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**From theater of children to theater for children: The
development of children's theater in Israel**

Amitai, Raziel, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1989

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FROM THEATER OF CHILDREN TO THEATER FOR CHILDREN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S THEATER IN ISRAEL

BY

RAZIEL AMITAI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1989

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty
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PREFACE

Surprising as it may seem, it was clear to me from the outset of my studies in theater that I wanted to concentrate on the interplay between the theater on one hand, and children and youth on the other. Indeed, I tried to route my studies in this direction. In addition to the required studies, I pursued all electives that touched upon children's theater, or theater for children and youth. It was only natural, therefore, that I would select this theme for my dissertation.

All of my academic studies were undertaken in the United States. As an Israeli student familiar with theater in general and children's theater in particular, I considered myself a fit candidate for the research that I intended to conduct. I also considered this research very important to perform. In this sense, I believed that my particular background, combined with the fact that I have a full command of Hebrew, made me better suited to the task than someone who was unfamiliar with the topic or whose command of Hebrew was limited.

As I took my first steps, it became clear to me that these advantages were in fact indispensable tools. I also began to understand just how difficult the task which I had undertaken would prove to be. The path was strewn with obstacles. Theater of and for children, I quickly learned, was considered by many to be "uninteresting and

unattractive," "of marginal importance," "unimportant," and/or "not serious." These are only a few of the responses I received from Israeli colleagues who worked in adult theater. Actually, these reactions did not surprise me. The people who voiced them had done so much for adult theater in their lives, helping shape Israel's cultural life in so many ways that appeared important to them, that theater of and for children did not rank high on their list of priorities. However, the deeper I delved into the matter, the longer I plowed through newspaper clippings, reports by teachers and children, critiques, and articles in theater journals, the better I understood that the actual situation was quite different. Even if children's theater was not always considered "important," there was still quite a lot of lively activity surrounding it. Even while Israel's Jewish community was called upon to make tremendous efforts in accommodating multitudes of immigrants, even while settlements had to invest resources and efforts to defend themselves against bandit gangs, rather extensive activity in theater of and for children continued all over the country.

For a variety of reasons, I found collecting the material for this dissertation more difficult and complicated than I had expected. Where does one begin? There were no relevant works by academicians. There was, however, an abundance of newspaper articles, writings by teachers and students, laconic reports in journals, long articles with a wealth of minutiae. This material was scattered far and

wide. It seems that in a still-renascent and developing country like Israel, theater activists considered action more important than documentation, preservation, and notation. A sense of historical documentation was quite beyond them.

I decided to attempt to lay hands on everything written in Israel, provided that it meet two criteria:

- a. That it relate to theatrical activity by either children or adults, for a target audience of children and youth.
- b. That it relate to theatrical activity using the Hebrew language which took place in Israel or in pre-independence Palestine.

The following were my primary sources of information:

1. The Museum of the Theater in Tel Aviv, and the Theater Archives in Tel Aviv University. These two institutions came into being only a few years ago and are based on the private collections of theater practitioners and aficionados. The collectors did not always manage to attach relevant and vital details—such as source, author, and date and place of publication—to the documents they preserved. Unfortunately, both institutions are still in the formative stages, because of various difficulties that need not be spelled out here. They do not have catalogues of the kind found in most archives, nor do they have inventory lists. Thus, I
-

found myself rummaging through boxes packed with highly valuable documents.

2. The Jewish Education Archives in the College of Education at Tel Aviv University. This, too, is a new institution, based on the archives of the Hebrew Teachers' Association. Its contents include teachers' notebooks, journals, newspaper clippings, scripts, minutes of meetings, etc.
3. The Press Archives at Tel Aviv University, containing bound collections of Hebrew-language daily newspapers published throughout the twentieth century.
4. Interviews with various activists in the field of theater of or for children in Palestine and Israel. I spoke with all those who were still alive and whose health allowed them to cooperate. They told me personal anecdotes, as well as the history of the theaters, each from his or her own vantage point.
5. Miscellaneous sources such as the archives of private individuals, historians specializing in Israel and the Yishuv, and museums in several cities and rural villages.

During two years' intensive research I amassed a large quantity of raw material. As I began processing and organizing the material, and as the picture began to come into focus, I found myself still lacking a number of significant details despite all my labors. For example, having read about a play, I often still needed to know who

produced, directed, and wrote it, when it was staged, etc. Checking and rechecking, I made every possible attempt to fill in the missing details or to cross-reference with other sources, so as to weave the story of children's theater into a complete and reliable tapestry.

The words "theater," "education," "children," and "youth" became landmarks for me while researching and writing this dissertation. All of the other concepts and activities mentioned herein focus around them, including amateur theater, professional theater, drama in schools, activity outside of the schools, etc.

Another phenomenon surfaced as I was writing this dissertation: the intimate and fascinating connection between the development of children's theater in Israel and the history of the Jewish community as a whole. The organization and structure of this work reflects this relationship. I chose to present a chronological-topical continuum, having reached the conclusion that the connections between the development of children's theater and that of the rest of the community were by no means coincidental. Theater of children was the progenitor of theater for children, and the birth of the latter was divided into stages, each of which developed directly out of the preceding one.

This dissertation is an historical, documentary composition, an example of documentary ethnography. Here I have attempted—successfully, I hope—to tell for the first time the story of how children's theater and theater

for children developed and operated in Palestine/Israel. The organic nature of the process, beginning with the birth of theater of children and ending with that of theater for children, runs like a golden thread through all the chapters of my manuscript.

I hope my research and conclusions will make an important contribution to all others who in the future study or research children's theater in Israel or elsewhere. This work will certainly be of assistance to them, offering a guiding thread and a large and informative body of material. The same holds true for any researcher the world over who wishes to compare Israel's experiences in this field with those of other nations and communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is an initial attempt to describe and portray the development of theater of children and for children in Palestine and Israel. This theater grew as did the Jewish community in the country, and its growth centered on people who were and still are considered "theater nuts."

Because it was an innovative, pioneering, and usually personal process, those involved in it did not always take the trouble to document what they did. Thus the story of how theater of and for children in Israel developed was hardly documented in any real sense. Some of the information was kept in the practitioners' memories; other material was scattered across the archives of newspapers, public and academic institutions, etc. To document the history of this theater, then, one must assemble raw material, gather newspaper clippings, plunge into archive documents that produce clouds of dust when touched, and finally, interview those who had participated in the process.

While gathering the material and writing this dissertation, I had the privilege of interviewing several of Israel's early theater giants, men and women who had come to the country with the idea of children's theater, and who implanted it in a country lacking a theatrical heritage. Needless to say, it was by their virtue that children's theater came into being in Palestine and, later, Israel. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all those who devoted

their time to my cause, sharing information without which this dissertation could not have been written.

My appreciation goes to the following:

Author Levin Kipnis, one of the founders of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater; Mrs. Danya Levine, founder of Urim Theater, which brought the tidings of the theater to Jerusalem's children; Dr. Shmuel Navon, an educator whose research studies helped me understand the attitude toward theater in the 1930s and the 1940s; Eliezer Ansky, whose activity shed special light on the established children's theaters; the late author and researcher Uriel Ofek, who gave me carte blanche to explore his large private archives and gave me a unique perspective on the world of commercial children's theater, its plays, and its productions; the late Moshe Zeiri, who introduced me to theatrical activities on the kibbutzim and rural farm settlements, and gave me unrestricted access to the large play archive he had built; and Orna Porat, founder and director of the Ministry of Education and Culture's National Theater for Children and Youth, with whom I had also worked, gained experience, and learned to know thoroughly one of Israel's unique theatrical bodies.

In addition to the interviews, I spent long days in several archives: the Zionist Archive and educational archives at Tel Aviv University, and the Tel Aviv Theater Archive. I express my gratitude to all their employees for the concern with which they treated my requests, their

patience, and their help. With devotion and love they extended all necessary assistance.

By its very nature, this dissertation represents the pinnacle of my academic progress thus far. I would not have reached it without the ongoing encouragement of my good friends Dr. Tom Levy and Avraham Natan.

Like any researcher who devotes many days to studying a subject, gathering and organizing material, and committing his findings to writing, I needed encouragement, support, advice and criticism. These I received in abundance from Professor Vera M. Roberts, who accompanied me during my years of study in the City University of New York, believed in my ability, supported me, and provided me with assistance that exceeded anything I had expected from a dissertation advisor; Dr. Imre Goldstein of Tel Aviv University, who devoted much time to my work, read the manuscript, made comments, suggestions, and forced me to produce my best; my friend Yaakov Havakuk, researcher and litterateur, who prodded me to continue all the way, advised me on the basis of his experience as researcher and author, shed light on various points, and spared no effort to help me edit the dissertation. I also thank all those who supported me and made it possible for me to devote the past few years to this research: Gabi Malka of Haifa University, the AISF Foundation, David Sella, Shimon Avizemer, and the Academicians' Department of the Histadrut Executive Committee in Tel Aviv. Nor could I possibly fail to stress my gratitude to the

teachers and staff of the Graduate Center's Theater Department, from whom I learned about the theatrical world.

Last, though perhaps better situated first, are my family, my wife Vered, and my daughters, without whom I would not have found the time, strength, and psychic will to have researched and written this dissertation.

Raziel Amitai

Tel Aviv, Israel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	X
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE—THE FIRST STEPS	31
CHAPTER TWO—ANOTHER STEP FORWARD	48
CHAPTER THREE—ASHER ERLICH: BRINGING THEATER INTO THE SCHOOLS	63
CHAPTER FOUR—THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION CHILDREN'S THEATER	78
CHAPTER FIVE—VARYING VIEWS ABOUT HEBREW THEATER AS AN EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM IN PALESTINE	105
CHAPTER SIX—HABIMAH AND HA-OHEL: AIMING FOR YOUTH	119
CHAPTER SEVEN—BACK TO THE TRADITIONAL FORMAT IN AND OUT OF THE SCHOOLS	133
CHAPTER EIGHT—ELIEZER ANSKY AND THE BANATEINU THEATER	147
CHAPTER NINE—THEATER ON KIBBUTZIM AND "WORKING SETTLEMENTS"	158
CHAPTER TEN—NEW GROWTH FROM OLD STOCK	171
CHAPTER ELEVEN—URIM THEATER, JERUSALEM	186
CHAPTER TWELVE—COMMERCIAL CHILDREN'S THEATER: NOT BY QUALITY ALONE	197
CHAPTER THIRTEEN—THEATRICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOL: THERE IS ANOTHER WAY	229
CHAPTER 14—THEATER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH: THE IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTE IN ITS FULL SEVERITY	248
CHAPTER FIFTEEN—EPILOGUE	283
ENDNOTES	293
APPENDIX: LIST OF PLAYS	320
BIBLIOGRAPHY	344

INTRODUCTION

The title of this dissertation—From Theater of Children to Theater for Children: The Development of Children's Theater in Israel—clearly indicates that it deals with two types of theater: of and for children. This title also alludes to the basic change in children's theater over the past 100 years. The process began with theater of children, a way station of sorts for theatrical activity in Palestine/Israel, and has presently reached its current destination—theater for children.

To fully understand the distinctions between these similar terms, we must devote some attention to the substantial differences between the two types of theatrical activity.¹

Theater of Children

These are the salient characteristics of theater of children in Palestine/Israel:

- * Schoolchildren are active in all aspects, especially acting.
- * It is well-integrated into the regular school curricula, and is organized under the school's auspices.
- * It is seen as an educational medium, a teaching tool, rather than an activity with intrinsic value.
- * It is run mainly by teachers and educators with theatrical-dramatic awareness, and its success depends

on the teacher's motivation, qualifications, willingness to make an effort, etc.

- * Well-executed, theater of children can help develop desirable qualities in the pupil-participants—creativity, responsibility, the ability to cooperate, mutual concern, and self-discipline. It also fosters musical proclivities, enriches language skills, and broadens children's conceptual world, expanding their imagination and exposing them to the world of the classics.

These are all positive aspects of theater of children.

On the other hand, the institution also suffers from several drawbacks:

- * Theatrical activity during school hours is generally at the expense of instruction and study of "basic" and "important" subjects such as math, history, etc. This can sabotage the undertaking unless a theater enthusiast on the faculty takes action on its behalf.
- * Since it depends on teachers taking an interest in it, this form of theater can be harmed or even undone by underskilled teachers.
- * Allowing children to play prominent roles—onstage and off—runs the risk of inflating their egos, leading them to see themselves as "stars." Such a situation can cause problems in school and at home, especially for young children.

- * Unprepared and inexperienced, children often have trouble distinguishing between reality and fantasy, as embodied in the theater, and sometimes find their theatrical experiences confusing.
- * Amateur by nature and intended as an educational tool, theater of children generally forgives non-professional acting and direction. Over time, this attitude is liable to encourage mediocre or shallow performance.

Theater for Children

Theater for children has the following attributes:

- * Its participants are experienced adult professionals, sometimes accompanied by children or youth but usually not.
- * Because of its explicit professional aspirations, it is held to higher standards by both critics and those immediately involved.
- * Children are prepared for its performances by teachers who tell them about the author, setting, and main themes of the play to be attended. Thus the experience of the young audience is enriched.
- * Theater for children attracts youth to the classics, enriches their language skills, and arouses their imagination.

Although theater for children is considered professional, and although it flaunts its professional aspirations, its "flaws" are readily apparent:

- * Theater for children places a clear emphasis on national and educational goals. Nevertheless, the theaters remain money-makers that must invest capital, pay actors, set designers, musicians, stage workers, etc., and still show a profit. These needs can often only be met at the expense of quality and educational merit.
- * The children in the audience are passive onlookers, denied the creative joy of active participation.
- * When the producers of theater for children do integrate children or youth into their plays, they make them work hard for low pay. The children must dedicate much time to the project and travel around the country, often to the detriment of their studies.
- * The adults involved in these troupes generally see their work as a sideline, and therefore invest minimal time and effort. Their main concern is the professional adult theaters operating at night.
- * Despite this theater's professional ambitions, its repertoire is not always properly adapted to its audience. Plays suited to adults are not necessarily suited to children. Staging a professional play for children or youth is no trifling matter: language and plot must be simplified, emphasis must be shifted to the experiential and visual aspects of the play, catchy music must be selected, etc. Having studied the nature

and activity of this theater, I am convinced that it is as professional as the adult theaters.

With little difficulty we can further identify several traits common to theater both of and for children:

- * Both help attract youths to the world of drama and the classics.
- * Both significantly help strengthen the Hebrew-language skills of their young audience, enriching their conceptual world and deepening their sense of imagination and imagery.
- * Both improve children's self-discipline and strengthen their listening skills and oral comprehension.
- * Especially important, both emphasize education, even if the term means something slightly different to each. In theater of children, as noted, drama has one purpose: education. It is an educational tool, sometimes a major one, used to convey national, historical, Biblical, and other messages. In theater for children, the producers have retained the label "educational" because it creates a more "serious" image, justifiably or not. By defining their theaters as "professional and educational," they encourage a more positive attitude on the part of anyone involved in education. In other words, the description "educational" seems to guarantee these theaters access to the country's educational institutions. The result, of course, is handsome profits.

Now that we have clarified the nature of both types of children's theater operating in Palestine/Israel, we can turn to their historical development. Theater of children established itself in Palestine ex nihilo, and theater for children carried the enterprise forward, professionalizing and improving upon previous efforts and virtually supplanting theater of children.

Theatrical activity aimed at children and youth was no small matter. Its path was strewn with questions and uncertainties, controversial issues, pressing initiatives, serious criticism, daring experiments, and, of course, success and failure. It is clearly incumbent upon us to go beyond documentation and discuss the questions of substance that preoccupied theater activists and everyone else who came into contact with the various types of theatrical endeavor.

When theater of children was dominant, the major responsibilities were naturally entrusted to teacher-educators. They had to take the initiative, examine material, stimulate artistic consciousness, live with the material they wished to present, update it when necessary, etc. These difficulties were the lot of all teachers involved in the field because they had taken a new direction rather than continuing the traditional activities of their forebears. A passage by B. Silman-Jaffe in Hed ha-hinukh, written in 1927, illuminates the difficulties encountered by teachers struggling to engage their pupils:

...Once you decide to organize a party, the questions begin: what to include, in what order, and what to make the centerpiece. Everyone agrees that a program will not satisfy the children unless it includes a skit.... A skit is the centerpiece of the festivities. It is the magic word for children. Here, however, begins the search through the old, scant material at our disposal.... Nothing can warm the heart and inspire the teacher to bring material to life in a rousing performance because the Diaspora plays will not satisfy our children. The material is foreign to them, it is shallow, and it lacks variety and action. After all, a skit is meant to speak to the heart in form, content, or both. A skit will speak to the child visually if the emphasis is on the sets, i.e., the external, effective facets, or it will engage the child's moral sensibilities via its ideas. The show will be most powerful and enjoyable if it preserves a unity of fine, moral content and pleasant effect....

Three categories of skits are suitable for children's plays: realistic drama, which describes life familiar to the child; drama based on the Bible and Hebrew legend; and drama based on fables. In drama of the first type the child sees himself, his family, and his environment. Such a play encourages him to think, to be self-critical, and if it is humorous, it amuses him. If the play exaggerates, it should do so naturally, staying within the realm of the possible. As for drama of the second type, some of these plays are hard to stage in full, so teachers should abridge them as they see fit. But each play must be treated carefully, lest it be drained of its educational and artistic value. [If this is done], its impact on our children will certainly be sufficient. Emotion and intellect will both be satisfied. But we must admit the truth: even if the content of such works satisfies our children, the form might not. The monotonous form can be detrimental in that it removes our heroes from their pedestals and from the fog of the child's imagination. The characters striding across the stage are familiar to children from their daily lives, and they want to see these noble heroes portrayed in an extraordinary, imaginative way. Thus I believe they must be stripped of their excessively realistic attire, which fits them only in the Diaspora, where it blends into the haze of imagination. But not here.... [Here], free of the burden of tradition, plays are built on universal legend. They leave

room for the imagination to spread its wings and satisfy both the eye and the heart. Such plays permit complete integration of form and content.... And our literature remains bereft of these very plays. We should rework these "international" legends into plays for children, introducing something of the spirit of the country and its people but dealing with the material diligently and faithfully....²

Silman-Jaffe's comments provide us with a beautiful, thorough, and reliable account of the uncertainties that plagued any teacher/educator who wanted to stage an event with his students. As one seeking to use drama as an educational tool of the highest order, as a means of stimulation and arousal, it was his task to find material, adapt it, and fine-tune it to a young audience and new circumstances. The absence of working norms and appropriate material both testify to the fact that the country was in its infancy. Material suited to the Jewish Diaspora was not good for the patrimony. In this situation, recourse to the world of general fable was a means for escaping from having to contend with the challenge, and was a teacher's almost sure way out.

Early children's theater in Palestine was a means, not an end. Teachers used it to convey messages, provide information, enrich language skills, and instill values. Briefly stated, it was meant to be what Shepszold, Ilana, and Zankovsky later called "a didactic theater in school education." Reading through their article of the same name leads one to conclude that this type of theater developed in Palestine quite predictably, because the situation at that

time made the need for such an institution virtually self-evident. Furthermore, we see from their article that what happened in Palestine was not an unprecedented phenomenon:

Part of the job of modern, up-to-date education [the trio writes] is to implement a full pedagogy. The goal is to equip the youngsters with the ability to think, and to shape their character.... It must promote in equal measure man's intellect and emotions.... It is a tool for fulfilling this purpose, alongside psychodrama and group dynamics.³

The theme of their thorough article is "didactic theater." This, they believe, was the product of "improvisational theater," or "psycho-drama."⁴ Such works are generated as a creative act by a group, deliberately, with analysis and consideration of forms and problems. When a problem is pinpointed, it is brought into greater focus and analyzed in class. Ideas presented randomly are included on a list, and from this compendium the jointly produced plays is created. When it comes time to act it out, all those present must be involved, needless to say. It follows the general pattern set up previously, but is open to significant improvisation.

Summarizing their remarks, one sees that "didactic theater" serves not only as a pedagogical tool in school for handling real conflicts taken from class and pupils' lives, but as an instrument for handling issues that arise from the study material. By providing for dramatized actualization of the material, didactic theater relates to people and to

life; it combines the creativity of the participants—singly and collectively—with a disciplined group structure. Thus, it can both develop and achieve the substantive, shared educational goal.

It is not at all difficult to identify similarities between that written about drama in Palestine/Israel during the time of Erlich⁵ and Ansky,⁶ to name two examples, and that actually done.

Under the title "Dramatic Presentations in School," Yehezkel Sohn discusses children's theater as a means, juxtaposed to children's theater whose purpose is to create a play. This issue relates to children's theater in Israel, as well as to the major points presented by the aforementioned three writers.

Sohn writes:

Many teachers still consider putting on a children's play a waste of study time and time in general.... But its utility, both educational and scholastic, is inestimable, because to absorb something a child must be interested.⁷

Farther on, Sohn spells out what the pupil can acquire: motivation to succeed, better understanding of the material, memory development, better command of language, correct pronunciation and clear enunciation, improved abilities in the arts related to the technical aspects of the play (painting, sewing, lighting, etc.), and a stronger sense of collective responsibility.

Sohn explores the educational aspect of this last point—"collective responsibility"—at length:

All areas of cooperative children's activity considered, there is no area in which the individual's success or failure affect that of the group as in a drama.... Here I am not referring to an education in the arts, nor to an artistic presentation. After all, art is the province of individuals, and it is not reasonable to demand of everyone in the class which is presenting a play to be artistically gifted—artistic talent is a gift from Heaven. The artistry involved in presenting a play also places demands on the teacher, requiring that he too be an artist—and not every teacher is up to the task. Even if a school calls in a professional director to put on the play, it would not be an artistic performance insofar as the participants are the children in the class, all of the children in the class."

Sohn's point is that the most important concern is not the professionalism or artistry desired by the people involved, but the preparation of the play as a group or class project. In general, involvement in theater promises much in terms of socialization and instilling values, not to mention the actual experience of being in a play.

Leah Goldberg, too, addresses the question of children's capacity as "consumers of culture." She considers their intrinsic potential. For her, children can judge naturally the quality of a play, just as they can use their imagination and identify with the characters on stage.

In an article entitled "Children and the Theater," Goldberg writes:

Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to attend a children's play knows what a pleasure it is to speak to this alert, eager, and innocent audience, which wholeheartedly believes everything transpir-

ing on stage. This audience is a partner. There is nothing like it for reminding us sober, over-critical adults about the youthful atmosphere of the theater in general, and of those great days when an audience of ordinary folk was willing to take the plot as given, hate the bad guys, love the good guys, and add a dose of its imagination to the charms of the stage.... Theater is the child's natural element.... Every child lives most of his life in a world naturally close to the theater. To the extent that the child is ready to "perform" anytime, he is also ready to watch a presentation. He is prepared to observe with an extraordinary sensitivity to any subtlety, even one we would consider extremely abstract. Just as the child sees a row of chairs lined up in the yard as a string of railroad cars, he is willing to see people walking on two legs across the stage with a tail and ears pinned to them as a dog, wolf, or horse if they so claim. Only certain rules of the game need to be defined in advance, namely the general plotline and characters. The child's imagination will fill in the rest, and the play will succeed by itself. The more sophisticated the performers are in presenting naturalistic details, and the better they recreate the external side of life that makes the stage similar to what children see around them every day, the more the genuine pleasure from the artistic experience will develop, yielding to total identification with a counterfeit reality, exempting the audience (children, in our case) from the active interplay of imaginations (that of the performer onstage, and that of the audience).... Children are precisely the people with enough strength and psychic vigor to be directed into the realms of creation and involved in the creative process; this is not only a way to refine their taste, it is the best preparation for a vital, lively attitude toward life, for after all, a lively attitude toward art is also a lively attitude toward life.... Consequently, thinking about our future, which will be determined by him whose heart is receptive and alert, we in Israel should work more energetically for the survival of good children's theater, children's theater worthy of the name in its various forms (theater for children, theater of children, puppet theater), where the material invested therein will develop taste and creativity and counter the pernicious influence of the cinema...."⁸

In another article, Leah Goldberg again considers the problems of theater education.⁹ In her opinion, good theater should always concern itself with educational questions, doing so in its own unique way. The theater, unlike other arts such as, say, music, reflects life and occasionally criticizes familiar manifestations in life, even in the child's psychic life. Here, the drama presented on stage must correspond to reality. If the play revolves around a child or adolescent, it is inappropriate to cast an adult in the role; he or she would encounter technical, objective difficulties in shaping the character naturally. However, engaging children on stage is not always a welcome phenomenon. Children are liable to develop affectations of "stars" on the one hand, and the critics are liable to react to the children's performances in an undesirable if not insulting manner, on the other. In either case, the imprint made will remain engraved in the child's psyche.

Summing up Leah Goldberg's remarks, one comes to the inescapable conclusion that she prefers theater for children in which adults perform for the children, so long as they are professional and try to act believably. However, she does not belittle the importance of theater of children—theater that serves as an educational medium and a channel through which the pupil may experience the thrill of pure creation.

Ansky, unlike Goldberg, was a theater person through and through. With his abundant experience, he developed an

attitude that favored the performance of children on a semi-professional stage, i.e., the appearance of children before a broad audience. To Ansky, the theater, apart from being an important educational tool, provides children or youth with one of their natural needs—role-playing.¹⁰ Within the performance, they invoke everything they know in order to fashion a dialogue, build sets, and portray correct body postures. Dramatic performance also hones all the acquired characteristics, such as willpower, discipline, and imagination. The play's benefits, however, are not the exclusive property of the actors. The youngsters in the audience, too, have much to gain. They are presented with an opportunity to participate in an experience that brings their humdrum world alive before their eyes. The presentation permits them to identify with characters and teaches them to be critical.

Ansky preached his ideas for many years, and subsequently gathered them into a book, Theater for Children and Youth: Idea and Action (Heb.). Several interesting excerpts follow:

Over the past 20 years, children's entertainment and theatrical performances have become standard fare in the schools. There isn't a school in Israel that does not avail itself of theatrical performances.... In most cases, the nature of these productions differs from that of organized theater. They are the result of spontaneous activity, neither organized nor prepared, unlike organized theater. They are not devoid of a certain artistic quality.... Pedagogical experiments in general education during the past few decades have brought various discoveries to light. One of these is that the theater makes an important impact on the development of children and adolescents.... Theatrical performances by

children and youngsters are original and unprepared. Through them, youngsters develop their bodies and imagination, and expand their horizons in the surrounding world.... Modern instructional doctrine builds its methodological principles on the child's individualism, and asserts without reservation that theater for children and youth is the most natural and dynamic instrument there is for educating the child in body and soul.¹¹

In a scholarly and detailed article entitled "Stage Presentation as an Educational Tool" (Heb.),¹² Barukh Kalas approaches children's theater from a slightly different angle. Like his predecessors, he considers this theater an educational tool of the highest order, but emphasizes the activity's contribution to the coalescence of the group. Kalas identifies the catalyst behind this coalescence as the director, whose function is partly educational. He needs skill and know-how, and, in general, direction—or staging, as the author calls it—is all that matters. After all, a director can take a group of children and successfully route each of them into the function that befits his or her creativity; even introspective or introverted children may be put to work in a variety of directions demanding different creative talents, e.g., building sets, etc.

Everyone mentioned thus far speaks of the theater as an educational medium, and mentions the indecision and difficulties facing the teacher-director-sponsor. This integration of educational activity through drama is taken for granted, but it seems far more complicated to those dealing with it. In "Acting as an Educational Medium" (Afigim 9, 1955), Kalman Konstantiner explains that even

though teachers and would-be theater activists grapple with the problem all over the world, no fail-safe formula for auspicious activity has been found. He believes acting is a good device only if one knows how to go about it, i.e., how to draw the best and most out of the participants, to communicate a spirit of creative joy, and to understand each child's psyche rather than attack it. He says:

The search for a new way to implement this educational method breaks down into two types of educators. One teacher imparts doctrines and information to his pupils. The other is a true artist aspiring to convey beauty. As for the attempt to teach material by acting it out, its proponents believe that brilliant results have been achieved. Every instructor who uses games to teach history, literature, geography, nature, and even math and physics, can attest that even the most backward pupils absorb the material with surprising ease....¹³

Konstantiner makes extensive use of the term "dramatic acting," which includes theatrical acting but refers mainly to acting per se, i.e., acting meant for the actor's own enjoyment. Such acting satisfies the urge to emulate that nestles in all our hearts, for we all subconsciously desire to collect and rework our observations on the society around us, interpreting the experience for our benefit.

The author categorizes children's theaters three ways:

1. Theater for children produced by adults, or, as he says, "presentations by adult actors."¹⁴ Such theater is important if the material is good, adapted to the audience, and executed in the best manner possible.

Thus, the educational aspects and all their components will surely be upheld. But such theater lacks the children's creative participation. The impressions and experiences are imposed on them from without. One overcomes this drawback by having the actors involve their young audience in their performances.

2. Theater for children and by children, or, as Konstantiner says, "presentations for children by children."¹⁵ These productions, of course, should be guided by an experienced director or instructor, thereby providing the participating children with appropriate instruction and a suitable creative experience. Directors must fathom the child's psyche, and to shape a certain character on stage, they must sometimes cultivate a great closeness to and understanding of the child, taking him/her under their wing. In such theater, directors must walk a thin line lest the children begin to act mechanically, turning the whole project into their director's creation.
3. "Self-produced, creative dramatic acting,"¹⁶ in which children express their natural wish to act for the sake of acting and create for the sake of creating. Thus they develop their sense of self—mentally, intellectually, physically, and socially. They learn to bring out the best in themselves, using all the talents and skills with which they have been gifted. Acting becomes not only a means of entertainment but a form of

training associated with spiritual and physical growth—a happy medium between "work" and "play."

Hanoch Levin, subsequently one of Israel's premier playwrights, wrote an article entitled "School and Children's Theater" in Hed ha-hinukh in 1966. He begins with a question: how to bring good theater into the school, and how to bring the school to good theater. The question still perturbs all educators who wish to enrich their pupils' spiritual world. Levin writes:

Good children's theater must bring to the child—whether he views it at home or at school, alone, with his friends, or with older people—the lights, beauty, love, and kindness. Anyone who considers original children's theater realizes how much teachers, parents, literary people, and artists do the child and his world a disservice. Is it by coincidence that everything done for children is done badly?....

Levin also assails the perception that productions for children must be light and simple, requiring less effort to prepare or create. He believes quite the contrary:

The producers of children's theater must assume multiple responsibilities. They must incorporate the best poems, sets, movement, and sound. No less important is how this is received. The child's psyche must be prepared to absorb and accept the good and the beautiful.

After spelling out the advantages of children's theater in school, while providing no insights into the aforementioned attitudes, he sums up as follows:

Children's theater will come into being only if we train the future teacher's mind to appreciate art, setting aside at least two or three hours per week

for systematic theatrical instruction organically associated with the educational and scholastic worlds. Children's theater by adults will not have done its duty until it atones for one crime our culture has committed—the absence of original dramas for children.¹⁷

Addressing himself to children's appearance on stage in Hed ha-hinukh (no. 31, 1960), Emanuel Frankel states that there is no director who has not promoted children's participation in his/her productions, especially evening or adult performances. The presence of children on stage is quite conspicuous, and based on their theatrical experience, some cultivate hopes and aspirations for their future. Frankel advocates fostering young talent in school, with acting taught alongside other arts. Thus, children will be able to shape their destiny as professional adult actors. His remarks imply that he opposes children on the professional stage.¹⁸ Yet he definitely thinks that if they grow attached to stagecraft in school, it will be easier for them to draw conclusions about their being professional actors in the future.

In the 1970s, "creative drama" was spoken of as a new method. In "Creative Drama and Its Integration into Teaching" (Hahinukh ha-yesodi ["Elementary Education"], June 1975), Shulamit Sirota writes: "The 'creative drama' teaching method appeals to all teachers, not just drama and creativity coaches.... This method does not nullify all existing teaching methods."¹⁹ Later, she describes the work process, as she perceives it, in which those who deal with

works and wish to dramatize them must transform them into dynamic art on many levels. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, she speaks about a process in which there is no distinction between actors and audience;²⁰ all function as actors, directors, and audience simultaneously. Such a method encourages everyone to get involved, even the "untalented," and it stimulates thought, improvisational ability, etc.

The same year, a kibbutz-movement umbrella organization published Iggeret le-hinukh ("Bulletin on Education"), in which the following was stated:

The wonderful thing about "creative drama" is that it has no borders or perimeters, yet its profoundly significant essence attains its objective. It resembles an exceedingly rich and complex form that will never take shape, a kind of kaleidoscope of various shapes and colors, each creating a new and splendid picture. These attributes confer strength, success, and satisfaction, but also failure and frustration. Creative drama is a delicate, intricate tool in the educator's hands, a tool with a responsible and meaningful purpose in a child's creative education.... Creative drama is meant to give children an opportunity to take action, create, and express their moods.²¹

Still, what sets creative drama apart? The author mentions the following aspects:

Self-expression on every level and in every situation; group and social integration; information application; teamwork; individual and group creativity side by side; plurality of viewpoints, leading to broadened horizons; artistic expression in tempo, motion, use of hands, presentation of handicrafts, etc.; use of senses; clear, well-enunciated rhetoric; cognitive development; and honing of the ability to improvise.²²

Summarizing creative drama as a new method used in children's theater or in school, we may say it upholds the principle that action, participation, and the removal of barriers between audience and stage are what count. More succinctly, what matters is not the end but the means (participation).

During the mid-1970s, a trend that had taken hold many years previously gained strength: the trend toward children's theater in school, drama groups, and undertakings by teachers with theatrical affinities, which were conspicuously amateurish and inferior. Perhaps these amateurish attempts stood out precisely because of the vigor and diversity of the professional children's theaters that were performing numerous plays nationwide and raking in handsome profits. In the midst of a slump in amateur, original children's theater, the journal Bama held a symposium on theater education²³ for theater people, journalists, and high-school students, the participants and consumers. Herewith selected excerpts:

Miriam Dinur, drama group director and instructor:

When running a drama group, a school's major goals are, first of all, giving pupils something to do in the afternoons, cultivating prestige, and in particular, preparing a play for holidays, parties, end-of-year festivities, etc. We focus less on the educational aspect of the drama group itself....²⁴

Sashka Levine, principal of the Kibbutz Seminar and member of the Amateur Theater Association:

...I draw a distinction between theater and dramatic education. Theater is essentially communication between actors and audience; dramatic education is experiential, active involvement, irrespective of an audience.... Dramatic education in school should be viewed as a way of educating people; thus, the drama, too, will benefit. The children will acquire their own theatrical understanding, but educating people remains the goal!

Activity is people's—and particularly children's—way of making contact with their environment. Dramatic education is the best way of enabling children to express their psychic gifts and latent creativity.... By "education," I mean the education of people, including their personalities and everything inside them, e.g., sensory development. Intellect, as we know, will not develop unless constantly exercised. The same is true for the senses, psyche, and imagination; they are liable to atrophy unless used.... The drama group today is nothing but a group of children who want to stage a play, and they act accordingly. Children lack this communicative association, which is necessary in the theater (between the stage and the audience).... I favor ongoing dramatic education throughout children's lives, which will impart to them possibilities and channels for creative expression, in keeping with each child's ability. Thus, we can educate an audience whose opinions, impressions, and experiences of a play will be not repetitions of things they have heard, but expressions of their own feelings.²⁵

Rafi Ilan of the Kibbutz Theater Association:

...Because I have dealt with school drama groups, I believe I have an insight into this field. The principal's attitude, as I understand it, is: "The drama group is a supplementary education activity that's meant to keep children busy in the afternoon, ensure that plays will be ready for parties, etc." The principal is not interested in aesthetics or theater education; rather, he considers the drama group an educational endeavor.... The director's work with the pupil-actors is more an educational and scholastic act than a theatrical experience....²⁶

Orna Porat, director of the Ministry of Education and Culture's National Theater for Children and Youth:

...It must be understood that theater is an inseparable part of cultural and national life. If theater is not to be divorced from life (and I believe it is one of everyone's vital needs), one has to begin with the child.... Education approaches or is based on the creative-drama method....²⁷

Zissi Stavi, editor of Yedioth Aharonoth's art and literature column:

...To shape a good theater-goer, three factors must come into play: home, school, and the theater itself. It's a kind of triangle, with the pupil in the middle. We have no control over the home: some homes have a certain theater culture that can be imparted to children, but some don't. I don't think there is any real way of changing the situation, so the main duty becomes the school's.... [As one who taught for seven years, I want to say that] the situation verges on catastrophe. In the schools, I saw no recognition of the genuine need to teach pupils about the theater. The drama groups are more an internal school project for show purposes.... I am rather skeptical about the education imparted by the drama groups. Why don't the high schools try to organize theater groups rather than drama groups? I mean groups that will engage not in staging plays, but in studying theater academically—i.e., theater history, kinds of drama, work methods—and meeting actors and directors. Consequently, the group members will become active theater-goers....²⁸

In "Youth and the Theater" (Musag, October 1975), theater critic Shoshana Weiss connects the phenomenon of educating the public as theater-goers with the material offered it by the established theaters and producers. Weiss relates that youth who frequent the adult theaters find them "tedious." Because they are too old to be taught how to

behave, they tend to create disturbances when they are brought to "compulsory" plays. That quickly leads theaters to refrain from inviting youngsters. The author draws the following conclusions:

A. The standard image of the "cultured person," who reads books, attends plays, and knows how to select good films, has no validity for youth.

B. Guidance and instruction undertaken at school age may not only affect the cultural norm, but even create it. Instruction in school is a tried-and-true way of creating a good, interested audience that considers theater and good cinema part of its cultural system, whereas neglecting these age brackets is liable to result in empty halls within the foreseeable future.

C. Guidance in school makes a greater impact than parents' norms.²⁹

Half a year later, in Musag 30,³⁰ Weiss deals with children's theater in an article entitled "The Children's Theater Industry: Anything Goes." This industry places psychological pressure on parents: they must fill their children's leisure hours and select media of entertainment. Because there is an abundance of such media, an "anything goes" attitude has entrenched itself. The producers share this attitude, mounting more and more productions even at the expense of quality. So do the parents, who are tempted into taking their children to inferior plays. No wonder the present is not auspicious, and the future is not rosy.

Menuha Gilboa of the National Theater for Children and Youth wrote an article called "Theater for Children—A Survey of the Problems,"³¹ dealing with the complex issue of art education in general and theater education in particular. She argues that such education is especially important for the educational system, for it imparts the basis for the pupil's future intellectual world. If the schools want to build such a world, they must tailor their repertoire to every age group. Up to age 15-16, the repertoire must be selected; then adult theater is recommended.

Yardena Hadas echoes Gilboa in "Theater in the Classroom":³²

The earlier we teach children to watch and internalize plays, and to create something out of the sensitivity their attendance generated, the more they will be mature and ready to be a good, understanding audience, building its worldview through the theater.... Because the transition from understanding one kind of drama to appreciating another is lengthy and difficult, we must channel children's activity into both the emotional-social field and the cognitive field simultaneously....³³

Comments keep returning to the issue of "dramatic acting." To Shmuel Navon, dramatic acting is a far-reaching tool with which teacher-educators³⁴ can teach the humanities interestingly, and on which they can base class parties and other social events. Using it, they can endear pupils to the country and its landscapes, and hone their sense of motion, socio-collective awareness, and discipline, not to mention bolstering the underpinnings of their artistic world.

Dramatic activity was also the theme of a discussion by the educators and intellectuals (in 1974) of the Central Committee for Artistic Education.³⁵ Committee chairman Yeshayahu Frishman opened the deliberations with some rather clear and familiar remarks:

Dramatic activity, like the other arts, is meant to contribute greatly to children's education and even streamline their studies; enrich their achievements; develop their character and their views of themselves and society; enhance their conceptual world, imagination, and oral and written self-expression; and refine their aesthetic and other sensibilities. Furthermore, dramatic activity benefits those involved, and this is a very important motivation in the educational and scholastic process.... This activity pertains directly to the goals and content of the entire educational system, in the national, Jewish, and social senses.³⁶

Author and journalist Hanoach Bartov began by quoting Shakespeare: "'All the world's a stage'....The school is by nature a theatrical arena. Would that it were more aware of its essence and inherent possibilities." According to Bartov, several components of the theater exist in the schools: teachers play roles in front of the children, and deliberately or otherwise, they mold the souls known only to the pupils themselves. Dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs, Bartov presents a proposal:

The most fruitful method of stimulating and implanting any kind of thought is by growth from within. At times the miracle is performed with the help of one teacher with God in his/her heart. This teacher is not necessarily the school director, nor even the school's playwright who wishes to impose his/her not-so-good plays. Rather, teachers should serve as a stimulus, creating the psychological atmosphere, focusing on

that which is fine and good, and tapping the children on the head and saying: "Do something! Live!" A dramatic activity must be turned into a creative activity, not just the "product" of "cultural consumption." This activity should be remembered as an active experience....³⁷

Ephraim Rokah, chairman of the Pedagogical Secretariat's Primary-Education Committee, countered:

I disagree [with Bartov's pronouncement] that the school is a theatrical arena. For me, theater has artistic criteria, and few teachers are artists. They are teachers, and I want them to be teachers. There is an important, respectable place for theater in school.... A school is first of all a home, and I would like children to feel at home there, enjoy being there, live there. There's something about a theater where one moves towards something; it's no routine matter....I would very much like to arrive at a situation where school-children, including those in primary school, become partners in planning and performing plays. The frequent passivity of children is our undoing.... Perhaps it is worth creating models of joint plays involving parents and children.... Most important, through good plays we should get children to identify with characters and events, which is impossible by means of ordinary instruction. The identification factor, central to education, can be buttressed by plays that meet the criteria of art. I consider it the greatest challenge in this field. Let us not forget that our children grow up not only in school. The media engulf them from all directions and influence them. There is also the "street," etc. To cope with these influences, schools must perform plays that will make coping possible. The key word is "identification."³⁸

In the ocean of rhetoric produced by intellectuals, speaking as critics, theoreticians and theatergoers, it would seem that a special place is reserved for Orna Porat in the pantheon of children's theater in Israel. In the following dissertation, we have devoted a chapter to her and

her enterprise.³⁹ Here we've confined ourselves to noting a few things that may illuminate her approach to children's theater. In "Education Through Theater," Porat writes:

Theater for children and youth is in fact rather new in our century....No wonder the most conspicuous development in this field has taken place mainly in the Eastern Bloc, where the authorities consider the theater an educational tool of the highest order, which can influence citizens and their modes of thinking, impressions, and designs. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in the Western world, including Israel. We are the first country to establish a government theater for youngsters. The responsibility entrusted to such an entity is great, and it cannot operate without the full cooperation of the educators.... Theater, like school, should address various age groups because there is a pronounced gap between ages and social strata.... And there is a tremendous disparity between children who received theatrical or "cultural" education at home and those exposed to this experience for the first time.... A shared experience in a pluralistic country like Israel may possibly be a means of growing and developing together. Good theater teaches people about aesthetics, sensitivity, identification, a spoken vernacular, motion, colors--all those components that "make" the theater.... Children's impressions are much stronger than those of adults, who can nevertheless criticize the theater. Children are part of the plot onstage; they integrate themselves into it, react spontaneously, and receive messages unconsciously. Thus theater, too, can teach, for through it the child unknowingly receives messages.... Didactically, the theater tries to do its job because it sees itself as part of the educational apparatus. Besides our plays, we [in the National Theater for Children and Youth] dispatch teams of several actors to the schools to teach children a drama lesson supplementary to the material they're about to see on stage. And we adapt the material to the audience: In kindergartens, we concentrate on puppet theater. In first through fourth grades, we dramatize fables that tell of an enchanted world, dissociating the children from their day-to-day world and enabling them to identify with heroic characters. With older children, the ideal is to find adventure stories in which the children will perhaps find

themselves the protagonists. For teenagers, adult theater and classical and historical plays are recommended. As stated, if the type of theater, i.e., the material, remains tailored to the audience, its contribution will be more effective.⁴⁰

Thus, in this introductory chapter, we have reviewed, albeit briefly, that which has been said and written about theater of children and for children as an educational medium. The professionals' remarks contain a rather interesting parallel between the ideas and stages of children's-theater development in Israel. The ideas at the beginning of the present century concerned amateurish school theater performed not for theater's sake but for the sake of conveying messages, and teaching history, nature, geography, etc. As theater developed in the country, alongside the aforementioned original theater there arose a more professional genre that spilt out of the school setting. Simultaneously, the ideas, too, went in this direction. We find more and more talk about the technical and educational aspects of plays, acting, and the audience. Theater increasingly became an end in itself. It became progressively professional. Adults acted for children, and the directors were professionals. Between these two extremes, the question around which the argument revolved was whether children and youth should be allowed to perform in professional commercial theaters. Meanwhile, a new concept and genre surfaced: creative drama, which channels dramatic activity onto a narrow, clearly marked path not of results

but of "doing," participation, experience, and the impact made on a child's psyche. In other words, it took dramatic activity out of the hands of the professionals, who work for money, and away from the amateur teachers, and entrusted it to the cognoscenti, who know how to lead the children—both the talented and the introverted—to extract from themselves the otherwise unextractable.

This chapter was based on primary material which was spoken, written, and printed in Israel, and is meant to describe the field in Israel. Israel is a country that takes in immigrants, a country taking shape, coalescing, comprising a wide range of populations. Precisely under these conditions, the attempts made—which we undertake to document for the first time—constituted an interesting and successful experiment. It was successful because in Israel theater of children and theater for children came into being ex nihilo, becoming a significant educational tool; and it was interesting, because people from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds did what seemed impossible: they infused a new idea with living spirit, designed for it a unique form, and turned theater into a grand educational tool, whose history we will survey in this dissertation.

Chapter One

THE FIRST STEPS

Eretz Israel¹ was subjected to Moslem Ottoman rule for four centuries, from the end of 1516, when the Ottoman Sultan invaded the country, until World War I. During those four centuries the country was regarded not as a separate or independent entity but only as a province which was very much of secondary importance to the Sublime Porte.² This status is obvious from the fact that rather than appoint their own representatives to rule the country, the Ottomans made do with locally recruited functionaries.

As a result of the Ottomans' paying so little attention to Eretz Israel (their main concern being the levying of taxes) these local rulers, such as Da'her El-'Amar in the Galilee, Ahmad Pasha El-Juzar in the Western Galilee, and Abd El-Rahman in the Mount Hermon region, decided at some particular point to exceed their authority and do just as they wished in the areas they controlled. Those who usually suffered most as a result of their unbridled activity were the native inhabitants who were pressured into paying higher taxes.³

Throughout the period of Ottoman rule in Eretz Israel, albeit indirect, the majority of the country's inhabitants were Arabs, chiefly Moslems; the Jews were in the minority. On the eve of the First Aliya⁴ in 1882—the first wave of

modern Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel—the country had 24,000 Jewish inhabitants dwelling in the four Holy Cities: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias.⁵ At a time when the Jews of Eretz Israel were having to contend with the problems of earning a bare living, in the European Diaspora the Zionist Movement, whose aim was to bring the Jewish people back to Eretz Israel, was fast taking shape. Jewish thinkers, led by Binyamin Ze'ev (Theodor) Herzl, had much to do with formulating the Zionist idea of which they dreamt so much, and preached the need for Jews to settle in the ancient patrimony.⁶ In various parts of Europe and particularly in Russia, the Jews suffered at the hands of the authorities or their Christian neighbors, serving occasionally as the targets of pogroms and other outbreaks of violence. Needless to say, these outbursts against the Jews only served to promote the ideas preached by the fathers of the European Zionist Movement.

The "First Aliya," although of relatively modest size, brought with it people who were highly motivated ideologically. These immigrants, nearly all from Eastern Europe, were to establish a new form of settlement, the moshava,⁷ which was based on the principal of communal, purely Jewish labor. The subsequent waves of immigration were more extensive, bringing with them people who settled in towns and who provided a considerable impetus to cultural life in Eretz Israel, including the consolidation of Hebrew as the national language, as well as the development of the

theater, elementary and higher education, and other public services.

In the Diaspora communities, theatrical performances had always been of minor significance, at least as far as community leaders were concerned. Considering that the lifestyle of these communities was dictated by rabbinical authorities, who objected to art and the theater because of religious prohibitions ("Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness...nor serve them"—Ex. 20:3-4), it is obvious why the arts, including the theater, never had much of a following in Diaspora communities. Rabbi Moshe Sofer (1762-1839) typifies the attitude of religious circles regarding the prohibitions against viewing theater or acting in it. He clearly expressed his opinions on the subject when he wrote: "God forbid that you should ever set foot in the theater! I totally forbid it..."⁸ Not only religious circles forbade theatrical activity or the viewing of performances, however. Author Yehiel Mikhel Pines (1843-1913), one of the most prominent figures in Hovevei Zion ("Lovers of Zion," an early Russian Zionist Movement), also gave his opinion of the theater most emphatically: "a monster of profligacy, defilement and abomination... There will be no place for the theater in the Holy Land, for even a single minute."⁹

Despite religious opposition, however, the theater did manage to exist in Diaspora Jewish communities. During the nineteenth century, children's theater was essentially the

Purimspiel, i.e., folk plays performed on the festival of Purim.¹⁰ The Purimspiel included colorful street performances. Acted in the style of the *commedia dell'arte* but spoken in Yiddish, the lingua franca of the Jews of Europe (the Ashkenazim), these were chiefly based on Biblical stories and the Book of Esther.

Towards the end of the 19th century, theatrical activity in Eretz Israel began to change to some extent. A small number of teachers who had studied in advanced schools in Turkey and Germany (Berlin) began to introduce drama into their pupils' curriculum, particularly in Bible study lessons. They set out to produce plays based on Biblical episodes, and on more than one occasion prepared full-scale performances. In addition, these early practitioners were influenced by ideas from the culture of the surrounding Christian world, even though they often failed to communicate these ideas to their target audience. The first Hebrew play for children, Ha-harif ve-ha-'atzel ("The Sharp and the Slothful") by David Zamushatz (1789-1864) was printed in 1817. It is a purely didactic work and there is no evidence that it was ever actually performed on the stage. Uriel Ofek, a researcher in Hebrew children's literature, describes it as a short allegorical play of a distinctly moralizing nature, with a structure based on Christian morality plays. "On the same stage," Ofek writes:

There are characters who are realistic—children and their parents, a teacher, guests—and imaginary characters from the world of allegory—

Wealth, Goodness, the Devil and others. The play and its plot are conceived in line with the classical allegorical drama productions which dominated the literature of the entire period of the Enlightenment. There are contrasts between good and evil, represented by symbolic characters, while in the end, of course, the righteous hero triumphs over his wicked adversary.... And as in every allegory, the heroes' names correspond to their personal characteristics.¹¹

Besides writing his own play, Zamushatz also translated two plays for children. One was the dramatic idyll, Eldad ve-tirza ("Eldad and Tirza") by Swiss author Solomon Gesner. The other was the Biblical play Ro'ot midyan ("Women Shepherds of Midian") by French author Stephanie de Jeanlis. As far as is known, these two translated plays, like Zamushatz's own work, were never performed on stage. By all accounts, and with written proof as evidence, the first Hebrew play to be actually staged was Degel tora ("Banner of the Law") by teacher Yaaqov Otolonqi. It was performed in 1884 at the Young Israel Study Center in Salonika, Greece.

Anyone familiar with developments in this field will readily understand that the first experiments made in the Greek Diaspora effectively augured the start of Hebrew play-writing for children, and a breakthrough in dramatic activity in Jewish schools and educational institutions. Surprisingly enough, however, these experiments were aimed at children whose mother tongue was not Hebrew or who had neither learned Hebrew nor spoke in their everyday lives. It is quite likely that unfamiliarity with Hebrew was one of

the main reasons why these plays were isolated, random experiments, lacking continuity and well-defined goals.

True children's theater in Eretz Israel began to appear only at the end of the nineteenth century. This type of theater developed slowly but steadily, in the form of Hebrew plays performed in Hebrew by children and adults, before audiences of children and their parents. This activity coincided with the transformation of Hebrew into a living language used in everyday life and the growth of Hebrew schools in the country.

One of those who came to Eretz Israel in the First Aliya (1882-1903) was Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (Perlman), considered the father of the modern Hebrew language. Other immigrants in that generation included young teachers and literary people. Encouraged by Ben-Yehuda, a considerable number of immigrant teachers regarded the revival and study of Hebrew as a major aim of their educational activity. Thus they devoted themselves to developing methods for teaching the language. One of them was to write, adapt, translate, and perform Hebrew plays before young audiences through whom they would be able to reach older audiences, that is, the youngsters' parents.

Apart from Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the most prominent of these teachers were David Yelin (1864-1942) and Yosef Meyuhas (1868-1942), who declared themselves willing to establish a purely Hebrew-speaking neighborhood in Jerusalem. Their plans, which coincided with those of Ben-

Yehuda—who wanted Hebrew to be spread via the city's schools—were expressed in a declaration of intent they had prepared, stating the following:

Our official language for every facet of our lives is Hebrew; we will also use secondary methods to further this aim, such as children's festivals in Hebrew, plays, evening entertainment and everything this entails.¹²

Over the years, these plans had a considerable influence on the development and the very nature of the country's theatrical activity. This development, of course, was only made possible by the actors involved. These were young people who had managed to obtain a secular education in European higher educational institutions despite the fact that the Jewish communities from which they came were dominated by the religious people. For them, this higher education was a passport for integration into their respective countries' cultural and material milieu. These young people, most of whom had chosen to be teachers, had left their homes, families and financial security, out of pure idealism to emigrate in order to settle and develop Eretz Israel. With them they brought a rich cultural heritage from their European countries of birth. Considering that turn-of-the-century theater in such countries as Russia, France, Germany and England was flourishing as never before, it is clear that immigrants from these countries were imbued with a deep appreciation for the dramatic arts.

Reaching Eretz Israel, therefore, they stressed the need for local theatrical activity. At the time, the country lacked professional drama companies, although the many immigrants who were teachers had acquired a taste for the theater. Thus it was only natural that early theatrical activity centered around a nucleus of teachers who sought to use drama as an instructional and cultural tool for promoting their educational goals.

Two Hebrew plays that were first performed in Eretz Israel (included in Uriel Ofek's research¹³) heralded the start of everything connected with children's theater in Jewish Palestine. Without any doubt, they also provided an impetus for the writing of children's plays which were subsequently performed on the stage. These two plays were Zerubabel and Ha-hashmonaim ("The Hasmonaeans"). Zerubabel, also called Shivat tzion ("Return to Zion"), was originally written in Yiddish, the language of the Jews of Europe, by Moshe Lieb Lillienblum (1843-1910) and was specially adapted for children's performances by David Yelin. The latter offered to work on the play in his first year as a Hebrew and Arabic teacher at Jerusalem's Lömel school. There is no doubt that he was encouraged to do so by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Naturally, Yelin, like Ben-Yehuda, regarded the staging of Hebrew plays as proof that Hebrew could be used as a living medium of expression. At the same time, both sought to use drama as a way of instilling national values in their

audiences. This is why most plays produced subsequently had nationalist or Biblical contents.

