

The Joint Commission on Social Action established by the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations came into being in February and adopted a ten-point program on social action for education within and outside the liberal Jewish fold and for co-operation with like agencies of other religious and secular groups, to further international peace, social justice and inter-racial harmony. Meanwhile, the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Central Conference of American Rabbis published statements on "Judaism and Race Equality" and "Judaism, Management and Labor," and sponsored an Institute on Judaism and Civil Rights at St. Louis in April, 1948, which also produced a statement fully covering the issues involved.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

By Sholom J. Kahn

OUR SUBJECT IS THE DYNAMIC and growing pattern of Jewish creative activities in America, and the present article is in the nature only of an exploration of general areas and forms still in the making. Though the concept of culture employed has been restricted to literature and the arts, an attempt has been made to represent as many segments of Jewish life as possible. Since the United States, as the largest of surviving Jewish communities, may be expected because of its unique history and position to develop a character peculiarly its own, the criteria which have determined whether a creative product should be included as "Jewish" have been rather broad and flexible. Such an approach, it was hoped, would have the virtue of comprehensiveness.

LITERATURE

The People of the Book were creating and reading books in America during the period under review, as always, but with an increased tempo indicating a spiritual stock-taking in the aftermath of the recent World War.

*New Books*¹

In their variety, the new books reflected the problems and themes uppermost in the minds of American Jews. A number of refugees and others began the process of recording and exploring the harrowing experiences of Nazi persecution in Europe, especially the destruction of Polish Jewry, the situation of the displaced persons, and the migrations to Palestine and elsewhere. Works worthy of note were Zvi Kolitz's *The Tiger Beneath the Skin: Stories and Parables of the Years of Death*, and Marie Syrkin's *Blessed Is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance*; other authors wrote of Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buchenwald, Dachau and Poland during and after the war.

American Jewry also began putting into books the stories of its participation in the war. Two volumes of the collective record appeared under the title of *American Jews in World War II: The Story of 550,000 Fighters for Freedom*; less formal treatments included personal experiences of individuals ranging from Marines to USO entertainers.

Many writers were also busy recording and evaluating their personal experiences in peace-time America. That some of these had been happy was clear from the number of books of nostalgic memoirs, of which Charles Angoff's *When I Was a Boy in Boston* and William Manners' *Father and the Angels* were typical. Ann Birstein, Class of '48 in Queens College, Flushing, N. Y., won the Dodd, Mead Intercollegiate Fellowship for 1948 with a first novel, tentatively entitled *Fruit of His Goodness*, written in a similar vein.

Among the Jewish poetry of the year were Karl Wolfskehl's

¹For a complete listing of books of Jewish interest in English published in the United States, see the bibliography in this volume, p. 527.

1933: *A Poem Sequence*, published in the original German accompanied by an English translation, and the posthumous *Poems* of Samuel Greenberg, rescued from oblivion through the accident of their having influenced the work of Hart Crane. Karl Shapiro showed an increased awareness of his Jewishness in his *Trial of a Poet*. Jacob Sloan was a relatively new voice, Jewish both in the subjects of his own verses and in his many translations from Yiddish and Hebrew.

Involved in the spiritual self-discovery of the American Jew was a return to the classic sources of his tradition. First and foremost was the Jewish Bible. During the course of the year publication was begun of a series of thirteen or more volumes by Solomon Goldman dealing with the Jewish Bible, under the general heading of *The Book of Human Destiny*, to include translation, commentary, historical analysis, bibliography, and notes. The first to appear was *The Book of Books*, published jointly by the Jewish Publication Society and Harper & Bros. A Bible for the blind in Hebrew Braille was in process of publication by the Jewish Braille Institute of America. In the Jewish Pocket Books series, published by the Agudath Israel Youth Council of America, other classic works were reprinted in cheap editions, including Judah ha-Levi's *Kuzari* and Nathan Birnbaum's *Confession*.

Also deserving of notice was a striking literary trend toward increased concern with the problems of anti-Semitism and intermarriage. This type of material proved to be extremely popular and commercially profitable, and Hollywood began to explore its possibilities.

Less commercial and more profound were the products of a growing group of young writers who described Jewish experiences on a high literary level. Saul Bellow's *The Victim* was praised for its subtlety and solidity, as were Delmore Schwartz's stories.

Jewish Publication Society

The Jewish Publication Society¹ completed sixty years of

¹ A full report of the Society's activities may be found on p. 841 of this volume.

activity with a busy year of production. Biography and history predominated among its publications: Cecil Roths' *The House of Nasi: Doña Gracia; Essays in Jewish Biography*, by Alexander Marx, whose seventieth birthday was celebrated; Solomon Grayzel's *A History of the Jews*, a one-volume history for general use; and Abram V. Goodman's *American Overture*, a pioneering exploration of the status of early Jewish settlers in America, in addition to Marie Syrkin's *Blessed Is the Match*.

Schocken Books

An outstanding contribution to the cause of Jewish books in America was made by the appearance, beginning in October of 1946, of Schocken Books.

