



Program in Jewish Studies at Rice University

Issue 6 • 2013

From the Director

As I write these lines, the academic year 2012/13 is drawing rapidly to an end, and the excitement about the commencement celebrations is palpable everywhere! We have three students this year who are graduating with a Minor in Jewish Studies: Louise Bentsen, Hannah Bosley, and Eli Spector. Hannah will also be this year's recipient of the Morris and Shirley Rapoport Prize in Jewish Studies. Accolades are also in order for our faculty. Dr. Shira Lander, Anna Smith Fine Senior Lecturer in Jewish Studies, is this year's winner of the Sarofim Teaching Prize in the humanities. Congratulations to all!

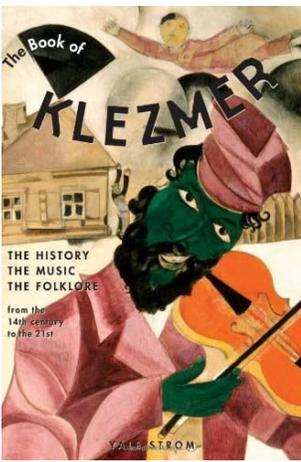


Next year promises to be a very good year, too. Dr. Melissa Weininger, who is finishing her term as our postdoctoral fellow, will move to the Center for the Study of Languages to become our new Modern Hebrew instructor. The Stanford and Joan Alexander Foundation has kindly given us a grant to bring a new postdoctoral fellow to Rice in 2013/14. We have interviewed a large international pool of applicants and are very excited about our new junior colleague next year.

As always, I invite you to become part of the Program in Jewish Studies at Rice. I hope to see you at one of our many lectures and seminars. Please keep in touch.

Warm regards,
Matthias Henze

Workshop with Klezmer Scholar



Students, faculty, and staff gathered over lunch to hear Klezmer authority Yale Strom discuss his work in Eastern Europe as a musician and musicologist. Strom regaled the audience with stories of travel and meetings with Roma musicians where he transcribed melodies and played impromptu concerts with his hosts. Strom painted a picture of cooperation between Klezmer and Roma musicians, of a shared musical vocabulary, of rich cultural exchange, and of mutual admiration for each other's musical techniques and traditions. Strom demonstrated his observations with violin performances, which transported listeners to the lost world of the European *shtetl*. The program was made possible by Houston Hillel, Gloria and Joe Pryzant, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston in partnership with the Barish Family/Chair King.

Hannah Bosley '13 Receives Rapoport Commencement Award

The Morris and Shirley Rapoport Award in Jewish Studies is given to a Rice undergraduate student who has demonstrated exemplary achievement and dedication in Jewish Studies courses over his or her undergraduate career. This year's award winner, Hannah Bosley, is double majoring in Psychology and Linguistics and minoring in Jewish Studies. Hannah has submitted outstanding work in the field of Jewish Studies and has shown a commitment to integrate the study of Jews and Judaism into her major area of study, in keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the minor in Jewish Studies. From Tyler, Texas, Hannah plans to spend next year in Israel.



Save the dates!

In conjunction with the exhibit *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Dr. Henze will deliver a lecture entitled "Cyrus, the Anointed of the Lord: The Cyrus Cylinder and the Bible" on **Sunday, May 19, at 3 p.m.** in the Brown Auditorium Theater, The Caroline Wiess Law Building.

On **Friday, May 10 at 7:35am and 4:45pm**, Dr. Weininger will air an episode of the KUHf series "Engines of our Ingenuity" on Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the revival of modern Hebrew. If you miss this brief segment, you can link to the archived version from the Jewish Studies website.

Hebrew Through Hoummus

Next year, Rice will offer two levels of Hebrew instruction: *Introductory Modern Hebrew* and *Advanced Modern Hebrew*. The introductory class will build students' knowledge of the language from the ground up, beginning with the characters of and including basic grammar, with an emphasis on conversational skills. Advanced students who already have mastered the fundamentals of the language will develop proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing Modern Hebrew through immersion in Israeli culture. By reading newspapers and literature, listening to and singing popular music, and watching contemporary films, students will expand their Hebrew skills while also learning about Israeli culture. Both classes will be taught by Dr. Melissa Weininger, postdoctoral fellow emerita.



Student Reflection: My Study of Holocaust Commemoration, Part II

This is a continuation of the story printed in the Fall 2012 (Issue 5) Program Newsletter.

I spent the second half of my travels in Berlin and Munich, Germany to investigate the Holocaust memorialization within each city as well as the concentration camps of Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau.

The most effective form of Holocaust memorialization in Germany began illegally by a man in Cologne. The man removed a cobblestone from a sidewalk and replaced it with a metal block engraved with the name of a Holocaust victim, his dates of birth and death and to where he was deported. There are now 30,000 *stolpersteine* (stumbling blocks) in the world and 3,000 in Berlin alone. These *stolpersteine* epitomize Germany's approach to Holocaust memorialization: low-key yet powerful.

I then visited Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen. Ravensbrück was a women's concentration camp and most of the prisoners were German women dubbed "asocials." The camp was razed, so in lieu of foundations, the memorial-museum laid black gravel and created shallow depressions to evoke the former sites of the barracks and remind visitors of the voids left by the deaths of the women prisoners. Each cell of the jail block has been dedicated to one of the nations from which the prisoners originated, including Albania, Greece, Belgium and Spain.

Sachsenhausen was a Holocaust concentration camp from 1936 to 1945, but from 1945 to 1950 it was the largest special labor camp used by the NKVD Soviet Secret Service. Sachsenhausen's permanent exhibition, "From Memory to Monument," was inaugurated in 1961. One information plaque discussed a monument made by Hans Eickworth. The original monument had a red triangle on top and a relief of a Soviet soldier holding a liberated prisoner in his arms but was re-worked in 1955 to leave only the red triangle. This re-done monument highlights the motivation behind memorialization and the controversy behind depiction. Like Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald became a Soviet special camp from 1945-50, although it was not as well-maintained; what remained of Buchenwald was only foundations, overgrown with flora, distinguishing it from all the other camps I had seen.

The final stop of my trip was Munich, Germany. I found Munich's memorialization sub-par in comparison to that of the other cities I visited. I saw only one memorial dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust; the rest commemorated German citizens. Dachau is 25 minutes from Munich. Near the entrance of the camp is a large black sculpture erected in 1968 is meant to symbolize the depth of hopelessness, depicting the disfigured bodies of the prisoners who threw themselves onto the 10,000 volt fences. On one side of the memorial is a sculpture of the different colored symbols prisoners had to wear as patches. To the other side of the memorial is a vessel with the ashes of the "unknown prisoner" (evoking the "tomb of the unknown soldier"). My tour guide said these ashes make this site a cemetery, and by law, once a site is a cemetery it is always a cemetery and must be



Farrah Madanay '13 was a 2013 recipient of the Desirée and Max Blankfeld Fellowship

maintained. These ashes are thus the insurance policy that Dachau, as well as many other camps, will not be destroyed. Above the ashes is a sign with the words "Never Again" in Yiddish, French, English, German and Russian.

My upcoming plan is to use what I have learned from my travels to create a public blog. This blog titled, "The English speaker's guide to visiting seven Holocaust concentration camps," will hopefully serve as a tool to help others who would like to tour the concentration camps, but are experiencing difficulties figuring out how to visit the camps and what the camps entail.

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Professor of Religious Studies

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