

Der Bay

The International Anglo-Yiddish Newsletter

December 2007

Vol. XVII No. 10

The Czernowitz Conference

With next year marking the 100th anniversary of the first-ever Yiddish conference this theme will pervade many of the Yiddish conferences, institutes and programs.

It is an opportunity for Yiddish clubs, as well, to have at least one meeting based on this theme. The twelfth IAYC conference in 2008 will be based on this historic event - August 30 to September 3, 1908.

While the proceedings and famous, key figures have been written about and covered in many articles, the significance of the event must still be considered to be monumental.

What has transpired in the last century was totally unexpected and surely unpredictable. Who in 1908 would have foreseen:

- the horrific loss, in numbers and the manner in which it occurred of the Yiddish-speaking community between 1939 and 1945. It far surpassed the Inquisition and pogroms,
- the realization of an almost two millennium dream to return to the Jewish homeland and "next year in Yerusholaim" – the founding of Israel in 1948.
- the start of the Space Age and the opening of Cyberspace. With the advent of the home computer it now was possible for everyone to be able to communicate with other Yiddish speakers in distant places forming a "Virtual Shtetl". Led by the online list, Mendele, the number of groups has grown as well as the wonderful Yiddish websites.

IAYC and Czernowitz

In addition to incorporating it into the theme of the 2008 conference, IAYC member clubs will be encouraged to have programs that will cover the significance of this event.

Der Bay now is putting out a call for all other interested Yiddish organizations/groups to have this historic Czernowitz Conference in at least one of their programs during 2008.

We shall include these events on the website in *Der internatsyonaler kalendar* where the world is divided into 14 regions. If enough events occur in a given region, that region will be subdivided.

This announcement is being sent to Mendele, the major online Yiddish list. "Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the Caernowitz Conference (August 30-Sept 3). We hope that your organization/group will stress this historic event in your programming."

Mendele was started by Prof. Noyekh Miller and published today with the assistance also of Victor Bers and Iosif Vaisman, the editor. If you are not receiving this wonderful mailing, send a 1-line message: sub mendele first_name last_name to: listproc@lists.yale.edu

Der internatsyonaler kalendar on *Der Bay's* website is acting as the worldwide clearing-house, so as to avoid as many conflicts as much as possible. Major events also will be listed in the separate listing:
www.derbay.org/calendars/kalendar.html

LARP – Live Action Role Play

LARP is not the Linear Accelerator Research Program. It is an interactive role-playing fun or serious way of creating real or fictional situations. This article tells how this might be used at Yiddish club meetings.

Suppose you were to create an imaginary scene of a shtetl and a list of characters. Then create a situation such as farmers' market where the shtetl-folk are going around shopping for different items and the bargaining begins. The conversation a butcher would have in buying a cow would be far different than a farmer selling a sack of potatoes.

What if you were to create a scene of a shadkhn in the home of a young girl's family who is being visited by a young yeshiva bokher's parents. Think of all the characters that may be present. It might even include the grandparents living in the house. Try to recreate the banter going on during the visit with the negotiations between the two parties, and then the money to be paid to the shadkhn.

Perhaps we are at a baby naming or bris - consider the role played by the father, mother, grandparents and the "professionals". There is an excellent discussion on the Internet at:
www.aish.com/literacy/lifecycle/Pidyon_Haben.asp
of the Pidyon Ha'Ben.

Maybe the scene is in a home preparing for peysakh with all the cleaning and preparing the food or sitting at the seder table. This type of a program is a possibility for any holiday and the special food could actually be brought in.

Another possibility is to create a pogrom. What kind of problems might a family encounter? What might you do to protect yourself and your family? Who are the men that are out to inflict punishment? Think of the wonderful curses you might heap on those who wish to do you harm. One source is *Words Like Arrows a Treasury of Yiddish Folk Sayings* by Shirley Kumove.

How about a trip to America? What might it be like preparing for the trip? Who and what might we encounter on our journey? What would it be like going through customs? What would our first day in America be like?

Let's re-enact night school learning a new language. What words might we have trouble saying /spelling. This would also include our interview for a job. Perhaps we might go to work in a sweatshop. What conversation might we have with a co-worker about joining the labor union and the trip home on the subway?

LARP in Action

Why is *Der Bay* and Fishl so excited about the potential of LARP for Yiddish Club meetings and at future IAYC conferences? One of the major concerns we hear about our groups is that they come to our meetings and all they want is to be entertained or sit around and just talk.

Getting members involved requires them to have choices. Assigning does not give choices. Ask them, "Which of these would you wish to do or do you have a better suggestion?" A member who does not participate and only eats consumes your coffee and cake is worthless in the building and maintaining a vibrant and dynamic club.

In the column to the left we discussed situations that can be created for a program. Before we cover the how-to, let's see how mainly younger people utilize this very popular style of game play.

Wikipedia has an excellent discussion of LARP. It lists several genres. A form our clubs could use would be *historical*. Our children and grandchildren find games using *dragons* and *dungeons* exciting.

How to LARP

Much of the success of a LARP encounter depends on the leader. It is up to her to set the stage (scene and time) and the house rules. The column to the left gave several possible scenarios. At a prior meeting the theme should be announced and volunteers are asked to assume roles of their choice.

