



The Theatre Royal, Toronto, 1836

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Stars of David

By HYE BOSSIN

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Stars of David



TORONTO—1856-1956

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

“Why didn't you come to me?”

Since much of what is chronicled in Stars of David is part of the experience of our contemporaries, that question was directed at me frequently after its publication. The answer is easy. I didn't think of them or wasn't led to them by anything I had heard or read. I suspect that none expected an answer to that question.

Ordinarily a work is printed and that's that. Here we are more fortunate. Stars of David, having appeared in The Jewish Standard as a series, was issued in this form by that publication. It received flattering attention and the edition was soon gone. The Canadian Jewish Congress decided on this printing to meet the request for copies. That provided an opportunity to make revisions and additions.

I fully expect that the appearance of this, a second and more extensive edition, will be followed by the frequent and familiar question:

“Why didn't you come to me?”

PROGRAM NOTE

This is a very, very casual account of the Jewish element in the theatre history of Toronto, written in 1956 at the request of the Committee for Centennial Celebration, created by the Canadian Jewish Congress to mark a century of community life in the Queen City.

On September 7, 1856 16 persons of the Jewish faith met in the home of one of them, A. G. Asher, to establish group worship, a manner of devotion originated by their race in biblical times. Under the leadership of Lewis Samuel, the father of the distinguished Dr. Sigmund Samuel, they organized the Sons of Israel Synagogue in a rented room above Coombe's drug store at Yonge and Richmond Streets.

What motivated them was the approach of the High Holidays. Their love of the Lord shone no less brightly because the Scrolls of the Law had been borrowed from their brethren of an older Canadian Jewish community, Montreal.

In 1876 the congregation, by then the Holy Blossom, moved into the first Toronto structure erected as a synagogue. It stood on Richmond Street, just east of Victoria, on the same spot where the famed Shea's Victoria Theatre, demolished in the summer of 1956, had its stage for 46 years. Toronto has quite a few Jewish grandfathers with happy memories of that location, after and before it became a theatre.

Although Jewish biblical life did not employ the drama, except for the feast of Purim, a form of carnival by which is celebrated the deliverance of the Jews from a tyrant of those times, its dramatic figures have been drawn on for all the creative arts, including those of the theatre. "The psalms of the prophets, the Sweet Singers of Israel, and the odes of King Solomon possess the prerequisites for stage effect and drama," wrote Curtis Lubinski in *The Jew in Drama, Theatre and Film*, a chapter in *The Hebrew Impact on Western Civilization*, edited by Dagobert D. Runes and issued in 1951 by the Philosophical Library, New York. What many consider to be the greatest motion picture in the history of that art, Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, is the story of Moses and a depiction of Exodus.

"The people of the Book has eventually become the people of the drama, of the tragedy, and of the comedy," Lubinski observed. Indeed it has. To the extent that non-Jewish readers, particularly those sure they know a Jewish

person when they see one, would be astounded at how many of their favorites, among them the typical Englishman, Scotsman or what have you, are of Jewish stock.

Speaking poetically, Jewish artists can think of themselves as part of a tradition that began with David, King of Israel and Judah, the greatest figure in Hebrew history and literature with the exception of Abraham and Moses. David created the Jewish nation and the national spirit which, when that nation was destroyed, kept alive the image of it for thousands of years.

This David was a very young shepherd when King Saul, grown melancholy because he felt the disfavor of the Lord, accepted the suggestion of his servant that music might raise his spirits. Another servant said he knew a fellow who was “cunning in playing . . . and a comely person.” So Saul sent for this person, David, “and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.” David was a real hand with a harp and no doubt offered some songs along with the music. Whenever Saul was unhappy “David took an harp, and played with his hand: So Saul was refreshed, and was well.”

The story of David has been told many times. The last play of Sir James M. Barrie was *The Boy David*, produced by C. B. Cochran late in 1936 with scenery by Augustus John and music by William Walton. Its star was the Austrian actress of Jewish birth, Elisabeth Bergner, for whom he wrote it. Like Miss Bergner, he had been enchanted by the boy David ever since he could remember. Sir James died in June, 1937, not long after the play had closed, and in his will he left £2,000 to Miss Bergner for the best performance given by an actress in any of his plays.

There is fresh drama for those with an inherent or acquired interest in the Jewish people in the fact that less than a decade ago the nation founded by David was reconstituted and is struggling valiantly to recreate the peace and prosperity it knew under him.

What set the personable David on the path that led to the leadership of his people—and immortality—was his ability to perform entertainingly. Can it be that the Star of David, symbol of the Jewish race, shines just a little brighter for theatrical people of the same lineage as this minstrel boy who became a great king?

I

Places, Please!

The two most popular questions about any drama are “What’s it all about?” and “Who’s in it?” In setting down here the Jewish influence in Toronto theatrical history, it might be best to start by taking the directions from those questions.

Let me approach our somewhat plotless drama involving both major theatrical fields, the stage and motion pictures, through what is known in the latter as the “star system.” In other words, “Who’s in it?” Our approach shall be to examine first the relationships of a number of persons to our early theatrical history.

The persons of whom I shall write first played small parts in our historical drama. The roles of some were so small and so remote that only the important names they bear earn them a place in our company. That, of course, is not to say that their parts were not interesting ones.

Well then, who are these persons? Here they are:

Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785-1851), Philadelphia-born American diplomat and politician, rambunctious New York editor, leader of Tammany Hall, Surveyor of the Port of New York, member of the Supreme Court of the United States, author of the theory that the Indians were The Lost Tribes of Israel, founder of his own Zion for the Jews of the world on Grand Island in the Niagara River, son of a soldier of the Revolution, fierce patriot, proud Jew and prominent playwright.

William Lyon Mackenzie (1795-1861), irascible editor, agitator for popular reforms, the first mayor of Toronto and leader of the ill-fated Rebellion of 1837 against those self-favored representatives of the Crown known as the Family Compact.

Sir Francis Bond Head (1793-1875), Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada (1835-38), whose stubbornness provoked the Rebellion and who, as leader of those who quelled it in the name of the Crown, was the victor over his enemy, Mackenzie. Mackenzie’s hatred he returned in full measure.

Having named and described these early participants in our theatrical history, let me now reveal where they belong in it.

Let us begin with Noah, whose connection was indeed minor. His third play, *She Would Be a Soldier; or, The Plains of Chippewa*, which opened in New York in 1819, was based on a recent event, the War of 1812, and was the first widely popular drama on an American theme. The Battle of Chippewa took place on July 5, 1814, in the Niagara area and there, according to Arthur Hobson Quinn in his *A History of the American Drama*, “the American Army under General Jacob Brown and General Winfield Scott redeemed the earlier defeats of the Canadian campaign.”

In this play, which is about a girl who dresses as a soldier to join her sweetheart at camp, Toronto (then York) is used—as far as I know—for the first time as the locale of a drama. These words, which have to do with Scene I, Act II, give Noah his place in this account: “York, in Upper Canada, a Tavern meanly furnished.”



MORDECAI M. NOAH

From a photograph of a portrait by John Wesley Jarvis (1781-1839), now in possession of the Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City. It is reproduced here from the book. Major Noah: American-Jewish Pioneer, by Isaac Goldberg (The Jewish Publication Society of America, Phila., 1938).

Have I perhaps overdramatized so small a matter? Then let me quote some of the curtain speech of the American general, addressed to the lovers onstage and to the audience—words that were somewhat daring then and have grown in importance since. Blessing the lovers, he adds that “when old age draws apace; you may remember The Plains of Chippewa, and feel toward Britain, as freemen should feel towards all the world: ‘Enemies in War; in peace, friends’.”

Amen. Those words, spoken to close the most popular play of that hostile day, should be enough to earn Mr. Noah a place in any Canadian chronicle of The Theatre.

Perhaps Mr. Noah’s noble sentiments, so concerned with war and peace between the defenders of the Crown and those opposed to them, shall

be the cue for the entrance of William Lyon Mackenzie and Sir Francis Bond Head at the same time, each from a different side of the stage.

Mackenzie, though high-minded in his concept of democratic rights, was not above low journalism in attacking Sir Francis Bond Head, whose arrogance was provocative. And he missed no opportunity to revile the Lieutenant-Governor. Though Mackenzie had not shown himself to be opposed to The Theatre on principle, the opening in 1836 of Toronto's fifth theatre, the Theatre Royal, where the Globe and Mail Building now stands at the NE corner of King and York Streets, drew his fire.

Mackenzie wrote in *The Constitution* of August 2, 1836 that "Sir Francis Bond Head has come out as the patron of a playhouse, which is therefore called the 'theatre royal.'" Note that he would not even give it the dignity of capitals for its first letters. He then could not resist getting in a swipe at the pro-Government paper: "Had the government come forward in this way before canting Hypocritical Priests of The Guardian took the royal bounty, we should have had a tirade about profanity, lewdness, late hours, morality and so forth, but now the curs are too busy gnawing their bones to see the players stealing away the morals of their puppies." *The Guardian* was the official Government paper, used by it for public reports and announcements. So much for patronage.

Now let us relate these matters to our own special interest in the sneering Mackenzie and the haughty Bond Head.

In the London of two generations earlier there was a Jewish poet and playwright, Moses Mendes, whose works had been performed in Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Mendes was the descendant of a Marrano physician, Moses (Fernando) Mendes, who attended Catherine of Braganza when she came to Britain as the wife of Charles II in 1662. This physician was the ancestor of Sir Francis Bond Head.

It was Cecil Roth, in his *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*, (Macmillan) who made me aware of the Jewish ancestry of Upper Canada's chief representative of the Crown in those uncertain days: "Moses Mendes, whose sons adopted their mother's name, was the grandfather of Sir Francis Bond Head, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, 1835-38, (who suppressed the 1837 uprising) and of Sir George Head, Assistant Commissary General to the Forces in 1814, both prolific writers."

Before coming to Canada Bond Head had been a soldier at Waterloo, then a minor Crown official and later he managed a mining expedition into the Andes which had cost its investors £60,000. Mackenzie, in *The*

Constitution of May 17, 1837, drew on what was apparently the Jewish backing of the exhibition to gibe at Bond Head:

“A friend has sent us a pamphlet printed in Edinburgh in 1825, containing a humorous arrangement of surnames and the 2nd name is ‘F. B. Head, Esq. Royal Circus,’ where they say he figured to great advantage as an equestrian. Whether he performed for money we do not know. From the circus he went to South America as the agent of the Jews to dig silver from the mines, and failing there had been inflicted on us by Stephens in his anger, and is extracting all he can from the people’s pockets here. The Egyptians suffered 10 plagues before they would quit their hold on the poor Israelites.”

Stephen, it should be explained, was the Undersecretary of State who had named Bond Head to the Canadian post, having judged that he had liberal views from his writings. Mackenzie and his supporters welcomed him, under the impression that his liberal ideas would be exercised in Upper Canada, and their subsequent disappointment must have deepened the hatred for Bond Head that came later. Bond Head seemed to believe that all who accepted his ideas, which came too soon after his arrival to be sound, were loyal to the Crown and all who did not were republicans. He and Mackenzie refought the Rebellion of 1837 in print many years after it.

In *A Narrative* (1839) Bond Head wrote: “Mackenzie, who has caused the effusion of so much British blood, and money, was, it is believed, an insignificant pedlar-lad who, about 18 years ago, having transferred himself to America, under disreputable circumstances, succeeded in becoming the shop or errand-boy of a notorious republican at Toronto.” He just couldn’t keep his snobbery out of his sniping at Mackenzie, whom the Government permitted to return in 1849 under amnesty from the United States, where he had taken refuge when the Rebellion was lost.

Sure that he had saved Canada for the Crown, Bond Head was outraged by the rise in popularity of his opponents after his departure: “I need hardly say that the party who rebelled, who plundered and massacred the loyal, and who, on being defeated and caught, at enormous expense to the Mother Country, naturally expected to be expatriated, rejoice inwardly and laugh outwardly, at finding themselves the Executive Counselors, the judges and the crown advisers of the sovereign they betrayed!!!”

He took things hard, did Bond Head. The events of 1837 resulted in two disappointed men. But time gave the victory to the loser of the day.

In any case, a gentleman of Jewish ancestry aided a Toronto theatre by extending to it royal patronage. This act, as well as his background, did not escape Mackenzie's uncomplimentary attention.

But very few Jews were offended by what he wrote. The population of York was 9,652 and there were probably fewer than 300 Jews in all of Canada. The directory of 1833 indicates that one, Arthur Wellington Hart, had arrived in York and opened A. W. Hart & Co., an insurance agency. This Hart is worth our attention for a moment, for Morris U. Schappes wrote of him in his *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States* (The Citadel Press, NY, 1952).

Born in Quebec as a member of Canada's first important Jewish family, he went from Toronto to England and from there to the United States. After residence in New York and Wisconsin he settled in Scranton, where in 1861 he was publisher and editor of *The Scranton Daily News* and *Hyde Park Advertiser*. In April of that year he helped recruit a company of the Pennsylvania Infantry for service in the Civil War and when his three-month term was up became a clerk in the War Department, remaining a government employee until 1869, when he resigned from the Internal Revenue Service.

In 1872, while living in New York, he was active in a company organized to bring about the settlement in the United States of 40,000 Jews from pogrom-ridden Europe, particularly Roumania. His request that the government provide 250,000 acres on which to establish a colony for this purpose was rejected with the explanation that the law provided for individual homesteading only.

