DIRECTOR’S REPORT
Optimism and Generosity of Spirit

M y grandfather (z”l) spent the duration of World War II separated from his wife and children while they fled Nazi-dominated Europe. He had left them in Strasbourg, France, to attend the World’s Fair in New York City in 1939, hoping to determine whether to try to bring his successful rag business to American shores. Through some combination of prescience and paranoia, he had the good sense to stay in the United States—not realizing, of course, that he wouldn’t see his family again for years. I imagine that during that time, he dreamt about them often.

My grandmother, Dora Schweber, kept her kids safe and cared for through their extended odyssey—from Strasbourg to Vichy, Marseilles through Spain, Portugal and eventually to a displaced persons camp in Cuba where my father learned English from a single volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Miraculously, during that time, my grandmother somehow endowed her two children with the sense of being deeply loved despite the fact that they were literally hunted. I don’t know how she did that—but rather than ending up bitter or angry at all that was lost, she ended up a very “classy lady” as my father describes her. She had an expression—and she applied it liberally. Whenever she was asked about who was to blame—for tragedies, for spilled milk, really for almost anything—she would say in her distinctive Yiddish/French/German accent: “I blame circumstance.”

In a way, this position allowed her to live through harrowing times without harboring resentment, without developing the crushing bitterness that hardens some of us, sometimes beyond repair. It was her way, I think, of seeing the good, embracing the good, and thereby creating good in the world. An old Yiddish saying goes, Oy, s’iz shver tsu zayn a Yid, (Oy, it’s tough to be a Jew). My sense is that my grandmother, despite knowing just how tough it was to be a Jew, somehow didn’t let the tough realities quash her optimism or narrow her generosity of spirit.

In these times of new challenges and compelling toughness, the Center for Jewish Studies remains a place for students to learn about the world, to make sense of violence, and to try to find ways to foster the good. In this sometimes hard work, I wish us all continued optimism and generosity of spirit.

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“Performing the Jewish Archive”: The Unsilencing of Jewish Musicians

BY MELISSA MILLER

What if a suitcase tucked away at the back of your closet held the key to a lost musical world? How can a once-vibrant tradition of Jewish music-making, silenced in the twentieth century by displacement and war, inspire audiences today? The research of Teryl Dobbs, Jewish Studies affiliate faculty and Chair of Music Education at UW-Madison, aims to revive this forgotten artistic past with modern audiences. Alongside an international research team, Dobbs has received a $2.5 million grant from the United Kingdom’s Arts and Humanities Research Council to perform rediscovered musical, dramatic and literary works by Jewish artists.

The grant, titled “Performing the Jewish Archive,” funds five international performance festivals, two of which are based in Madison, the only U.S site chosen for the project. The first took place on August 30, 2015, and the second will take place on May 2-5, 2016. Works performed will include chamber music by the Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society, as well as klezmer tunes and cabaret theater.

The August chamber music concert featured works by several Holocaust-era Jewish composers, among them Erwin Schulhoff and Dick Kattenburg both of whom were murdered in Auschwitz. Their lively and joyful compositions contrast starkly with their tragic fates. As Stephanie Jutt, Professor of Flute at UW-Madison and one of the musicians who played at the August concert, notes, these men were “early crossover artists” who wove the dynamic themes of American jazz into their classical works.

The May festival will focus on young people’s music-making, bringing to life the grant’s central theme, Care for the Future: Thinking Forward Through the Past. This theme is particularly close to Dobbs’ heart, as her research focuses on children’s musical experiences. A highlight of the concert will be a piano sonata by a 12-year-old Polish Jewish girl named Josima Feldschuh. The daughter of a composer, Josima performed in the Warsaw ghetto, dying of Tuberculosis just a few weeks after being smuggled to the Aryan side. Now, more than a half-century later, her work has been unearthed by musicologists at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Thanks to these efforts, Feldschuh’s musical legacy will be heard not only in Madison, but also at the other festival sites: Leeds, England and Terezin, in the Czech Republic. The May performance in Madison will include local groups such as the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Madison Youth Choir. As Dobbs explains, participating in this concert will encourage these young people not only to learn this music, but to “consider their own place” in musical history.