At the day of the meeting volunteers (role payers) may wish to come in wearing descriptive clothing or even signs naming the roles being played.

After the scene is set and the players, performers, or participants are introduced the LARP is ready to start. We begin by drawing a closed card from 1-6 or role a *die*. Number 1 is terrible news or information and 6 is wonderful news or information.

The role of the leader is critical. If done properly the meeting can be very exciting. It is the task of the leader (forzitsler) periodically to insert changes into the situation to make it more interesting. It is done to make the event more lebedik.

Please write to let us know of any experiences your group had, if you LARP. Include the name of the club, the scene, the players and any special exciting events that took place during the LARP.

Czernowitz Conference: The First Yiddish Language Conference

© by Iosif Vaisman

The First Conference for the Yiddish Language, also known as the Tshernovits* Conference, opened on Sunday, August 30, 1908. The Conference was convened to discuss very important topics formulated in the ten point Conference agenda.

To what extent the Conference succeeded in finding the solutions to any of these ten problems has been a subject of discussions (sometimes quite fierce) ever since. A simple look at the agenda is sufficient to see that many issues have yet to be resolved:

1. Yiddish spelling
2. Yiddish grammar
3. Foreign words and new words
4. A Yiddish dictionary
5. Jewish youth and the Yiddish language
6. The Yiddish press
7. The Yiddish theater and Yiddish actors
8. The economic status of Yiddish writers
9. The economic status of Yiddish actors
10. Recognition for the Yiddish language

It has become a good tradition in the Yiddish world to celebrate the anniversaries of the Tshernowitz Conference. Today Mendele joins the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary with a series of special issues dedicated to some of the Conference's highlights and the figures of several key participants.

*Note: The names Tshernovits (Yiddish), Czernowitz (German), Cernauti (Rom), Chernovtsy (Russian), Chernivtsi (Ukr), and their spelling variations in other languages, all refer to a single entity - a town in Central Europe at 48° 18' N latitude and 25° 56' E longitude. Capital of Bukovina, the land that shunned sovereignty for more than ten centuries, the town at various times was a part of Galician-Volhynian Principality, Principality of Moldavia, Poland, Lithuania, Walachia, Ottoman Empire, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Western Ukrainian National Republic, Romania, Soviet Union, and Ukraine, which partly explains the toponymical assortment.

Every morning and afternoon in the late 1960's, walking with one of my parents to and from kindergarten in a quiet residential neighborhood in Chernovtsy, I passed by a stately building on the Ukrainska Street that at the time housed the City Teachers' Club. Built for the Ukrainian National House at the very end of nineteenth century, in a

fashionable then pseudoclassical style, the structure did not make the list of the city's most important architectural landmarks.

Not until much later did I learn that the building occupies one of the most important places on the map of the Yiddish Universe. In that building, from the podium on a slightly raised stage of the Assembly Hall, ninety years ago Yiddish was proclaimed a national language of the Jewish people.

The beginning of my love affair with my hometown easily can be traced back to my father's influence. He never missed an opportunity to talk about Czernowitz's rich history and splendid architecture during our walks. Why didn't he tell me that the Yiddish Language Conference, which was a topic of many of our conversations, took place in the building we saw twice every day? Because, like many others, he thought that the Conference was held in the much larger, centrally located and seemingly more appropriate for the occasion, Jewish National House.

Organizers of the conference planned to have it held in the brand new, imposing Baroque building whose entablatures are supported by four Atlantes. They were in various stages of straightening up their backs. Born in 1908, these Czernowitz Jewish Atlantes, on their way from the house of slavery to the redemption in the new old Homeland, perhaps were the first major architectural manifestation of the Zionist aspirations.

I don't know whether it was the architect or the community leaders who decided to employ polytheistic deities as a symbol of the revival of the Jewish people, but the facade of "Das Jüdische Nationalhaus" was not a bit more oxymoronic than any other detail of the Czernowitz Jewish landscape.

Hosting a Yiddish language conference did not at all play well with the Czernowitz Jewish establishment (creating a precedent for many Jewish establishments for many years to come).

Under the pretext of unfinished construction, the Jewish House was closed. As a result, the conference started in the Concert Hall of the Czernowitz Music Society on Rudolfplatz and then moved to the Ukrainian National House on Josefgasse.

Why did the conference take place in Czernowitz? This question seems to have earnestly interested scholars and commentators for nine decades. Many answers based on geographical, political, and other serious considerations were offered, and most of them are definitely valid. Czernowitz was very conveniently located.

People in Czernowitz enjoyed much greater political freedoms than their neighbors across the borders. The proportion of what we would call "middle class" in the Czernowitz Jewish population was several times higher than in any other major Jewish center in Europe.

Czernowitz was famous for what was known as "Czernowitz Toleranz", which can be illustrated by the fact that by 1908 Czernowitz was the only city in European history, where the mayor, the city's representative to the Parliament, and the Rector of the University, were Jews.

However, one very important reason escaped most observers. Czernowitz has always had an ability to produce and attract a disproportionate number of "unconventional" personalities, people, for whom Yiddish has borrowed a wonderful word "tshudakes". Unlike the English "eccentric" that incorporates negation, "tshudak" shares the root with the word "chudo", which means "miracle"...