"Hart was for many years a prominent figure in Jewish communal affairs, being connected with the Congregation Shearith Israel," Schappes noted. "He died in Montreal in 1891."

Henry Abraham Joseph, a furrier, and a relative, Judah George Joseph, came from Cincinnati five years after Hart. Both opened businesses, the former at 70 Yonge Street and the latter at 56 King Street East. "J. G. Joseph, Optician, Spectacle and Mathematical Instrument Maker, Jewelry, Watches and Silverware made and repaired to order." So read the advertisement of Mr. Joseph, a kindly old man with spectacles and the long sideburns of the pious Hebrew, who tried to organize a synagogue in 1849 but couldn't find the required number of Jews among York's permanent residents. However, that year he and Abraham Nordheimer, a manufacturer of pianos, established a Jewish burial ground on land purchased from Sir John Beverley Robinson, Chief Justice of Upper Canada.

The Theatre Royal was a converted carpentry shop which seated 300 and was reached through a lane at the side of the Shakespeare Hotel. The 1894 edition of *Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto*, in noting its importance, also introduces to us several other characters in our theatre history: "This theatre was a great improvement on any previous place of amusement in the town. The seats were ranged in tiers much after the fashion of the present day. The theatre was taken by Mr. Noah and his daughter, who was at that time a star of considerable magnitude." We shall leave these other Noahs in the wings until they take their place in the order of things.

By the way, the first character in our prologue, Mordecai Manuel Noah, was not unknown to one of the others, Mackenzie. In his *Sketches in Canada and the United States* (1833), Mackenzie writes of visiting a New York Synagogue and notes that "Mr. Noah of the Customs, Judge of Israel, was not present on this occasion." In the same book he tells about a visit to the Canada Company's planned settlement at Guelph, founded by its agent, John Galt, for whom Galt is named and whose son, Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, became our first finance minister under Confederation. Mackenzie was unimpressed with what Galt, a Scottish novelist, had accomplished at Guelph and in support of his views quoted "M. M. Noah, Customs, NY":

"On general grounds we are pleased to read of these advances in Civilization and the conquests, destined in no long time to be exclusively the domain of the federal republic. But if we were to speak selfishly we would say that we regret the diversion of Mr. Galt's genius from fiction to reality, —from the construction of romances and novels to the construction of market-houses and caravanserais."

Our Noah's smugness about the extent of the future domain of the federal republic, since unsupported by a century of history, did not prevent Mackenzie from quoting him in support of opposition to Galt. He made quite a few other written references to Noah, a hard man to escape in those times, and not all were neutral or flattering.

Let us now end this somewhat lengthy—though I hope interesting—prologue and get into a chronological presentation. To do so we shall have to go back to 1826 and introduce here the bearer of a name which *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* says belonged to "An American family, probably of Spanish descent, whose members appeared in the early colonial period and continued to contribute to the history of the nation until the Civil

War.” That name is Judah—an honored one in Canadian Jewish history, for it was “also found in Canada during the American revolutionary era.”

Aaron Hart, progenitor of the family so distinguished in Quebec Jewish life, was a commissary officer in the army of Lord Jeffrey Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in North America and rode into Montreal beside him when the city surrendered on September 8, 1760, following Wolfe’s victory over Montcalm. In London he married Miss Dorothy Judah and her family came to Three Rivers, where Hart had settled.

Our man was known in the theatre of his day as “Mr. Judah.”

II

'Mr. Judah'

If someone other than Emanuel Judah deserves to be regarded as the first actor of Jewish birth to come to York as the major attraction in a drama, then diligent research has not revealed his name. Though engaged in a dramatic calling, probably nothing in the life of Emanuel Judah was so dramatic as his death.

Emanuel Judah, birth date unknown, was the son of a prominent American playwright, Samuel H. B. Judah, who, like his contemporary and compatriot, Mordecai Manuel Noah, drew on native elements for his dramas. Like Noah, he was a lawyer. Yet, for all these likenesses to Noah, there was no liking for him by S. H. B. Judah. He hated him and among the thinly-disguised characters he slandered in his *Gotham and the Gothamites* was Noah. "Judah beheld New York as a scene guilt-stained, gain-greedy, murky with power abused, inviting the retribution of his prophetic denunciations," wrote the late Isaac Goldberg in his *Major Noah, American-Jewish Pioneer*. The Theatre, Judah said in verse, was the repository of all wickedness. "An evil, then, within that greater evil, Gotham. And Noah, who seems to have stirred Judah to his most impassioned scurrility? Noah was, at the core of this inner evil, a greater evil still." For his literary attack on Noah and others Judah was arrested and fined. He refused to pay and was jailed. He was released from jail because of his poor health.

Enough of the senior Judah. Enough of the byplay. Let us return to the play—and the younger Judah.

In 1826 Toronto's only theatre was still in the ballroom of Frank's Hotel, on Colborne Street, where it was first used for dramatic purposes, mainly by garrison officers, about 1820. Emanuel Judah played it for the first time in October, 1826 after engagements in Montreal and Kingston. Although one of Mr. Judah's roles, Richard III, had brought the finest actor of that day, Edmund Kean, his greatest measure of fame, a Kingston critic wrote about Mrs. Judah; "She is in our estimation by far the best performer in the company."

For as yet Judah, who had achieved popularity in the South and made his bow in his native New York in 1823, was working toward the wider public acknowledgment that was to come to him near the end of his career. How

good an actor was he? In his *Settlement of the Jews in New York* (1872) Charles Patrick Daley, LL.D., Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and president of the American Geographical Society, gave this estimate of Judah:

“I saw him many times in Savannah in the winter of 1829 and have rarely seen an actor who was so uniformly excellent in whatever he undertook, and his range, within what is called the legitimate drama, was a wide one. He was a very gentlemanly man, below the medium height, with a finely proportioned person, a handsome face, and a voice of great sweetness, and power. Though he played attractively the higher parts of tragedy, he was most effective in melodrama and in what was then known as the romantic drama and was excellent in the leading parts in light comedy.



‘THEATRE AT FRANK’S BALLROOM’
Mr. and Mrs. Judah in *Taming the Shrew*.

“He was of that class of dramatic artists not very often found, who do everything well that they undertake without reaching the elevation of a great actor. He played occasionally in New York in different years, when, apparently, he was not appreciated as fully as he deserved to be, or as he was in the Southern cities, where he was seen more frequently and in a greater range of characters.”

He was indeed versatile. Among the plays in which he appeared in Kingston in one week were *Timour the Tartar* and a two-part bill, *The Soldier's Daughter* and *How to Cure a Jealous Husband*. The next week he starred in *The Mountaineers*, *The Stranger* and *Richard III*. I could not find the report of his third week in *The Kingston Chronicle* but he opened his fourth as Roderick Dhu in *Lady of the Lake*, with Mrs. Judah as Blanche. That lady starred in the afterpiece, *The Day After the Wedding*.

To Emanuel Judah, the first Jew to star in a Toronto theatre, belongs another distinction. Under the heading “Theatre at Frank's Ballroom” an *Upper Canada Gazette* advertisement said: “Mr. Judah respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of York, and its vicinity, that on this evening, (Saturday) October 21, 1826, will be performed for the first time in York Shakspear's much admired comedy of *Catharine & Petruchio* or *Taming the Shrew*, With the Laughable Farce of *Fortune's Frolic* or *A Ploughman Turned Lord*.”

Obviously the Toronto—or rather the York—of that day was an easy place to acquire the distinction of being the first. *The Gazette* of the next week said: “This evening (Saturday) October 28, will be performed for the first time in York, the Grand Classic, Comic Operatic, Pidatic, Camera Obscuratic, Extravaganza Burlette called, ‘Tom and Jerry or, Life in London’—Also to conclude—*Bombastes Furioso*.” Again Judah.

The Gazette of the 21st, noting the Judahs' arrival with “a Corps Dramatique,” had said: “The estimation in which Mr. and Mrs. Judah were held in Montreal, and the liberal support they met with in Kingston will, we hope, entitle them to the ladies and gentlemen of York.” Did the ladies and gentlemen of York like this first actor of Jewish lineage to star among them? Did the press respond? I cannot tell you. If their response was recorded in any newspaper or diary of the time, I have failed to detect it.

Let us hope that he and his company had better luck than the troupe which, a year earlier, offered *Richard III*—the first time Shakespeare had been presented here professionally. Like actors before and since, it was stranded when the engagement proved unprofitable. It was fortunate for

them that Governor Simcoe, who in 1793 changed the name of Fort Toronto to York in honor of the Duke of York, had ruled in 1798 that the 12-house community, located at a safe distance from the troubled USA border, was to be the future seat of government for the area. Buildings containing the House of Assembly were erected and it was the legislators who, by attending a performance en masse, helped get these strolling players strolling again.

I made an earlier reference to the dramatic death of Emanuel Judah, who died while enroute to Galveston, Texas, from New Orleans while crossing the Gulf of Mexico.

The manner of his passing I learned from Edmond M. Gagey's excellent book, *The San Francisco Stage*, as well as something of Mrs. Judah, who settled in San Francisco 13 years after her husband's death. She joined the Jenny Lind company there and was active on the stage until her death in 1883. "Born Mariette Starfield in New York, she specialized from the start of her acting career in the playing of old women roles," notes Mr. Gagey, whose book was issued by the Columbia University Press, New York, in 1950. Then he adds:

"With her husband, Emanuel Judah, and her two children, she was shipwrecked in 1839 on the way from Florida to Cuba. Her husband was drowned, and though she survived by clinging to some wreckage for over four days, her children died before her eyes."

That scene shall end our story of Emanuel Judah, bearer of a fine name, the first actor to present *The Taming of the Shrew* in Toronto—and the initiator of Jewish participation in The Theatre of this city.

III

Those Other Noahs

You will recall that we left some other Noahs standing in the wings a while back: “Mr. Noah and his daughter, who was at that time a star of considerable magnitude.” Let’s bring them on now. They too were associated with the Theatre Royal—some years after the bestowal of royal patronage on it by Sir Francis Bond Head, the Lieutenant-Governor with Jewish blood. The act had drawn a sneer from William Lyon Mackenzie. By then the Rebellion had failed, Mackenzie had fled to the USA and Bond Head had been ordered back to Britain.

Endeavors to determine the place of these Noahs in Toronto theatre history show what hard and almost vain work can befall the researcher when a chronicler in an earlier century records misinformation. However, there is one fact of interest.

Toronto’s first Jewish theatre manager was W. G. Noah of Rochester, a relative of Mordecai Manuel Noah, who rented the Theatre Royal, probably between 1841 and 1843. Noah, a business man, had run into financial difficulties. He had married a former actress who was the widow of an actor named McClure and she returned to the stage in 1841. Being a businessman without a business, it seems natural for him to have devoted his experience to his wife’s calling in the hope of creating income.

Mrs. Noah—or Mrs. McClure—retired again in 1845 and raised a family of three daughters, two of whom became actresses. One of the two, Rachel Adine Noah, became a leading lady at the Boston Theatre in 1864-65. Mr. Noah’s management of the Theatre Royal must have taken place between 1841 and 1843, for it was destroyed or damaged in the fire of August 21, 1843, along with most of the buildings nearby.

I was not very lucky in my efforts to find some printed record or reference to the Noahs’ stay at the Theatre Royal. The Toronto Reference Library and the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library, though carefully searched, yielded little information. This led me to write to the Theatre Collection of the Harvard College Library at Cambridge, Mass., which is in the Houghton Library.

An excellent gentleman and conscientious scholar named William Van Lennep, curator of the Theatre Collection, became interested in my search.

My letter was almost coincidental with his purchase of 20 typed pages about the life of Rachel Noah, an account which had been her own property. He soon realized that the account was no more than a hint—but the challenge was there.

About six weeks after my first enquiry Van Lennep wrote again, saying that “I have done more digging on your problem, and a real problem it is.” He then revealed the information I have placed before the reader earlier. The writer in *Robertson’s Landmarks* who wrote of “Mr. Noah and his daughter” had put an error into the record, of course, for as Van Lennep suggests, it should have been “Mr. Noah and his wife.”

So, after a salute to that man of good will, William Van Lennep, we will let Mr. W. G. Noah, manager, and Mrs. W. G. Noah, actress, return to the silence of the past.

IV

People Passing By

In spite of the space devoted to our subject up to this point, it is a fact that no Jewish resident of Toronto gave important leadership to a theatrical enterprise until Lawrence (Lol) Solmon, in behalf of a group otherwise non-Jewish, opened the Royal Alexandra Theatre in 1907.

However, in the 1890's a firm with a Jewish partner, Jacobs & Sparrow, which had offices in New York and Montreal, operated the Toronto Opera House, where melodrama at modest prices was the usual fare. H. R. Jacobs was a theatre man with interests in New York and Chicago and he formed a partnership with J. B. Sparrow of Montreal which lasted a few years. The manager of their Toronto theatre was J. B. Morris, who had been a New York lawyer under his real name, Byron H. Cohen, and he came to the city to make a fresh start after involvement in a questionable matter. The Toronto Opera House, later the Majestic, was finally the Regent, a movie theatre where the late N. L. Nathanson, whom we shall meet later in this story, began his fruitful career.