Aware of Zerubabel's historical value as a play, Yelin set about rewriting it in a Biblical, plaintive, but free-flowing discourse. He wrote:

We are about to prepare a play which will be performed in Hebrew by my students on one of the days of Succot.... I had previously translated Molière's play (L'Avare), as it is excellent but more suitable for Purim, while this time I chose a national theme, the return from the Babylonian exile. The performance will take place in my local school.... This will possibly be the first play to be performed in Hebrew for as long as the language has existed. The style is very simple so that people will understand it, and I hope it will make a great impression.¹⁴

The play made its debut on Hol Hamo'ed Succot,¹⁵ in September, 1889.¹⁶ The actors were seniors at Lömel, and the "conductor"—as the producer was then known—was Ephraim Cohen-Reis (1863-1943), a teacher and one of Jerusalem's best-known figures at the time.

Even before Cohen-Reis thought of staging plays with his students, he had introduced something new into his lessons: "recitation," a type of dramatic performance or expression much in vogue at the time. Cohen-Reis explained the importance of recitation as follows: "I also harvested the fruits of my teaching recitation in the performance of the drama Zerubabel, a play where recitation is of greater importance than the dramatic content."¹⁷

Zerubabel's five acts are set in Babylon and Jerusalem, and include a number of songs. The play was staged in the small auditorium at Lömel before an audience of about a hundred invitees—parents, teachers and others. The latter included a group of young people from the moshava of Rishon Lezion who had made the ascent to Jerusalem in horse-drawn carts (delijansim¹⁸) for the express purpose of taking part in the historic performance of the first Hebrew play in Eretz Israel.

A reporter from Ha-maggid¹⁹ wrote of the performance, and in particular of the audience's response, as follows:

There were no limits to their joy. They clapped and shouted 'sheinit' ("encore") and 'hazak' (well done). They called for the producers of the play to appear on the stage again. They refused out of modesty. Yet the young people did not relent until the two men mounted the stage to be met with shouts of hazak! hazak!

Teacher and Palestine scholar Yeshayahu Peres (1874-1955), who was present at the performance, also described the audience's warm response:

The actors played their roles skillfully and enthusiastically.... The audience cheered them on with shouts of 'bravo!' Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, however, shouted out for the first time "heidad," which the audience repeated after him.²⁰

News of Zerubabel's success spread throughout the country and generated widespread interest. Attempts were made to stage the play in other moshavot in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. In the spring of 1893 it was performed in the

moshava of Zikhron Ya'akov in honor of Baron de Rothschild who was visiting the settlement. When Lömel School moved to new quarters, Zerubabel was presented again. At the same time, in 1903, the student-actors were invited to perform before the founding committee of the Hebrew Teachers' Association.

The staging of the play in Hebrew evoked a great deal of controversy in the Yishuv. In 1893, a group of young people in the moshava of Rehovot decided to perform Zerubabel in Yiddish, the language in which it had been written, with songs by famous Yiddish playwright Avraham Goldfaden. Their action led to an outcry among the "Legion of the Defenders of the Hebrew Language" (Gedud meginei ha-safa ha-'ivrit), a group that aspired to transform Hebrew into a permanent spoken language. In one form or another, well-known songs which were favored by the actors and the local audience were introduced into the play in every school and community where Zerubabel was performed. The group in Rehovot that had staged it in Yiddish in 1895 presented it again the following year in Hebrew, using the Sephardic pronunciation that was new at the time. The producer of the Rehovot performance was Haim Walkomitz (1871-1918), who subsequently presented the play in the Upper Galilee moshava of Rosh Pinna. Strange as it may seem, Zerubabel was staged as an experimental play and performed in various versions in different places. In 1982 the manuscript, previously

believed lost, was discovered by pure chance in an historical archive devoted to Rishon Lezion.

Following the success of the first play, Zerubabel, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda started to write a special play for children. Just before Hanukah,²¹ Ben-Yehuda decided to write a work connected with this festival and called it Ha-hashmonaim ("The Hasmonaeans"). This special play, he hoped, would serve two purposes at one and the same time: it would transform Hanukah, a festival commemorating a Jewish war of liberation, into a national celebration, and it would contribute substantially to establishing Hebrew as the vernacular. As far as is known, this was the first original Hebrew children's play to be written and performed in Eretz Israel.

Ha-hashmonaim, which Ben-Yehuda's son, Itamar Ben-Avi, irreverently claimed was written in practically one stroke of the pen ("one night, till past midnight"), is a short, dynamic, thrilling drama full of love and hate, self-sacrifice and the joy of victory. Possibly because of the author's lack of experience, or perhaps because of the short space of time in which he wrote it, the text is very amateurish: the plot is broken, and the characters are superficial. Rather than devoting his time and effort to constructing a proper plot, Ben-Yehuda was more interested in having his young actors use Hebrew words that had heroic and nationalist connotations.

Like Zerubabel, Ha-hashmonaim debuted in Jerusalem on Hanukah of 1889. Its actors, students at the Lömel and Alliance Israelite Universelle schools, spoke Hebrew with the Sephardic pronunciation favored by Jerusalem residents at the time. As with Zerubabel, the successful staging of Ha-hashmonaim caused a considerable stir in various places and led to requests for additional performances. On Hanukah of 1892, three years after it was first presented, Ha-hashmonaim was performed in Rishon Lezion. Production work was supervised by David Yudelevitz (1863-1943), headmaster of the local school. When Mordekhai Liebman (1857-1895) reviewed the play in the newspaper Ha'or, he praised the actors' performance but criticized the visual aspects of the stage:

The stage props were far from perfect, and the singing and poetry were deficient. Apart from these flaws, however, the play was fine.... Everyone spoke in a pure and pleasant language which, as the listener could feel, was both a living and an agreeable tongue.²²

Liebman's review indicates that the play was performed in simple conditions, and that those involved in it were perhaps more concerned with the Hebrew language and national values than with the visual aspects of the drama. As we have seen, this approach was characteristic of the playwright Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, and the group of teachers who were his followers.

Another play entitled Ha-hashmonaim appeared in print in 1894. This second Ha-hashmonaim was written in Yiddish by teacher and linguist Yitzhak Epstein (1863-1943). Six years later, in 1900, students in Zikhron Yaaqov staged a production essentially combining both these plays and given the same title.

Anyone studying the theatrical activity of that period will readily find several common denominators. Those behind the theatrical activity, chiefly on the acting side, were students. Those who gave a considerable impetus to the adaptation, translation, and staging of plays were teachers. Their major motives were to establish Hebrew as the country's major language and to instill national values among young audiences, that is, their students. Nearly all the plays were concerned, in one way or another, with Jewish festivals or events of Biblical origins, and they were adapted to the occasion upon which they were performed. Nearly all the theatrical activity at the time was given a considerable boost by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who not only translated the relevant material and adapted it to the language of performance (i.e., by writing a play in Hebrew), but also supported those involved by reviewing every dramatic work in his journal Ha-havatzelet.

David Yudelevitz, the teacher who established the first nursery school in Eretz Israel, produced Aryeh Lieb Gordon's (1848-1913) dramatic elegy Afel but zion. In his review of Yudelevitz's performance, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda said the

following: "Dear Children of Zion, you have arisen to revive our language through your own efforts, gladdening the hearts of all those who love plays such as these."²³ There is no need to read between the lines to appreciate Ben-Yehuda's intent.

The pace of theatrical activity in Eretz Israel began to grow rapidly. The success of the performances in Jerusalem, Rishon Lezion, Zikhron Yaaqov, and Rehovot led to further initiatives throughout the country. In a single month—March, 1892—several plays were performed. Students from the Galilee moshava of Menahemya staged Shimon ben-Yair, and Rehovot students performed Ha-anusim be-sefarad ("The Marranos of Spain"), produced by Yosef Vitkin (1876-1912). Other students, at the Mikve Israel agricultural school, chose to present Racine's drama Athalie. On Purim, children at the Jerusalem Orphanage performed Esther, also by Racine, produced by Efraim Cohen-Reis (previously responsible for staging Zerubabel). Zikhron Yaaqov students performed David and Goliath under the direction of teacher Mordekhai Karniel. Moshe Goldman, writing in the journal Ha-hashqafa, noted that the play "provoked jubilation and protracted applause in the crowd, especially when little David appeared before the giant Goliath."²⁴

In 1902, students at the Hebrew School in Hebron performed the Biblical play Mekhirat Yosef ("The Selling of Joseph") by Yitzhak Katznelson. A teacher and poet, Katznelson wrote a dozen plays for youth with the intention

of having them staged. He established a kind of early drama library in which he printed the various plays. In addition, he established a small Hebrew theater for children who worked under his direction, with himself as producer and as conductor of the chorus. From the extent of his efforts, aimed at attracting young people to the theater, it would not be far beyond the mark, in fact, to name him the real "father of Israeli theater for children," and to note that Hebron—not Jerusalem—was the site of the first continuing, organized theater for children.

The first steps were over. What had happened up to the turn of the present century may be summarized as follows:

- * A prominent feature of late 19th-century Europe was opposition by rabbinical authorities who proscribed theatrical activity because of religious reasons. This approach was expressed by both Rabbi Moshe Sofer and Yehiel Mikhal Pines, who although not formally a rabbi, had had a traditional education.
- * In Eretz Israel, religious circles issued no censure or prohibitions. This liberal attitude allowed teachers who had come from countries with a rich and varied cultural and theatrical tradition to initiate theatrical activity.
- * Theatrical activity in Eretz Israel usually took place in schools, where it evolved naturally from the teaching methods of those who appreciated it, such as David Yelin, Ephraim Cohen-Reis, and others.

- * Dramatic themes at the time were heroic, with the characters being historical or Biblical figures, the result, possibly, of a belief that Jewish audiences in the country would be most receptive to national values. Since the plays of the time dealt with national and Biblical themes, they were mainly performed during the appropriate festivals.
- * The prevailing language used in theatrical activity in Eretz Israel was Hebrew, with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the person who revived the language, setting this trend. Ben-Yehuda's aim was to have Hebrew plays help to firmly establish the language in the country.
- * The language conflict present in Eretz Israel was also reflected in theatrical activity. After Zerubabel was performed in Jerusalem in Hebrew, young people in Rehovot decided, apparently in reaction, to stage the same play in its original language, Yiddish.
- * Plays were performed both in cities (Jerusalem, Hebron) and, to a considerable extent, in various moshavot in the Judean Plain, the Galilee, and other areas. In every case, the trendsetters were the Jerusalemites, who influenced young people in Rishon Lezion, Zikhron Ya'akov, Rehovot, Menahemiyya and other places.
- * Yitzhak Katznelson can be regarded as having played an important role, even if it did not gain him any great following, in establishing the institution of theater for children in Hebron. In short, he succeeded in bridging the gap between young people who favored theater and a producing theater for young people.

Chapter Two

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD

The surge of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although restricted in volume because of Ottoman constraints, could not but have left its imprint. Although the Arab inhabitants of the country were in the majority, they could not ignore the continuous influx of Jewish immigrants. They considered them a threat to the Arabs' very existence, or at the least, to their continued residence in the country.

The Jewish immigrants, most arriving from Eastern Europe (although a rather large group came from Yemen in 1881-1882, settling in the village of Silwan near Jerusalem),¹ were, as is known, driven by commitment and ideology. They sank roots in the Galilee, Judea, Samaria and, later, in the cities. Among the latter was Tel Aviv, the first all-Jewish city, founded in 1909. In the early moshavot (semi-cooperative farming villages)—Yesud ha-Ma'ala, Rosh Pina, Zikhron Yaakov, Rishon Lezion, Rehovot, Gedera, etc.—the settlers stubbornly worked their farms with simple if not primitive implements and a minimum of training, while fighting—and often losing to—malaria. If these difficulties were not enough, they had to contend with friction with their Arab neighbors, fellahin (subsistence farmers) and Bedouin. The immigrants received moral and

financial support from various sources overseas, of whom Baron Rothschild was the most conspicuous.

The major event between 1915 and 1920 was World War I. Europeans were still perturbed by the "eastern question," i.e., how to split up the crumbling Ottoman Empire and its territories. In the Middle East, specifically in Egypt and Palestine, the Ottoman regime was falling into disarray.² British forces under General Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby (1861-1936) completed their occupation of the country in 1918. Shortly thereafter, the British Mandatory Government, meant as an interim regime until the country's inhabitants were ready to assume the autonomous conduct of their affairs, ensued.

In the postwar years and into the early 1920s, in a Palestine taking its first steps under the Mandatory Government, the Yishuv—the semi-autonomous Jewish community—was still a minority encircled by a larger Arab, Muslim, and Christian population. Although Arab supremacy in Palestine was not in any real jeopardy, Arab-Jewish friction was an almost daily occurrence. Localized clashes—incursion of livestock into cultivated land, riparian struggles, tense neighborly relations—threatened to spread and ignite into a wider general struggle. The volcano indeed erupted several times: in 1921, 1929, and 1936-1939.³ Most such outbreaks of violence in the 1920s occurred in mixed Arab-Jewish cities such as Hebron and Jaffa; the number of casualties was not

small—especially on the Jewish side, that which was attacked.

The initial years of the British Mandate were characterized by hope and optimism on the part of the Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora. The indigenous Jewish community, and the Diaspora groups that supported them, still remembered the declaration phrased by Sir Arthur James Balfour in a letter to Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917. Its key sentence established that "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine...."⁴

Needless to say, this letter, although not a binding, official document, was interpreted by the Jews as something of a moral commitment on Great Britain's part. As such it kindled great hopes in the hearts of Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora alike. Naturally, the Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere feared that the very promulgation of this declaration had planted an entity that would be impossible to dislodge, and that an irreversible process leading to an official Jewish political body in Palestine had been launched.

The Mandatory Government,⁵ on the basis of guidelines it received from London,⁶ chose to adopt a "divide and rule"

policy in Palestine. The reason for this policy, it may be presumed, was a desire to demonstrate objectivity and balance and was meant to appease Arabs across the board. In actuality, the "divide and rule" policy proved to be a smokescreen for a pro-Arab bias. Evidence of this was the Mandatory regime's response to the major Arab disturbances of the 1920s and 1930s.

The Third Aliyah of European Jews reached the country between 1919 and 1923. These immigrants were notable not only for rapid settlement activity, but also for their great contributions in developing the country's construction industry, transportation system, manufacturing sector, education, and various public institutions.

The Jewish education system in Palestine consolidated into various components and streams in the 1920s. A Department of Education—something like a Ministry of Education for the Yishuv—was established within the Jewish Agency.⁷ A teachers' union embracing educators and instructors also came into being, and a basic decision was taken on a grave question of principle that troubled and threatened to fissure the Yishuv: recognition of Hebrew as the major or principal language of instruction in all Jewish educational institutions in the country.

Hebrewphone Jewish education in Palestine, under the inspection of the Mandatory authorities, developed with relative speed. As elementary schools came into being, so did seminaries for the training of classroom and kinder-

garten teachers. In the mid-1920s the foundations for higher academic learning in Palestine were laid: the Technion (Technological Institute) was established in 1924 in Haifa, and a year later the cornerstone for the Hebrew University was set in place on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Thus, in effect, the entire educational spectrum from kindergarten to university was established in Palestine.

Although affected by various problems, the Yishuv endeavored to maintain routine life, to engage in productive work, to cultivate the arts, and to settle the country. A factor of substance in the educational-artistic work was dramatic activity in schools. The roots for such activity had already been planted. At first it was the continuance of the regular but amateur and unconsolidated work embarked upon at the end of the previous century. There was no "children's theater" in the full and conventional sense of the term; rather, there was activity in which the element of drama was used as a vehicle toward the fashioning of enrichment activities and ways of lending substance to educational and national forms.

In the next stage, as review of the period's newspapers will attest, school plays stepped out of the school confines and into large performance halls. Thus, for example, the Girls' School in the Old City of Jerusalem staged its Hanukah festivities in the 'Tmu-na' (Cinema) Auditorium and invited its pupils, their parents, and students of other schools. The daily newspaper Ha'aretz described the event on

December 15, 1920, as follows: "A regiment of children performed some lovely gymnastic routines.... The school choir sang Shir ha-stav ("Autumn Song") and Pirhei ha-sadeh ("Flowers of the Field"); afterwards the children performed Kaddish Yehuda Sillman's skit Ha-hashmonaim ha-qetanim ("The Little Hasmonaeans") with no small success."

Conspicuous Hanukah celebrations were held that year Tel Aviv and Jaffa, too. One of the most prominent of them included the performance of a "historical skit" called "Nero and Agrippana" before an audience of students and adults. Additional festivities worthy of mention were those of Herzliya Gymnasium and the Neve Shalom neighborhood girls' school. The former achieved a conspicuously high artistic quality. The school auditorium was bedecked with British flags and filled with dozens of students, parents, and other guests. Ha'aretz described the occasion as follows: "On the stage were the outlines of a Hanukah menorah built of boys and girls carrying Hanukah candles. Then Rubinstein's skit Migdal bavel ("Tower of Babel") was presented under the direction of Mr. Barukh Aggadati. The tableau, to the audience's surprise, was a great success."⁸

As vehicles of education and culture, schools steadily became fixtures in community life, cultural centers, and the venues for local gatherings. Working in a vacuum, they found themselves answering the spiritual needs of the local population, mostly after regular school hours. They helped establish pupil-parent relations, and initiated and

channelled activity by adults on its own behalf and that of the students. When a school for girls in Tel Aviv sought to establish a library, it raised funds by holding its 1921 Purim party in Jaffa's St. Jonas Hotel and staging Ribsman's Ta'anit esther ("Fast of Esther"). In the farming town of Rehovot, a teacher, one Mr. Uziel, chose to lend his patronage to a Hebrew reworking of Chekhov's Yovel ("Jubilee") for the branch of the Maccabi sports and culture club.

Even as a relatively fixed pattern of dramatic activity coalesced, innovations appeared here and there. At Passover of 1922, a Jerusalem group called Qevutza ha-miniaturit ("Miniature Group") undertook an unusual experiment on Palestine's dramatic scene. It presented a play based on the legend of the Sleeping Beauty, which, as explained by the performance's coordinator, was visual theater in a style verging on pantomime. It was a three-act performance with rich costumes and sets, and was helped along by background music played by the Jerusalem Police Orchestra. It was performed only four times.

Viewing the theatrical activity of those days inclusively, it may be adduced that every event became a social one, investing the routine lives of teachers, pupils, schools, and the community with a little light and variety. Just the same, the schools, even while building a theatrical tradition, made efforts to invigorate and diversify it.

Another innovation was unveiled in 1924. Jerusalem's Takhkemoni School presented a children's opera performed by its own students. During Passover of Pesach that year, the pupils presented the opera Kanfot ha-aretz ("Wings of the Land"), which had already been successfully staged elsewhere. Kanfot ha-aretz was performed twice, and was attended on both occasions not only by children—for whom the work had been composed—but by tourists as well. It was an exceptional show for the latter, since an opera in which all participants were children, including the chorus and orchestra, was no common sight anywhere, let alone in Palestine.

The trailblazing Takhkemoni School continued to set the tone in this new field of children's opera. Two men were behind this trend—the school's principal and one Mr. Levanon, the young music performance teacher. These two found the school and, especially, its student body a fertile culture for this activity, and they persisted at it until the staging of plays and musical performances became a tradition.⁹

It would be incorrect to infer that theatrical activity in Palestine focused only on the country's central area, that between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. A perceptible breakthrough into other areas, i.e., the moshavot in northern Palestine, was made in the 1920s. Little, scaled-down dramas were performed for schoolchildren in various settlements in 1920; as time passed, however, several communities combined

for a shared performance, staged in a different village each time. These local events attracted large local audiences as well as guests from the immediate and not-so-immediate surroundings, who came with speeches, tableaux vivants, flashy fireworks, parades, song, etc.

It is impossible to consider the movement of drama from the country's center to its periphery without considering the movement of teachers in the same direction. The teachers, heading for the outlying areas, bore the message, the idea, and the activity. It was they who turned these regional gatherings into theatrical events and lent them a new, professional, and more polished ambience.¹⁰ An example was a performance on Lag b'Omer,¹¹ 1923, in the Re'i No'a ("Motion Picture") Hall in Tiberias. Students at the school for girls in Kinneret presented Ha-shakhehanit ("The Forgetful One"). Its author is unknown, but it was directed by Brakha Habas (1900-1968), who invested much in designing its visual aspect. Schoolchildren in Sejera presented Ha-shakran ("The Liar"), and their comrades from Menahemya performed Yitzhak Schweiger's Shnei nigunim ("Two Melodies").

Events of this kind helped strengthen Tiberias' status as a regional cultural center for children of the Galilee. Three years later, for example, on Hanukah of 1926, children in the Galilee staged two plays in Tiberias: Ha-hashmonaim ha-getanim ("The Little Hasmonaeans") and Hannah ve-shiv'at baneha ("Hanna and Her Seven Sons"). Here another novelty

was introduced: the first play was meant for children in the lower grades, while the second was for the upper grades.

Now that activity had reached the country's periphery, and now that innovations in school dramatic activity such as children's opera had been made, it naturally became necessary to increase the stock of children's plays from which to select. Supply rose to meet demand. An increasing number of teachers and educators tried their hand as children's playwrights, and professional authors labored alongside them. Representatives of both groups submitted their works to children's newspapers, which began to function as a significant if not a central forum for the publication of children's drama.

Observing the plays published in the children's newspapers of the time, we may adduce that almost everything presented to the newspapers' editorial boards appeared in print. Editors neither criticized the plays strictly nor judged them by professional criteria (which they probably did not possess). They treated the plays according to supply, demand, and editing requisites. One could always read a particular play, in a particular newspaper, in serial form—although the division into parts was not always logical.

Two newspapers were especially inclined to publish children's drama during those years: Ha-kochav of Warsaw, Poland, and 'Eden of New York.¹² The themes of the plays appearing in the children's newspapers included the

Diaspora,¹³ yearning for Eretz Yisrael, the fate of the Jewish people, or various Jewish historical episodes.¹⁴ All the published material was written in Palestine, in Hebrew, by Yishuv authors, and all focused on three major themes: the child's world (for preschoolers),¹⁵ Jewish festivals,¹⁶ and Biblical topics.

It should be said that the plays were written on different levels and used different techniques, depending on the individual playwright and his/her style. Some used rhetorical Hebrew, others a more vernacular register. Some divided their plays into scenes, others into acts. Be this as it may, the authorship was notably congruent to the process the Hebrew language was undergoing; both instances—writing of children's drama and use of the Hebrew language—were matters of first steps, initial attempts at coalescence.

As the writing of Hebrew plays for children took hold, and as the corpus grew, it obviously became necessary to find a way to gather the material so as to facilitate its use. In 1927, a company called Kohelet published the country's first book of plays, Sefer ha-hizionot ("Sketchbook"), edited by author-translator Dov Kimche (Mellar). Hed ha-hinukh ("Echo of Education"), the Hebrew teachers' newsletter edited by Kimche, was enlisted in the cause; it invited teachers to present any material in their possession to the editorial board.

Even when these endeavors seemed to be moving in some way toward professionalism, even when the corpus of published material was burgeoning, even when activity was spreading across the country—the process did not develop serious momentum. Dramatic theatrical activity remained within the confines of educational institutions and under the control of educators. The two large professional theaters active in the country at the time—Habimah¹⁷ and Ha-ohel¹⁸—could not organize themselves to meet the need for children's plays. The two theaters' unwillingness, or rather unpreparedness, to meet the immediate needs originated in or effectively reflected the situation in which they found themselves. They wrestled with questions of how to select a repertoire, hone the national messages they wished to convey in their regular activity, instill correct use of Hebrew, and teach the general public how to behave in the theater. The Yishuv theaters' founding fathers were so preoccupied with these issues that they totally ignored the fact that they were no less pertinent for children's theater as for adult theater.

The need to set professional theater for children on formal foundations, combined with the large professional theaters' unwillingness to meet the challenge, provoked ideological disputes on the topic of children's theater in writers' gatherings, teachers' meetings, and newspaper columns. In an article in an unidentified newspaper dated March, 1925,¹⁹ Rachel Feigenberg equates the birth of the

Hebrew theater with the birth and rebirth of the Jewish people in general. She reserves to the theater an important role in the people's spiritual and cultural life, and adds:

This is the renaissance of the Hebrew man, with his independent attributes, originality, and tenacity, which have been considered one of world history's greatest riddles. For centuries the Jew, his joy and sadness, were restricted and of little value in the Gentile world.... He assesses good and evil through the spectacles of aliens.... And they would like to uproot and replant the Jewish people's every cultural value. And here, in Eretz Yisrael, the Yishuv is still too tender and small to sustain an artistically rich and well-endowed theater of national intent such as Habimah. Habimah's substance must be great and aimed at the entire nation.

The most important point raised in Rachel Feigenberg's article, of course, is the assertion that a purportedly national theater such as Habimah ought to meet the needs of the entire people, i.e., those of adults, youth, and children.

Even though the professional theaters continued to disregard the child audience, there is evidence that not a few children attended their performances, even when they were meant for adults. Thus, for example, many children mingled in the adult audience when, in Ein Harod in 1928, Habimah presented Ha-yehudi ha-nitzhi ("The Eternal Jew") and Ha-golem ("The Golem") for the Jezreel Valley and Galilee settlers. We have no way of assessing how much the young onlookers understood of the plays, or the extent to which their immaturity detracted from their enjoyment.

However, the fact that children and youth saw fit to attend a professional drama (even if accompanied by their parents) not meant for their age group, may attest to the demand for such activity by children—that there was a need which somebody should have taken into account.

The significant trends of the period between the turn of the century and the late 1920s are as follows:

- * Most dramatic activity took place in the schools and followed a pattern that coalesced in the late 19th century, with occasional innovations including the first presentation of a children's opera in which all participants, including the chorus and orchestra, were children.
- * Children's theater moved from the center of the country (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv) to the north— perhaps because teachers were moving in the same direction. The effect, however, strengthened relations between the center and the periphery.
- * Theatrical activity was still dominated by teachers, and reached the locales to which they took it.
- * Demand for dramatic material was growing, and was met by professional and non-professional authors who wrote plays and published them in children's newspapers. The latter thereby took on a role their editors had not foreseen: an important forum for the publication of new children's plays.

- * The new dramas were written in Hebrew and were meant for children from the outset. The variety of themes dealt with in these plays, too, widened steadily; no longer were they Biblical alone.
- * Another step forward was taken when, for the first time in the country, an anthology of children's plays appeared for the use of educators and other interested parties.
- * Even when demand for children's plays expanded, and even when the large professional theaters were operating at full speed, they did not meet the challenge. Neither Habimah nor Ha-ohel was ready to act in this new field, perhaps because they would have to organize themselves appropriately and in the long term for such an endeavor—developing a suitable repertoire with the corresponding staging and sets, music that children would appreciate and understand.

Chapter Three

ASHER ERLICH: BRINGING THEATER INTO THE SCHOOLS

The introduction of the British Mandate for Palestine at the end of world War I, discussed above, may in many senses be considered the imposition of restrictions on the country's inhabitants—particularly its Jewish ones. This resulted not only from the laws the regime promulgated but from the rules of conduct it established—and enforced. Viewed inclusively, and thus, by nature, superficially, the change of regime did not make any great difference: the Ottoman Empire's lengthy tenure was over, and a new, different government, that of the British Mandate, had taken its place. But for the residents of Palestine, one major aspect did not change: government was in the hands of foreigners, to whom the indigenous population was subordinate.

When the matter is observed more profoundly and critically, however, the difference is easily discernible. The Muslim Ottoman regime had done nothing for the indigenous population with respect to its well-being and its material and cultural development; all it wanted was to collect taxes through its local agents, and to keep the country quiet. The new regime, by contrast, was a Western and more orderly one, differently planned and pursuing a different approach. Furthermore, it benefited from the seal

of approval of a major international institution.¹ The Mandatory Government, despite its limitations, was more benevolent to the local population and enabled it to enjoy a different quality of life.² All this, moreover, was securely anchored in a League of Nations resolution.

As described in the previous chapter, the general attributes of the educational system—dramatic activity in particular—did not depart from the format that had previously coalesced, notwithstanding occasional innovations or modifications. Educators continued to dictate the tone of dramatic and theatrical activity because they were aware of the importance and values of the theater, and because they viewed theater as a tool with which to entrench Hebrew as the dominant and major language in the country. As noted, however, innovations were made in the long-standing format, and one of the most significant was the importance attributed to the visual components of drama. No longer were plays performed against a neutral, smooth backdrop; now they came with sets that helped establish the right ambience and that exuded the sensation of events taking place "elsewhere," in some other setting. This innovation should be viewed as marking a change in attitude; handling of theater had begun to take on an artistic character.

The pioneer in this endeavor was the Bezalel Teachers' School, subsequently the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and a breeding ground for many of the country's important artists. An example of the new developments was described in

the daily newspaper Ha-herut: "On the stage was a large pyramid built of ranks of steps, and on the steps people representing Jerusalem's eight Hebrew schools stood in order. Halfway up the pyramid stood a little girl representing the Hebrew kindergarten, where Hebrew education originates and on which it rests.... They all clutched torches."³ The newspaper went on to laud the pupils' talents and made special mention of the background decorations: the pictures in the sets, the wreaths in which they were framed, and a large curtain bearing a likeness of Mattathias the Hasmonaeon⁴ based on an emblem designed by the founder of Bezalel, Professor Boris Schatz.⁵

Here, too, the fixed format was maintained: the event designed was a theatrical ceremony marking a festival, with a play as the central element. The play chosen was Ha-yehudi ha-nitzhi ("The Eternal Jew") by David Pinsky (1872-1959), which an amateur troupe had performed for the first time several years previously in Jerusalem. Here again, most of the pupil-actors were making their first appearance on the stage. The sympathetic audience of parents and friends neither judged the event by severe artistic criteria nor criticized the performance. It was thrilled by the very fact that the event was staged at all, considering its very existence rather than its quality the criterion of importance.

In this regard mention should be made of the reciprocal impact of the schoolteachers' dramatic-theatrical activities

and the development of comparable activity aimed at adults. The connection was evident, and it will be explored in greater depth below.

In the midst of this process, a significant development took place in the Diaspora. A theater group with professional pretensions had been established in Russia under the inspiration of Constantin Stanislavsky (considered the forefather of the modern realistic style and this century's greatest teacher and creator of theater), and with the close guidance of his disciple, director Yevgeni Vakhtangov. Stanislavsky had instructed Vakhtangov to adopt this group and work with it. The troupe, called Habimah, subsequently became the Habimah Theater, the national theater of Palestine and, later, of Israel.⁶ It was a theater in its infancy—an amateur theater performing for adults, whose members had not yet made acting their major or sole profession. Their indecision about relinquishing their non-theatrical occupations in fact paralleled the theater's own situation; it, too, was seeking its way, not yet having coalesced a repertoire and objectives. Both were matters of controversy.

At this point another, anonymous, author addressed himself to the issue confronted earlier by Rachel Feigenberg⁷—the role or involvement of theater in education. He writes:

Since the Jewish population in the cities began to swell, so has the desire to create and re-create the Hebrew theater. That is to say, the beginnings

of Hebrew theater, for everything we are doing, after all, is in the nature of 'beginnings.' There was a time when the Hebrew school, too, was only an experiment, a beginning. And as in every beginning, many shook their heads skeptically, and some dismissed and ridiculed the whole matter. But the Hebrew school is now a great and existing fact...and I am not at all hesitant to utter both of them— Hebrew school and Hebrew theater—in one breath. Moreover, in our circumstances Hebrew theater will serve as a great complement to the Hebrew school once that longed-for immigration to [this] country begins. Hebrew theater will be a Hebrew school for adults, those who, in the early going, in routine life, and with their families, will have to use foreign languages. By evening they will gather at the Hebrew stage, and, with their children alongside acting as interpreters, will whisper the meanings of the words; by necessity they will learn the sounds of Hebrew discourse. Neither will the great masses of future immigrants from Russia and America be angry for not being able to comprehend. On the contrary! They will sit, listen, congratulate themselves for having come so far, and take delight in seeing that their offspring already understand this language, whose mighty echo will yet resound from the hearts of each and every one of them.⁸

Thus the anonymous author of this article considered the theater a tool of great import: a complement to formal school education, a vehicle by which Hebrew would be taught to the public, a means of abolishing the use of foreign languages. As such, the theater would help unify the speech and thought of the different ethnic and Jewish exile groups and promote encounters among them.

Writing elsewhere, Yosef Hayyim Haftmann (1888-1955) focused on the need to produce better theater, featuring high-quality plays and professional actors who view the theater as a life's calling. Haftmann also speaks, for the first time, about the need to establish acting studios and

schools, including the requisite funding. Haftmann, who regarded the theater as a cornerstone in shaping the cultural lives of the masses in Palestine, adds:

The language of theatrical performance is the language of the people.... In our case, the theater will not speak gutter language; quite the opposite: the language of the theater will become the language of the people, the masses... It will therefore be the Hebrew theater's role to cast the living Hebrew word into daily life... Today we must prepare the Hebrew stage. With the advent of Hebrew theater and the beginnings of Hebrew opera, Jewish homes will sing exclusively in Hebrew, imitate the motions and voices in Hebrew, and joke and laugh in Hebrew. Schools alone could not accomplish this.⁹

Haftmann's comments, like those of Feigenberg and the autonomous writer mentioned above, may be perceived or interpreted as speaking of a great conception of the desired role of the theater in the country's future cultural scene.

But for the present, until the idea presented by the three journalists came to fruition—and the three were probably not its only propagators—Yishuv theater was that which existed in the local schools and other educational institutions: an amateur theater whose every participant was related in one way or another to education, i.e., to instruction.

Scanning the developments in the domain of drama and theater during those years, we repeatedly encounter the name Asher Erlich, a key figure in education, theater, and the integration of the two. In many ways, Asher Erlich's story is the story of theater in Yishuv schools.

Erlich found his way to the theater by pure chance. In his youth, wishing to study at the University of Odessa in Russia, he sought and found a student who would help him prepare for his studies. Erlich's tutor chose an original method: he sent his charge to the theater, where the erstwhile student would master literary language and its correct pronunciation. Then he had Erlich commit his impressions to writing by critiquing the actors and analyzing the plays he had seen.

Erlich found his tutor's instructional method interesting and unusual. Rather than engaging in rote memorization or recitation, he was to attend the theater, and, through it, master correct pronunciation, structure of the drama, its language, etc. The adult Erlich considered this a superb and innovative way of imparting the values of education to the young generation.

After immigrating to Palestine in 1903, Erlich made education his calling and considered theatrical activity in the schools as part of his job. Unlike his predecessors, David Yelin and Ephraim Cohen-Reis, who preferred techniques of recitation,¹⁰ Erlich chose drama as the medium by which subject matter (Bible, history, etc.) should be conveyed, basing himself on his own experience as a student in Odessa. Recalling the experiential method to which he had been exposed, he wanted to share it with his pupils. Wherever he went—and he traveled the length and breadth of the country—he spread the gospel of the theater and the idea of

the Hebrew stage. He believed that education and theater were firmly linked; now the latter would complement the former, and then the former would contribute to the latter. In his perception and attempt to integrate the two, he sought to create theatrical activity at its best, i.e., activity embodying performance in keeping with artistic criteria (in view of the resources and conditions of the time) and awareness of the potential and the values intrinsic to the theater as an agent of education and cultural progress. Furthermore, we cannot, of course, disregard his conviction—shared by predecessors Yelin and Ben-Yehuda—that the theater could be used to solidify the status of Hebrew in Palestine and invest the young generation with national and universal values.

Erlich spent his first years in the country teaching in the girls' school in the Jewish neighborhood of Neve Zedek next to Jaffa. This school played an important role in the cultural life of Jaffa and the neighborhood at the turn of the century, and functioned as a first hostel for recently landed immigrants. Erlich, Menahem Gnessin (1880-1951), Yaaqov Mosheli (1885-1960), and Haim Harari (1883-1940)—all avid if not professional theater men—began together to toy with the idea of establishing a Hebrew theater. As Mosheli wrote in his book Asher Haya ("That Which Was"): "We mustn't go about this sloppily. We have to find people who are 'crazy' about establishing an amateur troupe. The plays will serve as a school for them, and a Hebrew school for the

general public.... The public will have to learn Hebrew...."¹¹

In 1904, the three theater men established the Hovevei omanut ha-dramatic ("Lovers of Dramatic Art") Society in Jaffa.¹² Its purpose was to further the use of Hebrew in the Yishuv, to stage plays in Hebrew, and to perform them before the general public, mainly adults (although youth and children attended these plays with their parents). It was clear to these founding fathers that theirs would not be an easy route to follow. Most of the target audience did not know enough Hebrew to watch and enjoy drama in that language; the Hebrew repertoire was scanty; it would have to be enriched by translating and reworking plays from other languages—a task entailing both suitable people and considerable expense. Aware that they could not resolve these difficulties "in one go," they chose to adopt an interim stage. For the meantime they would put on plays in Yiddish while keeping their original goal, Hebrew, in mind. The overriding goal was to see their theatrical activity progress and attract fans.

Menahem Gnessin, a wine press operator in the Rishon Lezion winery at the turn of the century, a founder of "Lovers of Dramatic Art," and later a key figure in the country's professional theater, relates in his memoirs (Darki 'im ha-teatron ha-'ivri) that all persons involved in this work were inexperienced amateurs who overcame this drawback with willingness and enthusiasm. They were

titillated at the sound of a Hebrew accent, and put forth their best efforts even in the absence of professional guidance in their productions.

As stated, the first two plays, Sholom Aleichem's Mefuzar u-meforad ("Scattered and Dispersed") and Nikolai Gogol's Nisuin ("Marriage") were translated from Russian into Yiddish, performed before a large audience, and, as expected, sparked controversy concerning the Hebrew language--this being a major topic of dispute in the early twentieth-century Yishuv. Those in favor of presenting the play in Yiddish argued that the theater had to appeal to the general public, including that of Jaffa; and since few people in that town understood Hebrew, the handful of pro-Hebrew protagonists could not force their will on the majority. Moreover, a Hebrew play would be hard to take around the country, since the community of Hebrew speakers in Palestine was small.

Faithful to their goal of "pushing" Hebrew, the society's members indeed staged a play in that language: Carl Goitchcove's Uriel Acosta, which had been translated into Hebrew within a week by teachers at the girl's school. Uriel Acosta made its debut on the eve of Purim, 1905. The "theater" was an Arab café in Jaffa, chosen because it could accommodate a large audience and had a stage. The event turned into a genuine festival. Jews who had neither set foot in that café nor had attended a play turned out to watch. Entire families from Jaffa and elsewhere, including

settlements in remote Judea, donned holiday attire and climbed aboard horsecars to attend the Hebrew play.

The newspaper Ha-hashkafa had the following to say about the play and the audience's response:

It was a lovely play they'd staged at that party...at the municipal exhibition house. This time a glittering new phenomenon took shape there: a large Jewish audience of six hundred, gathering from Jaffa, Rishon Lezion, Rehovot, Gedera, Petah Tikva and other settlements. An intermingling of folk, an ingathering of all kinds of Jews from far away. All had come to see this spectacle, to hear the cast of actors speaking in the language of rebirth. The fact that Uriel Acosta was staged for us in Hebrew was an attraction, the major feature of the party.... The hall was filled to overflowing with Ashkenazim, Sephardim, and quite a few war refugees.... The audience filled the entire hall with a kind of noisy buzz, until the curtain was raised... The large crowd enjoyed itself at the sight of the well-staged performance. Three days later I still heard them talking about it.¹³

Asher Erlich was the force behind every facet of the evening's performance. He helped translate the play, acted in it, and even prompted the other actors. Encouraged by Uriel Acosta and Ha-yehudim, performed a year later, Erlich took the next, natural, inevitable step: a venture into writing original Hebrew drama. His works include Bat 'am ha-sefer ("Daughter of the People of the Book"), Shabbat ("The Sabbath"), Rak lo ba-shabbat ("Just Not on the Sabbath"), and Bat yiftah ("Jephtha's Daughter"). Needless to say, he continued working as a teacher all this time.

Following Erlich's success, various groups asked him to lend a dramatic dimension to their events and festivities.

Two examples were a society called Rag 'ivrit ("Only Hebrew"), comprising people committed to speaking in nothing but that language, and the Ezrat Nashim charitable organization in Jaffa. Erlich's pupils performed in these events, presenting Peretz Hirshbein's short drama Yeladim ("Boys") and Asher Erlich's Bat 'am ha-sefer, in addition to several recitations and a choir that provided background singing at every event.

As theatrical activity gained momentum in the Yishuv, various groups around the country, primarily Orthodox, began to rise up in opposition. Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook (1865-1935), one of the country's most important rabbis and subsequently the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine, published a letter in Ha-havatzelet¹⁴ condemning "the new phenomenon that went by the name of theater," with special disapproval reserved for men's and women's performing together and the phenomenon of collecting charity at "licentious parties." But this criticism, like that of late 19th-century clerics in Europe, never exceeded the bounds of mere criticism, and the ongoing theatrical activity remained unscathed.

"Lovers of Dramatic Art" remained active until 1920, but Asher Erlich, one of its central pillars, developed a wanderlust. As early as 1905 he began to travel the country, concentrating on the outlying farm settlements and villages. His "baggage" was his love of the stage and the idea of the theater. He organized amateur troupes, translated plays, and

even tried his hand at stage direction. He treated his activity as an important mission, since it helped instill the Hebrew language, national values, and familiarity with selections of literature among the new immigrants.

In 1909 Erlich was sent to teach in Beirut, Lebanon, then an effervescent city with a large, respected Jewish community. In his characteristic way, he built his educational program for youth around the stage arts. For him, the presentation of a play was a complex and protracted activity, an action that attracted highly-motivated youth. Performance days were festivals, and he considered them excellent opportunities for social encounters among Jews who had come from different places.

The first play Erlich staged in Beirut was Ha-anusim be-sefarad ("The Marranos of Spain"),¹⁵ written by himself, which described the tragic circumstances of the Jews of Spain. As in Jaffa four years previously, he staged this production in an Arab café that he had rented for the purpose. So successful a production was it that even the Arabs in attendance gave the cast an enthusiastic ovation, although they did not understand a word of it all. Another play he put on at the time was Molière's The Miser (in Hebrew: Ha-qamtzan). It was presented in the home of a local Jew, which had a large room opening onto a patio that Erlich turned into a stage.

Thus Asher Erlich, no ordinary teacher and educator, refused to follow the beaten path even in theatrical work.

He played to the audience, taking the theater to it. Wherever he staged his productions he tried to create the conditions most suited to presenting his audience with theater at its best. He used youth as actors wherever he went, and even in Beirut—where even the Jews did not use Hebrew—he established youth drama groups such as Hevrat Qadima and Heruteinu, and had them perform in Hebrew.

An anonymous writer in the newspaper Ha-'olam gauges the significance of the encounter between the young Jews of Beirut and the theatrical world, in which Asher Erlich was the catalyst:

On the ninth of Tevet the Heruteinu company in Beirut, together with the Qadima company (a troupe of American Jewish students) performed Uriel Acosta in Hebrew. Last week large notices about the upcoming performance were pasted up around town. They attracted our compatriots, those born in this country, who thus far had managed to see in Hebrew nothing but volumes of prayer, supplications, and occult literature... The play made a good impression on our Sephardi brethren here, in that they saw simple affairs being articulated in Hebrew. If they were to be shown a large number of Hebrew plays with national Jewish content, they would generate some kind of national revival movement, too.¹⁶

Here is evidence, on some level, that Asher Erlich had achieved among the Jews of Beirut exactly what he had thought of doing and had actually accomplished several years earlier in various places in Palestine. He continued to present plays for Beirut's Jewish community until the end of 1910. His aim, in Beirut and in Palestine, was to tie all the ends together—formal education and professional theater,

original writing and translation, communication of national values, and entrenching of Hebrew as the country's major language. Thus he established a method for the instruction of diverse kinds of material in schools, and it was indeed adopted by teachers in various educational settings.

Chapter Four

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION CHILDREN'S THEATER

At a time when theatrical activity for youth was non-professional and concentrated mainly in the urban and rural schools,¹ and at a time when such professional theater as existed in the country, or more precisely visited the country (i.e. Habimah) appealed mainly to adults, an interesting experiment was made, the first of its kind, toward establishing professional theater for kindergarten and lower elementary-grade children. The force behind this rather daring experiment was the Association of Kindergarten Teachers in Palestine (hereinafter: the Kindergarten Teachers' Association).

The beginning was expectedly modest. In the spring of 1928, Tova Hiskina (1893-1949) took the initiative of establishing an artistic committee under the auspices of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, and this committee began to organize concerts in kindergartens and lower elementary grades. It had two major goals in mind: 1) to expose the next generation of theatergoers to aesthetics and art outside the school; and 2) to introduce and integrate music into kindergarten activity, thereby connecting the central medium of art with the schools.

Kindergarten in Palestine of the 1920s was in its inception, still searching for its way. Kindergarten

teachers were not well endowed with educational experience, and educational resources were not ample. Kindergarten teachers sought to develop their institutions and adapt educational media such as song, melodies, literature, and children's games to their work. They considered the committee's concerts as a worthy vehicle to this end, and this, as stated, was Tova Hiskina's intention when she set these concerts in motion. To maximize the youngsters' enjoyment, she staged the concerts in small halls that accommodated small audiences. Before each event, teachers in the kindergartens and elementary schools received bulletins establishing rules of behavior such as walking to the performance in an orderly and organized way, entering the hall properly, taking one's seat, etc.²

The concerts followed a rather standard format: music, songs, dance, and dramatized stories. The concerts, organized by educators—primarily kindergarten teachers—became experimental laboratories for the educators on the one hand, and a unique educational and artistic forum for the children on the other.

Naturally, this activity of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association concentrated first in the cities, where most of the population and hence the kindergartens were situated. Tel Aviv was twenty years old and growing; as it burgeoned so did the need to expand the concert enterprise. An increasing number of Tel Aviv artists and intellectuals—singers, actors, musicians, authors—sought to take part in

this pioneering endeavor, and many if not all of them made a substantial impact on Yishuv cultural life in general and the theater in particular.

As the concert model took shape, the Association's committee decided to take another step forward and to stage small performances, designed for and adapted to kindergarten and lower grade-school children. Here, in fact, the difficult process of shaping or determining the style of the plays began. Working committees under Hiskina met, pondered various themes, deliberated them, and approved them. It then became necessary to translate the decisions and proposals into the language of action.

Just as theatrical activity in the schools was firmly affiliated with Asher Erlich, so theatrical activity in Yishuv kindergartens and elementary schools, especially in the lower grades, was inseparably linked with Tova Hiskina. Hiskina, one of the country's premier kindergarten teachers and a kindergarten pioneer in general, had reached Palestine from Russia. Even before acculturating herself to the country, she recognized the vast educational potential of art in general as a medium toward shaping the child's cultural world. It was her dream to create an advanced education system based on children's literature and art, and it was this dream that underlay the idea of establishing children's theater as a major tool in molding and educating the young. As school principal, Hiskina skillfully assembled

a team of educators and artists and blended their skills adroitly and usefully.

Three men worked with Hiskina as a special creative team; each of them, and the three together, helped fashion the dramaturgic channel of children's theater. They were actor Yosef Oxenberg (1897-1967), subsequently the permanent director and adapter of the plays; painter Zvi Goldin, in charge of designing sets, and children's author Levin Kipnis (1894-), who wrote most of the plays staged by the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater. It was a genuine triumvirate of education, literature, and the stage, embracing all the skills necessary to write and produce plays, build sets, and direct the cast; each member complemented the others in know-how and professionalism.

Levin Kipnis, who wrote dozens of plays that were performed while the theater was active, had reached Palestine in 1913 having already established a reputation as an author of children's literature, with major works published in children's newspapers. Upon his immigration he became an activist in the struggle to instill the Hebrew language in Palestine.

Two years after his arrival, he was asked to write material suitable for kindergarten children. The result was Hanukkiya sapri li ma'asiyya ("Hanukah Menorah, Tell Me a Story"), a song that spread from child to child, kindergarten to kindergarten, throughout the country. Shortly thereafter Levin Kipnis was appointed Inspector of

Children's Literature in Kindergartens with the Jewish Agency Education Department, in which capacity he issued and circulated literature for kindergarten teachers (dappim la-gannanot) including musical sketches and playlets; they were written and produced by hand on a "hectograph" machine.³

Kipnis personified and combined the skills of educator and author, and added to these a sense of humor, a feel for the construction of dialogue, and an aptitude for directing. Altogether he was therefore a superb author-dramatist for children. His works are evidence of his command of the contraction component of children's language, which he uses in most of his plays. His style is simple and graceful; most of his dialogue is in verse. The abundant humor in his plays endeared them to the young audience. His authorship reflects the thought he gave to the problems of making the Hebrew language comprehensible to the children; he tried to instruct and enrich, but not to filter the language so badly, as he said, as to "squeeze the life out of it."⁴ In so doing, he considered himself a children's author and playwright, and forswore writing for adult audiences. For good reason Levin Kipnis is considered the Yishuv's premier children's author.

Thus, consistent with his approach, Kipnis joined the leading creative team of the children's theater. He viewed this work as a mission, convinced that children had to be offered something beyond kindergarten. Because he considered the theater he had joined a grass-roots entity aimed at

children in general and designed for their level of imagination and understanding, he took pains to construct plays that were concise and easily grasped. Neither was the structure of his plays, which were divided into scenes, coincidental. It reflected Kipnis' intent to make it easier for the young onlookers to absorb, understand, and enjoy the scenes acted out before them.

Aware that children have a limited span of concentration and find it hard to think continuously about a play, Kipnis and his colleagues decided to break up each performance with two or three intermissions. This gave the children a respite from their mental efforts and an opportunity to break their silence and exchange impressions and experiences. Because the intention was to create a "participatory theater," the intermissions were used to perform musical selections and teach songs from the play. Thus the songs entered the public domain; the public at large developed stronger affinities for the plays and events, and the entire experience became part of Yishuv artistic education.

Although Levin Kipnis was the leading luminary and major source of influence on the content of the plays, the dramatization and stage direction work were intertwined. These were performed within and for the theater on a collaborative basis, and this principle, in a way, guaranteed a state of balance and proper integration among all the artistic, conceptual, and educational elements. The

task of directing the plays was entrusted to Yosef Oxenberg, a noted actor in the spheres of satire and light entertainment. The pinnacle of his theatrical activity, however, was his stage direction in the children's theater.

In this function, Oxenberg bore three basic principles of acting and directing in mind: simplicity, adaptation of level to that of children, and clarity. He understood the child's world and made the necessary adjustments to it. His work contained an abundance of good humor, and the plots featured love of animals and plants. He also excelled in coaching his actors in portraying the characters. Children always saw the natural acting in his productions as convincing. Plots were constantly helped along with background music, plastic motion, and dance. Some of his productions, such as Eliezer ve-ha-gezer ("Eliezer and the Carrot"), stressed song and motion, thus demonstrating the importance of melody and rhythm. He also relied rather heavily on the grotesque, as in Ram asher lo kam ("Sleepy-head Ram"), which made a tremendous impact on the children.

Oxenberg gave the matter of children's theater great thought, and one of the performance problems that concerned him was the art of storytelling. The troubling question was how to present a story to the child. How does one convey a story in a living, fascinating manner, invoking artistic elements but keeping the message simple and clear at the same time? One of the appropriate avenues to a solution, he ruled, was to work with the actors and narrators on clear

enunciation, melodic intonation, and accurate illustrative motion as support. It was his view—and he was largely right—that motion and dance were the actor's and director's indispensable assistants. Recalling that children's ability to absorb and perceive is limited, and that the message must be reduced, focused, and underscored with motion, we shall more readily understand how right Oxenberg was. The actual task of training the actors in the attractive, deliberate use of plastic expression was entrusted to Devorah Gershman, who, in most cases, succeeded.

Sets have always been a complicated and difficult matter in the theater in general, and much more so in children's theater. The sets and illustrations in all the children's plays under discussion were produced by Zvi Goldin, one of the country's veteran art teachers. In most cases he used tried-and-true methods, and faced numerous serious constraints such as no permanent stage and poor equipment. Lighting was not considered very important, as it is today.

The major attribute of Goldin's sets was a tendency toward realism and generous use of color. Goldin, personally inclined toward painting of mythical nature, tried to create innovative stage pictures when designing sets and costumes, especially animal costumes. As the performances became increasingly frequent, he gained more experience and produced better results.

Music, too, occupied a place of honor in the plays. It injected a new style into children's drama, and made a great impact. Every play was accompanied by music. To avoid the difficulties and problems that arise in arranging and adapting selections of famous musical works for theatrical themes, the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater commissioned original music for every play. Some of the Yishuv musicians who wrote for the children's theater were Nahum Nardi (1901-1977), Menashe Rabina (1899-1968), Daniel Sambursky (1909-1977), Yedidia (Gorochoy) Admon (1884-1982) and Emanuel Amiran (Pougatchov) (1909-).

The musical accompaniment included an opening tune, songs and refrains (of which many became major fixtures on the Israeli song scene), marches, and descriptive excerpts adapted to the development of the plot.

In addition to the songs in the plays themselves—which, as stated, became very popular among the children of the time—this theater added an interesting musical element specific to itself: a melody played before the play and during intermissions. The theaters' directors thought this would calm the audience, focus its concentration, and conjure emotions appropriate to the spirit of the plot and the drama. In most cases, a famous woman singer would mount the stage (examples were Bracha Tzifira,⁵ Esther Gamlieli,⁶ and Sarah Levi-Tannai⁷) and sing with the audience. Thus the theater contributed to promoting

indigenous music and enriching the children's song repertoire.

As for the educational value of the music at the children's plays, an anonymous theater critic is quoted:

...The silence in the Beit Ha-'am Auditorium, even during intermissions, as the orchestra accompanied the light children's music—with songs familiar to the children—proves that the time has indeed come, even at the tender age of kindergarten, to nurture tomorrow's theatergoer in the heart of today's child. The child is alert; he participates. But he is taught from this age to sit patiently, politely, and attentively. Melody and song, accompanied with spiritual motions and the pace of the plot, teach good taste and induces children to demand genuine aesthetics and art.⁸

The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater contended with difficult problems. On the one hand, it sought to teach national values as part of its activity, notwithstanding the objective constraints. On the other hand, it had not yet established its own modus operandi—approaches to artistic education, organizing the child audience, content enrichment during intermission, etc. All these difficulties, however, did not stop the theater's activity; at the most they forced the theater to "apply the brakes" and settle for slow but steady progress.

As befitting an educational theater making its debut in unmapped, virgin territory, its repertoire, too, was sui generis. Almost all the dramas performed under the theater's auspices were commissioned from local playwrights, even though the themes were taken from the international corpus

of children's stories and adapted to the local experience. Here too, however, controversy raged. Some believed it insufficient to clothe foreign stories in "Israeli" attire; the local children's theater should in fact produce original drama for children, built on themes taken from the indigenous landscape and the people's and country's history.

This issue of substance could easily be coped with—at least at first—in a relatively familiar and proven way. In the very first stage, that of the children's concerts, the theater's artistic committee built the repertoire around the Jewish holidays. The initial choices were Hanukah and Purim, which always had an appropriate dramatic aspect; subsequently added were Passover, Tu be-shvat (Arbor Day), Shavuot (commemorating first fruit and the giving of the Torah), days of remembrance connected with the nation-building effort such as Adar 11 (immediately before Purim), the tenth anniversary of the dedication of Tel Aviv port, etc. "The festivals are the pinnacles of the nation's life, having acquired their being from the volcanic turbulence of [Jewish] history," wrote Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934), considered the nation's poet. "Every great historical event, if it truly shocked the people to the depth of its soul, gave rise to such a day of remembrance. Thus a festival may at times provoke a great awakening, disclosing the nation's awareness of itself, much as a man's consciousness may stir upon recalling a great personal event."⁹

The theater practitioners took Bialik's lead. They considered the Jewish holidays as embodying spiritual, national, and traditional elements that combined into psychic experiences of childhood joy and contributed to children's education. Because the festivals were fitting occasions for the staging of plays, the frequency of performances naturally increased as the holidays approached.¹⁰ The holidays also coincided with school vacations, thus "liberating" the audience for theater attendance. There was nothing novel about this practice; it represented further progress on the course of existing theatrical activity. Thus it is clear that a tradition governing "theater season" developed: the festivals and summer vacation.