The list of Czernowitz "tshudakes" is long. A grandson of the Great Maggid, the last of the great hasidic masters and a distinguished expounder of the Torah, who surrounded himself by the ceremonials and luxury unheard of among the hasidim, and was known as a "king in Israel".

The most gifted of his six sons, who ran away from home, and for a time joined the militant maskilim in Czernowitz. One of the founding fathers of modern molecular biology, known for the discovery of the rules of DNA composition, is also known as an astute cultural and social critic and also as an excellent poet.

A grandson of the Czernowitz Chief Rabbi, who became one of the foremost Muslim theologians and ideologues of this century, close friend of Saudi royals and a cabinet minister in the newly independent Pakistan.

An outstanding psychologist, whose attempts to combine world revolution, cosmic energy of orgasm, and capitalist business practices ended tragically for him. He was a brilliant Yiddish poet, who played not only with words, but also with his own identity.

Nathan Birnbaum

He was the mastermind of the 1908 Conference, and deserves a place in this enumeration. A product of an intermarriage between a galitsian hasid and a daughter of a mitnagid rabbi, Birnbaum during his life embraced many disparate views and persuasions.

Birnbaum was a towering intellectual figure, a political leader who coined both the terms *Zionism* and *Yiddishism* and founded the movements described by these terms, he played a pivotal role in shaping the Jewish ideological and cultural landscape of this century. Birnbaum's move to Czernowitz in 1908 and his decision to convene the Conference there was not an accident. He had chosen the place that was fit for the task.

The Czernowitz Conference significantly influenced Jewish nationalist movements in Bukovina and Galicia, in particular in Czernowitz. Jewish students at the Czernowitz University started registering as "Jews" by language and nationality, although Austrian laws did not recognize either of those (Yiddish language and Jews as ethnic group).

Violators were punished and sometimes expelled from the University, but this did not stop the campaign. A mass demonstration in support of Yiddish was staged during the Census in 1910. All three major Jewish political forces (zionists, liberals - Jewish People's Party, and socialists) called for indicating Yiddish as a "spoken language" ("Umgangssprachen") in the Census forms, despite the ban on using "unrecognized" language and severe intimidation by the government.

The greatest success the demonstration had in Czernowitz: 75 % of the Jews indicated Yiddish as their language (cf. Cracow - 25%, the whole Galicia and Bukovina - ca. 50%, S. M. Dubnov, 1923).

In the 1920's and 30's Czernowitz had lively and diverse Yiddish cultural, literary, and political activities. Twenty Yiddish periodicals served as an indicator of this. It boasted the largest in the world number of titles of Yiddish periodicals per capita of Jewish population: 3.9 titles/10,000 (Vilna had 3.4 (18 titles) and Warsaw - 2.4 (83 titles), L. Dobroszycki and B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1977).

Editor's note: Prof Vaisman is a leading authority of Yiddish on the Internet. His website, Virtual Shtetl is a must to visit. He will be presenting the Sunday morning plenary lecture at the IAYC conference in La Jolla Oct.24-27. This article is at: www.ibiblio.org/yiddish/Tshernovits/iiv.html

"Der Mordkhe Shekhter-Ondenk-Numer"

funem gezeshaftelekh-literarishn zhurnal
Afn Shvel,

"Der Mordkhe Shekhter-Ondenk-Numer" funem gezeshaftelekh-literarishn zhurnal Afn Shvel, aroysgegebn fun der Yidish-Lige, iz shoyn aroys. Ale 72 zaytn funem zhurnal vern in gantsn ibergegebn dem umfargeslekhn D'r Mordkhe Shekhter vos er iz geven der langyorker redaktor fun Afn Shvel, der farleyger fun der Yidish-Lige, a legendarer lerer un shaferish-produktiver lingvist, vi oykh a laydnshaftelekh yidish-tuer.

In dem numer gedenken bney-mishpokhe, gute-fraynd, kolegn un studentn Mordkhe Shekhtern. Derin gefinen zikh artiklen fun:

Tevye Boyrd,
Dovid Braun,
Gele Shveyd Fishman,
Hershl Glezer,
Beyle Shekhter-Gotesman,
Mark Kaplan,
Brukhe Lang Kaplan,
Yitskhok Niborski,
Rakhmiel Pelts,
Dovid Roskes,
Sheva Tsuker,
Gitl Shekhter-Vishvanat,
Shoshana Balaban-Volkovitsh, un
Zuni Zelitch.

Der numer nemt oykh arayn frier nit-gedrukte zikhroynes un a vogikn lingvistishn artikl, "Der khilek tsvishn 'Litvish Yidish' un 'Litvish Yidish,'" beyde ongeshribn fun Mordkhe Shekhtern.

Der unikaler band kost \$15 oyb m'iz nit kin mitglied fun der Yidish-Lige. Mitglidershaft in der organizatyse kost nor \$36 (\$18 far studentn un \$50 far instiutseyes) un nemt arayn an abonement say afn Afn Shvel vos geyt aroys dray mol a yor, say af VZMAY - "Vi zogt men af Yidish" - an elektronishe post-reshime vos tsillevet tsu farshpreytn dem banits fun verter, spetsyel naye verter, vos me ken nisht gefinen in di shoyn eksistirndike yidishe verter-bikher.