For the most part the persons of Jewish ancestry who enlivened our theatre scene were touring thespians. The late J. M. Bulloch, in *Hereditary Theatrical Families*, a chapter in the 1952 edition of the British volume, *Who's Who in the Theatre*, observed that "the ranks of our actors, as has frequently been pointed out, are very largely made up of Celtic or Jewish origin." As an example of the Irish strain he offers the Kembles and Sir Henry Irving and notes that "the famous American family of Booth was Jewish."

In 1848 Toronto got its first theatre structure erected as such, the Royal Lyceum, which stood on King Street, then the city's fashionable promenade. The city grew steadily and with that came more important attractions. Soon there were several theatres in operation at the same time, while some halls, notably St. Lawrence Hall, in the 1850's part of the City Hall structure, accommodated theatrical performances.

But until the Grand Opera House—opened on Adelaide Street near Yonge by Mrs. Daniel Morrison on September 23, 1874—came into existence, Toronto did not have a theatre on par with the finest. It was, *The Leader* said, "one of the handsomest theatres in Europe and America." Built

for Mrs. Morrison, daughter of John Nickinson, actor-manager at the Royal Lyceum, by a group of public-spirited investors, she starred in its opening play, *A School for Scandal*. The theatre was destroyed by fire at 3 a.m. on November 29, 1879.

The fire took place some hours after a Saturday night in which *Macbeth* had held the boards. Earlier the witches had intoned: “Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble.” These witches did their work well, for it was said that a chemical mixture used to make their fire in the second act had been left smoldering and the destruction of the theatre developed from this. The stage carpenter, his wife and their five-year-old daughter lost their lives.

The star of *Macbeth* that fateful night had been Daniel Edward Bandmann, the German-born American tragedian of Jewish parentage, whose favorite role was that of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, a condensed version of which he presented in vaudeville in 1901. Other roles he essayed were those of Hamlet, Richard III, Richelieu and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Bandmann and his company toured constantly on this continent and abroad and he wrote a book about his travels, *An Actor's Tour*. Among the members of his company at different times were Cyril Maude, Maurice Barrymore, Forbes Robertson, James O'Neill, William S. Hart, Clara Morris and Julia Arthur, all of whom were to achieve stardom. A great star, Miss Morris, who came from Toronto, joined Bandmann for one engagement, during which, as the Queen in *Hamlet*, she accepted the status of a supporting player. She did this, wrote the pleased Shakespearean actor, “out of respect to me because I had encouraged her in the young days of her career, when twenty years before in Cleveland, she played my Queen in *Hamlet*.”

In 1884 Bandmann toured Montana and made some good friends among the stockmen. He decided to move there and entered into a partnership with a rancher, Robert Child, who informed him that he had bought 219 cattle with the \$6,627 the actor had sent him. “I was playing in Canada at the time and the news I got from my good Christian partner was most satisfying,” Bandmann wrote. “I nearly jumped out of my gabardine for joy, for I was playing Shylock on that evening (in Montreal) when the letter was handed to me.”



DANIEL E. BANDMANN

From a drawing in T. Allston Brown's
History of the American Stage (NY,
1870).

He moved to Montana but, as a story about him, *Shakespearean Stockman*, in the Fall, 1954 edition of the *Montana Magazine*, observed: "In the rough, realistic rawboned West he was definitely an eccentric." He even conducted an acting school on his ranch and "here, among others, Julia Arthur received her first dramatic instruction." The brilliant Hamilton-born Miss Arthur, trained by Bandmann as a child, made her stage debut in his company, in which she remained for some years. Later she joined the company of Sir Henry Irving, assuming Ellen Terry's roles when the latter left it. In 1924, at the age of 55, she toured as Joan of Arc in *Saint Joan*.

The Grand—as we used to call it—was rebuilt by Alexander Manning, who later became mayor, and was reopened with 1,750 seats on February 9, 1880. The star on that occasion was one of the finest actresses of the day, Adelaide Neilson.

Miss Neilson's company, at the Grand Opera House for a week of repertory that began with *As You Like It* and included *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* and several non-Shakespearean plays, was under the direction of Max Strakosch of the famed Jewish theatrical family of that name.



ADELAIDE NEILSON

This picture is reproduced from one in an article about her by William Winter in his book, *Other Days*, published in 1906.

William Winter, the greatest critic of that time, called Miss Neilson "the best actress of this epoch." She received a welcome worthy of her stature. Augustus Pitou, the manager, introduced her and, said the *Mail*, "the lady came on mid thunders of applause, the gallery cheering with all its old-time fervor." Miss Neilson read a poem about the fire and the triumph over it by the good people who built and would support the new playhouse. Mr. Manning then spoke from his box, assuring the audience of the theatre's safety in spite of malicious rumors. The play began with Miss Neilson wearing \$50,000 worth of real diamonds.

In a spontaneous demonstration University of Toronto students unharnessed the horses from Miss Neilson's carriage on her closing night and drew it to her hotel, the Rossin House, now the Prince George. It was the first time this had been done and it was imitated so frequently that it just about became a custom in America.

By the way, the Rossin House, when erected in 1856 by three Jewish residents, the brothers Marcus, Samuel and Julius Rossin, was a glittering 220-room hostelry considered by many to be the finest west of New York. It sustained great damage by fire in 1862 and the Rossins, heartsick, left Toronto, going separate ways. Their enterprise was rebuilt by other hands and for the next few generations welcomed the leading theatrical figures. In 1906 Lol Solmon was reported to have paid \$70,000 for the licence, goodwill and furnishings but apparently the deal fell through, for there seems no record of it having been taken over by him. A century later the Rossin House, since 1910 known as the Prince George Hotel, is again under the direction of three Jewish brothers, Harry, Ben and Percy Smith. Thoroughly modern today, its theatrical tradition continues through its popularity with the profession and as the home of the Variety Club.

Adelaide Neilson was almost as tragic a figure as the character she brought most truly to life, Juliet. Born out of wedlock in Leeds as the daughter of a strolling actress named Browne, she became Lizzie Anne Bland when her mother married a mechanic. At 15, after working as a mill hand and as a nursemaid, she ran away to London and joined a ballet company. In August of the same year that she reopened the Grand Opera House she died.

A Toronto lady, Mrs. William Campbell, recalled in 1930 Miss Neilson's farewell performance, "when she stood on the centre of the stage surrounded with flowers—the letter 'N' in rosebuds was carried up and two bird cages containing canaries. Her farewell words were touched with sadness, as though she had some premonition of what was to happen."

The news of her passing at 34 plunged the whole theatrical world and its followers into gloom. "My mother wept, and my father was unable to control his voice because of the lump in his throat, when on a summer day news came of her untimely death," wrote Hector Charlesworth in 1925. "The circumstances were doubly tragic, for she died suddenly while alone in Paris; and her body lay unidentified in the Morgue for a full day or longer. The older generation of playgoers still talks, after nearly a half a century, of the loveliness of her presence and the music of her voice."

In the *Theatre* chapter of *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* Miss Neilson is named as being of Jewish extraction. Hugo Bieber, in *The European Theatre* section, states that “Adelaide Neilson (1846-80) met with exceptional applause in Shakespeare’s plays as Viola, Rosalind, Beatrice and Isabella.”

As an actress, particularly when playing Juliet, “she was more like a spirit than a woman.” So William Winter said. It was thought that Winter, who wrote feelingly of her in his *Shadows of the Stage*, was in love with Adelaide Neilson. He came to Toronto for the reopening of the Grand Opera House and wrote an unsigned review of her performance for a local paper.

As Thomas Scott, Jr., who joined the backstage staff in 1877, wrote in his reminiscences for *The Telegram* in 1924: “‘The Grand’ was the window through which Toronto looked upon Humanity’s finest artists in the full flower of their matchless talents.”

With such excellent facilities available in Toronto from the 1850’s on, the world’s leading players came to the city. Among them were some of Jewish ancestry, such as Ada Isaacs Menken, Sarah Bernhardt, Edwin Booth, Maurice Barrymore, Lewis Morrison, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, David Warfield and others.

Let us leave the Grand Opera House, here important because of what it did to nourish the souls of Jewish Torontonians in company with their fellow citizens. But not before recalling some of the lovely sentiment expressed by the then drama critic of the *Daily Star*, Augustus Bridle, in 1928 when, its use as a theatre having ended several years earlier, the building was being demolished. Of Johnston Lane, on which the stage entrance opened, he recalled:

“Out of the lane were the great processions of the actors—usually at night—in the days when not every autograph hunter or tea-party hostess had access to the dressing rooms; when the people who had been up in the gods and never could meet a live actor, lined up to see Irving and Terry drive out of the glimmering gloom in some haunted cab; when the play was done and the realism of common life and familiar streets had begun to come again, and hundreds of people wanted to keep up the illusion of magic, of great heroines and marvellous villains and splendid scenes—and to watch the actors depart was the only lingering illusion left.”

Can you feel those words? Then you, too, are a lover of The Theatre.

Solmon of 'The Royal'

That person of Jewish birth with the most important place in Toronto's stage history is Lawrence (Lol) Solmon, who in his day was without doubt the most popular and best known personality in the city. The Royal Alexandra Theatre, which Barry Jones insists is still the finest legitimate theatre on the continent, is a monument to him, as is the Toronto Maple Leaf Baseball Stadium. This clever, kindly, genial little man, whose father was one of the founders of the Holy Blossom Temple in 1856, was a person of much enterprise and many enterprises.

Lol Solmon, the son of Samuel and May Solmon, was born on John Street, Toronto, on May 14, 1863 and died on March 25, 1931, in his 69th year, of pneumonia. At the time of his passing he was managing director of the Royal Alexandra Theatre, head of the Toronto Baseball and Athletic Club and a partner with his brothers in the Sunnyside Amusement Company. Several years earlier he had given up his interests in Hanlan's Point, where until 1925 he maintained the baseball stadium and operated the amusements and the ferries. He had been the driving force behind the Tecumseth Lacrosse Club, which dropped out of competition in 1915 but not before winning a special place in the story of our now-shrunken national game.

His participation in endeavors designed to attract the public in large numbers was usually by the invitation of investors who regarded him as Toronto's leading authority on that science. In that way he came to the Mutual Street Arena. The early programs of the Royal Alexandra reflected his business versatility: they carried the Leafs' baseball schedule.

Some members of leading Toronto families, headed by Cawthraw Mulock, had proposed a new legitimate theatre and asked Solmon to not only join them but to take charge. "The Royal," as it is usually spoken of, opened during the Canadian National Exhibition of 1907 with a world premiere of *The Top o' the World*, a musical melange starring Anna Laughlin, which had been booked in for two weeks by the Shuberts. The \$750,000 structure bowed in on August 26.

"Manager Solmon was a proud man as he stood in the lobby and received endless congratulations upon the beauty and comfort of the playhouse," wrote the *Mail and Empire* reporter. *The Toronto World* said:

“Under the rich but soft light diffused from the electric chandeliers and sunbursts, the marble walls of the entrance hall, of darkest green, exquisitely veined, and the ceiling of old gold and the mosaic floor seemed fit to be the vestibule to a veritable land of enchantment. But all the earlier features paled before the more glamorous glory of the auditorium . . . Just before the curtain rose the theatre offered one of the most brilliant spectacles Toronto has witnessed.”

The Royal Alexandra—“Royal” by Royal Warrant and with the right to display the Royal coat-of-arms—retains that air of well-being and good taste. For many years under the direction of a protege of Solmon, Ernest M. Rawley, it still reflects the character and personality of the man who built it.

Solmon was also the manager of the Mutual Street Arena, in which he relinquished his interest in 1926, and staged many cultural attractions there. Though his education never took him beyond public school, his tastes were as excellent as his business ability. A combination of brains and good fortune led him to a high place in the life of the city. Two Toronto bankers, Osler and Hammond, had acquired operation rights to Hanlan’s Point, an island a mile from Toronto, and to the ferries that carried the crowds there.

These businesses were in need of rehabilitation and they decided that Solmon was the man to do it. He invited Ambrose Small, owner of the Grand Opera House, whose disappearance is still a local mystery, to become his partner. Small, a capricious man in many ways, agreed and, after Solmon acted accordingly, suddenly withdrew. H. C. Hammond of Osler & Hammond, decided on personal participation to replace Small. Solmon, of course, revived the popularity of Hanlan’s Point but that place of happy recollections means little today.

Solmon promoted opera festivals in the Arena and elsewhere and the late Hector Charlesworth, in his eulogy in *Saturday Night*, wrote that he had privately sponsored the appearance in Massey Hall of many great artists. “No man ever took a loss on these finer things with better grace; and there was also a side of his life known to very few which illustrated his indifference to money except for what he could do with it, a characteristic of the race from which he sprang when they achieve prosperity,” said Charlesworth.



LAWRENCE SOLMON

This photograph, made by Charles Aylett, hangs in his former office in the Royal Alexandra Theatre.

At the time the Royal was built the war between Klaw and Erlanger, who supplied the Princess, further east on King Street, and the Shuberts, who booked the new house, was on for control of North America's legitimate outlets. Marc Klaw of New York, noting the opening of the Royal, sneered that he would soon acquire it as a stable for the horses of the carriage trade that patronized the Princess. He didn't. The Royal outlived him and the Princess Theatre as well.

