In Spring of 2014, history Prof. Gillian Weiss initiated the Jew@CWRU project to uncover the historical role of Jewish students, faculty and administrators in the physical infrastructure, social movements and intellectual life of CWRU from the founding of its constituent parts to the present. Since evidence of Jews at CWRU over the past century and a half is hard to secure and verify, the study plans to produce and disseminate knowledge through an interactive website, publications, exhibitions and talks.

In a first phase, sponsored by the Program in Judaic Studies (JDST), history PhD student Elise Hagesfeld conducted a semester-long survey of available materials. She discovered a wealth of documentary evidence about the historical role of Jews at CWRU, residing in multiple collections in and around University Circle and beyond. She found, for example, that in the 1800s, Jewish men barred from Cleveland social clubs established their own. The Excelsior Club, dedicated to the pursuit of “enlightened social and literary pleasure,” occupied what is now the Thwing Center, at CWRU, although no plaque on any wall, nor any mention in university literature, acknowledge the structure’s former function.

In a second phase, supported by the Freedman Fellows Program, Dr. Weiss, Ms. Hagesfeld and two undergraduate assistants, Francesca Langer and Daniel Robbins have delved into the archives. Their focus is on 1967-1973, years that saw the federation of the university and the mobilization of the campus in response to wars in the Middle East and South Asia and to the civil rights and women’s movements in the United States. To what extent was “the American Jew . . . at the forefront of the youth movement today,” as a CWRU senior declared in 1968?

Certainly, numerous protagonists on different sides of the drama that played out at CWRU were openly Jewish. A refugee from Vienna, physics professor Paul Zilsel, for example, protested what he viewed as administrative complicity in a racially biased death sentence against a Cleveland man, by leading a 1969 sit-in at the office of the provost. The man whose office he occupied, meanwhile, was social work pioneer Hermann Stein, alumnus of the Borscht Belt circuit and the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Student newspapers, administrative records and various ephemera also reveal the Cleveland Hillel of this period as “tuned to the activist spirit,” in the words of director Benjamin Marcus. During Vietnam and before Roe v. Wade, it hosted draft counseling and abortion consultation services. Through the Free Jewish University, it offered mini-courses with titles like “Conscientious Objection and the Jew” and “The New Jews: Activists and Militants.” Starting in 1970, it operated a late night coffee house called the Rap Cellar, which appears to have been a regular hangout for student activists.

A talk about the “Jew@CWRU: 1967-1973” is scheduled for April 6, 12-1:30pm at the Kelvin Smith Library with an exhibit to follow next October. A competitive undergraduate research fellowship will begin this summer. Contact from alumni who wish to contribute information to the project is most welcome!

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In 1846, Adolphe Sax submitted a patent for a new wind instrument with a conical bore; the saxophone. Sax’s instrument was designed to combine the projection and body of a brass instrument with a timbre suitable for blending with strings (Cottrell). In modern times, the saxophone has become a fixture in wind bands, jazz ensembles, and orchestral arrangements, but the instrument’s path to relevancy was not without obstacles. It faced considerable resistance when Nazi Germany and its propaganda machine set out to silence the music, the players, and the culture surrounding the instrument.

Saxophone pieces were at first written for virtuoso soloists, who were gaining attention across Europe at the turn of the 20th century. By the 1930’s, the growing popularity of jazz—with its roots in African spirituals and American folksongs—was influencing musicians to employ key jazz elements like African syncopation, to create a swing or dance feel. But at the same time, Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda, asserted that music should draw only from “the masters of the past” (Dennis 2012); that is, from great German Romantics like Strauss and Wagner, whose music he deemed suitable to the Third Reich (Hirsch). Jazz itself was “sexualized” in German art and performance (Kater), and was associated with eroticism, rather than the Romanticism of historical German musicians. In 1933, Richard Strauss, who had orchestrated for saxophone in 1903, condemned its use, largely due to the instrument’s association with jazz (Zumwalt). The flood of works for saxophone by European composers such as Glazunov and Ibert, and by composers living in Germany such as Schulhoff and Schoenberg, dried up abruptly after 1933. By and large, composers who had once experimented with the saxophone now avoided it entirely.

