California State University, Northridge

The Israeli Theatre of the Sixties

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Drama

by

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ABSTRACT

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The sixties were a period of proliferation of theatres in Israel. The theatres reflected the mood of the nation in their choice of repertoire and in the manner of production. They increased their educational effect on native-born as well as immigrants. Until about fifteen years ago, Israeli authors tended to deal with such local problems as resettlement of the land by pioneers, the struggle for independence and Biblical subjects. The improvement of playwriting skills was partially responsible for new scripts dealing with a wider range of themes, local subjects as well as universal.

In the sixties, the Israeli theatres also increased their repertoire by presenting more world drama, classic
and modern. They improved their professional standards in directing, playwriting, production, and technical subjects.

Directors from abroad contributed their varied experience and talents to the Israeli theatre and helped to improve its calibre. The influence of outstanding directors also had a negative aspect, probably the result of a lack of effective communication between them and the local professionals.

Drama critics and press increasingly took on an important role in theatre life of the sixties. Their influence has not yet approached that of critics in the United States.

The repertory theatres were unable to resolve their managerial and artistic problems because of poor financial support. As a result, the theatres endangered their artistic value and developed their quality slower than might otherwise have been the case.

The significant change in Israeli theatre was found especially in the three major repertory theatres: Habima, Ohel and Cameri and they will constitute our primary consideration.
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I. Introduction

The origin of the Hebrew theatre is bound up with the realization of the Zionist\textsuperscript{1} ideal in the first half of the twentieth century. The early Hebrew theatres, whether founded in Europe or on the soil of Palestine,\textsuperscript{2} were meant to be vehicles for the Hebrew language. They were a major instrument of the Jewish cultural renaissance, and their national significance went beyond the purely artistic.

At the beginning of this century, Hebrew was still the "holy tongue," a language employed mainly for liturgical purposes and for writing religious treatises. The Jewish settlers in Palestine of the period spoke Yiddish and Russian. Hebrew was used on festive occasions by rabbis and teachers. Those occasions included theatrical performances by pupils in the settlement schools.

The years following World War I were years of great issues for the world at large and for the Jewish people especially. The Jews saw in the revolution which convulsed Russia and in the liberation of other European peoples the signs of approaching Redemption. The Balfour Declaration, which then seemed finally to give international recognition to the right of the Jews to Palestine, was interpreted as a sign that their two-thousand year
exile was about to end. Against this background, Habima staged its biblical, prophetic plays and The Dybbuk by S. An-Ski, which was permeated with the mystique of freedom.

The War of Independence (1947) was reflected on the stages of Israel in plays which echoed the thunder of battles fought in the immediate vicinity of the theatre buildings.

The years following independence and mass immigration were colored by the people's desire to relax and recover from battle struggle and live as other people do. One symptom of this desire for normalcy was a thirst for entertainment at the expense of intellectual and emotional effort by presenting plays dealing with topical issues. The new generation, born in the twenties and thirties and matured in the War of Independence, asserted itself with a new brand of playwriting and possessed of a style of acting which was natural and direct. The new generation's impact was stronger in the field of light entertainment, where a new style emerged from the army entertainment units. Those units became the proving grounds for a number of highly gifted writers, directors, singers and actors.

As the sixties began, Israel entered a phase of growing prosperity. Its Jewish population had already passed the two million mark. Citizens of Near Eastern
origin constituted a majority and their relative numbers were growing. Their influence on the social and cultural life of the country still remained negligible. Western influences predominated. The theatre reflected the mood of the nation in its choice of repertoire and in the manner of production. As the technical level of competence rose, the role of the theatre as an educational instrument was played down. The emphasis was on professional attainment and popular success.

The sixties were a period of proliferation of theatres. The public, which hitherto could choose from only three or four productions on any one evening, suddenly found itself confronted with as many as ten or more choices which ran the gamut of modern theatre.

Criticism became an important element of theatre life in the sixties when the public, bewildered by so many theatres in such a small territory, began to feel the need for professional advice in deciding what to see. It is difficult to assess the actual influence of the critics on the public. Although their power never approached that of critics in America, their growing influence was attested to by the fact that the theatres began to use quotations from reviews in their advertisements. Nevertheless, there were cases many times when critics went one way and the public the other.

The year 1958 witnessed the beginning of significant
changes in the Israeli theatre. They are found especially in the three major repertory theatres: Habimah, Ohel and Cameri. Our discussion will center on the history of these three theatres during the years 1958-67.
II. Habimah Theatre

The founding of Habimah ("The Stage") in Moscow, in 1917 was a fantastic undertaking. First of all, it was a theatre without a ready public. There were no Hebrew-speaking people in Russia because only small groups of intellectuals understood the language. Palestine was far away and there, too, the language was used by small groups only. The survival of Hebrew from ancient times has been part of the mystique of the survival of the Jewish people. It was the language of religion and religious scholarship. It underwent a renaissance in the nineteenth century in the garb of a new secular literature. Interwoven with the Zionist dream then entering the stage of reality, Hebrew toward the end of the century penetrated Palestine by means of a small nucleus of Jewish families intent upon reviving it and making it the daily language of the people.

The repertory company Habimah was the first professional Hebrew theatre in the world. It is today the national theatre of Israel. Its founder was Nahum David Zemach,¹ who had been joined by Menahem Gnessin² and Hannah Rovina³ in Warsaw. The first World War interrupted their efforts. They met again in Moscow in 1917
and were soon joined by a number of young, Jewish actors. Their idea was to give expression to the revolutionary change in the situation of the Jewish people and establish a theatre in harmony with the dignity of Jewish tradition and aspirations, to perform only in Hebrew. They deemed it their mission to revive the ancient language.