Oyb ir vert itst a mitglied vet ir oytomatish bakumen dem "Mordkhe Shekhter-Ondenk-Numer."

Tsu bashteln dem numer oder vern a mitglied, zayt azoy gut un shikt arayn ayer tshek tsu:
League for Yiddish,
45 East 33rd St., Suite 203, New York, NY 10016.
Oyb ir vilt batsoln elektronish, geyt af undzer vebzaytl www.leagueforyiddish.org

<<http://www.leagueforyiddish.org/>> . Oyb ir hot kashes klingt on tsu (212) 889-0380 oder shraybt undz af info@leagueforyiddish.org .

"The Mordkhe Schaechter Memorial Issue" of the Yiddish literary/cultural magazine Afn Shvel is already out. This 72-page issue, published by the League for Yiddish, is devoted exclusively to Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter, long-time editor of Afn Shvel, founder of the League for Yiddish, legendary teacher, prolific linguist and passionate Yiddish activist.

In this issue, Schaechter is remembered by family, friends, colleagues, and students. Among the contributors are:

Prof. Thomas Bird - Queens College
David Braun - MIT Doctoral Candidate
Marc Caplan - Baltimore Hebrew Union
Brukhe Lang Caplan - Baltimore Hebrew Union
Gella Schweid Fishman - Yiddish Teacher
Prof. Paul Glasser - YIVO
Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman - Mordkhe's Sister
Prof. Yitskhok Niborski - Medem Bibliotheque
Prof. Rakhmiel Peltz - Drexel
Prof. David Roskies - Jewish Theological Seminary
Shoshana B. Wolkowicz - Mordkhe's Secretary
Binyumen Schaechter - Mordkhe's Son
Gitl Schaechter-Viswanath - Mordkhe's Daughter
Dr. Zuni Zelitch - Former League for Yiddish Pres.
Dr. Sheva Zucker - League for Yiddish, Exec. Dir.

The issue also includes previously unpublished memoirs and a linguistic article on "Litvish Yiddish," both written by Mordkhe Schaechter.

The cost of this special volume is \$15 for non-members/subscribers. If you are not a member of the League for Yiddish, annual membership in the organization is only \$36 (\$18 for students and \$50 for organizations) and includes a subscription to Afn Shvel, published three times a year, as well as to VZMAY ("Vi zogt men af Yidish?") an electronic "Yiddish Q & A" mailing list which seeks to promote the use of words and phrases, especially new ones, not currently found in existing Yiddish dictionaries.

If you become a member now, you will automatically receive "The Mordkhe Schaechter Memorial Issue."

To order your copy or to become a member, please send your payment to: League for Yiddish, 45 East 33rd St., Suite 203, New York, NY 10016. For online payment, please go to our website at <<http://www.leagueforyiddish.org/>>. If you have questions you may reach us at (212) 889-0380 or at info@leagueforyiddish.org

Ode to a Vanishing Language

Participating in the 11th Conference of the International Association of Yiddish Clubs by Yoshiji Hirose, Ph.D

The 11th Conference of the International Association of Yiddish Clubs took place (August 3 - 6, 2007) in Cleveland, Ohio U.S.A. Yiddish scholars and Jewish cultural figures, mainly from America, Canada and Israel, attended daily lectures and workshops from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Each evening was filled with entertainment until 9:00 as dinner was served between performances of Yiddish music by several Broadway singers invited to the conference.

The main purpose of this conference was the exchange of knowledge and ideas about the Yiddish language and literature. At the same time, this conference plays an important role in searching for ways to keep the Yiddish language, spoken mainly in Eastern Europe and Russia before World War II and heritage, alive and well not only for the present, but also for future generations.

Mr. Philip Fishl Kutner, the program chairman, personally invited me to attend and present at the conference as an Asian scholar of Yiddish Literature. Whenever I present in Yiddish in America or Canada, the majority of audience members are Jews who speak, or whose parents speak, Yiddish as their mother tongue. Because of this, I think a certain amount of bravery and audacity (or is it insensitivity?) is needed. Given this, it may have been more sensible of me as a careful researcher to politely turn down this request to present.

However, courage got the better of discretion and, as usual, I readily agreed without being deeply worried. The thought that now may be the only time I can directly learn the vanishing Yiddish language from people who speak it as their mother tongue is a powerful one that always helps me forget any worries I may have. This is my personal meshugas (craziness).

Early in the morning of August 3 at New York's LaGuardia International Airport, as I was waiting for my flight to Ohio, I happened to meet Boris Sandler, author and editor of the Yiddish-language newspaper Forward. It turned out we were both going to the same conference. In his case, he was attending on very short notice as a "pinch hitter" for another presenter. Since I had taken his Yiddish Literature class at Oxford University decades ago, it was a very nostalgic reunion for me. He is a very good-hearted and genial human being who did not once make a wry face at my clumsy Yiddish.

At the Cleveland Hopkins Airport, a taxi that had

been arranged for us was waiting, and 30 minutes later we arrived at the Marriot Hotel. The receptionist, smiling soon after seeing my face, offered words of welcome along with a bag containing a program booklet and a nametag with my name and country written in big letters. After receiving notification of my arrival, the program chairperson, Mr. Kutner, a mild-mannered and congenial person, came to greet me. Even though it was our first time to meet, I felt as if I had reunited with an old friend.

