

# The Edinburgh Star

Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

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# The Edinburgh Star

SYNAGOGUE CHAMBERS

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**Front Cover: The Queen, in an open coach, making her way to the Assembly Hall to open Scotland's parliament.**  
**Photograph taken from the Camera Obscura by David Moir.**

# Contents

**EDITORIAL** .....2

## COMMUNITY

Coming Events.....3

The Riffkin Column .....4

Congratulations .....5

Council of Christians and Jews – Christian Influences  
on Indian Jewry by Sass Jadah.....5

A Wedding in Jerusalem.....6

## PEOPLE

What does it mean to be Jewish? – Eva Neuberg-Erdelyi  
and Marianne Laszlo .....7

A Double Profile: Willie and Betty Caplan – Ian Shein .....9

Star Trek into the Past .....10

A first Novel by Suzanne Glass.....8 and 11

## ARTICLES

The Jewish Community and the Scottish Parliament –  
Philip Schlesinger .....12

Victim of the Holocaust – David Goldberg .....14

Anti-Semitism in Music – Esti Sheinberg .....16

## REVIEWS

David's Gift at the Theatre Workshop – reviewed by Janet Mundy .....22

Avigdor Arikha Retrospective – Reviewed by Samuel Robin Spark .....24

## IN MEMORIAM

Louis Pinto, Rachel Morrison .....28

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Andy Mackie, Stefan Reif.....29

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*Mr & Mrs Harold Mendelssohn for kindly defraying the cost of sending **The Edinburgh Star** overseas.*



A great deal has happened since the publication of our last issue in February of this year and many of the most significant events of the last few months have had, or ought to have had, particular significance for our community.

The ethnic conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians in Kosovo, and the attempt by the former to 'cleanse' their 'national home' of the latter, brings back memories of the Nazi's attempts to rid Europe of Jews and other 'aliens'. Whether, as some critics argued, NATO's aims could have been achieved more effectively and with less suffering if the Western powers had been prepared to commit ground forces at the outset, or, as other critics claimed, the bombing served only to make the situation worse, are no longer issues of great importance and the priorities must now be to assist the return of the refugees, to repair the physical damage which resulted from the bombing, and to rebuild the shattered community on a nonsectarian basis. The Jewish community has always been generous in its support of humanitarian appeals and, in deciding which worthwhile causes to support, **The Edinburgh Star** urges its readers to heed the advice of our religious and communal leaders and to give generous support to the reconstruction of Kosovo. It is a sobering thought to recall that, although the roots of the conflict between the various religious, ethnic and national communities in the Balkans go back a long time, they seemed to have been resolved in postwar Yugoslavia where, until 10 years ago, the different communities lived peacefully side-by-side. Against this background, the fact that communal strife has manifested itself with such ferocity should be a reminder to all of us that we need to respond vigorously to any manifestation of racial prejudice or ethnic discrimination wherever and whenever it takes place.

The defeat of Binyamin Net anyahu by Ehud Barak in the Israeli general election was a clear expression of the electorate's loss of confidence in the seemingly unprincipled and ultimately unsuccessful policies of the former Prime Minister and of a clear wish to continue the search for peace started by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres and set out in the Oslo Agreement. Ehud Barak's victory has greeted with considerable relief by a majority of Jews in the Diaspora, not least because it has brought their views into line with those of the Israeli government.

Nearer at home, we have witnessed the election of the first Scottish Parliament in almost 300 years. Although a goodly number of Scottish Jews have, over the years, been elected to Westminster, none have, as far as we know, been elected to Holyrood. This probably reflects the continuing decline in the size and influence of the Jewish community in Scotland. That notwithstanding, the devolution of powers to legislate over a wide range of domestic issues which could potentially affect the well-being of the Jewish community, means that devolution is of great significance for us. **The Edinburgh Star** welcomes the establishment of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, which will represent the community's views to the Scottish Parliament, the decision by the Board of Deputies to fund a public affairs officer, and the agreement of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation to provide accommodation for the postholder. Readers of **The Edinburgh Star** who have not hitherto paid the voluntary levy to the Board of Deputies may wish to reconsider their decision.

Although, compared with these events, our local problems are necessarily of much less significance, they are of considerable importance for the well-being of our community and, as such, are worthy of reflection and comment. The *Shul* Council's recommendation that the land and buildings behind the synagogue and community centre should be sold to the Glasgow Jewish Housing Association (GJHA) to build amenity housing for elderly members of the community, and the Trustees' opposition to this proposal, have created an unprecedented degree of disagreement in the community. Those in favour of the proposal argued that there was both a need and a demand for such accommodation and that selling the land would not only enable the caretaker's house to be renovated, the *Mikveh* to be rebuilt and the synagogue roof to be repaired, but would also ensure the longer-term financial viability of the community by enabling it to remain on its present site. Opponents claimed that the community was being asked to support a scheme which had been developed by GJHA and did not meet the needs of our community, and that selling the land would undermine the integrity of the site and, by so doing, jeopardise the longer-term financial interests of the community in the event of its having to move to smaller premises. Unfortunately, they did not put forward any alternative and the community was therefore presented with an 'all or nothing' choice.

To an outsider, the dispute resonated with earlier conflicts between the Lords (representing the views of the aristocracy) and the Commons (representing those of the people) and between the 'old guard' (consisting mainly of well-established second and third generation families) and the 'new guard' (who largely consist of newcomers from elsewhere). It also resonates with the conflicts in Israel between those who are prepared to trade land for a greater good



(peace in Israel, financial viability in Edinburgh) and those who are not. There were, of course some notable exceptions to these characterisations - people who might have expected would hold one set of views who held the other. However, although all analogies involve a degree of oversimplification (and those mentioned above are no exception), there is more than a grain of truth in each of them

However, this was clearly not a black and white issue. The real tragedy is that the arguments were not resolved and a compromise solution found before the issue was put to a vote. It is vitally important now that the Council and the Trustees should take stock of their respective positions. The Council needs to recognise that it was partly to blame for the way in which it handled the proposal (in particular for the way in which it let GJHA do all the running, albeit with the active participation of individual members of the Council). The Minutes which were circulated at the AGM reveal that the Council did not consider the scheme until its meeting on 10th March 1999 when 'a protocol and timetable for presenting the proposed housing development to the Trustees, Council and Community' was discussed, although it had been under consideration by GJHA for a considerable period. At the same time, the Trustees need to accept that, although it was generally recognised that the proposals were imperfect, a clear majority of the community was prepared to back them and that they did not come up with any alternative. The problems faced by the community were given a considerable airing at the Special Meeting and at the AGM and it is clear that the Council and the Trustees need to work together to find a solution to them. They will be letting down the community if they fail to do so.

This issue of *The Edinburgh Star* reflects some but not all the issues referred to in this editorial. In the light of the horrendous events in Kosovo, it is appropriate that we should recall the holocaust and we are very pleased to publish David Goldberg's autobiographical account of his own experiences and a review of Andy Mackie's play 'David's Gift' at the Theatre Workshop, which incorporates his story. In response to devolution, we are also very pleased to publish an article on 'The Jewish Community and the Scottish Parliament' by Professor Philip Schlesinger. In addition, this issue includes a very stimulating article by Dr. Esti Sheinberg on 'Anti-Semitism in Music', a review of the Avigdor Arikha retrospective at the Gallery of Modern Art by Robin Spark, a profile of much-loved community stalwarts Willie and Betty Caplan, and much else besides. We hope you will enjoy it.

MA

### COMING EVENTS

The Friendship Club meets on alternate Sundays at 3.00 p.m. For dates and further details of activities over the summer period, contact Willie Caplan (667 7984).

Junior Maccabi meets on alternate Sundays from 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.. For further information, contact Judy Fransman (447 5861).

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members' homes. For further information contact Howard Nichoisby (317 7563).

The Jewish Philosophical Society meets every month on a Sunday in members' homes.

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30 p.m..

The Friendship Club meets every second Sunday at 3.00 p.m. For further information, contact Willie Caplan (667 7984).

The Parent and Toddler group meets on Sunday mornings at 10.00 a.m.

There are no meetings of the Literary Society or the Council of Christians and Jews during the summer months. In both cases, programmes commence after the High Holidays.

All meetings are subject to alteration.

All the above events, unless otherwise stated, take place in the Community Centre, 4 Salisbury Road.



## FREDA RIFFKIN REPORTS....

### WIZO DINNER 13th February 1999

This dinner was well patronised as usual. The Wizo Committee, organised as always, upheld their normal high standard of catering and the meal was much enjoyed by all.

It was followed by a concert from yet one more of Edinburgh's talented community, Brian Levy. His extremely professional singing was much enjoyed and rounded off another successful social occasion at which £1,000 was raised for Wizo.

### COMMUNAL HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE — ANTIQUES ROAD SHOW 14th March 1999

The Communal Hall Committee once again secured the expertise of the Goodwin family to give us a dazzling show of knowledge, not to mention a dazzling show of beautiful jewellery and silver, which the audience was invited to value. The winner, whose guess was nearest to the valuation, was Norman Berger who, for the second time, won a £50.00 voucher for use in the Goodwin shops.

The audience then submitted various items for inspection and valuation and some extremely interesting objects were to be seen, including some lovely items belonging to the synagogue which are not normally on show.

This was another excellent result for the hard-working Committee.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE EDINBURGH HEBREW CONGREGATION 19th June 1999

This was an unusually packed meeting. 112 members arrived to debate a controversial subject — the proposed sale of part of the synagogue's land to the Glasgow

Jewish Housing Association for the provision of amenity housing for seven to ten elderly Jewish people.

The first part of the meeting consisted of the election of Honorary Vice Presidents, Wardens and Members of the Council. The following were elected:

Honorary Vice Presidents: John Cosgrove, Malcolm Cowan, Dr. N A Oppenheim

Wardens: David Goldberg and Sass Judah

Members of Council: Mesdames Carole Cowan, Anita Mendelssohn and Rose Orgel, Messrs Laurence Bowman, John Danzig, Jonathan Sperber, Bill Simpson, Bill Sinclair, Richard Winetrobe and Michael Wittenberg, Drs Ian Leifer and Philip Mason.

Dr Ian Leifer and Mr Bill Simpson were re-elected President and Honorary Treasurer respectively.

The financial report was presented by the Hon Treasurer, who pointed out the need for an increase in subscriptions. This proposal was duly carried and the report duly adopted.

The President reported on the work of the Board of Deputies and informed the Congregation of the formation of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities whose role would be to monitor the Scottish Parliament. From now on, the annual contribution to the Board of Deputies will be divided equally between the Board and the Scottish Committee.

John Danzig reported on the activities of the Future Generations Committee which had received a grant from UJIA to meet the costs of setting up a resource centre in the community centre.

The President then moved a Constitutional Amendment to Article 24 to the effect that matters relating to the sale or purchase of all

or part of the Congregation's property shall be determined by a two thirds majority. This was passed by a large majority on a secret ballot.

The meeting then moved on to discuss the proposal to sell the land behind the Synagogue to the Glasgow Jewish Housing Association. Jonny Sperber took the chair and Bill Simpson outlined the thinking behind the proposal. The proposal would enable the Glasgow Jewish Housing Association to build seven flats and a new mikvah on the site and to refurbish the caretaker's house. In addition, the Glasgow Jewish Housing Association would pay for the land in cash and had guaranteed to maintain the site. The motion was proposed by the Hon. Treasurer and seconded by your correspondent who pointed out that care of the elderly should be one of the highest priorities in modern society. A full discussion followed with opposing points of view put forward by various members.

There was a secret ballot, the result of which was 62 for and 45 against the motion — 10 short of the required two-thirds majority. The motion was formally abandoned by the Council; and the meeting concluded at about midnight.

### WIZO LUNCH 29th June 1999

Once again, Katie and Ronnie Goodwin made their house available for one of the year's most eagerly awaited functions, the annual Wizo lunch. For once, the weather did not smile on the function for it was a dreich Edinburgh summer's day. However, over 100 guests enjoyed the Goodwin's hospitality and a beautifully catered meal by the Wizo Committee. Over £1,000 was raised for Wizo, an outstanding sum which says much for the enthusiastic Committee and for Katie's leadership.



## COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

*Blanche Mundy summarises a talk given by Sass Judah on 'Christian Input in the Religious Evolution of Indian Jewry' to the CCJ on Thursday 11th March 1999.*

Sass Judah began his talk by noting that it was a matter of surprise to many people that for centuries Jews have entered fully into the pattern of Indian life and that people were even more surprised that Jews were there in the first place.

The first mention of Jews in connection with India occurs in the Book of Esther. Reference is made to decrees of Ahasuerus which make it clear that Jews were dispersed throughout the 127 provinces of the Empire, which stretched from India to Ethiopia.