Constantin Stanislavski, who had taken the talented actors under the wing of the Moscow Art Theatre, appointed Eugene Vakhtangov to direct them. Vakhtangov played a vital role in Habimah's development. He also set the imprint of his distinctive theatrical style on The Dybbuk by S. An-Ski. Vakhtangov's brilliant creative staging of An-Ski's folk drama of Hassidic life and legend made theatrical history.

The Dybbuk bears the subtitle of a dramatic legend. In the first act the author introduces us to a small-town synagogue where a group of batlanim (idlers) while away their time with tales about the wondrous deeds of their rebbes (wonder workers). A woman enters, bitterly weeping, and implores the men to pray for the recovery of her desperately ill daughter. From the monologue of a young man, Hanan, we learn that the study of the Talmud disappointed him and he is now studying Kabbala, an occult science. Hanan is in love with Leah, the daughter of Sender, the town's rich man. He knows his love is
hopeless because Sender has been seeking another rich man's son as husband for his daughter.

Leah, accompanied by her duenna, enters to examine the curtain of the Holy Ark because she intends to embroider a new one as a gift to the synagogue. The two young people barely manage to exchange greetings and Leah leaves.

Another batlan arrives with news that Sender has just returned from a trip during which he contracted the marriage of his daughter. Hanan stands up, tries to say something, but drops lifeless to the floor.

The second act begins with a beggar's dance in the court of Sender's house, preceding the wedding ceremony. Leah enters with friends to entertain the beggars and is drawn into their dance. A Wanderer approaches and makes a mysterious remark about restless souls of the dead who enter the body of the living. Leah goes off with her duenna to the cemetery to invite her dead mother to the wedding, as prescribed by custom. She also asks permission of the old woman to invite the dead Hanan.

At the moment of the ceremony when the bridegroom draws near with the shawl he is to place on her head, Leah cries out that he is not her bridegroom and starts singing in a voice not her own. In the midst of the general consternation, the Wanderer comes forward and announces that a dybbuk, the soul of a dead person, has
entered her body.

In the third act we learn that the dybbuk is the soul of Hanan. He had known Leah because Sender occasionally invited the poor scholar to eat at his table. A tsaddik (a righteous sage) speaks to Leah and she answers in the voice of the dead youth. The tsaddik bids Hanan quit the body of the girl but he refuses. The tsaddik learns that Sender and an old friend of his had vowed in their youth that, should they have children, they would marry them to one another. But Sender became rich, forgot the vow and the friend who had meanwhile died. Hanan had been that friend's son. Only after the tsaddik uses powerful incantations and curses does the dybbuk leave with a heart-breaking cry. Sender takes Leah back to the wedding ceremony but she hears Hanan's voice calling her from afar. She calls out that she is coming and collapses. The Wanderer appears, covers her face with a cloth and pronounces the benediction for the dead.

The Dybbuk owed its triumph to outstanding orchestration, a forceful symbolism and glaring contrasts. The boundless enthusiasm of the company in its acting and singing, however, was the main reason. Even in the group scenes, every person on stage made a distinct contribution, every Hassid and every beggar stood for something different; yet, together they formed a team.10

Habimah has won a world-wide reputation with The
Dybbuk. It has presented the play in the United States (1948 and 1963), Canada, London (1961) and Paris, as well as in Israel. It has presented the play more than a thousand times and it is still in the company's repertoire.

The premiere of The Golem,\textsuperscript{11} by H. Leivik,\textsuperscript{12} took place on March 15, 1925 in Moscow. It was to become one of Habimah's greatest successes,\textsuperscript{13} second only to The Dybbuk, and remained in the theatre's repertoire's for decades. Habimah presented it with The Dybbuk in New York in 1948 and again in Tel-Aviv in 1961.

The Golem is based on the archetypal legend of man creating an artificial, man-like creature which obeys orders for a while, acquires a will of its own and, inevitably, clashes with the master. In its Jewish form, the legend has as its hero Rabbi Yehuda Loew, known as the Maharal of Prague. Rabbi Loew lived in the sixteenth century in the Czechoslovakian capitol and became famous for his good deeds, scholarship and communal leadership. He was a student of the kabbala and, according to legend, learned the uses of the ineffable Name. This, in turn, enabled him to perform miracles, such as making a man out of clay and breathing life into him and endowing him with tremendous strength with which to protect Jews against their enemies.
Leivik envisioned the legend as an expression of the eternal Jewish yearning for the Messiah. The Maharal, embittered by the sufferings of his people and impatient with God for postponing the promised Redemption, takes matters into his own hands but he fails and the Redemption remains as distant as ever. The Messiah as a young beggar, as the prophet Elijah and as an old man, appears in the play but he cannot carry out his historic mission. The Maharal's attempt to use force in the struggle against the enemies of his people is regarded with disapproval.

The Moscow authorities failed to perceive the allegory and raised no objection when the play was presented for the censor's approval. A ghost scene was ordered deleted on the grounds that it fostered superstition.

The director was Boris Illich Vershilov, one of the staff directors of the Moscow Art Theatre, a pupil of both Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov. The play provided an excellent part for Aharon Meskin. The role of the golem made him as famous as Leah in The Dybbuk had made Hannah Rovina.

The company left Moscow January 26, 1926, never to return. The world tour of Habimah lasted almost six years before it finally settled in Tel-Aviv. During that period it toured Palestine, Europe and the United States.

The company made Tel-Aviv its home base in 1931. Habimah did not lose sight of its original aim to foster
Biblical, Jewish and, later, Israeli drama. Among plays of this type, it produced: Amha (1937) by Sholom Aleichem; The Short Friday (1933) by H.N. Bialik; Him and His Sons (1934) by J.D. Berkowitz; The Travels of Benjamin the Third (1937) by Mendele Mocher Sefarim (Shalom Jacob Abramowitz); Michal, Daughter of Saul (1941) by Aaron Ashman; The Love of Zion (1947) by Abraham Mapu; In the Wastes of the Negev (1949) by Yigal Mossinson; The House of Hillel (1950) by Moshe Shamir; On the Way to Eilat (1951) by Aaron Megged; Most Cruel of All—the King (1953) by Nissim Aloni and Black on White (1953) by Ephraim Kishon.