I went to an orientation session that was being held in the main hall a little after 2:00. The lady sitting in the seat in front of me glanced backwards with a slight look of surprise on her face. She then said to me rather suspiciously to me, "You are also participating in the conference?" When she saw my name tag, her facial expression suddenly brightened as she overly expressed her surprise saying, "Oh! Professor! You're the professor from Japan, aren't you?" I got the impression that she had remembered seeing my picture and introductory essay in the program. After this, the demeanor of the people around me began to ease. They seemed to quickly become less nervous and came over to shake my hand. At the opening greetings, I was introduced by the program chairperson and, somewhat embarrassed, stood up and bowed.

After the orientation, several attendees gathered around me. Being the first-ever Asian participant in the history of the conference, I was a most unexpected visitor. They all started asking a variation of the same questions: "Why did you begin learning Yiddish?" and "Where did you study Yiddish?" Laughing, I dodged their questions by responding, "I have to save that answer for my presentation. Please be sure to attend."

Thirty presenters were invited to the conference meaning that five different presentations would occur simultaneously at different locations. I must admit that I was secretly thinking to myself how lonely I would feel if the lecture room were empty—especially after all the effort I had put in to preparing it.

There were a variety of exhibits at the venue on each day of the conference. In one corner of the spacious hotel lobby, sales of books, CDs and the like were going very well. The Ohio State University, which is very active in Jewish studies and Yiddish research, is not too far from Cleveland. Due to this and the large Jewish community in the area, many local residents participated in the conference as helpers and volunteers. This led to the number of people being involved in the conference totaling close to 300. While the Marriot Hotel certainly isn't small, it certainly felt like most of the people there were there for the conference.

My presentation was scheduled for the third day of the conference, August 5. Until then I thought I would get my ears used to Yiddish by speaking it to as many of the attendees as I possibly could. It is hard for me to get the feel for a foreign language that I do not use on a routine basis unless I live in the language for a couple of days. Yiddish is especially difficult since I only use it when I come to America. Since there was no use in complaining about it, I became determined over the first two days to make best use of the limited time I had.

August 5 – the day for my presentation had come. Since my presentation was not scheduled to start until 2:30 p.m., in the morning I attended a lecture of a local Hasidic Rabbi, Rabbi Yossi Marozov. Dressed in black attire with traditional long sidelocks (payes), Rabbi Marozov stressed as the theme of his lecture the importance of Jewishness in domestic upbringing. He gave three reasons why Jews have been able to endure and overcome persecution throughout history: language, clothing and names.

By protecting these elements, Jews have been able to carry through without perishing. More specifically, Hasidic Jews, even while living in American society, continue to speak Yiddish and read the Jewish Bible in Hebrew.

Hasidic men wear suits in dark colors with distinctively long jackets while women, even in summer, wear long, conservative skirts with long sleeves that do not expose any skin. Moreover, they eschew English names and make use of Jewish ones instead.

After his lecture, I spoke to him in Yiddish. Surprised, he said to me, “Just as I thought / I thought so. You’re Jewish?” He was amused when I replied laughingly, “No, I am Japanese, but we do have something in common. We share the same name – Yoshi.”

I spoke half in English and half in Yiddish. My topic was the Symbolic meaning of Yiddish in works of the modern female Jewish author Pearl Abraham. Perhaps it was the effect of the earlier teasing, but the hall for my lecture had so many people that there weren’t enough seats. Chairs were brought in. I felt a little tense because I wanted to be remembered for more than being just an “unexpected visitor”. Since the joke I made got a few laughs from the audience, I was able to comfortably begin my lecture.

Throughout Yiddish literature the names of many small towns in Poland and Russia appear. They are so uncommon that even Jewish-American scholars mispronounce them. Whenever mistakes were made

in pronunciation, even in the middle of a lecture, audience members that were natives of those towns pointed it out and corrected it. This also occurred during my lecture several times. The audience seemed to enjoy how I used jokes to humorously get past this during my lecture. To me it seems that audiences in America take pleasure in this kind of mid-lecture interaction.

After the lecture, the question and answer session was ever so fulfilling. The “True Jewish Voice” that I had been searching for was there. Several people raised their hand to ask questions. While directing traffic, I tried to politely answer their questions and mix in a little humor as well. The 30 minute time limit was over before I knew it and at the end I received a completely unexpected extensive round of applause. Soon afterwards, there was a stream of radio interviews, newspaper photographs and the like. This was all set up by Mr. Kutner because he believes strongly in the survival of Yiddish.

The people who attended this conference hold a deep love for Yiddish. Simon Swirsky, an elderly gentleman who was a large contributor to the conference, is also such a person. Over the years, (current age 92) he has made countless contributions to the Cleveland and national Jewish community. After my lecture, he took hold of my hand and wouldn’t let go. Despite his age,

I was overwhelmed by the firmness of his handshake. I could feel his overflowing love for his mother tongue as he grasped my hand and spoke with a Polish-accented Yiddish. It was a moment that strongly made me conscious of the fact that it is the enthusiasm of people like this that sustains my academic endeavors.