The Jews of India fall into three main groups. The largest of these groups is the Bene Israel, the Children of Israel, who, it is believed, originally came from Palestine and were shipwrecked on the West Coast of India about 20 miles south of Bombay. At their peak in 1947 they numbered about 20,000 but, with the establishment of the State of Israel, there was a mass exodus in 1948, leaving fewer than 3,000 behind. A smaller group, known as the Cochin Jews, numbered not more than 2,500, of whom only about a dozen elderly men and women remain. The third group consisted of Jews who came as traders, mainly from Baghdad, in the 19th Century and settled in Calcutta. In the 1947 Census they numbered about 5,000 but only about 250 remain today.

By tradition, according to the writings of the early Church fathers, two apostles of Jesus of Nazareth went to India to preach Christianity. St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew converted many of the Hindu population but their efforts had little effect on the Jewish settlements. In 1172 David Maimonides (brother of Moses) visited India and was convinced of their religious devotion and sincerity. Although the lifting of the ban on missionary activity in India in 1813 resulted in the large-scale conversion of the

Hindu population, it had little or no effect on the Jews. In fact, the Christian missionaries taught them to read and understand Hebrew and, having established printing presses, provided them with copies of the Bible and grammar guides free of charge. They opened schools to which they welcomed Jewish pupils and the speaker expressed his admiration for the private Missionary school of more than 1,200 pupils which he attended. Although there were very few Jewish pupils at the school, and the school curriculum offered no classes in Jewish history or Torah study, non-Christian students were provided with separate morning prayers, excused from school on Jewish Holidays and exempted from attending school sports day as it fell on the Sabbath. Jewish pupils attended *Cheder* after school and on Sunday mornings. Jews mixed with Protestants, Catholics Muslims, Hindus and others from a variety of religious backgrounds but were not assimilated. It is clear that the influence of Christianity on the Indian Jews was minimal but the influence of Christians on the religious welfare of Indian Jews was substantial.

After the meeting, Sass' wife Sinora Judah provided a delicious 'taste of India' to the large audience.

*Sass Judah, who is a graduate of the University of Bombay, is a prominent member of the community and Junior Warden of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.*

*With Compliments  
from  
Jess Franklin*

205 Stenhouse Street  
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## CONGRATULATIONS

The Editorial Board offers its warmest congratulations to:

**The Editor** on his forthcoming marriage to Sue Fyvel.

**Simon Brodie**, elder son of Norma and Ian Brodie, on his recent marriage to Sarah, which was solemnised by Rabbi Jonathan Romaine of Maidenhead Reform Synagogue. Simon has been serving with H M Forces in Macedonia.

**Paul Gilbert**, youngest son of Tony and Judy Gilbert, on being awarded an MSc in Biotechnology from the University of Kent at Canterbury last summer. (*Apologies for not reporting this before. It was an oversight. Ed.*)

**David Mason**, elder son of Philip and Irene Mason, on his engagement to Elisheva Ciesielska of Lodz, Poland.

**Elaine Samuel and Ros Abramsky** on their elections as President and Secretary of the Jewish Literary Society.

**Pearl and Ian Shein**, on the birth of a grand-daughter, Miri, in Dawlish, Devon (a fifth grandchild).

**Debbie and Danny Sinclair** on the marriage of their daughter Yael to David Berman in Jerusalem (see report below).

# CHIQUÉ

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## A WEDDING IN JERUSALEM

*Judy Sischy writes:* How could we ever have hesitated? It was Yael's wedding and we were guests of Danny and Debbie Sinclair. The *simcha* was at the end of May and we were warmly invited, nay exhorted, to attend.

Many readers of *The Edinburgh Star* will have fond memories of the 'Sinclair era', when Danny was Rabbi in Edinburgh from 1984 to 1988. Perhaps none more than us, not only through our friendship with Danny and Debbie, but also through our daughters, Debbie and Jenny. Debbie was instructed by Danny for her *Batmitzvah* and Jenny became a close friend of Yael who was exactly her age, bar a day, and a true soul-mate. It was wonderful to see the girls grow up together and, to use current jargon, to watch how they bonded, despite differences in culture, in nationality and in personality. They cared for each other deeply, had tremendous fun and a rare affinity, which survived time, distance and even illness. Yael - and the whole family - were firm, steadfast and true friends to Jenny to the end.

When the Sinclairs returned to Israel we kept in close touch, largely through Jenny and latterly through Debbie, and we heard from time to time about Yael's career and her love life. We were, however, not quite prepared for the phone call last December from Yael to tell us that she was engaged to David Berman and that they were planning a wedding in May - on 25 May 1999 to be precise. Would we come? After only momentary hesitation, we resolved to go and we accepted the invitation with pleasure and excitement. For Debbie it was also an opportunity to visit the friends she had made in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Dimona and Ashkelon during her nine months in Israel last year; for us it was an excuse to revisit Israel and build a week's break around the wedding. It would also be a week after the Israeli elections and an interesting time to be in the country.

Not being experienced in orthodox Jewish weddings, especially in Israel, we began to



*Yael at her wedding with Judy, Mark and Debbie Sischy.*

gather advice as to the customs, rules and regulations of such an occasion. In the end, we resorted to telephoning the Sinclairs in Jerusalem, as the advice was becoming encyclopaedic and like all sources of Judaic advice, conflicting. Debbie Sinclair clarified our queries and, joy of joys, simply advised that the ladies should wear long sleeves.

The wedding was held in the Yehuda Gardens in the hills in Talpiot overlooking Jerusalem. The *Chuppah* was outside and on arrival, there was Yael in the gardens, looking radiant, beautiful and serene, greeting guests with warmth and excitement. Although we had spoken to her, and to Debbie and Danny, the day before, it was a stunning and moving moment to be greeted by Yael as a bride. Despite all resolutions to remain dry-eyed, an unwelcome tear appeared to signal the emotion and happiness we felt for Yael and the family.

We quickly had a peep at the groom, David, who was at the other side of the gardens with his family and what seemed to be countless rabbis and learned gentlemen giving him last-minute advice and instruction. Yael's brothers, Yonathan and Noam, and her cousins kept us informed and we soon recognised family and friends whom we had met before, or whom we felt we had met before, from the many family stories the girls used to exchange. Although Israeli, David's

family emanated from Leeds and as at all weddings, we found hitherto unexplored connections with other guests. We met 'natives' from Edinburgh and found that the world continues to be a shrinking place. We were made to feel very special and were warmly welcomed by family and friends; we met lots of interesting people and enjoyed meeting both Sinclair and Berman guests, although the demarcation lines between them soon became well and truly blurred. Addresses were exchanged and promises of future contacts made; there was food and dancing - and rabbis - in abundance, and a wonderful atmosphere of relaxed joy.

Our abiding memories will be of the *Chuppah* itself in the balmy, warm evening surrounded by stunning views of Jerusalem and the hills of Moab; of the ceremony in the gardens; of the voices, the singing and the music; of the blessings being sung, each by a different rabbi or member of the family; of Yael resplendent in a simple but stunningly beautiful dress; of Debbie Sinclair's smile bursting with pride and happiness; of Danny's unique and melodious voice striking joyous, yet for us painful, heart strings and of the happy couple circulating amongst the guests making each one of us feel special and part of their precious day. And there was Israel too - but that's another story.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE JEWISH?

In this issue, we print two unsolicited contributions to our series. The Editor would welcome further contributions from readers.

### Eva Neuburg-Erdelyi

To me personally it means to identify with the Jewish people, past, present and future, Oriental, European, African or American, and, of course, with Israel. This identification I acquired only as a married woman and young mother. My family background had been entirely non-religious and non-zionist. My grandparents had already been "assimilated"; they spoke German and, probably, also Czech because they lived in Prague. They certainly did not know Yiddish, and if they had learnt some Hebrew in their youth, they had not made use of it in later life.

My mother's father, whose name was Heinrich Feitis, grew up in a Jewish village and was sent to *Cheder* in the nearest town, which was miles away. So the small boy had to leave home in the very early morning and walk two hours or more to learn what all Jewish boys had to learn. He hated it, and in his teens he revolted against his father and against religion. He studied at a German school and at the German University of Prague, becoming a successful and highly respected lawyer. He never denied or was ashamed of his Jewish origins, but for him, being a Jew merely meant not being a Christian, and belonging to a certain ethnic group, one of the many ethnic groups within the Austrian Empire.

My father's father, whose name was Sigmund Neuburg, was of a very different type, but equally, or even more 'assimilated' than my other grandfather. My grandmother Neuburg came from the prosperous and gifted family Perutz, which in due course produced one well known writer and one Nobel-prize-winning molecular biologist. I have seen German letters written by her in a beautiful hand and faultless

style. I inherited a small leather-bound prayer book from her, with Hebrew text and German translation. My father's parents had both died before I was born, but I remember my mother's parents well, as they were frequent visitors in our house, and we often visited their flat in Prague. If asked, what being Jewish meant to them, they would probably have answered 'nothing at all'.

In my childhood, the great event of the year was Christmas Eve. There was always a beautifully decorated, candle-lit tree with a star on top of it in our living room. There were also stockings hung out of the window to be filled by 'Nicolo', i.e. Santa Claus, and at Easter, when we were children we hunted for eggs in the garden. We knew nothing of Jewish festivals - the only Jewish communal event I can remember was a *Purim* party, for which my sister and I were dressed up in what today would be called 'ethnic' Austrian peasant costume. We had no idea what *Purim* was about and nobody told us. My mother taught us to pray, before going to sleep at night in German, of course. I knew that we did not pray to Jesus, because we were Jewish. All our little friends as well as our parents' friends, were Jewish too. In my childish world, only our servants and the peasants who came from neighbouring villages on market days were Christian.

When I started secondary school at the age of ten, there was one Jewish boy and one other Jewish girl in our class. Once a week, together with children from other classes, we had a lesson on Jewish religion. Our teacher was Dr. Morgenstern, the 'Rebbe' of our small, local community. He was not an attractive personality, to put it mildly. But the stories from the Old

Testament which we read in a little book called '*Biblische Geschichte*' (biblical history,) made a deep impression on my young mind. I discovered that we had forefathers in Palestine, (a romantic country with camels and palm trees whose fortunes and misfortunes I could sympathise and identify with. And the '*Liebe Gott*', whom I had hitherto regarded as a distant sort of super-father of all mankind, turned out to be not only that, but also our special protector and ally, who had endowed his 'Chosen People' (us) with very special responsibilities and privileges. I had the feeling that this was a great honour but wondered if one would have to work hard to deserve it. My mother had told us, that one had to deserve one's privileges.

Our teacher, Rabbi Morgenstern, wisely refrained from talking about *kashrut* and other *halachic* obligations, knowing very well what sort of homes we came from. But he did teach us the '*Shema*', and the Ten Commandments and told us that were written by the finger of God on the Tablets of the Covenant. We also got a bit of Hebrew grammar in his lessons, a slim basis for my later efforts in that direction. So I owe him thanks as well as apologies for the disrespect he had to suffer from all of us.

My religious inclinations, which were quite strong in my early teens gradually declined and disappeared completely in my student years at Vienna University. As schoolgirls, my mother had taken me and my sister to the local synagogue service on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. But during the ten years of my life in Vienna I never set foot in a synagogue. All the friends of my student years were Jewish but, with a few exceptions, they were either socialists, communists, or simply



agnostics, and to be Jewish meant nothing to them. One or two of my circle were Zionists, but long discussions with them failed to convince me to be one too. I knew, of course, that Jews had been persecuted in Poland, Russia and other Eastern European countries, but their world seemed to be so utterly different from our own that I felt I had nothing in common with them, until the day when Jewish students, myself among them, were thrown out of our university lecture rooms and the trickle of anti-Semitism turned into a flood in Austria and Germany. By that time, my sister had married a medical student from Berlin and had decided to emigrate to Palestine with him. To put it in a nutshell, it was Adolf Hitler who taught me to identify with my people.

When I arrived in Edinburgh, in 1938, we were welcomed, more or less enthusiastically, by a community of orthodox Jews, and one or two non-orthodox families. Of the latter I especially remember Mr. and Mrs. Davis, in whose hospitable home I ate my first 'gefillte fish'; and Dr. Ockrent from Glasgow, who later became a valued

friend of my second husband. Mrs. Ockrent's excellent readings from the works of Sholem Aleichem gave me a first taste of Yiddish culture, its sadness, its humour, and its resilience.

By that time, I was ready and eager to learn what Judaism was all about, and was looking for a guide, because I was indeed 'perplexed', and shaken out of my indifference. I started to take Hebrew lessons, and my first teacher, after Rabbi Morgenstern, was Arthur Erdelyi, who later became my second husband. He also showed me, how modern science and Jewish religion can live together happily in one mind. He gave me books to read, some of the works of Martin Buber for instance; other books I got from the Mitchell Library during the year I lived in Glasgow as an 'enemy alien'. During that year 1941-42, I regained not only the faith of my childhood, but I became what I have been since, and am now, a non-orthodox, believing, daughter of my people.