Habimah also added to its repertoire the tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe and Schiller. Other plays by Racine, Moliere, Lope de Vega and Goldoni were included; there were modern plays by Ibsen, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Shaw, Pirandello, Lorca and Brecht. American dramatists were represented by Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill.

Until 1948, the company had a permanent nucleus of actors and directors. Each new performance became a festive occasion. Habimah had its admirers, a Habimah "circle" and a youth studio, but the company failed to keep pace with cultural and social transitions. It began to fall behind the times. The Habimah Collective for years stubbornly refused to admit young, new talent.
Senior actors, men and women in their sixties and seventies, filled roles for which they were unsuited.

In the spring of 1948, Habimah came to the United States for the first time since 1928. The premiere performance in New York was scheduled for May 14 and when news arrived of the proclamation of Independence of Israel, the performance turned into a huge celebration. Unfortunately, Habimah was unable to turn the tour into a triumph. According to Kohansky, the tour was nothing short of disastrous. Its three productions (The Dybbuk by S. An-Ski, The Golem by H. Leivik and Oedipus Rex by Sophocles) were received politely by the critics, but the reviews emphasized the company's shortcomings, its antiquated style of acting, the staleness of its productions and the average high age of the actors. After the first few performances in New York, attendance fell off so badly that the company cut short its stay.

The failure of the tour exaggerated the friction within the company. The young actors who had not been admitted into the Collective revolted against their veteran colleagues because the latter kept all the power for themselves and used it to perpetuate their positions. The crisis became so severe that the theatre was on the verge of liquidation and actually remained closed for several weeks. An internal reform of sorts was achieved by setting up a managing board with some of the younger
generation represented.

After a severe organizational crisis, the composition of the company changed. Young people were added to the company and cast in suitable roles. Others were afforded opportunities to direct and several were appointed to serve on the Management Committee. The cooperative system, with a majority vote, was required on all issues.

On the occasion of the company's 40th anniversary in 1958, the company was granted the title of National Theatre. Its standing in the country, however, was no longer what it had been in the thirties and forties when it had been the leading theatre and Ohel ran a poor second. The advent of the Cameri Theatre changed all this with its successful presentation of He Went Through Fields (1948), an original Israeli play by Moshe Shamir. Habimah became just another of Israel's theatres.

The '58-'59 season marked further departures from the old procedure. Several actors, engaged on a temporary basis, were dismissed. A number of senior members of the company were retired. Additional young actors were taken into the permanent company. These steps were contributive factors in improving Habimah's artistic standard and financial situation. The favorable results were seen in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, staged by Tyrone Guthrie.
When Shakespeare originally presented *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's outrageous behavior was no shock to the Elizabethans. They naturally sided with the character Christian in the play, whose terms of opprobrium reflected the current judicial attitude. It was natural for them to accept the sentence that compelled Shylock to turn Christian. They despised his religion. The execution of Rodrigo Lopez, Queen Elizabeth's Portuguese-Jewish physician in 1594, provided Shakespeare with a springboard for his play. If any parallel were drawn between Lopez and Shylock, Elizabethans would have quickly recognized it. Hatred of the Jew in the sixteenth century is not conjecture. Reviling the Jew was part of the social convention in Shakespeare's day. There is no evidence Shylock was portrayed as a comic character and there is no doubt that whoever played the role gave it the unsympathetic reading sixteenth century playgoers expected.

In our day Shylock has on occasion been cast as a pathetic victim of his environment or, in the name of historical accuracy, as a comic butt and stock villain. At one extreme, Shylock is the scapegoat clown and, at the other, a broken figure who never meant harm with his "merry bond" until "warped" by betrayal and degradation. The reader may desire a tragic Shylock but the comically romantic fifth act makes this dramatically impossible.

I think Shakespeare set out to write a comedy about
a stage Jew involved in a grotesque story about a pound of flesh. But Shylock, to satisfy his author, has to act as a recognizable human being. Shakespeare therefore endowed him with sufficient humanity so that his formerly comic Jew became a tragic figure.

Shylock is a man with hands, organs, dimensions, senses, and affection and the plot to which he must conform is no more than an opportunity for bringing him to life. The plot determined the kind of character Shakespeare created; but the character, once created, determines everything he says or does.

Shylock's first scene points to such matters of concern in Shakespeare's working plan. In I-iii, the pattern seems fully formed with a Shylock who is impressive and grotesque. His habit of phrasal repetition is introduced vividly: "three thousand ducats," "three months." It echoes and re-echoes through the scene. "Three thousand ducats--well;" then: "For three months--well;" and:

"Antonio shall become bound--well." Finally, "Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound." His variety is interesting: "Antonio is a good man . . . yet his means are in supposition . . . The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient . . . Three thousand ducats--I think I may take his bond." (I-iii). Nothing here serves any other purpose than to present the comic Jew and to get the story under way. But the character is already
alive. We shall know him again when he opens his mouth to speak. Not in vain does he hate Antonio and his milieu.

