

David G. Roskies

IN COMMEMORATION OF SPRING

A tradition has been created at Brandeis University over the past four years. It began very modestly as a fifty-minute Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration Program, grew into a full-length play entitled "Hineni" (1967) and was further expanded into a two hour theatrical experiment entitled "Laughter" (1968). These programs were prompted by the desire to update the standard community commemoration programs (Yizker-ovntn) for a generation that did not live through the camps nor had any conception whatsoever of mass murder. The problem of this generation is that not knowing Yiddish or Hebrew (for the most part), it is intellectually and emotionally cut off from the cultural heritage of Eastern European Jewry and thus, from its destruction. ^(the Holocaust) Any Yizker geared to them cannot assume previous knowledge and must "tell the tale" from the beginning.

Four years ago we limited ourselves to presenting a simple narrative of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, interspersed with a few songs and poems of the ghettos. The next year we decided to exploit the theatrical medium ~~to the fullest~~, not only by presenting a play--on the Vilna Ghetto--but also by ^{in Poland} utilizing ^{using} slides, color film and live music. This was found to be extremely effective.

This year a ^{triangular} three-^{night} part program will be presented in ^{the University's} Berlin Chapel in an attempt to combine the setting of ^(ceremonial) ritual observance with dramatic ritual. Each night ^{will} has a different theatrical form and may be viewed independently of the others, although ~~all~~ together they are intended to form one conceptual unit.

The first night (Friday, April 18) will be subdued, ^{implicit} ^{simple and} and at times--complex. It is called "In the depths: an evening of parables." The title is more or less self-explnatory. A series

of five ^{anonymous} original parables will be presented by several readers, with the inclusion of Yiddish songs. The second program (Saturday, April 19) is entitled "Of the dark night: an evening of dreams." Here ~~all the~~ mixed media will be used to highlight and to juxtapose the "live" action. The cast will create a variety of roles: Carpenter, Poet, Dreamer, Orator, ^{Prophet} and Philosopher. ^{Literary excerpts} The material ^{have been} used is culled from various sources ranging from the literature of the Holocaust ^{to} and philosophical works to contemporary fiction and poetry. The third night (Sunday, April 20), entitled "There is laughter: an evening of truths" is perhaps the most experimental. It will be presented in the form of a cabaret, in a fast-moving Brechtian style. The names of the characters suggest the dramatic ^{approach} possibilities: M.C., Comic, Midget, Magician, Acrobat and Chanteuse. Here, folk songs, original ballads and symphonic music will be used.

There will, of course, be no admission charge. Each program will begin at 8:30 sharp and outside ^{all} visitors are urged to come early, since seating room in the Chapel is limited, ~~to 200~~.

- 1) contexts & materials used
- 2) interrelate of 3 nights:
telling the tale
laughter
"Magick" & Prophecy
Metaphor as an alternative to liturgy
- 3) description of film & slides
- 4) the question of silence
- 5) last year was presented week of ML King's assassination