*Eva Erdelyi went on aliyah in 1987 and writes from Ramat Gan*

## Marianne Laszlo

To me, being Jewish means being different. In my earlier life in Hungary, I was different because I could not take part in all the normal extracurricular activities that my peer took part in. This was because I was a Jew and most these activities took place on Saturday, when I had to go to *Shul*.. When I was a child, I was not allowed to join the 'brownies', because no Jewish child was allowed to join that kind of organisation. In the classroom I was made to feel different too, because I did not go to morning worship with the rest of the class. I was left behind in the classroom with the three other Jewish girls. I also had different religious festivals but the country of my parents and grandparents was ruled by a fascist government which systematically

attempted to strangle Jewish existence.

After liberation from a concentration camp', I resumed my studies at secondary school. Yet again I was different, because I had a different experience of the Nazi occupation from the rest of the students in my class. I had a different story to tell about the war.

In my adult life, I have always been very aware that I am different. Even among the Jewish community in Edinburgh, I am made to feel different because I do not speak Hebrew and because I am not descended from the *shtetls* of Poland or Russia. To me, being Jewish means feeling different, even among Jews.

*Marianne Laszlo and her family left Hungary in 1956.*

## A FIRST NOVEL

Suzanne Glass's first novel **The Interpreter** was published by Century (an imprint of Random House UK Ltd.) in paperback at £10 on 3 June 1999. Here we present a short preview; in our next issue we hope to carry a review.

'Foxes. We interpreters are foxes and the speaker's words are our prey. We sneak, up behind them, snatch them, slip them upside down and play with them as we choose. But sometimes, just sometimes, they set up a booby trap. The idiom. And we are caught then, suddenly bloody and exposed in that trap, writhing and realising too late the meaning of those words and while we squirm sentence after sentence dashes past us, mocking and untouched.'

The interpreter is Dominique - half-British, half-French, young, talented, beautiful and unusual, she lives in Manhattan translating at top level medical conferences. Day in day out, she sits in a darkened booth working with the words that are the tools of her trade. A childhood spent in anguish, caught in her parent's crossfire, has served to perfect her skills as mediator.

At every conference, international groups of doctors and researchers rely on the sound of her voice. On a professional level, there is no turn of phrase she cannot master, but her ability to express herself on a personal level is limited. She has yet to find her own voice.

Working at a top medical conference in Manhattan, she overhears a whispered conversation about the suppression of a new HIV drug. She is thrown into turmoil because her ex-flatmate, Mischa, has AIDS. On the verge of divulging to Anna, their mutual friend, what she has overheard, the interpreter's mantra rings in her ears:

*Continued page 11*



## A Double Profile

# WILLIE AND BETTY CAPLAN

by Ian Shein

Perhaps it would be at the *Shabbas* Service in the Synagogue, or at a weekday or evening Service; it could well be at one of the numerous meetings taking place in the community centre; indeed it might also be at a function held there; whatever is going on within the Edinburgh Jewish community, one can be certain of the smiling, cheerful presence of Willie Caplan. Salisbury Road is his second home. In many of the above activities, Betty, his wife of 57 years, is there to afford him the solid support which is intrinsically inherent within the Caplan family.

Born in Edinburgh, Willie was brought up in the Jewish quarter in the South Side, attending James Clark School until he was fourteen. He secured employment as an apprentice upholsterer with Vinestock and Co. in Stockbridge and thereafter as a frame-maker with Sam Cram. During the late 1930s, he was a member of the Territorial Army and was called up to the armed forces at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. He enrolled in the Lothian and Border Horse but was transferred to the Royal Armoured Corps. After a spell of duty in this country, he was given embarkation leave and took the opportunity to marry Betty Kofsky in Edinburgh Synagogue in January 1942. Rabbi Salis Daiches was the officiating Minister. A few days later he was posted abroad. It would be three and a half years before the young couple were reunited.

Heading for Egypt, Willie's unit disembarked at Durban where he spent his first *Seder* away from home with a South African family. On reaching Egypt he became a tank driver and part of a tank replacement crew in the famous Eighth Army, the legendary Desert Rats. Military archives would probably record that Willie's



presence at the Battle of El Alamein at the end of 1942 and the subsequent resounding victory over the renowned Afrika Corps was purely coincidental. Poetic license and time lend enchantment to challenge such thoughts. A posting to Italy followed. Willie was attached to the Durham Light Infantry as a Beach commando, with special responsibility for maintaining mechanised transport. He saw active service in Salerno, Rome and Florence before being demobilised after six years service. He returned to Sam Cram and thence to the furniture firm of Barney Lewis, whose was George Bindman. He remained there until his retirement some thirty years later.

Betty was born in Glasgow. When she was a child the family moved to Edinburgh where she also attended James Clark School. She fondly recalls her association with the Edinburgh Jewish Rangers, the Jewish equivalent of the Girl Guides. The leader was Gertie Plancey and other members included Sylvia Daiches and Minnie Greenstone. She returned to Glasgow on completion of her education and worked as a passer with Manclark, the uniform manufacturers. Her aspirations to join the ATS, Womens' Army, were unfulfilled as she was one inch too short for enlistment. Whether or not it entered her mind

at the time, tank driving was not an option for small females. On her return to Edinburgh at the end of the war, she and Willie lived in the Prestonfield area of the city. She opened a shop in Leith specialising in alterations, dry cleaning and skirt making but, for health reasons she had to give this up in 1970. She and Willie have resided in Watertown Road for 13 years. They had two children, Linda who died tragically at the age of ten, and Stuart. Two grand-daughters are at university - Stacey, 19, is at Glasgow studying Psychology and Yvonne, 22, is at Strathclyde studying Business Finance, Management and Languages.

It would be simpler to list the activities in which Willie is not involved. He was a member of the Friendship Club, which had been initiated and run by David and Celia Leigh for many years, and took over the chairmanship at the request of David in 1991. George Benjamin was secretary of the Club and Gertie Segal was social secretary. Betty took over from the latter and thereafter combined both duties when club membership declined. Their ardent wish is for the community to come along, and to join and support what is an essential and valuable amenity for senior members. In the past Betty was a member of a sewing circle engaged in sacred work, the members of which included amongst others Rose Rifkind and the then Rabbi's wife Mrs. R. Weinberg.

For many years Willie has been President of the Stewards of Lodge Solomon and has been responsible for the gastronomic gratification of members and visitors. A keen supporter of the Luncheon Club, he is involved with the preparation of the twice-weekly meals. With Betty he arranges seating, serving and any task on offer. He is assistant *Shamas*



at the Synagogue, ever present at the commencement of Services morning, afternoon or evening. A member of the committee of the Burial Society he is very much involved in sacred *Tahara* work. Although the Edinburgh Jewish Branch of the British Legion is no longer active, he still remains a member and every Armistice Day, whatever the weather, is to be found at the Cenotaph at the City Chambers laying a Star of David wreath on behalf of the community. Nostalgically he recalls the days when he and other worthies including George Magrill, Harry

Myerthal, Abe Rabstaff and Sydney Solomon marched from the Castle with ex-Servicemen and women to the Cenotaph to the strains of 'Boys of the Old Brigade'. Willie is also a committee member of the Board of Guardians. Were it permissible he would probably be an active member of the Ladies Committee, so strong is his capacity for communal work involvement. In 1994 Willie and Betty were invited by the Synagogue President to attend the annual Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace. A fitting reward for honourable services.

Two extremely popular members of the community, Willie and Betty epitomise warmth, kindness and sincerity. Their wish to do their best for the community exemplifies tireless, unselfish commitment. Willie's exuberance, often tempered by Betty's caution, and persuasive good humour, are hallmarks of a friendly disposition which wins them both a large circle of friends. We are most fortunate in having them as members to enrich the Edinburgh Jewish community. Long may they continue to do so.

## STAR TREK INTO THE PAST

In the last issue, we published a photograph of children at a *Purim* party which inadvertently cut off Ivor Klayman, whose *talit* and hand can be seen at the left of the picture. We apologise for this. The other children in the photograph are:

**Back Row (from left to right):** Jack Cowan, Anita Levinson (née Lewis) Ronnie Hoffenberg, Brian Cohen, Frank Abramson, Mickey Cowen

**Front Row (from left to right):** Shirley Bennett (née Zoltie), Anne Sterne, Harold Sterne, Sheila Gordon, Alan Myerthal.

In this issue we publish two more photographs. Does anyone's memory go back to World War One? Two of the soldiers in uniform had sons who became well-known members of the community. Can anyone name them and the other men in the picture? And how many of the swingers can you recognise from the other photograph, taken in the early 1950s? The majority of the young people have been recognised but what brought them together and what were they celebrating? All will be revealed in the next issue.







*Continued from page 8*

'your vows of confidentiality are as solemn as the Hippocratic Oath. Break them, repeat what you have heard in that conference hall, and you are out.'

Then she meets Nicholas Manzini, an Italian doctor, through the glass of the interpreter's booth and begins a passionate love affair, Dominique begins to discover her own voice. But her dilemma remains and will ultimately test her strength of

character and the depth of her love for Nicholas.

An exploration of moral integrity, emotional isolation and profound passion, the publisher's blurb claims that *The Interpreter* 'combines a uniquely memorable voice, an almost musical gift for narrative and a powerful love story in an atmosphere of international intrigue' and describes it as a remarkable début by a writer with an almost musical gift for narrative. Any reader who would like to try their hand at reviewing this book,

anyone who would like to suggest other books for review, should contact the Reviews Editor, Elaine Samuel (229 5541).

*Suzanne Glass, who was born in Edinburgh, has contributed two articles to The Edinburgh Star, 'Confessions of a Troubled Man', an interview with Binyamin Netanyahu in Issue Number 29, and 'Holocaust: the Next Generation Face to Face', an interview with Ricardo Eichmann, archaeologist son of the infamous Nazi, Adolf Eichmann, in Issue Number 31.*

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# THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

*by Philip Schlesinger*

On 6 May, Scotland entered a new era. The Scottish parliamentary elections mark a profound break with the latterday centralist approach of the British state. The creation of the Scottish Parliament - after an interval of almost 300 years - is a matter of resounding importance for everyone in the United Kingdom, and not just for Scots.

This is so for two major reasons - first, because the Parliament disposes of considerable powers and, second, because the devolution settlement has resulted in what political scientists call 'asymmetrical government'. Next to Westminster, Edinburgh has been granted more powers than anywhere else in the UK, a recipe for turf wars between England and Scotland and one for likely emulation in Wales and the English regions.

One consequence of the new dispensation is that it is already sending tremors through British institutions. The BBC, always a weather-vane in matters of state, reflected these late last year in the row over whether or not there should be a Scottish six o'clock news. Currently, civil service departments are busy drawing up 'concordats' on how the division of powers will operate between London and the Scottish Office. And right across the board, British bodies are having to think again how they deal with Scotland.

The Jewish communities are not exempt from this process. The Board of Deputies of British Jews has spent the past 240 years as the principal 'national' representative body of Jews throughout the UK. Suddenly, the map has changed. It is less easy to talk about Britain as a nation; what is more important is the state in which we live. Scotland's Jewish communities find themselves with two distinct

political arenas in which to operate, one in London and another in Edinburgh. And foreign affairs, defence, and Treasury matters aside, it's highly likely that, like all Scots, they will be most touched by what is decided in Edinburgh, the seat of most home legislation. This change has thrown up new questions of how to go about seeking effective representation, a voice in matters specifically Scottish that will be legislated for in Edinburgh. It's not that the Board of Deputies could not lobby and represent Jewish interests at the Mound, and eventually Holyrood. It is that, on many matters, it is not likely to be the most suitable body. We live in a small country which is rapidly growing its own, no doubt distinctive, democratic political culture, within the wider British framework. We need to get to grips with this as it develops and organise to be a part of it.

Scotland's new settlement is potentially very positive for Scots. As in the UK as a whole, our new, national political community is defined by residence and not by ethnicity. Although such civic nationalism can under some circumstances be exclusionary, there has been nothing in the prevailing political discourse to suggest that it will be so. Sectarianism and prejudice are not going to disappear from the map just because there is now a new Parliament. But with the right kind of political debate and policy-making, and a high calibre of politician, they can be courageously, and maybe more effectively confronted.

The Scottish Parliament has yet to prove itself. But at least it has a good pedigree in decent, open-minded, democratic thought and practice. While it can draw on the long-

standing tradition of British parliamentarism it is also the child of the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which kept the flag flying for devolution, and which has been the source of many of the blueprints for its functioning. In short, the Parliament has its origins in the wishes and desires of much of Scottish civic society. The Jewish communities, aside from having a religious face, are also micro civic societies, with welfare, educational, sporting and cultural activities that are much in tune with the more aspirational thinking about the new Scotland.