Carrying on a tradition already well established in Europe and Palestine, this distinguished house published twenty-two volumes in whose number are such important works as Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters* and two fine anthologies: *In Time and Eternity*, edited by N. N. Glatzer and *Röyte Pomerantsen*, edited by I. Olsvanger. In addition, Schocken Books continued its program of printing the complete works of Franz Kafka. The twelve volumes published in the Schocken Library series included classics, writings of the recent past, and the works of living authors. Among the authors were Heinrich Heine, Solomon Maimon, S. Y. Agnon, Bernard Lazare, and Sholom Aleichem, and the subjects ranged from prayer, through essays, autobiography, and history, to humor and fiction.

Schocken Books were models of beautiful book production: The American Institute of Graphic Arts chose two of them, Roman Vishniac's *Polish Jews: A Pictorial Record* and Leo Baeck's *The Pharisees*, for exhibition among the fifty best books of the year.

Scholarship

The wealth of Jewish scholarship this year was impressive both from the point of view of completed achievements and the number of important projects in progress.

Of permanent value were Saul Lieberman's critical edition of a newly published Maimonides manuscript, from the famous *geniza* discovered by the late Solomon Schechter, *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi* ("Laws of the Palestinian Talmud"); Harry A. Wolfson's two-volume *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, an epoch-making book which will probably result in profound re-evaluations of early Christian and Moslem history; and the completion of Chaim Tchernowitz's *Toledot ha-Poskim*, a monumental three-volume history of the Jewish codifiers.

Basic works of more general and timely interest included Mordecai M. Kaplan's *The Future of the American Jew*, a thoroughly documented volume applying the Reconstructionist analysis to the current scene, and two popular but solid attempts to present the essentials of Judaism to the American public: Milton Steinberg's *Basic Judaism*, and Meyer Waxman's *Handbook of Judaism*.

Biblical studies were represented by the American Biblical Encyclopedia Society's publication of Volume 12 of its *Torah Shelemah* ("Complete Torah"), under the editorship of Rabbi Menachem M. Kasher, and Dropsie College's announcement of a projected new edition of the Apocrypha. Yale University initiated the publication of a Yale Judaica Series with Samuel Rosenblatt's translation of Saadia Gaon's *Emunot Ve-Deot* ("Faith and Dogma"). Basic reference works in progress included the encyclopedia, *Judaism and the Jews*, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and under the editorship of Louis Finkelstein; the Central Yiddish Culture Organization's *Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks*, now under the editorship of A. Steinberg, and the one-volume encyclopedia, *The Jews*, under the editorship of Guido Kisch.

There were many signs of increased interest in the study of American Jewish history. In February, 1948, it was announced that the National Jewish Welfare Board had become the sponsor of the fifty-six-year-old American Jewish Historical Society; Volume 37 of the Society's *Publications* was issued and plans for expansion of activities were announced. Chief among the projects of the American Jewish Historical Society

under its new sponsorship will be the setting up of an institution in the Washington building of the Jewish Welfare Board to be known as the American Jewish Museum, with Isidore S. Meyer, librarian of the AJHS, as curator, and the publication of a new quarterly.

The Hebrew Union College set up a department of American Jewish Archives and began collecting documents from individuals, concentrating on material relating to the West and Mid-West. The Jewish community of Charleston, South Carolina, assigned two scholars, Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engelman, to put its local history into book form. Finally, clarification of some of the problems involved in the writing of such history was sought at a conference on "The Jewish Experience in America — How to Record It, How to Interpret It," sponsored by *Commentary* magazine on May 22–23, 1948. Among the historians who participated were Carl Bridenbaugh, Lee M. Friedman, Hyman B. Grinstein, Oscar Handlin, Arthur M. Schlesinger, and Max Weinreich.

In the academic field an all-time high of 68 Hillel Foundations and 117 Counselorships was indicative of Jewish cultural awareness on the campus; credit courses in fields of Jewish learning were added to the curricula of many colleges and secondary schools. Israel Matz established the Sidney Matz Teaching Fellowship in Jewish Culture and Education at New York University.

Jewish Book Council

The outstanding organized effort to disseminate Jewish literature was made by the Jewish Book Council of America, under the sponsorship of the National Jewish Welfare Board. With the co-operation of the World Federation of YMHA's, similar projects were initiated in South America, England, France and South Africa.

The annual Jewish Book Month was observed in 1947 from November 8 to December 7, and 1,756 organizations in 426 communities participated, as compared with slightly more

than 1,300 in 1946. November 15, 1947, was designated as Jewish Book Sabbath. On November 30, the popular Eternal Light radio program was devoted to the celebration; in addition, short wave broadcasts of Jewish Book Month programs were beamed abroad in French, Spanish, Yiddish and English.

In addition to the tri-lingual *Jewish Book Annual*, the Council published a bimonthly review, *In Jewish Bookland*, under the editorship of Mortimer J. Cohen. A Book Recommendation Contest was held to stimulate ideas about books of Jewish content; and plays and booklists were distributed.

In order to encourage the growth of Jewish libraries, the Council initiated a plan for granting citations of merit to institutions whose libraries met certain requirements. On the basis of a survey made in 1947, criteria were formulated, and, at the annual meeting of the National Committee of the Council held on May 19, 1948, eighteen libraries were awarded citations. The Council also reported the growth of Jewish book shops throughout the land.