As anti-Semitism grew within the Third Reich, the music of many saxophone-friendly Jewish composers was banned. This included the operatic works of composer Alban Berg, who was not Jewish himself, but was blacklisted for his connection to Jewish composer Arnold Schoenberg (Bell). Similarly, Paul Hindemith was driven from Germany after his music was banned, due in part to his relationship with Schoenberg (Zumwalt). Performers, too, were affected by the Nazis’ policies, including one of the most virtuosic saxophonists of all time, German-born Sigurd Rascher. Rascher fled Germany as the once-vibrant musical culture of his country was dulled by the Nazi cultural agenda (Cottrell).

In 1938 Goebbels made a muscular effort to draw the public away from the saxophone through an exhibition in Düsseldorf, titled Entartete Musik, or “Degenerate Music” (Cottrell). Entartete Musik was modeled after his previous exhibition condemning certain artworks as Entartete Kunst, or “Degenerate Art.” In these exhibitions selected art or music was displayed haphazardly with degrading captions and annotations, instructing the public to avoid and distrust artistic creations deemed inferior, particularly works by Jews and persons of color. In fact, the advertising poster for the Entartete Musik exhibition featured a grotesque caricature of a black musician playing a saxophone, with a Jewish Star of David affixed to his jacket. By associating the saxophone with alleged “inferior races,” Entartete Musik formally vilified the instrument, and the music culture surrounding it.

None of these actions, however, prevented jazz from being wildly popular in German dance halls (Kater). Although Germans were supposed
to be dancing to waltz music written by Strauss, Brahms, Wagner, or other Romantic German composers, they were dancing to ragtime and swing music instead. It was enjoyed so much that by the 1930's the distinguished Hock Conservatory had added coursework on Jazz Studies, including for the saxophone (Cottrell). In Jazz Studies the focus is primarily on improvisation, a technique in direct conflict with the “Ten Principles” of German music, as decreed by Goebbels at Düsseldorf (Dennis). Ongoing public affection for this new dance music was so detrimental to Goebbels' cultural agenda, it sparked outrage in Nazi sympathizers, including some SS officers who banned use of the instrument, and even removed saxophones from players' mouths in the dance halls (Cottrell). But these efforts had no effect on the music's popularity.

Unable to curb public enthusiasm for jazz, the Nazi regime set out to replace it. Thus, Goebbels and his cohorts sponsored a national contest to introduce “New German Dance Music” (Neue Deutsche Tanzmusik), but the effort failed miserably (Kater). The propaganda machine responded to this defeat with an about-face, trying to take credit for the invention of the instrument. In a publication called “Rescuing the Honour of the Saxophone,” Nazi propaganda claimed that the instrument was “an invention of Adolf [sic] Sax, born November 6, 1814” (Cottrell). The Germanic spelling of Adolphe Sax’s first name was a sly attempt to identify the inventor as German, and credit Germany for the instrument. Adolphe Sax was in fact Belgian, and the saxophone had no roots whatsoever in German music history. Unfortunately for the Nazi party, this attempt at propaganda also failed, and the spelling of Sax’s name was later corrected (Cottrell).

Having exhausted all methods of discrediting the saxophone, the Nazi propaganda machine was finally vanquished by popular affection for the instrument, especially in jazz. Widespread and unflattering appreciation for saxophone music was too difficult for the Nazis to combat. Attempts to vilify composers and musicians, to create a German substitute for jazz, and to take credit for the invention of the saxophone, ended in utter failure. After the war, the instrument continued to flourish both classically and in jazz. Thus, the saxophone maintained relevance throughout World War II, and emerged post-war as an important fixture in contemporary music, outliving the Nazi attempt to silence it.

References Cited


In fall semester 2015, in conjunction with CWRU’s Violins of Hope program, Profs. Daniel Goldmark and Jay Geller taught a unique course on The Holocaust and the Arts (JDST 326). Students examined the ways that music, literature, painting, film and architecture were part of the Holocaust experience, and the ways they have been used to remember and commemorate the Holocaust.

In addition, the interdisciplinary course featured two field trips; to the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage to see the violins that form the core of the Violins of Hope program, and to the Holocaust Memorial Center near Detroit, to examine how museums in America narrate the Holocaust.