We have already responded to political change by forming the **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities**. I advocated this kind of response last Autumn, in an address to the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, and then in a series of subsequent talks, because I believe that a coherent voice that represents the complex, multifold, character of Scotland's Jews will be needed at a time of change. I proposed the name because it firmly situates us as stakeholders in this country and yet identifies us as distinctive, multifold and at the same time united.

The Board of Deputies has recognised Scotland's particular changes and encouraged the Scottish Council to operate autonomously, in line with the devolution settlement. This means that a great many political and public affairs skills will have to be learned rapidly and applied when they are needed. The Scottish Council might well look around the smaller democracies of western Europe for models of how to conduct itself, as well as drawing on the Board's longstanding experience. Since devolution is a process and not an event, and its eventual destination is unclear,



learning to think for ourselves is imperative.

It might be thought that things could go on just as before. However, I would argue otherwise and strongly advocate that the material means need to be found to support the Scottish Council in monitoring the activities of the Parliament, learning its *modus operandi*, and, when necessary, reaching out to our new representatives and those who administer government in Scotland. The Board of Deputies is giving financial help to support the development of a public affairs capability north of the border. The Edinburgh community has offered space for a public affairs practitioner to work. Fund-raising activities are being pursued in Glasgow. All of this is both timely and necessary before the Parliament begins to legislate in September.

It is difficult to foresee precisely what issues will be of major concern to our communities. However, as the new body politic takes shape, I believe that we need to think about our diversity and how we might ensure that it flourishes. The Jewish communities have at least three aspects. There is the religious dimension, which embraces a considerable diversity of belief, affiliation and practice. There is the ethnic dimension, which offers a distinct point of identification for many who do not sign up to the religion. And there is also the civic dimension, our participation as a community in Scottish society and the wider Scottish polity. All of these aspects need to be both considered and represented.

If I were to make some recommendations for a broad strategy for the Scottish Council as it now looks ahead, these would include the following:

- a campaign to finance monitoring, lobbying and representation in Edinburgh, as required, because this way of doing politics is already up and running there and is simply unavoidable if you want to

influence things that will affect you;

- a willingness to be open to the range of political and policy-related developments in Scotland. If professional lobbying is one face of the emergent polity, the newly launched Civic Forum may well be another mode of engagement in the voluntary sector;
- pursuit of the inter-faith nexus, in particular with the churches and the Muslim community, and a preparedness to offer a Jewish voice on moral questions;
- a readiness to look around at other small countries for relevant models of conduct, as well as keeping the lines firmly open to south of the border;
- a continuing educational effort to raise the consciousness of the Jewish communities about the

new, autonomous situation in which we find ourselves as Scots;

- a pro-active approach to drawing on the professional advice readily available in the communities to help formulate legislation where this is possible in the new committee system of the Parliament, or otherwise to respond expertly to proposals in the pipeline.

Devolution is unprecedented and far-reaching. It will throw up challenges for Scotland's Jews and preparing for them now is a matter of some urgency.

*Philip Schlesinger is Professor of Film and Media Studies at the University of Stirling and Director of the Stirling Media Research Institute. He is presently researching the development of political communications around the Scottish Parliament.*

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# VICTIM OF THE HOLOCAUST

by David Goldberg

The subject of this article is a holocaust victim. A holocaust victim should not be mistaken with a holocaust survivor - there is an important difference. A survivor is someone who survived the camps but a victim is someone who experienced the Nazism at first hand as I did. In order to tell you my story, I will have to go back to the beginning, in my case to 1923.

I was born in Germany on 23 November 1923 of Polish parents at a time when Germany had very high inflation. My late father served in the Austrian Hungarian Army under Kaiser Franz Josef. When he arrived in Germany he went into business for himself. Over the years, his business progressed and eventually opened a shop in the main street in Kiel. When I was five years old, I started school. I went to the *Volkschule*. The year was 1929. Of course, we did not know anything about politics. Four years later, in 1933, Hitler came to power. We shrugged it off as a bad joke, never imagining what lay ahead of us. The Nazis wore their brown shirts and ran around shouting *Sieg Heil*. As children we thought it was funny, but what we did not know was that there was a sinister motive behind it. By 1935 things began to look different. There were placards saying 'Juden den Eintritt verboten' (Jews forbidden to enter) outside every cinema, on the beaches and in the parks but, as children, we did not take any notice of them. Then the windows of my fathers shop were smashed and the slogan 'kauft nicht bei den Juden' (do not buy from Jewish shops) was daubed over the front door. My father's response was to make the biggest room in our apartment into a shop and to erect a sign on the wall advertising that he sold ladies and gentlemen's goods.

In the meantime my father's brothers in the USA begged him to come to America. However,



David (Second from right) with his family in Kiel, 1938.

business was not bad and we all thought that this was just a phase Germany was going through and that it could not last for ever. Little did we know then that by 1936 we could no longer go to school. Jewish children and 'Aryan' children were not allowed to mix. All the Jewish children were sent to a special school and were taught by an old retired teacher who wasn't any good. Now things began to get worse. A Jewish teacher was sent to a concentration camp and we applied to the authorities for his release on the grounds that he was the only one that could teach us. The only way we could secure his release was to prove that he would, eventually, emigrate to the USA. When he came out of the concentration camp, he looked like a skeleton.

In August 1937, the Nazis put a 'Treuhänder' (a minder) into our business. Our bank account was frozen and we were not allowed to take any money out of it. The Treuhänder decided how much money we needed to live on. Now we started to think! It was difficult to get out, as by this time you had to

have an affidavit to get into the USA. And you had to have a passport. My parents had their own passports, but we as children did not. So I had to apply for one. You would think that, being born in Germany, they would have given me a German passport. No way! They gave me a stateless passport instead and in answer to the question about nationality, they wrote 'Polish'. I had never even been to Poland. In addition, the passport had a big 'J' stamped on it, 'J' standing for 'Jude' (Jew). The date was 2nd December 1938.

Before that, on 29th October 1938, all Polish Jews had been rounded up. I remember it well. It was a Saturday. My little brother and I were on our way to the Synagogue and, as we walked in, the caretaker waved us out as the place was full of Gestapo. We knew something was up, but we did not know what? So we walked across the road to a big park but, to our surprise, we could not get out, as all the gates were shut, and Gestapo were every where. They arrested us, took us to our home and told us to pack. They then took us to the railway station,





*David, in uniform, 1945.*

put us into a big room with lots of other people, and told us we are going to Poland. At that time I did not know where my parents were but I later found out that they had been hidden by one of our customers on a farm nearby. It just goes to show you, not all Germans were Nazis.

The train went to Berlin first, where the German Jewish community told us not to worry because we would soon be back. They handed out tea and coffee but it did not make me feel any better. We arrived in Poland in place called Spongen, a real no-mans land. There we were, with machine guns on the German side and machine guns on the Polish side, because Poland had closed its borders and would not take any more of us. What I did not know was that this transport had been going on for days. They could not shoot us, as there were too many witnesses, reporters and so on. So they had to take us back. Those who had money were able to take the train back to Kiel and those who had nothing went back in a cattle train that took a little longer. My parents were waiting for us at the station. Hugging and kissing us, with tears in their eyes. We went back to our flat with a policeman as our door had been sealed by the Gestapo. The policeman, who was a customer

of ours, apologised to my father and said 'I could not do anything as the Gestapo were in charge'. Then he whispered into my father's ear 'Get out as soon as you can as things are going to get worse'.

My father knew that this was the time to get out. Now that things were obviously hotting up, he got busy, making calls here and there. The German Jews could not really believe what was happening. They thought of themselves as Germans who were Jews by religion. In our Synagogue, or Temple as we called it, there was a memorial plaque which read 'To our sons who gave their lives to the fatherland in the 1914/18 war'. Under Hitler, if there was one ounce of Jewish blood in you, you were Jewish.

Now came the night of 9th November, now known as the 'Kristalnacht'. We were listening to the radio, and we heard that the German ambassador to Paris, Herr Von Raht, had been shot by a Jewish man called Greenspan. We knew something was going to happen, and that night many temples, shops, houses and institutions belonging to Jews were burnt to the ground. They came to our house looking for my father. My father and my brother were put into a holiday camp for three days and then set free.

All this was done systematically, as if it had been planned. It was clear that the Germans were looking for an excuse, because an undertaking like that could not otherwise have happened in one night. Our temple was set on fire, but they had not reckoned with the fact that the fire would spread very quickly and that there was a power station across the road. The firebrigade had to come and put the fire out, but by this time half the temple was completely destroyed.

My father was told of a certain man who was an expert in smuggling people out of Germany, for money of course. We had to be careful, as not every one was genuine. All of these smugglers

were Nazis - money recognised no boundaries. We were told to meet at a certain place and that a courier would take us from this place to the next. It was the middle of January and it was freezing cold. My father locked the door to our flat and we carried with us what we could. As my little brother was only four years old, I had to carry him on my shoulders for most of the way. We all met in Cologne, and from there we went to Aachen. At this point there were about six families because other wise it would not have been worth their while. It was in the middle of the night. We had to be very silent because at night noise travels easily. I tripped over a barbed wire fence and ripped my hand open - the scar is still there to this very day. We could see the border guards' The idea was to get through, travel to Brussels the next day and report to the police and register. If you got caught, they would send you back to Germany. What a funny system they had? Many people were caught and were sent back. What we did not know is that we were going from the frying pan into the fire. We arrived in Brussels the next day and reported to the Police who gave us a permit to stay in Belgium. I had a cousin who lived in Brussels and we stayed with him until we could find other accommodation. All you could hear was talk of war. My father heard of a *Kindertransport* leaving soon for England and he arranged for me to get on it. My older brother had left Germany on a *Kindertransport* in 1938 and all my parents could think of was saving the children.

I had to wait until June 1939. They took me to the railway station, stuck a label on me with my name on it and told us to say our good byes. That was one of the hardest things I have had to do in my life. I did not know if I would ever see my parents again and, as it turned out, I was on the last *Kindertransport* to leave for England.

The British Government of the day had decided to let 10,000 children into the country and for



that I will always be grateful. When I arrived in this country, they sent me to a hostel in Leeds. My late brother and the late Jack Hammond were prefects, as they were older than me. But when War broke out they were sent to Peel on the Isle of Man where they were interned. At that time I was too old to go to school and too young to go into the Army. So they asked me what kind of trade I would like to learn and I said I would like to become a motor mechanic. No, they said that was work of national importance. So they gave me a list of different occupations and told me to choose one. I could become a tailor, a barber, a gardener and so on. I chose to become a tailor and that I was did until I retired last year. But that is not the end of my story.

After one year in Leeds, I left for London. There I became a waiter in a Lyons Corner House. The blitz in London was in full swing, I wanted to join the Army but I was told I had to wait until I was 18 years old. The only Regiment I could join was the Pioneer Corps, otherwise known as 'The Alien Battalion'.

I landed in France 14 days after D Day at Aramance in Normandy. It was hard work laying the roads for the tanks to drive on. We were told

to find big stones and we did so but, to our surprise, we saw two nuns running around and shouting at us. At first, we did not know why but when we later found out that the stones we were using came from a bombed Convent we had to take them all back. When bending down I slipped a disk in my back. I was sent back to the UK on a hospital ship.

At that time, I did not know if my parents were alive or dead. All the mail I sent through the Red Cross came back. Now after the liberation of Belgium, a friend of mine with whom I had shared a room in the hostel in Leeds, saw many pictures of my father. This friend, who was in the Parachute Regiment, had overheard a conversation in which the name Goldberg was mentioned. He looked around and went over to the gentleman and asked him if he had a son called David. And that is how I was reunited with my parents.

I later found out what happened to them during the War. My mother and my youngest brother were hidden away in an attic by a Belgium *Gandarme*. My father and my other brother, who was three years younger than me, were caught by the *Gestapo* and sent away to a camp in Vichy France. Both of them

survived and, after the liberation of France, my father went back to Belgium to look for my mother and my brother went with a transport of children from Marseilles to what was then Palestine. As soon as the opportunity arose, my parents themselves went to Palestine with my younger brother.

When the war was over I saw on the notice board that they were looking for translators for the Nuremberg trials. I applied and got one of the jobs. I became very friendly with Sir Hartley Shawcross, the chief prosecutor at the trial. Although our pay came from our own paycorps, in other respects we all came under the jurisdiction of the Americans and ate in the PX. That part of my army career was the highlight of my four years in the Army.

By way of conclusion, let me say this. We don't know what lies ahead of us but we do know happened in the past and we must make sure that it will never happen again.