I hate him for he is a Christian;  
But more for that in low simplicity  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.  
(I-iii)

"I hate him for he is a Christian." This first scene excludes the Jew from the Christian world. It is as though he belongs to another planet for he, Shylock, is a Jew:

I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. (I-iii)

After being depicted as spoil-sport and miser in his dealings with Jessica and Launcelot, Shylock encounters the Christian again in Act III:

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?—fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should his sufferance be by a Christian? Why revenge! (III-i)

Shylock is not basically evil. Perhaps he does not intend to take the pound of flesh if Antonio will not
return the money on time. It is—"in a merry sport" that he says:

A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of mutons, beefs, or goats. I say
To buy his favor, I extend his friendship.
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu.
And for my love, I pray you wrong me not. (I-iii)

Shylock even wants to be friendly and to "buy his favor." But Shylock loses. He loses his servant, his money, and his daughter converts so that she may escape with her lover. Then:

If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me and hind'red me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gain, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies—and what's his reason? I am a Jew. (III-i)

Shylock does not want to abandon his principles and his sense of justice, for "There is no power in Venice can alter a decree established." (IV-i)

He therefore demands that which is justly his:

The pound of flesh which I demand of him Is dearly bought, is mine and I will have it. (IV-i)

But Shylock is defeated. The Christian, Mercy, overcomes the Jew, Justice, with tricks. Portia, representing the law, is not a judge. She acts as Antonio's lawyer but not as a judge. She represents Mercy, not Justice:

We do pray for mercy, and that same doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy. (IV-i)
As we see it, the lowly is beaten by injustice. Shylock has to become a Christian because of the injustice. It is the final irony.

I pray you give me leave to go from hence,
I am not well. Send the deed after me,
And I will sign it. (IV-1)

These are the last words of the tragic character, Shylock.

In the February 27, 1959 issue of the Jerusalem Post, drama critic Mark Segal wrote:

The Merchant of Venice as directed by Tyrone Guthrie, is one of the most magnificent productions ever seen on the Hebrew stage. Mr. Guthrie has taken full advantage of the opportunities offered in Shakespeare's play, where tragedy is carefully balanced by comedy, humor by seriousness, romance by commerce and lyric poetry by crude witticism. Every detail is perfectly worked out. Every incident and character dovetails smoothly and effortlessly into the other. The setting, costuming, lighting and movement are everything they should be.

Segal also mentioned the limitations of the production:

But the very fact that one is constantly aware of these perfections is in itself a flaw. There is rarely a moment when you identify yourself with the characters, their pains, their joys, their loves and hates. Aesthetically, the production moves, but emotionally we remain completely detached.

The critic also praised Aharon Meskin's role in the production:

Aharon Meskin's Shylock is a man of superb dignity. Probably more than any actor before him, he dwarfs the nobles and gentlemen, making them seem petty and insignificant beside him. His pain and his hurt at the
loss of Jessica, her betrayal of her faith and her father is truly poignant and almost justifies his subsequent behavior.

In addition to Tyrone Guthrie, there were other guest directors who directed in Habimah, such as Julius Gellner from England who was later to become for a brief period the theatre's artistic director; Harold Clurman of the famous Group Theatre in America; Lee Strasberg of the Actors Studio; and Peter Coe from Mermaid Theatre in London. Work with foreign directors had a positive effect on the members of the company, including the oldest among them. They gradually became less sweeping in their gestures and their voices assumed natural tones. The influence of foreign directors also had a negative aspect which found expression in the Shakespearean productions. *Julius Caesar* (1961) failed because British director Peter Coe, with a background of theatre in which every actor was trained to speak Shakespeare's poetry, failed to realize that Habimah actors did not have this training and this deficiency had to be covered by emphasis on the non-verbal aspects of the play.

In the July 9, 1961 issue of the Jerusalem Post, drama critic Ida B. Davidoviwitz wrote:

Habimah is capable of fine theatrical work, but when confronted with Shakespeare all of its minor weaknesses become blatant faults... And when the words are mumbled and muffled and run together, the play loses its greatness and potency and becomes an elaborate pantomime.
With the memory of many Caesars and the indelible impression made by the magnificent cinema production of a few years before, Peter Coe had his work cut out for him. He had to deal with actors of lesser stature than John Gielgud, James Mason and Marlon Brando.

The internal strife in Habimah, the quarrels between "old" and "young" again provided food for the gossip columns of the press. There were also artistic and financial mismanagement. In the '61-'62 season, the theatre went through one of its public financial crises and was saved from liquidation by an emergency subsidy from the Government. This particular crisis came at the end of a season during which Habimah, for the first time, had an artistic director. Faced with pressure from various public bodies and internal situations which threatened to explode, the company elected Shimon Finkel artistic director. He was one of the company's veteran actors and directors.

In the April 28, 1961 issue of the Jerusalem Post, critic Horatio wrote:

Shimon Finkel, elected artistic director of Habimah last week, is still reluctant to speak of his plans but hints that the changes will be far-reaching. The very fact of electing an artistic director constitutes a revolution in the venerable theatre which, in its half-century of existence, believed in collective wisdom and in the past few years stumbled from failure to failure with an occasional success thrown in. It is public knowledge that relations within the collective
have been far from amiable and decisions arrived at were often grievances than of consideration (sic!) aiming at the good of the theatre.

The new artistic director demanded and was given full authority to decide in artistic matters. He exercised those powers for one season. The reason for Fin-

kel's failure was that he tried to run Habimah like a fully subsidized repertory theatre.

For the next artistic director, Habimah went abroad and brought Julius Gellner from England. Gellner had been living in London since the thirties, directing plays for the Mermaid Theatre and the BBC. Gellner could not find his way in the organizational maze which Habimah had be-
come. Many decisions were made without his knowledge. He was also confronted by an unfriendly public opinion that resented the fact that Habimah should have at its helm a man who did not understand Hebrew and to whom He-
brew culture in general was foreign. The condition was aggravated because the beginning of his tenure was marked by two productions¹⁹ which were financial successes but aroused resentment in those who failed to distinguish between the present Habimah and what it had been in the past. During the season, Gellner took several leaves of absence to fill engagements in London. In the end, he did not return. Habimah's experiment with artistic directors failed and the theatre returned to collective rule.