Prominent in the Royal's half-century cavalcade of players are members of the Jewish race, among them Leslie Howard, Al Jolson, Fannie Brice, Eugene and Willie Howard, Florence Reed, the Marx Brothers, Helen Menken, Kenneth McKenna, Francine Larrimore and Alla Nazimova. The Royal had been expected to open for the first week in January but the delay caused Solmon to cancel what would have been the initial attraction: *The Music Master*, starring David Warfield, who had played in it on Broadway for over two years. It is interesting to note that the week the Royal did open the Princess, until then the city's leading legitimate house, offered the Jewish star of the English-language theatre, Leo Dietrichstein, a matinee idol, in his own play, *Before and After*.

Lol Solmon was married twice, the first time to Emily Hanlan Durnan, a widow whose second and third names were those of the leading Hanlan's Point families. She predeceased him and two years before his passing he married Daisy Walshe, his secretary at the theatre.

The funeral of this man of "immense and widespread popularity," as Charlesworth wrote, occupied the front pages. Many were the editorials, stories and pictures. The famous of Toronto, joined by dignitaries from other places, filled 200 automobiles.

He was buried from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, near the theatre, that being—his widow explained—as he might have wished. He had been helpful to the church, permitting the congregation to use the theatre for its services when this was necessary. He was never very close to the Jewish community but he never became a Christian.

It is just as well that the Royal Alexandra be the main evidence of Lol Solmon's stay on earth—a stay so rewarding to his neighbors. It keeps alive his spirit and the love of theatre so common to his people.

VI

Time: The Present

We have arrived at the present—130 years after Mr. Judah introduced York to *Taming the Shrew*, as his ad in the pre-Toronto press had it.

Perhaps we should regard this as the epilogue to an informal, rambling presentation. So informal and so rambling, in fact, that the conclusion of this epilogue will not allow us to release you. In the theatre of yesteryear the program didn't end with the play. There was the Afterpiece. We have not one Afterpiece but two. The first will be about the Motion Picture Industry and the second about the Yiddish Theatre. I'm sorry I could not integrate them in the body of this account. Probably my art is too poor. But it does seem simpler this way.

This chapter will deal mainly with the contemporary scene—meaning the people of the present and the memories they will stir up. At this time Toronto, the main point of origination for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's English-language radio and television shows, has an abundance of theatrical activity. Players from many parts of Canada have become local residents in pursuit of their careers, adding to the ranks of those born here. So with people in related fields.

Jewish Torontonians have a fine record of active interest in English-language drama from the late 20's on. On April 26, 1924 the *Mail & Empire* reported that *Three Weddings of a Hunchback*, written by Henry Borsook, a University of Toronto medical student, over-rode "the usual laws of form" and was, said the reviewer, "a remarkable piece of writing." Perhaps this is the place to add that the Hart House Theatre, where the play was presented, welcomed Jacob Ben-Ami, who was to appear often in Yiddish plays at the Standard on Spadina Avenue, as an actor and director for several English-language plays during the 1925 season.



(Stratford)

LORNE GREENE

As Brutus in Julius Caesar, presented
at the Stratford Shakespearean
Festival, Stratford, Ontario, in 1955.

In the late 20's and early 30's Jewish amateur groups were busy. A series of plays, directed by the late Charles Benjamin, was offered by the Judea Lodge of the Knights of Pythias. The most popular type of presentation in the Jewish Community, however, was the home-grown musical, sponsored by women's organizations. Most of these were produced and directed by the late Jackie Lewis. For 20 years the Tri-Bell Club, mainly Jewish in membership, has presented a variety show, with the proceeds for charity. The early Tri-Bell shows were semi-professional in character, employing the talents of such professionals as Sammy Sales, Lou Jacobi and Johnny Shapiro and took place on Sunday evenings in the Victory or the Royal Alexandra theatres. They were produced by Joe Fox or Leo Romberg. The

latter, from Montreal, is now a resident of Hamilton. He also directed light theatricals for the Knight of Pythias and other Jewish organizations.



(McKague, Toronto)

TOBY ROBINS

This young star, in private life Mrs. Billy Freedman, is rated among Canada's most skilled and versatile players.

Quite a few of those interested in the Theatre of Action, a politically-motivated body that presented plays of social significance, were Jewish, along with several of the directors brought from New York, where they had been influenced by the new and vital Group Theatre. One of these was Daniel Mann, director of *Come Back, Little Sheba* and other popular American plays, now also an outstanding motion picture director, who will direct *Marjorie Morningstar*, based on Herman Wouk's popular novel about modern Jewish-American life. In the late 30's and early 40's other groups, organized mainly by Jews but open to aspirants of all races, came into existence, among them the Belmont Group Theatre and the Plaquest Drama Guild.

It was in the late 30's that the Drama Section of the Labor Zionist Movement, known as Dramsec, became active under the direction of

Yitzchok Fogel, who had come from New York and was a newspaperman on the staff of *The Hebrew Journal*. Dramsec presented plays in both Yiddish and English and for their roles in one of its entries in the Ontario Region of the Dominion Drama Festival, Hirschbein's *Lone Worlds*, Belle Greenberg was given the best actress award and Morris Kirk got honorable mention. Among the plays Dramsec offered in Yiddish were Levick's *The Golem*, *Green Fields* and some based on Sholom Aleichem's works. Played in English were Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun* and Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing*. Dramsec joined with groups from the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the Young Women's Hebrew Association to create the Jewish Little Theatre, which Fogel also directed. The YM-YWHA, which has active drama groups during the winter season, still maintains a summer drama course under the direction of Joe Jolley.

Toronto's Jewish community has contributed people to the general theatrical scene for years. Probably those of its former members who made the biggest impact on the theatre of their day were the Selwyns, Archie and Edgar, who, when they lived in Toronto, were Archie and Dave Simon. Though born in the United States, they came to Toronto when very young with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wolf Simon, who were related to the Draimins and other Jewish families. They left here in their late teens and Edgar, who was to become an actor, author, manager and theatre owner, made his stage debut in 1896 at the age of 21 in *Secret Service*, starring William Gillette, after being introduced to the theatre as an usher.

Edgar wrote or had a share in the writing of about 25 plays and he and Archie, as Selwyn & Company, produced some of these, along with dozens more. They also built two New York theatres. In 1917 Edgar became vice-president of the Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, which he and Samuel Goldwyn organized. Loew's, Inc. merged with the company and renamed its first film studio Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer following the extension of the partnership to include Louis B. Mayer, who left his home city, Saint John, NB, to win an important place in the motion picture industry.



(McKague, Toronto)

LLOYD BOCHNER

A player of important roles at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, he is considered one of Canada's finest actors.

Edgar came to Toronto now and then in a play and was seen several times in a popular one which he had played in London, titled *Arizona*. Another success was *Pierre of the Plains*, in which he starred with Elsie Ferguson and which he had adapted from the immensely popular short stories of Canadian life, *Pierre and his People*, by the great Canadian writer of the day, Gilbert Parker. While here he stayed with relatives or friends. During one such visit the pals of his youth gave him a dinner in the King Edward Hotel. Edgar passed on some years ago and Archie now lives in Hollywood, where, as an agent, he has represented leading artists, including George Gershwin.

In the days of the burlesque wheels Rube Bernstein's *Bathing Beauties* caused the young men to kick up their heels. He returned to Toronto frequently as a company manager, in recent years with *Oklahoma!*, and spent many after-theatre hours in the Variety clubrooms reminiscing about

his young days here. Harry Peterson, an ex-postie, was publicized as the highest paid “straight man” in burlesque. Like Peterson, George White, whose *Scandals* in the 20’s and 30’s competed on Broadway with the musical extravaganzas of Ziegfeld and Carroll, danced as a boy on the ferries to Toronto Island for thrown pennies. Today in Toronto vaudeville is combined with burlesque at the Casino Theatre, which is managed by Louis Appleby, whose late father, Abner, was in the field with the Globe, later the Roxy, and now a movie house, the Broadway. The Globe-Roxy played movies between burlesque presentations in the late 20’s and early 30’s. During this time Sam Ulster, still an exhibitor and the main principal now of the Westminster Hotel and its Town and Country restaurant, also offered stock burlesque. This was in his theatre, the Photodrome, on Queen Street across from the City Hall. Simpson’s occupies the property now. The Casino is owned by the Appleby family, Arthur Cohen, Louis Rosenfeld and The Allen interests in partnership.

In the great days of vaudeville one of the busiest acts was Krugel and Robles, singers and comedians, with Lou Krugel, now a brewery executive, getting a special welcome here as a home-towner. In those days there were few tap dancers better than Nat Nathanson, or Nat Anson, as he was known professionally on The Big Time. A singing star of musical comedy and night clubs was Francis Shelley.

Another vaudeville performer of the 20’s was the boy singer, Louis Herman, a protege of Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt, the latter a theatrical headliner because of his peerless tenor voice. Herman, son of Cantor Samuel Herman, is now a cantor in American synagogues. From the same Toronto Jewish district as Herman came little Jackie Breen in the early 30’s to enchant all America each Sunday night as the radio discovery of Eddie Cantor. Breen is today a popular singer in nightclubs and theatres.

Mrs. Ben Geldsaler, whose husband is the head of Famous Players’ film booking and buying department, was a very young member of the famed Gus Edwards troupe, as were Lila Lee, George Jessel, Georgie Price, Walter Winchell and others. A New York girl, she met her husband, a Canadian Army officer in WWI, in Amherst, Nova Scotia, where he was stationed and where she was performing that week as part of a two-girl touring musical act.

In the mid-30’s Eva Langbord, who had appeared at Hart House and with local Jewish groups, played a number of roles in the New York theatre, one of which placed her opposite Burgess Meredith in Maxwell Anderson’s

Pulitzer Prize drama, *Winterset*. She returned to the role when that play was chosen to be the first offered on television.

Lorne Greene, originally from Ottawa, starred on Broadway opposite Katharine Cornell three seasons ago and in 1955 played the role of Brutus in *Julius Caesar* at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, while Lloyd Bochner was Cassius. At the present moment Lou Jacobi of Toronto, formerly a leading performer on the London stage, is featured on Broadway in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. He initiated the character role he plays in this drama, which appears destined for a place in Jewish history and world literature as part of the record of Mankind's greatest self-made tragedy. Also on Broadway earlier this year, in *Too Late the Phalarope*, was Paul Mann, the conductor of a leading New York school of the theatre, who is the brother of one of Toronto's busiest actors, Larry Mann. Incidentally, the leading local school for the teaching of the arts and techniques of radio and television was the Academy of Radio Arts, founded by Lorne Greene, which he closed when his own growing eminence no longer made possible personal direction. It was the first school of its kind in Toronto and quite a number of leading radio-TV personalities and executives got their basic training in it.

The end of the year saw Greene back on Broadway, this time in *Speaking of Murder*, while Louis Negin, another Stratford player, made his first New York appearance in a minor role in the off-Broadway drama, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, starring Uta Hagen. It should be noted here that Lloyd Bochner, considered to be one of Canada's finest actors, has so far not accepted invitations to appear on the New York and London stages, preferring the Canadian theatrical scene. He provided Canadians with a memorable television Hamlet, as well as other highly-praised portrayals.

Locally Sammy Sales and Toby Robins have starred in professional productions of New York hits. Among producers of stage productions are Stan Jacobson and Mervyn Rosenzweig, who operate the Premiere Theatre, and Bernard Rothman and Billy Freedman. The first three named are originally from Montreal. Freedman, husband of Toby Robins, is an executive with Allied Theatres and a third-generation showman.



LOU JACOBI

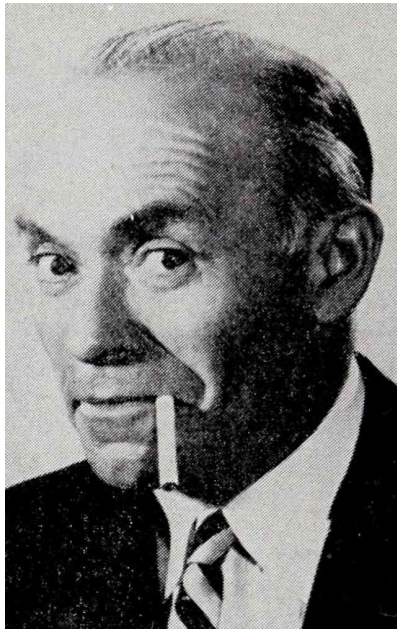
A Torontonians who made quite a reputation in the London theatre before his Broadway bow in *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Ben Lennick and Sylvia Paige are a prominent acting couple, with the former having also directed *The Fifth Season* here. The chief resident character comedian of Melody Fair during several seasons of its existence was E. M. Margolese. Wayne and Shuster, stars of *The Army Show* and now Canada's top TV comedians, returned to the live theatre to do *Room Service* last summer and among the supporting players were the Lennicks, Johnny Shapiro and Paul Kligman, the last an outstanding character actor formerly of Winnipeg. His sister, Libby Morris, a talented comedienne, is now popular in England where she went with her husband, Murray Kash, a Toronto actor who is a brother of Eugene Kash, concert violinist and conductor of the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra. Another with distinction in several fields is Monty Hall, emcee of George Formby's Canadian touring troupe during 1955, who still carries on his Toronto radio show, although he is now residing in New York, where he appears on television. Alene Kamins has played important roles in all mediums. Carol Starkman, Iris Krangle and Toby Tarnow are among the promising young actresses on TV and in the theatre. Cecil Linder is an actor of considerable stature here and in New

York TV. Larry Solway and Brian Davidson make regular appearances, as do Alfie Scopp and Bernie Orenstein. David Sniderman is a boy actor of distinction. Gloria Rand, who studied in New York and appeared there, came home for stage and TV engagements. She is married to William Shatner, who moved from Montreal to Toronto to be closer to greater theatrical activity and appeared at Stratford in important parts before signing with MGM. Claire Murray has played many demanding roles. Marilyn Plottel, of a family long prominent in the Canadian motion picture industry and the wife of Monty Hall, won recognition for her acting ability.