Highlights of the course included class visits by some of the most renowned scholars in their fields. Bret Werb, musicologist at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gave students an audio-visual overview of music during and about the Holocaust. Comparative Literature scholar Sara Horowitz of York University led a seminar discussion on poetry written during and after the Holocaust by those who witnessed it. Finally, two-time Oscar-winning filmmaker Malcolm Clarke screened one of his films and led a seminar discussion on the challenges and inspirations he faced in making documentaries about the Holocaust.
IN MEMORIAM

James W. Flanagan
(1935-2015)

Father James W. Flanagan came to CWRU in 1986 as the Paul J. Hallinan Visiting Professor of Catholic Studies, and was appointed Professor of Religion here in 1991. He was Chair of the Department of Religious Studies from 1998-2000, and became Professor Emeritus in 2002. He was best known for his archaeological excavations, including at Tel Gezer in Israel, and for scholarly documentation on the early Internet. Jim died on Sept. 1, 2015 at his home in Iowa. He was a pioneer in anthropology of the Bible and the Ancient Near East, and was a mentor to many of the current academicians who now carry his work forward.

New Publication

Prof. Judith Neulander’s essay “Conjuring Crypto-Jews in New Mexico: violating ethnic, scholarly and ethical boundaries” has been published in a new book by Routledge: Boundaries, Identity and Belonging in Modern Judaism, eds., Maria Diemling and Larry Ray (2015). The book is scheduled for review by SHOFAR, an interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies, and is available at KSL.

Happy Winter Break!
From the JDST eJournal
Courses of Interest for Spring 2016

INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH FOLKLORE
JDST/RLGN/ANTH 233
Judith Neulander

Folklore is the world’s most powerful vehicle of cultural expression, vital to the continuity of group identity. Tradition and transformation in Jewish myth and magic, festival and foodways, folktales, art, music and more, will give us access to the spirit and mentality of the many different peoples who have carried these traditions, from remote Middle Eastern antiquity, to modern times in Israel and the U.S.A. Over time and across space we will follow Jewish folklore as it shapes, and is shaped by, the vast expanse of western history and civilization.

HEBREW
HEBR 102 – Elementary Modern II
HEBR 202 – Intermediate Modern II
HEBR 302 – Advanced Modern II
Yoram Daon

Leap into the time of an ancient civilization that gave the world the Bible. Step back into our class and confront a vibrant, living, constantly developing language. Imagine those who once spoke the same language, wrote the same script, read the same vowels, and time becomes irrelevant. Ancient? Mysterious? Romantic? Modern? Magical? Immortal? Yes—modern Hebrew is all that, and more!

For courses in Hebrew and Arabic visit the Modern Languages and Literatures website:
http://www.case.edu/artsci/dmll/
A sampling of titles for final research papers in The Jewish Image in Popular Film JDST 228, reflects the diversity of interests in a typical JDST/RLGN classroom.

Sampling of Final Paper Titles

Poking Fun at ‘Private Benjamin’: Creating Social Distance from the Butt of the Joke
Adam Gleichsner

American Film History: A Chronicle of Jewish Heritage
Woosuk Jeong

Feminism In American-Jewish Film
Jenna Buchbinder

From Sophie Tucker to Bette Midler: ‘Funny Girls’ Who Changed the World
Brittany Stern

From Victim to Victor: Cinematic Evolution of the Holocaust Jew
Grace Piscura

Gender Stereotyping in American-Jewish Films
Christina Page

Intersection of Masculinity and Religious Preservation in Modern Jewish Cinema
James Dolgin

The Film ‘Holy Rollers’ and the Roots of Jewish Criminality on Screen
Ruby Katz

From ‘Seinfeld’ to ‘Sex and the City’: A Modern Representation of Jewish-ness In the Media
Sarah Lisk

The Many Faces of Gene Wilder: A Jewish Presence in American Film
Alex Dominish
By bringing a variety of fields and disciplines to bear on its subject, the Judaic Studies Program at Case Western Reserve University conveys to students the complex interaction of forces that create Jewish ethnic identity. Students completing the program will have a broad knowledge of the field along with the tools necessary for continued academic study of Jewish civilization in all its manifestations.

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Guest Speakers, The Holocaust and the Arts, JDST 326, fall 2015