

Der Bay

The International Anglo-Yiddish Newsletter

March 2008

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The XII IAYC Conference, La Jolla, CA, Oct. 24-27, 2008 Our Evening Programs

After a day filled with learning, listening, watching and making new friends you will lean back and be entertained. Each evening will be filled with great entertainment.

Opening Night

Cantor Hale Porter will say the blessings and greetings will be given by **IAYC President, Paul Melrood**. Then **Conference Chair, Norman Sarkin** will introduce His Honor the Mayor.

Our entertainment begins this first night with master raconteur **Archie Barkan**. You will recognize him, for he will be the moderator of the first afternoon teacher's panel. He also performed at a previous conference when the IAYC was at the UCLA Conference Center ten years ago.

Next **Debby Davis and The Second Avenue Klezmer Ensemble** will perform. Several members of the band have been in the music department at U.C. San Diego. As a group they are a musician's dream. In addition to being magnificent performers, both singer Debby and **Professor Bob Zelickman** will be presenters.

Second Night

This will be a very special time, for it will be the third consecutive conference that the **Arbeter Ring/Workmen's Circle** has sponsored the Saturday Evening Gala Event of Stars under the leadership of **Adrienne Cooper** and **Zalmen Mlotek**. Each year they have

introduced young rising performers who are becoming names on the Yiddish Circuit. As they are added, their names will be placed on the IAYC updated list found on the website (listed below).

IAYC will feature its Third Lifetime Yiddish Service Award. We are proud to announce that this year's award will go to the brilliant, **Lilke Majzner**, leader of the LA Yiddish Culture Club, the #1 Yiddish club in the West. She follows in the footsteps of **Chana Mlotek** and **Simon Swersky**.

Final Night

First we shall honor the IAYC "Scholarship" Award winners and Norman Sarkin's stellar La Jolla Committee. It will be the start for a great night of entertainment.

Raquel Leisorek's San Diego Yiddish Club will perform Mayn Sheyne Meydl, which is the Yiddish version of My Fair Lady. There was a wonderful video made of the first performance and distributed to the IAYC clubs.

Closing out the evening will be **Yale Strom**, the leading ethnographer-artist of klezmer who will perform with his wife **Elizabeth Schwartz** and his West Coast group, **Klazzj**,

Conference website: www.derbay.org/lajolla/
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Yiddish Dance Action Network

by Helen Winkler

Thanks for sending me the e-mail edition of *Der Bay*. Please include information in *Der Bay* about a new initiative in Yiddish dance that is a result of the recent Yiddish Dance Symposium at NYU.

<http://www.yiddishdance.com/zamler.html>
Calling All *Zamlers!
The Yiddish Dance Action Network Needs You

For hundreds of years, Ashkenazi Jews were part of a diverse tapestry of ethnic communities in Eastern and Central Europe. Dance, particularly during wedding festivities, was an important means of cultural expression and community cohesion for Jews living in cities and shtetlekh alike. These old Jewish folk dances are now known as Yiddish dances. Examples include the freylekhs, bulgar and sher. The website at: www.yiddishdance.com has more about the dances.

A variety of factors caused most traditional Yiddish dance and associated klezmer repertoire to fall almost completely out of practice by the 1960s. While remnants of a limited number of dance forms and gestures are retained in Hasidic communities, today there are but a few elderly immigrant and second-generation Jews who still perform, or can even recall traditional dance from either Europe or America.

The Yiddish Dance Action Network is a non-profit association of musicians, dancers, ethnographers and others who strive to document and continue the traditions of Yiddish Dance. We seek materials and memories that will help complete the picture of what Yiddish dance was and what it can be. Examples of useful documentation include: memories of Yiddish dancing; perhaps you have a family member or friend who recalls the old dances and wants to share these memories, old family films, home movies or photos of celebrations that feature Yiddish dance, written descriptions in books or personal accounts of the dances, such as written memoirs

If you have information about the dances that you would like to share, please contact us:

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From Dr. Meinhard Mayer

Editor's note: Dr Mayer and Dr. Scherzer will be at the IAYC Conference. They both were childhood classmates of Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter o"n.

ikh hob gehat an intervyyu afn "yidishn kol" in Boston tsu di shloyshim far morkhe shekhtern in mertz 2007. men ken es hern oder arupludn af: <http://yv.org/sound/mordkhe-schaechter-shloyshim-mar-21-07-yiddish-voice.mp3>

21 March 2007: Shloyshim Program for Dr. Schaechter. [Audio/MP3:] Audio Available: Program in memory of Mordkhe Schaechter Listen <<http://yv.org/sound/mordkhe-schaechter-shloyshim-mar-21-07-yiddish-voice.mp3>> to the show MP3 format (~25 MB). To download, click at: <<http://yv.org/sound/mordkhe-schaechter-shloyshim-mar-21-07-yiddish-voice.mp3>>. PRESS RELEASE: The Yiddish Voice: Program in Memory of Mordkhe Schaechter Z"L WUNR 1600 AM/Boston - Wednesday, March 21, 2007, 7:30 to 8:30 PM