Until several years ago Hilda Eckler was a principal dancer at Radio City Music Hall, New York, and today one of this continent's leading ballerinas is Melissa Hayden. Cynthia Barrett, prominent locally as a teacher and choreographer, was an interpretative dancer of stature, as was Saida Gerrard more than a decade ago.

Players identified locally with the Yiddish theatrical scene have become active in the English language. Among these are Isaac Swerdlow and Jacob and Sofia Reinglas. Both Swerdlow and Jacob Reinglas appeared in the CBC television production of Gogol's *The Overcoat* and in Ted Allan's story of a Jewish-Canadian childhood, *Lies My Father Told Me*. Reinglas, who was active in the Warsaw National Drama Theatre and on the Yiddish stage of that city, as was Mrs. Reinglas, is before the cameras frequently and Mrs. Reinglas, with the same excellent training, was one of the principals of Premiere Theatre's second legitimate production, *Uncle Willie*, which starred Sammy Sales. The Reinglases came to Canada in 1948 and Swerdlow, who for years had been a player with Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theatre, settled in Toronto in 1951. Also from Poland are Milton Rothstein and his wife, Chaya Luxembourg, who appear in English and Yiddish theatricals.



(Herb Knott)

SAMMY SALES

A popular star of the legitimate theatre, television and radio who excels in presenting comedy and sentiment. He is also a writer.

Henry Kaplan is perhaps the best known local director of Jewish extraction and the brightest of the new aspirants to that craft is Leon Major, who, like Kaplan, got his first experience at the University of Toronto and also won the Governor-General's Award through the Dominion Drama Festival. Leo Orenstein, a CBC TV director, occasionally takes on direction of a stage play. Joe Jolley is both a director and a teacher. Ted Allan and Stanley Mann, who came to Toronto from other parts of Canada and are now in England, had their plays produced locally. So has Nathan Cohen, who hails from Nova Scotia and is the CBC's drama critic, as well as its TV drama script editor and conductor of the panel show, *Fighting Words*. Stan Daniels and Ray Jessel are among Toronto's best creators of revue material for TV and stage. Mavor Moore has called on their talents for his annual *Spring Thaw* and several of the musical numbers used by Jack Arthur in the past few editions of *Canadiana*, the CNE Grandstand Show, were provided by Daniels, who, incidentally, is married to Alene Kamins. Another contributor of sketches to *Spring Thaw* is Ben Lappin, executive director of

the Central Region of the Canadian Jewish Congress, who enjoys considerable repute as a writer.

Toronto's busiest and best known independent impresario is Walter Homburger of International Artists Concert Agency, who has brought the city the finest attractions in the dramatic and musical worlds. He also manages Glenn Gould, Canada's leading concert pianist.

Among the theatrical agents in Toronto are David Bossin, Joseph Poster and Paul Simmons, while Nat Goodman, Art Snider and Earl Parnes act as personal managers for artists. All limit themselves to the light entertainment field.

Israel Zangwill once caused something of a sensation when, speaking in Toronto, he attacked American theatrical managers after a play of his flopped. "For a man with long experience of the theatre, probably the most unreasonable individual with regard to his plays, and in refusing to consider the public, was the late Israel Zangwill," wrote Hector Charlesworth, in the second volume of his enjoyable and invaluable reminiscences, *More Candid Chronicles*, which Macmillan published in 1938.

"His speech before the Canadian Club at Toronto was especially venomous and when I was in New York shortly afterward I found some of my Jewish friends indignant. 'Some of our people are always getting us in wrong' was what they said," Charlesworth wrote.

Zangwill made his Toronto speech on January 28, 1924 and I was able to read it in the *Printed Proceedings of the Canadian Club*. Called *Some American Impressions*, it should have been called *Some Bad American Impressions*. "Outside the Town Hall in New York they have in stone letters 'The truth shall make us free.' It did not make them free. It made them mad," he told his listeners. A little later: "They have no right to call it America. My friend Sir Herbert Tree once said a witty thing about this matter. He said: 'They have conquered Canada and Mexico by a slip of the tongue.'"

Then he told how a blizzard was followed by a drop in the temperature to 16 below in Chicago just after a play of his arrived, so there was little patronage. "The owner of the theatre, disregarding local conditions, wired from New York to terminate the play in that theatre. But for the mercy of Providence the play would have been assassinated but fortunately we found

another theatre where the play is doing bigger business and I hope the man will see what an idiot he was.”

Apparently the owner of the theatre was Jewish. Those were the days when Henry Ford had been misled into printing the Protocols of Zion, that vicious fiction about an international Jewish conspiracy, in his magazine. “When I tell you, you will see how little of the so-called solidarity there is in the race, or of any conspiracy Mr. Ford tries to put on the race,” said Zangwill.

Zangwill may have been unreasonable but he was certainly no bore. He helps bring to an interesting end this examination to date of Jewish interest and participation in the Toronto theatre. A hundred years hence some other researcher may continue it. I doubt if it will matter to us then.

May I interpose an interesting bit of information here? Early in the century Zangwill was a leader in the Jewish Territorial Organization, which stood for the establishment of colonies within the British Empire for the resettlement of the oppressed Jews of Europe. This movement was not looked upon kindly by those who held that the Jewish rebirth belonged on native soil and the JTO got nowhere. But at its height Zangwill visited Toronto and he took the opportunity to speak to the Premier of Ontario, Sir James Whitney, about a grant of Provincial land in Northern Ontario for the JTO. The Premier received him amiably and made no promises. It was just as well.

And now to our first Afterpiece.

VII

They Moved the Movies

There is an impression that each new wonder of the mechanical age immediately captured public interest and in no time established itself as part of contemporary life. Perhaps later wonders, such as radio and television, found their places quickly because they weren't as expensive as automobiles, which also required driving skill and repair services, or airplanes, which were not for average use at all. But the moving picture, even though it demanded only time and a bit of silver, did not sweep the entertainment world when it was first demonstrated to audiences in 1895 in France and Britain and in 1896 in the United States. The darkened store first used as an auditorium and theatre was no place for a lady and the moving picture was regarded as a novelty useful as a "chaser" at the end of the vaudeville show. Let Cecil Roth, that fine historian, tell you about it:

"In the new art of the Cinema, where there were no established traditions or prejudices to hamper their progress, the Jews entered wholeheartedly. They found it a starveling newcomer, relegated to back streets and uncomfortable halls, and occupying itself in cheap extravaganzas. It is largely under Jewish auspices that it developed from this to a great industry, not challenging but supplementing the theatre, the centre of a new art which brought a new standard of comfort as well as of achievement to the reach of the poorest pocket."

This observation, made in Roth's *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*, is as true of Canada as of Britain and the United States. The great flood of immigration from Europe had begun about 1880 and the lowly film was to benefit from it, for immigrants and sons of immigrants, particularly among the Jews and Greeks, were to see in the presentation of motion pictures the means to a better standard of living and a better life. It was a business easy to enter. Empty stores weren't hard to find, nor kitchen chairs, nor a bedsheet for a screen. Films were cheap. There wasn't much competition.

Yet none of these points was the major one in attracting many of the Jews who became exhibitors. You know what was? The fact that it was a night business. You could work at the common trade of tailoring or at some job related to it during the day as a factory hand—and at night become a businessman. Not just a businessman; a showman as well!

This combination of business and theatre was one with special appeal to Jews. They were soon among the chief couriers of the new form of entertainment and today the names of some of them—Zukor, Selznick, Goldwyn, Mayer, Warner, Laemmle, Fox—are identified in the public mind with the screen's greatest achievements.

Canadian Jewish motion picture history can be dated from 1900 if we place its beginnings with one Joe Rosenthal. Canada owes a great debt to the film for help in colonizing its vast spaces. To bring British Columbia into Confederation Canada had to guarantee a railroad and the last spike was driven at Craigellachie on November 7, 1885. Now all that was needed to make the Canadian Pacific Railway profitable was people.



ON THE EXTREME RIGHT: JOE ROSENTHAL

He and the camera crew he headed were brought over from Britain by the CPR in 1900 to film Canada. The films were shown in Britain to stimulate immigration. The first and second figures, F. Guy Bradford and Clifford Denham were his crew. The third person is T. Bell, a CPR official.

In 1900, when the population was on the favorable side of 5,000,000, the CPR decided to use the motion picture, then but five years old as an audience attraction, to help stimulate immigration from the United Kingdom. It brought over a camera crew headed by Joe Rosenthal, who had with him F. Guy Bradford and his brother-in-law, Clifford Denham. They photographed city and country, always avoiding snow. Their work, which went on for two years, was made into a series called *Living Canada* and, shown everywhere in Britain, did much to increase our Western population.

Bradford and Denham remained in Canada as motion picture exhibitors. The former opened many theatres and died in the United States, while the latter is today manager of a theatre in Victoria. Joe Rosenthal, just about Britain's leading cameraman, had many adventures. He photographed the Boer War from behind the Boer lines, the Boxer Rebellion in China and the Russo-Japanese War from behind the Japanese lines.

Who knows how many Canadians owe their being Canadians to the ideas the films of Joe Rosenthal planted in the minds of their grandfathers?

Most of the Jewish Torontonians who became showmen in 1909 and in the next few years were needle trade workers, the employer of many of them being the T. Eaton Company. Among these early exhibitors were Manuel Gebertig, Jacob Smith and Abner Appleby, who have passed on. An interesting exhibition partnership was comprised of Harry Alexander, Maurice Mentel and Sam Lester. During the day they ran a little cloak-and-suit manufacturing business, with Harry, who had come from England in 1909, as designer and salesman. Within a few years they were operating a half-dozen theatres. The Lesters—Sam, George and Harry—got into the movie game early and the second generation, represented by Bob and Lionel Lester, George's sons, are still active, with Bob the operator of the Studio Theatre and Lionel, manager of a booking organization, the current president of the Motion Picture Theatres Association of Ontario. The Rotenbergs, Charles and his late brother, Hyman, were early exhibitors, as were no doubt a few more Jewish citizens of Toronto then. These mentioned here stayed in the movie business and some grew with it, while others were satisfied with a single neighborhood house.

Perhaps the story of The Allens is the first Canadian one worthy of becoming a chapter in the motion picture industry's volume of great accomplishments. Bernard Allen was a jeweller in Bradford, Pennsylvania when he and his teen-age sons, Jay J. and Jule, were attracted by the success

of a newly-opened picture show there. There might be a future in it for them. The year was 1906.

Jule, 18 years old and just out of high school, went to Hamilton for a look—and found no space available. As he pondered whether to return or search further into the countryside, an interesting name caught his eye and stopped him because it was so much like that of his home town. The name was Brantford, the next community of a good size. So there he went, observed that there was no picture house and that there was a store to be rented on the main street.

On November 10th The Allens, as they were to become known throughout the moving picture world, opened their first film theatre, the Theatorium. The Theatorium was the beginning of an entertainment empire that was based on the most luxurious and comfortable cinema theatres possible to build and which held many lessons in circuit or chain operation for exhibitors everywhere. In the West it was Harry J. Allen, the cousin of Jay J. and Jule, who erected new theatres under the family banner. Today he and his son, Leslie, operate a distribution business, Cardinal Films, which has no connection with the other Allens, the latter's interests being Columbia Pictures of Canada and Theatre Holding Corporation Limited.

The progress of The Allens was astounding. In a decade and a half the fistful of nickels that marked the opening of the Theatorium in 1906 grew into a \$20,000,000 investment in about 50 theatres, including one each in Britain and Russia and several in the United States, as well as a film distribution organization.

Not many years after they entered the motion picture business the Allen family settled in Toronto, where its members built the city's finest cinemas, among them the Tivoli, Parkdale, College, St. Clair, Beach and Hollywood.

But even the success of The Allens was dwarfed by the rise of N. L. Nathanson, who came into the film-theatre business ten years after them. He began as their competitor and became their partner, along with his associates of Famous Players Canadian Corporation.

Nathanson, who had been a newsboy in Minneapolis, came to Toronto at the age of 21 as an employee of an amusement park concessionaire. In later years he boasted jocularly that he was the man who had introduced the ice cream cone to Canada. Amusement parks being closed in the winter, he began to sell outdoor advertising for E. L. Ruddy, whom he interested in financing a cinema. They acquired an old legitimate theatre, the Majestic,

and converted it into a deluxe movie house in 1916. After an uncertain beginning the Regent, in which Jack Arthur was soon staging prologues and conducting a 20-piece orchestra, became a success.



JULE ALLEN OF THE 'THE ALLENS' IN 1909

From Bradford, Pa. to Brantford, Ont.—and the beginning of big-scale theatre operation.

Other financial backers had become interested and in 1920 Adolph Zukor, a leading film pioneer, became their partner and president of a new company in Canada, Famous Players—the name of his American firm. To this company Zukor transferred his motion pictures, then about the finest made, from Allen control in Canada and this was a severe blow to patronage in their theatres. Nathanson, as managing director, a post later held for

several years by Arthur Cohen, directed the growth of Famous Players. Meanwhile he had personally become the largest distributor of motion pictures in Canada. He also served on the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting corporation.

Like Jay J. Allen, who was president during the growth of The Allens, Nathanson has passed on. Their monuments in every Canadian city are the fine theatres their energy and imagination helped create. Before he died in 1943, several years after he resigned from Famous Players, N. L. Nathanson joined his son Paul in the activation and operation of Odeon Theatres. In Britain some years earlier the head of a large milling company, J. Arthur Rank, had entered the film and theatre business in a big way by acquiring the interests of such Jews as the Ostrers, Oscar Deutsch and the Woolfs. The Odeon name, owned in Canada by Paul Nathanson, came to Rank from Deutsch. In 1945 Rank bought 50 per cent of Nathanson's Canadian Odeon and later the remaining interest. The Nathanson name is still prominent in the film industry, Paul controlling Empire-Universal Films Limited and Henry L., his uncle, acting as president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures of Canada Limited. Paul also has control of Associated Screen News, Montreal, a production and laboratory company.

Do you know the name "Leon Schlesinger"? It used to appear on the screen as the producer of those series of animated musical cartoons called *Looney Tunes* and *Merry Melodies*. The latter gave the world Bugs Bunny. Schlesinger, from the USA, was a member of Toronto's theatre community before and during the first World War. He was manager of the Strand Theatre, Yonge Street, which had been Shea's until Jerry Shea opened Shea's Victoria in 1910. Later he managed the Globe Theatre, Vancouver. Schlesinger maintained his Toronto friendships and came to the organization meeting of the Canadian Picture Pioneers in 1940. Some years before his passing in 1949 he sold his interests to Warner Bros., which had been releasing his cartoons.

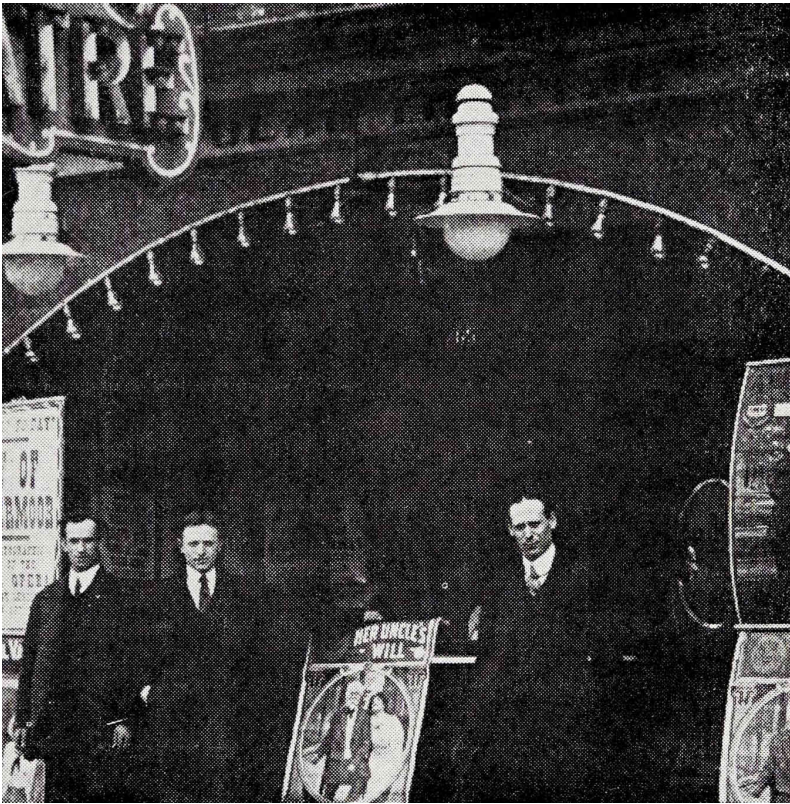
Perhaps this would be a good place to touch on several other related matters. Television and its needs have grown quickly and these frequently overlap into the motion picture industry. A great percentage of what one sees on receiving sets is on film. Even without that there is a great affinity between television and the motion picture, the techniques of both being largely the same.



JULE ALLEN TODAY

Canadian Film Industries, founded by Arthur Gottlieb as the second large Canadian laboratory, is now also a production studio, with the entire plant under David Coplan, managing director. There many TV commercials and industrial films are made. It has also provided all the facilities for Canada's first filmed TV serial, *The Last of the Mohicans*, which is being produced by an American company in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Another Toronto studio is that of Meridian Productions Corporation Limited, of which Ralph Foster, former Deputy National Film Commissioner of Canada and National Film Commissioner of Australia, is president. Julian Roffman, regarded as among the continent's finest documentary makers, is director of production.

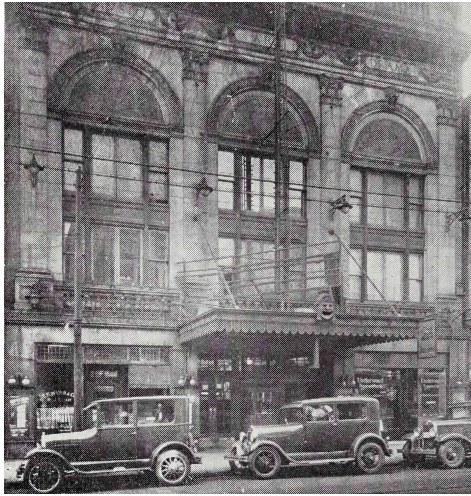


MAURICE MENTEL, SAM LESTER AND HARRY ALEXANDER
Cloak-and-suiters by day; showmen by night. This photo, like the others
here, is from the archives of Canadian Picture Pioneers.

At the Toronto studios of CBC television Sydney Newman, formerly of the National Film Board, is supervising producer of television drama and Eva Langbord casting director. There are Jews among the producers—Leo Orenstein, Stan Harris, Harvey Hart, Mervyn Rosenzweig and Clifford Solway—and quite a few among the performers, some of whom have been mentioned earlier. In stage, radio, live TV and films performers move from one to the other, as does Phil Stone of CHUM, but as yet Canada's No. 1 disc jockey, the wise and witty Mickey Lester of CKEY, has not made his TV bow. Other popular radio personalities are Richard Scott, Martin Silburt, Harvey Dobbs and Vita Linder, each commanding an audience. Bert Pearl, originator and for years emcee of *The Happy Gang*—which for a time included the pianist Lou Snider—enjoyed national popularity. Percy Saltzman enlivens the daily TV program, *Tabloid*, as its weatherman and one of its interviewers. Jacqueline Rosenfeld is among the most talented of

Toronto's resident television playwrights. Bernard Cowan, prominent as an announcer and commentator, has served as president of the Association of Radio and Television Artists and is an officer of the Canadian Council of Authors and Artists.

Incidentally, one of the most desired honors administered annually by the Canadian Council of Authors and Artists is the Maurice M. Rosenfeld Award for the outstanding newcomer in Canadian radio, television or films, which is symbolized by a plaque. The person whom it commemorates, called "Rosy" by his friends, commanded the affection of all who came to know him well and many expressions of gratitude were directed his way by artists now prominent. As head of the radio and television department of the MacLaren Advertising Company Limited, he was responsible for the character and personnel of a number of leading radio programs, among them those of Peoples Credit Jewellers, Buckingham Cigarettes and General Electric. He gave Wayne and Shuster their first chance on radio and provided broad opportunities for Alan Young, Howard Cable and others to demonstrate their talents when they were not yet widely known. Maurice was the brother of Bobbie Rosenfeld, Canada's woman athlete of the half-century and for years now a daily sports columnist for the *Globe and Mail*.



HERE BEGAN N. L. NATHANSON—AND
FAMOUS PLAYERS

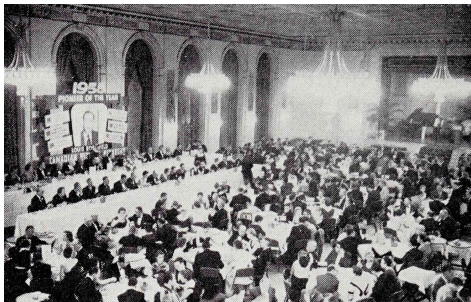
This is the old Regent Theatre on Adelaide Street, Toronto. Converted into a superdeluxe movie theatre in 1916, this old legitimate theatre was the foundation of one of the great theatre circuits of the world.

Probably the best known Canadian in the art of composing music for films is Louis Applebaum, director of the Stratford Music Festival and consultant to the National Film Board. He composed the scores of such Hollywood films as *Tomorrow the World*, *G.I. Joe*, *Lost Boundaries* and *Teresa*, as well as for many dozens of Canadian subjects. Mention should be made here of Samuel Hersenhoren, musical director of the Wayne and Shuster Show; Jackie Kane, musical director of the Jackie Rae Show; and Robert Ginsler, one-time trombonist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, who in recent years has been musical director for Milton Berle and the conductor of the orchestras of several leading musical comedies on Broadway. Another Toronto composer and conductor who has been working in the Hollywood and New York studios for the last decade or so is Percy Faith.



N. L. NATHANSON (1886-1943)

Hollywood has a number of Jewish ex-Torontonians hard at work there. Jules Levey, whose brother Nat is a leading USA film sales executive, has produced quite a few feature films and has plans for making a film of Thomas Costain's book, *The Tontine*. Arthur Hiller, formerly of the CBC, is now a motion picture and TV director. Morris Goodman has for years been one of the Cinema City's leading art directors. Helen Winston has played minor roles in quite a number of films and Maurice Manson, due to play Joseph Stalin in *The Girl in the Kremlin*, is a leading character actor. Lorne Greene, though his home is in Toronto, spends much time making theatre and TV movies in Hollywood, where he also appears from time to time on live television.





LOUIS ROSENFELD—‘PIONEER OF THE
YEAR’

He’s on the left, holding the annual award of the Canadian Picture Pioneers, which was given him in 1955 for his contribution to the advancement of the motion picture industry in Canada. It was presented by Haskell Masters (centre), who was introduced by Nat A. Taylor (right), toastmaster and the then president.

There is perhaps no other industry which provides more fraternal and business relationships between Christians and Jews than that of the motion picture. A non-Jewish member of the film-theatre division of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, John J. Fitzgibbons, Sr., CBE, president of Famous Players, has been one of the national co-chairmen and the branch is one of the liveliest under the chairmanship of Gordon Lightstone of Paramount Pictures. Lightstone is the representative of the Variety Club of Toronto on the board of the Will Rogers Memorial Hospital, Saranac Lake, New York.

One of the three founders of the Canadian Picture Pioneers, the fraternal and benevolent organization of the motion picture industry which stipulates 25 years of connection as a membership requirement, was the late Ray Lewis, who was Mrs. Joshua Smith. She edited the first Canadian motion picture trade paper, the *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, now in its 41st year and under the direction of her son, Jay. Miss Lewis, who was honored by the Pioneers just before her passing, served as president of that body, as has Nathan A. Taylor, president of Twinex Century Theatres, and the current head is Morris Stein, Western Division manager of Famous Players. The last

named is also chairman of the National Committee of Motion Picture Exhibitors Associations of Canada.

In 1952 the Pioneers held a public dinner in Toronto which marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the first successful film theatre in Canada. On that evening six veterans who had done the most to advance the motion picture as public entertainment in Canada were honored, one of whom was Jule Allen. The next year the annual Pioneer of the Year Award was inaugurated for the person who had served the industry best and one of the three who have received it so far is Louis Rosenfeld, president of Columbia Pictures of Canada Limited.

Other members of Toronto's Jewish community have served as heads of national and provincial film-theatre business associations. Among these are Harvey Harnick of Columbia Pictures, who is the current chairman of the Motion Picture Section of the Toronto Board of Trade, and Charles S. Chaplin of United Artists, now in his second term as president of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association.



LOUIS APPLEBAUM

A composer of international reputation who is responsible for the scores of many prize-winning films.

He was music director for the Stratford Shakespearean Festival from its inception in 1953 to 1956 and has composed the music for one or more of its stage productions each year, as well as for the screen version of Stratford's Oedipus Rex.

That organization of the amusement industry which best represents the friendship of those of all races and creeds is the Variety Club of Toronto, founder and supporter of Variety Village, world-famed vocational guidance and residential school. Six of the members of its first board, elected 11 years ago, are Jews: Paul Nathanson; B. S. Okun, Biltmore Theatres; Henry L. Nathanson; Ben Freedman, Allied Theatres; and N. A. Taylor. In those 11 years three Jews—Morris Stein; Harry S. Mandell, Twinex Century Theatres; and David Griesdorf, International Film Distributors—were elected to the highest office, that of Chief Barker. The 12th year will see N. A. Taylor as its Chief Barker.

Annually the Variety Club holds its Heart Award Dinner, saluting the person who has served the club best and the three Jews given this honor to date are George Altman, Mavety Film Delivery; Monty Hall; and Dan Krendel, a Famous Players executive. The Variety Club has three chaplains every term—one each for Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. The

Jewish faith has been represented officially by Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of Holy Blossom Temple and Rabbi Reuben Slonim.



(CBC)

WAYNE AND SHUSTER

Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster are youthful veterans of stage, radio and TV and have been consistently ranked as Canada's leading comedians, first in radio and now in television.

What is most important is that the Jews of the motion picture industry have always been quick to provide leadership, assistance and support for all communal endeavors. The immigrants of one period or another who came into the motion picture field and made a good life for their families have expressed their gratitude both through industry and non-industry channels, as well as through communal ones, by service. Arthur Cohen, a lawyer with theatre interests who served as managing director of Famous Players from 1929 to 1933, has been prominent in making a reality of the dream of a new Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto—just one of the ways in which he showed his community spirit. Gurston Allen is one of the second generation of that family to serve on the boards of communal organizations through the acceptance of important responsibilities. The boon of being among the custodians and economic beneficiaries of a great art-industry brings with it an obligation to life in general and Canadian life in particular. This, it is very

obvious, those custodians and beneficiaries of the Jewish faith know very, very well.

It should be understood that the Jewish contribution to the cinema has been artistic as well as technical and economic. The screens of yesterday offered stars of Jewish origin, among them the first film cowboy, Bronco Billy Anderson; the first great vamp, Theda Bara; the rival of Valentino as a Latin-type lover, Ricardo Cortez; the good-hearted broken-nosed roughneck, Louis Wolheim; the Talmadge sisters, Norma and Constance; Charles Chaplin, still the leading comedian; and Douglas Fairbanks.

Among the players identified as being of Jewish stock are Laurence Harvey, Tony Curtis, Kirk Douglas, Jeff Chandler, Joan Blondell, Melvyn Douglas, Paulette Goddard, Hedy Lamarr, Adolphe Menjou, Paul Lukas, Binnie Barnes, George Burns, Sue Carol, Peter Lorre, Simone Simon, Sally Eilers, Alice Faye, Bert Lahr, Lee J. Cobb, Sylvia Sydney, Danny Kaye, Aline McMahon, Judy Holliday, Lauren Bacall and Keenan Wynn. Miss Holliday's real name, Tuvim, is a derivative of "holy day" in Hebrew and Miss Bacall's surname is a ritual wine glass in that language. S. Z. Sakall and Edward Arnold, both of whom have passed on, were of Jewish birth.

These are but a few. All that is proved by this is that the screen is a reflection of the many racial strains that make America great.

VIII

The Yiddish Theatre

The last few patrons had straggled out a while back. The clatter of the cleaners' brooms against the iron legs of the chairs had ended and the worklights had been put back. The house is silent, empty, dark. The actors are in the lobby, waiting to be taken to their next engagement—in cans and on a truck, for this is the Victory Theatre, at Spadina and Dundas, a movie house since 1935.

Not too many years ago, when this was the Standard, home of the Yiddish drama, the departure of the actors for the evening or after the engagement was shared by friends and admirers. Their gay presence enlivened the night and brightened the spirits. Together they went to nearby cafes to dine, smoke, talk and laugh until the a.m. hours. The intellect was stimulated and the sense of living heightened, even for those who looked and listened from neighboring tables.

When the Standard opened on August 18, 1921 it was the finest Yiddish playhouse in North America and probably the world. An old showgoer, slipping into a seat in the dark theatre, could call back the golden evenings of drama and comedy that had enriched his life.

Here was seen what many said was the greatest theatrical art of its day, that of the Yiddish Art Theatre of Maurice Schwartz, as demonstrated in such dramas as *Jew Suss*, *Yoshe Kalb*, *Sabbatai Zvi* and *The Brothers Ashkenazi*. Here Jacob Ben-Ami portrayed Dostoyevsky's gentle sufferer, The Idiot, and swaggered as Molnar's Liliom. On these boards Berta Gersten was Ibsen's scheming individualist among women, Hedda Gabler, whose selfishness led to self destruction. This, across the years, was a wonderful gallery of classic characters—and every last one spoke in the Yiddish language.

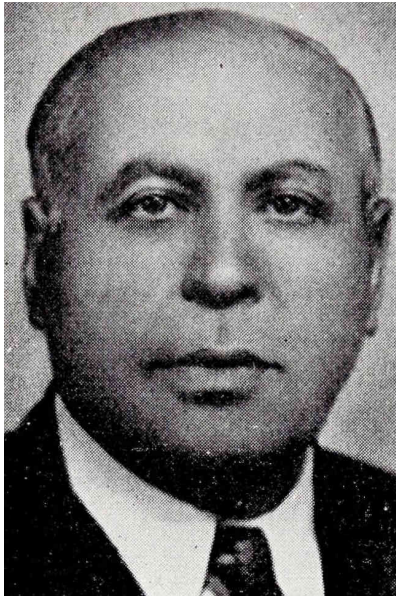
The showgoer, bringing back the past here, could relive Menasha Skulnik's priceless clowning as Shmendrick in America. Or be delighted in recalling the impishness of Molly Picon. Other popular personalities could come out of the shadows to poke the funnybone or tug at the heart: Boris Thomashefsky, Mr. and Mrs. Snegov, Samuel Goldenberg, Michael Rosenberg, Joseph Buloff, Lazar Freed, Max Gable, Aaron Lebedev, Celia, Luther and Stella Adler, Misha and Lucy German, Chana and Isidor

Hollander, Jennie Goldstein, Julius Nathanson, Moyshe Oysher, Michalesko among them.

Perhaps the showgoer, before he leaves his seat in the magic darkness of the theatre for the empty reality of the street, will even remember when a young actor named Muni Weisenfreund, later Paul Muni, was just a promising player in a Schwartz company. Or another lesser player, Menasha Skulnik, when he came with the troupe that opened the Standard, that of Jacob Cohen.

Certainly, before he heads sadly for home dreaming of the dramatic joys of yesteryear, the old showgoer's mind will turn back to that shining evening when this 1,500-seat theatre, built through the sale of shares to the public, opened to place Toronto among the leading centres of the Yiddish Theatre throughout the world.

A uniformed doorman aided the entrance of dignitaries and patrons and were welcomed by Isidore Axler as the theatre manager and Abe Littman as the company manager. Jewish and Gentile notables appeared on the stage for opening ceremonies, among them Controller James Simpson, Louis Shumer and Magistrate Jacob Cohen.



ISODORE AXLER

The leading Toronto figure in the Yiddish Theatre for many years, who passed on in 1941.

But a sense of artistic triumph on the part of those who created the Standard and struggled to maintain its place in the theatre world was not enough to sustain it. It made money for but a few of the seasons it was devoted to the live theatre. That it offered stage attractions for as long as it did was owed to a gentleman whose love of the drama became a legend in every Jewish theatrical corner of the globe—the late Isidore Axler, who is so fondly remembered by many theatrical people and their patrons.

Under Axler the theatre won its place in Yiddish theatrical history and the greatest names in Jewish and other literature were to become part of its past—Gorky, Gogol, Strindberg, Shakespeare, Perez, Ansky, Hirschbein, Sholom Aleichem, Singer, Asch, Pinski, Gordin, Dymov, Andreyev and Feuchtwanger among them.

But for every play of such excellent origin there were dozens of melodramas of a type long outmoded in the English-language theatre. In these, which were usually offered by stock companies, the actors played in the scenery-chewing style of a bygone day. The strong mixture of low comedy and high tragedy was regarded as the fare most desired by the older folk, who were the most regular attendants. Many of these plays opened in the Old Country and showed the sweethearts separated by the girl's father, a successful man, who would not accept a poor boy for a son-in-law. In America the boy becomes rich and the father-in-law poor. The girl has married another, a cruel but rich man. And so on. Of course, they always ended happily with everyone forgiving everyone.

Seeing that all this was united with appropriate music was Shier Fleischman, who had dominated the orchestra pit in the theatres which preceded the Standard and who was identified with it for the first three seasons. Some well known local musicians, Gentile and Jewish, played under Fleischman, among them Dennis Stone, the Barclay Hotel conductor, and Michael D'Angelo, one of the busiest teachers of local musicians. Also in the pit from time to time were the conductor's talented children. Among these was Jenny, a pianist, who met a small-part actor and married him on the Standard stage. Later he became the star known as Der Payatz (The Clown)—Herman Yablacoff. Her brother Dave, also a pianist, is now the accompanist for Lillian Roth. Brother Manny, a trumpeter and fiddler, is the conductor of the orchestra for the only Jewish theatre operating on Second Avenue, New York, today. A brother who never played at the Standard is Max, a child prodigy of the violin, who studied in Europe, thanks to Lady Eaton, and is now a leading New York violinist.

The Standard had grown out of the earlier Yiddish theatre activities of Charles Pasternak of Toronto and Abe Littman of New York, who were responsible for the theatrical presentations in an earlier theatre, the National. The Axler family provided major financial support and active participation through Isidore Axler. The Standard, which became the Strand as a movie house and was named the Victory in 1945, is still in the Axler family. Today it is operated by Twentieth Century Theatres, of which Myer L. Axler, son of Isidore, is an executive. Another son, Lionel, is co-manager with Harry Roth, who was a stagehand when the curtain went up for the first time.

In the heart of Toronto's Jewish community when opened, the Standard added to the liveliness of the city's most interesting and colorful avenue, Spadina. To the Old World cafes of that broad boulevard, in which almost every European language could be heard and every political belief and intellectual movement argued, came the theatre's patrons before and after the play. Among them were many non-Yiddish lovers of the drama who held that the art of Schwartz, Ben-Ami and others transcended mere language. To them Spadina was the most "different" street in Toronto—a mixture of the religious ritualists and nonconformists of every conviction.

They found that Spadina had about the same relationship to Yonge Street as Second Avenue in New York has to Broadway. Their favorite cafe was the favorite cafe of the players, Caplan's, which was operated by a warm-hearted lover of the dramatic art, Jacob Caplan. The actors and actresses knew him and loved him—for his very human nature and for his understanding of their financial troubles.

Caplan's, like the Cafe Royal on Second Avenue, was known to Yiddish players everywhere. Its spirited atmosphere is hard to forget. It welcomed writers as well as actors, for *The Hebrew Journal*, still edited by the scholarly Shmuel-Meir Shapiro, a hard-working chronicler of the present and an avid researcher of the Jewish past locally, was around the corner on Dundas Street. His knowledge and ability are greater than mine and it is he who should be writing this chapter, for he was Spadina's No. 1 drama critic and often joined the stars at Caplan's.

In the after-theatre crowd at Caplan's would be many who had come for a glimpse of the players with whom they had shared the theatre a bit earlier. Other tables were occupied by persons who had come from a meeting or a lecture in one of the district's many halls. Frequently they had come from the auditorium in the Labor Lyceum, a few hundred yards north on Spadina, where they had listened to a lecture on politics, and they usually brought the

lecturer with them. The cafe, which had two levels, was often crowded with people who, in the manner of such places, listened and talked at the same time. Now and then a roar of laughter from a table of players rose above the clatter and chatter. Like as not it was caused by Charles (Chanina) Englander, short and peppery and never without his cigar, who was the wardrobe man in the theatre from 1927 to the end of live drama there. The friend of supernumerary and star alike, he loved them and was loved by them. They took turns stirring him up just to hear his witty retorts, delivered with mock belligerence.

Jacob Caplan was cherished for his understanding of the economic problems of others, particularly players, and he seemed to accumulate unpaid checks, separated and neatly stacked, instead of money. The fate of the cafe seemed linked to the theatre and it closed soon after the Standard became the Strand.

In triumph the stars always began their curtain speeches with such phrases as “My dear public” or “Kindly, beloved friends,” spoken in a Yiddish with a truer German pronunciation, this being greater evidence of personal culture. Inevitably they ended with a plea for support in keeping the Yiddish language, Yiddish culture and Yiddish theatre alive, urging the listeners to tell their friends to come during the rest of the engagement.

But a phrase heard more frequently than any other was the doleful one made as the audience was being studied through a peephole in the curtain: “Where are the Jews?” In the end it was a death chant for the Standard, which was not a commercial success. Towards the last of its days as a legitimate theatre it came under new management several times but remained wed to adversity.

And so the building stands there today, occupied by an alien art, a symbol of the devotion of some people—and of the indifference of the many.

The modern Yiddish Theatre came into existence in Jassy, Roumania in 1876. There, in a tavern, Israel Grodner and Sachar Goldstein, entertainers, offered the material written by Abraham Goldfaden. The three travelled through the Jewish communities of Europe, theatres growing up around them. London soon had a company and some of its members came to New York through arrangements made by Boris Thomashefsky, a cigarette maker and choir singer, along with Frank Wolf, whom he had met

in the synagogue where he sang on the Sabbath. The actors were housed in Wolf's Bowery saloon, *The Workingman's Friend*.

It is to William Lyon Mackenzie King, for many years Canada's Prime Minister and grandson of the leader of the Rebellion of 1837, to whom this account is indebted for its first record of Yiddish Theatre in Toronto. The writers of *The Age of Mackenzie King* (William Heinemann, London), H. S. Fern and B. Ostry, identified as his a series called *Foreigners in Toronto*, which appeared under the byline, "A Reporter," in the *Mail and Empire* during October, 1897.

Next to the Germans the Jews, with 2,500, constituted the city's largest foreign population, he observed. "York Street is distinctively the 'Petticoat Lane' of Toronto," Mackenzie wrote in what was an exhaustive analysis of their economic, religious and social life. Some of his conclusions about the Yiddish Theatre of then are the same as those used today to explain a similar state. Wrote King:

"A short time ago an effort was made to establish a Jewish theatre on the corner of York and Richmond Streets, and a troupe of Jewish artists came here from the United States to run for a season. The older Jews, however, did not take much interest in the venture, and the younger did not appreciate Jewish wit or understand the jokes and allusions intended for an older generation. After a few performances the doors were closed."