*David Goldberg is Senior Warden of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. This article is based on a talk given to the Edinburgh Council of Christians and Jews on Thursday 18th February 1999.*

## ANTI-SEMITISM IN MUSIC

by Esti Sheinberg

The first thing that comes into mind, when anti-Semitism in music is mentioned, are Nazi marches, 'hate' rock songs, or - if you happen to be more conservative in your musical taste - the music of Wagner. In fact, none of the above is anti-Semitic. Indeed, both Nazis and Neo-Nazis abused music to manipulate the emotions of their publics. They attached despicable texts to popular tunes, arousing rhythms and repetitive musical patterns in order to create the same kind of tribal complicity that happens whenever a crowd takes part in a sweeping,

hypnotising common activity. This includes not only singing along (which is what happens in most 'hate' rock-music sessions) but also dancing, stepping with a common beat, rhythmical slogan shouting, etc. All these activities can be seen in mass demonstrations, and they have more to do with mob-psychology than with music. The music in such events serves whatever happens to be the organisers' agenda: communism, religious fanaticism, anarchism, nationalism, neo-nationalism and/or anti-Semitism. It functions as a

uniting, enticing force. Intrinsically, however, it is unrelated to any of the above causes.

Wagner's case is even simpler. Wagner was a vicious anti-Semite, whose *literary* writings had an enormous impact on Nazi ideology. He did write outrageous articles against Jews, including the notorious "Judaism in Music." There is nothing in his *music*, though, that is anti-Semitic. It is said that the character of Beckmesser in *Der Meistersinger* is an indirect caricature of a Jewish critic and that



the characters of Alberich and Mime from his *Nibelungs' Ring* are also caricatures of Jews. All these are, however, at best, only indirect references, since there is nothing 'Jewish', let alone 'anti-Semitic', in the music of any of these characters.

Can music express anti-Semitism at all, without any reference to text or to a literary subject?

Music expresses feelings and ideas by using sound elements that are associated, in our culture, with certain concepts. For example, the concept of 'evil' is normally associated with darkness, with the nether-world, with unexpected violence, with threat, each of which has sound-correlations with slow motion, bass pitch; unexpected shrills; tremolo, vibrating, trembling sounds, harsh dissonances. All of them are therefore associated with our sound-image of 'evil', as anybody who has ever listened to the soundtrack of a thriller will testify.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is quite easy to write 'music of evil', that will be perceived as such by listeners who share the same culture - in our case Western Culture - with the composer.

Anti-Semitism draws its strengths from a successful transmission of a formula that equates 'Jewishness' with 'evil'. The most famous cases of presenting Jews as paragons of evil by using 'the music of evil' can, of course, be found in Christian liturgy. The ways in which this was and is done throughout history - in Christian literature, art and folklore are, sadly enough, more than transparent. For example, in many places the tradition of burning 'Judas' dolls on Good Friday is still an on-going practice. The particular name attributed to the traitor who sold his Rabbi to the enemy cannot have been coincidentally adopted by Christian tradition. Being a 'Judas', a Jew, while spending Easter in a Christian country can be an awkward experience as everybody is thinking about, preparing for and dealing with the crucifixion. People all around may be rehearsing for the

performances of Passions, the most popular of which is Bach's St. Matthew's Passion. The reading and performance of the Passion is the liturgical (and musical) peak of Easter, and the dramatic 'turning point' and the high point of the Passion story is, of course, the point in which the *Turba*, the people, or, to be more exact, the *Jewish* people, choose Barabbas, and not Jesus, as the one to be released from crucifixion. What, then, is to be done with Jesus, the holy Son of God? As much as I love the music of Bach, I still always shudder at the sound of the *Turba* choir, representing the blood-thirsty crowd of Jews, who scream at Pontius Pilate: '*Lass ihn kreuzigen!*' (*Let him be crucified*) '*Was hat er denn Übels getan?*' (*What the devil has he done?*) - asks the gentle Pilate, while pondering about the hygiene of his hands. The incited mob, however, will not listen; like a den full of venomous vipers, the voices accumulate over each other in an impressive fugue, stronger and stronger, faster and faster, more and more voices. The 'ss' of 'lass' and the 'z' of 'kreuzigen' hiss from bass to tenor, from alto to the shrieking soprano and the whole mass of maddened people scream: '*Lass ihn kreuzigen!*' (*Let him be crucified*). Poor Pilate, of course, has no choice. It is obviously not his fault. Still, just to be sure, the evil Jews hereby declare '*Sein Blut komme über uns und unsere Kinder!*' (*His blood be on us and on our children.*)

Is Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* an anti-Semitic work? Certainly. Is the *music* anti-Semitic? No, It is not, because there is nothing Jewish in the music. It is the text that bears the information about 'the Jews', while the music has only sound-correlatives of 'evil' - harsh consonants, an accumulation of voices, the extreme use of loud dynamics, sudden voice-outbursts and harsh dissonances (relative to Bach's style). Thus, while the music bears the 'evil' content, and the text has 'Jews' in it, there is no intrinsic anti-Semitic content *in the music*,

because nothing in it points to its 'Jewishness'.

'Jewishness' in music, indeed in Western culture, is perceived as a combination of certain '*Shtetters*' - modes and melodic formulae that are prevalent in the Jewish prayers and Chazzanic performances. It is related to certain musical gestures, rhythms and even instrumental timbres - like the clarinet or violin, that are prevalent in *Klezmer* music. All these musical elements are used, again, whenever 'Jewishness' is signalled, mainly in soundtracks of films, but also in other instances where background and/or incidental music is used. Our first reaction to such music to identify it as 'Jewish', and only then will we make a judgement of the ways it is used, and of its circumstantial appropriateness.

None of the musical indications of 'Jewishness' is equal or even related to the musical indicators of 'evil'. This, combined with the fact that 'evil' and 'Jewishness' are unrelated concepts, makes the composition of anti-Semitic music a very difficult task. How can two completely separate concepts be combined, to successfully transmit the required 'evil Jewish' image through music?

The most efficient way to connect between two unrelated concepts is *condensation*. This technique was analysed by Ernst Gombrich in his study of anti-Semitic caricatures.<sup>2</sup> In such caricatures a double meaning is created, which equates physiognomic 'facts' with ethical and moral defects (and disapproved attitudes or behaviours). Most of the stereotyped 'Jewish' physical characteristics - dark hair, long curved nose, large ears and thick lips are also associated with evil. The 'forces of darkness' come into mind, the long curved nose is associated with old age, witches, ugliness and 'nosiness', and the thick lips are traditionally a sign of lust and coarseness.

Caricatures are based upon exaggeration. They can exaggerate certain characteristic *qualitatively*.



For example, a caricature could show Prince Charles flying with real 'Dumbo' ears over genetically modified crop fields, spraying them with a weed-killer; another caricature could present Madelaine Albright, shaped as a military tank, energetically leading the way to Pristina. Another technique of exaggeration is *quantitative*, using the accumulation of as many characteristics as possible in a single case. This second type of exaggeration is almost exclusively reserved for subjects that represent *types* (a people, a race, a language, a musical or literary style, etc.). To explain how this works I will refer to Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance'. Wittgenstein pointed out that when we speak of a group of items, what we really have in mind is not any actual manifestation of them but rather an abstract model made up of the accumulated characteristics in their various manifestations. The overlapping of several of the theoretical model's characteristics with those of a particular item is what relates it to the model. Therefore, it might well happen that two items with the same designation do not share any common features at all; yet they are regarded as related, due to the fact that several of the features of both of them will appear in the theoretical proto-model. For example, Wittgenstein noted that no single member of a family actually bears all the family characteristics.

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.<sup>3</sup>

If Wittgenstein is right, and no actual realisation of any member of a family will include all the family's features (although it is *all* these features that we have in mind when we think about this particular

family), then the actualisation of such a person would be perceived as *overloaded*, and, consequently, as a *caricature* of the family. Thus the accumulation of all the features that are considered as characteristic of any group, race, species or type on one sole individual would result in its caricature.



*Cruikshank's Fagin wears a long caftan that covers his short figure, his back is crooked, in one hand he holds his hat upside down, almost in a beggar's pose, while the other exposes long, thin, crooked fingers, ready to grab whatever it finds. He is bald, has protruding ears, a long and crooked nose and a long, black, pointed (devilish!) beard.*

Anti-Semitic caricatures of Jews are based on the accumulation of all the stereotyped 'Jewish' characteristics, which are partly physical and partly the culturally accepted physical correlations of alleged 'Jewish' character defects.<sup>4</sup> Long noses, short and crooked legs, large and protruding ears, dark hair (and/or bald heads), short-sighted eyes, black beards, long black coats and long nailed fingers that are always poised in a greedy position, were all accumulated in the caricature's focal object, that represented the whole satirised 'Jewish' group. This kind of

accumulation is particularly manifested in the visual arts. Charles Dickens' description of Fagin the Jew in *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839) is complex and ambivalent. George Cruikshank's satirical and simplistic illustrations to the story, on the other hand, achieved the caricatural exaggeration of Fagin's figure by the accumulation of all the stereotyped Jewish physical characteristics.

Since no musical sign of Jewishness can be successfully condensed with the musical signs of 'evil', new sound-associations of 'Jewishness', that could easily be related to ethically, morally and/or aesthetically, had to be found.

And indeed, many caricatures were wittily enriched with additions of a captions and verbal under-texts. The late 19th Century 'Humorous and Artistic Magazine' *The Butterfly* describes not only the Jewish characteristics that can be seen, but also those that can be heard. Its caption uses the 'Jewish language' that reveals the subject's 'Jewish character', regardless of the language he is actually speaking.<sup>5</sup> The physical characteristics are the same as in Cruikshank's caricature, although a bit more developed: crooked legs (giving a hint at the traditional 'devil's limp'), thick lips, a pointed black beard and a darkened figure. To these are added two more informative details: the caricature's title which points at Throgmorton Street, the famous London business centre, and the distorted language with its emphasis on the characteristic 'Jewish' accent.

The ridiculing of 'Jewish talk' was in no way restricted to London late 19th Century journals. The derogatory attitude towards the 'Jewish voice' is deeply rooted in the European consciousness, which is best expressed in its idioms, such as the German *mauscheln*, a popular word the various meanings of which describe the 'Jewish talk' as an unclear, unintelligible, blurred





FROM THROGMORTON STREET  
*Finkelstein (emphatically): 'I don'd care vot yer say, yer tief; yer robbed me, I dell yer! yer a liar und a placguard, und a schwindler und a schweinpig; und dot's plain English!'*

Caricature published in *The Butterfly*,  
 London, 1893.

speech, mixed with Yiddish words.

A considerable number of German dictionaries explain this word as well as its etymology.<sup>6</sup> However, none of the sources specifies exactly how it sounds 'to speak like a Jew'. Luckily, the confused musician is not left in the dark, and the missing substantial information is supplied by Richard Wagner who, as early as 1850, engaged himself in filling this particular gap in European culture. The 'Jewish talk' is thus described in full detail in Wagner's writings (here in English translation), which were enthusiastically read by his followers.

In particular does the purely physical aspect of the Jewish mode of speech repel us. Throughout an intercourse of two millennia with European nations, Culture has not succeeded in breaking the remarkable stubbornness of the Jewish *naturel* as regards

the peculiarities of Semitic pronunciation. The first thing that strikes our ear as quite outlandish and unpleasant, in the Jew's production of the voice-sounds, is the creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle: add thereto an employment of words in a sense quite foreign to our nation's tongue, and an arbitrary twisting of the structure of our phrases - and this mode of speaking acquires at once the character of an intolerably jumbled blabber; so that when we hear this Jewish talk, our attention swells involuntarily on its repulsive *how*, rather than on any meaning of its intrinsic *what*.<sup>7</sup>

This impression is in no way restricted to German culture nor to the 19th century.<sup>8</sup> Similar descriptions of the 'Jewish voice' can be found in French, English and Russian writings from the 19th century and the beginnings of the 20th century. Being directly connected with sound, these characteristics appear in musical caricatural descriptions of Jews, like the famous "Samuel" Goldenberg and Schmuyl' from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Mussorgsky was a known anti-Semite and also expressed his dislike of the sound of the Jewish language, as well as of Jews in general. The imitation of the squeaky, gasping, nervous, repetitious, chatter-like voice of the poor Jew is evident in the music that describes him. It is the musical condensation, in which the aesthetically pejoritized 'squeakiness' is condensed with 'the Jewish sound' that makes this caricature anti-Semitic.

A more extreme sound-caricature of Jews is drawn by Richard Strauss in *Salome*. Strauss, who was deeply influenced by Wagner and closely acquainted with his writings, draws a caricature of the five Jews who are gathered in an endless noisy blabber, which is contextually contrasted with two other elements: the deep, serene voice of Jokanaan,

and the authoritative demand of Herodias of 'Make them be silent!'.