A relatively new development was the growth of book-selling agencies modeled after the Book-of-the-Month Club: i. e., the Jewish Book Club and the Jewish Book Guild of America. Seventeen titles were distributed by the Jewish Book Guild during the year, and books dealing with the Palestine situation, with Jewish history (Sulamith Ish-Kishor's *Everyman's History of the Jews*), and with biblical themes (Konrad Bercovici's *The Exodus*) were especially popular.

*Hebrew and Yiddish*¹

The Jewish word in America has suffered neglect, partly because its alphabet has been forgotten by so many. Nevertheless, a solid nucleus of Hebrew and Yiddish cultural activity remained, nourishing small but significant minorities.

The impact of events in Palestine created an increased demand for modern Hebrew cultural expression to supple-

¹ For more complete treatments of books in Hebrew and Yiddish, see those sections of the *Jewish Book Annual*.

ment more traditional forms associated with the synagogue and the school, and Hebrew organizations tried to meet the challenge. Chief among them was the Histadruth Ivrit of America (the National Hebrew Culture Organization).

The Hebrew Arts Committee, after about a decade of pioneering, was transformed into the Hebrew Arts Foundation and sought wider community participation and backing. *Ani Ma'amin* ("Credo"), a new sort of program created for this purpose, utilizing a Hebrew script with explanatory notes spoken in English, was first presented on May 23, 1948, starring Burgess Meredith as narrator. *Pargod* ("Curtain"), the theatrical group, rehearsed two plays, Bialik's *Yom Ha-Shishi Ha-Katzer* ("The Short Friday") and Pinski's *Ha-Yehudi Ha-Nitzhi* ("The Eternal Jew"), to be presented the following year.

The basic idea of the Hebrew Arts Foundation has been that the spirit of Hebrew culture can best be conveyed by utilizing all the creative arts. This idea has taken root in various parts of the country, in Chicago, where a Festival of Jewish Arts was conducted by the College of Jewish Studies, and in New Haven, where the Friends of Hebrew Culture and Arts was organized. Los Angeles, too, had its Festival of Jewish Arts, and a Hebrew Arts Institute program was under the direction of Shlomo Bardin.

To accommodate increasing numbers of adults who were interested in the study of Hebrew, the Zionist Organization of America published and distributed *Hebrew Self-Taught*, by Zevi and Ben-Ami Scharfstein, which proved to be a popular text.

Hebrew Month was celebrated during April, 1948, opening with a cultural evening, March 28, 1948, dedicated to the works of Zalman Schneur, in celebration of his sixtieth birthday. Especially effective organs of Hebrew cultural expression for youth were the summer camps, Camp Massad and Kibbutz Kaitzi, the latter modeled on a Palestinian collective colony.

Tarbut ("Culture"), the women's Hebrew society, devoted special programs to music and art (Saul Raskin spoke on "Jewish Art"). The American Fund for Palestinian Institutions, headed by Edward A. Norman of New York, ran a

banquet-concert at the Waldorf-Astoria (November 13, 1947), featuring Leonard Bernstein, for the benefit of the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra. Among the outstanding Hebrew visitors of the year were a number of Palestinian editors, who were honored by a banquet at Freedom House, New York, and Ernst Simon of the Hebrew University, who was Visiting Professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Hebrew publications in the United States included a double volume (32-33) of *Ha-Tekufah* ("Epoch"), issued by The Goslava and Abraham Joseph Stybel Foundation for Hebrew Literature, which included some prose and verse on American themes; Aaron Zeitlin's collected poems, in two volumes; Harry Sackler's *Ha-Keshet B'anani* ("The Rainbow in the Cloud"); J. Ovsay's *Ma'amaram U'Reshimot* ("Essays and Sketches"); I. Rabinowitz's *Ha-Safrut Be-Mashber Ha-Dor* ("Literature in a Time of Crisis"); an Israel Matz Foundation volume of letters by Hebrew writers; a collection of Daniel Persky's popular pieces, entitled *Ivri Anokhi* ("I Am a Hebrew"); and Zevi Scharfstein's *Yotsre Sifrut Ha-Yeladim Shelanu* ("Creators of Our Children's Literature"). Hebrew translations of Shakespeare's plays were published by Hillel Bavli (*Antony and Cleopatra*) and Simon Halkin (*King John*).

In the periodical field, *Yeda Am* ("Folk Lore"), a journal, under the editorship of Yomtov Levinsky and G. Kresel, and two issues of *Atil* ("Crucible"), a magazine of literature and criticism, made their first appearance.

A Guggenheim Fellowship, granted to Reuben Wallenrod, Hebrew author, to enable him to write a book on the development of modern Hebrew literature, indicated the extent to which modern Hebrew culture had gained recognition from the general American community.

In the Yiddish area the Central Yiddish Culture Organization (CYCO) and the Yiddisher Kultur Farband (YIKUF) published and circulated new Yiddish books and pamphlets.

During the year, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) conducted a course on "Trends in Jewish Thought from 1750 to the Present"; a series of public lectures including a series on "The Poet and Language"; a symposium on "The Ac-

tivities of the Jewish Documentation Centers"; a program about "Three Years of the Kovno Ghetto"; and an exhibition on the theme of "Jewish Children in Europe after World War II."

