a gala concert celebrating the unique connection between Broadway and the Yiddish Stage. The concert will take place at Town Hall. The evening's honorees will include Bel Kaufman, author of *Up The Down Staircase* and granddaughter of famed Yiddish writer Sholom Aleichem. This event features many luminaries of the Broadway and Yiddish stages, including Bruce Adler, Theodore Bikel, Fyvush Finkel, Judy Kaye and Leonard Nimoy as well as original cast members from *Jersey Boys*, *Mamma Mia*, *Movin' Out*, and *The Billy Joel Band*. Please contact the Folksbiene office at 212-213-2120 if you are interested in attending this historic event or would like to place an advertisement in a special commemorative journal.

SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION WITH THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE - EAJC BY MOTTI SANDAK

The European Association for Jewish Culture EAJC announced their collaboration with and support for the All About Jewish Theatre website, www.jewish-theatre.com as of January, 2006. The award will help develop European sections of this global website in order to promote performances and provide resources for theatre professionals working in Jewish culture in Europe. An expanded directory of artists, producers and venues as well as plays, articles and other research material will be constantly collated and updated online.

Since 2002, the EAJC www.jewishcultureineurope.org has awarded over 120 grants for new works in Jewish culture to artists, playwrights, composers and filmmakers in more than 20 European countries. The performances and exhibitions commissioned and supported by the EAJC have been staged in a variety of venues ranging from opera houses, theatres, museums, galleries and international festivals to community centers in some 60 cities and towns across Europe. The most successful go on tour and many have gone on to win prizes and critical acclaim.

We are proud to announce that Prof. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett Professor of Performance Studies at New York University joined our Editorial Board, as of February 1, 2006, Her many awards include the Guggenheim Fellowship, Getty Research Institute fellowship, Winston Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University, and resident research fellowship at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. She was designated Distinguished Humanist for 2003 by the Melton Center for Jewish Studies at Ohio State University. Website: <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/web/>

Get to know all our Editorial Board Members
http://www.jewishtheatre.com/visitor/aboutUs_editorialBoard.aspx#BKirshenbl

Our new Initiative: Jewish Intercultural Performance Working Group at the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR)

The focus of this new Working Group is on the interaction between Jewish theatre practitioners and world theatre.



The goal of the Working Group is to broaden our understanding of intercultural performance; as well as of the multiplicity of Jewish cultures and their expression in theatre and performance. Subjects can be drawn from all areas of theatre - popular, experimental, canonic, as well as musical and dance theatre - without geographic, national, or temporal restraints, as long as they focus on the intersection of Jewish and other cultural elements.

Members of the group are asked to contribute short papers that will be distributed and read in advance of conference meetings, where the papers will be discussed and explored. The eventual goal of the meetings is the publication of a volume or volumes of essays on this subject. The Moderators of this Working Group are our Editorial Board Member Dr. Jeanette R Malkin e-mail: imalkin@post.tau.ac.il and Prof. Peter W. Marx e-mail: pmarx@mail.uni-mainz.de
Next meeting: Helsinki, Finland August 7, 2006 - August 12, 2006

Web: <http://www.firt-iftr.org/firt/site/workinggroups.jsp>

All About Jewish Theatre acknowledged as academic resource by University of Oxford

The Humbul Humanities Hub - a service of the Resource Discovery Network funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and hosted by the University of Oxford - has acknowledged All About Jewish Theatre as an academic resource for Undergraduate and Postgraduate/Faculty students: "The Web site, 'All About Jewish Theatre,' acts as a platform for Jewish and Israeli theatre practitioners and aims to be a central point of information on Jewish theatre and performing arts. . . . Altogether, this is a substantial and immensely valuable resource for anyone working in this field."

<http://www.humbul.ac.uk/output/full2.php?id=11050&sub=american&ref=subout&PH>

New look to All About Jewish Theatre Homepage

From January 2006 our home page got a new "look and feel". You can find 10 different sections: Cover Story, Latest News in Europe, Upcoming Events, Special Research, Production Point, Editor's choice, Photo of the week and Quote of the week, all linked to more than 50 Columns to provide a unifying environment that brings together all available information about the international world of Jewish Theatre. All About Jewish Theatre is the comprehensive and targeted coverage of the international community of Jewish Theatre and the leading source of industry news in the world. Tens of thousands of professionals, educators, students and enthusiasts stay in touch with All About Jewish Theatre to get the facts, figures and dates of what, when, where and how - in-depth coverage they haven't been able to get until now. Through All About Jewish Theatre, people worldwide have a single source for a vast array of information pertaining to all facets of Jewish Theatre, from manufacturers to consumers.