Hanukah abounds with symbols and elements that lend themselves to dramatic rendition: the struggle for freedom, the dreidel (spinning top), the menorah, the candles, the miracle in which a vial of sacramental oil meant for one day's use lasted eight days, etc. No wonder it was a favorite among children. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater tried several times to articulate the festival's symbols on stage.¹¹ Examples were Ha-sevivon mesaper ("The Dreidel Tells its Tales") and Levivot hanukah ("Hanukah Latkes"), noted for simple, light, and entertaining content interspersed with jingles and songs. Songs, or parts of songs, were sometimes inserted into kindergarten birthday parties and the like, attesting to their ability to "speak" to the child audience. In a general sense, the

children considered attending a play something of a festival. Teachers' announcements of a new play were greeted with jubilation.

Purim was—and still is—the most popular and beloved festival for children. This festival abounds with merriment, gaiety, and the building blocks of drama: characters from the Scroll of Esther, costume masks and games, groggers (noisemakers), hamentaschen (three-cornered pastries), sending of gift food parcels (a custom somewhat reminiscent of Halloween), etc. These and other customs created a well-endowed trove of games, songs, and dances for children. Two examples of children's plays for Purim were Ma'ase be-ozen haman ("Hamentasch's Tale") and Mishloah manot ("Gift Packages"). The latter actually turned a school and kindergarten ritual into a theatrical event orchestrated by the cast of actors, in which the kindergarten teachers, too, were given a role. They held the food parcels, sat on either side of the aisles, and handed them out to the children in a special procession.

Purim plays became integral parts of the festival. The children reacted with howls of joy and by joining with the actors as they sang. In other words, the events on stage and in the audience merged into an intimate, living connection. For that generation's children, these plays were the major source of festival entertainment. They were staged several times in town and in nearby villages such as Rishon Lezion and Petah Tikva. On Purim they were usually sold out.

In Hed ha-gan ("Kindergarten Voice", the kindergarten teachers' newsletter), B. Barukh describes the Purim play presented in the Borochoy quarter of Ramat Gan (a suburb of Tel Aviv) in 1937:

The play came across well with its childlike simplicity and natural cohesion. The subdued acting infused with artistic thought, the educational script, and the lovely costumes put the children into a positive frame of mind. They sat there concentrating during the play, and stayed quiet even during the brief intermissions. Indeed, the spirit of the play has much to do with the children's behavior.¹²

While Jewish holidays were the central theme in the Children's Theater productions, they were definitely not the only theme. Several poems and stories by C.N. Bialik, who had no small influence over the theater's work, were dramatized and adapted for the stage. On his sixtieth birthday, a year before his death, a special play was staged in his honor: Ha-atzel ("The Idler"), based on a story he had written. After his death, a play called Sefer ha-temunot ("Picture Book") or Sefer Bialik ("Bialik Book") was performed in his memory.

Reviewing the Children's Theater repertoire, we find that from the outset the teachers and actors sought ways to include components from the child's own world. Examples were the animals—billy goats, donkeys, monkeys, bears. They appeared as characters onstage, played out with amusing articulation and motions.

Three plays—Ha-tizmoret ("The Orchestra"), Ma'ase be-hamor ("Tale of a Donkey"), and 'Eza peziza ("The Reckless She-Goat")—were initial attempts at short dramas portraying parables, tales, or short songs. Later ventures of this kind were Ha-gezer ("The Carrot") and Ha-qipudim ve-ha-arnav "The Hedgehogs and the Hare"), which presented a moral with light humor.

Following are comments written by Hava Karmi, a teacher, after attending a performance of Ta'alulei 'eza ("Escapades of a She-Goat"):

It's the world of a very young child: the toy room comes to life! The charming velvet dog, the silent soft cats, the shepherd with the flute— all have come down from the shelf and are presented on the stage... Is it any wonder that the little onlookers are easily and very affectionately familiar with the cast of characters on stage? ... The play Ta'alulei 'eza, with its twists and turns, its naughtiness and delightful dances, is one great show of humor—originating in the world of the toy, delicately and musically twitting the emotions of child's humor, exuding aesthetic grace throughout. The sight of it evokes pleasure and warmth, with no offense done to the depth of emotion and morality.¹³

As time passed, the theater took the inevitable course. If before it held concerts, now it presented short plays and skits adapted from the universal world of legend, alongside special plays for the festivals. Another step was taken in 1933: presentation of an original three-act play that comprised a complete drama program for children. Alongside this theatrical innovation was another novelty, or a significant change in terminology; the artistic committee,

after several years' activity, finally saw fit to refer to its enterprise as "children's theater."

The play in question was Ha-dahlil ("The Scarecrow"). The product of much work and creativity, it should undoubtedly be considered an artistic and educational combination of content, sets, music, dance, interplay of light and color, etc. Ha-dahlil, an important landmark in the development of Yishuv children's theater, actually lent this theater its legitimacy and made it the country's first professional children's theater.

Ha-dahlil also earned the theater some enthusiastic supporters. The following critique of the play appeared in the newspaper Doar ha-yom ("Daily Mail") of September 29, 1933:

... A small troupe of actors led by Oxenberg began empty-handed, without shouting and without declamations, without resources, and without moral support. But we have finally been presented with Ha-dahlil. Experts will come forth and argue, actors will find deficiencies, artists will find flaws, teachers will wrinkle their noses pedagogically.... Ha-dahlil is an aesthetic, rhythmical, serious, and amusing play all at once. It is a pleasant experience for kindergarten and for early elementary grades, too. Even an adult who comes with a child does not slip into ennui.... The children like the noise. When the stage bursts into abundant motion, so do the chairs in the hall. The children love to hear familiar songs being sung from the stage.... They love to repeat them with the actors.... Neglect of this humble, fledgling enterprise is an unforgivable sin on the part of our public institutions.

Thus Ha-dahlil was a success. Furthermore, several years later it became a topic for praise and citation as a model of ideal children's drama¹⁴ and as an educational/cultural event that would influence the child's spiritual world. Yaakov Rabinovitz, an author-playwright as well as a translator and editor, described Ha-dahlil as an example of how to influence children by means of art, without resorting to discipline or excessive rhetoric.¹⁵

The theater's major activists worked devotedly and relentlessly to give their institution a central and respected role in education, and to make it part of the standard set of teaching and enrichment tools. It was their intent to turn the performances into experiences that the children would not quickly forget.

To bring this about, they clearly had to aspire to more intensive, richer, and better activity. Children's author Yemima Czernovitz (1909-) dipped into the classic corpus, took out Pinocchio, reworked it for the stage, and, combining it with songs by poetess Leah Goldberg (1911-1970) turned it into a children's play. This classic tale contains kernels of thought eminently appropriate for the young and old alike. Pinocchio registered another accomplishment in unification of artistic and educational powers. Apart from Yemima Czernowitz' reworking and the songs contributed by Czernowitz and Leah Goldberg, the actors, the director, and the visual design also stood out. It seems, however, that the hero of the play—Pinnocchio, a wooden marionette who

comes to life, materializing slowly before the children's eyes by virtue of the actions he performs (e.g., motion, walking and eating, by virtue of which he becomes "real")—could not but dislodge the young onlooker from his lethargy, could not but sweep him along into adventures.

Dr. Yaakov Weinshall (1891-1981), a physician and author, articulated the sentiments aroused by the play in his article in Hed ha-gan:

Despite the surfeit of deeds in the play, the viewer is presented with a slice of life that is lively and living....conspicuous and fantastic all at once, so much so that even a child who's hardly begun kindergarten chooses what he likes of the acting and understands it, as if it is taking place at home or in the kindergarten environment. This is the benefit derived from the very ambience of art reflected in the play: the pairing of ability with natural execution—of fantasy with the child's natural excitability.¹⁶

The next presentation was another classic, The Three Bears, adapted by Levin Kipnis, who usually wrote original plays for the theater. As in Pinocchio, here too was an intent to integrate three components—art, nature, and education—in order to gain the children's trust.

Another play mentioned above was Ram asher lo gam ("Sleepyhead Ram"). Educationally speaking, it was a successful choice. Its theme was the experience of a child's waking up in the morning, the process of emerging from sleep, the uncertainties of climbing out of a warm, pampering bed into the sun and the world of play. All these elements—clad in interesting literary attire, set to rhyme,

and acted out in a grotesque style by children performing as toy dolls—provided the onlooking children with a moving experience, an opportunity to identify with themes so close to their routine lives.

From its very first steps, the Children's Theater sought to integrate its activity into kindergarten and school work, and to entrench art as one of the vehicles of early childhood education. The aim was not only to give children artistic pleasure outside the school, but to bring artistic life into the school. It was felt that such drama as presented to children, in school or elsewhere, should provide them with an experience and a topic for drawing, play-acting, singing, etc. The dramatic literary material generated within the theater had an especially conspicuous role: it became part of the study material used in kindergartens and early elementary grades, or was redramatized by the teachers, especially at festival time.

It took this theater ten years to become an integral part of Israel's cultural/educational scene. During those years, it had to contend with budget difficulties, lack of a permanent place to perform, a certain indifference on the part of the governmental institutions, and uncertainties as to repertoire and the route by which it would attain its goals. Even so, the Children's Theater became a force to be reckoned with, and a solid core of fans and theatergoers crystallized around it. Apart from the plays staged in the kindergartens and schools at vacation and Jewish holiday

time, the theater, at least in the early 1940s, began to take part in various events such as the jubilee of the town of Hadera, which it marked by performing Eliezer ve-ha-gezer and The Three Bears¹⁷ and leading public dancing and song.

Although the theater was funded in part by the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, most of its plays were open to the general public, i.e., the children and their parents. The repertoire was rather standard, perhaps because those in charge found it expedient to stride on firm ground, and perhaps for other reasons. Every festival was greeted with the plays particular to it—Levivot hanukah or Ha-sevivon mesaper at Hanukah time, and Ma'ase be-ozen haman or Mishloah manot le-hayal at Purim. The same plays, with minor changes, were performed in the cities near Tel Aviv—Netanya, Petah Tikva, Herzliya, etc.—where they were usually major events. At Purim of 1942, an audience of seven hundred children from kindergartens and elementary schools in the southern Sharon settlements gathered in Herzliya's Hasharon Cinema for one such performance.¹⁸ In addition to its theatrical aspects, then, this theater also worked at length to establish a permanent and unmediated encounter between the theatrical world and children from cities, farm villages, and communal settlements.

Renewing the repertoire is the lifeblood of any theater. The enterprise under discussion here, however, toed the straight path in this regard. Neither did its supporters and its enthusiastic, faithful audience overlook this fact.

The theater's manager, Leah Gihon, wrote the following caustic comments in a 1944 edition of Hed ha-gan: "It is puzzling that new plays are not being produced. Are we short on material? Are the actors unwilling to do anything new? Thus anyone who peeks behind the curtain, even with only one eye, notices something very sad. New plays not only exist but have been readied; only for the lack of a few pennies are we not staging them."¹⁹ These remarks by someone evidently well acquainted with this theater's affairs indicate that the only reason for the lack of new repertoire was budget shortfall. Leah Gihon's comments, however, must be taken with a grain of salt; with plays being performed time and again in a totally open market, attended by thousands of children in and around Tel Aviv, it seems odd to hear that there was no money for new repertoire. The theater was generating an income and the Kindergarten Teachers' Association helped out with funding. Did this not cover expenses and leave something to spare for new productions? Be this as it may, the theater lost some of its allure and was less frequently invited to perform. After all, how often can one watch the same play?

A revival took shape in the mid-1940s when the Children's Theater decided to present Yitzhak Schweiger's Simlat ha-shabbat shel hannaleh ("Hannaleh's Sabbath Dress"). This play, the first using the Sabbath as its theme,²⁰ was based on a story that was rather well-known at the time. Simlat ha-shabbat shel hannaleh was considered a

great artistic success and was performed often. Its director, Yosef Oxenberg, sought to stress the lyricism, the nobility, the purity of emotion and action that the drama tried to convey to its audience. To this end he made extensive use of poems by Leah Goldberg set to music by Nahum Nardi, simple acting, and sets by Zvi Goldin.

Following the success of Simlat ha-shabbat shel hannaleh, another Yitzhak Schweiger drama was performed: Beriat ha-'olam ("Creation of the World"). This four-act play, too, featured poems by Leah Goldberg and was directed by Yosef Oxenberg.

The troupe was asked to perform both plays in various locales around the country. The Children's Theater, however, had its limitations:²¹ its new plays needed large performance halls, which were not available in the outlying areas.

Another new play, Levin Kipnis' three-act Ta'alulei 'eza ("Escapades of a She-Goat") made its debut on December 26, 1945. It deals with a rambunctious goat that tries to "change its stripes." Although the theme did not seem extraordinary, the opulent sets and the abundance of animal characters on stage, in addition to the goat's escapades, turned the play into an experience and a source of delight for the young onlookers.

Even though Ta'alulei 'eza contained a hint of naughtiness, the theater considered itself a vehicle of education and culture. Thus it decided to make its contribution,

however small, to fostering national sentiments. Ma'ase benamal ("Story of a Port"), also by Kipnis, was set at Tel Aviv Port, which was celebrating its tenth anniversary and symbolized the gateway of immigration to the country. Unlike its predecessors, this play was so simply staged as to be a source of puzzlement. The intent may have been to convey a national message and value rather than to stage an artistic event.²² Precisely for this reason, however, it touched painful nerves and evoked the audience's profound identification.

The Children's Theater reached its peak in the second half of the 1940s and began to fade thereafter. Although, it provided an educational and theatrical commodity for kindergarten and early elementary-school children, it largely stagnated. For almost twenty years it had been for children what Habimah was for adults. The difference was that the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater tried—successfully—to remove the barriers between stage and audience, and to induce young theatergoers to experience and actively participate in the event they were witnessing.

A serious rival for a certain cross-section of the target audience was the cinema. The "movies," relatively new to the country, intrigued the young but offended the teachers, who viewed cinema as crude entertainment and as competition for their pupils' precious time. The latter considered theater an unsullied educational medium and an

appropriate response to the cinema; they probably hoped that this medium would display more involvement and present more offerings related to the here-and-now, i.e., the Yishuv milieu.

If the advantages and virtues of the Children's Theater were clear, its greatest drawback was downplayed. Because it always focused on kindergarten and lower elementary grade children, it neither thought about nor offered anything to the upper elementary and high school grades. Thus there was a large population that found its presentations unsuitable, yet did not attend adult theaters such as Habimah and Ha-ohel. One could, of course, argue that the reason for this oversight was budgetary, but that would seem to be a mere excuse. The neglect of teenagers appears to be more than a random circumstance caused by lack of funds.

Be this as it may, at the end of the British Mandate period—mainly in 1947-1948, when travel on the country's roads became increasingly dangerous—the theater confined itself to the Tel Aviv area, thus forcing the cancellation of many performances. Then came the inevitable step of halting activity until the State of Israel was declared. Activity resumed when it became safe to travel again, and the theater restaged its great success stories of yesteryear—Simlat ha-shabbat shel hannaleh, Bialik's Sefer ha-temunot, Ma'ase be-ram asher lo gam, etc.

Summing up the activity of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater across two decades, from its

establishment in 1928 until the establishment of Israel in 1948, the following may be said:

- * The theater came into being by the initiative of Tova Hiskina, a kindergarten teacher with professional inclinations. Like her colleagues in the kindergartens and elementary schools, she wanted a professional theater that would educate the young and equip kindergarten teachers with an additional educational tool. Her intentions, however, were not enough, and her skills alone were not equal to the task.
- * Tova Hiskina recruited three professionals (Kipnis, Oxenberg, and Goldin), and this group became the theater's leadership.
- * The format selected was the "concert," a kind of mish-mash event with no particular cohesion of its own. The reason for this may have been that the theater, too, had not yet coalesced the events it purported to stage; it may also have been deliberate, reflecting attempts to reach the hearts of the young onlookers. Hence the participation of well-known singers of the time within the "concert" framework.
- * The turning point seems to have been reached in 1933, when the Children's Theater staged Ha-dahlil, a three-act play that was in fact a complete program.
- * The theater was funded in part (possibly in greater part) by the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, and this may have motivated its leaders to be cautious and

stick to the tried-and-true. Otherwise it is hard to explain why the theater's repertoire so rarely changed.

- * Its presentations dealt with standard themes such as Jewish holidays and the world of the child. Only at a later stage did the the country's history become a topic of concern. Almost all the plays were original; those taken from the classical repertoire were reworked and adapted to take account of the country's conditions and the audience.
- * The theater had to contend with problems such as tight budget, lack of facilities, security difficulties that restricted its mobility in the country, etc. All of these affected regular activities.
- * Its failures were two: 1) adherence to a fixed, familiar repertoire that guaranteed success, at the expense of new repertoire, and 2) a priori selection of a specific target audience—children in kindergartens and lower elementary grades—at the expense of teenagers who found themselves disinclined to attend any theater, children's or adult.
- * It is altogether possible that the theater choked on its own umbilical cord, i.e., its strong ties with the Kindergarten Teachers' Association. Had it freed itself of the dictates of the Association and its activists, it would have been more receptive to ideas, innovations, broader activity, and a larger repertoire. Thus

it might have been longer-lived, and its difficulties rather significantly reduced.

Chapter Five

VARYING VIEWS ABOUT HEBREW THEATER AS AN EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM IN PALESTINE

As it developed, and particularly concurrent to the development of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater as a professional enterprise catering specifically to children,¹ theatrical activity in Palestine, especially that for children, gained momentum in all respects. In surveys of such activity in the 1930s, one attribute stands out: attempts to establish new, independent theater groupings, bursting through the traditional confines of the schools.²

When we attempt to consider the 1930s within an inclusive overview, we can hardly disregard the protracted violent disturbances that beset the country in the second half of the decade. The disturbances,³ a symptom of the shaky security situation in the country at that time, affected the Yishuv in various aspects, the theater included. Specifically, the trend toward more widespread activities, so characteristic of the 1920s, came to a halt. Troupes from the center of the country visited the peripheral areas less frequently, and audiences dwindled as well. To be sure, the trend was evident not only in the periphery but in the country's heartland as well. However, while activity in greater Tel Aviv merely decreased, the implications were weightier in the more distant areas such

as the north. By its nature, the slump could have induced two reactions in the theatergoing public: an attitude typified mainly by apathy, seclusion, acquiescence to the existing situation, and making do; or the opposite of this: a stimulus to engage in alternative, local dramatic activity in the absence of "imported" performances from the country's cultural hubs.

The journals of the time articulate the trend clearly. The Yishuv did not sink into somnolence and apathy; growing numbers of studios and dramatic ensembles surfaced in various parts of the country. Thus, for example, an anonymous author in the January, 1939, issue of Bama writes:

...The country's dramatic studios and groups have become vigorously active recently. It's a good augury for the public, and especially for the youngsters' spirit and thirst for theater and artistic experiences. This phenomenon should be fostered and encouraged in every way, including desire on the part of these groups to attract youth to the world of theatrical and general art, their intent to engage in original Hebrew artistic creation, and their attempt to discover the artistic magic of the Jewish communities of Occident and Orient.

Worthy of mention among the studios cited by the author of this article are the Mishkan Dramatic Studio in Jerusalem, which staged Qan ha-neshet ("The Eagle's Nest") and Simha lav dafka ("Not Necessarily Happiness"). In 1934, extensive activity also got underway in a workshop run by the Young Maccabi Youth Movement under Bezalel Batzrawi.⁴

Batzrawi, an ardent theater lover, integrated theatrical work into his duties as Maccabi director.

Batzrawi's major area of concern was stage direction. He undertook the staging of festivities, ceremonies, and gatherings of various kinds. He selected the members of his dramatic group from the young members of his movement, and put together a cohesive group rather quickly. With these pupils-actors he put on several plays, including Ha-gamgeman ("The Stutterer") by the Straumann brothers (which would later be reworked as a radio skit), and Ben ha-paritz ("The Landlord's Son") by Batzrawi himself. The latter notwithstanding, it was his practice to perform the plays of others, such as Ha-dahlil of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater, and Shimshon ha-gibor ("Samson the Hero").

Drama group activity was not confined to youth movements, whose members had always been considered a high-potential population. Two groups came into being in Tel Aviv: the Youth Drama Studio and the Young Actors' Troupe. The latter group, whose members lived in special hostels for youth at risk, performed S. Silver's Yaldei hefger ("Street Kids"). On November 25, 1937, Barukh Krupnick wrote a rather sympathetic article in the daily newspaper Davar, including the following: "... Most of the actors, directed by Benny Frankel, brought an outstanding attitude to their roles and displayed a level of talent we had not expected to find among young actors, let alone young schoolchildren...."

An experiment not to recur was undertaken in Haifa, with the establishment of the Haifa Children's Theater. In 1937 it staged Leah Goldberg's (1911-1970) Beit ha-sefer be-shitafon ("Flood at School"), directed by Ze'ev Berlinski, the theater's sponsor and founder.

Any reviewer of theatrical activity in Palestine during those years must bear one fact in mind. Irrespective of the framework of the activity, and regardless of the actors' or directors' identities, the Jewish festivals continued to be the focus, if not the reason, for staging ceremonial events. They also presented a suitable opportunity to mount the stage. Some of these performances were small-scale theatrical events; others took the form of a mass, carnival-style parade down the city streets. The result was an interesting combination of in-school activity and an outreach from the school to the street, to the mass audience.

Another basic fact stands out when developments of those years are examined: within the panoply of Jewish festivals, Purim was and remains the favorite of theatrically-inclined children. Intrinsically abounding with theatrical elements, Purim increasingly became the central festival in cultural activity in the country in general and the cities in particular.

The following remarks in the children's newspaper Itonneinu ("Our Newspaper") shed some light on Purim festivities in Tel Aviv:

Old and young people in costume sang and set out dancing. The whole city bedecked itself for the festival. A giant dome of light with thousands of electric bulbs was set up on the main street, illuminating the entire area. Street after street of houses were decked out with palm fronds, colored paper, and electric lights. At the end of Allenby Street, a "Palace of Esther" was set up, and its stage was used for plays and entertainment for the crowd. There was also a special entertainment program for children, including storytelling, song and dance, and funny skits. The children participated en masse and had a great, happy time.⁵

A children's Purim musical based on the Scroll of Esther, Purimon le-yeladim, was staged as part of the Purim festivities for 1934. Two years later, D. Berkowitz's (1885-1967) Mis'hak purim ("Purim Play") was performed on the same stage at Esther's Palace at the end of Allenby Street, with a cast of 150 including actors, a chorus, and musicians. The size of the audience indicates how popular and central the event was in the life of the city and its inhabitants.

The children's press, an irregular affair thus far, now acquired two new protagonists: Davar le-yeladim and Ha'arets shelanu. Both immediately became very popular with their youthful audience. They regularly published new plays written for festivals or performed in school, together with precise stage instructions. The papers also provided translated plays such as Ha-me'ushar ("The Happy Man"), a two-act comedy translated by E. Even-Shoshan, dealing with a king who had fallen sick and would never recover unless he dressed in the tunic of a happy man. After searching his kingdom feverishly, the king finds one and only one happy man...who is so poor as not to own a tunic.

Parenthetically, one of the conspicuous contributors to these papers (especially Davar le-yeladim) was Levin Kipnis. Another was Bilha Yaffe, who published plays such as Ba-gina ("In the Garden") and Levivot hanukah ("Hanukah Latkes"). Much of the material was aimed at teachers, thus indicating that this kind of material was in demand by them, too.

As the Yishuv expanded, so did its cultural life. Quite a few of the new European immigrants—from Germany, Russia, Poland, etc.—were either theater-lovers or actual "theater people." Influenced by theater in Germany and Russia, both groups helped shape the local version. A new generation of young theatergoers, whose expectations were not met by the Russian and German styles, blossomed in Palestine. This made the question of Hebrew theater as an educational device more acute than ever.

On August 25, 1930, the National Dramatic Studio was inaugurated on the roof of Tel Aviv's Hotel Gdansky. Participating were several dozen intellectuals, writers, and public figures, including physician-author Yehoshua Heschel Yevin (1891-1970). Yevin launched the event with a speech on how the cultural affinities of Yishuv youth were rooted in forms established in Moscow or Amsterdam; he fervently demanded that Jerusalem be considered the cultural center of youth and that the theater be treated as a major medium for suitably realizing this idea.

Another distinguished participant in this event, physician-author Yaakov Winshall (1891-1981), noted that

audiences in the recent past had thirsted for Biblical drama, adding that this aspiration was met by the great Habima and Ha-ohel troupes. Winshall demurred from this exclusivity; plays on Biblical themes should represent only part of the theater's purpose and content. The theater had to be channeled and connected with developments and events in Yishuv society. Only when once the Yishuv theater became a force in education, he concluded, would it become a national theater.

An interesting and hitherto-ignored question is why physicians with literary affinities set the tone at this inaugural assembly, while other intellectuals, including writers of various kinds, kept a low profile. Was there something about the doctors' background that permitted them a greater freedom of self-articulation? Did the fact that they were not merely "theater people" enable them to say things that full-time theater professionals dared not? The matter definitely deserves special inquiry.

Be this as it may, Yishuv youth, in contrast to youth elsewhere for whom theater was a medium for the articulation of outlooks and aspirations, dissociated themselves from the theaters. Yishuv youth preferred to amuse itself at the "movies," where light, amusing, and enjoyable entertainment was at hand. The "heavier" fare of the theater was of little appeal. Furthermore, much of the repertoire reflected the relative success of plays in Warsaw, Berlin, Vienna, or Moscow.

On the day of the founding conference at the Gdansk Hotel, Hayarden ran the following comments:

... The theater should not only delight us but influence us, too. We want living theater. Theater is the result of a partnership created not by the initiator but the audience. The theater is in fact the major educational and cultural factor in the nation's life. In every civilized country, the theater plays a cultural and educational role of inestimable importance. For the masses, the theater is a kind of school of aesthetics and good taste, a venue of delight and spiritual pleasure. It introduces the public to the artistic works of giants of philosophy and the humanities. It disseminates the delicacies and beauty of the language, and brings literature into the public domain.... Hebrew theater should and can fulfill an important role in educating the Yishuv, disseminating culture, and promoting the Hebrew language.

The timing of these remarks in Hayarden, concurrent to the meeting in the Gdansk Hotel, was not coincidental. It was meant to touch nerves and establish contact at sensitive points. The anonymous writer succeeded in spelling out the theater's objectives in the nation's and people's life, and if we take his writings literally, we may easily understand why youth kept such a distance from the theaters. The reason for this dissociation may have been the fact that many of the theater's offerings were irrelevant to the here-and-now. A play well-received in Vienna or Berlin did not necessarily appeal to Jewish youth in Palestine. Plays with Biblical backgrounds were interesting, but the repertoire could not be based on them alone. Themes of interest to youth were not being dealt with properly in routine theatrical activity.

Even more important, it seems that the theaters' pace-setters were so out of touch with youth that the latter were disinclined to attend.

The intellectuals were not blind to the situation. They called on the theater professionals to educate the public for art and culture, and to foster children and youth as tomorrow's theatergoers. The educationists and the teachers had long been uncertain about their role in promoting the theater. Haya Kushlan, writing in Afikim,⁶ affixed the blame on them and warned that the theater was not being given the attention it deserved—especially with respect to writing plays for children. Educators, Kushlan charged, were being provided with shallow, artistically sterile material that they could hardly prefer. The educators were taken into account only when festivals or school events were at hand, at which time they would frantically pull out one of the old skits in their possession. The repertoire offered no fresh air, no unusual trend of thought, and no new and interesting initiatives.

After this attack on the allegedly sparse and shopworn repertoire, Kushlan turned her sights on the state of teachers' and educators' initiative. The level of performance, too, came under fire:

Children do not like to speak much; what motivates them in every case is their abundant energy and hot temper. In our case [children's theater], by contrast, the unfortunate child is forced to stand there doing nothing and deliver a lengthy speech made up of lots of hard words, [and] to spin off rhymes that this or that author has put in his

mouth.... For lack of appropriate plays, teachers put together parties with a kind of mishmash of whatever's available. That's why you have hardly a Hebrew party without speechifying. This old standard mode of entertainment is utterly uncalled-for. The child cannot express his psyche in any way, nor does he engage in anything creative of his own. Thus the child gets used to unnatural, forced delivery and, while still a child, acquires an affinity for empty pathos.⁷

Haim Aharonovich took Haya Kushlan's lead. A few years later in Hed ha-hinukh,⁸ Aharonovich warned that the goals of dramatic activity in the schools were not being met. Because of inept working methods, the teachers, he charged, were missing out on an experience intrinsic to the process of working with their pupils. They should put aside banal subject matter and, with the theater as their medium, contend with the day-to-day life experience in the country, with special emphasis on the audience's youth.

He regarded children's participation in dramatic activity in elementary schools as the first step toward turning the child into tomorrow's theatergoer. He went on as follows:

The repertoire for schoolchildren is no less crucial an issue than that of Habimah or Ha-ohel. In our case it comes together with the greater problem, i.e., how to shape the presentation in the school. This activity is full of educational potential. The child's impressions of the performance are engraved deep into his heart and memory. Here much is done toward developing his aesthetic senses; here is the crucible of his future artistic, dramatic, musical and plastic tastes. The play presents the teacher with the kind of opportunity to impart information and ideas, social and public habits—and more—that she cannot fully attain in the bustle of day-to-day study, either for lack of time or for lack of ability. In this sense, the play is educationally

equivalent to many days of dreary classroom study.⁹

Thus Aharonovich considered ordinary education as one facet of the inculcation of basic values, and regarded theatrical activity as an additional facet complementary to the first. Children's theater was a medium with which teachers could impart everything that the conventional system, for objective or other reasons, could not.

Dr. Haim Gamzu (1909-1982), subsequently one of Israel's most important theater critics, considered school theatrical activity a factor of great importance in cultivating a new generation of theater activists¹⁰ —tomorrow's actors, directors, and costume designers. Unlike the others, Gamzu stressed not the values but rather the artistic experience children would acquire by attending the theater.

The absence of systematic theater education for youth, like the absence of comprehensive action toward fostering the arts in general and theater in particular, continued to preoccupy educators and intellectuals. N. Livne, in an article headlined "Artistic Education For Youth" published in Bama ("Stage") in February, 1937,¹¹ also pinned blame on the government and the educational establishment, which he considered responsible for setting the direction of education for the arts. In his article he expressed his fear of the lurking menace of cultural degeneration that youth faced. To thwart it he counseled that no effort be spared

that would tend to attract youngsters to the theatrical world and train them to be useful citizens.

Yehudit Bittner addressed herself to the absence of systematic education in the theatrical arts, and even offered a practical answer: action should be taken as early as the lower elementary grades toward building an audience that would understand, react, and relate to what took place on the theater stage. Youth, she argued, was preoccupied with concerns such as sports and politics at the expense of theater and the arts. To attract youngsters to the arts in general and the theater in particular, they should be made into "consumers," and the artistic activity into a more effervescent "commodity." There were two ways of bringing this about: establishing relations with existing theaters, which would stage dramas suited to youth; and staging encounters on theater topics with the creators and producers of theatrical works. If activity were to take place along the lines proposed by Bittner, these youth circles would eventually experience for themselves the work of producing and writing drama; they would ultimately give rise to what Bittner called "a theater of youth for youth."

We may summarize this chapter as follows:

- * The basic format persisted into the late 1930s. Theatrical activity remained within the school framework, peaking on the festivals, especially Purim. While this meant that most of the work was still

amateurish, the teachers now had access to journals and newspapers that printed original and translated plays.

- * An interesting trend became evident during the decade: movement from the school confines toward the outside world. There were attempts to embark on studio activity in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa. These came into being and functioned under the inspiration of motivated, concerned people such as Batzrawi, Berlinsky, etc. Still, the large theaters (Habimah, Hahel, etc.) and other such entities had nothing to do with this activity.
- * The controversy, as old as the theatrical activity itself, as to the role of the theaters—or to be more precise, the functions of theatrical activity—repeatedly surfaced in Yishuv public life. Its protagonists were educators and intellectuals, the latter including physician-authors, journalists, etc. Oddly for a dispute of this kind, concerning the theater as a factor in education, the "theater people" as such were hardly the leaders.
- * The focus of the argument was the function of education for the theater, and of the theater itself, in the country in general and education in particular. Here, as expected, various and diverse ruminations and thoughts were voiced. Some considered school theater a medium for instilling national values if the appropriate national messages were communicated. Others

viewed it as a supplementary education activity alongside general education, and a device for instilling values that could not be imparted conventionally for various reasons. Still others, prominently led by critic Dr. Haim Gamzu, argued that the school theater setting was in fact a crucible for tomorrow's practitioners of the theatrical arts—not the audience but the directors, actors, playwrights, and costume designers.

- * Insofar as this controversy can be summarized, one gains the impression that the last word had not been said and that theatrical activity articulating its contents had (and still has) not yet played itself out.

Chapter Six

HABIMAH AND HA-OHEL—AIMING FOR YOUTH

The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater—which, beyond the educational values it represented, was of importance in focusing attention on age groups in whom no professional theatrical entity showed an interest—joined the dramatic studios that had begun to make an impact around the country as frontrunners of a certain kind. It was the vanguard that broke through the tradition of confining theatrical activity to the schools alone. It was the pioneer that blazed a new trail to the new but natural destination. However, during this theater's life, and even when the studios built around "children's theater nuts" were active,¹ the major forces and the significant players in drama—the large theaters—still hung back. These, notwithstanding the pretensions they appeared to arrogate to themselves, had not yet discovered the market segment represented by the young, tomorrow's theatergoers; at that stage they neither knew nor considered how to lure it into the theatrical experience.

However, the intent was clear. Even if the process developed at a slow pace, the end was inevitable. The progress was steady and clear, as in a ripple effect. Once the first "stone" hits the water, further stagnation is no longer possible.

This protracted process began with the traditional amateur theatrical activity organized by zealous school-teachers and educators, and culminated with regular productions by the large, professional theaters, aimed from the outset at children and youth. In the middle was a "way-station" in the person and work of Dr. Shmuel Navon, whose accomplishments undoubtedly represented a landmark in the history of theatrical activity in Palestine.

Shmuel Navon settled in the country in 1919 and studied at the Teachers' Seminar in Jerusalem. Moving to Tel Aviv upon graduation, he was one of the founders of the first Histadrut school. Like other colleagues, Shmuel Navon integrated dramatic activity into his teaching. Thus, for example, he and his pupils collaborated in writing, producing, and performing Esh ("Fire").

In this manner he began to organize his pupils into something resembling a troupe. The name he chose was Bnai Shimshon ("Sons of Samson"). They designed special uniforms to indicate their self-awarded status as a distinctive youth movement. As they worked, they constantly underscored the fact that they were separate and "different." There is hardly any other way to explain why they strove to devise a special manner of presenting drama for children, which sought, so they said (corroborated by Dr. Navon himself in an interview with me on January 23, 1983), to understand the child's psyche in the pedagogical sense. They believed that this was the way to contend with the question of how to tell

children a story by means of dramatic presentation and how sets and music can communicate the story's background, ambiance, and send messages to the audience. The guiding principle was that actors would use these tools in their acting, and teachers in their teaching, so their message would reach the child audience.²

"Bnai Shimshon" made its debut on May 14, 1933, with Ma'ayan ha-kesamim ("The Magic Spring") by Brakha Habas (1900-1968). The director was Zvi Friedland (1898-1967), Zvi Golding (1899-1962) designed the sets, and the music was composed by Yedidya Agmon-Gorokhov (1894-1982). This play, staged in Teatron Eretz Yisrael ("Eretz Israel Theater") on Rothschild Avenue in Tel Aviv, was performed by actors in special costume. The children were brought to the theater in an organized manner, and were met at the auditorium entrance by the costumed actors who then ushered them to their seats. Thus the actors initiated social contact with their audience, and introduced an ambiance of discipline and cultured, well-mannered behavior in the theater. As the curtain rose, the actors climbed onto the stage. As the audience observed, they assumed their roles in the play with the help of symbolic costume items such as tails, ears, etc.

Shmuel Navon's activities will be better understood after a review of his background. Although an educationist by training, Navon was attracted to the theatrical world; at a certain stage he even joined the Habimah acting studio run by Menachem Gnessin (1882-1951) and helped stage The Dybbuk.

A small company of theater-loving educators had begun to coalesce at the time; it was their wish to promote the stage arts in the educational settings of the schools and kindergartens. This group, to which Navon belonged, regarded study in kindergarten the foundation for school itself, and the early elementary studies as the second level of education. It was therefore crucial to give the child the best, both in kindergarten and in elementary school, for it was then that his/her cultural world would be shaped.

After parting ways with Gnessin, Navon still permitted himself no rest. The question of how to integrate education and theater troubled him greatly. He began to attract supporters from the Habimah studio, starting with Zalman Kahanov and Eliezer Drakhles. Friends such as Sara Levi-Tannai and Yemima Czernovitz, and established an acting company. He appointed director and teacher Zvi Friedland (who was affiliated with Habimah) as its manager and regisseur. Rehearsals and studies took place in the Dugma kindergarten in the Neve Tzedek neighborhood in the afternoons and evenings, because all the actors worked as teachers during the mornings. Zvi Friedland succeeded in equipping his actors with the tools and acting skills they would need to perform for children, in addition to the usual arts of oratory and motion.

The acting style fluctuated between realism and a stylized mode in which the actors would involve the audience in mid-play. Special emphasis was placed on reworking plays

for interesting, humorous presentation from the child's point of view. Navon's doctrine held that plays should be adapted to the audience's age, and it is therefore understandable that every play had more than one version. Each play ended with a song in which the entire audience was invited to participate. The actors came down from the stage and organized a procession in which the children were led, row by row, from their seats to the exits.

This contact between performers and audience, however, did not end when the curtain fell on the Teatron Eretz Yisrael stage. They asked a committee of educators to recommend their work in the schools, the traditional setting of plays for children and youth. Nor was this the only initiative. The actors, too, went from school to school, handed out leaflets, talked with the teachers about the theater in general and their own plays in particular, and, in short, "sold" their goods and made all preparations for the event of theatergoing.³

The second Bnai Shimshon production was David ve-shaul ("David and Saul") by Yitzhak Shenburg (Shenhar) (1902-1957), which followed the Biblical account. Here again, the actors disregarded the "fourth wall" of the stage so as to remove all obstacles between themselves and the audience. Again the audience participated and involved itself in the play. It seemed that Bnai Shimshon had found an effective and interesting mode of performance. But the difficulties were quick to come. When David ve-shaul was presented,

director and manager Zvi Friedland resigned following pressure by the Habimah management, which did not view with favor "their" man's involvement with a competing group.

The departure of Friedland, whose role in the group was pivotal and crucial, was not the only setback suffered by the group. "When it rains, it pours." Budget shortfall, seemingly an essential part of almost all cultural activity, made life hard for the Bnai Shimshon troupe, too, and made its continued regular activity a matter of doubt; David ve-shaul was challenged. Donations from private parties, and the actors' willingness to work for nothing and even cover some of the expenses out of pocket, allowed two performances only.⁴ Then the curtain fell on both David ve-shaul and this welcome and interesting Bnai Shimshon initiative.

We now return to the process mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, to trace the process to its end: the involvement of the country's large theaters in dramatic activity especially for children and youth. It is absolutely clear that these theaters could not remain indifferent once the issue became a matter of public interest. A rising crescendo of calls for their participation ensued. In view of the activism of "zealots" such as Batzrawi and others who were more amateurs than professionals, there was room in the arena for an influx of professionals. The leading figures in large professional theaters evidently concurred. They understood, however late the hour, that it was important for them to take systematic action to attract youth and children to

the theater. A first step in this direction was taken in late 1933, when initial gatherings were held in Tiberias, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. Here the infrastructure of the "Habimah Youth Circle" was built.

This group first met officially on January 27, 1934, in the Habimah hall in Tel Aviv. Emphasis was placed on the need to channel some of the energy and social involvement of Yishuv youth to culture and art.

Margot Klausner (Brendstatter) (1905-1975), manager of Habimah at the time, spoke on the interrelation of the theater and youth, and, in reference to the latter, said:

Youth in this country were born and schooled under the same joyous circumstances to which all previous generations aspired, for which they fought, and on whose behalf they suffered. They live in freedom, speaking their own language in their own country.... The future of Jewry depends on youth, because it is youth, everywhere and at all times, who possess the driving force to effect decisive innovations and change. The person who pushes and propels is the one who determines fate. A popular theater—and Habimah is a popular theater—can present and project an image only to those who live among the people.... Keep up your personal contact with your theater, and be aware that its fate will one day be yours to decide.⁵

What Klausner had in mind, then, was an equation: youth on one side, the theater on the other, and a certain result, identified in her remarks, produced by the relationship between them. She foresaw youth as playing a clear and important role, and considered it a force that would effect innovations and changes and do much to mold the nation's fate. By the same token, any theater with pretensions of

catering to the masses—and Habimah was worthy of such a description, she asserted—should and could commune with the here-and-now and could not dissociate itself from the context of the people and surrounding society. By attracting youth to the theater, the latter's continued existence would be secured; today's young theatergoers, if they liked what they saw and continued to attend its presentations, would provide it with the oxygen without which it could not survive.

This group, the Habimah Youth Circle, became a fixture of the theater scene. From year to year its ranks grew, mostly in the form of organized groups including youth movements and the like. The first core group, which was also the largest, came from the Tel Aviv branch—the natural venue, since Tel Aviv was the country's largest city and Habimah's home. This core group was firmly affiliated with the theater itself. Over the years, however, additional branches were opened in Jerusalem, Ramat Gan, and secondary towns such as Tiberias and Rehovot.

The group was sufficiently well organized as to issue publications and newssheets describing its activities. Its members usually met on Friday or Saturday evenings. Monthly cultural activity included attending plays such as The Dybbuk, Yom shishi ha-gatzar ("Short Friday") 'Amkha ("Ordinary Folk"), Oto ve-et bno ("He and His Son") Uriel Acosta, etc. Sometimes these encounters took the form of social gatherings, in which excerpts of drama were recited

and acted out by Habimah actors Rafael Klatchkin, Shimon Finkel, and Fania Lubich, and songs and tunes performed by Nahum Nardi or Brakha Tzefira. In addition to these were enrichment lectures on various theater- or drama-related themes, delivered by the finest lecturers and intellectuals of the time: poet Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934), Dr. Haim Hadari, and Habimah director Zvi Friedland. More than two thousand persons—a tremendous number in terms of those days, when the Yishuv population did not exceed 200,000—subscribed to the Habimah youth group in Tel Aviv alone!

The initial meeting and all subsequent gatherings were held in either the Habimah building in Teatron Eretz Yisrael (later the Sderot Cinema) or, on less frequent occasions, in the Mughrabi Auditorium in downtown Tel Aviv. For the youth in the group, these meetings were an artistic substitute of sorts for the traditional 'oneg shabbat—a casual, hearty, but formal weekly ritual. Subsequently, this format spread beyond the confines of Tel Aviv, the first all-Jewish city, and became a festive, experiential event once it did so.

Miriam Farkash of Moshav Merhaviva in the Jezreel Valley described the visit of the Tel Aviv acting troupe as follows:

One day our teacher told us that we were going to go to [Moshav] Kfar Yehezkel, where we'd attend a Habimah performance. What wonderful news this was! We waited anxiously for the day to come. When it did, we prepared our belongings and met at school in the afternoon. The wagon came and we climbed aboard. When the wagon moved, we cheered.... It

raced forward, and in a flash we had left the moshav, in full-throated song. It seemed that the green fields, too, jubilantly accompanied us.... Reaching the auditorium at Kfar Yehezkel, we sat down on benches. There was lots of noise. Some of us were laughing; others were angry. Everyone was mixed together like a porridge. The screen was pulled open and everyone fell silent. The play was lovely. It was called 'Amkha'.⁶

If we take Miriam Farkash's comments literally as the natural, sincere, unpretentious writings of a schoolchild, we may appreciate how significant the event she described was for her and her classmates. The teacher's announcement, the preparations, the wagon ride—which could not have been comfortable—made the children happy because they were looking forward to the event at hand. Even the descriptions of the landscape ("jubilantly accompanying us"), the details of the account, the excitement and commotion in the hall, all clearly point at the joy that seized the schoolchildren from Merhavia, who made their way to Moshav Kfar Yehezkel to watch a play.

In the habitual manner of groups and organizations, including voluntary ones, the Habimah Youth Circle took the first opportunity to elect a committee to handle routine activity, initiatives, and the setting and implementation of policy. This committee shaped the group's activity and brought in representatives of Habimah itself. Together they established a multi-year program: they chose the plays that members of the group would watch, the lecturers who would address them and the topics on which they would speak, and special and sundry events to be held. The plays Professor

Mannheim and The Golem were two examples of the committee's work. The Habimah group therefore rapidly turned into a fixture in the leisure culture scene of Yishuv youth, and its diverse activity fostered a constructive and interesting encounter between youth and the theater.

Naturally, when one takes a stance and does something, somebody else—half colleague, half rival—hastily follows suit. Some call this rivalry, others competition, still others imitation, and even others "response to audience demand and taste." Thus after Habimah took the initiative, Ha-ohel came in hasty pursuit.

Ha-ohel Theater was established in 1925, and its intent was unique: it would be a vanguard theater, whose actors would perform not just for a living, but as their after-hours pastime as well. It started out with a socialistic-proletarian coloration, and operated out of a little shack on the Tel Aviv beach. Its manager and living spirit was Moshe Halevi (1895-1974), a disciple of Stanislavski and Vachtangov and a former Habimah man, umbilically and ideationally affiliated with the Histadrut⁷ and the proletariat cause.

At first—or, more precisely, until the Ha-ohel Youth Group was established—Ha-ohel's actors came into little contact with youth, and focused on plays with historical or Biblical themes such as Herod and Miriam. Sarah Weill, a student at Bialik School in Tel Aviv, wrote in the school's newspaper that this particular play was an experience that

she and her classmates experienced with bated breath; it left a tremendous impression on them.⁸

But one flower does not a spring make. Ha-ohel still did not take the trouble to give thought to the youth market. This particular initiative, as stated, came about only after the competing theater, Habimah, set up its own youth group.

On January 31, 1939, Ha-ohel established Ha-ohel La-no'ar ("Ha-ohel for Youth"), and under its auspices focused on the pioneering youth movements. Participants in the founding meeting included representatives of youth organizations belonging to the agricultural settlement movements, the Tel Aviv Labor Council cultural committee, and Ha-ohel itself. This meeting, too, established guidelines for the group's activity. According to a mimeographed sheet produced by Ha-ohel actor Yehuda Gabai⁹ just before this inaugural meeting, the group's activity structures were established: monthly gatherings, youth club events, theatergoing, and lectures on the theater and its problems.

An examination of these frameworks reveals that they were virtual mirror-images of Habimah's Youth Circle. The Ha-ohel group's initial encounters were social and cultural by nature. Pupils came, listened to lectures, watched plays, and built festive events of their own (e.g., nishfei peretz, or "Peretz parties") around some of them. Ha-ohel la-no'ar, however, was deficient in two major respects. First, it met with difficulty in gathering a large and stable core group

of students; second, it failed to establish permanent, continuous relationships and activities. The reason for this may have been that the rival Habimah group acquired an image of greater exclusivity because the Habimah name itself attracted youth. It may also be that Habimah, which "beat" Ha-ohel to this initiative, simply established a better infrastructure. It may also have established a firmer hold on its audience, thus making Ha-ohel's task, once it tried to enter this field of activity, a difficult one.

It is interesting that while the two theaters were in fact competing for the same limited potential audience of youth, and while neither had a large and varied repertoire suited to this market, one of them flourished and the other fought for its very existence. Indeed, it was the group with the broader grasp that survived: the Habimah Youth Circle held on, while its rival, Ha-ohel, swiftly went the way of all flesh.

In summarizing this chapter, the following points should be stressed:

- * It became necessary to introduce changes in the traditional school-based patterns of theatrical activity. These changes were introduced in various places as a result of private, personal, and group initiatives by "theater fanatics."
- * This new activity articulated local demands, which the large theaters could not help but see. The large

theaters entered into this field of activity slowly and hesitantly.

- * Studios staffed by people with access to the theater, although not always professional theater people, came into being in Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv. Shmuel Navon's troupe stood out among them, because it was more professional than the others and because it represented a new conception; it functioned as a youth movement with uniforms and ideational messages, and it based itself on what its leaders considered an educational outlook attuned to its goals.
- * Even as the local studios' activity developed, so did that of Habimah and Ha-ohel. Habimah was the first; its rival, Ha-ohel, followed. Habimah won this contest, attracting hundreds of young followers. Although it offered a range of activities, it did not have a large repertoire.
- * Even though it tried to emulate the operations of its veteran rival, the Ha-ohel youth group succumbed. Strangely, factors not necessarily theatrical were at work in the two theaters' artistic competition. The reasons the Habimah Youth Circle survived had little to do with the plays or activities it offered its members, but rather more to the strength of its reputation as a quasi-"national" theater, and its organizational skills.

Chapter Seven

BACK TO THE TRADITIONAL FORMAT IN AND OUT OF THE SCHOOLS

One consequence of the activity of the two large, professional theaters was dissatisfaction among Yishuv youth. When Habimah and Ha-ohel embarked on a new venture in the form of youth groups, it seemed that the long-sought change was at hand. However, the two theaters were unprepared, remained uncertain about the repertoire, and chose plays that did not meet the needs and expectations of the youth audience.¹

At the same time, the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater proceeded in its usual way and even continued to grow steadily. It aimed, however, at a distinct and very young age group: children in kindergartens and the lower elementary grades. Thus this theater, too, had little to offer teenagers.

In the absence of appropriate, pleasurable, and convenient means of entertainment, Yishuv youth looked outside the contours of the large theaters. In view of the range of possibilities, they opted for musical performances, lighter cultural events and amusements, satirical plays, and comedies on social themes. One of the teenagers affected, Arie Avneri, struck the right nerve in an article entitled "Youth Blames the Theater": "We youth in Eretz Israel are looking for a theater of our own, one which will express

what's in our hearts, our psychic essence, our emotions, hopes, yearnings, the new ways of life taking shape among us."² By implication, the country's existing theater was out of touch with the here and now, failed to properly articulate the hopes, yearnings, and very being of youth, and, in a few words, was not reflecting what was happening in the country. Hence the distressing alienation of youth from the theater.

Cognoscenti were aware of the dissociation of Yishuv youth from so-called "serious theater." Those engaging in light, satirical entertainment were rewarded with success for their efforts, while those who supported and nurtured the development of serious theater faced quite the opposite fate with respect to youth. While members of a satirical troupe such as Ha-matateh ("Broom")³ jubilantly enjoyed a renaissance, theater critic Dr. Haim Gamzu considered the inclination of youth to frequent this kind of theater or, perhaps, to distance itself from serious work, as a dangerous phenomenon liable to undermine the very existence of theater in the country. Apprehensive that this trend might gain strength, he called for a revival of the cadres whose goal it was to train future theatergoers in general and future actors in particular.⁴

This lengthy process, Gamzu asserted, had to begin as close to the origin as possible, i.e., with youth, and activity had to span the entire country. Every region should have theater centers shared by several kibbutzim; the

establishment of amateur troupes in the cities and villages should be promoted; school and kindergarten teachers' colleges should engage in their own dramatic activity.

Not content merely to propose and demand action, Gamzu described in writing how action in the desired direction might be taken. He presented a plan to recruit the best actors and organize them into groups together with other theater people; these groups would implement his proposals in the kibbutzim, villages, cities, and colleges.⁵

Neither would it suffice to put people to work or to attend plays. Theater education had to be promoted wherever theatrical literature was studied in high school. In other words, high school students had to be made familiar with plays and playwrights, read plays of various kinds—original or translated—peruse criticism, and learn how to analyze the latter two. All this would equip every student with the tools needed for understanding, love, and critique of the theater. Thus, too, indigenous theater could exist and might even develop. In conclusion, Gamzu asserted: "The future of the indigenous theater has to be based on student and working youth in towns and country, on the teachers, and on the future teachers of the successor generation."⁶

As one of the country's leading theater critics, Gamzu said what he felt and believed important. But comments similar to his had been said about a full year before him by Paulina Appenschlake in her article "The Theater and the School," published in Bama in June, 1946. Appenschlake

pointed at the severe shortage of young actors, playwrights, and directors. Departing from conventional wisdom, which attributed the alienation of youth from serious theater to the lack of an appropriate repertoire and a dramatic message out of touch with the country,⁷ the author assigned the blame to a different factor: absence of leisure time. Teenagers, she argued, were overly preoccupied in politics or sports, leaving no time for the theater.

There may have been a kernel of truth to this, but Appenschlake's comments are hard to accept without challenge. Even if we bear in mind that the years in question, the 1940s, were marked by feverish activity in defense of the country and that youth participated in this activity rather extensively, it is still hard to blame events of the time for the fact that youth did not bother with the theater. Were this so, the satirical theaters, too, such as Ha-matateh—and not only Habimah and Ha-ohel—should have been affected. The fact that the initial turnout of youth at the serious theaters was rather good clearly indicates that the subsequent slump in interest stemmed from factors directly related to Habimah and Ha-ohel.

A more inclusive survey of developments in Yishuv theater supports our claim. The Yishuv's security situation and general circumstances during World War II and immediately before the State of Israel came into being did not interfere significantly with routine, ongoing activity in the traditional, long-established frameworks—i.e., the

elementary schools and kindergartens. Various festivities and performances were staged there, and, in keeping with tradition, were invariably associated with the Jewish festivals. This activity, notwithstanding the innovations introduced in local theater, toed the long-familiar line: the same repertoire, manner of presentation, and circumstances, i.e., Jewish holidays and the like. To the theater activists, it seems, this was the secret of success and survivability. To others, however, it was the major flaw. The familiar plays, already presented innumerable times, were presented again, and most were not optimally suitable for young children; some were superficial and shallow. However, successful or not, the plays were "taught" to the children by means of extensive and intensive memorization of lines. The acting, too, was ostentatious and overdone.

Here, it must be admitted, the approach of Asher Ehrlich⁸ won out. The path he had paved many years hitherto proved convenient and feasible a generation later, too. The pattern of theater-aware teachers with theatrical and didactic inclinations resurfaced. An increasing number of teachers and educators made names for themselves with their devoted activity in the field of theater.

Tirza Martzbach put theater to educational and therapeutic uses. Together with her pupils, she staged David and Goliath (Hed ha-hinukh, 9-11, 1940), using puppets made of rolls of paper. This marked an innovative initiative

attesting to fertile imagination and concurrent economizing on funds (which did not exist in any case).

The estate of Shaul Ziv, an educator and an educational inspector, contains a wealth of plays of the kind that were written or reworked for the schools that Ziv inspected. A conspicuous personality in this material is educator Rivka Guzani, who taught in Petah Tikva, Jerusalem, and Jaffa in the 1940s. Guzani was blessed with special teaching talent and great aptitude in writing short plays for children. She considered drama, lyric poetry, and dance as correct and useful vehicles for substantiating tradition and designing an original, indigenous drama style, i.e., preserving the old and shaping the new.