Some of the Yiddish Groups Online

Groups

53 1-YiddishForum

41 Members, Archives: Membership is required.

This is for both learning and writing elementary Yiddish. The Keywords at this site are: Jew Jews Judaic Judaism Yiddishisms language Kodesh Israeli Israel Israelite Israelites Israelis communication Torah Holocaust

88 yiddishafyiddish

36 Members, Archives: Public

All messages should be in Yiddish and in Yiddish (Hebrew) letters. If you need help to read and write using Hebrew/Yiddish letters on your computer, see <http://www.shoshke.net/uyip/blitpost.htm> Set the Encoding to UTF-8. Yahoo groups let you send messages in Yiddish

89 yiddishhumor

35 Members, Archives: Public

Here's the forum for Yiddish humor, jokes, etc. I have a great old book of Yiddish Jokes which I'd love to share here. This is the place and time for some laughs

93 shmues

64 Members, Archives: Membership is required

The aim of this mailing list is to provide interested Yiddish learners with a forum where they can try out and improve their linguistic skills. Interacting over the Internet will do this. You are urged to use whatever Yiddish you know and participate in informal chats. We use YIVO Romanized Yiddish in the transcription

95 yidisheloysshnenyidentim

76 Members, Archives: Public

It's for anyone who is interested in the Yiddish language, or would like to speak it and about Judaism.

115 Yiddish

95 Members, Archives: Membership is required

It is The Yiddish language group on the Web

116 yiddishkaytla

66 Members, Archives: Membership is required

This group is for those people who are interested in the Yiddish language and culture. It is not required to speak Yiddish for you to be a part of the group. The group will provide calendar listings of Yiddish events in Los Angeles, and beyond, as well as information about language and culture classes, and more.

A barikht fun a zeltenem klas

by Archie Barkan

Every Wednesday afternoon a group of people meet at Santa Monica Emeritus College, California—to read Yiddish literature in the original. We are currently digesting Sholem Asch's "Motke Ganev".

We just finished I. B. Singer's classic short story, "Gimpel Tam". In the past, this group of 20-25 has delved deeply into Peretz and Reyzin short stories, I. J. Singer's colorful narratives, Moische Nadir humor, the complete "Motl Peyse dem Khazn's" of Sholom Aleichem, Perets Hirshbein's "Grine Felder" and Raboy's "Yiddisher Cowboy" were of special interest.

This class has been in existence for more than 19 years; the first two "madrikhim" were Abe Friedman and Marion Herbst, z"l. For the past six years plus, it has been under my aegis. It is "shvere arbet" preparing the handouts, copying, collating and stapling—but—for me a "nakhes ruekh!...."

Some students enroll with just the most rudimentary reading ability and pass up their turn to read for a while—until they decide one day to give it a whirl. Another Yiddish reader is on board, and this incredible group of "heymishe mentshn" burst into a rousing round of welcoming applause.

If you live somewhere in the vicinity and would like to join us in these free classes, make new friends in "an emeser yiddisher atmosfer", please call me for details: Archie Barkan, 818-999-0433, or e-mail archiefromca@webtv.net

Sonia Pressman Fuentes Writes

Thought you'd like to see this excerpt from an e-mail I just received from Ann Stanton, the researcher and writer on the pioneer Jews of South Dakota, whom I'm trying to bring to Sarasota to speak, with the help of some of you. I believe the "Adams" to which she refers is the museum in Rapid City, SD.

"Yesterday was amazing. Went to the home of a couple who stumbled upon a cache of the letters and papers of Sol Star, six-term Jewish mayor of Deadwood, SD. We will work with the Adams to organize this priceless material to make it useful. As is, it is useful only to the owners. What a thrill to see BOXES of long-hidden Deadwood history."

Editor's note: Ann has been published in *Der Bay*, and is The Yiddish Network contact for her area.

“Borsht with Bread, Brothers”: Klezmer

by Yale Strom

I hope this CD gives the listener a sonic sense that the Jewish music we love and call klezmer has been influenced by the folk music of the Jews' indigenous hosts, while still being based upon the DNA of klezmer: the Middle Eastern modalities and ornamentations heard in the vocal music.

One point I want to make on this recording is to give the listener a window into the symbiotic relationship between the Rom (Gypsies) and Jewish musicians, particularly in the regions of the Carpathian Mountains, Transylvania, Moldavia and Bessarabia.

These ethnic groups have been the pariah of Europe for nearly 1000 years and singled out for extermination by the Germans during the Holocaust. These people often found solace in their respective folk musics.

The Rom and Jewish musicians often were itinerant and would meet in inns and on the roads between jobs. Many of them did not let negative stereotypes get in the way of forming close and lasting friendships.

I met Rom who had played so much with Jews that they spoke a fairly decent Yiddish, and I met Jews who had played in Rom bands and spoke a passable Romani. When there were no Jews left (due to death and emigration) in these towns of Eastern Europe.

It was usually only the Rom musicians who remembered the pre WWII klezmer tunes. The tunes range from the lilting Oberek Palota, the spiritual Ki Onu Amekho, bluesy Szol A Kakos to the wild and raw Svalava Kozasahok. Enjoy these beautiful and haunting klezmer melodies.

Hot Pstromi

In 1981 I trekked throughout the former Eastern Bloc countries searching for unknown, unpublished (and usually, unwritten) klezmer and Yiddish tunes. Many of my informants - Jewish and Rom Holocaust survivors - had never met an American. Upon my return to the US, I formed Hot Pstromi. The band has performed throughout Europe, Canada, Mexico, the United States and in Hong Kong.