The outstanding play in the 1961-62 season was by
Israeli playwright Nissim Aloni, The Emperor's Clothes, which he also directed. It aroused great expectations in literary and theatrical circles throughout the country. The premiere was a major theatrical event. The play explored universal problems (neither Jewish nor particularly Israeli). After the premiere, critics were divided. Some attacked him for not taking his theme from Israeli reality while others were relieved that here was an Israeli playwright who at last was trying to avoid reportage, disappointed war heroes, former kibbutz members who had become bankers, and all the standard characters found in Israeli drama of the day.

As the title indicates, the play took its cue from the Andersen tale but, instead of re-telling it, started where Andersen left off, after the fool shouted that the Emperor was naked. In Aloni's version, the swindle of the two tailors was part of a plot to defraud the empire. The Emperor himself was involved, having pocketed a considerable part of the money intended to finance the magnificent robes. The play was a satire on contemporary society with its worship of wealth and the prevalence of publicity. It was brilliant, witty, and abounded with ideas. In fact, there were too many ideas for its own good. The locale could have been anywhere. The play was universal in its appeal and could be applied to almost any society. The Emperor's Clothes could find an interested
audience in any country.

In 1962, an intimate chamber theatre was added to Habimah. It had a seating capacity of 300 and was intended for experimental production, primarily for the presentation of original Israeli plays, one of which was Children of the Shadow by Ben-Zion Tomer.

The situation of the Jews during the Second World War, especially under German occupation, had generated considerable controversy abroad. Habimah presented several plays dealing with the subject from varying points of view and approaches. Children of the Shadow revealed results as found after the war.

Children of the Shadow is Ben-Zion Tomer's first play, a powerful autobiographical drama dealing with the effects of the Nazi holocaust on the life and character of a young survivor, Yoram, who settles in Israel and tries vainly to forget his horrible past. Regarded as one of the most significant Hebrew plays ever presented, it has deeply stirred audiences, young and old, and evoked enthusiastic reviews. The production featured the father-son Habimah team of veteran actor Aharon Meskin and his son Amnon Meskin, the latter having recently returned after studying acting in New York.

In the '63-'64 season, Rolf Hochhuth's explosive first play, The Vicar, was performed at Habimah.
This powerful play had been directed in Berlin by Piscator and stirred much controversy there. The play expresses the author's indignation at what he regards as papal silence and indifference over Hitler's slaughter of six million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. The play poses questions: Was not Pope Pius XII himself a "criminal" for failing to denounce the Nazi atrocities? Why didn't he intervene to prevent these atrocities?

The Vicar is a story of the conflict between two persons: a young priest who takes literally the teachings of Christ and the sanctity of his calling and the Pope whose actions are directed by the Vatican. Riccardo Fontana cries out for quick action to save Jews who are being killed by the thousands each day, but Pius XII refused to antagonize Hitler. This, Pius reasoned, would make it difficult for Catholics living in the Reich. What is more important, the Vicar of Christ on Earth sees in Hitler an instrument of Providence for the destruction of Communism which is, of course, the greatest enemy of the faith.

In a climactic scene, after the Pope has dictated a vague, meaningless statement instead of a clear and unmistakable condemnation of the Nazis, the desperate young cleric takes out of his pocket a yellow Star of David and pins it to his cassock. He is ready to go to his death with the Jews of Rome and thus, by his personal sacrifice,
redeem the sin of the Church.

The author made no attempt to invest the characters with psychological depth or to provide inner motivation for their actions. There are no individuals in the play; there are only bearers of ideas and messages.

In the June 26, 1964 issue of the Jerusalem Post, Mendel Kohansky criticized the production:

> In keeping with this character of The Vicar, Avraham Ninio directed the play with a severe simplicity. There is no building of character here: the acting reduces itself to little more than speaking lines; the actors' movements and groupings are meant only to present the situation with clarity.

Another production dealing with the situation of Jews in the world that Avraham Ninio directed at Habimah, was Sholom Aleychem's It's Hard To Be A Jew (1965). It was originally a topical novel written under the impact of a wave of anti-Semitic persecution in Czarist Russia. Sholom Aleychem and his son-in-law, J.D. Berkowitz, dramatized the novel after the family arrived in the United States at the beginning of World War I.

The plot is based on an agreement between two friends, a Jew and a Gentile, to exchange identities so that the Gentile should realize how hard it is to be a Jew. He has a difficult time. He is barred from the University and is eventually arrested as a suspect in a "ritual murder." To these sufferings another is added: he falls in love.
with a Jewish girl who does not know his true identity and realizes that there is an insurmountable barrier separating him from her.

With the Czar and his regime gone for about half a century, the events of the Nazi era have made the Czarist brand of anti-Semitism seem idyllic by comparison. To offset the somber themes, we are favored with glimpses of the bitter-sweet Sholom Aleychem humor.

Habimah Theatre's institutional and artistic crisis had been more or less common knowledge for years. However, the press succeeded in bringing the crisis out into the open in 1966. Habimah's Public Committee, which until then had confined its activities mainly to bolstering the theatre's public image, came to the conclusion that something had to be done to solve the theatre's basic problems. The Habimah Public Committee assumed that no lasting improvement would be achieved without making basic changes in the group's structure. Gershon Zack, one of the Committee members, stated that Habimah was no longer a collective. Support of it, therefore, was no longer justifiable. Some members of management declared that the collective would not disband and give up its ownership to the theatre. With the renewed controversy, they failed to arrive at a solution.

The subject of the holocaust was touched upon again
by Aharon Megged in *The High Season* (1967). He considered some of the moral implications for the individual arising out of receiving financial reparations from Germany. He attempted this within a Job-like framework.