Also new - a collection of books on Jewish Theatre in All About Jewish Theatre Resource Center

On this special page you will get update information on the latest publications on Jewish Theatre and Performing Arts http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=1713

Linked directly full information and reviews on our vast Resource Center

http://www.jewishtheatre.com/visitor/resource_main.aspx

Contact us!

We would love to get your comments, ideas and suggestions for cooperating. Please contact: Moti Sandak, Director & Chief Editor by e-mail: ncmisrael@bezeqint.net or: editor@jewish-theatre.com, By mail: All About Jewish Theatre P.O.BOX 11818 Tel Aviv 61116 Israel
by Phone: 972-3-6512223, by Fax : 972-3-6512224
web: www.jewish-theatre.com



2006-2007 THEATRE SEASONS

Arizona Jewish Theatre Company

44 West Camelback #208
Phoenix, Arizona 85013
602-264-0402
janet@azjewishtheatre.org

Vilna's Got a Golem

by Ernest Joselovitz
Nov. 4-19, 2006

The Old Man's Friend

by James Sherman (AJT member)
Dec. 30-Jan. 14, 2007

Brooklyn Boy

by Donald Margulies
Feb. 17-Mar. 4, 2007

Bluish

by Janece Shaffer (AJT member)
April 14-29, 2007

Jewish Theatre of the South

5342 Tilly Mill Rd.
Dunwoody, GA 30338
770.395.2613
Mira.Hirsch@atlantajcc.org
www.jplay.org

Brooklyn Boy

by Donald Margulies
Directed by David deVries
October 18 - November 12, 2006

The Magic Dreidels

by Jenna Zark, (based on the book by Eric Kimmel)
Directed by Barbara Cole Uterhardt
December 13 - 24, 2006

Born Guilty and Peter and The Wolf (and Me)

Two Plays in Repertory by Ari Roth (AJT member)
January 24 - March 4, 2007

***Hank Kimmel's Shorts* - A World Premiere**

by Atlanta Playwright Hank Kimmel (AJT member)
Directed by Mira Hirsch (AJT member)
April 25 - May 20, 2007

Beth-El Players/Star Productions

3910 Creek Spring
San Antonio, Texas 78230
210-818-1242
lestherella@aol.com
Contact: Linda Kaufman

Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins

Linda Kaufman (AJT member) and Carla Silen
December 16-23, 2006

New Jewish Theatre

2 Millstone Campus Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63146
314.442.3175 - box office
ksitzer@jccstl.org

The Sisters Rosensweig

by Wendy Wasserstein
November 29 - December 17, 2006

Via Dolorosa

by David Hare
January 24 - February 11, 2007

Women's Minyan

by Naomi Ragen
March 14 - April 1, 2007

What's Wrong With This Picture?

by Donald Margulies
May 2 - 20, 2007

Jewish Repertory Theatre of Western New York

2640 North Forest Road Getaville, NY 14068
716-688-4114 ext. 334
marciafrankel@jccbuffalo.org

The Sisters Rosensweig

by Wendy Wasserstein
at the Andrews Theatre, 625 Main Street, Buffalo
December 7-December 31, 2006

Brooklyn Boy

by Donald Margulies
at The Alleyway Theatre, One Curtain Up Alley, Buffalo
February 22-March 18, 2007

***Mr. Benny*, a play in one-act**

starring Tim Newell
November 6, 2006 (one performance)

Theater J

Washington DC JCC
1529 Sixteenth Street NW
Washington DC 20036
202-777-3230
Rebecca@dcjcc.org

Spring Forward Fall Back

World Premiere by Robert Brustein
October 19-November 26, 2006

The Annual Arthur Tracy "The Street Singer" Endowment
Fund production

Sleeping Arrangement

World premiere by Laura Shaine Cunningham
January 9-February 18, 2007

Sherry Glaser in

Family Secrets

by Sherry Glaser (AJT member) and Greg Howells
March 7-April 15, 2007

Either, Or

World premiere by Thomas Keneally
May 2-June 3, 2007

Voices From A Changing Middle East: A Festival

June 23-July 29, 2007

Featuring:

Pangs of the Messiah

English Language World Premiere by Motti Lerner (AJT member)

Special Events:

Shlemiel the First

Based on the Play by I. B. Singer
Conceived and Adapted by Robert Brustein
October 8-13, 2006

Betty's Excellent Bat-Mitzvah Party Concert

Written and Performed by Betty
Sunday, February 25, 2007

Presented in conjunction with 6th and the City

Capathia Jenkins and Louis Rosen in

South Side Stories

Music and Lyrics by Louis Rosen

March 25, 2007

*Presented in conjunction with the John F. Kennedy Center's
"Shakespeare in Washington" Festival*

Theodore Bikel in
The Shylock Story
by Arnold Wesker
May 13-15, 2007

Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre

45 E. 33rd St.
New York, NY 10016
212-213-2120
info@folksbiene.org
www.folksbiene.org

Di Yam Gazlonim (Pirates of Penzance in Yiddish)
by Gilbert and Sullivan, Yiddish adaptation by Al Grand
October 29- November 12, 2006-05-08

A Zivug Fun Himl (A Match Made in Heaven)

A Musical Revue Starring Anat Atzmon and Gadi Yagil
by Yossi Banai, Ephraim Kishon and Itzik Manger.
Translated and arranged by Ya'akov Alperin
Directed by Shmulik Atzmon artistic director of YiddiShpiel
of Tel Aviv, Israel.
December 3-10, 2006-05-08

A Night at the Old Marketplace

Adapted from Bay Nakht Afn Altn Mark by I. L. Peretz by
Frank London, Glen Berger and Alex Aron
February 2007

Menakhem Mendl: Der Troymer

Adapted from the short stories of Sholom Aleichem by
Jean-Henri Blumen
Directed by Rafael Goldwasser, artistic director of Der
LufTeater of Strasbourg, France
March 2007

Bar Kokhba (or The Last Days of Jerusalem)

by Abraham Goldfadden
April-May 2007

Winnipeg Jewish Theatre

C402-123 Doncaster Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3N 2B2
204 - 477-7515, marla@wjt.ca www.wjt.ca

Golda's Balcony

by William Gibson
Oct. 26 - Nov. 5, 2006

Soap and Laughter - 4 new 20 minute comic pieces
by David Gale, (AJT member), Liza Balkan, Alex Poch-Goldin
and Sharon Bajer
March 14 - 18, 2007

Broken Glass

by Arthur Miller
May 5 - 13, 2007

Theatre Or

3604 Stonegate Drive
Durham, North Carolina 27705 (mailing address only)
919-306-1670
dgilboa@theatreor.org

Hard Love

by Motti Lerner (AJT member)
April 5 - 20, 2006
American Premiere Production at Victory Gardens Theatre
2257 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Wandering Jewish Theatre

444 East 82 Street
New York, NY 10028
topspeaker@yahoo.com
Brenda Shoshanna
(212) 288-0028

Where Prayers Come True

by Brenda Shoshanna (AJT member)
May 12 - 14th 2006
Performances through the month of July (2006)

Jewish Ensemble Theatre

6600 W. Maple
West Bloomfield, MI 48322
Box Office 248.788.2900
e.orbach@jetttheatre.org

Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh!

by Allan Sherman
Aug. 22 - Sept. 17, 2006
Directed by Kayla Gordon (AJT member)

Collected Stories

By Donald Margulies
Oct. 17 - Nov. 12, 2006
Directed by Gillian Eaton

Jaques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris

by Eric Blau and Mort Shuman

Nov. 28 - Dec. 31, 2006

Directed by Mark Lit

Old Wicked Songs

By John Marans

Feb. 13 - March 11, 2007

Directed by Evelyn Orbach (AJT member)

An Inspector Calls

by J.B. Priestly

April 17 - May 20, 2007

Directed by Chris Bremer

Teatron Toronto Jewish Theatre

41 Warwick Ave

Toronto ON M6C 1T7

416-751-5527

teatron@sympatico.ca

www.teatrontheatre.com

The Last Night in Ballyhoo

by Alfred Uhry

Jan. 24-28, 2007

The God of Isaac

by James Sherman (AJT member)

March 21 - 25, 2007

The Leanor and Alvin Segal Theatre

5170 Cote. Ste Catherine Rd.

Mtl, QC H3W 1M7

T: (514) 739-2301 F: (514) 739-9340

Box Office: (514) 739-7944

theatre@saidyebrofman.org

www.saidyebrofman.org

The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre Presents

Those Were the Days

by Zalmen Mlotek (AJT member) and Moishe Rosenfeld

Directed by Bryna Wasserman (AJT member)

June 3-28, 2007

Non-Jewish plays at The Leanor and Alvin Segal Theatre

Fallen Angels

by Noël Coward

October 22 - November 12, 2006

The Satchmo' Suite

by Doug Innis and Hans Böggild

In Collaboration with Eastern Front Theatre

November 19 - December 10, 2006

Amanda Plummer In

Shakespeare for My Father

by Lynn Redgrave

February 4-February 25, 2007

I Am My Own Wife

by Doug Wright

March 11 - March 25, 2007

Amadeus

by Peter Shaffer

April 29-May 20, 2007

CenterStage at the JCC of Greater Rochester

1200 Edgewood Avenue

Rochester, NY 14618

(585) 461-2000 ext 235

www.jccrochester.org

rmeranto@jccrochester.org

30th Anniversary Subscription Series

Non-Jewish plays

Urinetown, the Musical

Music by Mark Hollmann Lyrics by Mark Hollmann and Greg

Kotis Book by Greg Kotis

July 29-August 6, 2006

Ancient History

by David Ives

October 21-29, 2006

You're a Good Man Charlie Brown

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Clark Gesner

Additional Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

December 9-17 & December 28-31, 2006

***A Fine Romance*, The Songs and Stories of Jerome Kern**

February 3-11, 2007

Intimate Apparel

by Lynn Nottage

March 10-24, 2007

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

by Dale Wasserman based on the novel by Ken Kesey

May 5-19, 2007

Nephesh Theatre

P.O. Box 6195

Tel Aviv, Israel 61061

972.3.6044016

Nephesh@zahav.net.il

Einstein

By Gabriel Emanuel

It Sounds Better in Amharic

by Shari Ben Attar and Yossi Vassar

Miracles and Tragedies

by Betrice Hall

Gimple the Fool

by I.B Singer, translated by Saul Bellow

The Best of Shalom Aleichem

Theatre Ariel

PO Box 0334

Merion, PA 19066

Main 215/576-0462

dbm@netreach.net

On Tour (year round)

For Children and Families:

Dreamers, Demons and Queens: Tales from the Middle East

by Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer and Lisa Silberman-Brenner

A Musée: Journeys in American Jewish History by Louis

Greenstein

Silly Tales

Arielprov - Theatre Ariel's improv troupe

Oy! by Rich Orloff (AJT member)

Facing East: Celebrating Israeli arts and 2 Become 1:

Reflections on Interfaith Families, ensemble created

10 Imaginings of Sarai and Hagar by Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer

(AJT Member) with music by Juliet I. Spitzer

At the National Museum of American Jewish History

A MUSE in the MUSEum:

Journeys in American Jewish History by Louis Greenstein



Jewish Intercultural Performance Working Group

PLAYWRIGHT'S CORNER

PLAYS BY HINDI BROOKS

Makeover - A 10 minute comedy

An older woman who has been rejected by a makeover show sits on a park bench and throws away the coupons she would have used if she had become younger. The maintenance man tires of picking them up, berates her for littering, and then helps her to feel better about herself. 1 woman, 1 man.

Supposing Moses - A 10 minute comedy

In a theatre dressing room, a young actor preparing to audition to play Moses is confronted by the real Moses, who coaches him for the part. But Moses is not really Moses, just another actor trying to erase the competition. 2 men

Contact: Hindi Brooks - 310-450-2751

brookshindi@yahoo.com

PLAYS BY JONI BROWN-WALDERS

My Name is Evie Goldstein - a ten-minute comedy

Desperate for attention and recognition, a middle-aged Jewish woman climbs up on a freeway overpass and stops all traffic when she "moons" the drivers below. 2 women, 1 man. Simple platform set; exterior.

A Holiday Tale or How I Learned to Stop Kvetching and Love the Torah - a 20-minute comic monologue

When Marsha Geitlebaum "plants" a Christmas tree in her family's living room, her whole Jewish world erupts in a frenzy of hilarious anxiety and recrimination.

Contact: Joni Browne-Walders jonibw@hotmail.com

PLAYS BY EDWARD EINHORN

Golem Stories

Rabbi Loew creates a Golem to defend the Jews, but this Golem seems more interested in listening to the Rebbetsin's stories and falling in love with the Rabbi's daughter. Is he the reincarnated spirit of her murdered lover? Or does his childlike façade hide the face of a demon? 4-5 men, 3 women, 1 interior set.