Published by YIVO were the Yiddish edition of Max Weinreich's *Hitler's Professors*, and the first volume of Jacob Shatzky's *History of the Jews in Warsaw*.

Some other Yiddish volumes worth noting included the *Sefer Hashabos* ("Book of the Sabbath"), translated from the Hebrew by I. J. Schwartz; the first volume of B. Ravkin's *Yiddishe Dikhter in America* ("Yiddish Poets in America"); S. Katsherginsky's *Khurbon Vilno* ("Destruction of Wilno"); and *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, a collection of literary and historical material dealing with Jewish martyrdom, edited by S. Niger.

Several Yiddish courses, taught by Nathan Susskind and Max Weinreich, were introduced into the curriculum of the College of the City of New York. The occasion was celebrated at City College on October 16, 1947, with a Yiddish program featuring dramatic readings by Maurice Schwartz.

Translations

There has been increased recognition of the need for co-operation between Hebrew and Yiddish organizations, writers and scholars, and for more and better translations from both literatures into English.

An organization which works towards both these goals, the Louis LaMed Foundation for the Advancement of Hebrew and Yiddish Literature, continued to make its annual awards: Yiddish prizes for 1947 went to the poetess-novelist Kadie Moladowsky for *Dovid Ha-Melekh iz Aleyn Geblibn* ("Only King David Remained"), a book of verse, and to S. Miller of Los Angeles for *Dor Haflagah* ("Divided Generation"), a novel; Hebrew winners were A. S. Yahuda, for *Ever Ve-Arav* ("Hebrew and Arab Civilization"), essays, and Simon Halkin, for *Al Ha-I* ("On the Island"), verse; and English winners were Martin Buber, for *Tales of the Hasidim*, (translated by Olga Marx), and Irving A. Agus, for *Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg*.

Other agencies which worked towards the goal of translation included the American Fund for Palestinian Institutions, whose quarterly *American Fund News* presented various aspects of Jewish culture in Israel to the English-reading public, and Histadruth Ivrit, which published one issue of an English periodical called *Hebrew World*.

Translations of the year included Samuel Y. Agnon's *In the Heart of the Seas* (I. M. Lask, Schocken), Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda's *Duties of the Heart* (Moses Hyamson, Bloch), and Sol Liptzin's collection of stories and articles by Peretz (Yivo Bilingual Series). An event eagerly awaited was the publication of the complete poetry of the late Hayyim Nahman Bialik, in English translation, under the editorship of Israel Efros, which was announced by Histadruth Ivrit late in the year.

These were indications of the widespread feeling that the wealth of Hebrew and Yiddish literature, both classic and modern, should be made more fully available in English to American Jews and the American public generally.

OTHER CULTURAL MEDIA

To an increasing extent, Jewish cultural organizations and movements made use of the various media of oral, as well as written, communication, supplementing the theater with movie and radio programs.

Theater

The season started in late September, 1947, with Maurice Schwartz's Jewish Art Theater presentation of *Shylock and His Daughter*, a free adaptation into Yiddish of the Hebrew novel by Ari Ibn-Zahav. This retelling of the story of Shylock from the Jewish point of view aroused considerable interest and discussion.

At least twice during the year, the Broadway stage dramatized aspects of the Jewish problem: Ben Hecht's *A Flag Is*

Born, starring Paul Muni, was a melodramatic plea for Zionism, and Jan De Hartog's *Skipper Next to God*, starring John Garfield, presented a moral indictment against the Christian world for its treatment of refugees.

An outstanding theatrical event of the year was the six weeks' appearance on Broadway in May and June, 1948, of the world-famous Habimah Theater troupe. Brought to the United States by the American Fund for Palestinian Institutions, Habimah presented four plays in Hebrew: *The Dybbuk*, by S. An-ski, *The Golem*, by H. Leivick, *David's Crown* (from Calderon, classic Spanish dramatist), and the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles (Hebrew translation by Saul Tchernichovsky). The Habimah's coming was rendered doubly dramatic by the declaration of the state of Israel on May 14, and its performances received considerable critical attention from the press, both Jewish and general.

The familiar "Goldbergs," of radio fame, moved onto Broadway with the production of Gertrude Berg's *Me and Molly*, the authoress creating her own lead as Molly.

A number of organizations published and produced plays of Jewish interest, among them *The Joseph Play* (Agudath Israel Youth Council) and Max Zweig's *Sword by His Side* (Zionist Organization of America). Celia Adler toured the country with a group, performing the following Yiddish plays by Jacob Gordin: *Die Yosoime* ("The Orphan"), *Der Kreutzer Sonata*, and *Mirele Efros*.

Movies

The movies and radio also showed an increased interest in Jewish themes this year. The recent European experience was treated in such films as *The Search* (MGM), *The Burning Bush* (United Artists), and Peter Viertel's *The Children* (United States Pictures). *Report on the Living* was issued by the Joint Distribution Committee as a report of Edward M. L. Warburg's trip to investigate postwar conditions in Europe.