Like Asher Ehrlich, who headed for the countryside to bear the tidings of the theater, educator Tzafrira Yarkoni set out for the immigrants' transit camp in Pardes Katz, between Bnei Brak and Ramat Gan, where she established a drama group in the local school in 1954/55. Such a camp was a temporary collection of shacks, tents, or canvas huts housing the most recent arrivals—most from the Islamic countries—en route to permanent settlement. Yarkoni's work deserves special appreciation, if only because the camp in which she worked was tenanted by immigrants from Iraq, Yemen, and North Africa, most of whose native language was Arabic and whose Hebrew vocabulary was scanty at best. It was precisely here that Yarkoni faced her greatest challenge. She turned the drama group in the local school

into a creative social club. Together with her colleagues she staged Perah lev ha-zahav, as reworked by Mordechai Gorali. Yarkoni explained what she saw in this work in the newspaper Urim (April, 1956): "One of the important accomplishments that I had not foreseen was that the children would quickly learn the theater, develop an attitude toward it, begin attending children's plays, and take interest in our Israeli theater. Let's not forget that these children's parents go to the movies at best; and the children could not have heard of the theater from them."⁹

If this return to the traditional setting of Yishuv children's theater—the schools and kindergartens—was something of an innovation in the sense of teachers' going out to the transit camps (to name only one example), here, too, the last word had not yet been said. Dramatic activity was rather extensive in other educational frameworks as well, such as "youth villages" and agricultural schools.

In these institutions, which were and still are dispersed around the country, the children learned under residential conditions, i.e., the school was their home. Most of the pupils were immigrant children and youngsters who had reached the country clandestinely during and after World War II. Several of them—Kadoori Agricultural School,¹⁰ Mikve Yisrael,¹¹ Ben Shemen Youth Village,¹² Nitzanim,¹³ and 'Ayanot¹⁴—engaged in rather intensive dramatic activity. An example was the Meir Shefeya Youth Village,¹⁵ not far from the agricultural town of Zikhron

Ya'aqov. Shefaya's presentations were particularly outstanding, and not only by virtue of the educators (the Jakobs) who worked there and directed their pupils.

Dr. Paul Jakob and his wife Francesca came to Shefeya from Germany in the early 1940s, bringing a German cultural background, educational values, and behavior patterns. It soon became apparent that they were turning the village's cultural life around. Paul Jakob taught history, ostensibly a subject rife with the kind of memorization of dates and names that ensures ennui. However, he found ways, as his pupils attest, to make his history lessons into fascinating experiences, varied presentations engraved forever into the listeners' memories.

Jakob also had a great affinity for the theater. He selected classical works such as Molière's The Miser and The Imaginary Invalid, and plays from Jewish tradition such as Sholom Aleichem's 'Amkha and Gid'on ha-shofet ("Gideon the Judge"), and translated them into Hebrew. He then staged these plays with his students, most of whom came from Yemen, Iraq, and Syria—countries not noted for European-style theatrical activity. This notwithstanding, and although the performers hardly understood Hebrew, Jakob successfully steered the actors and the plays down the right avenue until, by developing both the material and the actors, he produced significant experiential theatrical events. As an indication of his success, his plays, first performed in

Meir Shefeya, were in great demand elsewhere in the country as major attractions at various and diverse events.

While using his dramatic activity as vehicle for the promotion of education and values, he also contributed something to the pupils themselves. He helped them find their identity and place in the society they had so recently reached. In other words, he helped them acculturate themselves in a new country. The channel he chose boosted the pupil-actors' motivation, articulation, and integration. Once the youngsters found that drama was a medium promoting these assets, they gave it their all. From almost the very first moment, then, his theater became an experiential one where the pupils had a hand in the entire creative process. It and the participants influenced each other reciprocally. Indeed, no few disciples of Paul Jakob's (including well-known Israeli performers such as Hillel Ne'eman, Juki Arkin, and Shimon Ciani) subsequently chose art, especially theatrical art, as their life's calling. At Meir Shefeya, under Dr. Paul Jakob's tutelage, they were given the kernel that would grow into a career and a profession.

Jakob's enterprise was not the only one to come forth from the outlying villages. Activities of other schools became known, and some performed in settings other than those originally intended. In 1943, students at Sokolow School in Jerusalem presented The Tales of Robin Hood in three acts, directed by Raphael Zvi, and Eliezer ben yerushalayim ("Eliezer the Jerusalemite") at Zion Cinema.¹⁶

Tel Aviv did not lag behind Jerusalem. In 1944, students in the Herzliya Gymnasium presented Bar Kokhba with a choir and orchestra. The director was Habimah's Zvi Friedland,¹⁷ who had previously worked with youth. A few years later, the same high school staged Ma'apilim ("Clandestine Immigrants"), based on an account by David Shimonovitch (Shimoni) (1886-1956) and directed by Avraham Ninio.¹⁸ For this performance, the Herzliya Gymnasium students hosted members of the Habimah Youth Circle. The latter group, marking its tenth anniversary, was considering how to promote theater awareness among youth; on March 3, 1945, Habimah—largely thanks to the leaders of the youth group using its name—held admissions tests for its drama school. More than 100 boys and girls sat for these exams. This is an impressive number by all accounts, and it may offer an indication of teenagers' interest in the theater.

In Haifa, too, the traditional format of dramatic activity took over again. In August, 1945, the Pinhas Rothenburg Youth Center on Mount Carmel launched a seminar for youth counselors entitled "Music, Song, and Theater"; and its teachers included several members of Habimah.

At the end of that year, another attempt to establish a children's theater was made in the Haifa area. This venture, called Koleinu ("Our Voice"), was in fact the children's theater of the Haifa branch of the Teachers' Association. Here again, the prime mover was a "theater fanatic," educator and stage director A.L. Yaron, who by use of this

medium aspired to attain the objective of predecessors such as Ben-Yehuda and Yelin: to instill Hebrew among the students as a spoken, beautiful, simple language based on ancient sources but developing with the times.

"Koleinu's" first presentation was Ronni Harzoni ("Rhyming Ronni"), a folk myth written by Yaron himself. A tremendous success, it was performed about twenty times in Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Rehovot, and Ein Harod. In its wake, "Koleinu" put on another play: Eli peli ve-yedidav ("Eli the Wonder Boy and His Friends"), again by Yaron. It, too, was staged repeatedly in Haifa, Tel Aviv, and the Jezreel Valley settlements, and was viewed by thousands of children and teenagers, teachers and parents. The June 1946 issue of La-horim (a journal for parents) critiqued this play as follows: "Apart from its attractive content and excellent acting, [Eli peli] feasts the eye with the wealth of color in its sets and costumes, and titillates the audience with music, song, and dance, prepared and guided by artistic personalities, including reputable people such as Gertrude Kraus."

Koleinu Theater had 32 child and two adult activists. In the process of its work, emphasis was placed on the educational dimension, and the children's involvement was sought not only in acting but in preparing and organizing the sets, costumes, and accessories. The organizers also went to some lengths to create an intimate atmosphere of humble activity, lest the children learn to be haughty. At

the end of its first, experimental year, Koleinu closed down because of financial and organizational problems. Once again, a unique attitude, talented people, will power, and initiative were not enough. Money still mattered.

Establishment theatrical entities and small troupes continued to experiment in presenting drama to children. In February, 1946, the Qatina Theater's Jerusalem studio presented Ha-na'ar ha-sonah ilanot ("The Boy Who Hated Trees") in Jerusalem's Edison Cinema.¹⁹ In Tel Aviv, four leading members of the Cameri Theater—Batya Lancet, Avraham Ben-Yosef, Mordechai Ben Ze'ev, and Yosef Milo (the first three actors, the fourth a director) formed a group they called Lehakat ha-ma'arkhonim ("Sketch Troupe"). They presented C.N. Bialik's Aluf betzalot ve-aluf shum ("General Garlic and General Onion") in Tel Aviv and Haifa, performing for schoolchildren in the morning and for teenagers and parents in the afternoon.

Ha-matateh ("Broom") Theater and its repertoire of satire enjoyed a rebirth during those years. In March, 1949, it presented Yemima Czernowitz's Rafi ben-ha-gal'il ("Rafi of Galilee"), which dealt with children's reaction to the events of Israel's War of Independence, then in its final stages. Ha-matateh proved in this case that it had its finger on the public pulse, providing youngsters with drama against a familiar background with which they could easily identify. Perhaps because everyone knew that the young had

been bearing the brunt of the war burden, Rafi played to packed halls.

In sum, the following points should be stressed:

- * Because the large, professional "serious" theaters — Habimah and Ha-ohel—failed to attract youth, teenagers were in fact estranged from their activities. Their serious, well-crafted works did not always speak the "language" of Yishuv and Israeli youth, who preferred lighter entertainment: movies, satirical drama, or comedy.
- * In the wake of the Habimah and Ha-ohel failures, the traditional, long-standing dramatic activity in the schools and kindergartens went through a renaissance. Theatrically minded teachers and others played an important role in this revival. Some of the plays originally performed in rural villages and schools were later taken "on the road."
- * The socio-cultural function of dramatical activity in the schools became increasingly apparent. In the transit camps where new and unacculturated immigrants were accommodated, and in the residential youth "villages" and farm communities where most pupils were very recent arrivals who were not yet fluent in Hebrew and familiar with the local culture, theater was a socio-educational medium meant to bridge the gaps.
- * Parallel to the school activities, Habimah and Ha-ohel professionals were also active, although in

independently-run operations unrelated to the large theaters. They performed all over the country with relative success, demonstrating that there was a need which they were trying to meet.

Chapter Eight

ELIEZER ANSKY AND THE BAMATEINU THEATER

A new and rather exceptional troupe came on the cultural-theatrical scene in late 1947, at the end of the British Mandate period. It was the Bamateinu Theater, powered by Eliezer Ansky. Indeed, Ansky was its driving force from the day it was conceived until its demise in the early 1960s.

We cannot explore Bamateinu's unique attributes without acquainting ourselves with the background of the initiative and the initiator. Eliezer Ansky reached Palestine in 1947 from Bulgaria, where he had been born. In the "old country" he had directed large-scale children's plays with casts of actors, singers, and dancers. At the same time, he had dabbled in journalism. Upon reaching Palestine, he foreswore his double life and opted exclusively for the theater. He considered children's theater his profession and calling. To pursue this goal he made contact with the Cultural Department of the Histadrut General Committee¹ and obtained funding from it to produce his first play.

Ansky's initiative provoked great curiosity and interest. The Bamateinu Theater was a gust of fresh air on the local children's theater scene. The question of the need for an artistic framework for children again surfaced in Israeli public life. Teachers and educators, artists and performers

grappled with the issue whenever they endeavored to do something for and with children. It was universally felt that not enough had yet been done in this field. The impression was that whatever had in fact been done—in school or elsewhere—was not of high quality and had not produced satisfactory results.

Theatrically inclined parents who had witnessed the results of the country's theatrical activity at the time preferred to send their children to the movies, even though the latter medium had acquired a reputation as educationally shallow and dubious. This image was strengthened by the local cinema offerings for children and youth. It is important to recall that teenagers were not being offered appropriate theatrical activity. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater² was the only regularly operating troupe in the country, and it, of course, set its sights on kindergarten and the lower elementary grades. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Four, this body, however positive it was, presented almost nothing new, choosing instead to stick to the tried-and-true.

Against this background we may understand how new and refreshing Eliezer Ansky's appearance was. Having founded Bamateinu, Ansky then deliberately embarked on a daring adventure with the kind of blind faith so typical of committed artists of his kind. In view of the fact that he was a new immigrant who had not yet mastered the Hebrew lan-

guage, Jewish culture, and the Israeli milieu, his audacity proves even more astonishing.

Since his knowledge of the country and its attributes was limited, Ansky relied on his wits. He believed in the course of action he had chosen, and felt that it would produce an immediate "payoff," i.e., plays. He went from school to school, talked with children, chose those whom he considered suitable—and made them the nucleus of a cadre with which he would work. He selected children who had no stage experience, but who, upon performing, would invite friends to watch. Once he had assembled the appropriate ensemble, he could embark on regular work.

From his archives he selected the libretto of a Chinese legend called "Prince Omar," translated into Hebrew by Raphael Eliaz (1905-1974) and choreographed by well-known choreographer Gertrude Kraus (1901-1977). Thus, supported by the Central Parents' Committee and the Tel Aviv Workers' Federation, he staged his first production in Beit Zvi in Ramat Gan, now the site of the School for Stage Arts.

Indeed, the newspapers of the time attest that both young and old were enchanted by the performance. It was evident that Ansky had invested much of his talent, ability, and dedication, and his work in concert with the ensemble was very elegant.³

If at first he had thought to start up something new and independent, without the backing of any large, organized entity that could dictate to him, things began to become

clear very quickly. After he had seen the Kindergarten Children's Theater production Simlat ha-shabbat shel hannah ("Hannah's Sabbath Dress"), Ansky had resolved that his theater would be different; it would be an artistic theater for children and youth, as opposed to that of his elder rival, which belonged in the school. Thus he attracted the wrath of the Children's Theater's management. Moreover, intent as Ansky was on establishing an independent theater, it was not easy to do. It required money, and Ansky had none. For lack of choice, he asked the Cameri Theater⁴ to help out. Cameri agreed, but with strings attached: it would help only if Ansky agreed to serve as an assistant director in its productions.

This collaboration enabled Ansky to begin work on his second play: an adaptation by Ansky of a classic story by J. Hauf, known in Hebrew as Ha-hayyat ki yimlokh ("The Tailor Who Would Rule"). It debuted in the autumn of 1949 in Tel Aviv. Although it was a success, the critics attacked the professional pretensions of the child actors, guided by Ansky.⁵

About two years later Ansky presented Ha-hayyat again. The daily newspaper Davar, on January 18, 1951, ran the following critique:

The adaptation is theatrically successful, the plot thrilling, a sense of humor present, and the characters multi-faceted. The young cast acts with a natural freshness typical of youth. The only regrettable aspect is that some of them are already trying to imitate professional actors, and

are overdoing it. Youngsters are best advised to play themselves, i.e., to act as if not acting. The young audience followed the plot alertly. The music and the dance lent diversity to the plot. The ovations, of course, were tempestuous.

Between the two productions of Hayyat ki yimlokh, however, something had happened. In 1950, Ha-ohel⁶ invited Ansky to transfer his activity to their auspices. This offer on the part of a well-organized theater had to be taken seriously, and Ansky was convinced. He began to create more professional performances with higher quality sets and costumes. Shortly after accepting Ha-ohel's offer, he staged Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, including excerpts from Huckleberry Finn.

The resources Ha-ohel placed at Ansky's disposal enabled him to produce on a large scale, with a sizable cast and eye-catching sets and costumes. As usual with Ansky's productions, the audience reacted favorably, but educationists, theater critics in particular, pelted him with stinging comments such as the following:

A handful of children seem to be trying to imitate characters. What they're really doing, however, is imitating actors, trying to stand out, and playing to the audience to make an impression.... One should beware of activities such as these.... "Wunderkind" are all well and good as long as they don't lose their innocence.⁷

Although the criticism ostensibly concerned itself with the behavior of the child actors, the message was really aimed at the man behind the actors and the play itself. Ansky, however, was blessed not only with inexhaustible energy but

with foresight as well. His response was to continue directing plays. His next offering was The Prince and the Pauper, again a large production with a large cast. Now Ansky's guiding doctrine—a bias in favor of large productions with sizable casts, rich sets, and diverse costumes—proved itself correct.

Ha-ohel's auspices enabled Bamateinu to take another step forward. It became a well-organized repertory theater, performing regularly throughout the year instead of appearing on Jewish holidays and school vacations and hibernating the rest of the time. Ansky decided that his theater would perform during the week, too, and chose Wednesday afternoons. This, of course, was a welcome novelty in the Israeli theatrical scene, and it was a prominent feature of the schedule of performances. Bamateinu actors frequently visited communities outside Tel Aviv, an activity which aroused favorable audience reaction.

On June 30, 1952, Bamateinu put on Hasamba (initials for Haburat sod muhlat be-hehlet—"Group of Absolute Secret"), based on a series of books by Yigal Mossenson. Because the books were so popular with children and youth, the halls were packed when the story appeared on stage. The tremendous financial success was an answer of sorts to commercial children's theater, which had begun to develop at the time. As usual, however, this successful and well-attended play was panned by the critics. Its educational aspect had to be thoroughly examined, they argued. Someone

in Davar assailed the rewrite man, Yosef Oxenbourg, and Eliezer Ansky as follows:

They are twitting the children's ambitions. In the world according to Hasamba, adults are nitwits who, without the children's help, would have lost the struggle for clandestine immigration and the war. We hope our children are not so naive, and will understand that the appreciation given them this time from the stage was overdone. There is no need to cultivate feelings of lordliness and hubris in them.⁸

Ansky, as usual, took the criticism in his stride. Not only did he not let it affect his work, it drove him to greater efforts. He continued with his extensive activity, even recruiting new artists such as painter Arie Navon (1909-).

Although the critics offered Ansky no satisfaction, his plays continued to play to packed halls. The critics found "educational flaws" in his offerings. In 1954, when he presented Cinderella, one critic wrote that the child actors were overacting grotesquely, and that the play was not original. A year later, when he presented Ma'ase be-'utz ha-'atzlan ("A Tale of Lazy Utz") Ansky was bombarded with accusations of having introduced into his play an act of murder which was not suitable for the child audience. When he presented Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs the same year (1955), the critics wrote that the translation was too flowery and that the audience could not fathom the actors' enunciation and rhetoric.⁹ As for Gershenson's Herschele me-ostropoli ("Herschele of Ostropoli")—a play on a Jewish

theme—Ansky was accused of having insultingly presented the hero, Rabbi Kalman, as a negative, ugly character.¹⁰

One way or another, Ansky worked extensively and energetically. However, notwithstanding his boundless motivation and ability to "push," he was only flesh and blood. The harsh criticism bothered him inside, even if outwardly he professed indifference. Seriously worn out, Eliezer Ansky left the theater in 1960 and went to Italy to complete art studies. Thus the curtain fell on his role in Ha-ohel. Although Bamateinu stayed alive for another two years or so, during which it presented four plays,¹¹ it may be described as having become "brain dead" as soon as Ansky left. Two years later, in 1962, Eliezer Ansky returned to Israel, settled in Jerusalem, and re-established Bamateinu. The reincarnated troupe, however, was an amateur body working under Ha-no'ar ha-'oved ve-ha-lomed (a non-profit institution for youth at work and study). In his characteristic manner, he staged plays that he had adapted for children's style and taste, and produced them with children. His productions included two stories by Hans Christian Andersen, and Moshe Shamir's Hedva va-ani ("Hedva and I") and Sof ha-'olam ("End of the World"). Five years later, in 1967, he presented Ha-poema ha-pedagogit ("Pedagogical Poem"). In all his plays, Ansky was the living spirit, delving into the minutest details in production, sets, design of costumes, etc.

Ansky considered his theatrical activity a mission, and took his plays all over the country. He had a special fondness for the development towns on the country's periphery. As one who devoted more than time and thought to the educational aspects of his work, he frequently offered his services as a volunteer, ever conscious of the need to prepare tomorrow's audiences. In his memoirs, Ansky notes that active stagecraft, aided by the actors' own experience, observation, critique and imitation, helped the children and youth fortify their inner world and reach a high level of cultural development. Ansky wrote:

Here on the stage, naturally and through emphasis, one's sense of aesthetics and criticism is developed. One hears correct enunciation, witnesses expression and movement, etc. All these help generate an appropriate social atmosphere, elevate youth to a high level of culture, and shape their spiritual image as part of society.¹²

It is especially important to note that Bamateinu, from its inception, was a theater in which children performed for children. Also from its inception, however, its educational objectives were topics of dispute. The question was whether such a theater—as a regular institution that sought to discharge an educational function and lend substance to the artistic experiences of the young, tomorrow's theatergoers—should engage children as performers on stage. Those in favor argued that the powerful play instinct intrinsic in children's psyche affects all their future personal and social inclinations. Thus children would be willing to act

in a "real theater," especially since dramatic activity and stage performance in a classroom setting had long since become a well-known and accepted instructional method of substantiating childhood experiences, imparting knowledge, and riveting attention. The naysayers considered the engagement of children as actors a serious matter that should be discussed with great responsibility and gravity. Children accustomed to performing before audiences, they feared, might develop feelings of superiority and haughtiness vis-à-vis their friends.

In a conversation with this writer, Ansky¹³ stressed that the first issue he addressed in his work with the children was that of bringing their expectations into line. After the children were introduced to the matter at hand, they were slowly integrated into theatrical activities; only a year or so later were they allowed to mount the stage. Ansky claimed that every child who had spent any time involved in the stage work acquired confidence, a highly-developed imagination, a broader education, and greater awareness of his/her senses.

Contrary to his critics, Ansky saw nothing anti-educational about having children perform on stage. Neither did he see any other subject in the curriculum that could engage children or teenagers in all these fields at once. Addressing himself to an issue on which he was widely attacked—having children portray adult characters—Ansky noted that he customarily assigned the adult roles to youth

aged 15-16, having the younger children play younger characters. He stressed that while the youngsters used makeup to help them portray adults, their acting was natural. His proteges played both adults and youth skillfully, and never had one of them met with inner conflict when portraying an adult or even an elderly man.

One way or another, after the children had portrayed adult characters in their performances while they were in school, it was only natural that they would eventually do so professionally, for the public at large. Here Eliezer Ansky was the unchallenged trailblazer, and even his critics cannot deny him the credit he deserves for this innovation. In addition, he enlarged the repertory, adding materials beyond the heretofore festival canon, and instituted regular performances not tied to holidays and festivals.

Chapter Nine

THEATER ON KIBBUTZIM AND "WORKING SETTLEMENTS"

Theatrical activity, as shown in previous chapters of this study, concentrated in the large cities—Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. There, because demand for drama was avid, theater companies could present each work several times before large audiences. In peripheral settlements far from the three major cities, activity was sporadic—occasional plays, most "imported" from the center of the country.

In the small settlements, particularly those in the north, theatrical activity was in its infancy. On the kibbutzim¹ and the moshavim² the major topics of concern were existential matters such as security, availability of arable land, water, self-sufficiency in labor (a major principle in cooperative settlements to this day), etc. Jewish settlement was still coalescing and sinking its roots, and settlers were inward-oriented, concerned mostly with their own kibbutzim, moshavim, and the like.

The kibbutz of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s was a unique social aggregation with high motivation and a strong ideological posture. It was comprised of young men and women, nearly all recent immigrants, who had parted ways with well-situated, affluent homes and academic studies in their countries of origin in favor of a new country and a

new, unfamiliar, untried way of life. They sought to live under a cooperative, egalitarian system in order to make the desert bloom. The result was a unique model of communal, egalitarian settlement in which everyone produced according to his ability and received according to his needs. The kibbutzim based themselves on the principles of socialism and were established on the basis of ideologies³ that could be distinguished from each other only by observers with keen vision and hearing. By the nature of things, the kibbutzim were founded in previously unsettled areas where arable land was available.

The relative distance of the kibbutzim from the center of the country, where cultural and intellectual affairs were centered, resulted in a measure of spiritual and social alienation. Plays and other cultural events did not reach the kibbutzim, moshavim, or moshavot (the non-communal farming villages that preceded the collectives) frequently or regularly. Thus rural farmers who wanted to see a play had to go elsewhere. At times performances reached outlying towns such as Tiberias, and members of nearby kibbutzim would travel in.

Because "imported" entertainment was not available, the local society naturally devised its own alternatives. After a day of arduous labor in the field, orchard, poultry run or dairy barn, "kibbutzniks" would gather, exhume memories of bygone days, tell stories, sing songs, read poetry, and stage an occasional folk dance. Over time, however, the

settlers grew bored with these modes of amusement. How often can one tell the same stories, sing the same songs, and dance the same dances? Diversity is as necessary as oxygen. Moreover, no small number of kibbutz members had come from countries with extensive and long-lasting theatrical traditions, such as Russia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland; they led the wave of demand that arose.

The inevitable result was a series of new attempts at indigenous, local artistic productions. Those with latent literary talent began to write. At first the thrust was one of satirical commentary on kibbutz life—prose, verse, short and long poems, humorous sketches, etc. Once there was material on hand, it became necessary to present it. Satirical writing generated demand for satirical performers. Thus kibbutz members who had acquired a reputation for declamatory ability were invited to perform at other kibbutzim, too. An example was Shmulik Zevuluni of Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, who would take his one-man evening routine from one kibbutz to another, reciting episodes from kibbutz life along with selections of general literature.

The kibbutzim had embarked on modest stage activity of this kind as early as the mid-1920s. Feivush, a member of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha-'emek and an active stage director, pinpointed the major factors behind the beginning of this activity in an interview with Bama:

The first reason was that the kibbutz as a society wanted to present its current ideas and experiences on stage. The second was the absence

of a real theater in the country (Ha-ohel had not yet come into being, Habimah was still in Russia, and most fledgling theatrical activity in the country was in Tel Aviv and almost never visited the outlying farm settlements). Kibbutzniks with theater affinities were therefore quite dissatisfied. Third, there were people on the kibbutzim who had aptitude for various aspects of theatrical activity.⁴

Thus such activity on kibbutzim originated in the needs of the kibbutzim, to which only kibbutz members could give proper response.

The thirst for stage performances on the kibbutzim paralleled the development of theaters in Palestine as a whole, including the introduction of a new medium—the cinema. The kibbutzim, like the cities, bred a new generation of young consumers who yearned to attend plays.

At first, the youngsters were no more than an adjunct to the main target audience, the adults. Director Hanoch Paz of Kibbutz Mizra recalls that when his kibbutz began to rehearse classical plays, the children streamed into the hall, followed the actors' every move, and had virtually memorized the entire script by the time the actors were ready to perform.⁵

Hanoch Paz's writings indicate clearly that theatrical activity won the kibbutz children's hearts. Kibbutz educators were probably alert to the potential of the new medium and decided to adopt it. Theatrical activity commenced in the kibbutz schools. Teachers who did not always favor formal instruction and who always sought additional ways of diversifying and enriching their methods,

considered theater a form of experiential teaching. They began to engage their students in dramatic work without calling it "creative drama." They also began to write plays themselves, sometimes integrating the pupils in this work, too. The motive, it should be said, was not purely creative; the point was to make it possible for the pupils to express themselves via the theater.

Avraham Amrant, a teacher and stage director from Kibbutz Afiqim, assessed the importance of the theater as an educational medium in an article in Afiqim, his kibbutz newspaper:

I have often realized how great the positive impact of a play on the child's psyche can be. It may add affection to his vocabulary, develop his sense of aesthetics, enrich his expressive ability, and make it easier to perform without inhibitions before an audience. Drama can also serve as an educational and ideational medium. Through it one can implant the initial ideas of a world view in the tender soul. It is also the most efficient way of introducing the child to reality of the passage of time. A play usually makes a greater emotional effect on the young than reviews or newspaper accounts of occurrences in the wide world. [But] it can do this only if it is close to our spirit, if the child easily discovers the threads that link him and his immediate surroundings to the central idea in the plot. With this attitude as our point of departure, we came to the realization that only very rarely will we succeed in adapting a play from the modest corpus presently at educators' disposal. Most youth-oriented works there cannot satisfy either the educator or his young charges. It would therefore be good to rely more on original drama composed by our members.⁶

Amrant's remarks show that the educators were aware of the great potential of theatrical work in kibbutz schools.

Now they sought to exploit it. Because suitable material was not always at hand, they preached greater reliance on new works, such as those written by kibbutz members involved in their settlements' daily events, who could express themes that struck chords in local residents' hearts.

The kibbutz movement thus spawned educators who gave their talents carte blanche and tried their hand at writing plays. Most of their efforts were adaptations of legends and stories for children and youth, which eventually found themselves exposed to the recognition of audiences outside the kibbutzim. Legends were rich raw material for theatrical creativity in which the child theatergoer's imagination and experiential impressions might be developed.

Legends, however, were not the sole source of themes. Other plays originated in and were inspired by the life of kibbutz children, the festivals in which they took an active and significant part, etc. Some kibbutzim, striving to sharpen children's awareness of the problems of society at large, selected plays such as Leah Goldberg's Nissim ve-nifla'ot ("Wonders and Miracles"), whose plot is set in a neighborhood with exceptional children.

The original written material produced on the kibbutzim and the "working settlements"⁷ slowly but steadily made its way to the Histadrut.⁸ The Histadrut had a small center devoted to music, song, and the training of conductors. The center had an archive and library. In 1943 a stagecraft department was set up there, mainly for the accumulation,

printing, and preparation of the written material (plays, skits, other texts) for general use. While it gathered and organized this material, the center also began to train performers, with particular emphasis on directors.

As the volume of activity grew, this department evolved into the Drama Department, an association of amateur stage groups. The outstanding figure in this activity was Moshe Zeiri, who lent new momentum to all theatrical activity in the "working settlements." Zeiri had reached the country in 1935 and settled at Kvutzat Schiller near Rehovot. Although he was a kibbutz member (for fifteen years), he was accepted into Habimah Theater Dramatic Studio, where director and actor Zvi Friedland (1898-1967) taught. During World War II he signed up for the British Army and established a troupe that travelled among the Palestinian Jewish formations and performed for them. After the war he engaged in rescuing Holocaust refugee children in Italy, integrating theater into his educational activity, mainly by means of the parties, literary evenings, and short plays he presented. Returning to Palestine, he embarked on a career as an educator. He became the Cultural Director of Hadassim Youth Village, and acquired fame and reputation for the texts, special social events, and recitations he prepared for his pupils.

In the early 1950s Moshe Zeiri assumed the post of Director of the Drama Department, and worked tirelessly to promote the theater in the rural settlements. In an interview with this author, he said:

When I was invited to run the Stagecraft Department, my major line of thinking was to build up the library's collection of plays for children and youth. This field had not been properly developed previously. I saw teachers who, without any preparation or advanced training, were asked to prepare end-of-year festivities or plays for holidays and festivals. They had neither the qualifications nor the skill for this. Such a situation is unknown in any other country on earth. I looked for a way to set things right. So when we engaged in training, we emphasized preparing the teachers for activity in this field.⁹

Under Zeiri the center, although not yet a truly professional and skilled enterprise, played a rather considerable role on the cultural and theatrical scene in Israel's kibbutzim, moshavim, farm villages, and labor councils. Annual regional festivals began to organize under his aegis, contributing to the proliferation and promotion of activity in this field by providing settings for encounters between troupes from different localities including various kibbutzim.

The drama center's library expanded and was open to all. Directors from kibbutzim—and subsequently from the professional theater as well—borrowed material from the library and presented it on stage. In the 1950s, Ze'ev Rosenblatt staged Leah Goldberg's Nissim ve-nifla'ot on Kibbutz Ramot Menashe. Ze'ev Vardi of Kibbutz Afek, a teacher and stage director, wrote countless plays and presented them on his kibbutz. On Hanukah of 1943, Avraham Amrant debuted Yovelo shel dam ha-makabim ("Jubilee of the Maccabees' Blood") on Kibbutz Mizra, with the participation of thirty immigrant children aged 7-11. (Bearing in mind

that these were Holocaust refugee children whose arrival on the kibbutzim had created a rather large educational and social problem, we may understand how greatly their theatrical activities softened the pains of their acculturation in Israel; we also perceive that this activity provided the educators with a fascinating experiential education tool).

Director and educator Barukh Kalas of Kibbutz Beit Zera worked with newly-landed youth on Galilee kibbutzim for two and half years in the early 1940s. On his own kibbutz he presented a play by David Frishman (1859-1922) based on the Book of Numbers, which became part of the curriculum. After this he went to Kibbutz Massada to present Natan Bistritsky's Pa'amei mashiah ("Footsteps of the Messiah"), which dealt with the idea of the nation's redemption and yearnings for the Messiah. The sets and costumes for the four-act play were prepared by the youngsters themselves. Kalas then presented the same play, with minor changes, in Kibbutz Mishmar Ha-'emek. Then he went on to Kibbutz Sha'ar Hagolan, where he staged Sholom Aleichem's Mottl ben feisie ha-hazan ("Mottl Son of Feisie the Cantor"). In Ashdot Ya'agov he presented Haverim ("Friends"), based on a story by Anda Amir Pinkerfeld (1902-1981) with a cast of eighth-graders. Summing up his intensive activity on the northern kibbutzim, Kalas wrote:

The children are excellent working material; one needs only to channel it in the right direction. You mustn't turn them into actors. You have to let them develop the strength of their imagination; [you intervene] only to help put it into a neat

and tidy form. A major condition is get everyone in the group involved, not letting one child or another stand out. Stress collaboration.... I insist that this is the way to work with children, but one must do it carefully, with sensitivity for the correct measure and attitude.¹⁰

In his work at the drama center, Moshe Zeiri had people such as Barukh Kalas, Ze'ev Vardi, Ze'ev Rosenblatt and Avraham Amrant in mind. Aloma Evron, in a wide-ranging article in Hed Ha-hinukh, assesses the role of the Histadrut's Israel Drama Center, and especially its leader and pacesetter—actor, director, educator, and principal Moshe Zeiri:

In his long years of work with youth, he reached the conclusion that a good presentation by children is far more credible than a presentation by adults, because the children identify fully with the play. This identification, according to Zeiri's doctrine, is attained by letting the children portray a world of children, irrespective of the period to which it belongs. They usually put themselves into their characters' shoes with all their heart.¹¹

The center, and the man heading it, contributed greatly to the writing of historical plays with children as heroes. An example is Ha-hashmonaim ha-getanim ("The Little Hasmonaeans"), dealing with the role of children during the revolt of Judah Maccabee. This play, written by children who studied under author and educator Yizhar Smilansky, spurred the writing of additional plays such as Anda Amir Pinkerfeld's Haverim, dealing with Samaritan and Jerusalem children in the time of the Prophet Nehemia; Ya'aqov Uri's Ha-kotel ha-afor ("The Grey Wall"), which described a

struggle by children to preserve the first wall built by the Biluim (early Zionist pioneers) as an everlasting monument; Yeladim ba-hagana ("Children in the Hagana"); and Ya'agov Uri's 'Etz ha-tikva ("Tree of Hope"), about children in the clandestine immigration period.

Alongside these original dramas, Zeiri's library also contained classical children's plays translated into Hebrew, such as Ha-yeladim me-rehov mapu ("The Children from Mapu Street") by Sarah Nishmit, Kaf ha-yad ha-shehora ("The Black Palm") by Erich Koestner, etc.

In her aforementioned article, Aloma Evron addresses herself to a point that irked Moshe Zeiri greatly: the fact that children were being asked to play adult roles.

There is nothing more ridiculous than an eleven-year-old child with a long white beard playing Mattathias the Hasmonaeen, or a skinny little kid playing Judah Maccabee. Zeiri thinks it's funny and unconvincing, and that it's high time to do away with the whole phenomenon. Let's have parents and teachers play the adults, he says; thus we shall also attain the goal of involving parents and teachers in the schoolchildren's activities, which will bring them closer to the children and deepen mutual relations."¹²

Indeed, various kibbutzim and schools adopted Zeiri's idea, as quoted by Evron, as their own.

We summarize theatrical activity in the kibbutzim and "working settlements" as follows:

- * Kibbutz theater was not children's theater for its own sake; nor was it children's theater in the standard conventional sense of the term. Rather, it was active

mainly on festivals and sundry occasions in which children played an active part in any case.

- * The schools were a convenient environment for the theater; in this sense, the kibbutzim were no different from the cities.
- * Theatrical activity on the various kibbutzim encouraged the establishment of a central resource bureau in the form of the Drama Department headed by Moshe Zeiri.
- * Zeiri's department did much to promote original writing on the kibbutzim, which focused at first on the local experience but eventually became receptive to other themes. The department existed until Zeiri's death in 1985.
- * The main reason "kibbutzniks" embarked on theatrical activity was to meet the communal settlements' own needs, neglected by the few professional theater companies in existence.
- * The local nature of the activity, conspicuous in any event, became stronger for another reason: the kibbutzim were scattered around the country, and the factor of geography had an inevitable impact on activity. In other words, under the conditions prevailing at the time it was hard to speak of a large, central, professional kibbutz theater that would gather the kibbutz movements' best creative forces and actors. Hence the conditions virtually dictated local activity within the kibbutzim, with actors either visiting or

belonging to the specific kibbutz that sponsored the activity.

- * Here as elsewhere, children and youth represented a very important market segment. However, they were also able to take part in various stages of the theatrical work—writing, preparing costumes, sets, etc.

Chapter Ten

NEW GROWTH FROM OLD STOCK

As the 1950s began, the newly-established State of Israel still had to contend with problems of existence and tremendous waves of immigration, mainly from the Islamic countries. Multitudes of immigrants, some brought to Israel in eleventh-hour rescue operations and made to relocate time and again, reached transit camps¹ where they were housed in tents, cloth structures, and wooden huts. All Israelis shared lives of austerity and scarcity. Under these conditions Israeli theater found no special solutions to the challenge of immigration and the immigrants. Perhaps no one in the Israeli theater world was prepared for the rapid demographic growth, or perhaps the heads of the country's theaters saw no reason to gear up for the immigrants because the latter did not yet have a command of Hebrew that would attract them to the theater. In addition, of course, attending the theater was by no means a tradition and way of life in most of the immigrants' countries of origin.

In any event, it was business as usual for the theaters; plays reached the outlying towns as always. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater, too, adhered to the practice it had followed since its birth. It continued to present plays in Tel Aviv, Petah Tikva, Haifa, Ramat Gan, Ra'anana, Kfar Sava and other towns for the

Jewish holidays; The repertoire, needless to say, was predictable and familiar: Ha-dahlil, The Three Bears, Purim and Passover plays, etc.

The evident stagnation of this veteran theater may be viewed as a turning point in the history of children's theater in Israel. As cognoscenti said to one another that "Something has got to be organized" and that "Parents and kindergarten teachers have to become more involved,"² a new play—Tom Sawyer, a comedy for children and youth—made its debut in February, 1956. The script (based on Mark Twain's novel) and the music were written by Zvi Rosen, the sets were painted by Avraham Mordoch, and the presentation was directed by Menahem Golan. The latter would subsequently play an important role in the life of children's theater in Israel, and would modify this medium in a way that would awaken it from the languor in which it had wallowed for years.

On March 15, 1956, the newspaper Davar carried the following item:

...The children's theater run by the School-teachers' and Kindergarten Teachers' Center put on a very nice play for us. It's a combination of a graceful, funny play, good stage direction by Menahem Golan, and enthusiastic acting by a professional, adult cast. Zvi Rosen has produced an effervescent, tension-filled comedy. The laughter never stopped. This seems to be the first time that the adults didn't sit there in boredom until the end of the play, rather enjoying it and laughing along with the children.... Educationally, too, the script is good. The only misfortune is the caricature made of the court, and the unsubtle way it is ridiculed in the form

of the cowardly judge. The children enjoyed the scene, but there should be some concern about its effect on children's views of justice and law....

Tom Sawyer was only one of several plays that reflected something of a theater revival. Along with it in this category was Gad ve-'anat nos'im le-eilat ("Gad and Anat Go to Eilat") by teacher Ze'ev Dominitz (1902-1976). It deals with a "current" theme and expresses educational-national tendencies. Juxtaposed to the regular fare of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater, a conspicuous "wave" of children's plays of diverse kinds appeared. On February 20, 1957, the newspaper Maariv commented on this phenomenon:

...A week hardly goes by without various people dangling temptations before preschool children in the form of "children's plays." Quantitatively, it's quite an accomplishment. Qualitatively—not so. Many of these plays have been prepared negligently (sinfully, with respect to developing children's aesthetic tastes and senses) and hurriedly (because they had to save on money and manpower). A few of them stand out for twitting youngsters' sense of humor by use of cheap (and highly uneducational) devices. Nevertheless, the auditoriums are packed when these plays appear. This shows that, for the first time, this age group is showing strong demand for entertainment. But precisely this enthusiasm of the audience further strengthens our indictment of these plays' "creators."

Then, to show how different things could be, the writer mentions Gad ve-'anat, presented by the Kindergarten Teachers' and Schoolteachers' Union, in the following vein:

... This body, already more than twenty years old,³ upholds the plays' educational intent even if this makes them somewhat sterile and pallidly "Zionistic" for the tastes of the adults who

accompany the children. The play in question emphasizes—in very simple terms, of course—the Jewish National Fund, the need to pitch in to help settle and develop the Negev, the beauty of Eilat...

Two days later, the newspaper Yedioth Aharonoth, too, spoke well of Gad ve-'anat:

Gad ve-anat, presented by the Children's Theater, has an ample load of latent educational value, more so when the presentation is original and attracts children to the essence of this country. The theater of the Kindergarten Teachers and Schoolteachers' Union Center should be congratulated for this play.... In children's theater, the measure of success is the children themselves; [in this play] the young onlookers had a good time.

The success of the Kindergarten Teachers' Children's Theater was a consequence of the needs of children and youth in Israel. Menahem Golan, a highly active director and a trend-setter in the theater, received the message and drew the correct conclusion. He quit the Kindergarten Teachers' Theater and set up a competing entity: a theater especially for children based on purely commercial principles and fundamentals. He called it Tilon (the Hebrew initials of "Israel Theater for Children and Youth"). At the first stage, while the Kindergarten Teachers' Theater was still coming to grips with Menahem Golan's unexpected venture, it continued to put on productions here and there. Examples are Ha-tisa la-yare'ah ("Flight to the Moon," based on Jules Verne's book) directed by Dan Kedar, and The Ugly Duckling, reworked by Michael Almaz and directed by Dan Kedar.

Drastic change was called for, and, of course, it came about quickly. Following Tilon (about which more is said below) the Kindergarten Teachers' Union Theater changed its name to Talil (Hebrew initials of "Pupils' and Children's Theater"). The theater needed more than a change of name; it also had to meet Tilon's competition more vigorously. It did this by focusing emphasis on its purely educational intentions. Alongside Bat ha-tohen ("The Miller's Daughter"), based on the Grimm brothers' story, national themes were again selected. An example was pre-state clandestine immigration (Heb. ha'apala), from which Ha-ma'apil, an original play, derived its name.

Talil's "clean" educational, Zionist line seemed pale and anemic when juxtaposed to Tilon's commercial, somewhat aggressive policies. It was a two-car race—one obsolete and in need of replacement or overhaul that its owners would not or could not perform, and the other a more modern model whose owner did whatever was necessary to build up its speed. Talil's demise was obviously a mere question of time.

The intent of competing with Tilon's commercial, large-scale, and diverse policies by strengthening and bolstering the Zionist educational message quickly proved to be a rickety crutch. The transformation manifested itself in the early 1960s. 'Alilot 'utz ve-gutz ("Tales of Utz and Gutz"), written and directed by David Davidov (1890-1975) was poorly received by the critics, as was Kopiko, based on a story by Tamar Burstein and directed by Davidov. Thus Tehilla Rabina

wrote in the November, 1962, issue of Urim la-horim (a newsletter for parents):

...As I watched the play, it seemed to me that the children sensed that it was overadapting itself to them. To be more precise, the people who staged it did not gauge the children's tastes as they should have. The average child has no particular inclination to run wild and break loose.... We cannot expect artistic quality worthy of the name, even if there are talented people in our midst, as long as the approach is so commercial and all means are used indiscriminately. True, children's theaters have to struggle to stay afloat, but first of all they should have a right to exist. With Kopiko, this theater has not earned this right!

This criticism, however, was but the groundhog that augurs the approach of spring. Following Leah Ilani's Ma tov yahday ("How Good It Is Together), based on a record by Yehudit Sela and Vina Yekutieli Schorr, and after the Jordan Valley children's choir sang the score of Talil's Batzoret ("Drought"), the December, 1962, issue of Hed Ha-hinukh went on the offensive:

The question is why a play is allowed to be presented on stage in such a manner. Children's theater is an educational tool, and the issue here is one of young children who may be getting their first taste of theater. Is this how we are going to develop our children's tastes for the stage arts? Everyone knows that superb works of art have a greater impact on children's spiritual development, quite frequently determining their future cultural tastes. Must the community of teachers and educators truly be silent? Shall we accede to having irresponsible people present our children with inferior plays?...⁴

A separate matter is the exploitation of dozens of children and actors who toiled for about two months, disrupted their studies, and lived under the charming and, for their age, pernicious illu-

sion that they were indeed actors. Only afterwards could their mentors assess the devastation wrought upon their psyches by this "charming" experience. The interruptions of studies have certainly left their mark already. The children performed on stage three times a day during the week the plays were presented—no easy task even for adult and experienced actors. I think it high time to ask the Ministry of Education and Culture to put an end to plays of this kind, and to prohibit the exploitation of pupils for the business dealings of a group of people masquerading as theater practitioners.⁵ May the day come that in our schools, on the planks of primitive stages and with modest resources, plays fit to be watched appear on stage through the labors of a large public of children. Would the Teachers' Union please take the initiative and, with the help of educators affiliated with the stage, establish a children's theater that will present select plays produced by the efforts of pupils and teachers engaged in the experience and joy of creating? [That would provide] our children with good entertainment and would serve as an educational tool of the highest order.

Relating to this onslaught as food for thought, we may adduce that the competition between Talil and Tilon, as manifested in a deliberate change of approach by the former and adopting the policy of the latter in producing "popular" productions, undermined the status of the Kindergarten Teachers Association Children's Theater and jolted its stable and long-standing base. Theater-loving educators and teachers, who considered this medium "an educational tool on the highest order," were suspicious of this substantial change in attitude. They were not about to accept Talil as commercial theater, and concurred with the criticism cited above. If educational and commercial theater were indistinguishable, the resulting question was legitimate and understandable: who needs the former? Why the redundancy?

When these questions split the air and biting criticism appeared with each passing day, the outcome became increasingly clear: time was running out for Talil.

Tilon—"Israel Theater for Pupils and Youth"—was in fact an outgrowth of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater, and became its successor even before Talil met its fate. While the kindergarten teachers' theater found it hard to march with the times and overhaul its operation, Tilon moved ahead energetically until it secured its place and consumed its progenitor.

After firmly establishing himself as a director in the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater, Menahem Golan surprisingly stepped out of his "training grounds" and took a daring personal, professional, and commercial gamble. On Tu B'shvat 5718 (February, 1958), he established Tilon as a professional theater for children and youth. His first subsequent move was to recruit theater activists: Uriel Ofek, a writer and editorial board member of Davar's children's supplement; lyricist Yohanan Zeri, and teacher Ruth Bat-Dor. He hired Haim Cohen and Shlomo Gal'ed to handle administrative and technical matters. Others included motion and ballet instructors Avraham David and Rahel Talitman, directors Asher Bergstein and Haim Einav, and a cast of veteran actors from the adult theaters.

Alongside the theater Golan established a studio for children and youth, entrusting it to a staff of experienced teachers. Here the youngsters' artistic inclinations would

be developed. Those who proved outstanding would participate in Tilon's presentations—in children's roles only, and with two understudies for each role.⁶

Having left a well-established theater to found a private commercial one, Menahem Golan understood that the basis for his existence was activity—lots of plays and large audiences. In the seven months between the establishment of Tilon and the Jewish New Year, Golan put on 220 performances.⁷ For a young theater, and in so brief a period, the repertoire was impressive indeed: Lassie Come Home, Captain Granite's Children, Uri the Redhead, Red Shoes, and Eight After One. Together with his repertoire consultant, Uriel Ofek, he chose "sure-fire" plays—the kind that come with songs, big sets, and impressive costumes. Tilon had a cast of adult actors recruited on the free market and from other theaters, who were experienced in performing with and for children. The format resembled that of the kindergarten teachers' theater; the only difference was that the basic aim was commercial—to do everything to grow and expand, appeal to the general public, perform in large halls, and support energetic activity with aggressive public relations and advertising.

In a Tilon flyer inviting public figures, school principals, journalists, educators, and culture officials to Tilon's gala presentation of David and Goliath, the writer (in the name of Tilon's management) packages the urgent commercial facet of the operation in nice words:

Our purpose is to arouse affection among youth for the arts in general and the theater in particular, to lure them from B-grade films to the spoken Hebrew word, the original play, and the Hebrew song, and to present them selections of the finest world literature and original art.... Every play of ours contains some ten new refrains and songs, some taught during the play. Every play of ours presents an educational theme built into a thrilling and entertaining plot. Thus the young onlooker has a good time and learns something all at once.

Like any commercial theater, Tilon viewed its repertoire as a springboard to the public at large. Hence they presented Biblical themes such as David and Goliath alongside The Prince and the Pauper and Emil and the Detectives. Tilon's large-scale, aggressive distribution network, using diverse and innovative pitches such as raffles and discount coupons through children's and youth newspapers, left no doubt as to the motives of Golan and his group.⁸

Like Denya Levine and the Urim Theater,⁹ Tilon may be identified with Menahem Golan in almost every sense. Not only did he encourage others to take action, but he himself engaged in professional stage direction and urged colleagues to aim for professionalism in their work.

As this refreshing initiative gained steam, the reactions began to come in. Hed Ha-hinukh (November, 1958) commented on David and Goliath, produced by Oded Avissar and directed by Menahem Golan, as follows:

... We congratulate Tilon for its audacity, momentum, and stagecraft; thanks to them, a handsome achievement was attained.... A theater that

harbors pretensions of carrying out a "public educational mission" has to be careful when presenting Biblical figures, portraying them in a way that leaves no room for doubt....

Tilon did not rest on its laurels. The plays were staged time after time, and the repertoire steadily grew to include Topele tu-tu-ri-tu (based on a stuttering rooster) created by A. Gur-Arye from a story by Sholom Aleichem; Sholom Aleichem's Mottl ben feisi ha-hazan ("Mottl Son of Feisi the Cantor") A. Gur-Arye's Mottl shulyat ha-hayyat (based on the previous play); Dag ha-zahav ("The Goldfish"), based on A. Pushkin's famous fable; Uriel Ofek's Ne'urei shimshon ha-gibor ("Young Samson"); Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs; and Oliver Twist, adapted for the stage by Uriel Ofek. The list goes on.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, a joint Tilon-Talil production, was well-received by the critics, as shown in the following example from the January, 1960, edition of Urim la-horim:

I have taken in many children's plays in the last two years, and I have never known as excellent a specimen of stage art for preschoolers as this play....

The February, 1960, edition of Hed ha-hinukh carried a similar opinion:

I saw the play twice in order to enjoy the grace that infused the children's acting, their handsome discourse, and the flowing chatter of the affectionate dwarfs....

Both critiques, by the way, were written by one man—Emanuel Frankel.

Tilon came away with more than favorable criticism: in short order, as might be expected, it also attracted unfavorable criticism. In Hed ha-hinukh of December, 1962, "M.S." wrote the following about François rosh gezer ("Francois the Carrothead"):

... The original French version was meant for adults. For children it undoubtedly causes great damage.... The cruel mother, dominating and discriminates against one of her children; the insipid father; the mother's unhumane attitude toward the household help. The mother orders "Carrothead" to knock over the elderly maid so as to be rid of her, and reprimands him when the old woman falls. The children [in the audience] reacted at once: "The mother's lying! I saw it myself: she told Carrothead to knock her over." Is it not our duty as educators to reject plays that destroy educational values? What use is it to impart educational values if plays such as this destroy, in one go, efforts of months if not years on our part? Occurrences enacted on stage are lodged engraved in the child's heart, and drama fulfills an important role in the education of children.

Don Quixote, too, came in for criticism. Emanuel Frankel, a frequent attender and critic of children's plays, wrote the following in the November, 1963, issue of Urim la-horim:

... This Tilon production placed the children in the Mann Auditorium in an entertaining, pleasurable atmosphere. The two actors, Gideon Singer and Yaaqov Ben-Sira, found a common language with the young audience.... It was a turbulent, noisy performance of song, chorus, and dance. Nevertheless, we must take exception here and there. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's syllabus, Cervantes' novel is read in the

junior and senior years of high school. As a play, too, it is suitable for teenagers only. The idea of adapting the book as a children's play was ill-advised, and we marvel that Tilon, usually noted for good taste, announced it as a children's play.

Frankel then criticizes the selection of auditorium:

...Golan would do well to select a more intimate place to stage his plays, and present them once a week and not only on holidays. By using the Mann Auditorium, he forces the actors to raise their voices, at which point they are not speaking to each other. This shouting mode of discourse is not part of the culture of speech; [but] that is a topic in its own right.

In any case, the Tilon people did not take the criticism—favorable or otherwise—to heart. They continued presenting plays and even stepped up the pace, appearing in almost every community in the country. Menahem Golan's market share grew steadily. At first he collaborated with his "parent" and rival, the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater. Eventually, however, he obliterated the latter's distinctive character and consumed it, forcing it to shut down as an independent theater in late 1960. At that point the market was virtually his, and success was all but assured.

It would be no overstatement to assert that Menahem Golan, who owes his professional origins to the Kindergarten Teachers Association theater, learned the "ropes" there and, when he left it, proved that things could be done a little differently—and successfully. He created a model hitherto

non-existent, which all successors had to imitate. He had pretensions, and lived up to them.

Uriel Ofek, Golan's repertoire advisor in Tilon, summarized Golan's activities in a special interview with this author on June 17, 1984:

... He [Golan] chose a commercial direction, wanted to do things well and in a big way. He believed that anything good virtually had to be commercial. We collaborated rather harmoniously—but the decisions were his. Jules Verne was considered both good and commercial. I was against Hasamba, and he did not take the risk. By contrast, I opposed Kopiko because I thought it was not a good book, but he went with it.

As for the criticism of child exploitation, and the accusation that participating in plays corrupts or at least harms children, Ofek has the following to say:

If you decide to present a play in which some of the characters are children, you ought to take children. I think that's legitimate. Children want to see themselves and those in their image on the stage; they want to identify with themselves. Does that ruin them? Every instance has to be judged on its own merits. Of all the child actors I remember, not one was ruined.

Having proved that success was possible, and having established a solid place for his plays in the world of commercial theater, Menahem Golan changed course in 1965. He went into cinema, and directed many films in Israel and abroad. Years later he made one attempt to return to the theater (presenting Uriel Ofek's Ha-tzipor ha-kehula ("Blue Bird") on Hanukah 1974 in the Mann Auditorium). However, he swiftly dropped the matter, leaving the stage to other

impresarios. Some of these had worked with and for him, and they ran their theaters according to the lines he had drawn. He seems to have been inclined to let them function as his successors in children's theater (even if they did not acknowledge this), while he went on to new and greater exploits in cinema and film production. After all, he had wrought his personal revolution a generation ago.

Chapter Eleven

URIM THEATER, JERUSALEM

When Danya Levine settled in Palestine in 1922, she considered herself a pioneer. A pioneer, as she understood and perceived it, was one who left her country of birth and immigrated to Eretz Yisrael—Palestine—so as to help build the country one way or another.¹ Some went there to plow the land, raise crops, and plant trees. These were pioneers. It was Levine's belief that acting, dancing, and stage direction were also parts of "building the country"; thus anyone engaging in those activities counted as a pioneer, too.

It occasionally happens that a person takes aim at a goal, and pictures him/herself entering, performing, and succeeding in a certain field. Ultimately, however, reality selects a different field, and such people find themselves involved in something in which they had never conceived of engaging. Some call this luck; others prefer "serendipity."

For Danya Levine, everything began serendipitously. Her first "occupations" in the country were the trivial pursuits of sweeping floors and laundering clothes. She did this for sustenance only; her dream was to be an actress and dancer. She disclosed this to no one. For years, nobody knew of her pent-up desires.

