

Saratoga Jewish Community Arts,
sponsored by the Jewish Federation of NENY, and Temple Sinai
Present
A panel discussion
of the documentary, *Orchestra of Exile*



Saratoga Jewish Community Arts and Temple Sinai, with a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York, presents a discussion of *Orchestra of Exiles*, the little-known story of Jewish musicians who were transported to Palestine in the 1930s when Nazism was escalating in power.

Orchestra of Exiles, a 2012 documentary, written, produced, and directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Josh Aronson, tells this well-hidden tale of the founding, in 1936, of what would become the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Bronislaw Huberman (1882 – 1947), a Polish-Jewish violin prodigy, saved more than 1,000 Jews in the process.

Huberman, utterly absorbed by music, began performing at 12 and was soon supporting his family. WWI politicized Huberman. He did not consider Nazism a passing fad. When Jewish musicians were banned from teaching, studying, and performing with or for non-Jews, Huberman, who had performed about 12 concerts in Palestine, began making plans to relocate the finest Jewish players there.

The obstacles present in moving that many people that far away would be difficult enough, but shaping them into a world-class orchestra, set very prominently in the public eye, makes the whole endeavor that much more unbelievable.

History may be full of inventive people turning unexpected hardship into great success, but not many can claim that they responded to the rise of a dictatorial state by creating a national arts institution halfway around the world. Huberman was a Jew saving a Jew. A very special breed. It gives a real sense of what Zionism was about, the passion for it, and the way that people felt in those days of a Jewish homeland.

Though generous with time and money, Huberman left no public statues, no foundations for young performers, and no legacy of teaching. The Israeli Philharmonic is his monument - and this documentary.

Panel

Josh Aronson, Director of Orchestra of Exiles - After starting his career as a still photographer for Time Life, Aronson began directing tv films and commercials. Through Aronson Films, he directed MTV videos, tv pilots and specials and over 500 commercials before turning to documentaries in 1999. Since then, Aronson has made award winning documentaries on a fascinating variety of topics. He is also a concert pianist and regularly plays chamber music in NY and at the Telluride Musicfest, the chamber music festival he founded in 2002 with his wife violinist Maria Bachmann. Aronson has produced at least a dozen film documentaries, each on a powerful area of human experience.

Lollie Abramson retired as coordinator of Jewish Student Life at Skidmore College in 2017. She worked closely with Skidmore Hillel, as well as with the Saratoga Jewish community, to bring a variety of Jewish themed programs to Skidmore and help make an active Jewish campus. Lollie previously worked for 32 years as a Public Educator for NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities where she developed and implemented programs with the goal of increased understanding and acceptance of people who have disabilities. She has taught people of all ages. Her career had been promoting a message of mutual respect and positive interactions between people of different backgrounds and faiths. Lollie lives locally and is a member of Temple Sinai in Saratoga Springs. She has been on the Schuylerville Planning Board, a Girl Scout leader, worked as an admissions interviewer at Skidmore, and is also an avid gardener. She now enjoys time with her two grandchildren. Lollie received a BS from the University of Connecticut in Education and an MS in Recreation Therapy from Long Island University.

Judith Ehrenshaft is the daughter of Holocaust survivors. Her mother, one of 11 children, was sent from her hometown, Uzghorod (today, a part of the Ukraine) to do hard labor in Hamburg, Germany. Auschwitz followed, then Bergen Belsen where she was liberated in April 1945 by the British forces. Her father's family fled in 1933 from Breslau to Prague. He was deported to Terezin, followed by the Lodz Ghetto. He was then sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen and Mathausen, hard labor in Leonberg, Death March, Auschwitz, and finally to Dachau where he was liberated at the end of April 1945 by the U.S. Army. In 1965, during the height of the cold war, Judith's parents decided to emigrate to America. Unfortunately, her dad died one week before departure. Judith and her mother fulfilled her father's dream and left Prague for New York with \$25, without knowing a word of English. Her mother found a job in New York's garment center and Judith went to school. She later held positions in the USA and Europe. Judith's family's devotion to Judaism in post-war communist Prague trumped the scrutiny and surveillance by government agencies. Judith came to Saratoga Springs more than twelve years ago with a strong Jewish background, but she still did not imagine how connected she would become to the community of people of Congregation Shaara Tfilla. Judith said, "Some judge their lives by who they are, others by what they do. Mine has been enriched by having the opportunity to serve as my congregation's President for the last five years. My parent's example drives me to continue to build a thriving and vibrant Saratoga Springs' Jewish community, not only for my grandchildren, but for generations to come."

Steven A. Hoffmann has been a member of Temple Sinai for more than a quarter century. He retired in 2012 as a Professor of Government at Skidmore College after approximately 45 years of teaching. Steve holds a BA from SUNY Binghamton, and an MA and PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. He has published a book on the India-China border war of 1962, as well as numerous academic articles. He also spent much time as a visiting scholar at such research institutions as the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, and the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, India. Steve's nonprofessional interests range from classical music to film. He is husband to wife Cheryl and stepfather to her two sons. As of now, Cheryl and Steve have three grandchildren: Emma, Sammy, and Buddy.

Upcoming Programs:

Panel Discussion: Spike Lee's **Do the Right Thing**, Oct. 25, 7 p.m.

Panel Discussion: **G.I. Jews: Jewish Americans in World War II**, Nov. 10, 7 p.m.

Panel Discussion: **Bombshell: The Hedy LeMarr Story**, Dec. 6, 7 p.m.

Saratoga Jewish Community Arts founded by Temple Sinai is supported by a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Northeastern NY.