The klezmer musicians, from well before the Holocaust, were playing old and contemporary melodies, and understood that this art form must serve and educate the public. Though, Jewish culture is constantly evolving as humanity evolves; so too must klezmer delve into new sonic realms

while still honouring the past music and its practitioners.

When you hear the musician improvise, you hear him thinking out loud. And when he improvises using these idioms and ancient modalities, this is my idea of spontaneous religious praying. Without improvisation, the music does not speak to one's spiritual consciousness. When you listen to the cuts on this recording, you will hear improvisation from all the band members - the arrangements here are spontaneous, unique and pay tribute to the past while creating something fresh and new.

Yale Strom

I play the violin and am a composer, filmmaker writer, photographer, and playwright. I am a pioneer revivalist in conducting extensive field research in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans among the Jewish and Rom communities. Initially, my work focused primarily on the use and performance of klezmer music among these groups. Gradually, this focus increased to all aspects of their culture, from post-WW II to the present.

I have composed New Jewish music, combining Klezmer and music jazz classical, Balkan and Sephardic motifs. These compositions range from quartets to a symphony, which premiered with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

My 12 CDs run the gamut of traditional klezmer to "new" Jewish music.

The CD Garden of Yidn in the Top 20 of Canada's major music critic's poll. His CD toezmer Cafe Jew Zoo was released by Naxos World Records in June of 2003 to international acclaim. Strom has performed with many world renowned musicians including Andy Statman, Mark Dresser, Marty Ehrlich, Mark O' Connor, Alicia Svigals, Salman Ahmad, Adam DelMonte, the band Muszikas et al.

My research has resulted in photo documentary books, documentary films, as well as CD recordings. I am author of "The Book of Klezmer History, The Music, The Folklore - from the 14th Century to the 21st (2002 A Capella Books), a 400 page history with original photos and sheet music gathered by Strom during his ethnographic trips to Central and Eastern Europe.

A Wandering Feast: A Journey through the Jewish Culture of Eastern Europe" written in collaboration with his wife, Elizabeth Schwartz, is part cookbook, part travelogue (Jossey-Bass, 2005). He is also the author of "The Absolutely Complete Klezmer Songbook" (Transcontinental Publishing, 2006),

which includes the sheet music of all the tunes on this CD, except tracks 3 and 2.

At present I am artist-in residence of Jewish Studies at San Diego State University. If you wish to learn more about my work, you will find it at: www.yalestrom.com

I continue to dig up artifacts of Jewish music, introducing audiences to something they might have missed." - San Diego Jewish journal "Yale Strom and his klezmer band Hot Pstromi, kinetic energy flying in all directions. - Time Out, New York City.

Songs on Borsht with Bread Brothers: Klezmer

1. Svalava Kozatshok (Ukraine)

This was a Ukrainian male folk dance in 2/4 time, popularized by the Cossacks (military border guards). Men performed this physically challenging dance to show off their athletic skills. The listener should imagine him or herself having stumbled into a Rom tavern.

2. Mermelshteyn's Nign (Slovakia)

The arrangement, with its more refined opening and raucous "B" section, suggests the duality in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, between the salons of Vienna and the villages of eastern Slovakia.

3. Szo A Kakos Mar (Hungary)

(Hungarian: When the Rooster Crows) This is the most popular kharidic song among all Hungarian Jews and especially the Hungarian khasidim (i.e. Satmar, Klausenberg). The lyrics are in Hungarian and Hebrew. The song is attributed to Rabbi Yitskhok Isaac Taub (1751-1821), the founder of Hungarian khasidism, and the rabbi of Nagykallo, Hungary, for some forty years.

4. Stoliner Shers I & II (Belarus)

The shers was a kind of klezmer square-dance that was popular even among the local Belarussians, Poles and Ukrainians. Here, one shers moves into another as it would at a dance. Stoliner is a town in Belarus: a Khasid is an orthodox Jew who follows a specific philosophy of Judaism.

5. Mayn Nign (Germany)

(Hebrew: Refusal Melody) This melody is the only one on this recording from Germany. The custom was that a bride and groom could be standing at the wedding canopy and still have the opportunity to refuse the marriage. Many people might not realize that klezmer Yiddish instrumental dance music) originated in the Rhine Valley region – the same area where the Yiddish language and Ashkenazic culture were born.

6. Vemen Veln Mr Dinen, Brider (Russia)

One of the lasting influences the military bands had on klezmer music was the instrumentation of the bands. Before the 19th century there were not many brass or woodwind instruments in a band. This arrangement is militaristic, particularly as the drums and other instruments swell up over the lone violin, which was the Jewish voice. The vocals mimic the clarinet in its typical glissandi and sighs.

7. Oberek Palota iSlovakia)

This tune came from a Slovakian village called Palota, near the Polish border. Later Slovakia was separated from the rest of the country and became a fascist German puppet state in March 1939. One can hear the influence of polka in this syncopated waltz.