An examination of Wilde's original text shows that he, too, was in no way sympathetic to Jewish thought and its verbal expressions:

**Herodias:** I tell you, you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him why you not deliver him to the Jews, who for six months past have been clamouring for him?

**1st Jew:** Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

**Herodes:** Enough of this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

**1st Jew:** This cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God. In these days God doth not show Himself. He hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

**2nd Jew:** Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God. Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

**3rd Jew:** God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in everything. God is in what is evil even as He is what is good.

**4th Jew:** That must not be said. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from the schools of Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not even circumcised.

**5th Jew:** No one can tell how God worketh. His ways are very mysterious. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of any thing. We must needs submit



to everything, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

**1st Jew:** Thou speakest truly. God is terrible; He breaketh the strong and the weak as a man brays corn in a mortar. But this man hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

**Herodias:** Make them be silent. They weary me.

Wilde's text of the Jews' sequence in his *Salomé* is in itself satirical. His fact-like description exposes the Pharisees' discussions as irrelevant and their conclusions, which are based on Jewish canons, as illogical. Thus he intentionally builds his satirical text as a discussion which is more irrelevant than meaningless, a quality that becomes particularly evident when compared with the high dramatic tension of the scene within which it takes place: Herod's wooing of Salomé, who is infatuated with Jokanaan, and Jokanaan's voice heard from his prison-cell, announcing his prophecies of doom.

Strauss, however, is not satisfied with Wilde's mere satire. For him a discussion among Jews should be materialised in the Wagnerian *Geplapper*: a meaningless blabber. Obediently following Wagner prescription, he creates in this episode a grotesque caricature, in which the semantic content is nearly lost among all the other accumulated characteristics of 'Jewish blabber': the 'creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle' that is conveyed in 'an intolerably jumbled blabber'. In order to make the text sound like 'a blabber', Strauss (unlike Wilde) uses repetitions. However, in order to create the necessary 'jumble', the Jews' parts, after being presented homophonically, so that their irrelevant content will be duly and clearly conveyed, grow into a chaotic contrapuntal web of noisy 'Jewish blabber', to which the instruments contribute their own

share, to make the general impression even more chaotic. In order to achieve the required Wagnerian effect of 'creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle', Strauss chose the uncharacteristically and unbalanced combination of four tenors and one baritone (to be compared, for example, with a more balanced male-voice quintet in Puccini's *La Bohème*, which is made of one bass, two baritones, one tenor, and the landlord's voice, which has no specifications.) The impression achieved by this distribution of voices which emphasises the upper, more 'squeaky' register of the male voice, is even further highlighted by the large amount of 'a', 'ä', 'e' and 'i' vowels in the text, to which, although originally translated by Hedwig Lachmann, Strauss himself contributed significantly:

**Herodias:** Ich sage dir, du hast Angst vor ihm. Warum liefest du ihn nicht den Juden aus, die seit Monaten nach ihm schreien?

**1er Jude:** Wahrhaftig, Herr, es wäre besser, ihn in unsere Hände zu geben.

**Herodes:** Genug davon! Ich werde ihn nicht in eure Hände geben. Er ist ein Hil'ger Mann. Er ist ein Mann, der Gott geschaut hat.

**1er Jude:** Das kann nicht sein. Seit dem Propheten Elias hat niemand Gott gesehen. Er war der letzte, der Gott von Angesicht geschaut. In unseren Tagen zeigt sich Gott nicht. Gott verbirgt sich. Darum ist grosses Übel über das Land gekommen, grosses Übel.

**2er Jude:** In Wahrheit weiss niemand, ob Elias in der Tat Gott gesehen hat. Möglicherweise war es nur der Schatten Gottes, was er sah.

**3er Jude:** Gott ist zu keiner Zeit verborgen. Er zeigt sich zu allen Zeiten und an allen

Orten. Gott ist in schlimmen ebenso wie im Guten.

**4er Jude:** Du sollest das nicht sagen, es ist eine sehr gefährliche Lehre aus Alexandria. Und die Griechen sind Heiden.

**5er Jude:** Niemand kann sagen, wie Gott wirkt. Seine Wege sind sehr dunkel. Wie können nur unser Haupt unter seinen Willen beugen, denn Gott ist sehr stark.

**1er Jude:** Du sagst die Wahrheit. Fürwahr, Gott ist furchtbar. Aber was diesen Menschen angeht, der hat Gott nie gesehen. Seit dem Propheten Elias hat niemand Gott gesehen. Er war der letzte...*usw.*

**2er Jude:** In Wahrheit weiss nieman, *usw.* Gott ist furchtbar, er bricht den Starken in Stücke, den Starken wie den Schwachen, den jeder gilt ihm gleich. Möglicherweise, *usw.*

**3er Jude:** Gott ist zu keiner Zeit verborgen...*usw.*

**4er Jude:** Du solltest das nicht sagen, *usw.* Sie sind nicht einmal beschnitten. Niemand kann sagen, wie Gott wirkt, denn Gott ist sehr stark. Er bricht den Starken wie den Schwachen in Stücke. Gott ist stark.

**5er Jude:** Niemand kann sagen, wie Gott wirkt, *usw.* Es kann sein, dass die Dinge, die wir gut nennen, sehr schlimm sind, und die Dinge, die wir schlimm nennen, sehr gut sind. Wie wissen von nichts etwas.

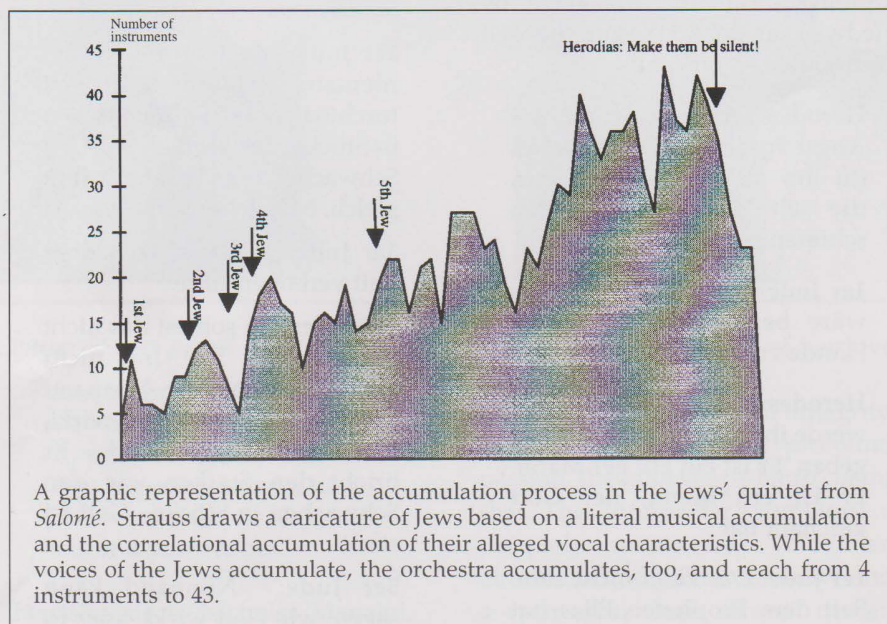
**Herodias (zu Herodes):** Heiss sie schweigen, sie langweilen mich.

This cumulative quintet is to be performed 'Sehr schnell' (very fast). It is written in 6/8; the metronome mark is 120 for every dotted crotchet, while the rhythm is mostly based on shorter note-values, mainly quavers. The orchestra,



which up to this point has played long-held chords, becomes a chaotic, dissonant chatter of chromatic runs. The use of instruments is likewise telling, being based on brass and double-reed woodwinds, with their nasal sounds: two oboes, one English horn and the rare loud heckelphone provide the required sound quality for the 'snuffle' effect, while one piccolo and three flutes pierce ears with shrieking sounds. The general orchestral sound tends toward the higher pitch-range, so that the first entrance of the Jew, with his high pitched tenor and jagged melodic leaps only heightens the caricatural effect of 'the Jewish Voice'. The figure below describes the accumulation of musical parts and gradual hightening of the

can, and does, express ideas, and even complex ones, such as anti-Semitism. Another common argument recurs to the aesthetic (and to our cultural association of the 'beautiful' with the 'approved') saying: 'But this music is so beautiful!'. Happily enough, I don't have to answer that, but instead leave the answer to my friend the composer Razak Abdul-Aziz, who was present at the Jewish Literary Society meeting where I presented these ideas, and heard these questions asked. When we later spoke about this, Razak could not contain his surprise: 'How can they say that? Don't they know that there are also many beautiful people that are really evil? Why should music be different?'.<sup>1</sup>



general pitch in this musical passage.

The ability of music to express anti-Semitism has been in the heart of a long debate, most strongly felt in Israel, where until quite recently the music of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss was banned, because of their anti-Semitism. Regardless of the various peculiarities and irrelevancies of this debate, a repeating motive appeared again and again: 'But this is just music!' - and notes, abstract sounds, cannot, of course, express ideas. I hope this analysis shows that music

Music can be beautiful. Fortunately, most music is. However, music can also be evil. Luckily, most music is not. Thank God for that.

*Dr Esti Sheinberg is a Lecturer in Music at Edinburgh University. This article is based on the talk she gave to the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society on 13th December 1998.*

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See also Sheinberg, Esti, 'An Application of Ernst Gombrich's Projection Theory to Music Perception' in *Song and Signification: Studies in Music Semiotics*. Ed. by Raymond Monelle

and Catherine T. Gray. 1995, Edinburgh, The University of Edinburgh Faculty of Music. pp. 38-58.

<sup>2</sup> Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on The Theory of Art*. 1963, Oxford, Phaidon.

<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §67

<sup>4</sup> Gilman, Sander. *The Jew's Body*. 1991, New York, Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> *The Butterfly*, May-October 1893.

<sup>6</sup> *Mausche* is explained in Heinz Küpper's dictionary as a derogative for 'Jude', specifying that it is derived from the Hebrew name *Moses*. All in all he lists five usages to *mauscheln*, one of which, traced back to the year 1600, is 'fraudulent commerce'. The Brothers Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1885), on the other hand, defines *mauscheln* as 'to behave like a *Schacherjude*'. 'Schacherjude' means 'a haggling, cheating Jew'. Similar definitions also appear in the *Brockhaus Dictionary* and Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, the latter tracing the use of the word back to 1561, and confirming its stemming from 'Moysche', i.e. the Yiddish form of 'Moses'. The other four usages mentioned by Küpper are: 2) To speak like a Jew (traced back to the 1600s); 3) nagging, grumbling; secret grudging. To make a plot or plan an intrigue (used since the 1900s); 4) To tax, to take financial interest (this usage was popular in the 1960s!), and 5) Unclear, unintelligible, blurred speech, mixed with Yiddish words. The other sources also specify *mauscheln* as Yiddish speech, or a speech of someone that 'sounds like a Jew.' Other dictionaries mention more meanings: to cheat or haggle; to use Jewish gestures. Finally, *Mauscheln* is also a name of a specific card game, traced back to the Thirty Years War, in which the players try to cheat their opponents. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Heather Valencia, who also helped me with the translations from German.

<sup>7</sup> Wagner, Richard (1852) 'Das Judenthum in der Musik.' in *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen von Richard Wagner*. 1872, Leipzig, Verlag von E.W.Fritsch. Fünfter Band, pp.85-108.

<sup>8</sup> For example, on the 16.2.1997, in a talk given to the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society, Prof. Scheunemann from the German Department of the University of Edinburgh described the 'sweet old Jewish woman' he remembers from his youth, who used to tell stories to him 'and had this characteristic charming way of stressing the beginning of the sentence instead of its end.'



## 'DAVID'S GIFT' AT THE THEATRE WORKSHOP

reviewed by Janet Mundy

In 1997, Edinburgh playwright Andy Mackie took a five-day trip with the Anti-Nazi League to visit Auschwitz and Birkenau. He was so moved by what he saw and learned there that he wrote a book of poetry, which he felt was the best medium to express his horror at 'a weird, warped fantasy become fact'. He gave a copy of the book to a friend, Robert Rae, artistic director of the Theatre Workshop in Stockbridge, who asked Andy to write a play based on these poems. The play, 'David's Gift', was the result, written by Andy Mackie and performed as a community play at Theatre Workshop in May 1999.

As the opening scene takes place on the site of the new Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood, it was very appropriate that the play opened on the night of the elections for the Scottish Parliament. In the play, a journalist and an architect rescue a memorial stone inscribed in Hebrew which was found on the site inscribed and discover an elderly man reciting *Kaddish* over it. This man is known in the play as David Ferguson, and his 'gift' is to take a group of people from Edinburgh to visit some of the concentration camps. This character is based on the real life story of Leon Greenman, the guide who escorted Andy's party on the Auschwitz trip. Leon Greenman was British but was taken to Auschwitz with his Dutch wife and child when they lost their travel documents during a visit to her family in Holland. Leon survived, but his family perished in the gas chambers. The play closely follows Leon's chilling story, but the character of David Ferguson is a Scotsman who gets married in Edinburgh in a kilt, with Rabbi Daiches officiating.

While he was carrying out research for the play, Andy Mackie visited the *Shul*. He was helped by Rabbi Sedley and met David Goldberg, who came to Britain from

Germany with the *Kindertransport*. Andy was so impressed by David's story that he integrated it into the play, showing David as a small boy (played by 10-year-old Rory McColl, whom the real David Goldberg says was 'very good indeed'). The play follows David's flight to Britain and relates his experiences in the British army and his work as a translator at the Nuremberg trials.

The play constantly draws parallels between the Nazi regime and Britain today. Andy Mackie told me that he did not want to write just another play about the Holocaust. He was amazed at the number of

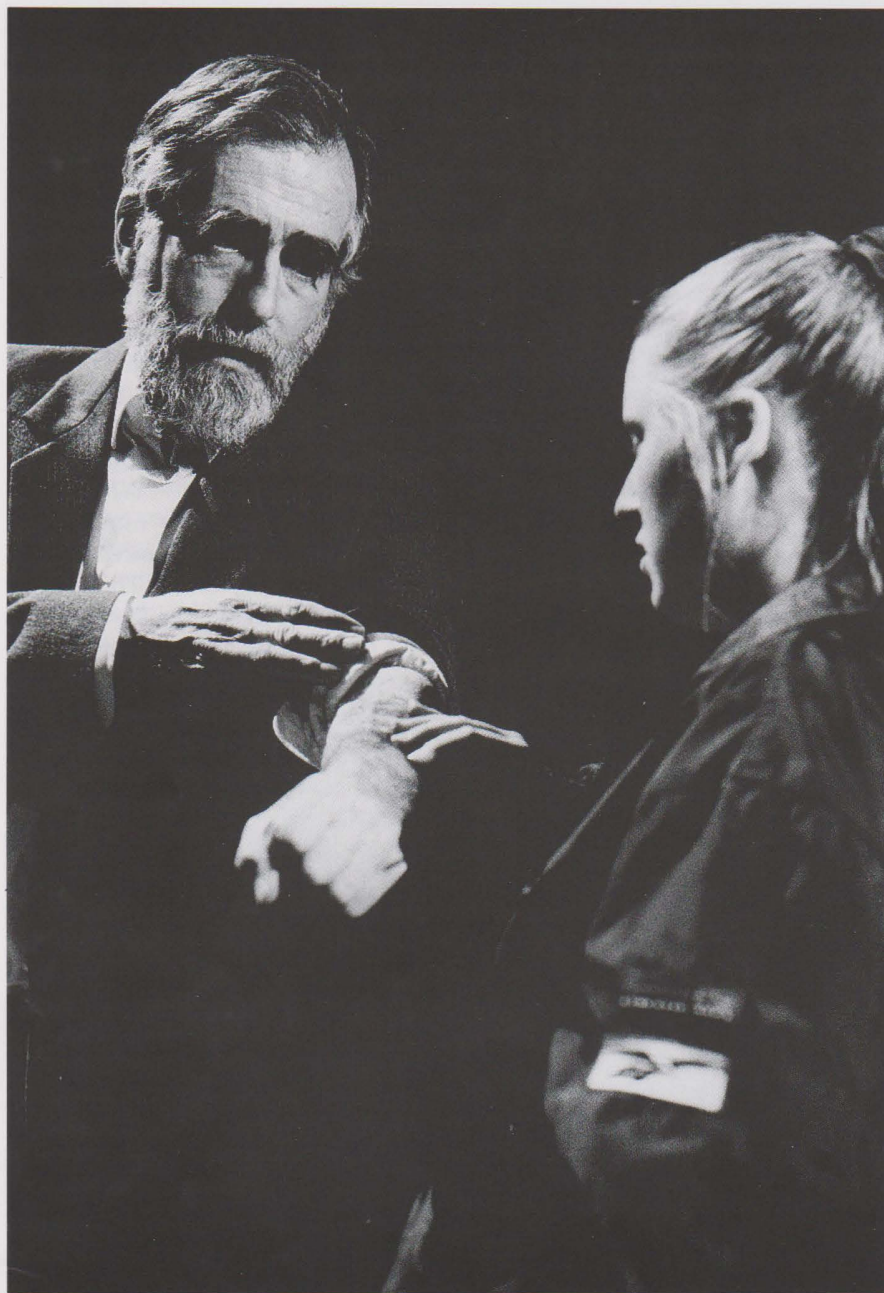
positive stories that he learned about Auschwitz, for example that there was a powerful resistance movement in the camp. The company who performed the play are, according to Andy Mackie, 'community people who wanted to do the play. The subject matter attracted more people than any other and the Theatre Workshop had to close their books on accepting people. What was wonderful was the number of people who wanted a voice, an anti-Nazi, anti-racist voice.' There were some Jewish people in the cast, but the large majority were non-Jewish



Hanna Read, who plays the violin to accompany the story of David Goldberg, and members of the cast.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GILLIAN WHISKER





PHOTOGRAPH BY GILLIAN WHISKER

*David Ferguson, played by Graham Addis, demonstrating that he had been in a concentration camp.*

and included Asians, Japanese, Chinese and Germans. It was obvious watching the play that each actor related to the message that the horrors of the Holocaust must never be allowed to happen again to anyone, and that bigotry must be stamped out by education and understanding. A large number of children were involved in the play and we must all hope that they will never forget that message. A modern parallel is made with the story of a girl who turns against her

Asian friend, until she is helped by David Ferguson to understand the absurdity and danger of prejudice. (The Asian girl, incidentally, was played by the daughter of a friend of David Goldberg's.) These scenes were given added relevance by the fact that the play was performed in the wake of the nail bomb attacks in the East End of London and the threat of further attacks to Jewish people, and should remind us that we can all still be victims of fascism. The attacks on Piershill cemetery in

1996 were also mentioned. The stories of Auschwitz were told in flashback through the experiences of the contemporary visitor. The 'positive stories' that Andy mentioned included women protecting a baby from discovery for several months and cabaret performances by inmates to their peers. In the programme for the play, Andy Mackie requests that everyone should 'Go to Auschwitz.... Five days will change your life'.

In the play, the characters who accepted 'David's Gift' were deeply affected by the trip. For those in the audience who relived the horrors of the Holocaust through the play, it was an uncomfortable experience which for some of them, led to unexpected discoveries. For example, I learned that the mother of one of the friends who came with me to the play had had a narrow escape from Nazi Germany.

David Goldberg attended the play as a guest of honour, and was delighted to accept an invitation to make a speech to the cast at the end of the evening. He was able to compliment the players on their acting and most particularly on the music. Anyone who knows David will appreciate how pleased he was to hear this largely non-Jewish company sing in Yiddish, and to hear the orchestra, especially when they included Klezmer music in their repertoire.

For Jews in the audience, it was a strangely uplifting experience to see how non-Jews could relate to the darkest point in our history, and to be reminded that other people also suffer greatly through prejudice. I came away feeling that it is as much the responsibility of Jews as of others to ensure that we live in a society that values cultural diversity and never oppresses or persecutes people because of their race, colour or creed.

*With Compliments  
from Mark and Judith Sischy*



## AVIGDOR ARIKHA RETROSPECTIVE AT THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

*reviewed by Samuel Robin Spark*

Avigdor Arikha was born in Romania in 1929 and grew up in Bucharest. In 1941, together with his parents and sister, he was deported to the concentration camps of the western Ukraine where, in 1942, his father died. As a fourteen and fifteen-year-old, he had to do forced labour in an iron foundry. After his release in 1944 he went to Palestine. He fought with the Haganah and later joined the regular Israeli army. In 1949 he received a scholarship to study abroad and arrived in Paris, where he has since lived, in September of that year. He subsequently pursued his studies in various European countries. In 1956 he met Anne Leah Atik, a young American poet who was to become his wife. He has exhibited almost every year since 1952 and has become an artist of international repute as well as a noted scholar and critic.

In Scotland Arikha is best known for his portraits of the Queen Mother and Lord Home and for the double portrait of Moira Shearer and her husband Ludovic Kennedy, all of which are hung in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh. The recent retrospective exhibition of Arikha's work at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, however, revealed the range of his work: abstracts, landscapes, nudes, still lives and domestic interiors/exterior, as well as portraits. But it is in the last three of these that Arikha's characteristic qualities can best be demonstrated. In view of the traumatic experiences of his impressionable years, it might be thought that his work would be full of pain - of anger, fear and horror. In fact, his work celebrates the joys of everyday life.

For many visitors to the exhibition the most enjoyable pictures will probably have been the still lives where Arikha's perceptive



*'Moira Shearer & Ludovic Kennedy' (1993).*

delight in the most ordinary objects - socks, hats, shirts, potatoes, loaves of bread - is vividly communicated to the viewer. 'Potatoes' (1989), depicting three different varieties of potato enclosed in a clear plastic bag is a fine example. The rough texture of the potato skins is contrasted with the soft, shiny plastic of the bag. Arikha's fascination for, and mastery of, texture are apparent here, as they are in 'Four Hats' (1988) where the four straw hats, two black and two light-coloured, lying on a burgundy buttoned leather chair, are meticulously painted to bring out the different types of straw and the patterns of the weaving. In 'Four Kinds of Hats' (1993), the hats are arranged separately from one another against an off-white background. Each is made of a different fabric - wool, felt, velvet and fur. The fur hat appears to have been painted wet on wet, the feeling of soft, warm furriness contrasting with the dramatic smoothness of the

black felt with its green silk ribbon. The homely knitted cap is painted in different tones of red and with jagged edges, eloquently suggesting the texture of wool, whereas the black velvet hat has a sophisticated softness reflecting light from its surface. An earlier work, 'Pears' (1974), shows an arrangement of Williams and Comice pears on an irregularly shaped black plate against a soft greyish-white background. The rough texture and grey-brown skin of the Comice contrasts with the smooth golden skin mottled with brown of the Williams. In 'Two Baguettes' (1990), the loaves, whose crispness and crustiness are almost tangible, lie on a greyish background but the warm bread has left a grease stain on the white wrapper. 'Nine Books' (1986) shows a colourful collection of well-thumbed old books cunningly deployed in a spiral composition. One is black, with a cover of padded leather; one appears to have pages



coming loose; another has crumpled edges and dog-eared covers. These books have been much loved and much used. In all of these paintings Arikha's delight in the texture of things is evident. But they are more than just craftsmanlike works painted with great skill; they communicate the intensity of enjoyment these objects can give us and point beyond the objects themselves to the lives of which they are a part.

Arikha's profound appreciation of the pleasures of everyday life is apparent, too, in his pictures of quiet, light-filled interiors and sun-drenched exteriors. In 'The Bedroom' (1989), we glimpse through an open door in a hall-way an unmade bed draped with duvets, a blue-spotted white pillow and sandals protruding from under the valance. The bedroom wall is made of smooth, creamy plaster and part of the artist's portrait of Dr. Spitzer can be seen hanging upon it. The room is filled with sunlight which seems to bounce off the white duvets and blue-white valance and reaches through to the hall. Here the doorway and partition wall are scumbled in white and bluish-grey paint, forming a marked contrast with the light plaster of the bedroom wall. On the partition wall hang two Kitaj prints and beneath them is a cover richly striped in browns and reds. The floor, brilliantly lit in the bedroom, is now in shadow. There is in this picture a tremendously strong sense of life being lived, as if someone has just gone out of the room.

'Summer Day Indoors' (1991) shows a corner of the artist's library. The wall opposite the open door is lined with books from floor to ceiling. In the upper left of the picture is an open French window in which is reflected an adjacent building. The searing brightness of



*'Inside & Outside' (1996).*

the light outside is muted and welcoming within. Chairs are invitingly set out. A thick black book on a glass-topped table attracts our attention. Again there is a feeling of a room much used and enjoyed; at any moment, we feel, someone may enter.

'Inside and Outside' (1996) shows the artist's studio. Here all is light, airy and spacious. The light flows from the window in the upper left area of the picture through which we glimpse the building opposite. A staircase leads up to the mezzanine floor. In front of it a large white canvas sits on a studio easel while a smaller one leans against the door leading into the library. In contrast to the rest of the picture the library appears in shadow. Two of the artist's paintings hang at the top of the stair. The large, relatively uncluttered area of the studio with its white walls and cream flooring, gives a feeling of great calm, which is accentuated by our being able to see through the double door into the library with its many books and artifacts.

'The Square in June' (1983) shows the view from the studio window. It is a partial view of a corner of the square; the impression is of a very tall building. Because we do not see right down to ground level, the depth is accentuated, giving rise almost to a feeling of vertigo. Again, the predominant colour is cream. The sky at the very top of the picture is pale blue and some of the flats have red awnings shading the windows. The square is in full sun and you can almost feel the heat radiating from the walls. How pleasant it must be, you think, to escape into the coolness of the interiors, behind the shaded windows.

In 'Towels and Sheets' (1990) we have an open cupboard with the door occupying almost half of the picture; to the right of it are four shelves crammed to overflowing with sheets and towels. The panels of the door are highlighted in white, forming strong verticals in the left half of the picture which are contrasted with the strong dark horizontals of the edges of the shelves. The neatly folded edges of the sheets contrast with the irregular shapes of towels bulging from the overfilled shelves. The open door is a quiet brown; by contrast the towels are a riot of colour in red, yellow, blue, green and orange among the white sheets. The bottom shelves in particular, with the juxtaposition of irregular shapes in different colours, have the quality of abstract painting. This is a delightful picture which transforms mundane objects of everyday life into something joyful and lyrical.

It is probably as a portrait painter, however, that most people in this country think of Arikha. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Queen Street, owns three of Arikha's finest portraits, 'Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother' (1983), 'Lord



Home of the Hirsels' (1988) and 'Moira Shearer and Ludovic Kennedy' (1993). The portrait of Moira Shearer and her husband has caused some controversy. The artist himself, when questioned by a member of the audience at a talk he gave at the SNGMA in conjunction with the exhibition, declined to comment upon it. The picture is unusual in that the two subjects are looking out of the picture in opposite directions. Moira Shearer is the principal subject of the painting, coming forward from the right. Her husband is entering the picture from the left; his right arm outwith the picture space. Were his wife to continue walking forward, her figure would be superimposed upon his. She appears to be listening attentively to a conversation with someone outside the picture. Her husband appears to be doing the same, his conversational partner beyond the picture on the other side. Moira Shearer is a beautiful woman and the painter has done her full justice. Her husband's left hand is outstretched, palm towards us, in a gesture of explanation or debate. This is a portrait of a couple whose closeness is symbolised by the fact that Moira Shearer is wearing her husband's tartan. They are outgoing, interested in and concerned about society at large, members of a wide social circle, but clearly they have such an affinity with each other that there is no need to portray them in more conventionally intimate pose; they operate as a team.

The device of placing the subject to one side of the canvas is employed to great effect in the portrait of Lord Home. Here, Lord Home, dressed very soberly in a dark suit, occupies only the left half of the picture space and appears to be entering the picture from the left. The right hand is introduced in the bottom left-hand corner of the picture, breaking the solidity of the suit while the richer tones of the hand complement the lighter tones of the face and neck. The rest of the

picture is uniformly greyish-white. It has been generally agreed that Lord Home's modesty and diffidence are clearly suggested by this compositional arrangement while the sharp perspicacity of the eyes and the firm set of the mouth and chin suggest the statesman whose dedication to duty was universally acknowledged. Lord Home was eighty-five years old when this portrait was painted. The body is that of an elderly gentleman but the face suggests a mind still active and acute.

The portrait of the Queen Mother in soft pastel colours and conventional three-quarter pose is in more traditional style. The soft blue tones of her hat and jacket enhance the blue of her eyes and the iridescent pearls reflect the soft skin tones. But, while the Queen Mother's femininity is not in doubt, Arikna has successfully brought out the strength of character and forceful personality of this remarkable lady, facets not always in evidence in portraits of her.

A number of the artist's self-portraits were displayed in the exhibition. Of these one of the most curious was 'Self-portrait standing Behind Canvas' (1978). Three quarters of the picture is taken up by

the back of the canvas which has been painted in brownish tones. The artist himself takes up only the right-hand quarter of the picture. His head is right at the top of the picture and his dark-coloured clothing extends right down to the bottom of it. We see most of his face, apart from the right ear and part of the right cheek which are hidden by the canvas. The artist is staring at his own image, mouth open in intense concentration. The device of placing the subject to one side of the canvas, so tellingly employed in the portraits of Moira Shearer and Lord Home referred to above, is successfully employed here ten years before those portraits were painted.

In 'Self-portrait Nude Torso' (1990), the artist has depicted himself again open-mouthed in concentration and with furrowed brow. This time the pose is fairly conventional. The subject fills most of the picture space. We have a three-quarter view of him as he paints himself in mirror-image. There is very careful control of colour. In the figure itself the colours are restricted largely to creams, reddish-pinks, yellows and browns. The subtle flesh tones are highlighted by the inert bluish-grey background. The only vivid colour



'Four Kinds of Hats' (1993).



is in the piercing blue eyes. The artist's scrutiny of his own image is so intense that the viewer feels somewhat inhibited, almost a voyeur.

A goodly number of the portraits exhibited were of his wife. Of these two of the most appealing were 'Anne in Summer' (1980) and 'Anne in Orange and Blue' (1988). The former is a head and shoulders portrait with the subject looking directly at us. The large brown eyes are lustrous, the full lips sensuous. A white floppy hat rests on her dark hair, framing her face and, by a happy coincidence, the curves of the brim appear to echo the curve of the lips. She is wearing a fluffy jumper with wide horizontal stripes of dark blue and black. The background, greyish-cream, is slightly textured. Anne is a very attractive woman whose serious expression and direct gaze suggest a personality of great strength and depth. 'Anne in Orange and Blue' is another very striking, colourful picture. The sitter is positioned diagonally across the picture, occupying mainly the right triangle of the space. She is sitting on a round stool with her arms folded and her crossed legs stretched out in front of her. Her head is tilted slightly upward. Her dark hair fills the top right-hand corner of the picture. Her cardigan is a vibrant orange, her shirt a vivid dark blue. The trousers are a more muted grey. This is an eye-catching, almost startling picture in which the artist has combined joyous colour with bold geometrical structure.

Among the most eloquent portraits in the exhibition were three graphite drawings: one of Maurice Couve de Murville, former Prime Minister of France (1977), showing him to be sensitive, intelligent and wary; one of Samuel Beckett (1980) playing chess with the artist's daughter Noga, where Beckett is shown with hunched shoulders and frown of concentration, and with his fore-finger across his upper lip in considering manner, the very epitome of the chess player; and one of Pierre Rosenberg (1981) where the sitter's personality comes vividly across as kindly, humorous and warm.

Arikha has a nimble brush. He is famed for his speed of execution and likes to complete a work within one sitting or on one day, whenever possible. This intensity of concentration gives a strong impression of liveliness and spontaneity. Although a modern painter with a broad spectrum of subject-matter, he is an inheritor of the classical tradition in art where the object portrayed is paramount and the artist's own feelings, though present, are subordinate. He is true to his subject and does not distort.

Arikha is an artist who is very sensitive to the atmosphere of a place and can communicate it to the viewer, often by means of contrast as in 'Inside and Outside' and 'The Bedroom' or by implied contrast as in 'The Square in June'. His paintings are underpinned by strong geometrical structures. 'Summer Day Indoors' exploits verticals and horizontals seen from a low viewpoint; 'Four Hats' depends upon the interplay of circles and squares; 'Potatoes' contains the oval shapes of the potatoes within the rectangular shape of the bag and its spilling contents; in 'Nine Books' the rectangles of the books are arranged in a spiral; 'Anne in Orange and Blue' uses the triangle to dramatic effect.

Another characteristic of this artist is the unconventional placing

of the principal subject of interest to one side of the canvas, as in 'Lord Home', 'Self-portrait Standing Behind Canvas', 'Anne in Orange and Blue' and 'Towels and Sheets'.

Arikha is a master of tone and colour. He normally uses a restricted palette, allowing the form of the subject to come through clearly as in 'Potatoes', 'Pears', and many of the portraits. But on occasion he can employ brilliant colours to exuberant effect as in 'Towels and Sheets' and 'Anne in Orange and Blue'. His background colours are chosen for their subtlety and serve to highlight the painting's principal subject-matter.

Arikha's work is accessible and enjoyable at first sight. But it repays careful and prolonged examination. Only then does the full extent of the artist's mastery of colour, form and perspective become apparent. He is the inheritor of the classical painterly tradition and within that tradition he is an innovator who extends that heritage.

*Samuel Robin Spark graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in 1987 and is both a practicing artist and a teacher of art. His account of his childhood 'Life with the Cambergs' appeared in the previous issue of The Edinburgh Star.*

*The Edinburgh Star wishes to record its thanks to Avigdor Arikha for permission to reproduce his work.*



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## In Memoriam



**LOUIS PINTO**  
died 2nd May 1999

*Shirley Bennett writes:* Louis was the last link to my mother which made him very special. He was born in May 1913 in Middlesborough and moved to Edinburgh 40 years ago to be with his sister Miriam Zoltie, my mother.

He was no whiz kid, a humble man who harmed no one, led a simple life and didn't ask for much - a kind smile - a small wave. On seeing someone he knew and his whole face would light up. He loved Jewish life, his visits to *Shul* and the lunch club. He was also a keen football fan and an avid reader whose tastes ranged from crime to love stories.

When his brother Colin died four

years ago, Louis felt the loss very deeply but, as with many things in his life, he took it bravely. He would often speak of that loss when we were together.

He did require a little help in his latter years but in spite of that he always strove to maintain his independence. He took life's knocks on the chin, was often hurt but his comic spirit helped him through the difficult times.

He loved his chocolates and fizzy drinks and was terribly upset when he was told to give them up after he developed diabetes. He had a great love of music and a special memory of him will be our recent attendance at a Beethoven concert in the Queens Hall. He so enjoyed himself there.

There were many in the community who were kind to Louis and gave him a little of their time and I would like to thank everyone who helped him and made his life a bit happier.

I want to pay tribute to the way Uncle Louis lived his life, with spirit and determination, always grateful for the small pleasures that came his way

My sister Andrea and I will miss him.



**MRS RACHEL MORRISON**  
died 13th October 1998

*Beverly Cooper writes from London:* My Auntie Raie was born in Dublin in 1909 and moved to Edinburgh when she married the late George Morrison in her mid-forties. They lived happily together in Blackford Avenue until George died some 25 years ago and she decided to move to London to be near me and a few other members of her family. She was a particularly wonderful, thoughtful person, a really lovely lady, very independent but, at the same time, very family orientated. I am certain that some members of the Edinburgh community will remember her with affection and am writing to your journal to inform them that she passed away in London last October.

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

Through your journal I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for the help I received from Edinburgh's Hebrew Congregation in writing the play 'David's Gift' recently staged at Theatre Workshop.

I was welcomed at the synagogue with great warmth and given wonderful assistance which made a significant contribution toward making the play a success. We sold out nearly every performance, including matinees, and had very favourable press reviews.

I would particularly like to thank Lenny Berger, David Goldberg, Rabbi Sedley, Howard Kahn, Ian Leifer, all the children at the Chanukah service and all others who gave their time and support. And thanks also for the *latkes*!

At the service I attended, the day's text concerned Jacob sending young Joseph to seek his brothers in Shechem. On the way home I stopped off at Thin's to buy David Daiches' excellent book 'Two Worlds'. Reading it that same night I was amazed to read this very same text was the last David heard his father, Rabbi Daiches, preach before he died. Quite a coincidence.

It may also interest your readers that, in addition to my visit to Auschwitz, as part of my research I visited Anne Frank's House and the new Museum of Jewish Art and History in Paris, opened last December. The Museum is situated in the old Jewish quarter and has many beautiful and interesting exhibits including costumes, architectural models of European Synagogues, ancient artifacts, an extensive art gallery and a section on the Nazi Occupation of Pans. Well worth a visit.

My thanks and best wishes to all.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Mackie  
Writer  
Theatre Workshop  
Hamilton Place  
Edinburgh  
EH3 5AU

Dear Editor

As a seven-year-old I participated with some 37 other children from the Edinburgh Hebrew classes in the 'Pageant of Esther', held on Sunday, 16 March, 1952, together with the annual prize-giving and the other Purim celebrations at the Minto Hotel Ballroom.

So outstandingly well did we all perform that the **Edinburgh Evening Dispatch** saw fit to include a report and a photograph of all of us in their edition of Monday, 17 March, 1952.

My late father, Pinkas (Peter) Reif loved to keep newspaper cuttings and it is thanks to him that I have a copy of that page of the **Evening Dispatch** with the full complement of children.

Compared to that more democratic record, your own photograph in your latest issue of February 1999, restricted to a mere twelve children (of whom I can identify nine), is elitist and eclectic. Sadly, I shall have to find some other means of becoming famous!

I enclose herewith a contribution to enable you to continue to provide such nostalgic flights of fancy for Jewish Edinburghers of old!

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Professor) Stefan C. Reif  
Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit  
Cambridge University Library  
West Road  
Cambridge  
CB3 9DR

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