

Look to the rock from which you were hewn  
הביטו אל-צור הצבתם



chicago jewish historical society

FORMERLY SOCIETY NEWS  
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# CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

## “From Fannie To Danny: Jews and the Chicago Symphony”

*Jews Played A Big Role As Musicians, Funders, and  
Organizers During The Symphony's First 100 Years*

By Seymour S. Raven

What was there about Theodore Thomas, founder and first conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, that should give him a place of honor in Jewish minds — if not also in the thinking of others who seek justice even at the cost of their personal comfort and convenience? Thomas, we should note, was not Jewish.

It happened in 1899. Thomas was invited to the Paris Exposition scheduled for 1900. He was asked to bring his own Chicago orchestra, if possible, otherwise to come himself as a guest conductor. The invitation, written by the distinguished French conductor, Edward Colonne, was warm in its praise of Thomas, who had left Germany as a young violinist and had made his podium reputation entirely in America.

It is not difficult to understand why Thomas' fame — and that of his orchestra — had spread to Europe even before the availability of recordings, radio and television. Word of mouth from such guest artists as Paderewski, Ysaye, Busoni and Dvorak, to name a few, was enough to characterize Thomas' ensemble as —in the words of M. Colonne — “one of the great artistic societies, French or foreign.”

So, what happened with this invitation? For the answer we turn to the memoirs of Rose Fay Thomas, the conductor's widow, who wrote in 1911:

“This invitation Thomas declined for a reason which seems very inadequate now, but which moved him strongly at the time; namely the trial and condemnation of Dreyfus by the French government. Thomas considered it a piece of monumental injustice, and was so indignant about it that he was unwilling to accept an invitation which came to him, even indirectly, from a governmental institution.” She took note of the enthusiasm voiced originally by some of the most important musical authorities in Paris in their expectation of Thomas' appearance, and she said of his refusal, “It was a pity he felt thus about the matter...”

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## Winter Open Meeting to Review Career of K.A.M. Rabbi

*Panel Will Discuss Social  
Activism of Hyde Park  
Rabbi Jacob Weinstein*

The Society's next open meeting on February 2 will feature a panel discussion on the life and work of Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein, chief rabbi at K.A.M. Congregation in Hyde Park for 28 years. Weinstein is widely remembered still for his commitment to community affairs,

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Seymour Raven is a familiar name to those who have followed classical music in Chicago. As a *Tribune* critic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra General Manager and University of Illinois Administrator, he has been a prominent figure for years. He has personally known many of the musicians and conductors he discusses and has attended countless performances of the CSO in his successive capacities.

Raven's address at the Society's open meeting on October 20 was a tremendous success. We hereby present excerpts from his address. For purposes of space, we have had to trim some of the colorful anecdotes that make the speech especially memorable, but Raven's intimate knowledge of his subject and the scope of his sense of history remain evident. Anyone interested examining a transcript of the full text of his address should contact the Society.

# President's Message

This issue of *Chicago Jewish History* is the second in a row to chronicle the visit to Chicago of a great Zionist leader in the days when Zionism was just beginning to win popularity among American Jews. The story of Shmarya Levin's first visit to Chicago in 1906, written of elsewhere in this issue, is related to Aaron Aaronsohn's 1909 visit that I wrote about in our Spring, 1991 issue. The connection between the two stems from their coming at a time when Chicago in general was struggling for recognition as a world class city and Chicago Jews in particular were working for recognition as a significant center for Jewish life. Each visitor brought an international perspective into what had been, scant decades before, a frontier city. The bulk of documentation remaining from those long-ago visits speaks to the importance they held for Chicago Jews of the time.

Another visit I hope to see written about in subsequent issues came in 1921 when Abraham Menaham Mendel Usshiskin arrived with Albert Einstein, Chaim Weitzmann and their wives. A year later, Nahum Sokolow, the great Zionist leader and Hebrew writer, made an impact with his lecture tour.

I believe these visits are of more than passing interest because they represented a tie between the new American immigrants and their European and Palestinian heritage. In the words of these speakers, the sweatshop working masses of old West Side Chicago Jews found pride and the opportunity to help in rescuing their families still stranded in poverty and misery in the countries of Eastern Europe. When we reconsider the excitement such speakers caused throughout the Chicago Jewish community, we help bring to life some of the immigrant dreams that fueled Jewish successes over the last 80 years both here and abroad.

The articles we publish in *Chicago Jewish History* are, I believe, an important link to this heritage. Not only do our articles tell about Jewish history, they also help preserve some of the documentation that gives evidence of our history. Dr. Irwin Suloway, who has edited this publication for over ten years, has been at the heart of our success. Detailing his contributions would take more than this brief space and I intend to discuss them in greater detail in a subsequent President's Message.

Dr. Suloway has recently requested a relief from some of his editorial duties, however. This issue of the newsletter, therefore, marks a transition period to the new editorship of Joe Kraus, a lecturer in English at Roosevelt University and Columbia College as well as a Society member. Mr. Kraus is a graduate of the University of



President  
Walter Roth

Michigan where he was Opinion Page Editor of *The Michigan Daily* as well as editor of *Weekend* magazine, the *Daily's* news and entertainment weekly.

This seems a good occasion as well to repeat the invitation to our readers to contribute articles on their lives, memories and history with a focus or connection on Jewish life in Chicago. Such articles should deal with historical subjects and should have a central connection to Chicago Jewry. If you have article ideas in mind, please send them to us so we can consider them for publication and help you develop them.

In closing, I would like to express our profound sympathy to the family and friends of our long-time member Sara Jacobson who passed away this month. Sara was the executive secretary at HIAS in Chicago for over 40 years. We remember her untiring efforts to help the immigrants who flocked to Chicago, from those who fled Russia in the early 1900s to the German refugees who came to Chicago in the 1930s. Though small in stature, she was a great lady with a big heart. We shall all miss her.

Walter Roth

## Weinstein

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social justice and religious freedom.

The panel of speakers features three people who know his work well: Weinstein's daughter Ruth Levine, K.A.M. archivist Jessica Young, and present K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf. Their focus will be on Weinstein's work on social issues in the city.