Even as Danya wielded her mop and washboard, her husband acted in an amateur theater in Jerusalem called

"Miniatura." She groaned as she plied her onerous labor; he enjoyed his acting. Danya was afraid to reveal even to her husband that it was her heart's dream to act and dance. Perhaps she feared that he would perceive this as competition or a challenge to his supremacy; perhaps she was apprehensive that if she carried out her wishes, surrounding society would no longer consider her a "pioneer."

In due course, her husband discovered her secret and prodded her to make it come true. He put her on the train to Tel Aviv, where she began to study under dance instructor Margot Ornstein.² Day by day her command of the art of dance grew. During her studies, Danya trimmed her personal needs to the point of self-affliction. However, even when she danced in the "Galinken Opera," she was hardly paid enough to cover her expenses.

Danya Levine's transformation, carried out with her husband's encouragement, began to assume a central role in her life. It was an opportunity for self-fulfillment and self-expression. She went abroad for further studies. Upon coming home in 1931, she found—perhaps to her great surprise—that there was someone who appreciated her as an artist. The director of the Lewinsky Seminar, one Pines, contacted her and asked her to teach rhythm to the Seminar's pupils.

Danya related to this tempting if not flattering offer—to teach students of her own age—with mixed emotions. She was indecisive. She did not know how to confront

a class of forty students. She did not know how to deliver a lesson in rhythm. She did not know how to keep teaching, housekeeping (she had three children by then) and providing for a family (her husband was off studying in Germany) in equilibrium.

After thinking the matter over, Danya accepted the job and discharged her duties in an exemplary manner. She succeeded in putting to use the know-how she had gathered during her initial and subsequent studies. She exploited everything she had learned 20 years earlier, and employed her intuition on top of that. Thus, in a very short period of time, she made rhythm her specialty. So self-confident did she become that she published two books on the topic.

Even when she had put one foot into the arts of pedagogy, dramatization, dance, and music, Danya Levine had not yet completed the circle. This she did only after returning from Brazil, where she had been sent as an emissary of the Yishuv's semi-autonomous institutions. Shortly after returning to Palestine, she saw a play directed by Menahem Golan.³ It recalled an opportunity she had had in Brazil to watch children's drama. The experience of attending children's theater abroad and at home moved her; she found it hard to remain indifferent and uninvolved. She saw children thronging to Jerusalem's Talil theater: shouting, pushing, making a tremendous commotion, storming the entrances. Inside, she saw child actors performing at the top of their lungs. Danya did not understand what was

going on, what they were saying or, in fact, supposed to be saying. Nor, we should assume, did the children in the audience understand much. Neither did she comprehend the dancing on the stage. As a professional dancer and dance teacher, she did not recognize the gyrations on the stage as belonging to the realm of dance; she found it hard to discern any style in them.

Agitated, she returned home and discussed the day's experience with her husband. She was acutely disappointed by what she had seen. The upshot of her conversation was that children's theater could be produced on a level higher than Talil's. Children's theater, she thought, should educate, exude culture, and build an audience of theater lovers.

Now that her conclusion and conception had crystallized, she was restless and in ferment. An inner voice goaded her, dared her to take the conception she had phrased and make it real. The urge to fulfill was powerful and unrestrainable. But how was this to be done? Whence the money? Where would one perform? Where would the actors be found? Who would write the music, make the sets, produce the costumes? In short, where does one begin?

Danya Levine ran from one school to another, one institution to another, presenting her idea and requesting backing and assistance. It was a hard idea to sell in Israel of the 1950s. The authorities were preoccupied with accommodating the multitudes of immigrants arriving from the Islamic countries. The schools struggled with existential

questions: how to teach and to convey messages to pupils who had just recently come, from so wide a variety of cultures.

Seeking safe ground on which to tread, Danya Levine considered presenting an educational play based on the Bible. Thus she decided on David, later renamed David and Goliath. The music was written by Mark Lavri (1903-1967), and Levine engaged a teacher to train a choir.

Now she had some partners and a play to propose. All she lacked was money. Even now financial support did not come easily. Turned away again and again and on the verge of despair, she appealed to Rahel Yannait Ben-Zvi (1886-1979), wife of then-President of Israel, Itzak Ben-Zvi, who had been Danya Levine's commander in the Hagana.⁴ Mrs. Ben-Zvi listened attentively to Levine's proposal and focused on the major issue: "How much money do you need?" Levine presented a detailed account of the expenses. Yannait Ben-Zvi wrote out a check, but with "strings" attached: that the first play must indeed be Biblical.

Armed with the moral and financial support of the President's wife, Danya Levine began putting her idea into practice. Again she made the rounds of Jerusalem's schools, offering to direct plays without recompense. She had only one request: at the end of the play, the sets and costumes be handed over to her, i.e., to the Urim Theater. Apart from this opportunity to build up an inventory of sets and costumes, she believed it would permit her to scout talented

13-14 year old actors, of whom she would co-opt the best and the brightest into her theater.

It worked. Levine's first play (Zelkind's David melech yisrael—"David King of Israel") made its debut on June 18, 1956, after lengthy work with the youthful actors—at first once a week, and subsequently almost every day. Levine did impose one condition on the participants: they had to keep acting and study apart. There was a time for each; acting must not be allowed to infringe on schoolwork. Forcefully she repeated time and again that anyone whose grades fell would find himself out of the theater.

Danya perceived her enterprise as a theater of children for children. At first she called it Masakh ("Curtain"); later she preferred Urim ("Lights"). In its fourteen years' activity and its 28 presentations, Urim was identified with Danya Levine and with Jerusalem.

Urim was not a theater in the conventional sense of the term. It was a one-person show—that of Danya Levine, a charismatic figure who succeeded in organizing people and sweeping them along, who knew how to adapt and stage drama, who excelled in putting the pupil-actors to work. Her own work was on a play-to-play, performance-to-performance basis. The theater, however, also held an acting workshop, providing a continuum of behind-the-scenes work and performance on stage. Urim's crowning achievements were its public performances. These were invariably held in auditoriums, usually in the Jerusalem YMCA.

The audience's response was encouraging. After the second play, Pakarash, based on a Russian legend, it seemed as if the message had gotten through. Danya was no longer considered as an eccentric; her theater had acquired a reputation, and Jerusalem school principals promised her and the theater their assistance.

Furthermore, the critiques were flattering. Hannah Yerushalmit wrote the following in Davar la-yeladim (Davar's children's page) on March 8, 1957:

... Finally Jerusalem's children, too, have been given a theater of their own, thanks to the initiative and persistence of Danya Levine. Since it opened last year, the theater has put on ten plays in Jerusalem and three elsewhere. It was established with the generous help of the President's wife, Rahel Yannait Ben-Zvi, who bolstered the spirits of the founder and of the young actors. Urim made its debut with a Biblical play. The actors' pure and handsome Sephardic Hebrew accent adds much to the impression gained by the young onlookers. Danya Levine's stage direction is done in good taste. Mark Lavri's music and A. Gurvitz's sets also contribute much to the play's success.... The audience is presented with an artistic experience and original Hebrew culture, and that's where Urim's great value lies....

Beyond the routine toil, the performances, and the workshop, Danya Levine considered herself first and foremost an educator for the theater. She regarded theater as an educational tool of the highest order. Before every presentation, she would come out onto the stage before the audience, before the curtain went up, to explain the major elements of the events to come. She also used this

opportunity to deliver a brief sermon on proper conduct. So important did she consider the audience's behavior that she handed out a document entitled "You're Coming to the Theater." Below the title was a set of instructions on how to behave before, during, and even after the performance.⁵

Observing Danya Levine's activity, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that she was a woman of resolution, initiative, and persistence, and that she took her work very, very seriously. She committed her doctrine to print and circulated it among those interested. In an essay she wrote and disseminated under the headline "An Educational Theater for Children" (copy in possession of this writer) she wrote inter alia:

Progressive countries have long correctly valued the influence of the arts in general, and the theater in particular, on the education and cultural development of children. Moreover, they make every effort to produce children's theater on the highest possible level. Stanisláwsky, the great theater artist and educator, said: "When performing for children one should act 'even better.' He was right; nothing so effectively absorbs everything surrounding it—the good and the bad alike— like the psyche of a child. If we do not come forth to show him the ugliness of bad and the luster of good, if we do not help him arrive at a correct appreciation of justice and honesty, what shall we have accomplished?

Every theater, directly or indirectly, teaches, instructs, and guides those who attend it. A fortiori a theater for pupils and youth must do so, for one of its functions is to instill in the young viewers' consciousness lofty ideas: love of homeland, love of mankind for its own sake; to introduce them to the wellsprings of culture and literature, and to arouse love of the arts. This is no easy task, even in countries that do not

have Israel's additional problems. They do not ingather exiles; they did not need to entrench their language. Nevertheless they consider theater for children and youth a very powerful medium of education and culture. Clearly this matter is many times more important in our country. Surely we shall not be able to solve all the problems in the next few years. It is our duty, however, at least to exploit all possibilities in every way possible so as to arrive at an uniform culture for the entire people.

Those in charge of education and culture in our country have been entrusted with a weighty task and great responsibility. If they want to seize every opportunity to discharge this responsibility, they cannot overlook as versatile an educational medium as the theater; they must not fail to exploit it for education and culture, on our children's behalf....

Because many Jerusalem residents are new immigrants with little exposure to culture, the Urim Theater was founded a few years ago to bring the message of art and culture, educationally, to the young onlookers who will be tomorrow's theatergoers. What kind of audience will our theaters in Israel have if we do not educate children from early on to love culture, the theatrical art, and all the arts?

After this programmatic, ideological introduction, Danya Levine returns to matters of "substance," i.e., budget problems. She laments the theater's material poverty and appeals to various agencies—the Ministry of Education and Culture, Jerusalem City Hall, etc.—for help. Finally she asserts: "[Urim] aspires to bring its young viewers nothing but education, culture, and art, with no box office interests."

Danya Levine's talents went beyond the articulate presentation of demands. Summing up her manifesto, she laboriously records all the plays Urim had presented during eight years of existence (as of the date this document was written). Thus she lists M. Zelkind's David and Goliath, Pan ve-ha-qosem parakash ("Pan and Pakarash the Magician") adapted by Levine, Sod ha-marvad ("The Carpet's Secret") by Bogumzun, Mered ha-tza'atzu'im ("Rebellion of Toys") by Danya Levine, Rahel Mintz's Bein zahav le-gahelet ("Between Gold and Ember"), Danya Levine's Ha-ratzon ("Desire"), Sender's Ha-sod ("The Secret"), M. Haikis' Ka'in ve-hevel ("Cain and Abel"), Iroshinski's Be-gil ha-sheva' 'esre ("At Age Seventeen"), Ris' Shiv'a be-sefina ahat, ("Seven on One Ship"), and Y. Dick's Tissa le-halal ("Flight Into Outer Space"), Mar'ot ha-sheker ("Funhouse Mirrors").

Incidentally, three plays—Ha-sod, Ka'in ve-hevel, and Be-gil ha-sheva' 'esre—won first prize at the Jerusalem Youth Festival in June, 1962.

The message, then, was clear: if one is interested in proper education, this important educational tool—the theater—should be taken into account. If it is integrated into the educational system, as are art and song lessons, the next generation will be one of people who love and understand the theater.

Reviewing the activity of the Urim Theater during its lifetime (1955-1969), we may say with no difficulty that its competition with the other, commercial theaters was not

easy. Those were years in which legitimate commercial theater flourished (as evidenced by the activity of the Habimah, Cameri, and Haifa theaters, which presented no few performances for youth during the 1950s and 1960s). Compared with them, Urim was a modest venture whose presentations might be called "clapboard and cardboard plays." Danya Levine, Urim's driving force and living spirit, did establish an institution with her own two hands. This institution, however, never left its mark outside Jerusalem, and did not find a place on the country's theater map.

Levine directed her efforts at children who had never attended the theater regularly.⁶ While this was an immediate response to a shortfall, if not an absence, of theatrical activity, it did not atone for Urim's amateur basis. Danya Levine's approach was professional in every sense of the word, but most participants in Urim were indeed amateurs.

Viewed in an overall historical perspective, Danya Levine must be given credit for having established a theater "from scratch." By virtue of her willpower, vigor, initiative, and connections, she succeeded in making Urim an accepted institution in Jerusalem—almost the only one of its kind—for fourteen years. Only in 1969, when the Cameri Theater opened a children's department in Tel Aviv, did the end come. Urim was delivered its coup de grace the following year, when Orna Porat established the National Theater for Children and Youth under the Ministry of Education and Culture.⁷

Chapter Twelve

COMMERCIAL CHILDREN'S THEATER: NOT BY QUALITY ALONE

Children's theater in Israel, like any other dynamic entity, could not exist for many years without making progress--in repertoire and in other respects. The education for theater that commenced in the schools during the 1920s left its imprint. No one who as a child had caught the theater bug, attended plays as a pupil, followed characters being acted out on the stage, listened to the recitation of texts, and enjoyed the background music, could remain indifferent. Such people, who had derived pleasure, gained impressions, and had a profound experience, could only seek to relive these for themselves as adults and bequeath them to their progeny. No adult who had been affected by his/her first encounter with theaters and plays in school could wish to deprive his/her offspring of the same kind of experience.

It was no secret that that an appropriate background for children's theatrical activity had been created in Israel over the years. Everyone knew it: teachers and educators, playwrights and directors, set designers and musicians, and, above all, producers. The latter, whether institutional bodies or private individuals, had not only the artistic theatrical aspect but also—and sometimes particularly—the commercial facet in mind.

The commercial facet, i.e., the aim to make a profit for its own sake, need not be treated negatively a priori. As long as the plays produced by this motivation are worthy of the name, the text clear, the message somewhat educational, the acting good and credible, the music pleasant and appropriate, and the sets abundant and appropriate, no harm will have been done if the producer comes away with a profit. But easy money at the expense of quality performance and the requisite investment can only be negatively viewed and criticized.

This chapter reviews the activities of Israel's commercial children's theaters. Rather than discussing plays in the chronological order in which they were presented, I have chosen to organize this chapter by theaters. It is thus possible to present the attributes and activities of every institutional and private theatrical body, whereas a presentation based on chronological progression may create some confusion. Everything described in this chapter is based on original source material collected during years of digging through press clippings, programs, posters, and brochures. The research also included a lengthy series of background talks and interviews with some of the major participants in Israeli commercial theater during the years under review, the 1950s and 1960s.¹

The various theaters' activities during these two decades cannot be surveyed without presenting some background information.

The massive waves of immigration that reached Israel's shores in the early 1950s left a substantial imprint on the composition of the target audience, i.e., the children. A high proportion of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants were children, born and initially schooled in various countries, including Arabic-speaking ones. These children had not acquired the values and cultural orientation of their Israel-born or veteran immigrant compatriots. Because these multitudes of immigrant children did not belong to the country's "elite," the theater practitioners had to adopt a new intent and attitude. High-quality theater was not always the most urgent necessity. What mattered was to simplify things, smooth out some rough edges, downscale the demands. In other words, the immediate need was to establish theater that offered something with which all population groups could identify.

Moreover, in order to make inroads into the hearts of the immigrant children, special emphasis was placed on the themes with which the theater dealt and the messages it conveyed. Certain themes were conspicuously stressed in children's plays of the time: social hardships, the establishment of Israel, etc.

As we have seen above, Menahem Golan became active in children's theater in the second half of the 1950s, first as a director in the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater, and later on his own. We have noted that, as an independent director, Golan set standards that

had not been conventionally practiced before him. Golan's productions were staged for their own sake and were meant to turn a profit; there was no necessary intent to provide an educational medium. Moreover, Golan employed tools such as aggressive marketing and encouraging attendance by the public at large.² This trend won increasing numbers of adherents, and many of the country's theater activists had no choice but to fall into line. Private theaters came into being, using "gimmicks" such as attention-grabbing names to build public consciousness and market share. This proliferation of commercial theaters, needless to say, virtually drove theatrical activity out of the schools and into large performance halls.

Briefly stated, the quality of Israeli theater plunged during the mass immigration period. Supply burgeoned, and the conditions of the time were exploited.

After the mass immigration and its attendant austerity ended, consumption increased, as did the supply of plays and the pace at which they were presented. Governmental and official sources took a dim view of most of the plays, and the critics treated no few of them rather harshly.

The chief institutional theaters of the time were Habimah and Ha-ohel, which had established a tradition of extensive activity. While most of this activity was for adults, they also devoted some attention to the young generation, tomorrow's theater-goers. This had been true during the pre-independence period, and the trend continued

after Israel was founded. As one would expect of theaters that made an impact and harbored pretensions, both Habimah and Ha-ohel performed extensively for children and youth, covering both the central and the outlying areas of the country.

Davar (August 2, 1951) reports that Habimah presented Yigal Mossenson's Ba-'arvot ha-negev ("In the Negev Wilderness"), written in 1948, in February, 1949.³ Because it was based on a true story that had taken place nine months previously, Ba-'arvot ha-negev was essentially a "docu-drama" which presented real, if somewhat camouflaged, characters. Its essence is a struggle between a settler in a Negev kibbutz and the kibbutz's military commander. The collective settlement is threatened on all sides by enemy forces; the commander, understanding that the situation is critical if not desperate, orders the men to evacuate. The settler does not consider the enemy's threat catastrophic, and refuses to abandon the kibbutz and its crops. In the ensuing struggle, the farmer wins.

If we are to judge by the report in Davar, Ba-'arvot ha-negev was a smashing success. About 5,000 men and women "thronged to the great amphitheater-like plaza in holiday attire with children on their shoulders, in their arms, or in strollers."

In 1952, Habimah presented Maurice Maeterlink's Ha-tzippor ha-kehula ("Bluebird"), translated and adapted by

S. Helkin and directed by Renato Mordo. This play, too, was considerably successful, presented no fewer than 105 times.

Reviewing Habimah's activity for youth, a rather clear watershed becomes evident. Until 1958, activity was limited: classes would attend plays randomly, without planning and with no official imprint. Teachers simply decided to take their classes to plays whose content met their expectations. Most of the plays, too, belonged to the classic repertoire—Shakespeare, Moliere, etc.

All this changed in 1958. Emanuel Frankel in Hed ha-hinukh (March, 1960) writes: "On November 21, 1958, Habimah embarked on a unique educational campaign, presenting exemplary plays for multitudes of children in the higher elementary grades."

The father of this idea was Yisrael Halevy, a member of Habimah, who, Frankel notes, "has devoted and still devotes his best efforts to carrying it out." The underlying perception was that youth must be attracted to the theater and presented with classical performances, including the best of world drama. Thus a core group of lovers of good theater might eventually develop. Frankel, an educator and critic, reported that the play he attended, Aharon Meged's Hannah Szenes, was so marred by misbehavior in the young audience that Hannah Rubina (1889-1980) had to stop the show and plead for silence and an end to the spitting of sunflower seeds. The conclusion to be drawn from this behavior—which was by no means an isolated occurrence at these presenta-

tions—was that Halevy's fine venture may have been launched with good intentions, but the audience had not been shown in advance how to behave at the theater.

A year later, in 1959, Tel Aviv City Hall stepped into the act. Emanuel Frankel, continuing to half-review, half-criticize the project (Hed ha-hinukh, June, 1960), lauded the presentation by Habimah of Sholom Aleichem's Alei kinnor ("On the Violin," as in "Fiddler on the Roof"), Aharon Meged's Hannah Szenes, and C.N. Bialik's Aggadat shelosha ve-arba'a ("Fable of Three and Four"), and called on the local authorities and councils (which administer Israel's small towns and rural settlements) to do their share by encouraging theater attendance by youth. At the same time, he ventured some criticism:

However, we cannot confer our blessing upon this cultural venture, which is also notably well organized, until appropriate arrangements are maintained in the hall and attention is paid to our pupils' cultural behavior. One of the first plays I attended, Aggadat shelosha ve-arba'a, was presented amidst a cacophony of noise and chattering by the pupils. Perhaps they were not won over by the lyrical segments. But it is absolutely clear that they are not used to listening quietly as a script is read, and the actors have to orate and perform amidst a commotion of noise, scraping of chairs, and chatter.... Before taking her class to the theater, the homeroom teacher ought to devote a lesson to reading excerpts of the play as a background for sitting quietly in the theater. If the teacher also describes the actors' work, the pupils may find it, too, attractive, appreciate the great effort invested in preparing the play, and refrain from bothering them. Only thus can the actors concentrate on articulating their thoughts and feelings as they perform.

Ha-ohel and the Bamateinu children's theater began to fade in the early 1960s. At this time, Habimah attempted to start up a children's theater. Here again, everything followed in the wake of the right person. This time it was English director Marjorie Sigley, who in 1962 staged a musical version of Erich Kastner's Emil and the Detectives with a cast including Shmuel Rodansky, Hannah Hendler, Shmulik Segal, and a group of carefully selected children. Emil ran for two seasons, mainly during school vacations, as a commercial play with afternoon performances meant for pupils and their parents.

Following this successful experiment, Lionel Bart's melodramatic musical version of Oliver was presented in 1966 under the direction of Peter Kaugh. It was a pretentious production; panned by the critics, it ran for one season only.

The next venture came about two years later: an experimental play called Ot be-eretz ha-pelaot ("Letter in Wonderland"), written by Uriel and Mina Ofek and directed by Marjorie Sigley. As this play made its debut, the press reported that Habimah was about to establish a children's theater. However, the idea vanished as quickly as it had appeared. Habimah intended to build this theater around the person of director Marjorie Sigley. The latter, however, had no intention of settling in Israel, preferring instead to spend some time in the country each year, as if "on vacation." When she made this clear to Habimah's managers, they

withdrew their idea, which consequently died on the vine. They had erred, of course, by building plans around an individual rather than a theme or goal.⁴ In the meantime, Habimah continued to perform chiefly for adult audiences.

Not until 1979 did Habima try to enter the youth market again. This time an attempt was made to revive the Habimah Youth Circle. As will be recalled, Gershon Hanoach (Rothfeld) (1894-1952) had established this youth theater troupe in 1933, and it rapidly became a focus of cultural and social activity. When it was brought back to life in 1979, a major figure in the initiative was Penina Grey, previously a member of the group. Teenagers (15-18) all over the country signed up, as noted in Al Hamishmar (December 21, 1979). The group's activities included discussions of literary works, production of a mimeographed monthly newsletter with information on plays, works of literature written by participants, and journalism. The venture was short-lived, however, and Habimah stopped addressing itself to youth.

Ha-ohel, Habimah's competitor on various planes, did not invest energetically in theatrical activity for children and youth. In early August, 1951, about a week after Habimah presented Ba-'arvot ha-negev, members of Ha-ohel visited Kibbutz Kfar Menahem and performed Karashnikov's Ya'agov ve-rahel ("Jacob and Rachel") for the kibbutz children. Subsequently they presented this play among others during a tour of London, where the public and the critics treated it enthusiastically.⁵ The fact that Ya'agov ve-rahel was not

meant especially for children, we believe, indicates that Ha-ohel had no special desire to attract children and youth.

It is clear that the two established theaters, Habimah and Ha-ohel, did not work strenuously to attract children. However, quite a few small, dynamic alternative theaters competed for this market, which included immigrant and native-born youngsters whose potential as an audience they appreciated.

The first to act on this realization was Do-Re-Mi, a musical theater for adults run by noted producer George Wohl. Undergoing a certain transformation, Do-Re-Mi chose to redirect its focus of activity to the child audience. First it set up a "children's department," and about two years later, in late 1957, tried to produce several full-fledged commercial productions. The goal was to establish a genuine commercial theater for children that would provide this market segment with professional, polished theatrical activity including popular adult actors and a children's chorus. In other words, Do-Re-Mi would present a theater of adults and children for children.

It was Menahem Golan who put Do-Re-Mi on a dynamic commercial path. Golan, who had gained his experience in children's theater with the Kindergarten Teachers Association, put it into practice in this theater. Immediately he proved himself to be a talented director for children, who knew how to establish contact with them. He succeeded in bringing many exceptional ideas to fruition.

On November 21, 1956, Do-Re-Mi presented its first children's performance in Ohel Shem in Tel Aviv: Heidi, adapted by Ruth Bat Dor and directed by Menahem Golan. It quickly proved to be a success, and professional relations between producer George Wohl and Menahem Golan became so strong that a decision was taken to make Do-Re-Mi's children's activities permanent.⁶ The next play was Uncle Tom's Cabin, adapted for the stage by Ruth Bat Dor; following it were Gulliver's Travels and Tom Thumb ("Etzba'oni" in Hebrew) adapted for the stage by Yeshayahu Koller. The criticism of Heidi was very good; views on Gulliver were split.⁷

No one paid much attention to the critics; everyone wanted to race ahead, bring more productions to the stage, prosper, rake in the success, and translate it into money. After Hasamba (staged by Yoel Zilberg because Menahem Golan had gone abroad)⁸ came Hasamba and the Horse Thieves, The Magic Wand, The Princess, and The Shoemaker's Daughter.

In sum, Do-Re-Mi reached the pinnacle of its children's activity while Menahem Golan served as its director, and it maintained its position even after he had left the country. It slipped in 1958 when Menahem Golan returned to Israel and set up his own theater, Tilon, which snapped at its competitors' heels.

Tzabarim ("Sabras"), a low-brow theater for children and youth, selected a repertoire from the world of fable. In December, 1953, it presented a musical version of Daniel

Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, staged by Yaaqov Milika, in Jerusalem's Edison Cinema. Fifteen actors from commercial theaters took part. About two years later, in late August, 1955, Pushkin's The Goldfish was presented; it, too, was staged by Milika, and the cast included dozens of members of Elisheva Mona's ballet studio.⁹

As in other cases such as Menahem Golan's Tilon, Tzabarim put out a manifesto of sorts in which it presented its credo:

Tzabarim's goal is to provide an organizational framework shared by Israel's children's theaters. Within this framework, plays will be presented after painstaking selection and artistic supervision by directors and public personalities. The purpose is to improve the status of children's theater, cultivate good artistic taste among the young onlookers, and attract them to the theatrical art.¹⁰

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that this manifesto contains nothing that Menahem Golan, for example, had not said when explaining the background of his theater.¹¹ Be this as it may, Tzabarim went on to present Mokhereth ha-tzabarim ("The Woman who Sold Prickly Pears") and Tom Thumb, both written and directed by Yaaqov Peleg. Next came Peter and the Wolf, adapted and directed by Peleg, with a cast including Azriel Asherov and Bronka Saltzman, who had also performed in the previously mentioned play. Peter and the Wolf ran for approximately two years. The Tzabarim Theater no longer exists.

Another theater came into being in the early 1960s: Pilpelon Yaroq (literally "Little Green Pepper"). It made its debut at Passover (April) of 1964 with Ora ha-kefula ("Ora the Twin") by Erich Kastner, directed by Misha Natan, using Tel Aviv's Mughrabi Cinema. A few months later, Pilpelon presented Uncle Tom's Cabin, about which Emanuel Frankel wrote the following (Urim la-horim, August, 1964):

... Pilpelon Yaroq wanted to present the children with one of the [most] painful problems in the world. Even today, millions of people in many countries are persecuted for their color or ethnic extraction. Indeed, the Pilpelon Yaroq management has taken a heavy task upon itself. It seeks to establish a theater that the children will love. It encourages the youngsters to express their opinions on the plays they saw there, to write down their impressions of the stage adaptation and the acting, to suggest plays they would like to see. The Pilpelon Yaroq management cultivates relations with its audience by establishing a young theater-goers' circle out of an audience of more than 20,000 children aged 7-13.... Members of this group are entitled to discount tickets.... Pilpelon goes so far as to demand that its members come well-dressed and behave politely. I must say that I was favorably impressed with the young audience's behavior. As for the artistic quality of the performance, Director Leo Filler did some beautiful work. His serious attitude is evident everywhere. For educational reasons, he tried to tone down the brutality toward blacks that found expression on stage.... The children acted naturally, but they spoke too fast and often enunciated poorly.

With respect to A. Lindgren's Gilgi, Tehila Rabina had the following to say:

The new Pilpelon Yaroq theater chose to present an exemplary play for children, Galgi.... The author addresses herself chiefly to children of the "Robinson" [Crusoe] age, 8-12, who sail off to faraway islands and unexplored lands. The presentation contains hardly a hint — by way of sound,

motion, sets, or special lighting effects — of those distant countries.... As for sound effects, Naomi Shemer's melodies are fine in and of themselves, but are not well suited to this stage. They lack the melodic simplicity and purity so necessary in children's songs. They come with a kind of slick, artificial gaiety. As for motion, instead of cohesive, aesthetic motion, we saw grotesque, ridiculous motions that may twit and amuse the children, but have nothing in common with art. Summing up, Pilpelon Yaroq should be commended for having chosen to present one of the finest children's plays anywhere. The only thing we regret is that this theater is following in the footsteps of our other children's theaters. It falls for the temptation to prepare children's plays with a minimum of expense and bother, under the altogether invalid assumption that children are not overly fussy in any case and will accept whatever they're given. Have we any right to hope that one of the children's theaters will at least aspire to educate a generation of art lovers, and not mere consumers of entertainment?¹²

Interestingly, the author-critic touched some raw nerves. While lauding the selection of this play, she expressed some rather sharp criticism of Pilpelon's approach, motion, music, and in short, on its management's transparent intent to make a buck rather than to stress the other, educational and aesthetic aspects of the production—even as their credo presented them in a different light. Pilpelon closed in 1965.

Pashosh Children's Theater was a 1965 outgrowth of "Hatarnegolim" (literally, "Roosters"), a group established by Naomi Polani.¹³ Polani, a product of Chisbatron (the first army troupe), was a choreographer, a stage director and an adaptor of music. She evidently found it hard to make peace with the dissolution of her army troupe (Hatarnegolim), and perhaps chose to revive its spirit in

the form of a children's theater. This surmise of ours may perhaps gain support from the fact that two years later, when Pashosh fell apart, she laid the foundations for yet another troupe, Hahamtsitsim.

In November, 1965, Pashosh staged Ha-tayyara ("The Kite"), co-authored by Uriel Ofek, Natan Alterman, Miriam Yalan-Steiklis, Ayin Hillel, and Avraham Shlonsky. Critic Ezra Sussman (1900-1973) had the following to say about this play:

Well-developed literary and stage taste, sensitive regard for acting and motion, a talent for composition and polishing form—these handsome attributes belong to Naomi Polani, director of the Pashush children's theater. They also put this play at a certain distance from the world of the young audience. [Other flaws include] acting within acting, theater within theater, introduction to and commentary on the play—sometimes shallow—and deliberately detached acting. Because of all these, the audience could not follow the plot, which was discontinuous for the very same reasons. This theater does not ask its audience to identify fully with the plot through emotional participation in the development of the story being presented. The children in the audience are seemingly invited to take part in the acting itself, to act together with the children of the theater. They are asked to remember that it is in a theater that they are sitting, to enjoy the very reality of its being theater. But children naturally prefer theater which does not insist that they recall that it is theater. They prefer theater that recalls life itself, life of imagination and emotion, surprise and astonishment over the realisticness of what is being enacted before them, theater that speaks to their heart and their imagination, using the language of "big" forces that make them, too, big. Perhaps by selecting the literary material as it did, this new theater ventured into a complicated field where everything is open to the imagination. Slonski's "Mickey Mouse" effect comes to light in the play of words, the dizzying progression of verses, the language which itself is a kind of three-ring circus of

acrobatics, with the plot swallowed up in a maelstrom of rhetoric. Adapted for stage, the script loses some of its ability to surprise and its dizzying dynamism of transformations, costuming, and turnabouts. Acting within acting, false smiles, lurches forward and backward, all weaken the audience's attention. Alterman's half-story, half-poem is quieter, more continuous, and more literary, but it seems rather too childish for children who come to the theater secretly yearning to grow up all at once and discover the secret of the theater in one quick Uriel Ofek's skit is highly appropriate for this theater, but it was presented in a way that distanced it from the real world and underscored the element of "alienation" with which adults are familiar. The impression acquired was that the children had been invited to a nice rehearsal, and that everything was "make-believe"....¹⁴

Sussman, known as a sharp-witted, brilliant critic, successfully characterized Pashush with all its difficulties. It was a one-woman show, and the one woman, Naomi Polani, found it hard to convey messages to children. Everything seemed to have been built along the lines of adult theater: discourse, stage direction, music, motion. The intentions may have been positive and desirable, but the performance was not suited to the target audience. It is a fact that even though it recruited experienced, famous authors such as Shlonski, Alterman, Miriam Yalan-Steiklis, and Ayin Hillel, Pashosh folded within the relatively short period of two years.

Yuval Theater came on the Israeli children's theater scene at the end of 1968. In Tel Aviv's Beit Hahayal on December 22 of that year, it presented Kofigo ve-ha-qosem ("Kofiko and the Magician"), based on a story by Tamar Bornstein-Lazar, adapted for the stage by Shlomo Bar-Shavit

and directed by Rafi Shahar. Yuval's next production was a sequel, Kofigo ba-tzava ("Kofiko in the Army"), produced by the same team.

From the outset, Yuval operated on firm ground and with a rather broad common denominator. It based its plays on a popular series of books, thus gaining many young fans. It hired a professional theater man to adapt the material, and actors widely regarded as "funny," such as Jetta Luka, Dudik Smadar, Haim Banai, Gabi Amrani. In addition to them were six children. It anticipated large audiences and expected commensurate profits. For its manager, Miriam Etzioni, this venture into the new field of children's theater amounted to a diversification meant to spread risks. Thus far she had been mainly an impresario of singers, not all of whom belonged to Israel's highest echelon. Aware of the riskiness of this line of work, she decided to hedge her bets by expanding into children's theater. The fact that children's drama was a mere extension of her original pursuit found expression in a tendency to give both quality and depth of repertoire short shrift. Yuval is still an active theater, performing for both youth and adults.

This seems an appropriate place to pause and consider an important, if not central, aspect in all children's theater activity. An article by Mirit Shem-Or, "Shells and Caps in Children's Theater," discusses the point in question:

Children's drama is good business. It's also good theater, but not always on the right side of the curtain. Children get excited. They love to boo, identify with the heroes, and villify the villains. The children, rapt and active observers, seem to be the ideal audience for those who herald progress and love "happenings." Children's plays evoke just what theater wants to evoke—a response. Sometimes this response is negative. Children do not have much consideration for the sensitive souls of theater people. When they get bored, they throw paper airplanes, wander around the hall, clown around, and carry out all the functions of their private lives, irrespective of what's happening on stage. However, it's not all that hard to capture their attention. There are several well-known devices. Casting a dog, horse, or donkey as the star of the play never fails. Supernatural phenomena are almost as good. You can also take a familiar and beloved subject such as Tarzan, Chipopo (Tarzan's chimpanzee) or Kofiko, and build the theater with all its accessories around him. The children watch their beloved hero undergo theatrical metamorphosis and accept it with love. Kofiko does not need to be "marketed"; every Israeli child already knows him. Children's theater also has its classics, such as Andersen....

Children's theater can sound like a fairy tale with a happy ending. Every child has a father and mother, and they already know that children go to the theater only on holidays.... This ossified attitude is not viewed with favor by those to whom children's theater is dear. As veteran theater activists who know show-business, however, they accommodate themselves to reality....¹⁵

With a gentle sting and a certain irony, the writer addresses herself to the topic least dealt with thus far: the interrelations of theater and audience, children and theater people. All the points she raises had been mentioned on occasion by various critics, but no one had spoken about them as she did with respect to Rahel bit'kha ha-getana ("Your Little Daughter Rachel"). How surely she struck the

target may be seen in the continuation of her article, in which she talks about the unchanging scripts, the same plays presented every Hanukah, and the fact that the various theaters' repertoires had not changed for years.

No survey of commercial children's theater in the years 1970-1980 can fail to devote special attention to Rafi Shahar and Yaaqov Peleg. Shahar, who began his theatrical career as an actor with Menahem Golan's Tilon, chose to refocus his activity on the management and production of children's theater. To this end he collaborated with Yaaqov Peleg, a dramatizer and stage director, who, too, had been extensively active in Menahem Golan's theaters. Shahar and Peleg surface as major participants in no fewer than three commercial children's theaters during the 1970s: Cyclone, Ha-varod, and Lilach.

The first of these, Cyclone, was born in October, 1970. It made its debut with Yaaqov Peleg's Mokheret ha-tzabarim, which had been first presented by a different theater. This play, whose cast included Bronka Saltzman, Yosef Golan, Cochava Harari, and Betty Segal, is a musical comedy about children in an immigrant moshav on the frontier.¹⁶

On Hanukah 1971, Cyclone presented Havurat nahshon be-'iqvot ha-meragel ("Spychasers"), based on a story by Tzvia Granot, adapted for the stage by Yaaqov Peleg, and directed by Avraham David. How commercial Cyclone's intentions were may be gauged from a poster the theater issued upon the presentation of Tom Thumb. The Hebrew name it chose for this

play was 'Etzba'oni, identical to that of a children's newspaper. In other words, Cyclone collaborated with the children's newspaper as a public relations gimmick....

Cyclone disbanded after two seasons of operation; its successor was Rafi Shahar's venture, Ha-teatron ha-varod (literally, "Pink Theater"). Ha-teatron ha-varod made its debut in 1973 with Chipopo be-mitzrayim ("Chipopo in Egypt") by Tamar Burstein-Lazar (adapted by Shlomo Bar-Shavit), and Ha-zamir shel helekh sin ("The King of China's Songbird"), based on a Hans Christian Andersen story, adapted for the stage and directed by Shahar himself. Shahar, as noted above, had acquired the tools of the trade in Menahem Golan's Tilon.

Ha-teatron ha-varod perished in 1975, and Lilach Theater for Children and Youth took its place, again with Rafi Shahar at the helm. Lilach made its debut with Maeterlink's Ha-tzippor ha-kehula ("Bluebird"), adapted for the theater and set to music by Uriel Ofek and directed by Avraham David. This play was presented on various occasions in 1976-77. The next Lilach production (late 1978) was Qofigo ha-'aliz ("Happy Kofiko"), based on a story by Tamar Burstein-Lazar and directed by Shahar.

Between productions, the theater and its director, Rafi Shahar, found time to participate in the festivities surrounding Tel Aviv's 70th anniversary. In 1979, a special Lilach cast headed by Shahar inaugurated a dramatic writing program for Tel Aviv schoolchildren. Well-known performers

such as Ella Alterman, Denya Aviel, Roni Lerner, Dudik Smadar, and Shahar himself participated, even encouraging students to produce their plays in school.¹⁷

Lilach is still active today. Like most of its precursors, it was identified with its manager-owner, Rafi Shahar. Shahar's presence was conspicuous in all three of the theaters described here—Lilach, Ha-teatron ha-varod, and Cyclone. The senior staff, too, was a rather permanent one, and Yaaqov Peleg was one of its fixtures. After starting out with Menahem Golan's Tilon, Shahar and Peleg had founded their own theaters as Golan had, demonstrating executive ability and commercial instincts. They staged classics alongside purely commercial productions, presenting their theaters under different names for each purpose.

Oz Theater began to present children's plays on a commercial basis in the early 1970s. By this time, Israel was awash in theaters—especially children's theaters—and plays. Thus the directors of Oz knew that they could survive only by large-volume production.

Oz chose to present plays on Jewish holiday themes and other "sure hits." They turned to the inexhaustible reservoir of classical plays, and built a cast of children and professional actors. Pinocchio, directed by Avraham David, was presented time and again. Simlat ha-shabbat shel Hannaleh ("Hannaleh's Shabbat Dress"), another old-time favorite, was adapted by Avraham Zohar based on work by Yitzhak Schweiger, and directed by Bitosh Davidov. This

play, of course, was for preschool children. Then, for the first time in Israel, Oz resorted to raffles (records and white dresses) as a crowd-boosting device.¹⁸ Was it any wonder that Hannaleh was a box-office success?

Alongside its classical productions,¹⁹ Oz presented more popular fare such as Yigal Mosenson's Hasamba, Pinhas Koren's Yehoshua ha-parua ("Wild Yehoshua"), etc. The directly commercial approach of this theater—and particularly that of its producer, Avraham Luria—met with some displeasure on the part of its audience and theater fans in general. Yedioth Aharonoth (July 28, 1978) had the following to say about Simlat ha-shabbat shel Hannaleh:

Contemporary children have extremely broad horizons. The new educational methods, as well as television, enrich their world. Thus their demands are more profound than in the past. For them, then, Hannaleh is outdated.... It's better to read the book. One would find better food for the imagination there than on the stage.

However, as always, the public cast the final vote by forming long queues at the box office, fattening Avraham Lurie's bank account. Hannaleh was a major success -- a popular play that played to packed houses and ran season after season. Lurie was always able to revive it even when its theme was thought of as obsolete and unpopular. Oz is still an active theater, especially around holidays.

Masekhot ("Masks") Theater was something of an exception on the scene of Israeli children's theater. It was established with intent to present two plays—Menorat ha-

gesamim ("The Magic Lantern") and Mi yatzil et ha-nesikha? ("Who'll Save the Princess?—a performance expanded to include Max Nordau's Mishgefei ha-peleh "The Magic Spectacles").

The Hebrew version of The Magic Lantern was written and staged by Michael Ohad, whose attachment to the theater included a regular column in the Ha'aretz weekend supplement. It was Itzko Rahamimov who pushed, produced, and established the theater. Ohad's adaptations include Bigdei ha-melekh ha-hadashim ("The Emperor's New Clothes"), Lars ha-'atzlan ("Lazy Lars"), Claus ha-qatan u-claus ha-gadol ("Little Claus and Big Claus"), and Ba'al ve-isha be-khad shel hometz ("Husband and Wife in a Jar of Vinegar"). The cast included some of the major names in Israeli theater: Shlomo Bar Shavit, Edna Flider, Mutzi Aviv, and Nissim Azikri.²⁰

The two-part Mi yatzil et ha-nesikha (including Max Nordau's "The Magic Spectacles") was adapted and directed by Shlomo Bar-Shavit, who also acted alongside Nissim Azikri, Barukh David, and Yonit Shoham. Masekhot's two presentations were considered successful. Nevertheless, we find it somewhat difficult to fathom the reason for setting up an ad hoc theater to present them. One must assume that any existing theater would have categorically rejected these plays, had they been brought to them.

Bimot Theater was founded by Yaaqov Agmon and began to operate in 1966. Agmon, formerly administrative manager of

the Cameri, chose first to specialize in Broadway-style comedies,²¹ and went into children's theater in the early 1970s by presenting Masa' ha-gesamim ("Magic Voyage"). This play was something of a "happening," in which the audience played an active role. The children slid about on sheets of metal and seated themselves on grass carpets in whose center, on a colorful rug, the magic voyage took place—a voyage to liberate a scientist held captive by a robot created by the scientist himself. The children were asked to help the scientist, who was crying for salvation.²² The cast included Avirama Golan, Yisrael Biderman, Ariel Furman, and Dudu Elharar. The play was written by Bernard Giss, translated by Yehonatan Gefen, and directed by Omri Nitzan.

Putting the audience to work became a successful gimmick in Bimot presentations. M. Ben-Shaul writes in Maariv (March 12, 1974) about the play Abracadabra:

Attractive costumes, a few puppets, a simple, literary script that drove the children crazy, involved them in the experience, gave them a little share of the theater action, and, in short, made them happy, brought them a little tension as relief, inserted them into the plot. The actors present stories and little sketches, converse with the audience, and make it participate in their plots. The nice thing is that the actors have no aspiration to grow and expand. They want to perform for an intimate audience of children. This troupe is cute, lovely, fresh, and colorful. Those are very valuable advantages.

Bimot did not perceive itself as a vehicle of children's entertainment; however, the target audience of its first presentations did include the young. Bimot

continued to function as a theater for adults until approximately 1980.

Impresario Jacques Yaaqov was no different from the other impresario-producers who operated in Israel's theater scene during the period under review. He had reached the country from Bulgaria after a career as an actor and singer. In Israel, he began producing shows associated with the world of operetta, and slowly began to try his hand at children's plays. Jacques Yaaqov had no educational intentions; he wanted to make lots of money, quickly. Thus, ironically, the strongest aspect of the children's plays he produced was their sets (they were designed by his wife, Batya). The repertoire was rather limited, most coming from the world of classics. His presentations followed one another at a rapid pace, and were performed festival-style, mostly in large halls such as Tel Aviv's Frederick Mann Auditorium. Jacques Yaaqov was in the habit of calling his theater by different names—Children's Theater, Musical Theater, or even Jethro's Theater.

In the summer of 1974, "Jethro" presented Lassie Come Home, Pinocchio, Treasure Island, The Magic Flute²³ and other plays. In September, 1975 (for the holiday of Sukkot), Yaaqov announced a "Children's Festival"; Snow White, Ami and Tami, Puss in Boots, and Little Red Riding Hood were presented in the little Tamari Hall. Not content to produce the plays, Yaaqov directed them, too. Together with Danny Pelz, he presented Sefer ha-jungel ("Jungle Book"), Bambi,

Popeye at the Circus, and more. As time passed, this mode became the clearly dominant trend in Israeli theater. No longer did the professional theaters have a monopoly on such performances; they became the province of sundry promoters. The difference was intent: the former had some affinity for good, serious, educational theater, while the latter wanted quick, easy money. Nor, strange to say, did they try to camouflage this intent. The phenomenon of impresarios' producing children's plays persists to this day.

Teatron ha-zman ("Time Theater") and Teddy Productions are cases in point. They considered children's drama a golden highway to easy money. They turned out small, mobile productions with relatively small casts and few, simple sets, which were nevertheless staged in large halls. To minimize their investment, they created a new kind of children's play, dramatizing a book or collection of songs.²⁴

In June, 1973, Teddy Productions staged Hayu yamim, hayu leilot—peraqim be-toldot ha-tzionut ("Those Were the Days, Those Were the Nights—Episodes in Zionist History"). The play was produced by Uri Milstein and directed by Yossi Alfi.²⁵

Presented along with this production were fables by Andersen (The Ugly Duckling, The Emperor's New Clothes, etc.). The audience was also presented with Waldmar Boneslas' Ha-devora maya ("Maya the Bee"), Roger Hargraves' Mar sameah ("Mr. Happy"²⁶), Hagigat gayitz ("Summer Bash")

(a collage of characters familiar to the children from the theater and television), Dodi simha ("My Uncle Simha"), and Ayin Hillel's Sameah ba-shekhuna ("Good Time in the Neighborhood"). The feature shared by all these was Dudu Yardeni as director.

"Time Theater" also selected popular fare: a children's play based on Steve Austin of TV's The Six Million Dollar Man, written by Shlomo Bar-Shavit and directed by Shlomo Wishinski, and Herpatka'ot mar guzma'i u-mar bada'i ("Adventures of the Exaggerator and the Liar"). The latter included song, pantomime, slapstick, and circus-type acts.

Authors and poets were typical Time Theater media. An example was Fania, produced and directed by Michael Shoshan. This was in fact the depiction of a fictional meeting between a teenage boy and girl with poet Fania Bergstein (1908-1950). Similarly, Le-tiyul yatzanu ("On an Outing") contained a selection of poems by Avraham Shlonsky (1900-1973), Ayin Hillel (1926-), Leah Goldberg (1911-1970), and Oded Burla. Kova' ha-gesamim ("Magic Hat") was based on poems by Leah Goldberg, Kadya Molodowska, and Yehonatan Gefen. This mode was especially conspicuous in the second half of the 1970s. However, a few plays of this genre are still presented in Israel.

As stated, children's theaters blossomed in sequence like a charmed circle. The volume and diversity of productions and producers lured large audiences into the theaters and generated handsome profits for the organizers-producers.

Under such conditions, with commercial and private theaters all active and all doing well, it was only natural that sundry parties would leap into the fray, creating a free-for-all with ill-begotten gains at stake. In this game, of course, all tools could be used: books, plays, poems, adaptations of old plays, adaptations of TV shows, etc.

In February, 1970, Holam presented Hakhmei helm ("The Wise Men of Chelm"), adapted by Uriel Ofek and directed by Avraham David.²⁷ Itzko Rahamimov produced 'Azit be-shilgei ha-hermon' ("Azit in the Snow of Mount Hermon") the same year; it ran about 100 times. He also presented 'Azit be-midbar yehuda' ("Azie in the Judean Desert"). The author of the latter two plays was Mordechai Gur, Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces between 1974 and 1978. Holam performed for two seasons (1970-71) during the schools' holiday recesses.

Our review would not be complete without mention of several plays of similar type performed by shorter-lived troupes. Uriel Ofek's Mira Kapira, whose heroine was a little girl who had recently reached Israel and found it hard to integrate into the society of children in her new homeland, was presented on several occasions. Its debut, in the summer of 1973, was produced by Ruth Zohar and directed by Edna Kantor.²⁸ Eric Smith and his puppet theater produced Ha-zamir me-eretz sin ("The Canary from China") in late summer 1974, and Amnon Berenson presented Ani pashosh ("I'm a Hummingbird"), based on poems by Ayin Hillel, and Astrid

Lindgren's Bilbi ("Pippi Longstocking"). A year later, Berenson produced The Wizard of Oz, adapted by Shlomo Bar-Shavit and directed by Eran Baniel.

In Hotam (the weekend supplement of Al Hamishmar), October 17, 1974, we find commentary on the play Shalom Choo-Choo, directed by Philip Diskin:

Before your very eyes, they build a play full of momentum and imagination out of a pile of shmattes and a few accessories on the stage. It's about a family of troglodytes who don't know how to do anything but eat and sleep. They live in the Land of Babel, which is full of holes. To fill them in, the residents begin to build their famous Tower. The children in the audience take part in the play throughout, climbing onto the stage and coming down after finishing their roles, as the actors invite them.... Here we have an excellent combination of psychological insight and theatrical ability. The play's style recalls that of Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater (U.S.), which makes extensive use of masks together with miniature and giant puppets, to create a theater that is "poor" in resources but exceedingly rich in forms and images, lacking the spontaneity-stifling polish found on the conventional commercial stage.

Actors Sassi Keshet and Yonah Eliahu plunged into the child audience, breathing stage life into Oded Burla's imaginative, humorous, and vivid stories.²⁹ Acting out excerpts of the stories written by Burla himself, the critic notes, the actors enriched the children's world. Shalom Choo-Choo, directed by Danny Lita'i, was produced in 1976.

We could continue describing various performances and shows, but the situation seems clear enough: abundant activity. Examining the productions and the producers more

deeply, we reach the inevitable general conclusion that the situation was out of control. Producers simply contended with each other for the public's money. These affairs became especially inauspicious at peak theater seasons—summer vacations and holiday time. Things reached such a state that when the Ministry of Education and Culture recommended that the country's kindergarten teachers and school principals consider various producers' publications, it was thought, erroneously, that the Ministry was lending these producers' plays its seal of approval.³⁰

The kibbutz theater (Bamat ha-kibbutz), which produced Mattate bein 'ananim ("Broom in the Clouds") in 1978 (directed by Goren), marked an exception to the chaos. Mattate was a first attempt to write a play based on actors' improvisation. Its plot dealt with a mother, Danny, and a good witch, who travel to a mythical land in search of some lost books.

Nitza Oren (Yedioth Aharonoth, July 28, 1978) commented on this play as follows:

... During the trip they meet with familiar characters from the world of children's fables: Peter Pan, Pinocchio, Snow White, etc. By making optimum use of masks, the actors change their "spots" into cats, frogs, etc. Nothing stands between themselves and the audience, and the children participate with the actors in their indecision. One of the play's goals is to handle this theme with children aged 4-7.

Oded Burla was a central figure in Kemo tzipporim ("Like Birds"), a children's play performed by the Kibbutz

Theater's Northern Workshop in the summer of 1979. Assaf Orr of Kibbutz Beit Zera adapted and directed the play, and Haim Barkani of Kibbutz Shaar Hagolan wrote the music. The purpose was to develop the young audience's imagination and creativity.

We cannot conclude this chapter without mentioning Masakh u-masekha (lit. "Curtain and Mask"), a family theater no longer in existence, owned by the acting couple Barukh David and Rachel Attas. In the winter of 1978, they presented Peti ma'amin be-khol davar ("The Fool Who Believed Everything"), directed by Ezra Dagan. It ran 150 times. A few months later, Masakh u-masekha presented Ha-shamen ve-ha-razeh ("Fat Man, Thin Man"), written and directed by Gidi Shaham. Yedioth Aharonoth (November 1, 1978) had the following to say about the latter play:

[Shaham] wants not only to amuse the audience but to educate it by means of political allegory containing many unoriginal but amusing satirical elements. The heroes are an obese king and his slender aide, who live in Cookieland. One day, when the kingdom had run out of cookies and the subjects had nothing left to eat, the king and his aide are deposed and go out in search of a new kingdom. In their travails, they pass through the Land of Culture, the Land of Animal and Vegetable, and a police state where law and order are studied. They return to their own country mature and wise.

In 1978, Ha-qoma ha-shelishit ("The Third Floor"), a fringe theater in Jaffa, presented Ha-yeled ha-ze hu ani ("That Boy is Me") by Yehuda Atlas, Yedidi tintan ("My Friend Tintan") by Miriam Yalan-Steiklis, Guzmai ha-badai,

Mi-zevuv ve-'ad pil ("From Fly to Elephant"), etc. All were based on poems, and all were staged on the Sabbath, marking a novelty in theatrical activity in Israel thus far.

To summarize the activity of the children's theaters in Israel from the 1950s until the late 1970s, we may say that it was removed from the exclusive control of the "official," public bodies, and transferred to private commercial ones. Emphasis was placed on the commercial-financial aspect as opposed to that of quality, and competition was brisk if not ruthless. All this proves that the public was insatiable and not overly fussy.³¹

Chapter Thirteen

THEATRICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOL:

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY

School, as we saw in the early chapters of this work,¹ was the cradle and initial venue of theater for children and youth in Palestine/Israel. It came into being and revolved around teachers connected with various kinds of theaters, and educators from European countries with theatrical traditions, who considered theater a creative, enriching, and interesting means of promoting education and instilling culture.

The immediately preceding chapters of this dissertation² may give the impression that once the state was born and established, public and private theaters became the centers of theatrical development, and the old-style activity in the schools simply faded away. Not so. Theatrical activity continued during and after school in cities and outlying rural settlements. Its practitioners worked with vigor and talent, albeit far from the spotlights. Publicity in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s focused on the heads of the commercial, private, and semi-official theaters, and this was natural, but creative amateur activity in the schools did not wither on the vine.

In Tel Aviv's Hadash (New) High School, an institution that always stood out in its innovative educational

initiatives, director Nissan Notovitz (Nativ) ran a drama group. In early 1951, Notovitz staged Moliere's Monsieur de Forsoniac. The play, translated by R. Gil'ad, premiered in the Ohel auditorium and garnered plaudits. Thus, for example, Y.N. Neiman writes in Davar (February 15, 1951):

... The influence of pantomime is favorably evident in the stage direction. With simple and limited resources, the director has presented us with a joyous, entertaining play. Youngsters' natural urge to act has found expression here. And what is theater, if not a constant return to childhood and youth? The play has grace and charm, especially with the accent that rings so beautifully in the mouths of young native Hebrew speakers ... The performers do not want to emulate professional actors, and this is the strength of their performance, which is free and unforced....

And beyond his straight review and criticism of the play, the critic takes the trouble to present his thoughts on theater in school in general:

Children's and young people's theaters are proliferating in our midst.... This is laudable It should be emphasized that original dramas, too, should be staged. We saw successful school productions of works by Yaaqov Cohen, Sholom Aleichem, and others. There should be a deliberate effort to strike a balance between classics from other countries, which are essential, and local works, which we owe the future.