Palestine received considerable attention from movie-

makers. *My Father's House* was produced by the American team of Meyer Levin and Herbert Kline, and was widely shown throughout the country; the story and some of the scenes in still photographs were also brought out in book form. Also concerned with Palestine were *House in the Desert* and *Look Homeward, Wanderers* (both produced for the United Palestine Appeal by Palestine Film and RKO Pathé). The Zionist Organization Film Bureau served as a clearing house for some thirty sound films on Palestine, and the Hebrew Arts Foundation formed a Hebrew Film-of-the-Month Club, with the co-operation of the State Department, the United Palestine Appeal and Palestine Films. The National Jewish Welfare Board also distributed a number of films of Jewish interest.

Among the other movies which touched on Jewish themes and characters this year were *The Big City*, Robert Nathan's *Bridgit* and *Body and Soul* (all MGM) and *My Girl Tisa* (United States Pictures).¹

Radio

In the radio field, the Eternal Light Program, sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary, celebrated its third anniversary on October 5, 1947, and for the third consecutive year won the Ohio State Institute for Education by Radio Award as the outstanding program in the field of religious education. Many of its more popular programs, such as the *Song of Berditchev*, were recorded for wider distribution. Yiddish programs continued to be popular, and occasional programs of Jewish interest produced by the large networks included Arnold Perl's *The Promise* (Columbia Broadcasting System) for the United Jewish Appeal, and Morton Wishengrad's *The Passover of Rembrandt van Rijn* (National Broadcasting Company), an Eternal Light script. The ZOA recorded two radio programs which were broadcast throughout the land: *Palestine Speaks* and *The Drama of Palestine*.

¹ For a discussion of motion pictures dealing with intergroup relations, see p. 219.

Lectures and Forums

The lecture, the forum, the conference and the discussion group were popular. Lectures were arranged by the Jewish Center Lecture Bureau, whose members spoke in English and Yiddish on a wide range of topics of Jewish and general interest. The Bureau booked 1,613 lecture engagements in 1947, as against 777 in 1943.

In 1948, the Bureau published a catalogue of model Jewish Adult Institutes, a method of adult education which had been proven popular. As an added service, a Directory of Jewish Organizational Speakers who were available on a non-fee basis was also prepared. The ZOA Speakers Bureau also provided lecturers, as well as artists, on subjects of Jewish interest.

The dissemination of authentic information about Jews and Judaism to America's Christian college youth and faculties was the function of the Jewish Chautauqua Society, a project of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods. This was done by providing lecturers, full-term credit courses, books for college libraries, and teacher-counselors for summer church camps. In 1947-48, over 400,000 persons heard 180 lecturers on 430 campuses in every state of the Union. Rabbinic teachers were provided for 140 Christian camps in the summer of 1948.

MUSIC

National Jewish Music Council

Jews have always contributed much to the musical life of America; in recent years, this contribution was greatly stimulated by the annual Jewish Music Festivals and other activities of the National Jewish Music Council, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Frank Cohen.

The Fourth Annual Festival (January 24 to February 22, 1948) aroused so much enthusiasm that it was carried over by many organizations into March; the Synagogue Council

of America designated January 24, 1948, as Jewish Music Sabbath (*Shabbat Shirah*); fifty-four national organizations co-operated actively; over 350 communities participated, including some in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America; fifteen major symphonies in the United States, including the Detroit, Indianapolis, Denver and New York Philharmonic orchestras, devoted part or all of an evening to the occasion; and radio programs of Jewish music included a Columbia Broadcasting System Church of the Air program (February 15, 1948), and an Eternal Light broadcast which paid tribute to the career of the late Bronislaw Huberman, organizer of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, who died during the summer of 1947.

The Festival was the occasion for a large number of public performances, and the Jewish Music Contest stimulated creative composition. Initiated by the National Jewish Music Council in 1947, the contest elicited more than one hundred compositions from all parts of the world. On February 9, 1948, a prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Jacques Berlinski, musical director of the Jewish Art Center in Paris, for a symphony entitled *Canaan*, inspired by the biblical story of the departure of Hagar from Abraham; a prize of \$500 went to 29-year-old Jacob Avshalomoff, faculty member of the Columbia University music department, for a composition for clarinet and chamber orchestra entitled *Evocations*; and honorable mention went to Alberto Hemsí, of Alexandria, Egypt, for his *Danses Bibliques*.

In connection with the Festival, the Council compiled bibliographies of Jewish music (vocal and instrumental), Jewish recordings, and articles and books on Jewish music; and lectures were distributed on "The Scope of Jewish Music," "Music in Palestine," and "Music of the Synagogue."

Among the critical discussions which appeared during the year on the long-continued controversy "What Is 'Jewish' Music?" were Hilda Pinson's report on "The Past Season in New York" (*Menorah Journal*, Winter 1948), which discussed "The Synagogue Music Controversy" between the "traditionalists" and the "modernists"; Kurt List's discussion of

“The Renaissance of Jewish Music: A Report on Progress” (*Commentary*, December 1947), which gave the point of view of a modernist; and Abraham W. Binder’s article on “Trends in Synagogue Music” (*American Hebrew*, February 6, 1948).

The Jewish Music Forum provided opportunities for exchange of news and views by its membership, which included composers, performers, and others interested in advancing Jewish music; some of the papers read and discussed at its meetings were printed and circulated in an annual *Bulletin*.

Music in the Synagogue

Musicians of the synagogue, seeking a common core of traditional music which is clearly Jewish in function, organized a Society for the Advancement of Jewish Liturgical Music, drawing its membership from the ranks of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jewry, and aiming at a co-operative effort to raise the standards of Jewish liturgical music.

The United Synagogue of America’s Department of Music sponsored an all-day conference on “Jewish Music in the Synagogue” at the Jewish Theological Seminary on February 26, 1947. Over 300 cantors from all parts of the country attended, and the day’s activities culminated in a special concert of synagogue music at the Juilliard School of Music. The Hebrew Union College established a School of Sacred Music to train cantors, directors of music, choir leaders, organists, and other musical functionaries of the synagogue and temple, and to foster research and creative work in the field. Classes were scheduled to begin in the Fall of 1948.

Even in the synagogue, however, the field was divided between those who stressed the importance of traditional continuity (Pinchas Jassinowsky, Sholem Secunda, and others) and those who welcomed innovation and modernism, including the work of non-Jews. In the latter category were David J. Putterman and Max Helfman. By way of illustration, the Sixth Annual Service of Liturgical Music by Contemporary Composers, held at the Park Avenue Synagogue on May 7, 1948, under Cantor Putterman’s direction, featured premieres

of compositions by such varied figures as Douglas Moore, David Diamond (awarded Honorable Mention by the Music Critics Circle of New York), Henry Brant, Suzanne Bloch, Jacob Avshalomoff, Yedidia Gorochof, Jacob Schonberg, and Robert Starer.

Chemjo Vinaver conducted a chorus under the auspices of the newly organized Friends of Choral Art, sponsored by Robert Shaw, Leonard Bernstein, David Diamond, Frederick Jacobi, and others. During the 1947-1948 season the Vinaver Chorus presented a series of three concerts in Town Hall, New York, devoted to music of the Bible, of the Hasidim, and of Palestine; and twelve American composers, Jews and non-Jews, were commissioned by Vinaver to compose choral works on Old Testament themes.

Jacob Weinberg's choral music for "*Adon Alam*" was used by the Army Department for a film on *Naval Chapels in the Pacific*. The Third Annual Ernest Bloch Award for the best new work for women's chorus based on a text from the Old Testament was divided by Norman Lockwood ("Birth of Moses") and Miriam Gideon ("How Goodly Are Thy Tents"); and the prize-winning compositions were premiered at Temple Emanu-El's Three Choir Festival, supervised by Lazare Saminsky, with the help of Karl Krueger, conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Music of Palestine

In addition to the synagogue, Palestine was an important source of musical activity during the year. A large number of young Palestinians were in the United States on concert tours or studying on scholarships. Professor Salom Rosowsky, on leave from the Palestine Conservatoire of Music of Jerusalem, was an outstanding musical ambassador. Besides working on his important book, *Cantillation of the Pentateuch*, he taught a course in biblical cantillation at the New School for Social Research. The Zionist Organization of America's Education Department launched the publication of a new series of the latest Palestinian music, arranged for voice and

piano by A. W. Binder, under the title of *Shire Zion* ("Songs of Zion"); and Palestinian songs and dances were important in the cultural programs of all Zionist groups.

Siegfried Landau stimulated the performance of Palestinian music as conductor of the Kinor Sinfonietta, broadcasting regularly from the Brooklyn Museum over Station WNYC. He also conducted the annual "Palestine Night," a regular event of the Carnegie "Pop" Concerts which are part of New York's Spring Music Festival; in 1948, this occasion became also a "Musical Salute" to the newly formed Jewish state of Israel.

Reciprocating the musical inspiration of Palestine, two projects were started in the United States to stimulate the musical life of Israel. The Esco Foundation for Palestine offered a scholarship to the winner of a composers' contest to be held in Palestine, the winner to be brought here for graduate study at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Massachusetts. As a result of the efforts of the Palestine Symphonic Choir project, headed by Myro Glass, James Heller, Jacob Weinberg, and others, the Jewish National Fund acquired fifty acres of land for the erection of a music center in Palestine.

"Palestinian Jewish Music" also remained a broad and much-disputed term. At a meeting of the National Jewish Music Council, held in the Jewish Museum on January 12, 1948, Leonard Bernstein discussed "The Problem of Jewish Music." Comparing the development of modern Palestinian music with the early development of American music, he concluded that Palestine would eventually evolve a musical style expressive of the many cultures represented there. However, Mr. Bernstein expressed his belief that, because of our history, there is no distinctive Jewish musical style, and suggested that any music which the listener or creator considers to be Jewish must be called such.

Music for the Folk

Everyday experiences of the folk have always been a source of Jewish musical expression. Ruth Rubin, a member of the American Folk Lore Society, had for some years been exploring

the folk songs of Jews in America, singing them, and lecturing about them. During the past year, she was able to supplement her notebook jottings by means of a recording apparatus, and her collection grew to over 500 items, some 300 of which have never been published. In this manner, Mrs. Rubin was preserving for posterity some of the remnants of European-Jewish culture which have survived in America.

Active in spreading Jewish music throughout the land was the Jewish Center Lecture Bureau, which featured singers, choral groups, instrumentalists, and the Palestine String Quartet. On May 12, 1948, the Bureau held its first annual music audition for the purpose of selecting vocal artists to be included in their listings. Winners this year were Norman Atkins, American baritone; Hanna Kipnis, mezzo-soprano from Tel Aviv; and Ingrid Rypinski, mezzo-soprano from Germany and Palestine.

The Workmen's Circle Chorus, directed by Lazar Weiner, was outstanding among the many political, social, and cultural organizations which included music in their programs. Although choral groups were most popular, a Yeshiva University Orchestra was formed, under the direction of Alexander Petrushka, a twenty-three-year-old Polish refugee.

Many recording companies, recognizing widespread interest in Jewish music, issued albums of Jewish music during the past year, including: A. W. Binder's *New Songs of Palestine* (Keynote); Stephen S. Wise and A. W. Binder's *Prayers and Songs for the Synagogue* (RCA Victor); Dov Arres' *Haganah* (Night Music); Moshe Nathanson's *Sing—Palestine!* (Metro); the Palestine String Quartet's *Hasidic Music and Songs of Palestine*, with Hilda and Josef Lengyel (Stinson); Sidor Belarsky's *Songs of Palestine* (Besa); Richard Tucker and Sholem Secunda's *Cantorial Jewels* (Columbia); and Ruth Rubin's *Jewish Folk Songs* (Disc). *Songs for Jewish Children* (*Far Yiddishe Kinder*) appeared, and *Shire Gan* ("Kindergarten Songs") was issued by the Mizrahi National Education Office.

To an increasing extent Jewish composers were seeking Jewish themes (e. g., Aaron Copland's "In the Beginning")

and Arnold Schoenberg's as-yet-unperformed "A Survivor of Warsaw"), and they were receiving organizational and commercial encouragement. However, there were warnings of the need for higher standards; and that a significant cultural life could develop only after popular taste had been educated to evaluate with objectivity such phenomena as adaptations of Yiddish folk music into pseudo-Zionist marches with Tin Pan Alley lyrics.

THE DANCE

The dance, combining the musical and the visual arts, was well represented on the American Jewish scene. Katya Delakova and Fred Berk were the directors of a professional group known as the Jewish Dance Group; they performed and taught at various institutions, as well as preparing a *Jewish Folk Dance Book* for the Jewish Welfare Board. Other outstanding performers were Dvora Lapson, Naomi Aleh-Leaf, of Jerusalem; and Benjamin Zemach, who appeared on the West Coast.

A Jewish Dance Festival was presented at Hunter College by the School of Jewish Studies in New York City on December 13, 1947, with performances by Hadassah, Lillian Shapero, Anna Sokolow, and Delakova-Berk. During the year, the Hebrew Arts Foundation Dance Group, under Alix Taroff, gave performances in a lecture-demonstration program on "The Development of the Jewish Dance." A trend towards the establishment of dance activities as a permanent part of the community cultural program was evident. Typical of the Jewish dance groups established was one in Washington, D.C., under the direction of Batya Heller. These groups presented dance programs in conjunction with the annual Jewish Music Festival.

Corinne Chochem supplied musical accompaniment for Jewish folk dances in the albums *Jewish Holiday Dances and Songs* and *Palestine Dances* (Vox), and Delakova and Berk issued *Jewish Folk Dances* (Ultra).

THE JEWISH MUSEUM

A landmark in the history of Jewish art in America was the opening of the Jewish Museum, on May 8, 1947, in the former Warburg mansion in New York City, which was donated to the Jewish Theological Seminary by Mrs. Frieda Schiff Warburg.

Continuing a Seminary activity begun in 1904, the Museum expanded its program steadily during the first year of its existence and under the direction of its curator, Dr. Stephen S. Kayser, developed into an institution where Jewish art and culture were living realities.

Jewish living, past and present, was the dominant pattern of the various exhibits. Permanent exhibits included one devoted to the art of the Torah Scroll and the ceremonies connected with it; also, synagogue architecture, the Sabbath, festivals, music and articles of everyday life, for use on various occasions from birth to death, such as circumcision knives, wedding rings, china, silverware and even tombstones. A Junior Gallery exhibited paintings by students in Jewish schools throughout New York City, in co-operation with the Jewish Education Committee of New York.

Among the living Jewish artists represented at the opening exhibition were Ben-Zion, Hyman Bloom, Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz, Elias Newman, Ilya Schor, Max Weber, William Zorach, and Jacques Zucker. During the year, separate exhibits were devoted to the works of M. Adon-Bronstein, Ben-Zion, Oded Bourla, Ellen Colmars, Abraham Levin, Victor S. Ries, Raisa Robbins, Ilya Schor, Arthur Szyk, and David Zak.

As with Jewish music, visitors to the Museum were impressed by the diversity of styles in Jewish art. Torah arks were Egyptian or Italian in style, depending on their country of origin, and some of the silver ornaments were produced by renowned Christian craftsmen of the sixteenth century. Contemporary Jewish artists worked in the modern idiom, even when they treated Jewish themes.

In addition to its exhibits, the Jewish Museum served as a

center for lectures, courses, roundtable discussions, and concerts.