Ultimately, the investigators on the project expect these performances to spur on the discovery of more treasures. Dobbs says that she hopes audience members will be moved to search for trunks of music and other artistic works in their own attics and continue to bring forgotten Jewish art to light.

The performances mentioned above are free and open to the public. For more information see: www.music.wisc.edu/performing-the-jewish-archive
A Tribute to the Late Stanley Kutler

BY JUDITH SONE

Stanley Kutler was a staunch supporter of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies. An early enthusiast for establishing the Center, he and his wife Sandra sponsored a yearly lecture in American Jewish History once the Center was founded. These lectures have taken place every year since 1996.

An acclaimed constitutional scholar, Professor Kutler taught at the University of Wisconsin–Madison for 32 years until he retired in 1996. Obituaries in the Washington Post, LA times, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and on the University of Wisconsin website chronicle Stan’s life and career as a scholar and historian, particularly his efforts to secure the release of Nixon’s secret White House tape-recordings.

Kutler’s courses at UW-Madison are legendary for their incisiveness and entertainment. His introduction of Jewish immigration as a topic within his American History courses was well ahead of his time. Hasia Diner, his student in the 1960’s and currently the Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University, recalls that experience precisely: “It was amazing to learn about Jewish immigration in an American History course. That which I considered to be my personal story—my parents were after all immigrants—was not something marginal but central to the larger narrative. It was eye-opening for me.”

What struck Hasia Diner as a college sophomore in a typically huge undergraduate survey course was how much Professor Kutler enjoyed what he was doing. “Watching him made it seem as though being a college professor was fun. He was a real contrast to some of the stiff, dour, and more formal professors.”

In her junior year, Hasia worked for Kutler as a research assistant. Stan sent her to the State Historical Society, to conduct nuts-and-bolts historical research, which she turned out to love. “He let me know that this [work] was basically a puzzle to figure out, an act of detection, like in a mystery novel. He made it both important and enjoyable.” Hasia adds that in the middle of that year she needed some money and applied for a loan from the Wisconsin credit union. She recalls, “I built up my nerve and asked him if he would co-sign it for me, as I needed an adult. He said yes, but in a typically Stan-Kutler manner threatened that he would kill me if I did not repay it.”

Tony Michels, the George Mosse Professor of American Jewish History at UW-Madison has organized the Kutler lectures for the last 16 years with Stan’s help. Over Indian food, Stan and Tony would meet and talk about...
I write with the terribly sad news that Professor Claudia Card passed away on September 12, 2015. Professor Card was a longtime Center for Jewish Studies faculty member and the Emma Goldman Professor of Philosophy. She was a delight to have as a colleague, she was a serious thinker and academic, and she was a fabulous friend. She will be missed at this campus but well remembered by the generations of students she taught and mentored.

Claudia, as we knew her at the Center, grew up in Pardeeville, Wisconsin and attended UW-Madison as an undergraduate. She earned her MA and PhD degrees from Harvard University, studying under John Rawls. She became a professor at UW–Madison when she graduated in 1969 and remained here throughout her illustrious career. A pioneer of feminist thought, lesbian philosophy, and environmental ethics, Claudia’s work ranged from investigations into the nature of evil to the tyrannical forms of global misogyny. She was a fierce advocate for the underrepresented and oppressed, and she was unafraid of opposing injustice wherever she saw it, not only in the classroom, but also in faculty meetings and the world beyond campus. Over the course of her career, Claudia wrote more than 6 books, the last of which was to be the second in a trilogy devoted to investigations of harm, evil and culpability. The last book, which was to have focused on the legacies of atrocity, has been left unfinished.

There is a saying from Ethics of the Fathers—the title of which I’m sure Claudia would remind me suffers from a distinct lack of inclusivity—that it is not your responsibility to finish the work of making the world better, but that neither are you free to desist from doing that work. Claudia’s life was dedicated to making this world a better place.

She died from lung cancer that had metastasized to her brain. She was surrounded by friends and family who loved her, and she leaves behind the legacies of a great mind and an impressive life well lived. May we help, each in our own way, to extend the vital work of her life, and may her memory be for a blessing.
The Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies is delighted to welcome Amos Bitzan to the University of Wisconsin-Madison this fall as the new Frances and Laurence Weinstein (Assistant) Professor of Modern European Jewish History.