A few months later, in the spring of 1951, the same group presented Bastine u-bastina, by all accounts a complex undertaking for amateurs since it integrated acting, song,

and musical accompaniment. The school, understanding the importance and impact of the theater group's activity, accommodated the pupils by letting them leave for rehearsal twice a week after their fifth class.³

The activity of the drama group was evidently carefully planned. In the end-May, 1951, issue of Hed ha-hinukh, the newsletter of the Israel Teachers' Association, we find the following item:

...Everyone can enter the drama circle. In the group, one understudies for two years, learning and serving as an extra. Only in his third year does he get major roles and attain full importance in the group. The drama circle works on two plays a year, and performs before audiences. When it is especially successful, an auditorium is rented and specially priced tickets are sold to benefit a good cause. The group's work influences class discipline and scholastic levels. Its overriding problem is an appropriate repertoire. The demands of a good repertoire are many: the teachers demand high quality and a level suited to youth; the students demand something interesting; and the director demands a speciality production in which he can draw on his powers. Regarding this last demand, Nissan's method is particularly interesting. He presents the dramas in the spirit of their times.... Thus, the students trace the various periods of the theater's development and learn the details first-hand, from costumes and sets to the stage and the style of acting.... This troupe must confront the problem of sets and costumes like any school-sponsored amateur troupe Usually lectures are delivered in class on the theme of the next play, to involve students in the drama circle's activity.⁴

Parenthetically, the plan used by the Hadash High School drama group was not exceptional. Quite a few educational institutions engaged in such activity. For example, Carmeli School in Jerusalem set up a drama group two weeks

before Hanukah, 1957, and admitted talented students in the fifth through eighth grades. Despite the time pressure, which left many observers skeptical, the group managed to stage B'nei rahmanim ("Children of the Compassionate"), based on a story by S. Ben-Zion. The experiment was a success, and it was apparently Jerusalem's first, prompting a wave of encouragement. In a flowery tone not without pathos, Hed ha-hinukh (January 16, 1958) said the following:

...We call on all drama activists throughout the country to redouble their efforts and marshal forces in the drama field, and on the champions of education (the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Teachers' Association) to assist in whatever way possible.

In case someone failed to understand the meaning of "in whatever way possible," the anonymous author spelled it out: offering special training courses for teacher-directors; reworking, printing, and disseminating appropriate dramas; and cooperating with the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater.

The following fact will perhaps attest to the strength of the direct correlation between the type of school theatrical activity and the educator who ran it. In Tel Aviv's Herzliya Gymnasium, teacher-educator Hadassah Sherman staged student operas: Papagani, based on Mozart's The Magic Flute; Verdi's Troubador and Aida; and Gleich's Orpheus and Euridica. Sherman's innovation lay not only in mounting operas but in using the students so extensively: 150

participants, including actors, a 100-student choir, a 30-piece orchestra, a ballet troupe, and...soloists.⁵

In what Israel called the "working settlements," i.e., the kibbutzim, dramatic activity was an educational medium of stature and an unfailing source of enjoyment. Anda Amir-Finkernfeld (1902-1981), an artist in her own right, visited various kibbutzim and reviewed-critiqued what she saw there. In the autumn of 1951, the children of Kibbutz Ashdot Yaaqov staged a play called Raheli, built around poems by Fanya Bergstein. Raheli was staged by "Matilda," and Amir-Finkernfeld wrote the following about it:

... This play enamors the eye and the heart, and should be performed for all the children in Israel and the new immigrants, to entertain them, enrich them, and teach them to seek and find the beauty that exists and envelopes them day in, day out, which they sometimes disregard.

A few months after she made these comments in Davar, suggesting that the play be performed for new immigrants, Kibbutz Hefziba apparently took her advice. The kibbutz youth group⁶ included new immigrants from Iraq and Yemen, who had turned into disciplined, outstanding workers. To mark the group's first anniversary, its counselor decided to stage Ha-melekh shlomo ve-ashmedai ("King Solomon and the Devil"), based on a fable by C.N. Bialik. Davar (June 26, 1952) carried the following critique:

Its success exceeded all expectations. The Hebrew accent of these Oriental immigrants was a joy to hear.... The dance troupe surprised us with its cohesive performance.... The costumes and sets,

prepared with the most limited resources, produced the maximum theatrical illusion. These boys and girls presented not only an innocent folktale, but a historical drama of our people in these times of the ingathering and acculturation of exiles.

The dramatic activity of their schoolchildren was so important to the kibbutzim that they went to the trouble of hiring professionals. For example, Zvi Rafael, prominent in Habimah and Ha-ohel, went to Kibbutz Mesilot, in the Beit Shean Valley, to direct Malkat hashelagim ("Snow Queen"), Y. Schwartz's adaptation of a Hans Christian Andersen story. Y.N. Neiman, who wrote extensively on theatrical activity in Israel's schools, reviewed the play for Davar (July 24, 1952):

Mesilot school's drama circle has presented a play they call Queen of the Snows.

It is evident that amateur youth are fine raw material to be shaped [by the director]. He did something that transcends the level of school plays.

In the same breath, Neiman delivered himself of other ruminations:

...Israel's schools, mainly those that teach agriculture, are the nation's crucibles. Anonymous teachers and counselors are engaging in holy work. This welcome educational activity is reflected in the play, too. It radiates light and a wellspring of goodness, like the fantasy from which it originates. Mesilot's Snow Queen should be seen by many. It's heartwarming.

The esteemed author's final comments are a little puzzling, to put it mildly. How can he ignore the fact that this specific play, which he praises so effusively, was directed by someone from the outside—not a rank-and-file school-teacher, but a professional director hired for this purpose?

In the theatrical world it was and is common to re-enact plays during specific periods like school vacations and Jewish holidays, or to attempt to recreate the success of a performance or play. The Ben Shemen agricultural school⁷ staged the comic opera Bastine u-bastina in July, 1953, using a translation by Ephraim Dror. This opera was also performed outside the school. So was a puppetshow by G. Wolff Krakauer. Both performances were broadcast on government-controlled Israel Radio, and this should be considered more than a token of considerable appreciation for them and the enterprise. Incidentally, three years later, in 1956, Bastine u-bastina was restaged by Ben-Shemen and re-broadcast on Israel Radio.

As with Kibbutz Hefziba, where a play was mounted with immigrant youth participating in a hitherto unknown cultural experience, plays were also staged in the transit camps—temporary settlements for immigrants from the Islamic countries—as a means of bringing people together, absorbing immigrants, and imparting values. There had been previous attempts in this direction, as in July, 1951, when Habimah went to Beersheva and Ha-ohel performed Ya'agov ve-rahel ("Jacob and Rachel") in the immigrants' settlements in the

narrow "corridor" leading to Jerusalem from the coastal plain. This, however, was an experiment by an established public theater meant for the general public—whereas here we seek to survey school-sponsored activity. On Hanukah of 1953, teachers and pupils in the school in the Tira transit camp, near Haifa, presented a Hanukah play. To create a rapport with her audience, teacher Hannah Lipkin had to provide a preface with some background information.

Three years passed, and in another transit camp, Kurdani Bet, in the Haifa Bay suburbs, a drama troupe evolved under Yosef Matzri. Hed ha-hinukh seemed to shake itself out of hibernation, and described this activity as follows:

Recently we have witnessed a certain revival in the direction of establishing Israeli children's theater. This work blossomed in the veteran, established Yishuv, and derives its inspiration and encouragement from the lively, effervescent Israeli world. The transit-camp schools, with all their uncertainties and problems, have remained isolated, struggling for minimal educational values and a basic element of instruction under inadequate conditions and a hostile, indifferent, and backward environment.⁸

It is a little difficult to understand the author's "discovery" at a time when those in the field were well aware of what was going on. An entity known as Telem (a Hebrew acronym for Theater for the Immigrant Transit Camps) brought Habimah and Ha-ohel to Beersheva and the Jerusalem "corridor" settlements in 1951. Its name attested to its goal: to bring theater to the immigrants in the transit

camps—as entertainment, as an educational medium, and as a living tool for Hebrew-language instruction. Quite often, Telem not only brought plays in but initiated their writing, as in Kazablan ("Casablanca") and Sof ha-'olam ("End of the World").⁹ Thus, the question is whether the Teachers' Association organ was out of touch with reality when it issued the statement quoted above.

One way or another, the drama group was established in Kurdani Bet after feverish preparations and considerable efforts by Telem. The group included junior-high and high-school students, who challenged the conventional wisdom that transit-camp children were less talented than veteran Israelis.¹⁰ It performed Esther ve-ahashverosh ("Esther and Xerxes") and Halom leil urim ("A Hanukah Night's Dream") in Kiryat Yam, Kiryat Bialik (twice), and Kiryat Haim.¹¹ With these performances they not only helped bridge the gaps with the residents of these suburbs, but earned a little money to improve their conditions, and deposited a tidy sum in their school's treasury.

During the 1960s, too, theatrical activity in the schools remained lively. Some of the plays were based on local experiences, others on esoteric ones, plus quite a few classics, reworked to fit the time and place. Haifa's Dror School presented Ma'ayan ha-gesamim ("The Magic Spring"), a Russian fable adapted by Y. Ahai, in the German Colony cinema on Purim eve, 1962. As reported in Hed hahinukh,¹² it was a smashing success. Something of an innovation in this

field may be seen in the local attempts to organize throughout Israel in the early 1960s. In the Tel Aviv suburb of Givatayim in 1962, a group of local teachers launched an educational-artistic venture: The Givatron Theater for Children and Youth. Naturally, the founding nucleus comprised concerned teachers, who chose the best of those Givatayim students with a flair for acting. They staged Malkat haya'arot ("Queen of the Woods"), a literal adaptation of a well-known Russian fable. It was performed by 35 student-actors and directed by Eliezer Eitan,¹³ with the music and dance composed and taught by Ziona Levy.

The guiding spirit behind this enterprise was Eitan, who attracted many followers with his fervor. It was he who decided that the Givatron's major objective was to teach values and Hebrew to the immigrant children in the Givatayim vicinity.

In 1963, as if jealous of Givatayim, Netanya residents established a drama, dance, and song group called The Greater Netanya Children's Troupe. The sponsor was Dov Zamir,¹⁴ a musician wont to perform and to discover young talents. Its first project was Sodo shel oman ("An Artist's Secret"), performed very successfully three times in Netanya and twice in Petah Tikva. The troupe included pupils from eight elementary schools, born in Israel to immigrant parents, and recent immigrants themselves.

In the mid-1960s we find an additional novelty: weekly drama festivals staged by Tel Aviv high-school students.

Participating in these festivals were professionals from the established theaters, who encouraged the youngsters to write and perform plays, from the classical repertoire and from the world of their school and environment. In late May, 1964, during High-School Students' Week in Habimah's auditorium, Alef Municipal High School presented Moliere's The Imaginary Invalid and The Miser, the former directed by Zvi Rafael and the latter by Emanuel Gorner; Daled Municipal High School staged Synge's Harokhvim el hayam ("Riders to the Sea"), directed by Dan Bar-Geva; Municipal High School Heh performed Sophocles' Antigone, and Municipal High School Vav presented L.S. Grunman's Shlomo ha-melekh ve-shalmai ha-sandler ("King Solomon and Shlamai the Cobbler"), both directed by Dan Kedar; Municipal High School Het presented Kelbund's Hama'agal halavan ("The White Cycle"), directed by Binyamin Arnon; and Municipal High School Tet performed Tom Jones Fantasy, directed by Niri Magnos.¹⁵ A year later, under the same auspices, the selection was smaller: Aleph offered Goldoni's Meshartam shel shnei adonim ("Servant of Two Masters"); Heh staged Itamar Yaoz-Kast's Or ha-nahshon ("The Light of the Bold"); Zayin undertook Amcha, and Het Tevye ha-holeiv ("Tevye the Milkman"), both by Sholom Aleichem; and Shevah performed Ha-mishpat ("The Caine Mutiny Court Martial") by Herman Wouk. Just as Tel Aviv City Hall supported this enterprise, municipalities and local councils subsidized various projects here and there. For example, there was Jerusalem's Bimat 'Esre ("Teen Theater"), a drama

group sponsored by the municipal education and youth departments. This outgrowth of the city's drama circles was meant to fill the void in Jerusalem's theater culture. Late in June, 1970, Bamat 'Esre presented As You Like It, directed by Rahel Schorr. This theater was quite popular among Jerusalem teenagers. Dozens of them did everything: acting, sets, costumes—under adult supervision, of course.¹⁶

A children's theater also sprang up in Rehovot in 1975 with a production of Nurit Shaham's Lama Kova ("Just Because"),¹⁷ which depicted a situation as a kind of reflection of the uncertainties of Israeli adolescence against the background of the Yom Kippur War. The play, based on encounters and conversations, discussed value issues such as whether living in Israel was a privilege or a duty, and whether army service was a duty or a choice. Hence, theatrical activity could also tackle the questions troubling Israeli youth.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to conclude a discussion of school theatrical activity from Israel's establishment until the 1970s without devoting special attention to Shaharit children's theater. It seems that on Israel's theatrical scene—with the public and private theaters on the one hand, and the amateur drama groups on the other—Shararit had a special position and held great sway.

Like other theaters, Shaharit was founded and run by a personage—in this case, a pair of personages: Fanny and Amos Mokadi. The latter, it should be noted, was none other than the son of Margot Klausner, a major figure in Habimah in its early years of activity in the Yishuv. Hence he was brought up on the fundamentals of theater. Against the background of these values, it is no wonder Amos Mokadi chose this field.

Anyone interested in the reasons for the theater's establishment—and in the Mokadis' credo—should study the August, 1963, issue (No. 8) of Teatron, a bimonthly published by Haifa Theater the year Shaharit was established. In a comprehensive article entitled "Why We Founded the Youth Theater," the Mokadis write:

From all sides people ask why we started Shaharit children's theater. Then they immediately inquire, "Is it a real theater? Is it commercial?"

Ours is not a country with a rich tradition in theater. The theatrical tradition in Israel is one of struggle to create an autonomous Hebrew-Israeli culture, like the other arts in our country. Most of our actors learned Hebrew as a second language "Street Hebrew" is one of the poorest [vernaculars] in the world.... Because most plays presented before us were written in spoken language, the writer or translator always ponders whether to corrupt the dialogue by shaping it into a totally naturalistic language identical or approximate to "street talk," or whether the play should be respected, expanded, and enriched, even if this puts it at a distance from complete, seemingly ideal naturalism. The answer appears to lie in finding that language whose texture is as natural as possible, but whose power and wealth of expression surpass those of speech. In other

words, the theater still mirrors nature, but it inflates and enhances it at the same time.

What this means is that the theater is an educator, even if only linguistically. The language question is clearly subordinate to a more sweeping one, that of style. Is there an Israeli acting style? The answer, without a doubt, is no! The reason for this, too, is the lack of a stable cultural background and a traditional typical Israeli lifestyle. In the absence of the objective factors, the neglect of education focusing on Hebrew language and culture, and overall lifestyle education, is glaring. This neglect is especially pronounced in the lack of theatrical education for youth, beginning with the very young.¹⁸

In countries where theater has existed for centuries, every youngster absorbs the dialogue of Shakespeare, Molière, Schiller, or Ostrovsky from their earliest youth With us, however, the disparity between what we want and what we've got is much greater....

But is this sufficient reason not to require Israeli high-school graduates to know at least six great dramatic works? And does it justify the fact that in Israel of all places, no cultural/educational entity teaches elocution and public speaking? Good theater cannot grow in a void. Good theater requires a good audience, fertile ground from which it can grow. And to make the ground fertile, one must enhance its quality, which is virtually not being done among us—and insofar as it is done here or there, it's being done wrong, as attested to by many who painfully observe the theatrical culture of Israeli youth.

Upon reading these comments, which exude concern and agony about the existing shortfall, one almost demands to see another paragraph in this article. It would include either proposals on how to improve the situation, or a plan

for implementing ideas that would rectify the flaws. Indeed, the founders of Shaharit continue as follows:

The way our thoughts developed drove us to consider establishing a theatrical educational framework for youth. Truth to tell, the initiative came from the young actors themselves. They were students of Fanny Mokadi, who herself had studied teaching of acting and directing in London.... She began to teach drama in various circles in Israel. Wherever she taught, she insisted that she wanted to more than "prepare a play" for some school or club. A drama teacher's job is to develop the child's or teenager's personality, to help him find additional avenues of self-expression—with motion, enunciation, pantomime, character development, and acquisition of a flow of discourse, in a process of group work.... As we worked, several of these youngsters gathered and asked us to keep on working.... We don't intend to turn these kids into actors....

Thus the Mokadis knew not only how to demand and criticize, but to follow through, create, and act. The intent was to make theatrical activity a powerful, leading force and a source of influence, rather than a limited, amateur tool for school use, or a private commercial theater with no aim other than maximizing its revenues and profits. A rather clear-cut domain existed between these two extremes: "serious" theater, addressing itself to the classical repertoire or the corpus of educational material in school. As stated, the Mokadis' troupe definitely crossed the watershed of amateurism in many senses: execution, visual resources, location of performance, audience, etc.

For its first project, rehearsals got under way for Caesar and Cleopatra. At the same time, perhaps to improve

and perform the material, the group began to use various excerpts of works by George Bernard Shaw. Needless to say, they had no special budget, although Lydia Pincus provided some assistance.

They derived encouragement and reward from the responses they received. A student at the Kfar Hayarok residential agricultural school wrote the following in the school's newspaper:

Shaw's immortal characters came to life in a sincere, convincing performance produced by boys and girls our own age. Their acting went straight to the heart, and with it contributed to an evening that will not quickly be forgotten.¹⁹

A school principal substantiated the same point: "I consider this play pedagogically welcome, and wholeheartedly recommend performances of this kind in all schools."²⁰

Compliments aside, however, the troupe had to live on something. It died within the relatively short period of less than two years. The cause of death may have been lack of support. Perhaps, too, it was destiny: the Mokadis' venture may have been meant to show that things could be different, that theatrical activity for youth did not have to be either amateurish and limited, or a magnet for would-be magnates. In any event, its activity was an example of what could be, and even the professionals joined in the chorus of praise.²¹

In Bama 18 (Summer, 1963), Giora Manor discussed theatrical activity for youth and children in Israel in an

article entitled "True Theatrical Education." His remarks are presented in the form of a typical conversation between a stage director and a pretty teenage girl who wants to perform in the theater, the army's troupe, the Israel Broadcasting Authority.

Why do you want to act in the theater?.... "When I was in second grade, I played Queen Esther".... Indeed, a Purim play in second or third grade is all the stage experience that most candidates for drama schools or theater courses have. The traditional Purim or end-of-year play is the only opportunity the Israeli school gives its pupils to acquaint themselves with the dramatic arts. Thus there are few (real) drama groups in the schools, and even fewer instructors who treat their work as a profession and a mission. Two such instructors are Fanny and Amos Mokadi, a pair of very serious and professionally skilled people. They went to work to develop an enterprise, which, I hope, may instill a healthy tradition of theatrical education in Israel's schools. During her work with several drama groups in Tel Aviv high schools, Fanny Mokadi gathered together a group of pupils who treat the stage arts seriously and profoundly. With the group, she presented a play called Hiukh retzini ("A Serious Smile"), built of excerpts from works by George Bernard Shaw.

They presented the program several times in a little hall that belongs to Habimah, and they're going to present it in various schools around the country. I exempt myself from the duty of awarding grades here.... What matters is that they chose superb literary material suited to adolescents. Shaw—the rationalist, the sober, the quick-witted—is beautifully understood by these youngsters, who revel in his brilliance and ideas.... I think it highly virtuous of the director not to use the play as her own showcase. Fanny Mokadi has elected to tread the educational path. Her actors do not shout, do not overact, do not strain. Instead, they act out their roles in a cultured, restrained manner. This is a real achievement. Compare it with those directors who coach drama groups, and treat their pupils' public performances as opportunities to show professional theater people

that they are really doing this just because they need the money, and that in fact their place is in the "great" theater. To drive this point home, they try to show off the force of their presence and pressure the young actors to use forms of expression borrowed from the professional stage. The consequence of that is a sensation of fakeness and outer affections. Watching Shaharit, it was evident that they loved the work for its own sake. Their cultural attitude was conspicuous (chiefly in the transitional excerpts written especially for this performance). Even the fact that the stage direction was a little pallid was something of a blessing. Our only regret is that they hired a professional painter to produce the sets. I am sure that had the teenagers done this themselves, the sets might have been more vigorous and imaginative, and would have become an inseparable part of their educational work....

Summing up dramatic-theatrical activity in school between Israel's establishment and the 1970s, we may say the following:

- * In principle, drama in school adhered to the old format we came to know years ago. The tone was set by educators who had theatrical affinities and who considered theater a catalyst for educational gains. They were the centerpieces of the activity, and they put the students to work.
- * Nevertheless, a meaningful innovation was introduced: teachers in several schools audaciously embarked on sweeping ventures such as operas with dozens of instrumental performers, large choirs, and sets on a commensurate scale. In several cases, Israel Radio broadcast the results.

- * Activity was essentially amateur and devoid of the commercial pretensions all around them. Thus the critics treated it understandingly, if not forgivingly.
- * In several cases, leading educators in city and rural schools, having realized the importance and contribution of theatrical activity, responded by hiring professionals from the large and established theaters—to make sure the presentation was handled properly. This may indicate a more serious attitude toward theater on the part of these institutions' directors.
- * An exceptional venture on the school scene was Shaharit Theater, which aimed to present "serious," classical drama with student-actors. The material was indeed of high quality, the actors carefully chosen, and the directors' attitude serious and professional. The performers were amateur, but the result was superb. Like any entity without a budget, however, Shaharit was unfortunately short-lived.

Chapter Fourteen

THE NATIONAL THEATER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH: THE IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTE IN ITS FULL SEVERITY

As in earlier chapters in the history of children's theater in Palestine/Israel, the theme of this chapter, too—the National Theater for Children and Youth (hereinafter, the NTCY), founded by the Ministry of Education and Culture—is synonymous with one individual. Just as Bamateinu was identified with Eliezer Ansky,¹ Urim with Danya Levine,² and Tilon with Menahem Golan,³ the NTCY was and is, at least at this writing, identified with Orna Porat. She conceived of it, presided over its establishment, molded its image, determined its modus operandi, and managed it for years. Before discussing Porat's venture, undoubtedly an important fixture of the Israeli theatrical scene, we must describe, however briefly, the woman and her method.

Porat was born in Köln, West Germany, to a Protestant family. In her youth, she attended a drama academy and performed locally in its plays. At age 18, she became a professional actress and left town. During World War II she reached a turning point in her life which, in 1946, culminated in her conversion to Judaism and resettlement in Palestine.

Such a move obviously marks a personal transformation fraught with substantial difficulties. Porat, however, set

herself a goal and pursued it with laudable determination. As an actress who saw her future in the theater, it was clear to her that she would be an actress in Israel, too. Language was only one barrier. Indeed, within two years of reaching the country, Porat joined the Cameri Theater and soon became one of its pillars. At the Cameri, she portrayed numerous heroines, with Joan of Arc heading the list.

Although she ranked among the Cameri's leading actresses, charming critics and audiences alike, Porat never stopped innovating and thinking how to bring theater—or, more precisely, the message of theater—to the general public, including children and teenagers. She therefore devoted extensive attention to spreading this message and, more important, attracting children and teens to the theater. This idea rattled around in her mind until her study trip through Eastern and Western Europe in the early 1960s. By her own account, the idea came into focus and took relatively clear shape during her visit to the Soviet Union. Returning to Israel and taking up considerable theater activities, she proposed that the Cameri establish a children's theater alongside its adult theater.

Her proposal was discussed approvingly and soon accepted. In May, 1964, this unique theater debuted with Eleanor Mannes' Ha-drakon ("The Dragon"). The idea behind this enterprise was to present children with quality theater featuring the Cameri's finest cast. The work began with great fervor. Perhaps because it was an interesting and

innovative idea, and maybe for other reasons, the experiment was promising. However, the initial enthusiasm faded after several months. After performing before children in the morning and afternoon, the actors were exhausted by the evening. Moreover, these performances cost them the valuable time needed to rehearse their adult plays. One way or another, the conclusion became increasingly clear: good children's theater could not be produced within an adult-theater structure, nor could it rely on actors who devoted their main energies to adult productions. Porat understood the situation rather quickly, and came up with the idea—which she then communicated to others—of an autonomous government-sponsored children's theater.

However, until this idea became real—i.e., until the NTCY came into being—much water, shall we say, went under the bridge. These were also years of experimentation—under real laboratory conditions, with Porat applying the results to the eventual NTCY, established in 1970. Its concept was based on the Cameri's children's-theater experience, and those years of activity are important to an understanding of the NTCY.

In the mid-1960s, the Cameri's leaders thought ahead, apparently following Porat's vision. They invested effort and resources, hired prominent set designers, selected fine actors, and recruited talented playwrights. They aimed at a young audience. Defying convention, they chose to stage classics, and to do so throughout the year.

The Cameri children's theater staged few productions, and these were treated variously by the critics. Their impact was immense relative to their number, perhaps because of their underlying theatrical and educational aspirations, and because of the Cameri patronage. Perusal of the lengthy articles and more modest reviews reveals that their writers often went beyond standard criticism, expressing the ideological dispute in full force. Central to this dispute was a question of objective—theater of children or theater for children—and a corollary: should children and youth be permitted to perform on stage, or should acting be left to professionals?

Because such questions were cardinal, and because Porat stated her position clearly and resolutely, even structuring "her" theater (the Cameri's, and that established later under the Ministry of Education and Culture) around this premise, the outlines of the argument should be sketched. Thus, presumably, we will understand the essence of the theater Orna Porat established and ran, and discover how firmly her mind was made up, all criticism notwithstanding.

The Cameri Children's Theater production of The Circus Adventure by James Ambrose Brown, translated and reworked by Yaaqov Shabtai and directed by Leonard Schach, merited a lengthy article by Hava Novack, which dealt more with the new theater—what it presented and represented—than with the play itself. Novack's remarks include the following:

First of all, we want to congratulate the new theater, born under the auspices of the Cameri. There has long been a need to establish a stage worthy of the name to produce plays aimed at children and youth. Years of experience have proven that in Israel, too, private initiative usually misses the mark in children's theater, simply because drama for children does not mean drama on a level equal to the height of its young audience. Quite the contrary. To imbue children with a love of the theater and an understanding of stagecraft, and to cultivate good taste, plays must be staged by major artistic forces, while children and youth cannot be charged high prices. Therefore, almost every children's production mounted by private-commercial entrepreneurs has represented a kind of artistic "compromise," which has, understandably, fallen far short of the educational goal. Sometimes these private troupes choose well-known, valuable plays, but they cut them—not to emphasize their educational facets, but to adapt them to their resources and commercial aims. Moreover, they cannot afford good actors, culling their casts from the fringes of the theater world, or, worse still, hiring children whose parents revel in the "exposure" and hope their offspring will become big stars in the theatrical firmament. Thus, these children occasionally neglect their studies and are put to work in an inhumane fashion, sometimes performing three-four plays per day, coming home to remote settlements in the middle of the night, and, of course, receiving only symbolic wages. This, however, is only half the trouble. The main problem is that under such conditions, even the most talented child cannot act in the full sense of the term, which leaves its imprint on the plays, the audience, and the actors.

Sustaining this critical tone, the author continues to denigrate private backers who produce children's plays solely to make money, even if at the expense of the repertoire, the group cohesion, the attitude toward the young audience, and the theater's educational function. Amid the developments on the children's-theater scene, Novack considers the Cameri enterprise a blessing:

What's positive about the Cameri theater setting up a children's theater alongside its "big one" is that the planners anticipated the venture's financial losses, and before going to work, they went to public bodies to generate the necessary support, and even allocated a budget for this purpose. In addition, they placed artists of stature at the disposal of the children's theater, first and foremost among them being Orna Porat, who was charged with managing the theater, and who had trained for this mission abroad

And what had the author to say about The Circus Adventure, ostensibly the topic of her article?

The play is top-notch in every respect. Aryeh Navon's sets are splendid All in all, it is a fine artistic presentation worth seeing, even for adults.

Novack's treatise in Urim la-horim reveals her attitude toward commercial children's theater, and the importance she attributed to the Cameri initiative. Contrary to her stress on the ideology of the Cameri children's theater relative to contemporary private commercial ventures in Israel, Davar ran a straight critique of The Circus Adventure:

This play has a measure of fetching adventurism, and its didacticism and moralizing never become burdensome or detract from the joy of it. The war between good and evil, love and machination, is waged on stage, but the evil is not absolute evil; it can be corrected, and children know the secret of this correction better than adults The play is aimed at audiences age 8 and older In general, the acting is good. Rina Ganor, Mira Rabinovitz, Ori Levi, Tzaddok Tzarfati, Nissan Yatir, and Shimon Bar perform with exemplary joy and freshness ⁵

The author of this article, Ezra Sussman, could not resist saying something about The Circus Adventure's sponsor:

Not much should be said about the value of this theater, especially in this country, whose ethnic groups represent such disparate education levels and standard of living. More than a theater for adults, a children's theater may serve as a make-believe bridge seemingly suspended in mid-air but strong enough for its task. If the existence of this theater is assured in advance (and the fact is that there are few such theaters in the world), then it needs municipal, public-national support. If public agencies are not bureaucratic fictions, and if the cause of educating this generation is written into their statutes, they will find this an opportunity to fulfill this goal in practice . . . Orna Porat, the guiding spirit of this theater, by whose virtue it was established, is a guarantee of its artistic quality and love of theater for its own sake.

Apparently, almost anyone who came into contact with the theater, and who had a forum in which to air his/her thoughts, lauded the Cameri initiative as a far-reaching innovation on the Israeli theater scene. Everyone not only gave the enterprise his blessing, but even called on everyone else to help the project survive.

Michael Ohad, theater critic for the Ha'aretz weekend supplement, also critiqued The Circus Adventure. After attacking "the agile impresarios who made a fortune...", he continues:

Something came into being this month. The Cameri staged a children's play, The Circus Adventure, a feast for the eyes and ears. Will one good play succeed in overcoming all the bad plays of recent years?

And in case anyone missed Ohad's praise of Cameri for this play, he outlined his view explicitly:

The Circus Adventure is a complete success perhaps precisely because this time they chose not a classic but an innocent, simplistic story that gives the director, the designer, and the composer an opportunity to develop theatrical situations to their hearts' content.⁶

In "Adventures in Theater,"⁷ an article written after seeing Utz li gutz li ("Rumpelstiltskin"), Miriam Halevi presents what amounts to her personal children's-theater credo. Her remarks should therefore be viewed as a seamless blend of theater critique and do's and don'ts. She applauds this interesting encounter with the play and its actors, considers the costumes and sets tangible media for creating a beautiful, brilliant child's dream, raves about the confident acting, and concurrently argues that:

Even with a young audience, an actor must, via ordinary dialogue, establish communication between stage and auditorium; the actor must live the role as it truly appears to him, rather than speaking in childish language

Halevi discusses the choice of material later in her lengthy piece:

Not only in Israel but the world over, educators customarily sort through the raw material in the trove of legend—primarily the Brothers Grimm tales—and rewrite them with a discerning eye and a writer's pen, adapting them to a child's understanding and desire to identify with a positive character. It's no coincidence that Cinderella became a symbol. She marries the prince not by virtue of her wondrous beauty, but as a reward for

her great suffering. Snow White, too, is saved by the seven dwarfs because of her good heart....

It may be said [Halevi summarizes] that theater, and even children's theater, is not a school and need not abide by the rules of didactics. Rather, it must provide children with an aesthetic experience, which is educational in itself. Clearly, an education in beauty and the development of imagination is a great value in a child's life; children are exceedingly sensitive art critics....

If the above review contains more than a dash of praise for the Cameri children's theater, the following critique takes a different tack. Urim la-horim (November-December, 1966) wrote the following about Androcles and the Lion:

The play never attains the level of Peter Pan and Utz li gutz li. It is full of tempo, motion, and smooth transitions The sets, unfortunately, are flawed. On a giant, desolate jute cinemascope is a wall where the words "Androcles and the Lion" wave in tasteless multicolor. ⁸

Even if the criticism touched upon one facet of the work, it did not dismiss the enterprise altogether. On the contrary: the reviews were essentially positive. Between the activity on the one hand and the criticism on the other, there is certainly room to explore what was behind Orna Porat's fervor and initiative in establishing this children's theater alongside the Cameri Theater. Anyone seeking to study the riddle will find an answer in Bama (28), winter, 1966. In an article entitled "Between Children's Theater and Educational Theater Work," Porat remarks:

The term children's theater [my emphasis—R. A.] can include, on a technical definitional level, a theater of children or a theater for children. The most important distinction, however, is rooted in the fact that one must not confuse educational work with theatrical effects, and that in which children themselves participate with professional stagecraft for children. There can, of course, be different views on the best educational methods and procedures for children. But when we speak of theater for children, we should clarify three points:

A. In theater for children, the children are the audience. Such theater seeks to impart general ethical, artistic, and human values to children by means of stage-production media: words, music, movement, and sets. Things played out on stage may take children into a broader (and sometimes more beautiful) world than their daily experience. Children who not only hear but see the plot develop will learn to absorb literary language, wordplay, and a world of imagination that they could not digest by merely reading or hearing.

B. Children's theater is where adult theater's future audience is bred. Naturally, a child accustomed to attending the theater will be part of the educated, select, and tasteful theater audience in the future, which spurs on the theater arts. Therefore, theatrical institutions concerned with the future of their art should view fostering their future audience as a fitting, respectable task.

C. Theater for children is professional theater in which professional actors make a living. Its aim is to run day-in, day-out. And since we are dealing with an audience of children, we must attend not only to adapting the dramatic material, but especially to ensuring completely professional direction, acting, and sets.

It seems to me that those who espouse professional theater for children would neither dismiss nor disparage the theatrical work of children done within a clearly educational framework. There is great inherent benefit in drama groups embracing

all ages. It has long been proved that in dramatic activity children find many channels of communication, liberate themselves from various kinds of despondency, learn to work in teams and give in for their team's sake, and, above all, experience the joy of creation. It is indeed true that dramatic activity serves as a major fulcrum in children's self-education. But here, too, the activity must be run by a certified professional, preferably someone artistic

We have listed the advantages of children's theatrical activity, but these do not justify—especially educationally—turning the children's drama group into a professional entity, even one where there is no intent to "learn lessons," for several reasons:

1. Children must learn.

2. Children find themselves in a world of psychological problems that even adults find hard to solve. After all, the acting profession has a special character, but this is not the place to enumerate its problems.

3. According to the Human Rights Convention, children should not be put to work.

Indeed, the fields should not be combined. A child should write compositions, stories, and poems, but should not have to create children's literature. One may exhibit children's paintings in public, but without turning their creators into professional artists. Similarly, a child may participate in theatrical creation, but this does not make him a full-fledged actor.

Thus, beyond her championing the importance of children's theatrical activity (which is really nothing new) Porat's major message in the article cited is a call for an end to the phenomenon of children's participation in

professional productions. True, the author encourages their involvement in amateur theatrical structures like schools or other groups, but categorically rejects their appearance on the professional stage.

Naturally, Porat's appeal/position, which was manifest in the professional children's theater run by the Cameri, had an impact. Ohad wrote in the Ha'aretz weekend supplement of April 30, 1965: "Children are the best theater...as long as they are not on stage...." Like him, if blunter, was Uri Kaisari in Maariv:

I don't like children on stage. Their very public appearance in the spotlight is in bad taste, and it does them damage—both as tomorrow's actors and as human beings—everywhere and at all times....⁹

However, other voices either rejected or objected to Orna Porat. One of them was Bilha Lipkin, expressing herself in an article entitled "Theater for Children or by Children?" in Bama 28 (1966):

...So it is and so it seems, theater people, critics, and journalists among us have addressed the theater of children. To prove their point, they cite the children's theaters that have flourished since the State began, sinned grievously against education and good taste, and exploited children for profit.

As further proof, they cite school plays in which children disguised in beards stand there reciting. Indeed, this rigid stand against children's stage performance has grown so crystallized and entrenched in recent years that it has become a kind of hard-to-uproot prejudice. Indeed, the Ministry of Education's Public Council for Culture and Art received a consultation request from a

children's theater in Haifa, and answered: "Our council does not deal with children's theaters unless they are professional adult theaters for children. This view coalesced in a Theater Section discussion." Thus, a council charged with promoting any genuine creative step in art has ignored a six-year-old children's theater whose impressive educational and artistic achievements have earned the appreciation of educators and artists. The view has taken root, and original ideas fall on deaf ears.

Yet our theaters occasionally come out with the standard proclamations about establishing theaters for children. The Cameri once announced: "We shall spare no resources, offering only the crème de la crème...." But it failed to do so in staging Dragon several years ago. Over a year ago, the Haifa theater began to win supporters for its children's theater, only to admit defeat recently: they shut it down because it had been a burden to the actors and the theater.

Indeed, much public money and effort are going down the drain, but people continue founding children's theaters (all of which, as stated, have failed thus far). One successful production by the Cameri's revamped children's theater, under Orna Porat's direction, doth not a thriving theater make. Let us hope Mrs. Porat's theater prospers, rather than being dismantled like the one in Haifa. After all, the problem here is lining up superb actors and directors, which presents many difficulties along the way. And the latter concerns all theaters, not just children's. It's time to delve into this problem and assert that important theater is that which represents a foundation for teaching children about good theater and the dramatic arts! The rigid stance and views of those who "do not like children on stage" impel me to say that the best and most useful way to teach children to appreciate theater and drama, and to instill in them an understanding of acting and an attachment to the arts, is through active participation in a theater built on educational foundations. Former pupils admit today that they acquired their understanding of and approach to our people's values, and their love of our history's heroes, by participating in children's theater—not by studying in school. They, too, support my assertion. And as for future

actors, I have considerable evidence that many of today's actors, directors, choreographers, singers, etc., took their first steps in the arts by participating in children's theaters and appearing on stage in their youth.

In contrast to claims that rehearsals and stage performances damage children "as human beings," it is important to consider educator Shmuel Navon's comments—in Ha-limud ha-yetzirati be-vet ha-sefer (Creative Instruction in School), published by the Histadrut Center for Education and Culture—on the utility of children's participation in plays:

"Through group work and the attendant joy of creating, group members merge and form a social unit, and their inter-relations strengthen. Good habits are imparted, e.g., discipline, order, cleanliness, responsibility, respect, adapting to the group, and helping each other. However, this does not rule out individual creativity. Within the group, every participant takes on a certain function. With each individual performing his function, the group can create something together. Anyone who has never seen children working on a play has never beheld enthusiastic group work."

Very well, opponents will tell us: we'll let children participate in drama groups. By all means. But they must not stand on stage in the footlights—it's a bad influence, etc. Why?! Children identify with acting much more than adults, entering a world of imagination that has not yet been destroyed. More than adults, children get involved and can really live out their story on stage, even forgetting the audience and their need to make an impression and "show off."

As for the young audience, I shall pose a counter-question: why is it permissible and proper to let adult actors appear before children and act out adult feelings, perceptions, and attitudes? Fans of professional adult theater for children will probably tell me that children have neither the capability nor the competence to stage plays on an appropriate artistic level. They'll say a theater for children must expose them to the "norm" of superb acting and perfect art. Permit me to

challenge this. I believe it is easier for children to identify with actors their own age, whose range of emotions and expression is similar. Furthermore, this eliminates the danger of imitation and self-denial when children see a first-rate play performed by adults, which for them is unattainable. The fact that children like themselves are on stage motivates them to engage in creative activity.

Below I cite two authorities. In Child Drama, Peter Slade, a children's-theater pioneer and educator in England, asserts when adults perform before children—especially under age 12—negative phenomena underlie the cultivation of the children's artistic and cultural taste:

1. Their impression of the performance is powerful and lacks self-criticism. As a result, they mimic this performance. But their imitation grows progressively worse, robbing them of their self-confidence and ability to masquerade, develop scenes, and create plays.

2. If children are called upon to play a role they've seen portrayed by an adult, they don't portray their inner impressions; rather, they act out what they saw. Consequently, even children under age 12—who generally feel no restraint—stop truly acting. The sight of a superb performance by superb actors undermines children's confidence in their artistic expressiveness.

In his opening address at the Conference of the American Educational Theater Association in 1964, Dr. Harold Taylor, former president of Sarah Lawrence College, stated that we can use children's theater most effectively if we enrich children's creative imagination and cultivate their feeling for and link with art by involving them fully and actively in artistic creation. We must allow children to express themselves actively—in acting, dance, and music. We must relate to children as creative artists.

If we intend to get to the bottom of the children's theater problem and solve it, we would do well to learn from the experiments carried out in America and Great Britain, as opposed to those of Porat, who visited children's theaters in France and the Soviet Union.

In the United States and England, two kinds of children's theater exist side by side. In the United States, theaters are affiliated with universities and high schools, and an educational method has proved itself in the last 50 years. In England, they call it "child drama," and in the United States, "creative drama." Contrary to the formalistic method, in which teachers and directors force the child to act their way, creative drama under the director's guidance permits free, spontaneous creation of characters, dialogue, and plot according to the child's impressions and perceptions. With this method, groups of children can dramatize stories and fables. In this context, we note "Drama as an Educational Tool" (in Bama 26), in which Z. Stavi reviews a book by Dr. Shmuel Y. Citrin of New York. I concur with Stavi that in Israel, this book is important not only in the field of education but in theater. Introducing the dramatization method means bringing the theatrical spirit close to children's hearts and beginning to kindle within them a burning love for this art. Based on my vast experience with group dramatization, I must attest that not only can children dramatize literary works, they even crystallize the dramatization and perform it artistically and convincingly before their peers. And they continue creating spontaneously on stage, surpassing the script they have written. Therefore, if we are interested in drama education and teaching our children to understand art, we should learn from the American and British experience and begin from the ground up, introducing the creative-drama method in all Israeli schools (in some American schools it's compulsory). Children should be treated as creative artists and all elementary-school pupils should be permitted to participate in creative-drama groups. Parallel to these school groups, children's theaters should be started up in the various cities, drawing on the finest young talent. These theaters would showcase not only acting but all theatrical disciplines: music, dance, stagecraft, set design, backstage work, etc. Thus we can cultivate a favorable attitude toward theater

among the maximum number of pupils, encouraging them to create and express themselves, and preparing tomorrow's theater-goers—i.e., the good, deep audiences so rare in Israel today. In short, let's stop shortchanging our children. Let's take account of them and their needs. Let's remember that children's artistic expression is necessarily different from adults'. It is an art form suited to and understood by them. It is their art form—not one thrust upon them by adults. Children do not want to be passive players in the theater. They yearn for and dream about their own theater, in which they will be the actors and creators. Slade put it well: we must not cultivate our children's ability to look on passively—it's liable to cause future generations to forget even how to look. For drama means doing.

Lipkin's¹⁰ long, scholarly treatise indubitably bespeaks a thorough familiarity with the issue, and it should be treated with the seriousness it deserves, which goes far beyond newspaper articles. Although she deals with a question that resists an unequivocal ruling, at least she does so from the perspective of those favoring children on the professional stage. I have quoted her at length in order to set the opposing view to Porat's credo.

In an article entitled "Culture as Institution: Theater for Children and Youth" (Yedioth Aharonoth, February 18, 1987), journalist Emanuel Bar Kedma attempts to search his soul with one eye on the public:

Implanted in my memory and that of my contemporaries are childhood vacations in Tel Aviv's vacant lots, spent chasing balls filled with rags My mother didn't see even my shadow from dawn to dusk Nor was she concerned with my cultural development. It was enough for her that I regularly borrowed books from the small library along the Yarkon River.¹¹ It's been years since there were vacant lots in Tel Aviv Children's vacations have become mothers' nightmares. The streets are congested, the houses

about one another, and safe space for a child on vacation has been throttled. "Bored children plus worried mothers" demanded a solution, which was offered to these mothers and the apple of their eye, their children, by dozens of producers, who flooded the market with children's plays. For the past 15-20 years, bulletin boards at the outset of holiday recesses and summer vacations have advertised an indescribable abundance of plays, concerts, festivals, and anything requiring an auditorium, a stage, and a producer. It's all for the children. Some of it is very good, but some—and not necessarily a little—is cause for concern. The market for the various kinds of children's theater is not always based on quality or education. The average children's play is meant to make money for its producers. The average children's theater backer invests as little as possible, hoping to rake in as much as possible. And because Israel is blessed with children, he has no shortage of career opportunities, even if his product is not the best For some time, this inundation of children's plays has worried educators, art lovers, and members of the artistic theater. The latter were the first to try to do something about it. They understood that bad theater in early childhood destroys children's theatrical taste even before they've taken shape and form, and, in the long run, sabotages the next generation of good theater.

As early as the mid-1960s, the Cameri began to stage children's plays one after another: The Circus Adventure, Utz li gutz li, Androcles and the Lion, Ha-nesikha ve-haroeh, and Treasure Island. However, because these were merely a sideline for the Cameri, only one production was mounted per season, with the emphasis here, too, on school vacations

What induces actors . . . to devote themselves to something so risky? "The truth" Orna Porat says, "is that the children's-theater bug bit me my first time in the country. When I reached [Israel] at the end of the Mandate period,¹² one of the most impressive aspects of my encounter with the country was the children Palestine seemed like a country of children Only in the late 1950s, as part of the Cameri management, did I propose to my colleagues: Let's start a theater for children. Ansky had just reported that Israel had the largest per-capita theater attendance in

the world, and theater managers were congratulating themselves. But I was concerned: the composition of the population was changing, television would come, we would lose our primacy. I considered theater for children and youth the best way to ready the next generation of theatergoers and fans."

Bar Kedma's quotations verify that Porat bounced around the idea of a children's theater for 10-12 years. Based on her fact-finding trips abroad, she continued refining the idea until it became a reality within her own theater, the Cameri. Within this structure, as Porat admitted, there was an idea of bringing professional acting to youth, children, to tomorrow's adult audience. The actors performed plays not only for the children but for all children (emphasis mine)—besides their adult productions, which was obviously difficult. The latter were exhausting, and motivation eroded with time.

One way or another, Porat's major mission, as she managed to convey it to her Cameri colleagues, was to provide a quality alternative to the mediocre commercial theater, whose private producers she considered purveyors of kitsch and corrupters of young sensibilities. Her major goal was to offer the largest variety of plays for various age groups. The intent was to follow in the footsteps of the Soviet Union and East Germany, where plays were not only divided by age groups, but each group enjoyed at least three plays per year. While the private producers rented out large auditoriums and packed them with youth, the Cameri opted for the traditional path, using the schools, where presumably

pupils would be prepared, teachers would provide an appropriate background, and the atmosphere would be pleasant and cultured. The heads of the Cameri apparently considered large theaters less educational, and perhaps even too similar to the modus operandi of their foes, the producer-merchants. Via the State school system, they somehow gained access to all of Israel's schools—in the cities and on the periphery—and set out to spread the word: to bring good, professional theater featuring professional casts to every child and teenager in the country.

With the experience accumulated by the Cameri children's theater, and with Porat's clear-cut conclusion,¹³ the establishment of an independent, professional children's theater was only a question of time and resources. The conditions ripened, but the resources were found only in 1970, when Minister of Education and Culture Yigal Allon (1918-1980) met the challenge implicit in Porat's initiative.

It was called the Ministry of Education and Culture Theater for Children and Youth (NTCY). Once founded, it set clear goals in its in-house publication, Kavei pe-ula (Action Guidelines):¹⁴

- A. To impart aesthetic, artistic, national, and universal values by fostering theatrical culture among Israeli youth from the earliest possible age.
- B. To enrich the experiential world of children and youth by fostering exposure to artistic creation.

- C. To expand and enrich their knowledge, and to develop their theatrical appreciation and judgement.
- D. To encourage children and youth to engage in creative thought and self-expression, and to understand others and their surroundings.
- E. To promote expanded creative-drama activity in the schools as an independent value and an auxiliary teaching resource used to impart knowledge and values.
- F. To foster theatrical initiatives in school.
- G. To teach youth appropriate, positive, useful entertainment habits of creative significance.
- H. To prepare the younger generation to be an ardent theater audience.

This agenda undoubtedly charged the fledgling institution with an important, rather pretentious mission. The birth of this theater, especially considering the fate of its Cameri predecessor, prompted a bustle of activity by the media/critics and by other theaters.

The NTCY debuted with two plays. One of them, Moliere's The Miser, seemed to be meant for adults, but it was in fact reworked.

Rafael Kratchkin (1908-1987), one of the most prominent actors to perform in Israeli theater, and in Habimah in particular, played the lead. Perhaps because it was the NTCY's first play, The Miser was a rather expensive production, evidently supposed to set a standard. It was performed throughout the country and attracted much critical atten-

tion. The second play was Amnon ve-tamar ("Amnon and Tamar"), a dramatization of Avraham Mapu's Ahavat tzion ("Love of Zion").

Incidentally, Porat's attempts to procure the rights to the Cameri's Utz li gutz li were fruitless, a fact which reveals how delicate relations were between the directors of the veteran theaters and those of the upstart. Maariv (July 16, 1970) commented:

The foundations of the government theater for children and youth are still being laid, and already we are not hearing such enthusiasm, especially from theaters that oppose the establishment of an institution separate from the existing playhouses—their major rationale being that it is financially unjustified

It was clear to everyone, however, that the reason for the new theater was not financial, as the directors of the existing theaters claimed, but ideological. The anonymous writer in Maariv also knew it, stating later in his article:

The determining factors will be the operation and quality of children's theater. Our children have been seriously deprived in this field because everything done thus far—both serious and less serious efforts—was far from sufficient. As a first step toward starting the theater, however, the Society for the Promotion of Theatrical Culture for Children and Youth has been founded, mostly by people from the theater and the Ministry of Education Orna Porat, who launched the Cameri's children's theater and was one sponsor of the government theater, has been appointed the theater's artistic director, and has taken an extended leave of absence from the Cameri for this purpose. The cast will comprise professional actors hired as production needs dictate. Addressing the Knesset, Education and Culture Minister Yigal Allon announced the theater's establishment and said its goal was to perform two

or three plays a year for all of Israel's children. The conclusion to be drawn from these remarks is that rather than being tied to the big cities, the theater will rove around the country.

Yaaqov Haelyon also wrote about how the new theater was founded (Maariv, November 4, 1970). After detailing its advantages and singing its praises, he continued:

The People of the Book—and in this sense, theater, too, is the "book"—has only now realized the importance of theater for children and youth. Let's not cry for the generations that did not enjoy theater. We won't benefit from bemoaning all those corrupted in their youth by faulty, amateurish, and often fraudulent children's theater. It's nauseating to think of the damage done to these young victims, whose first encounter with this cultural medium was so disappointing. Let us console ourselves with the hope that henceforth, with an institutionalized theater (in the positive sense of this term), private theaters and impresarios will have to compete with quality....

Haelyon's last sentence embodies the full complexity of the issue: in its activity, resources, objectives, and content, this theater endeavored to set demanding new criteria for impresarios and private commercial theaters.

At the end of its first season, which was definitely successful, an apparently binding decision was made to integrate the plays into the general curriculum, which naturally necessitated the school system's administrative and financial support. Furthermore, the broad backing of the Ministry of Education on the one hand, and "playing" before the whole country on the other, led rather quickly to a collaboration between the theater and the amateur Beit Gefen Theater in Haifa (an institution designed to promote Jewish-

Arab relations), under whose auspices Kad ha-zeitim ("The Olive Jug"), written by Rada Azam, was presented.

The second season opened with redoubled activity on the theater's part. Besides plays like Winnie the Pooh, Tom Thumb, Batzal ha-peleh ("The Magic Onion"), the theater staged Twelfth Night, Melekh ha-almogim ("King of the Corals"), and The Diary of Anne Frank. The critics loved them all.¹⁵

This abundance of plays may indicate that the fledgling theater was beginning to formalize work patterns and routines. In other words, it was starting to function like a repertory theater. Furthermore, from that year onward another fact stood out: at the end of each year the theater issued a pamphlet summarizing its activity, including information on performance venues and runs, excerpts of critiques, etc. The first pamphlet, published in the theater's second year (1971-1972), reports that 250,000 pupils attended its plays nationwide—for most, it was their first visit to the theater.

Alongside these impressive statistics, Dr. Menuha Gilboa outlined the theater's considerations in selecting its repertoire, and Porat provided various background and explanatory material characterized by a somewhat lofty ideology. Truth to tell, one who explores Porat's comments in depth may discover something rather interesting: in fact, her philosophy and intentions overlap—if not mirror—Asher Erlich's, as expressed at the turn of the century. The

difference may be that Porat was trying to attain her goals by means of professional theater for children, while Erlich aspired to channel his efforts into the school framework.

One cannot discuss this theater's activity without re-emphasizing the existing theaters' attitude toward it: they were not pleased—to put it mildly—to find an independent professional theater in the field. But their hands were tied. At most, they could only thwart the theater's efforts to obtain the rights to certain plays, or to hire certain actors. They fought the upstart in the media, sparking a public debate centering on the inevitable question: does Israel need a new independent, professional children's theater? Must the public exchequer finance it? Aren't its goals rather pretentious and beyond its ability and original, genuine function? ¹⁶

As if protecting her tender infant, Porat mounted a campaign against the onslaught of criticism. She chose to return blow for blow, recruiting staunch supporters who hurriedly and publicly expressed their enthusiastic endorsement. Prominent among them were Aharon Yadlin, then Minister of Education, and Drs. Gilboa and Ori Rapp, the latter two of Tel Aviv University.

In the theater's 1973-74 report, Yadlin writes:

The theater derives its power from the totality with which it acts on all man's senses. Therefore, it usually succeeds in imparting ethical and aesthetic values by means of the charms it knows how to use on its audiences.... There is no greater privilege than awakening the child's world

of imagination and creation, and the Theater for Children and Youth has earned this privilege. Not only is it readying Israeli theater's future audience; it is also bringing its hidden beauty and message to the farthest corners of the country, and to culturally deprived areas.

In the same publication, Dr. Gilboa adds:

The work of the Theater for Children and Youth is guided by the strength of both pedagogical and artistic thought in selecting its repertoire, adapting plays for schoolchildren, and training teachers.... We do not settle for full-length plays and trips to the theater. To deepen theater education and establish a direct connection with the theater, the actors, and the contents of the plays—lest a visit to the theater become a one-time episode—the Theater for Children and Youth assembles special troupes of actors for special performances....

In an article entitled "Thoughts on Theatrical Education," published in the same pamphlet, Dr. Rapp explains:

...[A]rt is part of one's educational system—and not only in his childhood, for one is educated all his life. The level and breadth of enjoyment stem from a specific process of being schooled in artistic enjoyment. To enjoy great, innovative art, one must be educated in it; only exposure to great works enables one to enjoy them.... One may be educated by creating theater, and possibly by watching theater [emphasis mine—R.A.].

In truth, these proponents' remarks—both in brief, as quoted here, and in full in the articles—express no far-reaching ideational novelty and no new educational-artistic perception. Rapp's final sentence, emphasized above, sums up their motto.

In the autumn of 1973, the Yom Kippur War caught the theater rehearsing Bat ha-melekh ("The King's Daughter"),

based on C.N. Bialik's Agadat shloshe ve-arba-a ("A Fable of Three and Four"). Porat, who adapted and directed the play, managed a unique commedia dell'arte production geared toward children age 9-11 and featuring a dancer from the Inbal troupe. Needless to say, such a play, integrating an exclusive, conspicuously Yemenite dance troupe, was an exceptional theatrical phenomenon in those days. The play was soon performed during the International Children's Play Festival in Hamburg, West Germany, where it was a great success.