Such architects as Percival Goodman and Eric Mendelsohn were concerned with the problems of synagogue architecture of the future. The Synagogue Architecture room at the Jewish Museum contained models, sketches, and plans of modern American synagogues designed to meet the needs of American Jewish communities; an attempt was made to integrate the contributions of architects, painters, and sculptors into harmonious units. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations sponsored two conferences (in New York and Chicago) to consider means of adapting synagogues to American styles, in continuation of the inevitable process which has taken place wherever Jews have lived.

VISUAL ARTS

Exhibits worthy of note during the year were one sponsored by YIVO on "Jewish Children in Europe after World War II" and one by the Keren Hayesod ("Palestine Foundation Fund") on Palestine products, in the Museum of Science and Industry (Radio City, New York).

There was an increased demand for the circulating exhibits made available by the JWB. A *Catalogue of Audio-Visual Materials* was compiled in June 1947, and a *Jewish Art Bulletin* was issued, describing the circulating exhibits. Over 200 groups throughout the country were supplied with exhibits during the last year. These included Jewish ceremonial objects, photographs, lithographs, etchings, drawings, and illuminated manuscripts. Among the artists exhibited were Marc Chagall, Stanislaus Bender, Isidore Kaufman, Ishkar Ber Ribak, Saul Raskin and others.

The School of Jewish Studies in New York had a special exhibit of art works on Jewish themes from April 3 to 25, 1948. Historical as well as contemporary subjects, including East Side themes, were represented. Among the artists were Albert Abramowitz, Maurice Becker, Aaron Goodelman, William Gropper and Chaim Gross.

Palestinian themes and influence were again evident. Under the auspices of the American Fund for Palestinian Institutions, a group known as "Artists for Palestine" was formed under the chairmanship of Elias Newman. Leading American artists, Jews and non-Jews alike, contributed their works for presentation to the Art Museum in Tel Aviv after exhibition in this country. J. B. Neumann, art critic and director of the New Art Circle, visited Palestine in the summer of 1947 to select a representative group of art works for exhibition in this country. In addition, a portable exhibit of pictorial panels depicting various aspects of Jewish culture in Israel was prepared and circulated.

Critical discussion on Jewish art was slight, but noteworthy articles included H. Salpeter's "American Jews in Art" (*Jewish Life*, April 1948) and Leon Spitz's "What Price Jewish Art" (*American Hebrew*, November 7, 1947). Interesting publications included a collection of *One Hundred Contemporary American Jewish Artists* with an essay by Louis Lozowick, Saul Raskin's *Land of Palestine*, Arthur Szyk's volume of drawings, *Ink and Blood*, and two volumes of photographs: Raphael Abramowitch's *The Vanished World*, and Roman Vishniac's *Polish Jews: A Pictorial Record*.

A RENAISSANCE OF JEWISH CULTURE?

The nature and state of Jewish culture was a popular theme of discussion this year, not only in literature, music, and the arts, but in more general terms as well. Reflection was stimulated by Elliot E. Cohen's speculations on "Jewish Culture in America" (*Commentary*, May 1947), and a series of articles which followed in the same magazine. An informal nation-wide symposium was conducted by the Jewish Welfare Board on the same subject. Data were compiled and analyzed for publication by Oscar Janowsky in a volume which constituted a detailed portrait of the state of Jewish culture in the Jewish centers of America in the light of the findings and recommendations of the JWB Survey Commission. As a result of numerous questionnaires and conferences, regional and national, and considerable discussion and debate, *A Statement*

of *Principles on Jewish Center Purposes* was finally adopted at the annual meeting of the JWB's National Council, in May 1948, the first article of which began: "Jewish content is fundamental to the program of the Jewish center."¹

But the search for "Jewish content" was not a simple one. Elliot E. Cohen contended that "there is no such thing as pure Jewish culture" and that, given a healthy "culture for Jews," Jewishness would emerge. Every segment in Jewish life had its own version of Jewishness, ranging from the Orthodox through the Zionist to the extreme left wing; each was vying for the loyalties of Jews, in terms of its own particular cultural concept.

This review could not conceivably mention all cultural events of the year, and unavoidably there are omissions. For not all cultural events are public. Some cultural manifestations were so pervasive that they were taken for granted. Recordings and "lectures" by Jewish humorists, ranging in quality from genuine folk humor to crude vulgarity, achieved sudden popularity. Activities in separate communities throughout the land, such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Cleveland and others deserve more than passing notice, as does the increased demand for Jewish culture in smaller communities, the thousands of American Jewish Middletowns which are so easily overshadowed by the large metropolitan centers, and the impact of such outstanding visiting personalities as Leo Baeck, former Chief Rabbi of Germany.

Finally, the impingement of events in Europe and Palestine on public consciousness must not be overlooked. Our review would not be complete if it failed to mention the many dramatic Jewish advertisements that played a role in popular American culture, particularly those calling attention to the needs of displaced persons.

The general picture last year was one of transition and ferment. If indeed there was no large-scale renaissance, there was an increased sense of awareness; and from the quantity and variety of activities higher standards of cultural life may also be expected to develop in years to come.

¹ For fuller treatment see p. 133.