Entitled "The Activist Rabbi: Jacob J. Weinstein and Hyde Park, 1939-1967," the presentation begins at 2 p.m. at K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation. There will be a social hour beginning at 1 p.m. for Society members and their guests to talk with another and view the historic synagogue.

The meeting is open to the public and no reservations are required. K.A.M.

Isaiah Israel Congregation is located at the intersection of Hyde Park Blvd. and Greenwood Ave.

## Society Welcomes New Members

The following individuals have joined the society as first-time members in the time since our last newsletter was written. We welcome them and look forward to their participation in meetings, efforts to record Chicago Jewish history and other CJHS activities.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Cohen  
Vivian Garland  
Elaine Goldstein  
Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Raven  
Evelyn Ross  
Mr. and Mrs. Aleck Saidel  
Charlene Salzman  
Mr. and Mrs. Rubin Saposnik  
Joanne Saunders  
Olga Weiss

## Minsky Award Winning Manuscripts to be Distributed

Society members in good standing can look forward to receiving copies of the first annual Doris Minsky Memorial Fund Award winning manuscripts some time around the new year.

Two separate monographs will appear in the single volume to be mailed free of charge to all Society members.

Dr. Carolyn Eastwood and Beatrice Michaels Shapiro each received awards of \$1000 for their work at the Society's annual meeting and members brunch last June. Eastwood, who teaches at Roosevelt University, won for her manuscript *Chicago's Jewish Street Peddlers*. Her son Peter Eastwood has contributed line drawings as illustrations.

Shapiro, a free-lance writer who has written for the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Federation News* and other area publications, took the prize with *Memories of North Lawndale*. Her manuscript will be illustrated by photographs from a number of sources.

The prizes and publication of winning entries are made possible by the Minsky Memorial Fund, established by family and friends of the late Doris Minsky, a Society founder and long-time officer. The awarding of prizes and publication is overseen by a committee headed by Dr. Irving Cutler that also includes Mark Mandle, Joseph Minsky, Norman Schwartz, and Dr. Irwin Suloway. □

# Oral History Project Continues Recording Living History

Work proceeds in the ongoing Oral History program of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society on several fronts: the taking of oral histories from individuals whose experiences and knowledge add to the record of local Jewish history; the transcribing of the audio tapes so that a written record is available for use by interested individuals; and the preparation of written precis of the tapes, brief summaries of the topics and events included in each tape. The precis will thus serve as an annotated index making the contents of the tapes and their transcriptions readily identifiable sources of information concerning aspects of the history of Chicago Jewry.

Indicative of the progress being made in the oral history program is a tape made this summer of reminiscences by Erma Baer, a Chicagoan well into her eighties who recalls almost seventy years of work for the blind performed by the Johanna Lodge of the United Order of True Sisters, a philanthropic group of Jewish women working in Chicago for over a century. The interview was conducted in her home by CJHS Board Member Janet Hagerup and Past President Norman Schwartz.

## Transcripts Checked for Accuracy

A typed transcript of the tape has been made and is currently being checked for accuracy by Mrs. Baer, after which a precis of the final transcript will be made by Board Member Carole Gardner.

The interview dealt mainly with Mrs. Baer's and the Johanna Lodge's efforts over the years since 1923 to transcribe books into Braille for the blind. She recounted how the group has worked with the Chicago Public Library to assemble a circulating collection of novels and non-fiction works, including textbooks, for blind borrowers. She recalled how the first novel made available in the 1920s, *Stella Dallas*, proved so popular that the Braille "bumps" on the pages were literally worn flat by the fingers of the blind and the work had to be re-transcribed into Braille for other readers.

## Reminiscences Fascinating

She also discussed the changes in Braille techniques through the years and the impact of audio tapes on reading for the blind. (Braille is still necessary)

Equally fascinating were her reminiscences of her family background, her

early years in Logan Square before World War I, her years at Hayt Elementary School, Senn High School and Northwestern University, her marriage and the family connection with Temple Sholom.

Valuable insight into Jewish community life can be garnered from her discussion of the operations of the Johanna Lodge, which, though it changed through the years, began as an essentially secret society for German-Jewish women and how its original exclusiveness gave rise to other lodges for "ineligibles" including sister lodges (Greenebaum and Lincoln, now defunct) of the United Order of True Sisters. These restrictions have completely broken down and today Johanna has non-Jewish members and officers although it is still primarily Jewish in membership.

## Lodge Affected by Changes

Its charities, which have included cancer-fighting, aid to the deaf and the Public School Art Society and a camp connected with Children's Memorial Hospital as well as the Braille work for the blind, have always been non-sectarian. Like lodge groups throughout the country, the Johanna Lodge has dwindled in size as women work after marriage and has a preponderance of older members today, according to Mrs. Baer.

The Society is fortunate to have acquired her oral history to add to its collection. Members willing to assist with the oral history program or to nominate candidates for an oral history interview should get in touch with Mr. Schwartz through the CJHS office at (312) 663-5634 or (312) 944-4444. I.J.S.□

# Membership Committee Announces Speakers Bureau

The Membership Committee's new Chicago Jewish history speaker's bureau promises to increase the Society's visibility and, thereby, bring in new members.

According to Mark Mandle, chair on the Membership Committee, the new bureau will provide speakers on various subjects and time periods for synagogues and Jewish organizations looking for innovative programming. Members with suggestions for speakers or knowledge of Jewish groups looking for speakers should contact Mandle.

With membership renewals coming next quarter, Mandle also suggests

members consider purchasing Society memberships for hard to please people on their Chanukah shopping lists. "We are looking for members through two groups," Mandle said, "your friends and local synagogues. Chanukah starts early this year. Why not get a membership in the Chicago Jewish Historical Society as a present for a friend or family member?" Mandle added that he can check to determine whether members' friends or family members currently belong to the society.

Members should consider recommending that their synagogue or Jewish organization join the society, Mandle said as well.

To reach Mandle with speaker's bureau suggestions or to inquire about membership, call him evenings at (312) 929-2853 or during the day at (312) 663-5634.

Regular membership is \$25, family \$35, senior citizen \$15 and student \$10. Sponsor, patron and life memberships are available as well. □

# CJHS Presents Program on Jewish Architects

Michael Gelick, award-winning Chicago architect, spoke on Chicago's Jewish architects at the most recent open meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society on Dec. 8 at the Spertus College of Judaica.

The talk reviewed the contributions Chicago's Jewish architects made on the city's development from the work of Dankmar Adler, son of the rabbi of Chicago's first synagogue, up until today.

Gelick is a member of the faculty of the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois, where he formerly served as acting director. Among his acclaimed Chicago-area buildings are Thornton Community College, Kennedy-King College and the Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism which have won design awards from *Progressive Architecture Magazine* and the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He also won an international competition with the design he submitted for a new town center in Ashdod, Israel.

Gelick's talk, like all of the Society's open meetings, was open both to society members and their guests as well as to the public at large. Most talks are held on Sundays at 2 p.m., following a social hour.

For further information on Gelick's talk, contact Charles Bernstein at (312) 263-0005 or (312) 324-6362. □

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# Jews and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

## Early Jewish Symphony Members

*continued from page 1*

You may see from this why, to my way of thinking, the history of Jews and the Chicago Symphony should, in a special sense, begin with Theodore Thomas and his concern for Captain Alfred Dreyfus at the hands of the anti-Semitic French military.

We may pass gently over Mrs. Thomas' regrets at her husband's forthright stand. She was, to be sure, a fine lady and the sister of Charles Norman Fay, one of the founding officers of the orchestra's sponsoring body, a man who enjoyed wide esteem. It is not too difficult to imagine the mixed emotions of loyalty to spouse, to brother and to organization when Mrs. Thomas and the rest of them lost such a trip to Europe as had been proposed. So we say understandingly, and in paraphrase of a familiar jest, Dreyfus-schmeifus, so long as she loved her husband.

Let us now examine the earliest rosters of the orchestra and its backers and officers.

In the very first season, 1891-92, the principal first violinist (concertmaster, we say today), was Max Bendix. A versatile musician, he worked out his career in several capacities, including concerto soloist and, in a number of cities, frequent conductor. Another Jewish musician at the beginning was the cellist, Frederick Hess.

### *Fannie Zeisler: Pioneer Soloist*

When we mention the first season soloists, we encounter a true pioneer, Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, who appeared 19 more times across 33 seasons. She was married to a prominent Jewish lawyer, Sigmund Zeisler, who was equally at home in corporate and municipal law and at the defense table of the Haymarket anarchists in the 1880s. Other members of their family achieved success in various callings, and at least one, with whom I was acquainted, was at once a physician, mathematician and musical amateur, Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler.

### *Wolfsohn an Early Symphony Supporter*

Fannie Bloomfield had come here from Austria as a child. Among her teachers was Carl Wolfsohn. A-ha! Look at the roster of guarantors for the orchestra's first season. At the bottom of the alphabetical roster you find Carl Wolfsohn, listed along with some other individuals who could afford to pledge money. To name a few, there three Armours, two Fields, a Lawson, a McCormick, a Sprague or two, and more.

In Wolfsohn, Thomas knew a good friend and pianist when he saw one, and it did not just begin with orchestra sponsorship. In Thomas' early career, when Wolfsohn resided in Philadelphia and presented an outstanding series of chamber concerts, Thomas took up the violin again and played in that series, even though he had already taken up the baton. That was in 1860-61.

By the 1890s, Thomas was leading his Chicago orchestra and Wolfsohn had already migrated to Chicago. As George Upton, the Chicago Tribune critic and later Thomas biographer told it: "Mr. Carl Wolfsohn is a resident of Chicago and still teaching. Chicago owes much to him for his important musical service. He was one of the first to guarantee the Chicago Orchestra concerts, and has ever been a staunch friend of Mr. Thomas, in whose concerts he often played and with whom he gave very successful chamber concerts in Philadelphia in the early days."

I offer this footnote to the Upton tribute. Wolfsohn, in addition to the \$1000 he pledged for each of the first three years of the orchestra, also donated a bust of Beethoven to Lincoln Park.

### *Dvorak Showed*

#### *Insensitivity*

I must digress here as Antonin Dvorak comes to mind. He was, as we all know, the great Czech composer whose symphonies, Slavonic dances, violin and violoncello concertos are among his fine works which have

long been firmly implanted in the repertory of orchestras around the world. He once came as guest conductor in Chicago. That was in 1893, at the World Columbian Exposition, during his extended visit to America. He spent a good bit of time in Spillville, Iowa where many Czech-born folks resided. We know, too, that his Symphony No. 5, captioned "From the New World," had its compositional roots in that sojourn.

What interests me here is the study in contrasts between the Theodore Thomas who reacted as he did to the Dreyfus Affair, and the Antonin Dvorak who wrote a letter to his countryman, Emil Kozanek, with some of his impressions of America.

"Not long ago," wrote Dvorak from Spillville, "we went as far as Nebraska, to the town of Omaha, where there are also many Czechs. I went to see Mr. Rosewater, a Czech from Bukovany, who, though a Jew, is a very nice gentleman. He is a personal friend of Harrison and Cleveland and many outstanding political men. He got rich here and his journal, *The Omaha Bee*, has had the greatest influence in the state. On the whole he is the most honoured and respected person here. We stayed at his home for three days." And so on.

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*When Jewish boys in the 19th century Europe were fantasized by their parents into world prominent emancipated musicians, the scenario called for a violin, cello or piano, or sometimes also a singing voice . . . Can you imagine Mischa Elman's parents, or Artur Rubinstein's, handing their boy a trombone and telling him, "You have to practice!"*

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Enough said. I think I have made my point. You see why my respect for Thomas is so great and why now, at the 100th anniversary of the Chicago Symphony, we must continue to honor him as a musical pioneer and a "mensch".

Now back to the flowering of Jewish identities in the roster of the orchestra. In the first 10 years there were few recognizably Jewish names, e.g., Silberstein, Singer and Baumgartner (perhaps). I say "recognizably" because with the considerable number of German musicians at that time, there might lurk some Jewish persons here and there. Until the great immigration of the period 1910-1920, Jews from Eastern European countries were not as numerous here as Germans and other central or western Europeans.

With that large immigration, however, the roster took on Zukovsky, Katzenelson, Ginsburg and Weisbach and eventually Gordon, Leviton, Dolnick and Finerman.

Let us look back for a bit to Alexander Zukovsky. I may be biased here in that my parents knew him well and I was fortunate as a child to enjoy some contact with him myself. When he came here from Russia, he moved into a front position and eventually became principal first violinist, as the assistant concertmaster was then called. He was also a capable conductor. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers engaged him to present occasional sinfonietta concerts in the Ashland Boulevard Auditorium in the early 1920s — with off-duty Chicago Symphony players making up the ensemble.

Let us proceed. Sponsors. We have sketched the developing membership of Jewish musicians in the orchestra. What about the Orchestral Association, its policy makers and officers.

In 1905 a meeting of donors, trustees and governing members adopted a "Plan of Organization" whereby the Association would thereafter elect out of their number a board of trustees (not exceeding 15 persons) to govern the administration and its officers. Further, they would constitute a self-perpetuating trusteeship, filling future vacancies from among the Association members.

Among the first 40 was Abraham G. Becker, the investment banker. In 1914, Julius Rosenwald, merchant and pre-eminent philanthropist, was named to the Association. By the 50th season, 1940-41, there were Drs. Harry Gradle and Ernest Zeisler. Still later came Philip Sang, Edwin Eisendrath, and James Becker. After World War II the board of trustees itself included the names Meyer Kestenbaum and Leigh Block.

I had the privilege to be the first Jewish general manager of the Orchestra. I had spent the previous 12 years as a critic and editor at *The Chicago Tribune*, and was invited to the management by the Orchestral Association President, Dr. Eric Oldberg, and the Music Director, Fritz Reiner.

### *Conductors After Thomas*

As for the conductors, Fritz Reiner was the first Jewish music director in the history of the Chicago Symphony. As far as I ever knew, he did not practice the religion, but there was no concealment of his Jewishness. I was especially impressed one time to hear him discuss one

of Handel's choral-orchestral works based on the Old Testament. As you know, Handel composed "Messiah" on one hand and — on the other — "Judas Maccabeus", "Israel in Egypt", "Samson", "Solomon", "Saul", "Jephthah" — and I may have forgotten some more.

In this instance, Reiner was dealing with Israel in Egypt and it was a pleasure to hear him discuss the text painting, the interaction of musical statement with Scriptural text. As he quoted line after line as amplified by the music, I preferred to regard his special capacity to understand as something to do with tribal memory, if you please. If that observation is unscientific, I won't press the point. Let's just say that his insights lay squarely between intellect and persuasion.

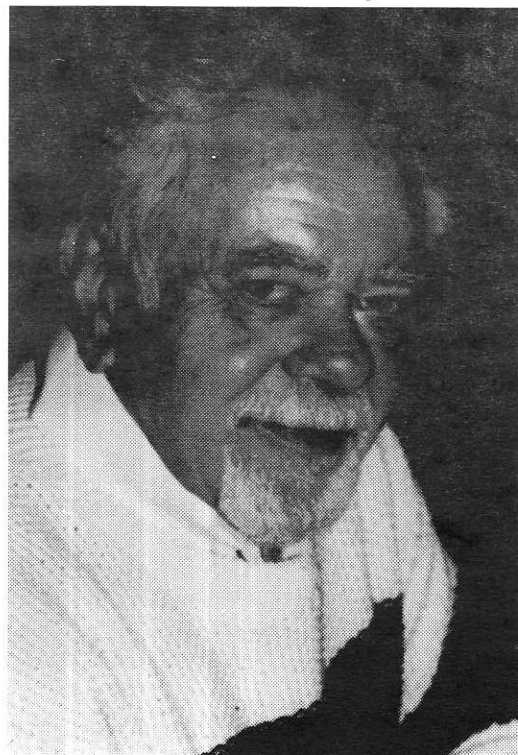
### *Reiner Could Be Humorous*

Reiner was considered by some to be quite gruff and unyielding in his artistic demands, and of course rather unchallengeable in his results. But he had another side, which included a sly sense of humor. Some time before the Israel in Egypt episode I just described, he was tossing choral-orchestral possibilities into the air for his season's programming. "I don't know," he said, whether it should be "Messiah," or "Israel in Egypt."

"Whichever you choose," I replied, "keep your eye on the calendar. Make it "Messiah" at Christmas time or "Israel in Egypt" around Passover, not the other way around." He fixed me with his well-practiced frown and said, "Go a-way!"

If Reiner was the first Jewish music director in Orchestra Hall, you all know he was not the last. Georg Solti, during one of the orchestra's European tours, made a well publicized visit to the graves of his parents in a Hungarian Jewish cemetery. And, of course, the Danny of the title of

**Seymour Raven**



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this discussion is Daniel Barenboim, the new music director whose identification with the State of Israel was formed when he was 10 years old and his family moved there from Argentina. His musical education, which was begun in his birthplace, was markedly advanced in his new home, where the musical environment was so inspirational and exemplary.

One other music director, Artur Rodzinski, was born a Jew in Poland but embraced Christianity later. Similarly, Bruno Walter, who came here from Germany and was a convert from Judaism. He was not the chief conductor here, but did serve as musical adviser during an interregnum on the Orchestra Hall podium. Of course, he conducted many concerts here.

Mention once more of Orchestra Hall causes me to backtrack to the first chief conductor. If you look at the hall's facade, well above street level, you will read the words, "Theodore Thomas Orchestra Hall."

### *Jewish Guest Conductors*

Over the years there have been a number of distinguished Jewish guest conductors. One, for example, was both a front rank composer and performer — Leonard Bernstein — whose virtuosity extended to the keyboard. Another, Efrem Zimbalist, was principally a violinist. But he was also a composer and is listed in the orchestra's records as composer-conductor.

Darius Mihaud came three times as a guest and appeared in the triple capacity of composer-pianist-conductor. He wrote a number of compositions of specific Jewish content. Indeed, the first sentence of his 1949 book, *Notes Sans Musique*, reads "Je suis un Francais de Provence et de religion Israelite." (I am a Frenchman of Provence and of the Israelite religion.) Ernest Bloch came once, to conduct his "Three Jewish Poems."