Job is a prosperous farmer in the land of Uz. Twenty years before, he had lived through a tragedy: evil men had set fire to his vineyards and destroyed all he then possessed. Job was not a man to spend the rest of his life cursing fate. By the sweat of his brow, with the help of his good wife and the daughter born after the tragedy, he rebuilds everything and is once again the most prosperous farmer in the vicinity. He brings in the biggest harvest ever and prepares to celebrate with a splendid feast, the end of a year of hard work.

The allegory is obvious. Job represents the remnants of the Jewish people after the Holocaust. He forgets the past, trusts the enemy and enjoys the prosperity which comes as a result of his forgetting. But Job lives in a fool's paradise. The enemy he thought dead still lives and still hates him. The workers whom Job employs and pays well hate him for being a stranger in their midst. When Job's daughter accuses him of forgetting the past, he realizes too late that he is wrong.

The elements in the plot hint at Jews who returned to Germany to rebuild their lives there. The Land of Uz is less a land than an attitude; one does business with
Germany, accepts reparations and believes in the existence of a "new Germany." The hero of the play wants to forget; he refuses at first to testify at the culprit's trial. He does not wish to stir old memories. In reality, this is untrue because the Jewish people have not forgotten places and events. And they have also tried to keep the world from forgetting. The dilemma is that remembering makes it difficult to reconcile the conflict between acceptance of reparations and the benefits which accrue from this establishment of official relations with Germany. Megged had touched some sensitive spots in the public's conscience.

From 1958 to 1967, Habimah more or less maintained a ratio by presenting Jewish and original Israeli plays in about 20 per cent of its productions. But Habimah still failed to solve its management and artistic problems. The matter of artistic director came up again in 1967 when the Polish director, Alexander Bardin, was invited to stage Slavomir Mrozek's Tango. He refused the invitation after he became acquainted with the internal situation in the theatre.

Habimah's current artistic and administrative management can still be replaced with more suitable and competent people. Bigger subsidies will simply not extricate Habimah from its problems. Without basic changes in its structural set-up, however, excellent management will not
be the solution either.
III. Ohel Theatre

Ohel,\(^1\) originally known as the Israel Labor Theatre, was founded in 1925 by Moshe Halevy and functioned until 1958 under Histadrut (Labor Federation) auspices, receiving a regular yearly subsidy from that organization.

Moshe Halevy, formerly a member of Habimah in Moscow, played in most of Habimah's Moscow productions and also tried his hand at direction as assistant to the directors before he decided to leave for Palestine.

In 1925, Halevy approached the Histadrut with the idea of founding a drama studio. The leaders of the cultural department of the Labor Federation, impressed by his credentials as a former member of Habimah and student of Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov, agreed.

During the first year, Halevy conducted a drama studio in Tel-Aviv patterned on the Stanislavsky-Vakhtangov method to prepare the members for public performances.

Halevy's aim was a theatre which was all social and artistic idealism.\(^2\) Halevy chose seven pieces by J.L. Peretz in keeping with the social ideals of his theatre. Peretz's mysticism had strong social undertones. The pieces were short stories adapted for the stage.
The premiere was held on May 22, 1925. The important thing about the Peretz Evenings is that they were shown all over the country. It was the first time a theatre had made such a tour and it established a pattern which has remained one of the characteristic features of theatrical life in the country.

The second offering was a full-length play, one of explicit social content: The Fisherman (original name was Hope) by the Dutch playwright Hijermans. The play had quite a vogue in Europe in those days.³

The premiere took place March 5, 1927 in Tel-Aviv and the results were overwhelming. The Fisherman had something of the movement and appearance of the Palestinian worker, a feature which gave the performance added appeal.⁴

Ohel’s third offering was a biblical play. Ohel believed in the Bible as a major source of inspiration for Hebrew drama.⁵ A biblical play could exploit the intimacy normally felt by a person raised with a traditional Jewish education. It could reflect the close relationship between landscape and the biblical drama. This would then be true Palestinian theatre, ultimate proof that drama had come to life again in the new Jewish homeland.

Ohel found a biblical play, Jacob and Rachel, by Russian writer L. Krashchennikov. The Russian script was translated by the Russian-born Hebrew poet, Abraham
The result was impressive though somewhat artificial and forced. Some objected to the presentation of biblical personages and events in a manner different from the traditional. Others found the production pretentious and unjustified by the quality of the acting. The show nevertheless attracted a great deal of attention, as well as hope that an original theatrical approach to the Bible was being evolved.

A serious approach characterized the work of Ohel's members during the first years. They rehearsed one play a year, devoting all their spare time and energy to the project. They worked at various occupations during the day to earn a livelihood and rehearsed and performed at night, volunteering their services without remuneration.

Organized as a cooperative, Ohel granted its members equal rights. Questions of artistic policy and administration were determined by majority vote.

Ohel gradually added several Shakespeare and Moliere classics to its repertoire as well as plays by such Jewish authors as Mendele^8 (Fishke the Lame, 1939) and Sholom Aleychem^9 (Menachem-Mendel, 1939). Some American plays were included: Tobacco Road (1954) by Erskine Caldwell; A Streetcar Named Desire (1959) by Tennessee Williams.

Ohel, like Habimah, was influenced primarily by the
Stanislavsky method since Moshe Halevy had been a charter member of that organization.

Unlike Habimah, Ohel never developed an individual, unified acting style. None of its members except Meir Margalit and possibly one or two others had the stature or the background of Habimah's veteran players. Most of them had no formal theatre training. Their previous experience had been largely limited to amateur theatricals.

The European tour in 1950 exposed major weaknesses and, soon after Ohel returned to Israel, the company's smouldering resentment of its leaders broke into the open. Halevy resigned and was replaced by an actors' committee.

After Halevy left in 1952, the theatre continued to decline. The theatre's financial situation was continuously desperate and it was repeatedly threatened with bankruptcy. The budget was overloaded by salaries of members who had outlived their usefulness to the company.

In 1958 the Histadrut, after more than thirty years of sponsorship, decided not to meet Ohel's heavy annual deficit any more. The severance was officially justified by the fact that Ohel was no more a workers' theatre than other repertory companies and there was no justifiable reason for the Histadrut to support it. The true reason was the theatre's declining quality and diminishing popularity.
The following years were a life and death struggle for the company but the veteran members resolved to keep going at all costs. The theatre managed to continue mainly because of one member's popularity, Meir Margalit. He was a great comic and public favorite and he invariably got the theatre out of the red. He saved Ohel in 1935 with his superb portrayal of soldier Schweik in Hasek's play, one of the great successes in the history of Hebrew theatre.

Because of Margalit, the theatre, in 1961, experienced a short-lived success. Early in the year, humorist Ephraim Kishon approached Ohel with a comedy, Haketuba (The Marriage Contract), which other theatres had refused. Ohel was in such financial difficulty that it could not afford to pay Kishon the usual advance against royalties. Kishon agreed to permit the play to be performed without advance payment in return for a higher than usual royalty rate. It turned out to be the best business deal in the history of the Israeli theatre.

Haketuba is a domestic comedy about a Tel-Aviv plumber, his family and neighbors. It was the kind of play with which a wide audience could identify easily, the situation, details and personalities being easily recognizable. Its success was immediate and lasting.

Ohel received a new lease on life with financial security for at least three seasons. It holds the long
run record of any play produced in Israel, having already passed its 400th performance. (In Israel, a play is a box-office success when it passes the 100 performance mark.)

The play did not meet with the critics' approval but the public loved it. The theatre generally was filled with a predominantly Middle Eastern audience, mostly young. In view of the fact that more than half of Israel's present population is Middle Eastern, some of the play's value may be found in the fact that it succeeded in attracting people of this cultural and ethnic background into the theatre, in many instances for the first time in their lives. It also helped draw them into the country's socio-cultural life.

Four Under One Roof, by M. Smirno and M. Kreindl, a satire on Soviet housing conditions, passed more than 125 performances in Ohel's 1961-62 repertoire. Yehuda Haezrachi's The Refusal, on the other hand, was a failure. Neither of the plays received a good press.

Four Under One Roof was a comedy in which two couples lived in the same apartment and tried to imitate each other. According to Ha-aretz,11 the end of the comedy was confused. The actors did not fit the characters. The directing was weak and the designing uninteresting.

The Refusal by Haezrachi was an original Israeli play with a universal plot. There were five characters
representing three different times: past, present and future. Ha-aretz,\textsuperscript{12} felt there was no real drama in the play; its ideas and its philosophy of life were weak.

The Plough and the Stars, a powerful drama of the Irish revolution by Sean O'Casey, failed and was withdrawn shortly after the premiere in the fall of 1962 because of bad reviews and poor patronage. According to Ha-aretz,\textsuperscript{13} it was an excellent play. The plot dealt with the revolution of the Irish people against the British government in 1916. The dramatic conflict on the stage was weak because of poor acting and direction. The director presented an incomplete work with no dramatic tension.

Ohel engaged a new administrator, Peretz Finkel. It appointed Peter Frye\textsuperscript{14} Artistic Director. During his short tenure, Frye gave the theatre its next hit, a spectacular production of Sholom Aleychem's Amha (1964), the story of a poor tailor who suddenly became rich. The leading man was again Meir Margalit. There was a successful attempt at integration between Jewish folklore and realism as well as between stage and music. Critic Asher Nahor, in Plays and Notes,\textsuperscript{15} wrote that the success of Amha was due to the fact that Peter Frye had converted it from a comedy to a popular vision.

Under Finkel's management, Ohel soon engaged upon a campaign of revitalization. It presented plays by
Ionesco,16 Brecht,17 and the youngest generation of such British playwrights as Shelagh Delaney18 and Joe Orton.19 Actors came from the "free market" and directors from abroad. Ohel had changed from the most conservative and stagnant company in the country to the most progressive and daring, attracting audiences which had until then ignored it.

In 1963, Ohel ended its best financial season with Marcel Achard's The Idiot Girl. Margalit, as usual, had the leading role. The Idiot Girl opened in the fall of 1962 with Gila Almagor in the leading female part.

The Idiot Girl is a typical product of Marcel Achard, the veteran purveyor of plays to the theatres of the Paris boulevards.

The heroine of the title is a pretty peasant girl who works as a servant in a rich house in Paris and cannot say "No!" to men regardless of their social status. This shortcoming eventually gets her involved in the murder of a fiery Spanish chauffeur. The plot revolves around the question: Did she murder him or didn't she and, if she didn't, who did?

Both Kishon's The Marriage Contract and The Idiot Girl broke box-office records for months.

In 1963, Ohel began to go through a severe internal crisis brought about by the unexpected wave of prosperity which had started with Haketuba and reached a peak with
The Idiot Girl.

What happened in Ohel was that the class system was undergoing a change. In the beginning, there had been a collective where all were equal. As some members were put on the inactive list, the theatre began to hire younger actors and creating a lower class, poorer paid and without a vote in the affairs of the theatre. This created tension between the two groups which often erupted into newspaper headlines. In January, 1963 a new category was added to the social system of Ohel—the high-salaried star. Gila Almagor in The Idiot Girl had attracted the public on the strength of her name and pretty face and received a salary which by Ohel standards was fabulous. This caused much resentment among the old-time members of the collective. The principle of equality in the collective was no longer valid, what with Meir Margalit also getting extra pay. It seems that all the members of the collective were equal, but Margalit was somehow a bit more equal than others.

Schweik in the Second World War by Berthold Brecht with Margalit in the lead role premiered July 15, 1963 under the direction of Etienne Dobel.