The Living Methuselah

The world's oldest man lives through the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, slavery in Egypt and his own extremely poor judgment, thanks to his wife Serach, the world's oldest

woman. Can he even last past the end of the play? An absurdist comedy with some dancing and singing thrown in. 2 men, 3 women, 1 flexible set.

Contact: Edward Einhorn Utc61@aol.com

PLAYS BY ILANA EYDUS AND VICTOR EYDUS

Solo On Sax

Rock Ballet for Bar-Mitzvah age kids. Paula is tired of going to school. She came up with a plan to invest her Bat-Mitzvah presents, make a million, buy a condo at the beach, and retire to a life of endless parties. 4 women, 2 men, extra dancers.

Contact: Victor Eydus veydus@yahoo.com

Website: www.SoloOnSax.org

PLAYS BY NORMAN J. FEDDER

In Every Generation

A one act dramatization of the Passover seder where a contemporary family becomes the characters in the Biblical account of the Exodus from Egypt and then returns to the present to finish the seder. 4 men, women.

The Reed and the Cedar

A satirical 10 minute story theatre drama of a young rabbi's transformation from egotism to altruism with the help of the prophet Elijah. 2 men, 2 women.

Contact: Norman J. Fedder fedder@ksu.edu

PLAYS BY STEVE FIFE

Savage World

A Jewish reporter tries to put the pieces of his life back together 20 years after his biggest case - seeking justice for an African-American athlete whom he believes was framed - went tragically wrong. Little or no set, large interracial cast - at least 10 actors playing 25 roles.

This Is Not What I Ordered

Six short comic plays about dating, loneliness, and the search for love. No set beyond tables and chairs. Cast can vary from 4-14, depending on how much multiple-casting is done.

Mickey's Home

An elliptical suspense mystery about an elderly couple who reminisce about a son (Mickey) who may or may not be real, and who receive a surprise visit from a man who wants to

interview them for a book about their neighborhood - or does he? 3 actors in a simple set (the couple's front room).

God of Vengeance

Adaptation of the classic Sholem Asch drama about a Jewish brothel keeper who wants to marry his daughter to a Rabbi's son while he runs a "house" in his basement.

Contact: Steve Fife slfife@aol.com

PLAYS BY NANCY GALL-CLAYTON

General Orders No. 11

When General Ulysses S. Grant banishes Jews "as a class" from his military district on 24 hours' notice, 30 families from Paducah, Kentucky, flee upriver to Cincinnati, not knowing if they'll ever see their homes again. 3 women, 9 men, with doubling 3/6, unit set.

The Snowflake Theory

A widow seeks advice from the new rabbi when her 40-year-old unmarried daughter announces she's pregnant and her son decides to marry a shiksa and serve in Iraq. Love, Jello, Scrabble, and bagels conquer all. 3 women, 9 men, unit set.

Contact: Nancy Gall-Clayton nancygallclayton@earthlink.net

ALL STEPS NECESSARY BY MICHAEL HALPERIN

An 80 minute one-act inspired by a true incident. On November 12, 1938, two days after Kristallnacht, Hermann Göring calls a meeting of the Nazi elite who meet over coffee and pastries to determine the fate of all the Jews of Germany. During the meeting a battle of personalities rages between Göring, Goebbels and Gen. Reinhard Heydrich. 8 men 1 woman - one set interior.

Contact: Michael Halperin - 818-907-6281 - michael-halperin@sprintmail.com

FMNJ (FORMERLY MARRIED TO NON-JEWS) BY THEODORE D. KEMPER

Five stories of Jews married to non-Jews are enacted. Mark's wife's conversion does not take. Betsy's lapsed Catholic husband returns to his faith. Rob's wife rejects even cultural Jewishness. Opposing her husband, Nessa wants a Birth for her newborn son. Billy discovers she has married an anti-Semite. 3 women, 3 men, one set.

Contact: Theodore D. Kemper - 718-263-0609 - kempert@stjohns.edu

PLAYS BY LES LEITER

They'll Drive You Nuts

A Jewish widower in his mid-seventies moves into a retirement home and befriends a younger widow. Their romance infuriates the home's director, her daughters and his son, but leads to a compromise. 6 men, 4 women. Interior, 2 sets.