Before coming to the University of Wisconsin, Professor Bitzan was a research fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania for the academic year 2014-2015. He began and completed an article there that challenges current understandings of the origins of academic Jewish studies in 19th-century Germany and has recently been accepted for publication by the Journal of the History of Ideas. Dr. Bitzan also presented papers at the University of Pennsylvania’s Gruss Colloquium on “Doing Wissenschaft: The Academic Study of Judaism as Practice 1818–2018” and at a conference on “The Rise of Nationalism and the Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literary Imagination” at Yale University.

Professor Bitzan’s current research project centers on the early intellectual formation of the Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891). He argues that Graetz’s discovery of the pleasures of reading literature as a young yeshiva student led him to a particular vision of how one ought to understand the history of the Jews: with heart and mind fully engaged. Bitzan became interested in why nineteenth-century German Jewish intellectuals considered the process and content of reading as supremely important. For example, most believed that reading the right kinds of books with the proper sorts of sentimental and cognitive attentiveness was crucial for the cultivation of the individual. At the same time, they cast other types of reading, such as some forms of Talmudic and halakhic (Jewish legal) study, as intellectually and morally harmful. Graetz aimed to challenge the religious culture of legally-oriented textual study by proposing one based on the reading of narrative.

Bitzan was attracted to his topic by the mesmerizing accounts Graetz and other nineteenth-century intellectuals recorded in their diaries, memoirs, and letters. He got hooked by the detective work of explaining obscure references, tracking down links among various writers, and tracing the footsteps of protagonists by researching the towns, institutions, and bookshops they frequented. Bitzan hopes his students also come away with a passion (or at least a liking) for the discipline of history, noting that, although historians often disagree on the causes of a particular event and sometimes even on what happened, they share a commitment to transparent analysis of the sources and to understanding past individuals, cultures, and societies on their own terms.

As a scholar in the field of Jewish studies, Bitzan hopes that his students will become familiar with the great insights into major human questions that Jewish thinkers and cultures have produced since antiquity. Studying the experiences of Jews in different regions, states, and societies, also sheds light on the larger histories of those times and places.
From New York I have been reading articles in the press and via Facebook about the changes in the works at “my” University of Wisconsin, changes in both the level of state funding and the vision of what the University ought to stand for. I am a title chair professor at New York University in the Department of History and the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies. I have published nearly a dozen books in the fields of American Jewish history, American immigration history, and American women’s history. I lecture on these fields across the country and around the world. And, I owe this all to the University of Wisconsin of the 1960s.

I came to Madison truly poor. A scholarship student (including from the Wisconsin Society for Jewish Learning which paid me a stipend of $100 for every Hebrew course I took), I survived in part by an endless string of part-time jobs, but mostly as a result of the low tuition, which made it possible for someone with basically no family support to graduate college. The University of Wisconsin–Madison was for me not just a set of courses which prepared me for a job, but an intellectual cornucopia which opened my mind to ideas, subjects, ways of thinking, and world cultures; it transformed me. I studied with great professors, I took courses across the spectrum of the humanities and social sciences and I interacted with students utterly different from myself. Some of these new acquaintances came from farms and small towns in Wisconsin and their outlooks made me understand myself, the daughter of a poor Hebrew teacher in Milwaukee, in ways I had never realized before. I also met peers from New York and California who had been to the theater, to the opera, talked about MOMA and the Guggenheim, and Greenwich Village and Malibu and they, too, helped me understand myself.

The State of Wisconsin enabled me not just to enjoy myself in a politically and culturally vibrant place, but because of the high level of state subsidy and the commitment to making the university an institution of truly higher learning, I acquired the tools that allowed me to develop as a scholar and as a person. I hope that the next generation of young people of limited means will be able to say that about “their” University of Wisconsin, too.
Save the date:

**Greenfield Summer Institute**

July 10–14, 2016  
Registration required

Complete information about our events is available at [jewishstudies.wisc.edu](http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu)