

Films for Television

Requests for films were coming from a new source during the period under review. Television stations, most of which devoted varying percentages of their air time to televising motion pictures, had to rely to a large extent on reissues of old films—mainly Westerns and comedies. New television film producing companies were springing up rapidly, but there was a marked interest by the stations in films dealing with human relations themes, with Israel, with German war guilt—in fact, with most subjects of general concern today.

Yiddish Films

Few Yiddish films were made in recent years. Theater exhibitors who specialized in Jewish film programs depended upon such staples as Moyshe Oysher's *Overture to Glory*, produced in 1939, or *A Vilna Legend*, originally made in 1924 but expanded in 1940 with narrative sequences supplied by Joseph Buloff, well-known on the Broadway stage. Moyshe Oysher favorites were *The Singing Blacksmith*, produced in 1938, the story of the life of a blacksmith in Eastern Europe; and *The Cantor's Son*, produced in 1937, the story of a young emigre to America who sings his way to success and then returns to the old country of his parents and his sweetheart. One of the classics, *Tevya*, made in 1939, was based upon the famous Sholom Aleichem book. Another classic was *Green Fields*, produced in 1935 and based upon the Peretz Hirshbein story of a young Talmudist who sets out to see the world. A famous classic, *The Dybbuk*, produced in Poland in 1938, was a dramatic presentation of a tale from Jewish folklore. *Di Klatche*, produced in 1939 and based on Mendele Mosher Sforim's well-known stories, was a comedy-drama portraying the joys and sorrows that entered into the life of a Jewish family.

Of more recent vintage was the documentary *We Live Again*, made in 1947, the story of the orphaned Jewish children cared for in various institutions in France. Another recent documentary was *Road to Israel*, which showed how Jewish children and adults in Europe were taught skills and trades in preparation for their eventual emigration to Israel.

All of these theatrical films, with the exception of the two documentaries, mentioned above were also available in 16mm. versions for non-theatrical screenings.

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RADIO AND TELEVISION

WITH the advent of television into the American home, the air waves played a doubly important role during 1948-49. As of June 30, 1949, 2,002 AM stations, 727 FM stations, and 72 television stations were operating in the United States. Many of these stations used their time and facilities to promote good will and ease intergroup tensions, as well as to broadcast material of interest to special segments of their audience.

Communal Activities

Jewish communal organizations used these media to present programs which dramatized the needs and interests of the community. Such programs on a local scale included *Everyman's Story*, depicting the functions of The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York; the *World Over Playhouse*, a program for Jewish children under the auspices of the Jewish Education Committee of New York; *Homecoming*, presented by the New York campaign of the United Jewish Appeal; and *Family Close-Up*, a story series based on the problems handled by the Jewish Family Service of New York.

In addition to New York City's efforts, civic programs of cultural interest were the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission's *Within Our Gates*, St. Louis' *The American Jewish Hour*, and Los Angeles' *Community Hour of the Air*.

All four networks offered their national facilities to the United Jewish Appeal during its national fund-raising campaign for the production of dramatizations featuring such popular motion picture personalities as Al Jolson and John Garfield.

Radio coverage of topics of Jewish interest was not limited to the English-language stations. Station WEVD, which devoted forty-four hours per week of radio broadcast time to programs delivered in the Yiddish language, led in this field, with thirteen other stations throughout the country also offering this service to lesser degree.

Intergroup Relations

Many of the daytime interview programs designed to appeal to women were very active in promoting good will over the radio. Particularly successful in this undertaking were Martha Deane, Tex and Jinx McCrary, Barbara Welles, and Mary Margaret McBride, who celebrated her fifteenth year on the air with a dramatic presentation of Morton Wishengrad's script, *Unfinished Business, U. S. A.*, with Melvyn Douglas as narrator.

Many regular commercial and sustaining series, such as *We, the People*, *Superman*, Fred Waring, *Quiz Kids*, and *Winner Take All*, produced programs which sought to promote better intercultural relations. Also highly effective in this field was the United America campaign of The Advertising Council Inc., which was supported by the entire radio industry through 632 network broadcasts and a radio circulation totaling 999,300,000 "listener impressions." (A "listener impression" is one radio message heard once by one listener.)

Television audiences acclaimed *The Goldbergs*, when the popular radio program about Jewish family life was brought into the parlor by the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television network. *Howdy Doody* on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network and *The Small Fry Club* on the Dumont Network conducted an interesting and successful experiment in the promotion of improved group relations for children by incorporating into their programs cartoon spot announcements distributed by The Advertising Council.

"Script Kits," compilations of scripts with intergroup themes and spot announcements, were sent to local stations for use in "live" shows. The National Broadcasting Company distributed among its 164 affiliated stations a "script kit" celebrating United Nations Week (October 17 to 24, 1948). In May, 1949, the United States Department of Justice issued a "kit" to one thousand local stations for use on "I Am an American Day." The script library of Broadcast Music Inc., served its 2,000 subscribing stations in the United States and Canada each month as a source of material in behalf of improved communal relations.

During the year all four television networks, as well as local television stations, showed the film, *Make Way for Youth*, the story of the formation of a youth council in Madison, Wis. Rabbi Roland Gittelson's Flag Day address on June 12, 1949, was presented on *Television Chapel* over Station WPIX.

Fifteen-minute recordings of electrically transcribed programs were prepared by the Institute for Visual Education in three individual *Lest We Forget* series and were used by 918 local radio stations and 196 schools. This organization also distributed to 900 stations *Little Songs on Big Subjects*, a group of musical good-will jingles recorded as spot announcements. Another series of one-minute spot announcements was broadcast by prominent persons and distributed during November, 1948, by the National Citizens' Council on Civil Rights to 150 stations to celebrate the first anniversary of the appointment of President Harry Truman's Civil Rights Commission.

Religion

The Message of Israel, a devotional service produced since 1924 by the United Jewish Laymen's Committee, Inc., continued to be heard regularly each Sunday morning as a weekly broadcast over the network of the American Broadcasting Company. Also heard on Sunday over the National Broadcasting Company network under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America was *The Eternal Light*, half-hour dramatizations of Jewish cultural subjects. This series completed its fifth year of broadcasting in October, 1949.

In addition to these two regular programs, the various networks broadcast special one-time shows, including commemorations of Jewish holidays. For example, the Mutual Broadcasting Company observed the celebration of Passover on April 12, 1949, with a half-hour dramatization by Morton Wishengrad, *The Camel and I*, which starred Sam Levene and was produced by the American Jewish Committee.

One of the first regular religious network television series was the presentation each Friday morning over Station WABD and the Dumont Network of *Morning Chapel*, a devotional service produced by the American Jewish Committee. The Columbia Broadcasting System conducted an experiment in television programming with *Lamps Unto My Feet*, a weekly series in which children demonstrated the teachings of the three faiths. The Jewish portion of this program was under the supervision of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

On the New York scene, the American Jewish Committee contributed a

half-hour religious program monthly to the *Television Chapel* presented over WPIX. *Stained Glass Windows* was the title of a regular series of religious films concerning the three faiths, televised over the American Broadcasting System.

Israel

A report on Israel received national coverage in *Israel through American Eyes*, a speech by Jacob Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee, delivered over the NBC network on May 4, 1949. Locally, the Zionist Organization of America depicted daily life in Israel in *Report from Israel*, which was carried over the air direct from that country to New York's Station WMCA.

Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day, Hadassah's film dealing with the life of Israeli youth, was televised by CBS's network as well as by the American Broadcasting Company. This latter network also presented two showings of *The House in the Desert*, a portrayal of agricultural pioneering in Israel.

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