Hosanna Hossea

God orders Hosea, a prophet in ancient Israel, to marry a whore, Gomer, an act that will serve as a metaphor of God's relationship to Israel. Three children later, God demands Hosea expel Gomer and the children, which leads to violence and redemption. 6 men, 2 women. Interior and exterior.

Contact: Les Leiter lleiter@cox.net

PLAYS BY JANECE SHAFFER

Bluish

36 year-old Beth Richardson discovers after a lifetime of Santa Claus that she is Jewish. Her Jewish fiancé isn't thrilled like his parent's with this "wonderful" news. Beth embraces her new found identity/faith and this puts tremendous strain on her relationship with Ben, and finally asks how much change can love withstand? 2 men, 4 women, one set, interior.

Hula-Hoopin' Hannah & Her Hanukah Adventure

After being excluded by her best friend, 10 year-old Hannah is disappointed to be spending the first night of Hanukah with her Grandmother and "Martin the Martian" - the world's nerdiest fourth grader. Hannah learns the true value of family, friends and tradition when she experiences a dream in which household objects come to life, challenging Hannah to fight for her grandmother in an outlandish game show adventure. 3 men, 4 women, one set, interior.

Contact: Janece Shaffer: 404-315-7874 schnig@msn.com

PLAYS BY MARSHA LEE SHEINESS

New Times - a serious comedy in two acts

Sylvia and Eli return home from a long day's work at the flea market. It is Sylvia's 70th birthday, a special day, being treated casually, until Ritchie, their 35-year-old son, drops in unexpectedly. Their intimate relationships unravel as the three of them engage in a harsh and tender attempt to be understood and to understand. For the first time, Ritchie and his father become willing to let go of a troubled past and brave the unknown experience of NEW TIMES. 2 men, 3 women. 1 unit set.

Bernie and the Beast - a bittersweet comedy in one act
Both Bernie and Evelyn are small in stature but giants in spirit. Lost somewhere in South Dakota, they sense they are on their last vacation as their evening unfolds at the Blue Lagoon Motel. As the play progresses the characters reveal the many levels of love and dependency as well as a solid commitment to an enduring relationship. 1 man, 1 woman. Unit Set.

Contact: Marsha Lee Sheiness msheiness@nyc.rr.com

The Idol Worshipper by Brenda Shoshanna

A Hasidic raised, but Buddhist oriented single mother and two of her sons - Aaron, deeply attached to his analyst, and Mendy, inflicted with a strange mental illness - struggle with her third son, Joseph, who returns from Israel a Hasid, convinced that he can cure his retarded brother, and not only him, the entire family. As she struggles to keep her family together, the mother discovers and re-claims long, lost parts of herself. The ending contains a startling surprise, which unites and frees everybody. 1 woman, 3 men.

Contact: Brenda Shoshanna topspeakeryahoo.com

PLAYS BY ZAN SKOLNICK

A Private Audience

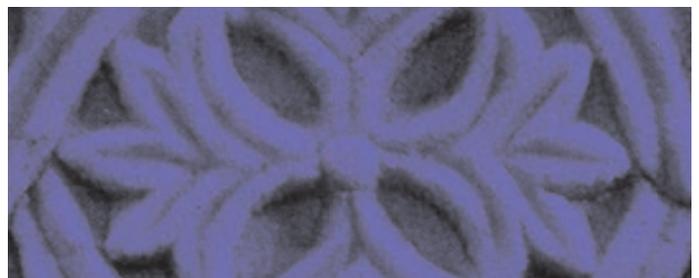
Suggested by a true story, the play is a fact-based riff on the odyssey of a persevering Israeli Ambassador (to Italy) whose "unofficial" efforts led to the Vatican's recognition of the State of Israel, and eventually led to the pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to Israel (in 2000) and his visit to the Kotel. 7-8 M, 2 W, several small sets.

Bob & Me

This musical memoir is about two blessedly stupid young Jewish men who wrote a musical revue, then a book musical and tried to sell them in NYC on their summer vacations. The titular "Me" tells of their friendship, their misadventures, their separation, Bob's death and their figurative reunion in this retrospective of their songs. 5 M, 5 W, slide projector, no set.

Contact: Zan Skolnick - 847-965-1918

zbskol.zsa@earthlink.net



PLAYS BY PETE WOLF SMITH

Are You There, My Son?

A dark, King Arthur-like tale based on the rise of the biblical King David, ARE YOU THERE, MY SON? is loosely based on the rise of the First Book of Samuel. Samuel, Saul, David, and Jonathan vie for power in a tale of intrigue and deception.

8 men, 2 women. Multiple locations, but a bare stage or single, non-realistic set are all that's required.

A Piece of Earth

Takes place in New York and Israel, and moves back and forth in time between the summer of 1997 and the biblical past. A divorced Jewish man travels to Israel and contemplates the wrong turns in his life, while Abraham, Sarah, Rebecca, Esau, and Ishmael appear and tell their own stories.

Multiple characters, male and female, played by 6 actors. Bare stage or "concert-style."

Contact info: petewolfsmith@earthlink.net

**IN THE NEWS:
OUR NEWEST MEMBER!**

Mazel Tov to Laurie Katz Braun and her new baby boy!!

We joyously welcome Noah Aidan Braun to the world!

Born May 31, 2006 at 10:12PM.

Andrew, Laurie, and Emily Braun



MEMORIES OF PHOENIX 2006





MEMORIES OF PHOENIX 2006



MEET AJT'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KAYLA GORDON

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Kayla Gordon to the newly created position of AJT Executive Director. The growth in our organization - in both membership and scope of services - has necessitated the introduction of a part-time staff person to handle the many administrative, organizational and developmental tasks that heretofore have been carried out solely by an all-volunteer Executive Board.

Many of you probably already know Kayla from her years as an AJT member. She served for over a decade as Artistic Director of Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, and recently left that position to pursue other artistic challenges. Her new career as a freelance director and artist allows her the flexibility to successfully manage the Association for Jewish Theatre.

Kayla had this to say about the Association for Jewish Theatre and her new position:

While I was Artistic Director of Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, I don't think a moment went by when I wasn't calling or emailing someone in the Association for resources, ideas and support. AJT has been my lifeline and I have been lucky to share the best of Jewish theatre with my colleagues at AJT. Many of the plays we produced at WJT were written by AJT members and I have developed life-long friendships with many of our members.

Now as the Executive Director I feel privileged that I will be able to give back to AJT what I needed when I was



working hard to build a theatre. We all share a belief in the power of Jewish Theatre. Through Jewish Theatre, AJT members work hard to honor the very centre of humanity, our collective ability to feel and to communicate with our communities locally and globally. I am very proud of what we accomplish at AJT and I am looking forward to seeing us grow internationally. I am especially excited about the opportunity to work with Warren, our colleague at the Jewish Theatre of Vienna, to make this year's conference in March one of our most exciting events to date. Hope to see you all there!

Says Mira Hirsch, president of AJT, "We are extremely fortunate to have Kayla at the helm of the Association for Jewish Theatre. Her passion for AJT, her knowledge of the Jewish Theatre world and her vast skill set will undoubtedly serve us all well – as an organization and as individuals."

Please welcome Kayla in her new role with AJT!

Thanks to Norman Fedder for assisting with this newsletter and to Miriam Rinn and the JCCA and Gustavo Rymberg for the graphic design

***We apologize for any omissions and errors! Newsletter Editor - Kayla Gordon

AJT MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

for Theatres & Individuals

NAME _____

THEATRE (if applicable) _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

city _____ zip _____

PHONE _____ FAX _____

E-MAIL _____

WEBSITE _____

**Please send in membership payment before September 1, 2006, payable to:
JCC Association**

_____ \$130. US – Large theatres (over \$100,000 US budget)

_____ \$105. US – Mid-size theatres (over \$50,000 US budget)

_____ \$ 65. US – Small theatres (under \$50,000 US budget)

_____ \$ 65. US – Individual members

_____ \$ 23. US – Students

Membership is valid from September 1, 2006 - August 30, 2007

Mail form, information sheet and check (made payable to JCC Association) to:

Janet Arnold
Arizona Jewish Theatre
444 W. Camelback R. #208
Phoenix, AZ 85013

All members of AJT can have their season or plays listed on our
website www.afjt.com

Email Denise for details denise@dmystudio.com

See you in Vienna in March 2007

SAVE THE DATE!
Association for Jewish Theatre
2007 Conference
March 20 - 23, 2007
VIENNA



association for jewish theatre

Association for Jewish Theatre
c/o JCC Association of North America
15 East 26th Street
NY, NY 10010 - 1579



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