The Boston Yiddish-language radio show The Yiddish Voice presented a program in memory of Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter, following Shloyshim, thirty days of mourning, on Wednesday, March 21, 2007, at 7:30 PM on WUNR 1600 AM radio in Boston, and also livestreamed on the web at yiddishvoice.com. Mordkhe Schaechter, who passed away on February 15 at age 79, was widely considered the leading Yiddish language expert of his day, and promoted use and knowledge of Yiddish over decades as a writer, educator, editor, publisher, and leading participant in various organizations, projects, and publications devoted to Yiddish.

The show featured an introduction by Dovid Braun and his interviews with Itzik Gottesman, Associate Editor of the Yiddish Forward and Schaechter's nephew; Joshua (Shikl) Fishman, sociolinguist friend, colleague and collaborator of Schaechter's; and Meinhard Mayer, Professor Emeritus of Physics and Mathematics at UC Irvine and friend of Schaechter's from their school days in Czernowitz. Excerpts of past interviews with Schaechter on The Yiddish Voice were heard, and cohosts Meyer Dovid and Hasia Segal participated.

The Yiddish Voice ("Dos Yidishe Kol" in Yiddish) is a weekly Yiddish language radio show broadcast on WUNR 1600 AM, Wednesdays, 7:30 - 8:30 PM.

Ph: 1-617-730-8484, website: yiddishvoice.com

Mah Jongg Revisited

by Sydney Turk Porter

Congratulations to Elaine Sandberg and her new book ("Newest Mah-Jongg Players 'Crak' Stereotypes - Bam!" This was a letter to the editor published in the Dec. 21, 2007, issue of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles.) Yes, mah-jongg has definitely cracked age and racial barriers. The game has grown in popularity, as Jay Firestone points out in his article in Lifecycles.

Last August, I accompanied my husband (Cantor Hale Porter) who participated and lectured at the International Association of Yiddish Clubs (IAYC) conference held in Cleveland, Ohio.

It was a four-day event and each day at lunch time (we hurried to finish our meal early) and again often at 10 p.m., four women met in the lobby of the hotel and played "Yiddish Mahj."

One of the women suggested we play using Yiddish in place of English and so we did. Cracks became "shpaltn," dots became "pintlekh," a red dragon was called "royte drakon," etc. My Yiddish-speaking husband, Hale Porter, corrected our pronunciation and vocabulary list, and we had so much fun speaking Yiddish mahj.

Spreading the word and game even further, I am teaching mah-jongg to seniors who reside at Beverly Carmel Assisted Living in West Los Angeles. It's also good for the memory and to help people to use their brain cells.

Thanks to The Jewish Journal, Elaine Sandberg and American Jewish University for spreading the word.

Jewish Documentary Depicts History of the Jews of Miami Beach

by Hindi Diamond

"Where Neon Goes to Die" is a new documentary that will be shown on PBS, Channel 2 and it will be available all over the United States. (When I asked the producer, why that title, he stated that Lenny Bruce had suggested it. However, I would have called the film "A Jewish Legacy - A Legacy of Love to Miami Beach, Florida.")

It is a poignant love letter focusing on the heyday of Yiddishland on South Beach, Florida. The documentary chronicles the Jews' vitality that thrived in the 1950s as well as in the 1960s and imbued the area with an outstanding Yiddish culture, theatre and music.

Producer David Weintraub was a lawyer whose great-aunt, poet Dora Teitelboim, established a foundation in Miami to promote Yiddish culture and David agreed to head the organization that began in Coral Gables, Florida, in 1992.

He became the Director of the Dora Teitelboim Center for Yiddish culture, and he began researching and setting up exhibits and publishing illustrated books in Yiddish for adults as well as children.

The documentary which began airing this week and will be shown several times, encompasses the heyday of Jewish culture and life which has slowly been decimated by the passing of many of the senior population that enjoyed and participated in it. Says David: "During those years, Yiddish culture underwent a tremendous revival in Miami Beach, it was like the Catskills coming south."

Postscript: He had interviewed me for some comments and knew that I was the first one to teach Yiddish on a college level, but we had no idea when it would begin showing on television. My close girlfriend called very excitedly last Sunday and said she was cooking in the kitchen with her TV on, when she heard my voice, which shocked her. She ran in, saw the film and liked it very much. Later, some friends from California called and said they saw it too.

Steve Lasky Writes

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First, I'd like to ask you if you can tell me the English translation of the Yiddish play title, "In a Farkishftn Krayz." Buloff was in it, but I can't figure out what the English title would be.