### *Schoenberg's Jewish Identity Grew*

There are many interesting things about Arnold Schoenberg, inspirator of so much 20th century theory and composition. Born a Jew in Vienna, he embraced Catholicism for a number of years, but when he came back there was no doubt about his resurgent consciousness. When he came here to conduct more than a half century ago, his program gave no hint of Jewish material. But by the time Solti performed "Moses and Aaron" in the 1980s, there could be no doubt about where Schoenberg stood ultimately. That oratorio, plus such things as "A Survivor from Warsaw," "The Biblical Way," and "Jacob's Ladder," established him in the forefront of Jewish musical concentration.

Jewish guest conductors have long been noticeable. In addition to the composer-conductors just mentioned, there is a list of men who concentrated on the podium, such as William Steinberg, Pierre Monteux, Paul Kletzki, Otto Klemperer, Eugene Ormandy, George Szell, Erich Leinsdorf and, quite recently, Leonard Slatkin. I may have over-

looked some.

### *Music Critics over the Years*

Somewhere along the line I should account for music critics. They are not part of the orchestra, nor is there any evidence that one of them ever played in an orchestra. Among the Jewish music critics — and there have been several in Chicago, especially when there were five metropolitan daily newspapers instead of two — was one who did have some good experience as a conductor. I refer to Albert Goldberg, who had been an excellent critic on the *Tribune* before he moved on to the *Los Angeles Times*. During the depression years he had been director of the Illinois Music Project under the WPA and in that capacity he conducted a number of concerts by the Illinois Symphony.

An even earlier critic was Herman Devries, who in his first career had been an opera singer in France. Andrew Foldi, after serving as one of the younger critics, launched a successful career as a singer. During the years after World

War II when I succeeded Goldberg on the *Tribune*, Irving Sablosky was the critic of *The Daily News*. A long ago critic on the *News* was the pedagogue Maurice Rosenfeld. When it came to symphony reviews, a lot of good reading was provided by

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the people I have named.

### *Number of Jewish Musicians Grows*

Now to the expanding Jewish membership in the orchestra. The great immigration of the early 20th century brought accomplished musicians and innumerable families whose children were to start their music lessons around the age of eight, from the best teachers, naturally, and the best instrument papa could afford.

When I began to attend young people's concerts of the Chicago Symphony in the 1920s, Jacques Gordon and Zukovsky shared the first stand and there were still to be found Selinger, Silberstein, Leviton, Dolnick and Finerman.

Before another decade had passed, the concertmaster was Mischa Mischakoff, the first cellist was Daniel Saidenberg and a whole bunch of first generation Americans came out of the Jewish neighborhoods to play under Frederick Stock. There were Sorkin and Sopkin, Chausow and Gradman, Moll and Senescu, Kahn and Oberman, Preves and Lehnhoff, all string players to be sure. But before many more years, there were Fishman in the oboe section, Friedman with trombone, and Brody as first clarinet.

### *String Instruments Attracted Jews Most*

There is more than one reason for relative scarcity of Jewish instrumentalists with no strings attached — in symphony orchestras at least. If you consider somewhere around 36 violins, 10 each of violas, cellos and double basses as against 4 flutes, 4 oboes, 4 trumpets, 6 horns, and



Theodore Thomas

so on, there are, of course, more symphonic opportunities for strings than for winds and brasses. As for staff pianist, there would be one, and I remember when, during the great depression, one of the backstanders in the violin section would slip over to the piano for the occasional score that called for one.

Another reason could perhaps be found under the heading "ethnic" or "sociological." When Jewish boys in the 19th century Europe were fantasized by their parents into world prominent emancipated musicians, the scenario called for a violin, a cello or a piano, or sometimes also a singing voice. These were the routes to soloistic wealth and glory. Can you imagine Mischa Elman's parents, or Artur Rubinstein's, handing their boy a trombone and telling him, "You have to practice!"

In my early youth, the noticeably Jewish wind players turned up at wedding receptions, dances sponsored by landsmanschaften, and so on. As we head toward the 21st century, however, we may note that the recent popularity of "Klezmer" ensembles is a lively manifestation of popular interest in folk music as we conjure up the recollections of our elders about Jewish life in the shtetl or such large communities as Warsaw and Vilna.

### *Symphony Boasts of Musicians Today*

But back to the main track, the symphony musicians. When we arrive at 1991 there has already been a long procession of such accomplished instrumentalists as Frank Miller, Lenore Glazer, Sidney Harth, Edward Druzinsky, Victor Aitay, Sol Turner and his daughter, Lynne Turner and Joseph Golan, all successors to the Sorkins and Sopkins I mentioned earlier.

We can dispense with roll-call and simply leaf through the program book of any present day CSO concert. The weight of Jewish participation is self-evident, and I am not forgetting the Israeli-born composer-in-residence, Shu-

lamit Ran.

One of the recollections I have of Sheppard Lehnhoff I have in the framework of this discussion. It may be only tangential, but I cling to it. Thereby hangs a tale I have never repeated widely, but you are a historical society and posterity insists. I tell it with malice toward none, only admiration.

There came a time when Reiner, as conductors would sooner or later, contemplated some re-seating of orchestra players. Lehnhoff, an excellent performer, sat at the third stand in a viola section that included Milton Preves, Isadore Zwerow, Harold Sorin and Samuel Feinzimer.

### *Dilemma With Lehnhoff*

Lehnhoff was an all-around musician, conservatory trained and well grounded in music theory and history. There was only one problem — eyesight — which did not thwart his career but did pose some extra challenges to him, I supposed. He wore very thick eyeglasses and was seen to lean forward somewhat more than others when he played.

The re-seating put Reiner in a dilemma. "I don't know what to do about Lehnhoff," he mused. "If I move him forward, he will think it's a promotion. If I move him back, he will never be able to see me again. What do you suggest?"

I didn't suggest, I merely advised in that other dictionary definition of advise which means to give information. I said, "I'll tell you something, Fritz. Lehnhoff's brother-in-law is the new Secretary of Labor in Washington, Arthur Goldberg." Reiner, without a moment's hesitation, replied, "I think I will let him sit just where he is."

Not to be forgotten is the name Lester Asher. Lester passed away just a year ago and is represented in the archives of your Society. He had been president for several years of K.A.M. Temple and formed an important link to the CSO as legal counsel of the Chicago Federation of Musicians for a quarter century.

### *The Musicians of Tomorrow*

Now, what about the future? Insofar as history deals with yesterday and the day before yesterday, I will leave it to future inquiries by your Jewish Historical Society to evaluate where we will have gone from here with Jewish symphony musicians and conductors, especially Maestro Daniel Barenboim, who fills us with so much hope as he takes over command of the Chicago Symphony podium.

Much of our future musicianship, I must caution you, depends on the persistence and quality of musical instruction to be provided by Jewish parents for their children. I have certain fears, which are illustrated by a recurring dream.

I dream of a cartoon I saw a few years ago in a magazine, the *New Yorker*, I believe. The dream keeps coming back to me and shows a young lad seated on a tall stool in front on an electronic contraption. Standing behind him is the unsmiling father. And the boy says, "Daddy, I don't want to operate a computer. I want to learn to play the violin."

Thank you, and good luck.

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# Early Zionist Leader's Visit Sparked Turn of Century Jewish Imagination

*Shmarya Levin's 1906 Trip Marked a Turning Point in Chicago Zionist Activities*

by Walter Roth

Shmarya Levin may not be well remembered today, but the famed Zionist orator's 1906 visit electrified Chicago's Jews and played a crucial role in boosting Chicago's Zionist organizations to world class status. As one of the 12 Jewish representatives to the Russian Duma, the short-lived parliament formed after the revolution of 1905, he was known world-wide as a passionate speaker and as a clever politician.

His success at having met with many of Chicago's most prominent Jews — including Judge Julian Mack, Julius Rosenwald, Adolph Kraus, Rabbi Emil Hirsch, and Bernard Horwich — and the many memoirs that reflect on his visit, leave remarkable documentation of his immediate and lasting effect on Chicago's Zionist movement.

Born in Russia in 1867, Levin received a rich education in both Jewish and secular schools. Like many Russian intellectuals of his time, he studied at the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin in Germany. After receiving his doctor's degree, he returned to Russia where the Tsar appointed him the Rabbi at Grodno, Ekaterinoslav and Vilna. During his time in Germany, he had developed close ties with German and American Zionists. He was a natural choice as a Jewish representative when the Duma formed.

He rapidly gained world fame as Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers reported the text of his Duma speeches. When the Tsar disbanded the Duma in 1906, Levin fled to Berlin and then embarked on the lecture tour that would eventually take him to Chicago.

## *A Victim of his own success*

One reason Levin is so little remembered today is that his fame was largely eclipsed by the reputations of a number of his followers, including Chaim Weizmann, Ahad Ha'am and Nahum Bialik. As his speeches throughout the world won him admirers, he proved instrumental in inspiring and teaching the generation of intellectuals that helped see the ultimate establishment of Israel.

In Chicago, he carried on a number of conversations about Zionism with Julius Rosenwald, the wealthy director of Sears retailing operation, according to Rosenwald's biographer M.R. Werner. According to some reports, Levin actually stayed with the Rosenwalds.

Rosenwald would eventually help Levin found a publishing house in Tel Aviv as well as contribute to building the Jewish Institute of Technology in Haifa. How much a Zionist Rosenwald was before Levin began influencing

him is not clear, however. Louis Lipsky, in *A Gallery of Zionist Profiles*, notes that Rosenwald's place of residence was then called Tel Aviv. While local legend confirms that claim, it remains unsettled whether Rosenwald used the name for his lavish South Side home or for his more rural estate located near where the Ravinia festival now stands.

Levin seems to have had an immediate effect on Rosenwald's wife who was said to have wanted to follow Levin in his Zionistic endeavors. Werner, in his biography, quotes Levin as telling Rosenwald, "I could convert one member of your family to the cause of Zionism, but I would first have to remove your wife from her husband's influence."

## *Shepherded by Horwich*

Bernard Horwich, the Chicago philanthropist and Zionist leader, claimed that Levin's visit overall was "electrifying," but he records a number of troubling moments from the visit in his book *My First Eighty Years*. In one instance, Horwich arranged for him to speak at Anshe Kenesset Israel, then the largest orthodox synagogue in Chicago. Following Horwich's introduction of him as a leader in Russian and Zionist politics, he stood before the largely European crowd and spoke in Hebrew, a language few could understand aurally. After speaking thus incomprehensibly, Levin ended his address in just fifteen minutes and irritated many people in his audience, including Horwich.

Levin's other biographers report that he was not only a brilliant orator but also a master of invective. Speaking Hebrew to an audience that could understand only Yiddish would not have been out of his character if he felt altering his address was a form of condescension. Horwich writes:

All in all his visit here was not a happy one. Of the true Russian intelligentsia, he was of a highly nervous temperament and like most men of that type, was rather self-centered and felt himself superior to the average person. He did not like the well-to-do Jews of the South Side, nor did he have much use for the poor Orthodox Jews of the West Side. What he had expected was to encounter here a group of Russian intelligentsia like himself, and that he did not find. However, he infused new life into the Zionist movement, which gained heavily by his presence.

## *Highlight of the Visit*

Levin's visit was best remembered, however, for a meeting held at the Standard Club where several hundred "South Side Jews" came to hear him. This time he spoke in a language they could all understand: German. The meeting which was chaired by Adolph Kraus, also featured Rabbi Emil Hirsch (a noted opponent of Zionism), and was apparently a great success.

In 1933, 27 years after the event, an unknown author wrote about it for *Hadassah* magazine (in Yiddish and English). The highly personalized report seems to reflect





**Schmarya Levin**

the visit through the eyes of the “poor Jews” of the West Side and also to demonstrate the tension that existed between the West Side and South Side Jewish communities. It went:

The first time that a reformed temple of the Chicago German Jews opened its portals to a Zionist conference was in 1907 when the late Schmarya Levin visited Chicago for the first time.

This transpired at the Isaiah Temple. The President there was the late Adolph Kraus, grandmaster of the B'nai B'rith, who hails from Bohemia. It was necessary to think up a resourceful pretext in order that the temple be obtained to house a Zionist mass meeting. It was performed thus. Adolph Kraus was approached and told that into Chicago comes a grand man, a Russian of the Mosaic faith. Pray, Herr Kraus, and contribute to the expenses incurred by the visit of the guest. Interrogates the Herr Kraus: Who might the illustrious Jew be? So he is informed: The great Jew is Dr. Schmarya Levin, a member of the imperial Duma. He flows the German language like water. Berlin is 'his meat,' and the Czar causing the dissolution of the Duma lead to the doctor's escape to Chicago.

Thus parleyed a Zionist committee with the old Sire Kraus of Bohemia and led him to understand that the doctor, the fleeing congressman, need be provided with a lodging place and a table to feed at. It was not fair to dispatch such a great man and a martyr, to

boot, to the sheltering house? Herr Kraus telephoned the Auditorium Hotel and ordered a suitable suite of rooms for the guest. With this alone, the transaction has not yet ended.

The interest just began and a new chapter commenced in the Temple crisis in behalf of Zionism. It started out with a banquet in honor of Dr. Schmarya Levin at the Standard Club where there were over two hundred men and women of the foremost Yehudic aristocracy assembled. Herr Kraus invited them himself and he himself was the toastmaster, too. And even Dr. Emil Hirsch, reformed Rabbi of Sinai Temple (the most antagonizing anti-Zionist of that day), was also present at the banquet and, what's more, the chief speaker in the audience. Not, Providence forbid, did he speak to the good of Zion, this Rabbi, but speak he did and this alone was accounted as a big victory, a very big victory, indeed.

#### *Weizmann's memories of Levin*

Chaim Weizmann, in his autobiography *Trial and Error*, refers to Levin as holding “first place” among the Zionist propagandists of the day. Much impressed by the older man's drive and occasional audacity, Weizmann reports a classic Levin story. On one occasion Levin had listened to a speech by Jacob Schiff of New York, a close friend of Julius Rosenwald's and a well-known philanthropist. In that speech Schiff had observed in his heavy German accent, “I am divided into three parts: I am an American, I am a German, and I am a Jew.” Levin rose immediately afterwards and wanted to know whether Schiff divided himself horizontally or vertically. If horizontally, he wondered, exactly which part had he left for the Jewish people.

#### *Subsequent Visits*

Levin would return to Chicago a number of times, though no subsequent trip would duplicate the excitement that his 1906 visit, the first by a world-class Zionist, had generated. He continued to be an in-demand orator, even after the unsuccessful talk arranged by Horwich. To those Chicagoans who remembered him, he was a giant. Louis Lipsky wrote, “They remembered him as he stood there, looking remarkably like Lenin, the Communist revolutionary. They remembered the lather of excitement in which he was immersed. They remembered the tone of exaltation which rang in his voice, the sarcasm, the rebuke. He appeared like Mephisto in reverse, speaking like any Prophet of God.”

Another writer, Rufus Lears in *The Jews in America: A History*, wrote, “With his first appearance in America in 1906, Levin left his audiences dazzled and astonished. He was one of the most potent forces in the progress of Zionism in America, a rare synthesis of the teacher and orator, standing before his audiences like an ancient Hebrew prophet, castigating them and uplifting them at the same time.” □

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# Press-Advocate File Recalls History of Jewish Newspapers

*Board Member Kraus Donates Copies of Post-World War II Weekly Newspaper*

By Irwin J. Suloway

Among items recently donated to the Society for placement in the Chicago Jewish Archives is a partial file of copies of *The Press-Advocate*, a weekly newspaper dealing with Jewish affairs published locally in the years following World War II. The files, contributed by CJHS Board Member Herb Kraus, a one-time staff member of the publication, cover the years 1946 and 1947.

Like many such newspapers which have appeared through the years, usually for brief periods, in the Chicago Jewish community, *The Press-Advocate* featured local news of Jewish interest garnered mainly from organizational press releases or daily papers and national and international Jewish news previously reported in other sources. It also contained marriage and death notices, columns about women and sports and a series of biographies of "outstanding [Jewish] citizens."

Again like most predecessors and successors, the publication was a profit-oriented venture dependent primarily upon advertising income. Like the others too, it ceased publication when that income dried up. The files donated to the Society reveal a shrinking number of ads (and pages) in the basically eight-page weekly during early 1947. According to Lawrence S. Stein, the editor during the years covered by the files, the paper was soon afterwards sold to another firm which was unable to continue publication for long.

## *The Earlier Reform Advocate*

What set *The Press-Advocate* apart from similar weeklies was its tenuous connection with an earlier publication, *The Reform Advocate*, a truly distinguished publication started in 1891 under the editorship of Dr. Emil G. Hirsch, the famed rabbi of Chicago Sinai Congregation. Rights to the Advocate name were bought and used in the title *Press-Advocate* by the publisher of an existing weekly, *The Jewish Press* when *The Reform Advocate* ceased publication during World War II. *The Press* then took the name *The Press-Advocate*.

*The Reform Advocate*, unlike its "successor," was essentially a journal of opinion and ideas with news notes a secondary element and generally confined to aspects of Reform Judaism in Chicago and the United States. Dr. Hirsch edited the weekly for over thirty years until his death in 1923, and it reflected his religious and social beliefs. He was succeeded by his son-in-law, Dr. Gerson B. Levi, the rabbi of Temple Isaiah Israel, who edited it until its demise.

*The Advocate* had originally been published by the Bloch Publishing Company before that Jewish publisher moved to New York City. Later it became the sole property

of Emanuel Newman, but at all times the editors had a free hand in the contents of this influential and sometimes controversial publication.

## *A Look at Earlier Weeklies*

The history of English-language publications of Chicago Jewish interest still awaits a definitive chronicler, but from such sources as the books by H.L. Meites, Morris Gutstein and Philip Bregstone it appears that the first known Anglo-Jewish publication (as opposed to ones in Hebrew, Yiddish and German) in Chicago appeared nearly 120 years ago in 1873. It was a weekly titled *The Occident*. A non-uncritical champion of Orthodoxy, with pronounced contempt for Reform Judaism, it persevered until 1895, by which time the new majority of local Orthodox Jews were Yiddish—rather than English—speaking and preferred the burgeoning Yiddish press.

In 1884 *The Occident* was joined by the *Chicago Israelite*, a local edition of the *American Israelite*, edited by Reform leader Isaac Mayer Wise and also published by Bloch. It lasted well into the 1930s and may be remembered by some readers of this article. Its orientation was toward Reform Judaism.

## *Published in English and German*

An earlier prototype of *The Reform Advocate* had appeared as early as 1878 in the form of *The Jewish Advance*, a weekly founded by Rabbi Henry B. Gersoni, a colorful leader of B'nai Sholom, the city's second Jewish congregation, which ultimately became part of Isaiah Israel Congregation. *The Advance* was different from other publications in that it appeared both in English and in German during its brief three years in existence. It too was Reform-oriented.

In 1897 a twice-monthly publication, *The Star of Israel*, appeared for less than a year. Its brief life is noteworthy because, unlike most predecessors, it was edited by and for "Slavic" or "Russian" Jews and was an attempt to serve the growing number of better-educated, English-speaking Eastern European Jews.

## *Twentieth Century Developments*

During the twentieth century the number of English-speaking Jews in Chicago increased dramatically and so did the appearance of new weekly publications in English aimed at them. Since most new weeklies were interested in profit from advertising rather than in propagating a particular form of Judaism, they became more "secular" in nature and solicited and featured news from all branches of Judaism. Like *The Press-Advocate*, whose file was referred

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The recent acquisition by CJHS of a file of a short-lived weekly newspaper serving the local Jewish community gave rise to this backward look at the many newspapers in English which have come and gone as that community formed, grew and changed during the past 120 years. This informal survey indicates the variety of publications, their different purposes and the varying degrees of success they have had. Dr. Suloway has edited *Chicago Jewish History* and its predecessor for the past ten years.

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to above, most of these weeklies were also short-lived.

Mention should, however, be made of *The Chicago Chronicle*, a long-lived weekly, founded and edited by H.L. Meites in 1919. In some ways an outgrowth of his neighborhood newspaper the *Lawndale News*, the *Chronicle* was for a few decades the only publication to offer serious competition to the dominant *Sentinel*.

### *The Sentinel: A Survivor*

The longest-lived of the Anglo-Jewish weeklies in Chicago and the sole survivor in any meaningful way is the *Sentinel*, still going after eighty years. It was started in 1911 by printing executives Louis S. Berlin and Abraham L. Weber and from the beginning adopted a magazine format with news-magazine-like content that seemed to set it apart from its competitors.

Although edited in its early years by a series of Reform rabbis, the *Sentinel* has always tried to cater to the interests of the broad spectrum of Chicago Jewry and today most of its readers are certainly not Reform Jews. In 1943 control of the *Sentinel* passed to J. I. Fishbein, who has since edited it for nearly fifty years.

### *More Recent Trends*

More recent developments in Chicago's Anglo-Jewish publication world have been the appearances of "give-away" publications with virtually no paid circulation, depending totally on advertisers for income, and the broadening in scope of the *JUF News* published by the Jewish Federation of Chicago, which, albeit a monthly rather than a weekly, today includes large amounts of advertising and contains, as well as Jewish United Fund news, reports on local Jewish events and features on local, national and international topics. Mailed free to most JUF contributors, it reaches a larger audience than any other Anglo-Jewish publication.

Concerned as we are with Chicago's Jewish past, it is perhaps foolish to speculate about the future. But one can't help wondering whether, as the local Jewish community becomes more diverse, more widely dispersed geographically, more thoroughly integrated into the broader community and more addicted to other specialized periodicals, the heyday of the general Anglo-Jewish weekly in Chicago has not already passed.

I.J.S.□

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## Historical Debate Shows Fad of Lecture Forums

### *Vogue Drew Large Crowds to Sponsoring Congregations*

By Irwin J. Suloway

The previous issue of *Chicago Jewish History* featured an article dealing with the Darrow-Wise debate over Zionism. That article brings to mind an era in Chicago history when "lecture forums" were an important cultural element in the community.

It was an era dating roughly from the time of the first world war until shortly after the second one, say from 1920 to 1950 — a short time even in the relatively short history of Jewish life in Chicago. Forums were a colorful and not unimportant facet of Jewish life and one which exemplifies the timeless thirst of Jews for knowledge and education.

Building upon the traditional view of the synagogue as a house of study and a house of assembly as well as one of prayer, leaders of the larger Chicago synagogues cast about for means of providing adult education in order to bind members' lives more closely to the synagogue and as a way of attracting new members. They borrowed from an old American tradition of self-education which involved bringing in traveling speakers and educational performers for a series of meetings — a tradition best exemplified by the small-town Chautauqua movement.

### *Lecture Series Established*

The result was the establishment of lecture forums, a series of periodic meetings at each of which a well known authoritative speaker would appear to discourse on a topic of interest or controversy. Sometimes, as in the case of

Wise and Darrow, two speakers would debate; occasionally there would be a panel of three speakers or more. Tickets were sold for an entire series of as many as a dozen evenings and, if space permitted, for individual programs.

Among the first of the Chicago forums was the one offered by Sinai Congregation on the South Side. Under the canny directorship of S.D. Schwartz, speakers — often controversial ones — of the greatest popularity and respect were scheduled and were paid what were huge fees at the time. The fees were warranted, however, by the capacity crowds the speakers attracted. The Sinai forums drew Jews of every religious bent and many Gentiles too, and it was not unusual to have to turn away persons seeking single meeting admissions.

### *Movement Grew in Popularity*

Of course, the success of the Sinai forums was not overlooked by others. Forums became popular congregational features in several sections of the city. Senators, first ladies, famous columnists, radio commentators, professors and popular literary, stage and concert personalities appeared at many Reform and Conservative congregations, sometimes performing at two or three on successive nights. An occasional large Orthodox congregation ventured into the arena although their choice of platform performers typically remained more religiously oriented. Community centers held forums of their own.

Sinai's forum was still going after World War II. But the handwriting was on the wall for those who could read it. Television was bringing celebrities into people's living rooms and the thrill of hearing one in person was lessening. But many an elder among us remembers with a thrill the time he or she saw and heard Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Thompson, John Gunther or Henry Wallace at a congregational forum. □