In 1906 Michaelson and Abramov, Shmuel-Meir Shapiro says, offered Yiddish theatricals at 102 Elizabeth Street, the main street of Toronto's Ghetto. Michaelson's wife, who helped him carry on an ice cream parlor at Agnes and Elizabeth Streets, shared the stage with him. Later Abramov directed and appeared in theatricals by local companies in Orange Hall. The Toronto Young Socialists' Club also tinkered with the drama.

However, it is likely that the first regular home of touring Yiddish troupes was the Central Palace Hall, on Elm Street between Bay and Yonge Streets, which was the centre of community life, it being the favorite location of weddings, Purim parties and other affairs. Simon Rabinowitch, the owner, brought such troupes in for two- and three-day engagements. Shier Fleischman, for years the leading conductor of the orchestras which provided the accompaniment for Jewish theatricals, waved the baton. Jack Arthur, the most famous individual in Canadian Show Business today, recalls playing his first pit band job under Fleischman at the Grand Central Hall in 1904 when, a Toronto Conservatory scholarship pupil, he was 15 years old. Here but a few years from Scotland, Arthur, a Gentile, didn't understand a word the actors were speaking or singing.

In the Fall of 1907 the late Charles Pasternak, a real estate dealer with a love of theatre, acquired a synagogue, formerly a church, when its members, having grown in number, purchased a larger church further South on University Avenue and converted it to a synagogue. The first structure, at the northeast corner of University and Elm, was remodelled into the People's Theatre by Pasternak. To this place came the local players and the visiting ones who had been forced to appear in Orange Hall and other auditoriums somewhat distant from the Jewish section, of which Elizabeth Street, two blocks from University, was the heart. Among the visitors was Vera Gordon, who later won a place on the silent screen as the mother in *Humoresque*.

The usher and man-of-all-work in that theatre was Pasternak's nephew, Harry Roth, who was mentioned earlier as the co-manager of the Victory. Now 64, Harry Roth is known among actors everywhere as "Der Blonder" and it is to him that thanks are due for much of the information about the pre-Standard Yiddish stage. He was known as "The Blonde One" to distinguish him in conversation from another Harry, a veteran stagehand, Cherofsky, who was called "Der Longer"—"The Long One."

The People's was neither successful nor safe, for once the balcony collapsed. Pasternak figured he could do better if his theatre was closer to Elizabeth Street, so he purchased an old church at what is now the northeast corner of Bay and Dundas Streets. This he altered to a 900-seat theatre in partnership with Simon Rabinowitch and called it the National—the name of a famous New York Yiddish temple of the drama.

They operated it for a time, then leased it to various managers. One of them, Edward Relkin, ran it for a season after renaming it the Lyric. Many, many persons have fond recollections of that theatre, which was a warm part of their lives when the Jewish community was much smaller and everyone was more neighborly. The language wall was greater then, for there was constant immigration, and the theatre relieved the sense of isolation.

The prices, 75c-50c-25c, were in keeping with the standard of living of the Jewish citizens and Saturday afternoon was eagerly awaited by the children, for it often meant a place in one of the long, armless, shiny, wooden seating accommodations in the balcony. The extremely informal atmosphere was heightened by the common preparation against hunger.

What small boy or girl, sitting together with mother or father or both at the Saturday matinee, did not enter that balcony with a paper bag containing chicken or fruit or both? Many theatregoers remember the theatre because of

their emotional response to the enthralling acting on the stage. But the major memory of many an orchestra sitter is having a chicken bone or an orange peel land on him from above, dropped by a youngster whose parents, made unwary by the artificial tragedy or joy on display, relaxed their supervision long enough for a repressed desire to emerge victorious in the child.

The theatre was indeed close to the people. Many of its patrons were needleworkers employed by Eaton's, then the city's largest garment manufacturer. Came the great strike of its clothing shop and the workers picketed the store. An American actress, Annetta Hoffman, intent upon shopping, did not heed the pickets. When next she came on the stage she was recognized as the unsympathetic shopper and a demonstration of protest developed, during which fruit was thrown and insults shouted. She withdrew from the stage and the star, Morris Kroner, came on to pacify the audience. He asked that Miss Hoffman be given an opportunity to explain and apologize. She did those things and the show went on.

It was a more naive era than now and the people of the ghetto, not having known better, welcomed the leading players of the day as gods walking the earth. It was the time of the matinee idol and of the grand manner. A star was nothing if not majestic, both in the theatre and out. Jacob P. Adler was called "The Jewish Irving" and his bearing reflected this tribute. The actors wore silk hats and fur collars on their fine coats, secure in the adulation of the public. Thomashefsky wore a cape. There was no mistaking these rare mortals as they strode among the ordinary people of the streets.

The lesser players were always closer to the patrons, for most of them stayed in their homes while here, hotels being too expensive for all but the stars.

Rudolph Schildkraut, David Kessler—the great ones all came to the National-Lyric. And in a time that was still part of the Golden Age of the Stage. The National opened its doors for the first time soon after the Royal Alexandra Theatre began business as one of the finest theatres in the world. The Royal has been a frequent host to Yiddish-language troupes across the years and still is.

The life of the Lyric was ended by that scourge of The Theatre, fire, in the Spring of 1922. There were no Thursday evening performances, perhaps because this is the time Jewish housewives do their shopping for the Sabbath needs, and so boxing shows occupied the house. The fire,

which followed one of these, was thought to have originated from the careless smoking habits of the fight fans.

For years before it closed the property was in the hands of a trust company, which rented it for a short time to Joseph Brown and Hyman Suroff. Its last four years as a theatre were under Max Shore and Louis Littman, with Harry Roth the spotlight man.

Just as the Standard had its Caplan's, so the Lyric had its Altman's. This was a cafe at the northwest corner of Elizabeth and Louisa Streets operated by the popular and jovial Herman Altman, formerly of Roumania and Paris, who years later was to operate the locally famous steak house at Brunswick Avenue and College Streets. The earlier place was in the heart of the earlier Jewish section, just as the later place was in the heart of the later one. Altman's, a couple of blocks from the Lyric, was filled with the cosy camaraderie of the Ghetto, especially near midnight, when the players had gathered for their after-the-play nourishment. Herman Altman, now retired, is the father of George Altman, prominent in the motion picture industry, and the father-in-law of Hans Fread, television personality and operator of The Sign of the Steer. It is not uncommon to find Toronto Jewish families with theatrical traditions. One example is that Mrs. Lorne Greene is the granddaughter of Charles Pasternak, who opened the first Yiddish theatre building here. Mrs. George Altman is the daughter of Hyman Suroff, as is Mrs. Sam Fine, whose husband is vice-president of B & F Theatres, while Mrs. Harry Ginsler, whose husband has been in the motion picture field all his life, is the daughter of Joseph Brown, who, with Suroff, was mentioned earlier as among the operators of the Lyric.

At the time the Lyric closed the Gayety Theatre, on Richmond Street, had no regular attractions, the decline of burlesque having brought about that condition. The Shore-Littman enterprise moved into the Richmond Street theatre for an unsuccessful season. Shore, the father-in-law of Harry Roth, was the treasurer at the Standard for its last eight years as a drama headquarters.

Yiddish theatricals in Toronto were not confined to the Lyric during its life, for companies with the biggest stars came from New York after the season to play in Massey Hall, the Grand Opera House, the Royal Alexandra, the Majestic and other of the city's legitimate theatres. One of the persons most active as their local manager and backer was David Sussman, who had acquired Central Palace Hall in 1912 from Rabinowitch with Shier Fleischman as his partner. Local Yiddish dramatics stirred his

interest and led him to offer the attractions put on the road by Edward Relkin, the outstanding supplier in the field.

The Yiddish Theatre was growing in stature and it was felt that a theatre worthy of the heightened eminence of its leading players, located close to the new centre of Toronto's Jewish population, College Street and Spadina Avenue, would be a successful enterprise.



CHARLES PASTERNAK
He founded the People's Theatre, a
Yiddish playhouse, in 1907.

It was this idea that led to the building of the Standard. But the coming of that finest Yiddish playhouse of its time did not bring darkness to the Lyric. It offered Yiddish stock companies for about six months after the proud evening that saw the Standard opened. Nor did the Standard have the field to itself at all times, even on Spadina. Near College stood Alhambra Hall and here other companies, some brought by Morris Sonshine and others by Morris Shapiro, made their stand. Now a bowling alley, it usually offered Sunday night concerts by Yiddish entertainers.

With the end of Yiddish dramatics at the Standard, the theatre of the Jewish people did not die out. Communal organizations sponsored the efforts of local and New York players at the theatre on Sunday evenings.

Max Mandel, who died suddenly in his prime a few years ago, was among the most talented of local comedians. Eva Fishman is a long-time favorite. The late Philip Gurewitz, who acted occasionally, was a costumier and makeup specialist from Europe whose services were utilized by the leading companies here and in other places. His art was frequently exercised for local amateur groups and many a footlight aspirant was initiated into the use of a makeup kit by him.

Toronto's chief contribution to the top level of Yiddish theatricals was Goldie Isman, singer and dramatic actress, who went from the city to engagements with America's leading companies. She married Marty Barrett of New York, who appeared in Toronto several years ago as one of the principals of the touring Broadway musical, *High Button Shoes*.

That full-length plays from New York starring Maurice Schwartz, Ben-Ami and others continued to come to Toronto until recently is owed mainly to Joseph Eisenberg, Toronto's remaining impresario of the Yiddish Theatre and the representative of the Hebrew Actors Union of New York. Under his management such companies have appeared at the Victoria, demolished earlier this year, and the Royal Alexandra, as well as at the Temple Theatre on Bathurst Street. The Victoria, in particular, had served the Yiddish Theatre well. The famed Artef Players of New York, drawn from the shops of the garment industry and directed by Benno Schneider, came there in the late 30's. Several years ago Ben-Ami and Berta Gersten appeared there in several short plays, their visit sponsored by the Jewish National Workers Alliance.

What brought about the decline of the Yiddish Theatre in America? For one thing, says Joe Eisenberg, it lost ground to the movies, along with the rest of the Legitimate drama. For another, the Yiddish Theatre was supported largely by Russian and Polish Jews, who had been barred from general education under the Czar and who therefore relied on their own language greatly. The new regime in Russia prevented emigration and this source of patronage was almost lost. The immigrants from countries which allowed Jews to become part of the ordinary life and the native culture weren't interested in the Yiddish Theatre. For that matter, many of them spoke and understood Yiddish poorly if at all.

In the *National Jewish Post* of November 2, 1956, Joseph Gale, writer of The Arts column, made some interesting comments after a visit to the Fourth Street Theatre, just off Second Avenue, where he saw an English-language presentation of *The Sea Gull*, which David Ross had directed. After discussing the play Gale wrote:

“Around and about Fourth Street, New York, are a covey of Yiddish playhouses—the last of their species in the country—where an assortment of talents stage one tasteless musical after another. Except for the occasional incursion of an old fire-eater like Maurice Schwartz, these today pass for Yiddish theatre.

“How we have wished that Ross, who gave us *The Dybbuk*, would stage one play from the Jewish classics, just one, to show how it is done, and perhaps waft the first fresh breeze in more than 20 years into the once-lofty, now musty Yiddish theatre.”

In that same paper, on December 14, 1956, Claire R. Aronson, in her *Key to New York*, noted that the National Theatre—“The Carnegie Hall of the Yiddish Stage”—was housing a company made up of “sons and daughters of yesterday’s great names of the Yiddish stage. Repertoire: Modern thought-provoking plays, slanted to American Jewry.”

This is a favorable situation, for the same thing is true of the Yiddish Theatre in America as is true of the Legitimate Theatre: As New York goes, so goes The Road. With this hopeful observation let us bring to an end the story of the Yiddish Theatre in Toronto.

CURTAIN SPEECH

At the end of this history of Jewish participation in the Toronto Theatre, let me say that Jews have given more to the Theatre of America than they have to the Yiddish Theatre—which is exactly as it should be. In “the characteristic Jewish function of acting as intellectual intermediary”—Cecil Roth’s words—Jews have given more to The Theatre of the world than to The Theatre of their race. “Up to 1943 (when statistics of this kind were last compiled), more than 100 Jewish playwrights had seen their works produced on Broadway. Up to that year, too, 62 plays by Jews had been included among the annual listings of the ten best plays of the year by Burns Mantle.” So states *The Jewish People*, a three-volume work from Jewish Encyclopedia Handbooks, New York.

“There is no branch of human culture or civilization which Jews (I refrain from speaking of ‘the Jews’) have not touched or enriched,” Roth wrote in the preface to *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*.

I endorse the distinction, which applies in Canada also. The motivation of the Canadian of Jewish stock, like the Canadian of any other ancestry, was and is Canadian. The results of that motivation, studied on the occasion of a century of community life, cannot help but strengthen pride of race and love of country. This is true of Jews as Canadians and the Jews as a community within the larger one called Canada. The next century, we know, will see this pride of race and love of country grow even greater in the hearts of Canadians of all races and of all crafts and arts—including The Theatre of the Queen City.



TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some photographs have been enhanced to be more legible.

[The end of *Stars of David* by Hye Bossin]