8. Ki Onu Amekho (Poland)

(Hebrew: We Are Your People). This melody was a Gerer nign. It was sung by Rabbi Icshe Mayer during the High Holidays in Gora Kalwaria, Poland, known by the Jews as Ger. Up to the eve of World War II, the largest kharidic sect in Poland were the Gerer khasidim, led by their charismatic rebe, Rabbi Abraham Mordecai Alcer.

9. Bughici's Khosedl (Romania)

In the Moldavia-Bessarabia region before World War II, there were several well-known klezmer kepelyes. They were the Lemesi, Bughici, Goct and Sigally kapelyes. A khosedl (Yid. small kharid) was a medium tempo khasidic dance in 2/4 either danced in a circle or a line.

10. Kalarasher Bulgar (Moldova)

We start the piece off as a bulgar, one of the most common dance tunes in the popular klezmer repertoire of southern Ukraine and Bessarabia. Then we change the rhythm to a fast freylekhs, the most common klezmer line dance played at weddings in Eastern Europe.

11. Ver Es ken Keseyder Tseyln (Ukraine)

(Yiddish: Who Can Count in Order) This Yiddish song comes from the town of Cernerivci (called Tshimerovits by the Jews). This wedding song is enhanced by the addition of batkhones, the art of improvised rhyme singing and talking that was traditionally sung by the batkhn (wedding bard/jester) at the wedding reception.

12. Ben Avrameni (Romania)

This is a melody I composed based upon music that I had heard played by Rom musicians, who often were the only purveyors of klezmer music in the towns and villages in the Romanian province of Moldavia and in the country of Moldova after the Holocaust.

Everyday Jews:
Scenes From A Vanished Life
by Yehoshue Perle

I am writing to let you know of a new book that may be of interest to your readers, *Everyday Jews: Scenes From A Vanished Life*, by Yehoshue Perle.

Because of the relevant content, I am contacting you in hopes that you would review the book, or note it in your newsletter. I will send a review copy.

The URL is: <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=9780300116373>

Juliann Phelps
Yale University Press
Internet Marketing Manager
302 Temple St.
New Haven, CT 06511

On Sept. 1, 2007, Yale University Press released *Everyday Jews: Scenes From A Vanished Life*, by Yehoshue Perle; edited by David G. Roskies; translated by Maier Deshell and Margaret Birstein.

When *Everyday Jews* was first published in Poland in 1935, the Jewish Left was scandalized by the sex scenes. I. B. Singer complained that the novel was too bleak to be psychologically credible. Yet within two years Perle's novel was heralded as a modern Yiddish masterpiece. Offering a unique blend of raw sexuality and romantic love, thwarted desire and spiritual longing, *Everyday Jews* now is considered Perle's consummate achievement.

The voice of Mendl, the novel's 12-year-old narrator, is precisely captured by this artfully simple translation. Mendl's impoverished and dysfunctional family struggles to survive in a nameless Polish provincial town. In his unsettled world, most ordinary people yearn to be somewhere else—or someone else. As Mendl journeys to adulthood, Perle captures the complex interplay of Christians and Jews, weekdays and Sabbaths, town and country, dream and reality, against a relentless and never-ending battle of the sexes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yehoshue Perle (1888-1943) was one of Poland's most popular, controversial, and prolific Yiddish novelists of the interwar and wartime-period. In his introduction to the novel, David G. Roskies, Sol & Evelyn Henkind Professor of Yiddish Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, opens up Perle's tragic life and undiscovered oeuvre to a new generation of readers.

Shpil ma zhon af yidish
Play Mah Jongg in Yiddish
By Varda Grinspan

Tiles: Kakh! (kakhlen) Pieces

Vint Winds

There are four winds each one has four tiles they come to the Yiddish language from Hebrew

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| 4 Tsofn | North |
| 4 Dorem | South |
| 4 Mizrakh | East |
| 4 Mayrev | West |

Drakonen Dragons

There are three kinds of dragons

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 4 Royte Drakon | Red Dragon |
| 4 Grine Drakon | Green Dragon |
| 4 Zeyf oder Vays | Soap or whites, (also is used as zero) |

| | |
|-----------|---------|
| 8 Blimen | Flowers |
| 8 Zhokers | Jokers |

| | |
|------------|--------|
| 4 Pintlekh | Dots |
| 4 Bambu | Bams |
| 4 Shpaltn | Cracks |

Oysdrukn Expressions

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pasn di Drakonen | Matching Dragons |
| Shpaltz mit royte Drakonen | Cracks with Reds |
| Pintlekh mit vayse Drakonen | Dots with Whites |
| Bambu mit grine Drakonen | Bams with Greens |
| Lomir shpiln | Let's play |
| Di shpilers | The players |
| Di baleboste | The hostess |
| Tsumish di kakhlen | Mix the tiles |
| Makh a vant | Make a wall |
| Mir shpiln umzeygerdik | We play counter-clockwise |
| Nem a kakh!l | Take a tile |
| Varf avek | Discard |
| A Por | A Pair |
| Pung: Dray zelbe kakhlen | Pung: 3 like tiles |
| Kong: Fir zelbe kakhlen | Kong: 4 like tiles |
| Makh a to'es | Make a mistake |

Each year a new card is sold that shows the year, and different game (hands) are on those cards to make it interesting to play.

National Mah Jongg League, Inc.
250 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10107
Phone: 212-246-3052
Website: www.nationalmahjonggleague.org