This triumph gained Porat's theater a place of honor in Israel and abroad, genuinely threatening the commercial productions competing for the same audience. In this respect, the theater apparently earned high marks from the Israeli press. For example, Moshe Ben-Shaul avers (Maariv, March 12, 1974):

Children are the best audience in the world, wherever they are an audience. They are also the happiest and most tolerant audience, the one that identifies best, and the one that suffers most because of this genuine identification. Consequently, the importance of a play, performance, or concert for children is inestimable. Thus, we must destroy, dismantle and discredit the fly-by-night "theaters," whose contribution to children is no more than the sum of Israeli pounds pocketed by their owners on holidays Conversely, those who are doing the best for the best should be lauded. The Ministry of Education's Theater for Children and Youth, which offers older and younger age groups a consistent, educational repertoire of children's plays, has already been cited....

Even while merely dreaming about establishing this theater, it was clear to Porat and her colleagues that if the Theater for Children and Youth were to accomplish its chosen mission, it had to be mobile. In other words, it would tackle plays that could be staged without great technical or other difficulties in any little community or settlement, and in any school, community center, and auditorium—whether the space was conceived as a theater or not. Most of the halls in which actors appeared then were meant for movies, not plays. True, they had stages, curtains, spotlights, etc., but their undoing was their poor acoustics, creaking chairs, narrow, small performing space, and makeshift dressing rooms. Performing under such conditions was obviously no fun. And these were the cinemas. In the small outlying settlements, theater groups—particularly the NTCY—often had to perform in cramped halls not conducive to smooth, pleasant performances.

The appeal/request by the Department for the Arts in the Jewish Agency Youth Aliyah Department led to joyous innovation and close cooperation between the two bodies (as summarized by a Jewish Agency Youth Aliyah Department document published on March 4, 1986). To meet a particular problem, the NTCY initiated activities which led to the coalescence of a special style. Initially, a broad audience of children could enjoy performances at reduced (subsidized) prices. Masses of children, all buying tickets at the same price and flocking to the theater in organized groups,

created something of a difficulty for the theater people. For most of the large audience, it was their first encounter with the theater, and they had not been prepared for or instructed in attending plays; the various residential institutions accommodated pupils lacking even a basic approach to the theater—and this presented the children's theater with a considerable problem.

The solution came in the form of small "team plays," beginning with enrichment activities, i.e., meeting with theater artists before a play, small youth groups would receive introductory and background information on the production. A new performance style grew out of these encounters: three to six actors performing plays before a small audience, with each presentation centering on a certain theme: pantomime, Shakespeare, Molière, etc. The team plays made symbolic use of sets, accessories, and costumes, while the small cast portrayed a relatively large number of characters. This new style was rather quickly emulated by other theater groups.

Team plays allowed for numerous simultaneous performances across the country, mainly in small halls, including schools, cultural centers, gymnasias, libraries, etc., and at a reasonable expense. Since these productions required no extensive preparations, most were subsidized, and the whole project was rather mobile. School principals were encouraged to strengthen their connection with the theater and to make plays a regular school activity.

In its fifth year, the theater continued to stage many plays in large and small halls in big cities and outlying towns, exactly as stipulated in its agenda. However, if anything new was done that year, it was that the theater obtained the permanent home Porat had sought for five years. Finally, with Tel Aviv City Hall's help, her theater received priority in staging its plays in the city's Nahmani Hall. Interestingly, this facility had housed the Cameri, which Porat had left to devote her time to her own "baby." The hall had known some fine days, but in the mid-1970s it stood unused because the city's entertainment center had moved from the original downtown to Dizengoff Street. In Davar of July 14, 1975, we find the following comments:

In its fifth year, [the National Theater for Children and Youth] has found a permanent stage: Nahmani Hall in Tel Aviv. It has also started what it calls "theater for the entire family," trying to attract not only schoolchildren but their parents with special afternoon performances.

Porat and her theater achieved an indisputable niche. They set the tone and work patterns for artistic involvement with children in Israel. Porat often met with teachers, intellectuals, and shapers of public opinion, participated in numerous discussions and symposia, and wrote in various theater publications¹⁷ and other forums.

The fact that the theater had become an institution of great weight attracted creative forces like Tzippy Pines and Hagit Rekhavi, two young theater students who, in 1975-1976,

took their first steps in the Theater for Children and Youth. Pines began as an assistant director and became a director, artistic consultant, and repertoire designer.¹⁸ Rekhavi is a director and playwright who has emerged as a unique star, and whose plays have become repertoire landmarks.¹⁹ Pines and Rekhavi represent only some of the artistic forces who began in this theater and went on to others as writers, directors, set and costume designers, etc.

In the second half of the 1970s,²⁰ the Theater for Children and Youth became a full-fledged public repertory theater. Compared with other such theaters in Israel, its audience and volume of activity gained it a very respectable position in Israel, earning it considerable esteem.

Each year, however, uncertainties resurfaced regarding which repertoire to present, which play to adapt, who will act, and who will direct. Because the selection for children is not large, the theater dipped into the beckoning repertoire of adult plays, adapting works to its young audience. Playwrights were encouraged, and children's plays were being written at a quickening pace. Thus, the theater had a diverse selection of material—translations, classics, original material, etc. Porat, the omnipotent force in the theater, influenced selection, and the selection committee has been known to bow to her taste, which is well-suited to the theoretical and practical approach of the entire

enterprise, and of what Bruno Bettlheim calls "the magic of fables."

During these years, Rekhavi, Hillel Mittlepunct, Goren, and Ephraim Sidon, wrote original material for the theater and adapted books and stories by Leah Goldberg, Natan Alterman, etc. All the above are presently top Israeli playwrights.

This abundance reached the entire country and received steady media coverage. In Maariv (July 1, 1979), Yaaqov Brown writes:

...To return to genuine theater...to venture out into the "second Israel"²¹...to unload burdens...to go beyond the frustration of the establishment theater...nine actors, graduates of Tel Aviv University led by director Tzippy Pines, have begun to operate a mobile workshop that has adopted six development towns: Beit Shean, Hazer, Tiberias, Ashdod, Dimona, and Kiryat Gat...where they will offer acting classes, teach children creative drama in school, stage plays, and perform in the evening for adult audiences, creating a direct rapport with them.

From its earliest days, the theater believed that another facet of itself may be interpreted as a social mission. Its members fanned out to towns far from the center, accompanying the residents, and trying to spread the message of culture and art and to touch upon sensitive social problems. Another example is El atzmi ("To Myself") by Galila Ron-Feder. Based on Ron-Feder's successful book series, the play deals with an attempt to transfer a boy

from the "second Israel" to the "first." It was staged by Amit Gazit in schools, youth clubs, etc.

At the end of its first decade, we may say that the National Theater for Children and Youth set high standards, assembled a rich repertoire, functioned as a professional forum for young talent, touched upon various problems—including sensitive social ones—but did not finally succeed in completely educating the public. Had the theater not counted such education among its missions and principles, this shortcoming could be swept under the rug. However, the theater considered one of its cardinal tasks to nurture the next generation of theater-goers, to attract them to the theater, and to impart proper theater-going habits. Thus its failure to do so cannot be overlooked.²²

Granted, the theater's leaders and its permanent and temporary staffs reached distant corners of the country, met with children, teachers, educators, and principals, lectured, galvanized, told stories, and set examples—but apparently this goal was unattainable within a relatively short period. Evidently, it takes lots of time to educate a generation, and a broad-based public.

It may be argued, however, that this should not be viewed as a failure. The achievements of this theater were great and numerous: It offered countless experiences to hundreds of thousands of children and youth in cities, towns, kibbutzim, moshavim, and sports and youth clubs. It drew them into a hitherto-alien theatrical world; introduced

them to playwrights and artists; afforded them opportunities to acquaint themselves with the world of fables and classics; helped them improve their Hebrew; enabled them to identify with characters; assisted them considerably in learning the country's history; gave them the feeling that despite everything they were part of the state; and transformed theater into an educational tool of the highest order, on a par with other such tools. Whether it was this theater's function to teach people to attend the theater is an essential question that deserves full attention. However, the theater's "failure" in this realm should not be permitted to obfuscate the many accomplishments described above. Perhaps another organization altogether should have assumed this task.

At present the NTCY continues to consolidate its progress toward the goals cited above, and has established its position as the national children's theater and an object of emulation. As the situation stands today, children are almost never seen on stage as actors. True, several presentations of commercial children's theaters, such as those of Jacques Yaaqov, Azriel Asherov, and Avraham Luria, continue to engage children. It is clear to the theater-going public and the professional community, however, that theater of adult actors performing for children has won the day. The result is a more mature, polished, and responsible style of presentation.

As for the issue of theater as an educational medium, the importance of the theater in this context is apparent to all observers. In this context, the role of children's theater is to foster tomorrow's adult seekers of culture. It is univerrally agreed, too, that to attain this goal it is necessary to pledge efforts and resources—monetary and educational—in order to develop a set of preliminary activities meant to foster a "taste" for theater and an awareness of how to behave in its ambiance. This, too, must be achieved as part of the set of values and tools that the educational system imparts to its charges. The problem is that although the essentials are known, the actual situation still leaves much to be desired. It will still take some time until children's behavior in the theater meets the expectations of its creators. There is no doubt, however, that the extensive activity of Israel's theaters for children has increased theater attendnace by the country's young.

Also, of course, the fact that NTCY is sanctioned and supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture has lent dignity and importance to the venture of children's theater in Israel.

Chapter Fifteen

EPILOGUE

Having examined the development of theater for children and youth in Palestine/Israel over a period of nearly one hundred years, we must again mention a basic fact which surfaced time and again in the preceding chapters. From the outset, this dissertation was designed as a work of historical documentation based on extensive and protracted exploration of archives in universities, theaters, newspapers, and contemporary journals. It relies on talks and interviews with directors, playwrights, composers, set designers, entrepreneurs, producers, and other relevant men and women.¹ Therefore, this dissertation should be viewed more as a documentative and ethnographic-historical work, rather than as a critical or comparative study.

Theater for children and youth in Palestine/Israel was an untouched field of research until now. It seemed to have been waiting for a redeeming hand and a scrutinizing eye—for somebody prepared to read through the voluminous writings scattered here and there, who would wipe off the layers of dust that had gathered on the plentitude of protocols, early manuscripts, newspaper clippings, articles of criticism positive and negative, and school bulletins. It demanded someone who would take the trouble to sit for many hours with the people who were and still are involved in the

field, and who would record their version of past events before it was too late.²

This is exactly the task we assumed in this study. After assembling a great volume of material, we tried to organize matters, knit the story together, and tell it for the first time. This dissertation is therefore raw material for other scholars, in Israel and elsewhere, who wish to research the theme of theater for children and youth in Palestine/Israel, or for those who wish to compare and contrast the history here with that of similar institutions in other countries.

This work cannot be summarized without describing Palestine in the late 19th century, when indigenous theater for children was born and flourished.

The last three decades of the 19th century witnessed the arrival in Palestine of the First Aliyah. The relatively small number of Jewish men and women who came to settle the land constituted the bulk of the Jewish community known as the Yishuv. Jews lived in several small cities, surrounded by Arabs, and on the alert against their neighbors. At the dawn of the 20th century, when the Second and Third Aliyot reached the country, the Yishuv grew, but the basic conditions did not change at all. Jewish clerics, both in Palestine and elsewhere, viewed theater and drama of any kind with disfavor—to put it mildly. They perhaps considered it akin to idolatry and a violation of the Jewish commandment, "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured

image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them."³ Still, while opposed to the activity, the clerics did not and could not stop it.

Most of the drama in those days took place in school. It was initiated by teachers who came from countries with theatrical traditions. They were considered "theater nuts," regarding drama as an important and interesting medium within a curriculum that had not yet taken final form. People such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, David Yelin, Asher Erlich, Ephraim Cohen-Reis, and others were the ones who planted the seeds from which theater for children and youth in Palestine/Israel eventually grew.

These men and women chose to present plays and sketches with clearly national themes, such as Bible stories, events from Jewish history and the history of the Land of Israel, accounts of heroes and exemplary figures, etc. This might have been due to any of several possible reasons. Perhaps there was a shortage of material. They may have been trying to avoid the wrath of the assorted opponents to theatrical activity. There was also an educational/national bias at work. The plays were all staged in Hebrew and on school grounds. The pioneer dramatists saw their activity as a tool for strengthening the nascent Hebrew language, and a means of teaching youngsters the history of the people and the country.

This issue deserves closer scrutiny. Understanding theater in Palestine at that time as an educational and national tool, in Hebrew and concentrating on specific themes, underscores the fact that something new was taking root. A resurgent nation was attempting to sink roots in and derive sustenance from its patrimony, rejuvenate and strengthen those roots, and revive a dormant language. Granted, the teachers who brought dramatic activity to life were immigrants who reached the country with ingrained patterns of thinking and working, which they now tried to apply in the new Yishuv. At the same time, however, they were attempting to establish a new, young, fresh, and unique model of amateur educational theater. Rather than place their primary emphasis on the purely dramatic and professional aspects of their work, they emphasized educational and national meanings. In other words, they considered theater not an end in itself, but a medium.

Once the planted seeds began to sprout, it became clear that the endeavor would be a protracted one, and not a fly-by-night, short-term initiative. Only by virtue of time and experience could theater for children and youth coalesce and become more professional. For some time, at least until the early 1920s, it was a purely amateur enterprise: theater as a medium, operating under school auspices and around teachers interested in and attached to the subject.

Not until 1928 did things change. The turning point occurred when the Kindergarten Teachers' Association

established a theater for children. Tova Hiskina, a kindergarten teacher with far-reaching aspirations, decided that if theater was a good medium for grade-school children, it might also be good for those in kindergarten. This depended, however, on an increased level of professionalism. With the help of Levin Kipnis, she promoted the matter until her association founded a theater for children.

This new theater brought about a very significant change. It was backed by a professional body and a tireless three-person staff that toiled at the practical work. Thus complete plays were brought to stage, such as Ha-dahlil ("The Scarecrow"), a three-act concert-play. The new format still required further coalescence, but nobody cared about this. What mattered was that there were professional attempts and patterns different from those of the past. The Association of Kindergarten Teachers' provided this theater with a budget and determined its repertoire. This, of course, was no common occurrence, and not conventional in the Palestine of those days.

Unfortunately, disappointment over the eventual failure of this enterprise was as great as the level of expectation placed in it. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater operated for about two decades, until its supporters were forced to give up and bring the curtain down for good. It is quite possible that the theater had to shut down because its leaders did not know how to draw the line between themselves and the Association. This connection was

positive in some ways and was even necessary for the theater's continued existence, but the ties may have consigned it to death as well. It is only natural that those who put up the money and offer their auspices will eventually demand the right to dictate and direct matters. Once this happened, the theater's demise was not far off.

Despite its part in the theater's downfall, the Association deserves credit for its positive contributions to children's theater in general, which included abetting its escape from the confines of school buildings, and helping it take a step toward professionalism. The school was no longer the only stage on which children's plays were performed, and the amateur perception that considered theater a medium and no more was no longer dominant.

In subsequent decades (the 1930s and 1940s) the process continued with great vigor. Alongside the traditional amateur endeavors under school auspices, troupes or theaters identified with individuals came into being: Urim (Danya Levine), Bamateinu (Eliezer Ansky), Tilon (Menahem Golan), etc.

Even though the professional theaters that operated in the country at that time (Habimah, Ha-ohel, etc.) did not pay special attention to young audiences, motivated professionals such as Batzrawi, Berlinski, and others began to operate with and for children and teenagers. Even when the controversy about the theater's function resurfaced and eventually grew rather fierce, the "establishment" public

theaters did not totally emerge from their slumber. Very slowly they began to display interest in youth, and tried to reach out to them. The first theater to set up a youth group was Habimah, followed by Ha-ohel. The latter ran its youth group more as part of its struggle for prestige with Habimah than for purely professional considerations.

Anyone who chose to enter the field of theater for youth knew full well that success depended upon willingness to devote oneself entirely to the work. The "serious" content and sophisticated language of the plays of the time were not well-suited to a youthful audience. Not surprisingly, youth avoided the halls of these theaters in favor of lighter and more pleasurable amusements at the cinema, or attending satires and comedies. Youth who had been introduced to drama in school found what they wanted in a variety of forums, not necessarily those of the established theaters. Several members of these theaters, who had chosen to operate independently in various places in the country, understood this development. They went to the kibbutzim and outlying towns, putting youth to work wherever they went, and adapting themselves to local circumstances and conditions. For example, when they worked on kibbutzim they cleverly based their repertoire on material focusing on kibbutz life, which could easily interest the participants, who would then take the shows to heart.

Theater for children and youth in Israel developed in a very interesting chain-reaction pattern. One theater was the

outgrowth of another, or a response to the other's activity. The first two links in the chain, of course, were the amateur theater in the schools, followed by the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater. The latter was a step in the direction of professionalism, and it gave birth to Danya Levine's Urim and Menahem Golan's Tilon. Tilon also marks the start of a professional-commercial approach with large-scale aspirations, and the hoopla that accompanies public relations. In short, Menahem Golan symbolized the commercial trend, which considered box-office success first and educational value second, if at all. After the professional-commercial approach was accepted as legitimate, additional theaters came into being: Eliezer Ansky's Bamateinu, youth groups under the auspices of Habimah and Ha-ohel, Orna Porat's Cameri Children's Theater, and, after that, the National Theater for Children and Youth under the Ministry of Education and Culture, also spawned by Orna Porat.

Considering what we have seen in detail over the course of this dissertation, and have reviewed in this chapter, it is clear that activity in children's theater in Palestine/Israel was quite lively and diverse. First, amateur theaters operated all over the country, in almost every school framework. Alongside them were professional theaters on one hand and commercial theaters on the other. Some of the latter were superbly professional, while others did not display much concern for the professional aspects of theater. For the amateur theaters in their traditional form,

educational and national concerns were of paramount importance. The professional theaters considered these of secondary significance, and the commercial ones deemphasized them still further. As the nature of the theaters changed over the years, their repertoire also developed and diversified. Having started with plays based on Bible stories, folk heroes, etc., they branched into the classics, and often called on the cultural treasures of different peoples. These were plays that explored exalted values such as love of humankind, love of nature, etc.

One accusation which certainly cannot be levelled at those who were involved in theater for children and youth in Israel is that they rested on their laurels. Quite the contrary. Innovations were so extensive and sweeping that the average observer could only gape in wonder. For a young and renascent nation, for a coalescing society and a newly reawakened people, for a country which absorbed a tremendously diverse population originating in dozens of countries—the last hundred years were a century of vigorous, versatile, fruitful, and complex activity. One might well conclude that this extensive activity in the field of children's theater proves that the "People of the Book" has not abandoned the "Book," even in this modern era, typified by radio and television, just as it did not forsake the Book during its many centuries of exile. By "Book" we do not mean reading material alone, but rather the entire

spectrum of cultural achievements, including theater for adults and, no less, for children and youth.

The story, of course, is not yet finished. What the end of it all may be—as Maxwell Anderson once said in another context—is still very much an open question.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

¹These theater issues are discussed comprehensively and thoroughly in the various chapters of this dissertation. For example, theater of children is the major theme of Chapters 1-5, 7-9 and 11, while theater for children is discussed and described in Chapters 6, 10, 12, and 14.

²Hed ha-hinukh 14, 1927, p. 218. The journal of the Hebrew Teachers' Association, it still appears today.

³Published in International Review of Education, Vol. XVIII, 1972, p. 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁵See Chapter 3 below.

⁶See Chapter 8 below.

⁷See Urim (1952), pp. 521-526.

⁸Bamot (quarterly journal on theater and the arts in Israel) 3-4, 1953, p. 238.

⁹"A Dialogue on Problems of Theatrical Education," Afigim A., 1943.

¹⁰Newspaper clipping (Davar), no date mentioned. Kept in the Theater Archives.

¹¹From the introductory chapter of the aforementioned book, which is treated as a basic text in the presentation of plays. It was published in Jerusalem in 1969, evidently by the author.

¹²Afigim (1955), pp. 147-151.

¹³Ibid., p. 242.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 243.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Hed ha-hinukh 26, 1966, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸He adds clearly-stated comments in another article, "Children's Theater and Its Purpose," which appeared in Hed ha-hinukh 36, 1962, pp. 13-14.

¹⁹Hinukh yesodi ("Elementary Education") 14, July, 1975, p. 73.

²⁰Ibid., p. 75.

²¹Iggeret le-hinukh, Ihud ha-gevutzot ve-ha-qibutzim (kibbutz umbrella organization), Education Department, September, 1975, p. 39.

²²Ibid.

²³The minutes of the symposium were published in Bama 50, 1974, pp. 22-39, under the title "Education for the Theater."

²⁴Ibid., p. 23.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 25-26.

²⁶Ibid., p. 26.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 29-30.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 33-35.

²⁹Musag (monthly journal on culture and the arts) 5, October, 1975, p. 59.

³⁰Musag 12, April, 1976.

³¹From Sifrut le-yeladim ve-no'ar ("Literature for Children and Youth") 3, 1977, pp. 10-12

³²Ibid., pp. 17-20.

³³Ibid., p. 18.

³⁴See Shmuel Navon, Dramatic Acting in Theory and Practice, Tel Aviv, 1965, pp. 7-13 (Heb.).

³⁵The minutes were published in the form of a pamphlet entitled "Dramatic Activity in School: Trends and Forms," Jerusalem, 1974 (Heb.).

³⁶Ibid., p. 1.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 3-5.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 12-15.

³⁹See Chapter 14 below.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 82-88.

Chapter One

¹Eretz Israel (Land of Israel) is the name of the territory west of the River Jordan; it is the name used by the Jewish people to describe the land of their forefathers. In the Hellenic period, and particularly during the Roman occupation, this tiny country was divided up into three provinces: Palestina Prima, Palestina Secunda and Palestina Tertia. The foreign name for Eretz Israel, Palestine, which was used mainly during the period of the British Mandate, may have been based on the Roman "Palestina." One way or another, the country's non-Jewish population, like its entire Arab population, call it Palestine to this very day. Even since the establishment of the State of Israel, for reasons known only to themselves, the Arab population prefer to use the

name Palestine to describe the country which they do not recognize.

²The Sublime Porte (Arabic: Al-Bab Al-'Ali) was the central administration of the Ottoman Empire.

³For general background information on the period in question, see Eretz Israel and its Settlements during the Ottoman Period, Jerusalem 1975 (Hebrew); Hyatt (Had) Uriel, Da'her El-Amar, Ruler of the Galilee in the 19th Century - His Life and Deeds, Jerusalem, 1942 (Hebrew); Amnon Cohen, Palestine in the 18th Century: Patterns of Government and Administration, Jerusalem, 1973; Moshe Maoz (ed.), Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period, Jerusalem, 1975.

⁴In historical literature on Eretz Israel and the Jewish people, the renewal of Jewish settlement in the country is considered as having begun in 1882. Waves of immigration are divided according to their period, each with its own characteristics.

⁵The term "holy cities" is current among the Jews, particularly those studying the history of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-Israel Palestine). It derives from the fact that each of these four cities has a site or sites that are holy to the Jews: the Western Wall and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Cave of Makhpela in Hebron, the tomb of Rabbi Isaac Luria in Safed, and the tomb of Maimonides in Tiberias.

⁶For background material on the Zionist movement in the 19th century, consult Shlomo Avineri, Varieties of Zionist Thought, Tel Aviv, 1980 (Hebrew).

⁷One of the early types of modern settlement in Eretz Israel, particularly characteristic of the First Aliya period. Most moshava immigrants were farmers. For what were usually financial reasons, they required the assistance of Baron de Rothschild. For additional information on the late 19th-century moshavot, see Eliyahu Scheid's Recollections of the Jewish Moshavot and Travels in Eretz Israel and Syria, 1883-1899, Jerusalem, 1983 (Hebrew).

⁸Ha-havatzelet, Volume 28, 1895.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰A festival commemorating the Jews' deliverance from the machinations of Haman, advisor to Ahasuerus (Xerxes), King of the Medes and Persians, as related in the Book of Esther. Israelis celebrate Purim by dressing in costume, holding colorful processions, eating "Haman's Ears" (triangular pastries filled with poppy seeds or jam) and drinking copious quantities of wine.

¹¹Child and Youth Literature, Vol. 3, 1983, pp. 3-10 (Hebrew).

¹²Matnat Kehuna ("Golden Handshake"), printed on the occasion of Ephraim Cohen-Reis' 70th birthday, Jerusalem, 1933, p. 14.

¹³M'oznaim (literary monthly), September 1983, p. 37.

¹⁴The Works of David Yelin, 1976, p. 50 (Hebrew).

¹⁵A religious festival, one of the three pilgrimage festivals (the others being Passover and Shavuot) when the ancient Israelites went up to Jerusalem to bring various offerings to the Temple. During Succot, which lasts for seven days, the first and last days are Sabbath-like days of rest; the remaining days are "intermediate" (Heb. hol ha-mo'ed). Observant Jews sit and sleep in makeshift dwellings (succot, sing. succa), recalling the tabernacles built by the Israelites after the Exodus from Egypt.

¹⁶In his book The Hebrew Theater--Its First Fifty Years, p. 9, Jerusalem, 1974 (Hebrew), Mendel Kohansky writes that Zerubabel was performed on Succot of 1890. This information is inaccurate; it appears that Kohansky was apt to round off dates.

¹⁷Cohen-Reis, Ephraim, Memories of a Jerusalemite, 1933, p. 48 (Hebrew).

¹⁸Horse-drawn carts were commonly used in Eretz Israel before the advent of the automobile.

¹⁹Ha-maggid (daily newspaper), September, 1889.

²⁰Yeshayahu Peres, a member of the distinguished Lömel family -- History of the School, Jerusalem, 1936, p. 27. Incidentally, this quote is noteworthy for its reference to Ben-Yehuda's innovation. In place of the non-Hebrew "bravo," he invented the Hebrew word heidad.

²¹Hanukah, or the Festival of Lights, lasts for eight days in memory of the successful war against the Greek occupiers. The eight days of the festival are intended to recall the miracle when a jar of oil which, according to tradition, lasted for eight days rather than a single day as had been expected. Candles are lit on each day of the festival. Light, generally, is the main symbol for the Hanukah Festival.

²²Ha'or, September 14, 1892.

²³Ibid, September 16, 1891.

²⁴Ha-hashqafa, March, 1904.

Chapter Two

¹ See Nitza Droyan: Pioneers of Immigration from Yemen--Studies in Yemenite Immigrant Settlement, 1881-1914, Jerusalem, 5742 (Hebrew).

²For further information see Shimon Shamir, A Modern History of the Arabs in the Middle East, Tel Aviv, 1971 (in Hebrew; Third Edition), pp. 291-302.

³The development of relations between the Arab and Jewish inhabitants of the country is gauged from the Arabs' point of view by Yehoshua Porath. See for example, Yehoshua Porath, Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929, Tel Aviv, 1976 (2nd ed., Hebrew); and From Riots to Rebellion--the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1929-1939, Tel Aviv, 1976 (Hebrew).

⁴Meron Medzini: Documents on the History of the State--Certificates, Laws, Announcements, Agreements, Jerusalem, 1981, p. 19. See also Christopher Sykes: From Balfour to Bevin--Struggles for Palestine, Tel Aviv, 1966, p. 15 (Hebrew).

⁵The Allies decided on a British mandate for Palestine in April, 1920, at the San Remo Conference. The mandate system was a compromise between the annexation of the "new" colonies resulting from the enemy powers' disintegration, and the principle of self-determination for all nations.

⁶See Sykes.

⁷The Jewish Agency for Palestine (later, for Israel): an administrative and representative body of the World Zionist Organization. Until the state was proclaimed and its official institutions took shape, the Jewish Agency was the political body that represented the Yishuv. Today it engages mainly in the handling of immigration, Jewish education, and overseas investments in Israel.

⁸Ha'aretz, December 15, 1920. Barukh Aggadati (Kowshinski) (1895-1976) was a pioneer of folkdance, cinema, and painting in Palestine/Israel. He is known for having initiated Purim parties and the Tel Aviv Adaloyada (outdoor Purim bash). Aggadati also produced the first Hebrew film with a sound track.

⁹See Ha-kokhav, 13-14 September 1924.

¹⁰Moshe Yaaqov Cohen (1896-1960) of Kfar Tavor attests that these festivities were unforgettable at the time, and did much to solidify relations between members of the Galilee moshavot and the country's other inhabitants. See Yitzhak Ogen (ed.): That Which Was, p. 122 (in Hebrew).

¹¹The 33rd day after the first day of Passover, in the middle of 'omer, the 49-day count between Passover and Shavuot. The date commemorates the Jewish war against the Romans under Bar-Kokhba, and is marked by lighting bonfires.

¹²Other newspapers that published Hebrew drama were 'Olam gatan, ("Small World"), a weekly published in Warsaw; Ha-ne'urim ("Youth"), an illustrated monthly for youth also published in Warsaw; Ha-hayyim ve-ha-teva' ("Life and Nature"), published in Vilna, then in Poland), Tzafririm ("Zephyrs"), a bi-weekly for youth published in Lodz, Poland; Shibbolim ("Sheaves"), Warsaw; Ha-kokhav ("The Star"), a literary bi-weekly for youth, Warsaw; etc.

¹³For example, Yehudim ("Jews") by Zandek Robert, translated from the Polish by A.N. Frank; a one-act play dealing with the escapades of Jewish children in a Christian school and their struggle to demonstrate their talents despite displays of antisemitism in their class; Shnei Nigunim ("Two Melodies") by Yitzhak Schweiger, about a Jewish town in Poland, with the Sabbath as a central motif in the plot.

¹⁴For example: Ha-giv'onim ("The Gibeonites"), a mystic drama by S.S. Kantrovitz portraying Joshua's war of redemption; or Kibbutz Galuyot ("Ingathering of Exiles"), a fantasy by Avigdor Hame'.

¹⁵Haveled Hamit'hale ("The Boy Who Made Out To Be Sick") by Bilha Sillman-Yaffe, depicting a child from a Jewish farm village in Palestine who pretends to be sick so as to avoid school. See also Kurotinski's Hagangeman ("The Stutterer"), focusing on the problem of young David, who has to contend with his stutter, his friends, and his teachers.

¹⁶Ahashverosh melekh tipesh ("Stupid King Xerxes"), author unknown; Ma'ot Shel Hanukah ("Hanukah Gelt"), based on a story by Sholom Aleichem translated by Y.D. Berkovitz; Hanna ve-shiv'at baneha ("Hanna and her Seven Sons") by N. Tamir; Mattitiyahu Ha-hashmonai ("Mattitiyahu the Hasmonaeon") by Yitzhak Berkman; Ba-ohel ("In the Tent"), by Yitzhak Katznelson, based on the account of Dina, daughter of Jacob. Eliahu Ha-navi ("The Prophet Elijah") by K.Y. Sillman; and Ha-na'ar moshe ("Young Moses") by A. Even-Tsur.

¹⁷Israel's national theater. Founded in Moscow in 1918, its actors left Russia in 1927 and settled in Palestine three years later.

¹⁸An Israeli theater originally constituted as the theater of Poalei Eretz Yisrael (the Palestine Jewish Labor Movement). Founded in 1925 by Moshe Halevi and disbanded in 1969.

¹⁹The clipping is kept in the archives of the Theater Museum in Tel Aviv, Press File 1. The date it bears-- March 1925--is worthy of thought. Because Habimah was still in Moscow in 1925, the criticism voiced in this article should not be misconstrued. In any event, whether the intent was to express a general statement of policy, a conception as to the objectives of the national theater, or wishful thinking with respect to the nascent national theater, Rachel

Feigenberg's remarks are food for thought, especially in view of the realities of those days.

Chapter Three

¹See documents defining the Mandate for Palestine, July 24, 1922, in Meron Medzini (ed.), Documents on the History of the State--Certificates, Laws, Announcements, Agreements, 1897-1979, Tel Aviv, 1981, p. 19, pp. 23-27.

²Medzini.

³Ha-herut, December 23, 1915.

⁴Patriarch of the Hasmonaeen family that led the rebellion against the Greeks. For background see Bezalel Bar-Kokhba, The Hasmonaeen War--the Times of Judah Maccabi, Jerusalem, 1980 (in Hebrew).

⁵Prof. Boris Schatz (1866-1932), one of the Yishuv's most important practitioners and teachers of art, founded the Bezalel School of Art in 1906. His works of art, primarily sculpture and relief, express Zionist and Jewish themes.

⁶Mendel Kohansky: The Hebrew Theater, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 19-47 (Hebrew).

⁷Press File 1, Theater Archives, Tel Aviv.

⁸Ibid. (newspaper clipping kept in Theater Archives, Tel Aviv).

⁹Ibid. (newspaper clipping kept in Theater Archives, Tel Aviv).

¹⁰See Chapter One above, "The First Steps."

¹¹The memoirs were edited by Yitzhak Ogen and published by the Erlich family. P. 74.

¹²See Kohansky, pp. 12-16.

¹³Ha-hashqafa 59, April, 1905.

¹⁴Ha-thavatzet, October 10, 1905.

¹⁵A. Rabinovich, Memoirs, Jewish Education Archives, Tel Aviv University

¹⁶Ha-'olam, January 20, 1909.

Chapter Four

¹See previous chapters, particularly that dealing with Asher Erlich.

²See Hed ha-gan, Newsletter of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, C-D, Volume 6 (1931), p. 10.

³When I interviewed Kipnis, he incidentally showed me a 1919 issue of Dappim la-gannanot containing four short skits: Ha-buba hola ("The Doll's Sick"), Shoshana ha-toferet ("Shoshana the Seamstress"), Lagiq, and Masekhot ("Masks"). A 1920 issue, for example, included a skit called Be-ginat ha-perahim ("In the Flower Garden").

⁴Interviewed on July 13, 1983.

⁵The daughter of parents born in Yemen, she began her career in the 1930s, appearing together with Nahum Nardi, who set many of her poems to music. Bracha Tzfira was a pioneer of Mediterranean-style song in Palestine, a style that has since become popular under the sobriquet called "Oriental" (mizrahi). She is still active.

⁶Another singer of Yemenite extraction who performed extensively in the 1930s and 1940s. Her active singing career ended upon her marriage.

⁷She began her career as a singer, but subsequently went over to dance and choreography. She founded the Inbal Dance Troupe, one of the country's most famous, and is still active in dance.

⁸See Hed ha-gan, C-D (1938).

⁹Ibid., E-F (1942), p. 14.

¹⁰Tova Hiskina, ibid., A-B (1945), p. 52.

¹¹To substantiate the point, consider the comments of Elisheva Rabinovitz-Pines, ibid.: "It's been a long time since I received such fresh and aesthetic impressions as in the Hanukah play at the Children's Theater. As I watched the children, I saw that the play was not merely an occasion for fun and games; it was a complete national and artistic experience. This integrity of impressions was the result of three factors: a well-reasoned program built around the central theme, an educational approach toward its execution, and aesthetic stage direction that cast the program into a handsome frame. The program was devoted to the historic and legendary foundations of Hanukah, and to underscoring the people's heroism. The ambience of Hanukah, too, was adeptly expressed in the play.... Although its content was serious, the play was not heavy; on the contrary, it unfolded in a light and interesting manner.... Theater in our times is not only a place of entertainment; it fulfills cultural, educational, artistic--and, in certain period of time--political

roles. If theater plays so important a role in social life, it has several times the impact on the life of the child.

Esther Oppochinsky articulates similar thoughts (Ibid., A-B, 1917, p. 47): "I had the occasion to attend the Hanukah play in the Kindergarten Teachers' Children's Theater on February 25, 1947 in the Mughrabi Hall. The experience was so moving that I can hardly keep quiet about it. The auditorium was packed and festive; spirits were high. The children and adults beamed with joy and happiness. I did not know what to look at first: the splendid stage, the actors performing their roles so beautifully, or the audience of little people, who sat with mouths agape and eyes flashing, as if identifying with the actors. Such a theater is indeed a ray of light for the child, since apart from its great educational achievements, it quenches the child's thirst for art.... It should only be regretted that the Children's Theater does not perform extensively outside of Tel Aviv, and does not receive the assistance and support it needs to consolidate and develop.... "

¹²Ibid., C-D (1937), p. 65.

¹³Teatron le-veladim ba-gil ha-rakh ("Theater for Preschool Children")--unidentified press clipping found at the Museum of the Theater in Tel Aviv, Press File 2.

¹⁴Consider Bilha Yaffe's comments on this play in Hed ha-gan (A-B, 1949, p. 65): "... I found myself in an auditorium packed to bursting with children of various ages, from three and a half to seventh and eighth grades. They were accompanied by adults, of course, but all segments of the audience responded to the play equally. No difference in age was perceptible: all faces radiated a chuckle of unadulterated fun, of spiritual satisfaction. All ears were cocked, all eyes focused on one spot, the stage. And there, again, enchanting things were going on. Everything was of the utmost elegance, the epitome of simplicity, everything combining into total harmony...."

¹⁵Ibid. (1939), p. 61.

¹⁶Ibid., E-F (1942), p.35.

¹⁷Ibid., A-B (1940), p. 67.

¹⁸Ibid., A-B (1942), p. 71.

¹⁹Ibid., C-D (1944).

²⁰For supplementary information see ibid., C-D (1945), p. 54.

²¹Consider Tova Hiskina's remarks, ibid., A-B (1945), p. 53: "... If it were technically possible for us to perform the play in the cities and rural settlements to which we have been invited, it would certainly be for the good. But, to our great sorrow, it is not possible...."

²²Author Yehuda Burla wrote the following in Bama, C (1946):
 ".... With this play, the theater has made a handsome contribution to its audience. It has presented it with scenes and experiences from our own world and integrated them into the 'great sea,' the timeless source of grandeur and power, action and life at work.... The Children's Theater's hidden gift is its ability to foster natural national sentiments in an appropriate manner. Ma'ase be-namal ... is an example.... "

Chapter Five

¹The Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater is discussed in Chapter Four.

²See Chapter Six.

³A terminological note is in order here. During the first half of the twentieth century in Palestine—more precisely the 1920s and 1930s—there were a number of outbreaks of violence by Arabs against their Jewish neighbors. These were known euphemistically as me'ora'ot—"events," or "disturbances."

⁴A wealth of material on Batzrawi and his life work is found in his estate, bequeathed to the Jewish Education Archives at Tel Aviv University.

⁵Itonneinu, March 7, 1934.

⁶Edition E-F, January-February 1933, p. 224.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Edition 11-12, July 22, 1939.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰See his article, "Hebrew Theater at the Present Time," Ha'aretz, September 27, 1934.

¹¹Bama 3, February, 1937.

Chapter Six

¹See Chapter Five.

²The source of all information pertaining to Shmuel Navon and his group is a set of conversations I had with him in January, 1983.

³The way the group members designed their activity reflects the importance they attributed to it. They invested much effort in studying techniques, building up the membership,

etc. Surface indications aside, their behavior certainly reflects the intentions or outlook of professionals.

⁴The actors' willingness to work on a volunteer basis, and to donate their own funds for the group, indicates that commercial or monetary considerations were marginal; what mattered was to perform and "spread the word."

⁵See Bama, March, 1934.

⁶See 'Itonneinu, 9, February 9, 1937.

⁷The General Federation of Workers in Palestine (later Israel), generally known as "the Histadrut," founded in December, 1920 to unite and organize all Jewish workers in the country irrespective of religion, race, gender, nationality, and creed. One of its purposes was to care for and serve workers, ensure proper job conditions, etc. Another was to foster cultural values and the Hebrew language.

⁸From Be-netiv ha-ge'ula, newspaper of C.N. Bialik Elementary School, January, 1938.

⁹Yehuda Gabai himself provided me with this material.

Chapter Seven

¹See Chapter Six.

²The article appeared in Hevra ("Society"), May, 1946.

³Ha-matateh was founded in 1928 by former members of Ha-kumkum. The latter was established in 1927 as a cabaret-type satirical theater by Avigdor Hameiri and Eliezer Donat, and folded about a year later, apparently for political reasons. Ha-matateh existed in various formats for about 26 years, and became an important element in local cultural life. For further information see Mendel Kohansky, Ha-teatron ha-'ivri ("The Hebrew Theater"), Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 97-100.

⁴Ha'aretz, July 11, 1947.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷See Chapter Six on the large theaters and the activity of youth.

⁸See Chapter Three.

⁹Urim, April, 1946, p. 560.

¹⁰The Kadoori Agricultural School, named for the Iraqi Jewish philanthropist Eliahu Kadoori, was founded in 1931 at the foot of Mount Tabor. It is considered a prestigious educational institution and many of its graduates have taken part in settling and defending the country.

¹¹Mikve Yisrael was founded in 1870 by Karl Netter, an agent of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road. It played an important role in the country's agricultural development, and many of its graduates became prominent in Yishuv and Israeli life.

¹²The Ben Shemen Youth Village, in the Judean foothills near Lod, was founded in 1927 on the foundations of the Kiryat Sefer Agricultural School established there in 1906 by Israel Belkind.

¹³The Nitzanim Youth Village, located between Ashdod and Ashkelon, was founded in 1949 and is affiliated with the Ha-'oved ha-tzioni ("Zionist Worker") movement. It is located at the original site of Kibbutz Nitzanim, which was destroyed in the War of Independence and rebuilt about three kilometers to the south.

¹⁴'Ayanot, a special school for girls, was established in 1930 between Rishon Lezion and Ashdod, about three kilometers west of Nes Ziona. It is affiliated with the Moshav Movement and belongs to the Na'amat women's organization. It educates its students in home economics, agricultural work, etc.

¹⁵A youth village and agricultural school about three kilometers northeast of Zikhron Ya'agov. The name is a composite: Meir after Meir Anshal, caretaker of the Rothschild estate, and Shefeya, recalling the Arabic name of the site. The school was established in 1904 to accommodate young victims of the Kishinev pogroms (1903). The youth village came into being in 1923, first for boys and, a year later, for girls as well. Meir Shefeya came under the auspices of Hadassah in 1925; after Israel was established the government took over and turned it into an agricultural school.

¹⁶The fact that the two plays were performed in a movie theater deserves special attention. In those days, of course, cinema was a new and attractive mass entertainment medium, and by deciding to make use of cinema halls, "theater people" may have been making another gesture toward appealing to a broader public. Something about this suggests a desire to attract the general public to stagecraft and the theater on territory considered familiar and neutral by that public. To have confined themselves to standard theaters might have been construed as "standoffishness" on their part, resulting in alienation of a large, curious potential clientele.

¹⁷Bama, 1, February 1944.

¹⁸Bama, January 1947.

¹⁹Original advertisement of February 7, 1946, kept in Theater Archive.

Chapter Eight

¹The General Federation of Workers in Palestine (later Israel), generally known as "the Histadrut," founded in December, 1920 to unite and organize all Jewish workers in the country irrespective of religion, race, gender, nationality, and creed. One of its purposes was to care for and serve workers, ensure proper job conditions, etc. Another was to foster cultural values and the Hebrew language.

²See Chapter Four.

³For example, La-horim, February, 1947. One critic wrote the following: "Anyone observing Ansky and his troupe in rehearsals, witnessing the birth agonies of this play, and noticing Ansky's great devotion and organizational ability, was sure that he would succeed. In such activity he revealed himself not only as an artist but also as an educator...." ibid., p. 74.

⁴A theater established in Palestine in 1944 by Yosef Pasofsky (Milo), born in Czechoslovakia, who acquired his love of the stage at Brecht's and Reinhardt's theaters. The initial Cameri core group comprised young actors such as Avraham Ben-Yosef (1907-1980), Hanna Maron (1920-), Yosef Yadin (1920-), etc. Cameri subsequently became Tel Aviv's municipal theater.

⁵In an interview with this writer on August 19, 1984, Ansky supported his claim with newspaper articles that he had collected without recording their origin and date of appearance.

⁶Ha-ohel, founded by Moshe Halevi (1895-1974) in 1925, operated under Histadrut auspices and aspired to become the theater of the Jewish workers in Palestine. For more information on Ha-ohel, see Mendel Kohansky, Ha-teatron ha-'ivri (Jerusalem, 1974, Hebrew), pp. 89-85.

⁷For example, Y.N. Neumann in Davar, January 26, 1950.

⁸Davar, July 11, 1952.

⁹Davar's criticism (December 29) included the following: "Every child and anyone who ever was a child knows the content of the legend. For some reason, however, director E. Ansky thought romantics weren't nice for our children. He did not think much of the old original, nor of Walt Disney's excellent adaptation; he altered the legend and added characters."

¹⁰Hed ha-hinukh, 22, January 2, 1958, article by Emanuel Frankel.

¹¹The plays were the following: Tolstoy's The Golden Key, Hebrew version by Rivka Cohen, directed by Isador HersHKovitz; Rafi ShahaR's Be-eretz luvengulu melekh zulu ("In the Land of Luvengulu the Zulu King"), produced by Nahum Gutman and directed by Avraham David; Maria Carla Mashadi's Sodo shel ha-qapitan bonanza ("Captain Bonanza's Secret"), directed by Isador HersHKovitz; and the Grimm Brothers' Puss in Boots, adapted by Tzafrira Yaroni and directed by Rafael Kadim.

¹²E. Ansky, Theater for Children and Youth—Idea and Practice, Youth Edition, The Jewish Agency for Israel (Hebrew), Jerusalem, January-February 1969.

¹³Interview on August 19, 1984.

Chapter Nine

¹A settlement form unique to Israel, the kibbutz is a rural community based on egalitarian socialism. Its settlers are members of the commune, and each works according to his/her ability and receives according to his/her needs. Decisions pertaining to the kibbutz at large, such as admission of new members, construction of a dining hall, and purchase of various pieces of equipment, are presented for discussion in a members' assembly and voted on at the end of deliberations. Kibbutzim were once based on various forms of agriculture, livestock, etc.; today, much emphasis is placed on non-agricultural pursuits such as manufacturing, tourism, etc. The first kibbutz was Degania, established in 1911.

²Another settlement form unique to Israel. Here the basis is the farmstead, each such unit owned by a nuclear family. Each family produces according to a quota, and each runs its own farm. Ideologically, the moshav is based on settlers' own labor, cooperative marketing, and mutual guarantee. Thus if one farmer is assiduous and successful, while his neighbor is lazy or incompetent, the former may get entangled in economic difficulties as the latter's guarantor. Israel's first moshav was Nahahal, founded in 1921.

³The major kibbutz movements are Ha-kibbutz ha-artzi/Ha-shomer ha-tza'ir, and Ihud ha-gevutzot ve-ha-kibbutzim. The major difference between them had to do with their interpretations of socialism; Ha-kibbutz ha-artzi took a more extreme line and for years considered the Soviet Union, especially under Stalin's rule, the "light unto the nations." The movement became more sober after Stalin died, but it still maintains a more leftward posture than Ihud ha-gevutzot.

⁴See Bama (C), June, 1943.

⁵Bulletin of Kibbutz Mizra, no year noted.

⁶1943 issue; no month noted, p. 94.

⁷A general term that denotes the full range of settlements and agricultural forms in the country, irrespective of their different attributes, ideological principles, etc.

⁸The all-embracing Israeli labor union, both the proletariat's great protector and the country's largest private employer. For further information on the Histadrut, see Dov Ben-Meir, The Histadrut, Jerusalem, 1978 (Hebrew).

⁹Interview on July 21, 1983.

¹⁰Bama (C), June, 1943.

¹¹No. 9, November 24, 1977.

¹²Ibid.

Chapter Ten

¹For background material on the early 1950s, including the mass immigration and the transit camps, see "'Aliya gedola ba'a, 1950-1957" ("Mass Immigration On the Way, 1950-1957), in Lissak, M. (ed.), Eretz Israel Historical Encyclopaedia, Vol. IX, Tel Aviv, 1982 (Hebrew); and Mordechai Naor (ed.), "'Olim u-ma'abarot" ("Immigrants and Transit Camps"), in Idan, Vol. 9 Jerusalem, 1986 (Hebrew).

²The minutes of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Children's Theater from 1951 onward provide interesting reading. The hand-written protocols contain much information on the plays and reveal the state of mind of Association's "activist" cadre. As an example, consider the following excerpt of a report dated February 26, 1951: "The question is what's our role in the theater.... The members really are not involved enough in all theater affairs; they also have to know what happens behind the scenes. Thus we have to strengthen relations between the kindergarten teachers and the actors, and each group has to avail itself of the other.... The members are also interested participating in the theater's cultural work; for their part they're willing to help out as best they can. However, they don't accept the idea that their assistance should be technical alone.... They would also like to critique the programs and the performances themselves.... Some members are suggesting that we set up a day workshop devoted to the theater issue only."

Below are the minutes of a meeting held on March 4, 1951: "The theater is a wonderful educational medium. It surpasses other forms of entertainment. Mothers have to be told that neither the cinema nor the adult theater is where their children ought to be. We have to try to give the theater the

necessary coloration and point it in that direction. We have to put the theater and the kindergarten teachers in touch with each other. Every kindergarten teacher should take her class to the Children's Theater once a year. There should also be criticism of the plays—what's well and good about them, what ought to be improved.... Public opinion should be acknowledged and taken into account. Its opinion and desires should be considered."

³This is inaccurate, of course. This theater, founded in 1928, was 29 years old when these lines were written.

⁴This seems to set a new tone in criticism. The fact that the writer dares to call the practitioners "irresponsible" is worthy of thought.

⁵In Israel, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the formal and non-formal education systems. As such, it wishes to influence and take part in the shaping of the young generation's spiritual and cultural life. To make sure that plays of proper and artistic quality reach schoolchildren, the Ministry established a special committee charged with examining, filtering, approving, and recommending plays suited to children and youth. Naturally, all theaters and producers wishing to attract youth try to meet the educational criteria and earn the valued recommendation. Therefore, on the many occasions when a given play proved to be of less than top quality, the Ministry, too, came in for complaints and criticism.

⁶This information is based on an invitation issued by Tilon management just before the festive debut of David and Goliath.

⁷Ibid.

⁸My assumption was verified in an interview I had with Uriel Ofek on June 17, 1984.

⁹See Chapter 11.

Chapter Eleven

¹An interview I had with Danya Levine in her home in Jerusalem on January 12, 1984, provided me with vast information, on which virtually everything in this chapter relies.

²In this author's interview with her, Danya Levine said, inter alia: "Quite a bit has been written about my theater, and very little about my dancing—a few sketches, a few critiques. I was always deathly afraid of critics, not because they would pan me but because I was pretty girl. I didn't want them to write about me for that reason, for better or for worse.... I kept my distance from the critics

and plunged into work and study. I studied dance with Etta Klampf and theater with Gassner, in the drama school in Berlin.

³See Chapter Ten.

⁴The Hagana—the Yishuv's defense organization, which operated underground during the British Mandate period (1920-1948). The Hagana was built along military lines, and had various divisions such as the Palmach (pelugot mahatz—"shock troops"), Heitz (heil sadeh—"field units"), Haim (heil mishmar—"Home Guard"), etc. Hagana members fulfilled essential functions not only in defending existing settlements, repelling attacks, etc., but also in establishing new settlements and securing the borders in dangerous areas.

⁵Below, in full, are the "Ten Commandments of the Urim Theater":

"You are about to attend the theater, where you will be shown a play. Much time was invested in it by many people. Do you know how to behave in the theater?

"1. One comes to the theater fifteen-twenty minutes before the show begins (with a ticket, of course) so you can take your seat at leisure.

"2. One wears clean holiday clothes, combs one's hair, and shines one's shoes.

"3. When taking your seat, face those seated as you pass. If you come early, stand up to let people through.

"4. If your place is taken, don't quarrel. Call the usher.

"5. Don't talk during the play. You can discuss the play with your friends during intermission. Remember: if it's noisy in the hall, the actors will find it hard to perform and you won't hear them.

"6. Don't eat, don't chew gum, and don't eat sunflower seeds during the play.

"7. Don't stomp your feet and don't stand up during the play. That will make the chair bang, bothering your friends as they try to listen. Don't whistle. This insults the actors. Don't walk out in the middle.

"8. Do not run out during intermissions; walk casually. Don't call out to friends who are standing far away.

"9. If something about the play is not clear, ask your neighbor to explain it during intermission.

"10. Don't get up until the end of the play. The play is over when the lights come on and the curtain no longer comes up.

"If you liked the play, applaud. That's how you thank the actors for the fun they gave you.

⁶In her interview with this author, Danya Levine was asked if the Urim Theater was Jerusalem's only children's theater. She answered: "Yes, it was the only theater. Actually, there was one woman, whose name was Hinda, who put on little skits in the schools before me. But that wasn't theater."

⁷See Chapter Fourteen of this dissertation for further information on this theater.

Chapter Twelve

¹I gathered and read the raw material in the Tel Aviv archives, Tel Aviv University, and the archives of Israeli newspapers—Ha'aretz, Davar, Yedioth Aharonoth, Maariv, Al Hamishmar, etc.

²Menachem Golan's theater and activity are described in greater depth in Chapter Ten of this dissertation.

³For further details see Mendel Kohansky, The Hebrew Theater, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1974, pp. 141-143 (Hebrew).

⁴Dina and Uriel Ofek confirmed my hypothesis in a conversation I held with them on June 17, 1984.

⁵Kohansky, pp. 120-121.

⁶Esther Koussevitzky, seminar thesis for the Tel Aviv University Faculty of the Arts, 1975.

⁷See, for example, Azaria Rappaport in Maariv, February 26, 1957: "Rich in sounds and details that arouse the imagination.... Director Menachem Golan has brought a serious and responsible attitude to this task. Yeshayahu Kohler's adaptation for stage, the musical refrains by Dana Almador and Ruth Bat-Dor, Rodriguez' music, and Mordoch's sets were all executed carefully. Effort was made to stress positive values and debunk negative ones, and to give pleasure to the eye and the ear. Mr. Golan succeeded in exploiting the gyrations of a real magician, the prodigious charms of little Ilana Shmuel as Gulliver, the talent and approach of Yaaqov Timmen and Alexander Yahalom, and the experience and devotion of Michael Messinger and Assaf Assa. The young audience followed the plots' progression attentively, and will undoubtedly remember and draw conclusions from the refrain." By contrast, Davar (March 7, 1957) wrote: "If Jonathan Swift were to come back from the grave, he would surely find in this play further grounds for his bitter pessimism. Nothing of his venomous sting and social satire has survived. The humor is entirely visual. Gulliver, defined in the program as "a 22-year-old explorer from the land of England" is a cute little nine-year-old girl.... The plot is extremely naive...."

⁸Esther Koussevitzky.

⁹The information is from a poster put out by the theater just before the debut.

¹⁰This widely circulated document is kept in the Theater Archive; a copy of it is in this writer's possession.

¹¹See Chapter Ten.

¹²Urim la-horim, January, 1964, p. 18.

¹³See Kohansky, p. 210.

¹⁴Davar, November 12, 1965.

¹⁵Davar, November 21, 1969.

¹⁶Maariv, October 13, 1970.

¹⁷Tel Aviv Archives.

¹⁸According to a poster announcing the presentation.

¹⁹There were others of this kind, e.g., The Little Prince, adapted by Pinhas Koren.

²⁰Consider the following interesting comments on this play in Maariv (September 20, 1972): "... I selected stories that have living characters, visual moments, surprises, comic collisions.... The children want to see something on stage, not just boring chatter. A child responds more with his eye than with his ear.... The child has to be treated with respect, not spoken to in a childish tone, just as you don't speak in a childish tone to your children at home. Children are sensitive to charlatans. They come to the play with an open mind, ready to hear you out. You, as an actor, a person, and a parent, have to educate the child, give him something of the best. You owe this to his imagination, to his development, and to himself. Twenty years from now, this will be your audience, and you have to give him this calling card." The author of these words is actor Shlomo Bar-Shavit.

²¹Kohansky, p. 216.

²²Ha'aretz, December 12, 1971.

²³Ha'aretz, June 29, 1974.

²⁴Yedioth Aharonoth, September 16, 1975.

²⁵Davar, June 12, 1973.

²⁶Maariv (February 1, 1979) reported as follows: "The play was produced like a circus show. The actors came across as buffoons who change their spots every now and then.... The children were not impressed, and many of them preferred to talk with each other than to listen to what was going on on stage. That's because they knew the story, and if what was happening on stage did not interest them, it's a sign that it was not well-done."

²⁷Yedioth Aharonoth, February 24, 1970.

²⁸Davar, June 28, 1973.

²⁹Yedioth Aharonoth, July 14, 1976.

³⁰Yedioth Aharonoth, April 27, 1977.

³¹Consider Mirit Shem Or's interesting comments in Davar (January 7, 1971): "[For mothers,] children are very susceptible to theatrical temptation. Just present them with a few grade-B actors reciting nice-sounding grade-C educational platitudes against a dubious backdrop of painted cardboard, and you've won their full-throated sympathy. The enthusiastic commercial response does not help improve the artistic image of children's theater very much. In truth, 'something ought to be done about it,' as those responsible for the theater's image (actors, directors, producers), or the child's image (parents and teachers), say.... Theater people's positive attitudes and good intentions are not enough. Too often they come with the fallacious belief that acting, directing, or writing for children's theater do not promote the artist's professional status.... Theatrical education is very important today, at a time when children are used to going to the movies and watching television. We are trying to attract them to the world of the theater, and equip them with tools to assess it correctly...."

Chapter Thirteen

¹See Chapters One, Two, Three, and Seven in this dissertation.

²See Chapters 10-12.

³Hed ha-hinukh, May 31, 1951.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Davar, June 26, 1952.

⁶The widely used term for special groups of non-kibbutz teenagers who are schooled on kibbutz.

⁷A comprehensive elementary-secondary residential school ("youth village") about four kilometers east of Lod, established in 1906 for orphans of the pogroms in Russia. Closed in 1907, it reopened only in 1927.

⁸Hed ha-hinukh, February 16, 1956.

⁹See Kohansky, The Hebrew Theater, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 167-169 (Heb.; English translation by Aviv Meltzer available); see also Davar, March 15, 1957.

¹⁰It is worth mentioning, if only by way of example, comments by Mrs. Y.M. Neiman in Davar (July 24, 1952). They speak for themselves: "...Israel's educational institutions, especially those that teach agriculture, are the country's

crucible" (emphasis mine—R.A.). Thus the elite of the country's youth, tomorrow's leadership, were enrolled in agricultural schools. Most came from the rural farming settlements. This left teenagers schooled in cities, urban neighborhoods, or transit camps in a position of inferiority.

¹¹Hed ha-hinukh, February 16, 1956.

¹²No. 33, 1962.

¹³Hed ha-hinukh, 35-36, 1962.

¹⁴Hed ha-hinukh, 40, 1963.

¹⁵Taken from leaflets kept in the Theater Archives in Tel Aviv.

¹⁶See Maariv (June 28 and October 13, 1970). Background material on Bamat 'Esre came mainly from Jerusalem City Hall publications kept in the Theater Archives.

¹⁷From the program put out on June 14, 1975, and kept in the Theater archives in Tel Aviv.

¹⁸It seems to this author that on this point the pair of writers may have overstated the case or were actually mistaken. It is hard to disregard the extensive theater education activity that did take place, as well as the dramatic activity in Palestine/Israel and on which we devoted several chapters in this dissertation. For at least two generations, the very young—children in kindergarten and elementary school—were presented with the ultimate theatrical experience, albeit amateur. Teachers with theatrical attachments worked in the various institutions and succeeded in engaging their students in this activity, which could not have but left a heavy imprint on them. Were it not for this serious impact, Israel's private and public commercial theaters could not have attracted many thousands of children and teenagers during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. It is therefore somewhat hard to understand why Fanny and Amos Mokadi expressed themselves in this fashion.

¹⁹The pupil was quoted in Ha-teatron, a bimonthly journal published by the Haifa Theater, No. 8, August, 1963. Neither the pupil nor her school is mentioned by name.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Consider the interesting comments of Yaaqov Shabtai—author, playwright, and translator—in Bama 24 (Winter, 1965): "Alongside the professional theater, amateur activity is still going on, even if somewhat 'out of sight and out of mind.' This is a two-sided coin. One side is professional theater, which represents theatrical art itself. On the other side, the amateurs demonstrate their affection for the theater by producing 'a little' theater.... This schism originates in the tremendous development of the technical stage resources at the theater's disposal—lighting, revolving stages, etc. These devices are very far from the

grasp of the amateur theater.... Although the professional artistic theater is the cause, it is sad that the amateurs' work is not given the attention it deserves—neither by the critics, the 'cultured' public, the institutions of education and culture, nor by the professional theater itself. Were it given these, our cultural lives in general, and our theatrical lives in particular, might stand to gain. Indeed, consider the indifference of our 'art-loving' public, which no longer dares to engage in any creative act because the professional 'giant' is out there. Observe how many people are willing to subject themselves to the 'affliction' of attending a heavy, serious play. Listen to the sound of the professional theaters' repertoire. Look how unwilling and unable it is to cope with 'making' important theater. Look how it dodges the topic of values. Under these circumstances, amateur theater is inestimably important. Here anyone with any gift, aptitude, and talent is given the possibility of engaging and expressing himself with an act of creative art. Here it becomes possible to present audiences with plays of value, with whose presentation the professional theater is not prepared to endanger itself. By so behaving, amateur theater may spur the professionals to take up the cudgels. The result would be a chance to revive something of the spirit of genuine and interesting theater—insofar as the amateur theater is liberated from box office concerns."

Chapter Fourteen

¹See Chapter Eight.

²See Chapter Eleven.

³See Chapter Ten.

⁴See Urim la-horim, May 5, 1965, p. 114.

⁵The article appeared on May 14, 1965.

⁶Ha'aretz Weekend Supplement, May 21, 1965.

⁷Hed hahinukh, 19 Tevet 5726 (December 1965).

⁸The author is Tehilla Rabina.

⁹Maariv, February 1, 1965.

¹⁰Lipkin's resolve and the firmness of her objection to Porat's proposal are also evident in an open letter Lipkin wrote Porat in Bamateinu (no year cited). In this letter, Lipkin reiterates the arguments she presents in the aforementioned article, and adds further comments in an explicit appeal. To touch upon the major points, some excerpts from the letter appear below:

"'Children's theater is the crucible for the future adult audience,' you assert in your article in Bama, no. 28. I

assert that children's theater is the crucible not only for the future adult audience, but for our future adult actors....

"You insist that a child's place in the theater is in the audience, and thus you demand that he be educated in art exclusively by intermediaries and substitutes. Furthermore, a child should adopt the norms the adult artist has set for him, because this artist—as you explain—knows what should interest a child and what is right and good for him. Only a professional adult actor can achieve 'performance perfection.' But let us contemplate a theater that represents such perfection, *i.e.*, a theater in which only professional adult actors perform. During a recent four-month visit to the United States and Great Britain, I sought for the most superb and perfect children's theater; I searched among the commercial theaters, which thrive on the fanaticism of individuals, and among the non-commercial ones, which live off public allocations, *e.g.*, the Cameri Theater project and the Children's Theater of the New York Board of Jewish Education. I searched but did not find. In those theaters, almost without exception, I found amateurish overacting by inexperienced actors (who use children's theater as a springboard into adult theater), and indifferent, tedious performances by superb actors who seemed to think they were doing the children a favor by stooping to donating their time and talent.

"Adult actors' unsuitability to children's roles was driven home to me in a production of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer by a veteran children's theater in New York. It was rather amusing to see adults playing teenagers (Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and their friends) and imitating the shenanigans of youth with their cumbersome motions; the deep, masculine voices emitted by these putative 15- and 16-year-olds was most grating.

"In the children's theaters, by contrast, I generally enjoyed the sincere, genuine, and probing acting of the youth."

Lipkin provides two examples: a commedia dell'arte production of Androcles and the Lion by a children's theater run by Hunter College of New York; and Shakespeare's Macbeth and Sophocles' Electra as performed by the 14- to 17-year-olds of the Rye (New York) Children's Theater.

After countering Porat's remarks, Lipkin concludes her open letter with the following comments:

"Permit me to conclude by challenging the Cameri children's theater to do something admittedly daring and pioneering for our country, which has already been done in various forms in the United States and England. Here is an American example: since 1932, the children's theater run by the professional City Theater of Cleveland (Ohio) has been running the 'Cleveland Playhouse.' Three hundred fifty children age 6-18

participate, mostly in improvisation and self-expression. This theater stages three plays a year for children, featuring selected groups of their peers. Besides being a theatrical center for children, this theater has also succeeded over the years in turning out professional actors.

"And an example from England: the theater operating under the Association for Educational Drama in Birmingham, directed by Peter Slade—an educator, theater enthusiast, and philosopher. Child and teacher actors participate in this center. The latter's work is bilateral; they teach children's groups creative drama (in school), thereby learning and living a unique drama that belongs to children. They also perform in the theater. This joint effort by adult actors (who are also teachers) and children should be very welcome. This theater is also unique in its 'arena' stage—in contrast to the frontal stage, which is distant and separated from the audience. With an arena stage, the actors can mingle with the child audience, redirecting their acting toward the children and encouraging their active participation. In a conventional theater, however, the acting is sent in the children's direction—and this is Slade's opinion.

"May I hope these examples inspire and propel us to take the audacious, groundbreaking step of establishing a children's department alongside one of our great theaters—or shall we continue along the conventional path?!"

¹¹A river that bisects Tel Aviv.

¹²Palestine was under British Mandatory rule for 30 years. The mandate was established and approved by the League of Nations at the end of World War I, and ended in May, 1948.

¹³For complete details, see Orna Porat's "Theater for Children" in Israel, a Review of Arts and Letters in Israel, no. 29, 1972.

¹⁴The pamphlet was published in February 1985, although the courses of action cited therein had been adopted 15 years previously and were reaffirmed in January 1985.

¹⁵For illustrative purposes only, and so as not to repeat the piercing criticism, let us consider, for example, the critique in Hed ha-gan, June 1971, p. 435: "The NTCY is presenting The Magic Onion around the country. This time, we shall recommend the play for the following compelling reasons:

"A. It is a good play. Orna Porat's directing adds an aura of grace to Clara Machadi's script and makes for an unforgettable visit to the theater.

"B. The plot itself is geared toward kindergarten and early-elementary-school children. After all, they are in the very midst of the age of fable. Our story has elements of fable. Nevertheless, it is spiced with a dash of detective story

and other ingredients used in the kind of story best-loved by children of this age.

"C. The plot conveys many educational values, like harmonious family relations, close relations between man and nature, and mutual support.

¹⁶See, for example, "The NTCY—Out of its Diapers," by Emanuel Bar Kedma in Yedioth Aharonoth, October 13, 1973.

¹⁷See, for example, reports for 1975 and 1976, etc.

¹⁸Today, she is the director of the Beersheva Theater.

¹⁹Presently a theater teacher and television scriptwriter.

²⁰The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the history of the NTCY during its first decade alone.

²¹The expression "the second Israel" denotes the backward sector of Israeli society—residents of urban slums, immigrants' settlements, and development towns. Common to all are backwardness, poverty, hardships, absence of modern cultural patterns, etc. Counterposed to the "second Israel" is the "first Israel"—the affluent social stratum, steeped in cultural values and dwelling in well-developed communities and posh neighborhoods.

²²On this topic, it is worth quoting the Minister of Education and Culture in the Knesset (parliament) on January 31, 1972. His remarks set things in their proper perspective:

"We belong to an ancient people, with a spiritual and cultural heritage of unequalled richness; however, our Israeli society is young, and as unconsolidated as any young creature.... The question of the spiritual and cultural identity of Israeli society was not resolved with the establishment of the state. When I say 'spiritual and cultural identity,' I also refer explicitly to the culture of life and behavioral patterns. The shaping of patterns of life, culture, and society in Israel is a matter of generations, and its coalescence is entrusted to us and our progeny. Every one of us remains subject to constant, tumultuous, and rapid formation.... Our society is very complex and multi-faceted, full of different hues and contradictions. I almost said "a society of immigrants," because alongside its unique Jewishness, each ethnic group brought to this country the uniqueness of its country of origin in the civilizations of peoples. One does not encounter this country under peaceful conditions. One who returns to his heritage finds his portion but no peace. The scars of the bitter wars and struggles forced upon us are deeply engraved in our psyches, even as we radiate faith and self-confidence. We belong to a people whose hearts bear the residue of traumatic experiences the likes of which no other people has experienced. Everything instilled in us for generations—anxieties, fears, frazzled nerves,

yearnings—finds its natural outlet here, for better or worse...."

The Minister's comments indicate that this theater's chosen task of teaching the public to attend the theater, etc., was virtually "mission impossible." However, David Alexander strikes a different attitude in Hed ha-hinukh, March 9, 1978. In a lengthy article in the aftermath of an appeal by Orna Porat to the country's educators, Alexander writes:

"'Dear educators, please help us make a visit to the theater a cultural experience for the pupil, for you, and for us.... We all know that only a good, well-educated audience can fully imbibe the theatrical experience, and that only for such an audience can the actor do his best....'

"This appeal by Orna Porat, director of the National Theater for Children and Youth, to the educators who bring their pupils to the theater's performances presents only one aspect of the complex relationship between the worlds of education and theater. In her appeal, which appears in the introduction to the teacher's guide, Porat issues several 'commandments' for proper behavior in the theater. Her remarks naturally focus on presenting the viewpoint of the production's creators, which, as stated, only one facet of a full complement of issues stemming from the fascinating (and, at times, heartening) encounter between pupil and theater....

"Demonstrating proper behavior in the theater hall, imparting respect for art and artists, and cultivating consideration for the rest of the audience—all these are consequences of the process I call 'education via theater.' Stringent student preparation before heading for the theater is possible, and—above and beyond the experience of a one-time visit to the theater—it teaches students the value of respect, order, cleanliness, and regard for the venue. This is one result of education via theater.

"The theater also serves as a 'launching pad' for shaping issues that are not necessarily theatrical. Education makes use of theatrical concepts and techniques, using "theatrical models" to teach various subjects. This is how to cultivate various concepts of creativity; these are the means for focusing pupils on basic aesthetics of daily life and an intensive life culture.... The basic activity of organized theater-going—the preparation and the encounter afterward—creates educational repercussions; out of the education meant to spawn a better, more enthusiastic, more cultured, and perhaps more understanding audience, grow all the other activities listed as part of education via theater.... If we consider theater attendance a basis for social education, and if we regard discussion afterward as an educational value focusing on the culture of debate and criticism, besides increasing teenagers' knowledge of the concepts of stagecraft, all the educational tapestries

anchored in theatrical art will self-generate. Thus, the two frameworks—that focusing on theater education, and that which originates in the theater—will become one."

Chapter Fifteen

¹During the years of research for this dissertation, and even as it was being written, I met with many of the people active on one level or another in children's theater. The many conversations, all tape-recorded, provided me with a large quantity of diverse information, which represented the basis of this dissertation. Many of the people with whom I met had not documented their activities, and each of them had a unique point-of-view which rounded out a general picture, making my meetings with them doubly important.

Even though some of the people I interviewed are not mentioned by name in either the text or the footnotes of this dissertation, this does not mean that the information they provided me was "lost." On the contrary, it helped form the basis of knowledge necessary to tell the history of children's theater in Palestine/Israel for the first time.

²This is said for rhetorical purposes alone. While this dissertation was being written, several of the people who played prominent roles in the subject at hand passed away. This includes Moshe Barkai, a major figure in the Kindergarten Teachers' Association Theater, Azova Oxenberg, widow of director Yosef Oxenberg, and Shmuel Navon. Two of the women who were active in the field—Sarah Levi Tanai and Danya Levine—have health problems because of which they are hard to interview today.

³Exodus 20:4-5. This is one of the most fundamental tenets of the Jewish faith.

APPENDIX: LIST OF PLAYS

The table below is a list of plays performed in Palestine/Israel in theaters of and for children during the period reviewed in this dissertation. Because no such list has been compiled before, the table represents a pioneer effort. To prepare it, I gathered all available material from the sources at hand: archives, journals, interviews, etc. I wish to point out that all efforts notwithstanding, the list is nevertheless missing certain details. Because it is important and original, however, I chose to present it as is.

The information appears in the following order: name of play, playwright, presentator, date of presentation, and reference — whichever are available.

'Ad de-lo-yada'

([traditional Purim festivities]), Hinga, Salimar; Tel Aviv Pedagogical Center; three-act Purim play

'Alei kinnor

("Fiddler [on the Roof]"), by Sholom Aleichem, Habimah; 1960

'Alilot popeye

("Adventures of Popeye"), by Omar, Dvora; Ma'ariv, August 26, 1971; directed by Miri Magnus

'Alilot Robin Hood

("Adventures of Robin Hood"), by Raphael, Zvi, Sokolow School, Jerusalem; 1943

'Alilot tom sawyer

("Adventures of Tom Sawyer"), by Twain, Mark, Bamateinu; 1950

'Anaq ha-sela'

("Giant of the Rock"), by Shalita, Haya; Urim, September, 1962, Vol. 19; based on Yemima Czernovitz

- 'Azit be-midbar yehuda
 ("Azit in the Judean Desert"), by Gur, Mordechai,
 Holam; 1972
- 'Azit be-shilgei ha-hermon
 ("Azit in the Snow of Mt. Hermon"), by Gur, Mordechai,
 Holam; 1972
- Abracadabra, Author unknown, Bimot; 1974
- Adama
 ("Soil"), by Shalom, S.; in Gorali, Moshe (ed.), Let's Perform, Jerusalem; 1955.
- Aggadat ha-ragefet
 ("Fable of the Cyclamen"), by Ariel, Z.; in Barkai, Moshe (ed.), Drama Group Book; 1964, p. 97.
- Aggadat shelosha ve-arba'a
 ("Fable of Three and Four"), by Bialik, C.N.; Habimah, Feb. 12, 1955; directed by Shraga Friedman
- Ahashverosh melekh tipesh
 ("Stupid King Xerxes"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak,
Tzfririm 11, Mar. 1; 1920.
- Ahavat ne'urim
 ("Adolescent Love"), by Ashman, Aharon; Habimah, Oct. 20, 1949
- Aluf batzlut ve-aluf shum
 ("General Onion and General Garlic"), by Bialik, C.H.;
Lehakat ha-ma'arakhonim, Tel Aviv, in Gorali, Moshe
 (ed.), Let's Perform, Vol. 2, Jerusalem; 1961, p. 175.
- Amnon ve-tamar
 ("Amnon and Tamar"), by Mapu, Abraham, NTCY,¹ 1970
- Ani pashush
 ("I'm a Hummingbird"), by Hillel, Ayin; Pashush, 1974
- Anne Frank, Frank, Goodreich; NTCY, 1971
- Appel bat-tzion
 ("Appel Daughter of Zion"), by Gordon, Y.L.; 1891,
M'oznaim, Sept. 1983, p. 37.
- Ayei ha-or?
 ("Where's the Light?"), by Frishman, David; in Barkai, Moshe, In the Play, p. 149.
- Ba-'arvei hanukka
 ("On the Nights of Hanukah"), author unknown; Ha-kokhav
 9, Dec. 1924.

¹National Theater for Children and Youth

Ba-'arvot ha-negev

("In the Negev Wilderness"), by Mossinson, Yigal;
Habimah, Feb. 10; 1949

Ba-gina

("In the Garden"), by Yaffe, Bilha; 'Itonneinu 4:26,
1936.

Ba-martef

("In the Cellar"), by Hirshman, Peretz; Ha-ne'urim,
Sept., 1904.

Ba-midbar

("In the Desert"), by Frishman, David, Kibbutz Beit
Zera; 1940

Ba-ohel

("In the Tent"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak; Tzafririm 23,
Dec. 15, 1919.

Ba-zman ha-hu

("Back Then"), author unknown, Tzafririm 27, Apr. 15;
1920.

Bambi, Oxenberg, Yosef; KTAET, Jewish Education Archive, Tel
Aviv University, based on story by Felix Saltan

Bar kokhva, author unknown; Gymnasia Herzliya, Tel Aviv,
1944, directed by Zvi Friedland

Bastine u-bastina, Dror, Ephraim, Ben Shemen Youth Village;
1958

Bat 'am ha-sefer

("Daughter of the People of the Book"), by Erlich,
Asher; 1905

Bat ha-melekh

("The King's Daughter"), by Bialik, C.N.; NTCY, 1973

Bat ha-tohen

("The Miller's Daughter"), by Brothers Grimm, Talil;
1961, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Bat yiftah

("Jephtha's Daughter"), by Perlman, S.; 1921, Ma'abarot
3, Jaffa, 1921, p. 19.

Bat yiftah

("Jephtha's Daughter"), by Erlich, Asher; 1909

Bat yiftah

("Jephtha's Daughter"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak;
Shovlim, May 22, 1922, Tarbut Publishing

Batzal ha-peleh

("Magic Onion"), by Machadu, K.; NTCY, 1972

Be-derekh efrata

("On the Way to Efrat"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1938, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University.

Be-ein nesheq magen

("Defenseless"), by Barrot, Eliezer; Center for Education and Culture; based on The Courageous Young Lad by Eliezer Shmueli

Be-eretz lubengulu melek zulu

("In the Land of Lubengulu the Zulu King"), by Guttman, Nahum, Bamateinu; 1961

Be-hag ha-hanukka

("On Hanukah"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1938, script set in verse

Bein zahav le-gahelet

("Between Gold and Coals"), by Mintz, Rachel, Urim, Jerusalem; 1959

Beit ha-sefer be-shitafon

("The School's Flooded"), by Goldberg, Leah; Haifa Children's Theater, 1937

Beit yisrael

("House of Israel"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak; Taltalim, Warsaw; 1920, p. 29.

Ben ha-paritz

("The Landlord's Son"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; Hamakkabi ha-tzair, Jerusalem, 1940, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Beriat ha-'olam

("Creation"), by Schweiger, Yitzhak; KTAFT, 1945

Bigdei yom tov

("Holiday Clothes"), by Berkovitz, Y.D.; Tel Aviv, 1924, based on story by Sholom Aleichem

Bikkurim

("First Fruit"), by Bannai, Nahum; 1933, Tzabar 2:8, 1933.

Bigetato shel v-dod tom

("Uncle Tom's Cabin"), by , Pilpelon Yaroq; 1964, Theater Archive, Tel Aviv University

Birkat ya'agov

("Jacob's Blessing"), by Akh Natan, Dr.; Gymnasia 'Ivrit, Lodz, Poland, 1932

Bnei ha-hashmona'im

("The Hasmonaeans' Children"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1941, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University.

Butzina gadisha

("Holy Candle"), by Weiner, S.; Ha-kokhav 5, 1924.

Chipopo be-alaska u-be-yapan

("Chipopo in Alaska and Japan"), by Burnstein, Tamar, Talil; 1966; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Chipopo be-mitzrayim

("Chipopo in Egypt"), by Burnstein, Tamar, "Pink Theater"; 1972

Dag ha-zahav

("The Goldfish"), by Hinnanit, Esther; Tzabar, 1955, Urim 20:2, 1963; based on story by Pushkin

Dani be-e ha-pela'ot

("Dani on an Enchanted Island"), by Panias, David, Tilon-Talil, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University; based on story by the Grimm Brothers

David melekh yisrael

("David, King of Israel"), by Zelkind, M., Urim, Jerusalem; 1956

David ve-goliat

("David and Goliath"), by Karniel, Mordechai; 1909

David ve-goliat

("David and Goliath"), by Merzbach, Tirtza; 1940, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

David ve-goliat

("David and Goliath"), by Avissar, Oded; Tilon, 1956, Lewinsky Education College, Tel Aviv

David ve-shaul

("David and Saul"), by Shenkar, Yitzhak, Bnei Shimshon; 1934

Derekh ha-ruah

("Way of the Wind"), by Tahor-Lev, Haim, Center for Education and Culture; three-act play

Devora ha-nevi'a

("Deborah the Prophetess"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; Hamakkabi ha-tzair, Jerusalem, Jan. 26, 1938, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Dodi simha

("My Uncle Simha"), by Hillel, Ayin; Teddy Productions

Don abarbanel, by Antebbi, Yehuda; 1919, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University, file 5,203

Don Quixote, Oxenberg, Yosef, Tilon-Talil; 1963

E ha-matmon

("Treasure Island"), by Gur-Arye, E.; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University; based on story by Robert Louis Stevenson

E ha-robinzonim

("Robinson's Island"), by Limon, Shimshon, Center for Education and Culture; based on "Children's Island" -- story by Mira Lova.

Efronit ("Hummingbird"), by Schwartz, Y., Center for Education and Culture; based on a four-act play by Anderson entitled in Hebrew Likhluhit.

Ein maqom tahat ha-shemesh

("No Room Under the Sun"), by Rekhavi, Hagit; NTCY; 1977

El 'atzmi

("To Myself"), by Ron-Feder, Galila; NTCY; 1979

El Cortizo, Ansky, Eliezer, Bamateinu Theater, Jerusalem, Oct. 29, 1972, Tel Aviv Theater Museum; based on volume of romances by Yitzhak Halevi

Eliezer ben yerushalayim

("Eliezer the Jerusalemite"), by Raphael, Zvi, Sokolow School, J'lem; 1943

Eliezer ve-ha-gezer

("Eliezer and the Carrot"), by Kipnis, Levin, KTACT², Tel Aviv Theater Museum

Eliezer ve-rivka

("Eliezer and Rebecca"), by Goldberg, Leah; in Goral, Moshe (ed.), Let's Perform, Jerusalem; 1961.

Eliyahu

("Elijah"), by Silman, K.Y.; 1939, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Eliyahu ha-navi

("Elijah the Prophet"), by Silman, K.Y., Ha-kokhav 2:7-8, Jul. 1924

Eliyahu ha-navi

("Elijah the Prophet"), by Hirshbein, Peretz; Sifriya getana 30.

Elu banaikh moledet

("These are Your Sons, Homeland"), by Burnstein, Tamar, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

²Kindergarten Teachers Association Children's Theater

Emil ve-ha-balashim

("Emil and the Detectives"), by Kastner, Erich;
Habimah, Mar. 20, 1962

Esh

("Fire"), by Navon, Shmuel, Beit ha-hinukh, Tel Aviv,
1932, Davar, Oct. 1932

Esther, Cohen-Reis, Ephraim, Jerusalem Orphanage School;
1902, M'oznaim, Sept. 1983, p. 37.

Etzba'oni

("Tom Thumb"), by Peleg, Yaaqov; Do-Re-Mi, 1957

'Etz ha-tigva

("Tree of Hope"), by Ori, Yaaqov; 1949; Amateur
Theaters Union, Histadrut Executive Committee, Tel Aviv

'Eza peziza

("Reckless She-Goat"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACT; Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Fania, Shoshan, Michael, Time; 1976

Fransuah rosh gezer

("François the Carrothead"), by Renard, Z., Tilon; 1960

Gad ve-'anat nas'u le-eilat

("Gad and Anat Went to Eilat"), by Barkai, Moshe;
KTACT, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Ganav ha-tzeva'im

("The Paint Thief"), by Mittlepunkt, Hillel, NTCY; 1978

Giborim

("Heroes"), by Bass, Shlomo; 1937, Jewish Education
Archive, Tel Aviv University

Gid'on moshia' yisrael

("Gideon, Savior of Israel"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel;
1936, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Gilgi, Lindgren, E., Pilpelon Yaroq; 1964

Gulliver be-eretz ha-'anagim

("Gulliver in the Land of the Giants"), by Kolar,
Yeshayahu, Do-Re-Mi; 1957

Gulliver be-medinat ha-gemadim

("Gulliver in Lilliputia"), by Arikha, Amos; Tilon,
Talil, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University;
directed by Menahem Golan

Ha-'osah nifla'ot

("The Miracle Worker"), by Gibson, W., Habimah, Dec. 3;
1960

Ha-adama ha-zot

("This Land"), by Ashman, Aharon, Habimah, Sept. 19;
1942

Ha-anusim

("The Forced Converts"), by Eliav

Ha-bahlan

("The Coward"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1923

Ha-buba hola

("The Doll is Sick"), by Adler, Yishai; Eden, New York,
April 1924.

Ha-dahlil

("The Scarecrow"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACT, 1933

Ha-dov be-'ir ha-yehudim

("The Bear in the City of the Jews"), Tel Aviv; 1928;
Lewinski College of Education, Tel Aviv

Ha-em

("The Mother"), by Novo-Gravlinska, Bat-Sheva; based on
H.C. Andersen

Ha-gamad ha-mekhushaf

("The Bewitched Dwarf"), by Hauf, William, NTCY; 1976

Ha-gangeman

("The Stutterer"), by Kurotinski, Hamakkabi ha-tzair,
Jerusalem; 1936

Ha-giv'onim

("The Gibeonites"), by Kanterovich, S.S.; Hakokhav,
August, 1923, No. 5.

Ha-heladim hidliku ner

("The Children Lit a Candle"), by Bar-Daat, Y.; Davar
(newspaper) Children's Supplement, 1956, Vol. E, No.
10, p. 9.

Ha-kalanit

("The Anemone"), by Yehoshua, D., KTACT

Ha-kalanit

("The Anemone"), by Margolin, Yehoshua

Ha-kotel ha-afor

("The Gray Wall"), by Yaaqov, Ori; 1947, Amateur
Theaters Union, Histadrut Executive Committee, Tel Aviv

Ha-laila ha-shneim 'asar

("Twelfth Night"), by Shakespeare, W., NTCY; 1971

Ha-lev

("The Heart"), by Livne, Natan; Talil, 1959; based on
story by A.D. Amichis

Ha-ma'apil

("Clandestine Immigrant"), by Kipnis, Levin; Talil;
Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Ha-matmid ve-tzilo

("The Benefactor and His Shadow"), by Kataznelson,
Yitzhak

Ha-mefuzar me-hor ha-har

("Scatterbrain from Hor ha-Har"), by Goldberg, Leah; in
Barkai, Moshe, The Drama Group Presents, Tel Aviv,
1964, p. 15

Ha-melamed yadai la-gerav

("He Who Trains Me for War"), by Uri, Yaaqov; Center
for Education and Culture; five-act Biblical play

Ha-melekh ferdinand pedatzur

("King Ferdinand Pedatzur"), by Sidon, Ephraim, NTCY;
1979

Ha-melekh matya

("Matya the King"), by Bergstein, Asher, Talil; based
on story by Janusz Korczak

Ha-meraglim

("The Spies"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1936

Ha-mesima ha-mi'uhedet

("Special Mission"), by Vitis, Yehoshua, Center for
Education and Culture; three-act comedy based on story
by S. Michaelkov

Ha-metapes 'al ha-'etz

("The Tree-Climber"), by Tawfiq, Hakim, NTCY; 1979

Ha-mikhtav le-abba

("Letter to Dad"), by Zuta, H.A.; Ben artzi, Dec. 4,
1926.

Ha-na'ar ba-ya'ar

("The Boy in the Forest"), by Bialik, C.N.; in Barkai,
Moshe, The Drama Group Presents, Tel Aviv, 1964, p. 7.

Ha-na'ar ha-soneh ilanot

("The Boy Who Hated Trees"), Studio Qatina, 1946,
Jewish Education Archives, Tel Aviv University

Ha-na'ar moshe

("Moses the Lad"), by Even-Tsur, A., Ben-artzi, Mar.
28, 1926.

Ha-nasikh 'omar

("Prince Omar"), by Eliaz, Raphael, Bamateinu; 1944

- Ha-qaitanim ha-getanim
("The Little Vacationers"), by Einbinder, Gershon
- Ha-gamtzan
("The Miser"), by Z.B. Moliere, NTCY; 1970
- Ha-gelipa
("The Peel"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACTION
- Ha-qipud ve-ha-arnav
("The Hedgehog and the Hare"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACTION
- Ha-ragdanit("The Dancer"), by Silverslag, Yitzhak
- Ha-saba ve-nekhedav
("Grandfather and His Grandchildren"), by Frank, A.N.;
Hakokhav, February, 1924.
- Ha-sevivon mesaper
("The Dreidl Tells"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACTION, 1929
- Ha-shakh'hanit
("The Forgetful Girl"), author unknown; 1920s, Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University; directed by
Bracha Habas;
- Ha-shamen, ha-razeh
("Fat Man, Thin Man"), by Gideon Shaham, Masakh,
Masekha; 1978
- Ha-shegediya
("The Almond Tree"), by Shalem, Matityahu; in Goral, Let's Perform, 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 77-83.
- Ha-sira ha-yafa
("the Beautiful Boat"), by Pinski, David
- Ha-sod
("The Secret"), by Sender, Y., Urim, Jerusalem
- Ha-tayara
("The Kite"), by Polani, Naomi, Pashush; 1965
- Ha-teiva ha-mezameret
("The Singing Box"), by Alterman, Natan, NTCY; 1976
- Ha-tissa la-yareah
("Flight to the Moon"), author unknown; KTACTION, 1960;
directed by Dan Kedar
- Ha-tizmoret
("The Band"), by Oxenberg, Yosef; KTACTION; based on story
by Karilov
- Ha-to'im ve-ha-gamadim
("The Wanderers and the Dwarfs"), by Rosenzweig,

Yehiel; Tzafririm, newspaper for youth published by Beit Ha'am (community center), September, 1919

Ha-tzippor ha-kehula

("The Bluebird"), by Meiterlinck, M., Habimah, Oct. 6; 1952

Ha-yeladim me-rehov mapu

("The Children from Mapu Street"), by Katznelson, Esther; Center for Education and Culture; based on book of the same name by Sarah Neshamit

Ha-yeled ha-mit'haleh

("The Boy Who Pretended to be Sick"), by Silman-Yaffe, Bilha; Eden, Jerusalem, January, 1925.

Ha-hamsan ha-gatan

("The Little Terror"), by Horlich, Moshe, Warsaw; in Nitzanim, Warsaw, 1893, No. 52-53.

Ha-hashmona'im

("The Hasmonaeans"), by Berkman, Yitzhak; 1924

Ha-hashmona'im

("The Hasmonaeans"), by Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer

Ha-hashmona'im

("The Hasmonaeans"), by Weis, Meir, Safad Girls' School, 1899

Ha-hasida ha-pela'it

("The Magic Stork"), by Gozani, Rivka

Hag ha-batzir

("Harvest Festival"), by Dzialoshinski, K.; 1939; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University; written for children of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha-'emek

Hag ha-ilanot

("Holiday of the Trees"), by Goldberg, Leah; Davar children's supplement, Vol. 2, No. 18, 1937, p. 75.

Hag ha-nitzahon

("Victory Celebration"), by Kipnis, Levin; 1941; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Hag hadash yitqadesh

("A New Festival Consecrated"), by Levin Kipnis; in Let's Perform, Jerusalem, 1962.

Hagar, Weinberg, Avraham

Hakh haman

("Hit Haman"), by Yitzhak, Yitzhak; Davar (newspaper) Children's Supplement, 1962, Vol. 32, No. 28, p. 617.

Hakhmei helm

("The Wise Men of Chelm"), by Ofek, Uriel, Holam; 1970

Halokh halkhu ha-'etzim

("The Trees Went Out [to Look for a King]"), by Kipnis, Levin

Halomot

("Dreams"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak; in Taltalim, Warsaw, 1920, p. 20

Halomot paz

("Golden Dreams"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1938; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Hannah Szenes, Megged, Aharon, Habimah, May 31; 1958

Hannah ve-shiv'at bane'ha

("Hannah and Her Seven Sons"), by Tamir, N.; 1942; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University, and collection belonging to Shaul Ziv

Hanukka, Fishkin Aharon; 1939; 'Itonneinu la-getanim, Year 3, Nos. 9-10.

Hanukkiya me-'aza

("Hanukah Menora from Gaza"), by Firstman, Shraga; Ha'aretz Shelanu, December 17, 1959

Hasamba , Mossinson, Yigal, Bamateinu; 1952

Hasamba ve-shadedei ha-sussim

("Hasamba and the Horse Thieves"), by Missonson, Yigal, Do-Re-Mi; 1958

Hassidut

("Hassidism") , Alexander, Michael; in Sde Hemed, 1964, Vol. 7, No. 8, pp. 439-445.

Haveri yashka me-odessa

("My Friend Yashka from Odessa"), by Manor, Rahel; "Fifteen Plays," published by Hakibbutz Ha'artzi Education Department, 1956, pp. 133-167; based on story by Slutzki, "From the Vale of Zebulun to the Sea of Galilee"

Haverim

("Friends"), by Amir, Anda, Kibbutz Ashdod Yaaqov; 1943

Havurat Nah'shon be-'iqvot ha-meragel ("The Nahshon Group Chases the Spy"), by Granot, Tzvia, Cyclone; 1971

Hayu yamim hayu leilot

("Those Were the Days, Those Were the Nights", Anderson, H.C., Teddy Productions; 1973

Hayyat ki yimlokh

("The Tailor Who Would Rule"), by Hauf, Y., Bamateinu;
1949

He-halutz ha-gatan

("The Little Pioneer"), by Karmon, Alexander

Hedva va-ani

("Hedva and I"), by Megged, Aharon; Tel Aviv Theater
Museum

Heidi bat ha-harim

("Heidi"), by Ruth Bat-Dor, Do-Re-Mi; 1956

Herpatka ba-qirgas

("Adventure at the Circus), Brown, J.A., NTCY; 1973

Herpatka'ot chipopo

("Chipopo's Adventures"), by Burnstein, Tamar, Talil;
1960; adapted by Shlomo Bar-Shavit

Herpatka'ot doolittle ha-rofe

("Dr. Doolittle's Adventures"), by Yannai, Yitzhak;
1950; based on story by A. Luftig

Herschele me-ostropoli

("Herschele of Ostropoli"), by Sholom Aleichem, NTCY;
1977

Hilufei yotzrot

("Tables Turned"), by Handelsach, Y.A.; Tzafririm, 25,
March 15, 1920.

Hizayon ha-'etzim

("The Trees Perform"), by Shpan, S.; 1939; Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University, special booklet
published by Jewish National Fund

Hizion le-hanukka

("Hanukah Sketch"), by Antebbi, Yehuda; 1919; Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University, File 5.203

Hoshekh

("Dark"), by Kipnis, Levin; Apr. 7; 1935; 'Itonneinu
la-getanim (children's edition) -- Passover play

Husham ha-yarkan

("Husham the Greengrocer"), by Kipnis, Levin; in
Barkai, Moshe, At the Theater, p. 185.

Hut ha-zahav

("The Golden Thread"), by McLeod, Norman; Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Ilan ha-makabim

("Tree of the Maccabees"), by Solar, Shmuel; "Davar le-yeladim" 25:12; 1956, p. 10.

Jean d'Arc, Bernard Shaw, G., NTCY; 1975

Kad ha-zeitim

("Pitcher of Olives"), by Rada, Azzam, NTCY; 1971

Kanfot ha-aretz

("[Four] Corners of the Land"), by Silman, K., Tahkemoni School, Jerusalem; Ha'aretz, 14-15, Jaffa, 1921

Kemo tzipporim

("Like Birds"), by Burla, Oded, Bimat ha-qibutz; 1979

Kenes ha-kita

("Class Assembly"), by Amihai, Yehuda

Lama kova'

("Just Because"), by Shaham, Nurit, Rehovot Youth Theater; 1975

Lassie shuvi ha-baita

("Lassie Come Home"), by Golan, Yosef; Tilon, Arlosoroff House, Tel Aviv. Feb. 15, 1958; directed by Amit Gazit

Le-'ein gedi

("To 'Ein Gedi"), by Fichman, Ruth; Davar, Year 2, No. 2, Jerusalem, 1933

Leitzanei purim

("Purim Jesters"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak; Taltalim, Warsaw, 1920, p. 26.

Levivot shel hanukka

("Hanukah Latkes"), by Yaffe, Bilha; 'Itonneinu la-getanim, December 8, 1933, Jerusalem

Ma'ale gerahot

("The Bald Hill"), by Sidon, Ephraim, NTCY; 1980

Ma'apilim

("Clandestine Immigrants"), by Shimonovich, David, Gymnasia Herzliya; 1947; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University; directed by Zvi Friedland

Ma'ase ba-tzefarde'a u-ba-magafayim

("Tale of a Frog and Bots"), by Amir, Anda; in Barkai, Moshe, The Drama Group Presents, 1964, p. 49

Ma'ase be-'utz ha-'atzlan

("Tale of Lazy Utz"), by Ansky, Eliezer, Bamateinu; 1955

Ma'ase be-ozen haman

("The Hamentaschen's Tale"), by Kipnis, Levin; in Goral, Moshe (ed.), Let's Perform, Jerusalem, 1962, Vol. 3, pp. 169-184

Ma'ase be-hamor

("A Donkey's Story"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACT

Ma'ase keshafim

("Bewitched"), by Sholom Aleichem; in Goral, Moshe (ed.), Let's Perform, Jerusalem, 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 1-26

Ma'ayan ha-gesamim

("The Magic Spring"), by Bracha Habas, Bnei Shimshon; 1933

Ma'ot shel hanukka

("Hanukah Gelt"), by Sholom Aleichem; Eden, Jerusalem, October, 1924; translated by I.D. Berkovitz

Mafta'h ha-zahav

("The Golden Key"), by Tolstoy, Leib, Bamateinu; 1960

Malkat ha-sheleg

("Snow Queen"), by Andersen, H. C., Bamateinu; 1962

Mar same'ah

("Mr. Happy"), by Hargraves, Roger, Teddy Productions; 1979

Masa' ha-gesamim

("Magic Voyage"), by Brand, Jess, Bimot; 1971

Masekhet shikorim

("Drunkards' Skit"), by Friedman, Shraga; Ha'aretz shelanu, March 4, 1958

Masekhot

("Masks"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACT; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Matanato shel saba

("Grandpa's Gift"), by Arenstein, M.; 'Itonneinu la-getanim, December 8, 1933, Jerusalem

Matateh bein 'ananim

("Broom Between the Clouds"), by Agmon, Goren, Bimat ha-qibutz; 1978

Matityahu ha-hashmona'i

("Mattathias the Hasmonaeen"), by Breckman, Yitzhak; Hakokhav, December, 1924, No. 9

Mahaze esther

("A Play of Esther"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; Hamakkabi

ha-tzair, Jerusalem; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Me'ora'ot shel yashqa

("Yashka's Doings"), by Amitai, Mordechai; Center for Culture and Education; based on Slutzki's story "From the Vale of Zebulun to the Sea of Galilee"

Mekhirat yosef

("The Sale of Joseph"), by Katznelson, Yitzhak, Hebron; 1902

Melekh ha-almogim

("King of the Coral"), by Brown, J.A.; NTCY, 1971

Melekh ha-bedayot

("King of Falsehoods"), by Davidit, Rivka; Davar children's supplement, 2:23, February, 1937, pp. 8-9

Menorat ha-gesamim

("The Magic Lantern"), by Michael, Ohad, Masekhot; 1978

Menorat kofer ha-yishuv

("The Yishuv's Ransom Lamp"), by Lerman, Zeev; Davar children's supplement, 6:8, December 1939, p. 2-9

Mered avshalom

("Absalom's Rebellion"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1936; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Mered ha-tza'atzua'im

("The Toy Rebellion"), by Levine, Dana, Urim, Jerusalem; 1959

Mered ha-hashmona'im

("The Hasmonaean Rebellion"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; 1940; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Mesiba be-kita alef

("Party in First Grade"), by Yitzhak, Yitzhak; Davar children's supplement, 1962, 35:12, p. 236.

Mevugar 'ayef ve-sole'ah

("Old, Tired and Forgiving"), by Shlonsky, Avraham, NTCY; 1976

Mi yatzil et ha-nesikha?

("Who'll Save the Princess?"), by Michael, Ohad, Masekhot; 1972

Mi-she-nikhnas adar marbir be-simha ("When [the Month of]

Adar Comes In, Joy Abounds"), by Wilenski, Ella; Davar children's supplement, 2:21, January, 1937, pp. 8-10

Michal bat shaul

("Saul's Daughter Michal"), by Ashman, Aharon; Habimah,
Jan. 11; 1944

Migdal bavel

("Tower of Babel"), by Rubinstein, Y.; Ha'aretz,
December 15, 1920

Mikhtav la-shamayim

("Letter to Heaven"), by Nitzan, Shlomo; in Barkai,
Moshe, The Drama Group Presents, 1964, p. 137.

Miki Mahu, Shlonsky, Avraham, NTCY; 1977

Mira kafira, Ofek, Uriel, Ramat Hasharon; 1970s; music by
Arye Levanon

Mis'hak purim

("Purim Play"), by Barukh, B.; Ha'aretz shelanu,
February 25, 1953

Mis'hak yeladim

("Child's Play"), by Yaffe, Bilha; 'Itonneinu la-
getanim, December 8, 1933, Jerusalem; translated by A.
Asch

Mis'hak Hanukka

("Hanukah Play"), Davar children's supplement, 2:12,
December 1937, pp. 8-9

Mishpat bnei ha-ya'ar

("The Forest People's Trial"), by Amir, E., NTCY; 1974

Mishpat shlomo

("Solomon's Trial"), by Cohen-Tzedek, Y.; Afigim,
January, 1933, 1:5-6; based on story by Y.L. Peretz

Mokheret ha-tzabarim

("The Woman Who Sold Prickly Pear"), by Peleg, Yaaqov,
Tzabar; 1956

Mottl ben feisi ha-hazan

("Mottl Son of Feisi the Cantor"), by Sholom Aleichem,
Kibbutz Shaar Ha-golan; 1940

Na'ale li-yerushalayim

("Let's Go Up to Jerusalem"), by Yahalom, M.; Davar,
2:3, 1933

Na'arim giborim

("Teenage Heroes"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel; Beit Aharon
Scouts; 1945; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv
University, Bezalel Batzrawi Collection

Ne'urei shimshon ha-gibor

("Young Samson"), by Ofek, Uriel, Tilon; 1959

Neron ve-agrippana

("Nero and Agrippana"), author unknown; Ha'aretz,
December 6, 1920.

Nerot hanukka

("Hanukah Candles"), by Finkerfeld, Anda; Davar, Year
3, Tel Aviv, 1932

Nes gadol haya po

("A Great Miracle Occurred Here"), by Shohat, H.S.;
'Itonneinu, Nov. 22, 1936, 5:5

Nes herzl

("Herzl's Miracle"), by Steibel, A.Y.; Jewish Education
Archive, Tel Aviv University, S. Bass Collection

Nes purim shel yossi

("Yossi's Purim Miracle"), Hinga, Smilar, Studio
Qatina, Jerusalem; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv
University

Nes hanukka

("Hanukah Miracle"), by Kipnis, Levin; 1939; Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Nifla'oteha shel leah

("Leah's Wonders"), by Goldberg, Leah, NTCY; 1974

Nisim ve-nifla'ot

("Miracles and Wonders"), by Goldberg, Leah; based on
story of the same name by Leah Goldberg

Nitzhon ha-makkabim

("Victory of the Maccabees"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel;
1959; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University,
Bezalel Batzrawi Collection

Oliver, Lionel Bart, Habimah, Jan. 17, 1966

Ora ha-kefula

("Ora the Twin"), by Kastner Erich; Pilpelon Yaroq,
1964

Orot giborei yisrael

("Lights of Israel's Heroes"), by Batzrawi, Bezalel;
1940, Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Orot ha-makabim

("Lights of the Maccabees"), by Bass, Shlomo; 1937,
Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Orot shel hanukka

("Hanukah Lights"), by Lappin, Rina; "Mishmar le-
yeladim," Dec. 4; 1947

- Ot be-eretz ha-pela'ot
("Letter in Wonderland"), by Ofek, Uriel; Habimah, Aug. 1968
- Pa'amei mashiah
("Footsteps of the Messiah"), by Bistritzki, Natan, Kibbutz Massada; 1942
- Pakhah lev ha-zahav
("Smarts with the Golden Heart"), by Uriel Ofek, Lilach; directed by Avraham David
- Pahdan u-fahdanit
("Boy Coward, Girl Coward"), by Fishkin, Aharon; 'Itonneinu la-getanim, December 8, 1933, Jerusalem
- Pen ve-ha-gosem fakarash
("Pen and Fakarash the Magician"), by Danya Levine, Urim, Jerusalem; 1957
- Perahim holkhim
("Walking Flowers"), by San, Yehezkel; Hed ha-hinukh, Jan. 16, 1927, 1:5; published by Kupat ha-Sefer
- Peti ma'amin le-khol davar
("The Fool Who Believed Everything"), by Shaham, Gideon, Masakh-Masekha; 1978
- Pinocchio, Ariel, Wanda; Tel Aviv Kibbutz Seminar
Pedagogical Center -- drama in verse
- Pinocchio, Czernovitz, Yemima, KTACT
- Pit'hu et ha-sha'ar
("Open the Gate"), by Molodovska, Kadya, NTCY; 1975
- Poo ha-dov
("Winnie the Pooh"), by Milan, A.A., NTCY; 1971
- Qan ha-neshet
("The Eagle's Nest"), by Cohen, Y., Mishkan Studio, Jerusalem; 1939
- Qashev lihyot yehudi
("It's Hard to Be Jewish"), by Sholom Aleichem, Habimah, Mar. 25; 1937; directed by Zvi Friedland
- Qayin ve-hevel
("Cain and Abel"), by Chaikis, M., Urim, Jerusalem; 1960
- Qever David
("David's Tomb"), by 1929; in Lema'an ha-no'ar, Warsaw, 1929, p. 20

- Qibutz galuyot
("Ingathering of Exiles"), by Avigdor ha-Meiri; Eden,
New York, July, 1924
- Qofiqo ha-'aliz
("Gay Kofiko"), by Burnstein, Tamar, Lilach; 1973
- Qofiqo ve-ha-gosem
("Kofiko and the Magician"), by Burnstein, Tamar,
Yuval; 1968
- Quguriqa bnei rahmanim
("Compassionate Roosters"), Batzrawi, Bezalel;
Hamakkabi ha-tzair counselors, Jerusalem; 1939; Jewish
Education Archive, Tel Aviv University; based on story
by S. Benzion
- Rabi simha eretz yisrael
("Rabbi Simha Eretz Israel"), by Rekhavi, Hagit, NTCY;
1978
- Rafi ben ha-galil
("Rafi of Galilee"), by Czernovitz, Yemima, Matateh;
1949; Tel Aviv University Theater Archive
- Raheli, Bergstein, Fania, Kibbutz Ashdot Yaaqov; 1951
- Ram asher lo gam
("Sleepyhead Ram"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTAFT, 1938
- Revue—eizeh no'ar?
("Revue: What Kind of Kids Are These?"), by Rekhavi,
Hagit, NTCY; 1979
- Rigmat notzot ha-tavas
("Tapestry of Peacock Feathers"), by Cohen, Ehud, NTCY;
1976
- Robin Hood, Einav, Haim; Tilon, 1950; Jewish Education
Archive, Tel Aviv University
- Robinson Crusoe, Defoe, Daniel, Tzabar; 1953
- Robinzon 'al ha-e ha-shomem
("Robinson on the Deserted Island"), by Ben-Zvi, 'Olam
gatan ("Small World"), 37, Warsaw, June 24, 1903
- Rofeh ba'al korho
("A Doctor Despite Himself"), by Moliere, Z.B.;
Bamateinu/Jerusalem Khan, July 6, 1972; directed by
Eliezer Ansky
- Roni harzoni
("Rhyming Roni"), by Yaron, A.L., Bimat Koleinu; 1945;
Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Rosh ha-shana la-ilanot

("New Year of the Trees"), by Kipnis, Levin; in Goral, Moshe (ed.), Let's Perform, 1964

Sara giborat nili

("Sarah, Heroine of Nili"), by Omar, Dvora, NTCY; 1978

Scafen , Moliere, Z.B., NTCY; 1974Shabbat, Erlich, Asher; 1906Shalosh bagashot

("Three Requests"), by Sokolow, Leon, Life and Nature, illustrated weekly magazine for children, Vilna, October 5, 1905

Shana tova la-ilan

("Happy New Year, Tree"), by Livne, Zeev; Davar children's supplement, 1966, 36:20, p. 475

Sheloshet ha-musqeterim

("The Three Musketeers"), by Sharfstein, Z., Hamakkabi ha-tzair; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University

Shilgiya ve-shiv'at ha-gamadim

("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"), by Brothers Grimm, Tilon; 1960

Shim'on bar yair, Menahemya; 1910sShimshon be-had ha-purim

("Samson on Purim"), by Finkerfeld, Anda; Davar, 2:10, Tel Aviv, 1933

Shimshon ha-gibor

("Samson the Hero"), author unknown, Aug. 7; 1933

Shirat hanukka

("Hanukah Song"), by Zuta, H.L.; 1911; Ha-'olam, July 22, 1923

Shlomo ha-melekh ve-ashmadai

("King Solomon and the Devil's Advocate"), by Bialik, C.N., Kibbutz Hefziba; 1952

Shloshet ha-dubim

("The Three Bears"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTAFT, 1939; based on story by the Brothers Grimm

Shnei nerot

("Two Candles"), by Leizerovich, Y.A.; 1940; Jewish Education Archive, Tel Aviv University, Shaul Ziv Collection; based on story by Janusz Korczak

Shnei niggunim

("Two Melodies"), by Schweiger, Yitzhak, Pupils at

Menahemya; 1923; Tzafririm, newspaper for teenagers,
Beit Ha'am, October 1919

Shuv hozer ha-niggun

("The Same Old Tune Again"), by Alterman, Natan, NTCY;
1976

Simlat ha-shabbat shel hannale

("Hannale's Sabbath Dress"), by Schweiger, Yitzhak;
KTACT, 1945

Simha lav davka

("Not Necessarily Happiness"), by Tchernichowski,
Shaul, Mishkan Studio, Jerusalem; 1939

Sippur hanukka

("Hanukah Story"), by Silman, K.; 'Itonneinu, 3,
Jerusalem, 1933.

Sod ha-marvad

("The Carpet's Secret"), by Bogomzom, Urim, Jerusalem;
1958

Sod ha-milim ha-bodedot

("The Lonely Words' Secret"), by Ben-Shaul, Moshe,
NTCY; 1972

Sodo shel ha-gapitan bonanza

("Captain Bonanza's Secret"), by Klara, Mashadi M.,
Bamateinu; 1961

Sof ha-'olam

("End of the World"), by Shamir, Moshe, Bamateinu; 1962

Ta'alulei 'eza

("Escapades of a She-Goat"), by Kipnis, Levin; KTACT,
1945;

Ta'anit esther

("Fast of Esther"), by Ribsman, Y., Ha'aretz, March 25,
1921

Tavas ha-zahav

("The Golden Peacock"), by Anochi, Z.I., Knesset, No.
1, Tel Aviv, 1925

Tom Thumb, Orland, Harris, NTCY; 1971

Trumpeldor ha-qatan

("Young Trumpeldor"), by Kadesh, Shlomo; 'Itonneinu,
February, 1937, Year 5, No. 18,

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