I finished transcribing an interview that was taped in 1998 with Yiddish actress Luba Kadison, and have interviews with Seymour Rexsite et al to do. The Kadison interview will be part of my "Kadison, Buloff and the Vilna Troupe" exhibition.

Secondly, you can see the only known biography of Maurice Schwartz and the Yiddish Art Theatre, exclusively published on my site. I am presenting it in a serialized form, a few chapters every month, so it should all be out there within a year.

I may announce it in the next couple weeks.
The link is: www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/mschwartz-ok.htm
I'm considering attending the IAYC Conference in La Jolla in October.

Port Royal Center for Jewish Life and Learning by Cantor Sheldon Feinberg

Cantor Sheldon Feinberg, is Curator of the Port Royal Library for Jewish Life and Learning. For 7 years he was the Religious Leader of Beth Israel Congregation, and Cantor at its 100 year old synagogue.

In 1998 he lectured to an Elderhostel group at Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia, the third oldest synagogue in the United States. Later the Rabbi Administrator of the Elderhostel suggested that he attend the South Carolina's Jewish Historical Society annual convention in Beaufort, SC—an hour's drive away.

He drove to Beaufort where " he was to be put up over the weekend in the congregation's house occupied by the retired rabbi. Met at the door of the house by the synagogue's president, she informed him that the "replacement" rabbi had gotten ill, and "would he take over the religious responsibilities for this period".

Sunday afternoon following Cantor Feinberg's attending the convention, a committee simply asked, whether the cantor would like to take over the retired rabbi's position? The rest is history.

Following his retirement at the age of 85 he undertook the responsibility of finding a free-standing structure to house his 700 book Library of Judaica, that was on loan to the synagogue.

In the neighborhood to which he moved from the "parish" house, the cantor noted an empty "caboose" (the last railway car of the defunct Port Royal Railroad going, from Beaufort, to Augusta, Georgia). He sought out its owner, Mr. John Keith, and learned that Mr. Keith was a "site developer" who established this refurbished railway car in Port Royal as an attraction.

Sheldon saw it as a perfect site for his library and after a remark by the city's librarian, (who noted its similarity to the "cattle cars" which transported Jewish victims to their deaths during the Holocaust), he inquired about its "rental" cost.

The gentleman asked "What do you want it for?"

The cantor said: "As a Jewish Cultural Center in memory of the 6,000,000!"

Mr. Keith's replied immediately "You have it" GRATIS!

The cantor conducts tours spelling out the 4000 year history. He narrates part of our history as they pass each of the 12 periods displayed on one of the 40 placards. Each one represents 100 years.

An Interesting Opinion from the online Yiddish Forum by Reuven Kalifon

The Czernowitz Conference of 1908 had no follow-up. A decade before, the Zionist Congress was founded, and in its wake, a whole organization had been set up—including education, youth movements, money-gathering, land-purchase and more. In the Land of Israel, Hebrew was revived as a spoken language, and the promotion of Hebrew became a central activity.

The same Nathan Birnbaum who coined the term "Zionist", later left Zionism and organized the Czernowitz Conference, and coined yet a new term, "Yiddishist". So while the impression of Zionist activities was in the background of the 1908 Yiddish conference, still the Yiddishists did not create a parallel movement and the related activities. There wasn't a second conference.

The language continues to exist, and it is not in danger of extinction like Ladino (which no longer has any children who speak it). However, Yiddish survives because of a very special set of social circumstances: The haredi communities sense that Yiddish is a tool for maintaining a distinct and separate identity against the pressures of cultural assimilation and the adoption of a new (non-Jewish) identity in the west (I doubt if the haredim celebrated "dankstog"). Yiddish is seen as a symbol of the opposition to the Zionist narrative in the Land of Israel that defined Jewish identity anew.

For the non-haredi Jews, the importance of Yiddish has been lost. They are the mirror image of the haredi thinking: in the west, the adoption of a new identity ("Americanization") was seen as an ideal, and in the Land of Israel, Hebrew became the very heart of an "old-new" Jewish identity. In both cases, Yiddish had no role. For those non-haredi Yiddishists, who understand that language is a carrier of identity, it should be clear that something needs to be done.

It's not enough to say: "Through me, my family's dialect lives on..." It is absurd to make-believe as on the UN Human Rights website where it says, "Yiddish is the main language of Ashkenazi Jews..." It is possible to revive a language through dedication and self-sacrifice. Hebrew proves it.

Perhaps there was no follow-up after the conference (in 1908) because it was so self-evident that Yiddish was the language of the Jewish masses. Today, it is self-evident that this is not the case, and with the loss of a Jewish language comes the loss of a primary Jewish identity—and that's the real crisis of today's Diaspora.