In the June 21, 1963 issue of the Jerusalem Post, drama critic Horatio mentioned the fact that the premiere of Schweik in the Second World War had to wait such a long time before being produced mainly because of the
prior success of The Idiot Girl. He also added:

Though the last and the present seasons have been so successful, Ohel still wallows in financial and other troubles which no current success can cure. The theatre's budget is burdened with salaries paid to a good number of actors who have not been seen by the public in years--a burden which can break even the most successful theatre. Peretz Finkel, Ohel's new administrative director, has therefore set himself the primary task of finding means to establish a pension fund to take care of these actors, plus a number of others who may soon have to join their ranks. He has been negotiating recently with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Histadrut (Ohel's erstwhile sponsor), the Kibbutz movements and other public bodies, with the aim of obtaining the sum of I.L. 350,000 which should cover it.

Schweik in the Second World War was a paraphrase of the famous First World War play by Jaroslav Hasek. Hasek created an immortal character and an apparently stupid but actually clever fellow who outwits those in power and sees through the sham of military heroics and glory. Brecht's Schweik lives under the Nazi occupation and sows confusion among the lower Nazi officialdom with which he comes in contact. He believes that all the common man wants is to be able to spend his evenings in a pub and have his beer and goulash. The play is propagandistic, anti-war in general, and against the Nazi-imposed war in particular. Written in 1944, before the Nazi army collapsed at Stalingrad, it forecasts this battle and the results. In the July, 1963 issue of The Jerusalem Post, Mendel Kohansky made the point that:
Brecht's play provides for Margalit just as juicy a part, and in Brechtian Schweik, Margalit generously displays all those talents and traits which have made him so popular with his audience.

In July, 1965 Ohel produced The Savage by Jean Anouilh. The plot of the play was naive and did not meet with critical approval. Therese is a daughter in a thoroughly corrupt family from the lower levels of French society. She plays the violin poorly in a cheap cafe ensemble led by her father. Since childhood, she has been subject to the humiliations which are the fate of the socially inferior and poor. Into her sordid world appears a Prince Charming, a kind young man who is also a famous pianist-composer. She loves him and he wants to marry her but, after a series of ups and downs which constitute the body of the play, the girl walks off for good. His world of luxury and ease will never be hers; the blows she has received throughout her young life have made her incapable of ever being happy.

In the July 16, 1965 issue of the Jerusalem Post, Mendel Kohansky wrote that the author had wanted to say that Cinderella cannot wash off the soot, but he failed to provide a solid sociological or psychological basis upon which to make this point convincingly. Kohansky also hinted at Margalit's limitations:

The Savage at the Ohel has the dubious distinction of being the most boring show of the season . . . The most important fact
about the production is the startlingly poor judgment in casting the two leading parts. There is no gainsaying Meir Margalit's comic talents, but someone at the Ohel should know by now that those talents are severely limited in scope. If Margalit scored in Haketuba and Amha, to mention only two roles he has played in the recent years, it was because they were so well suited to his stage personality. When a role does not suit him, as in the present case, Margalit recreates it in his own image—with predictable results. In this production his Monsieur Tarde is not only completely at odds with Anouilh's hero, but dominates the stage at all times, giving the role much greater weight than intended by the author, thus distorting the structure and meaning of the play.

The theatre was again approaching the brink of disaster. Old-timers who had been pushed into the background rebelled and forced Finkel to resign. In the following weeks, the theatre hovered between life and death. It revived two hits with "old reliable" Margalit in Haketuba and Hasek's The Good Soldier Schweik. These plays carried them over the most difficult part of the period.

In 1967, after the Six Day War, Ohel presented an original Israeli play, Upon Thy Walls, Jerusalem by Yehoshua Bar-Yosef. The play had been written after the War of Liberation about the battle for Jerusalem. With Margalit heading a cast made up mostly of Ohel's old-timers, it attained a measure of popularity on the strength of the play's title.

The play under its original name Guardians of the Wall, had been a hit in 1949 after the War of
Independence. It was revived after Jerusalem became a subject of topical interest in 1967. The play deals with the mystical attraction of the Western Wall. There is a conflict between two points of view—the ultra-religious with its fatalistic trust in Providence, and that of the secular-activist represented by the Haganah. The action takes place in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City on the eve of the War of Independence.

In the September 29, 1967 issue of the Jerusalem Post Mendel Kohansky wrote:

Yehoshua Bar-Yosef's play, written in the naturalistic-reportage style of the forties, is primitive. Meir Margalit makes fine use of the grandiloquent speeches without going to extremes. David Levin's direction is clean and correct, and he keeps the play moving at a good pace; and David Sharir's design of a compound in the Old City is effective in its simplicity.

Ohel did not adhere to the ideas of its founder Moshe Halevy (a theatre with social and artistic idealism). From 1958 to 1967, it produced only four original Israeli plays, one Jewish play (Amha), and thirty-three others in translation.

Ohel's deficiencies have become manifest over the years. Ohel needs a strong and efficient administration as well as competent stage directors with talent, imagination and leadership. Its Artistic Committee should have exercised greater care in repertoire, selecting only such
plays as the company would have been capable of doing justice to. Its failure to produce more original Hebrew plays representative of the new generation in Israel may yet prove to be its undoing.
IV. Cameri Theatre

The Cameri, known as the Chamber Theatre, is the most important theatre in Tel-Aviv and the most dynamic theatre in Israel. Cameri's company is still the most professional by far and its production standard the highest.

In the summer of 1944, Yosef Millo¹ organized a group called One Act Play Troupe, subsequently renamed Chamber Theatre.

Millo associates were mostly native-born and their aim was threefold:

To bring to the Hebrew theatre new Western European, particularly of an avant-garde nature, together with up-to-date methods of acting and production; to provide an outlet for talented actors who had not been absorbed by the existing theatres; and to create a theatre that would reflect the attitudes and behavior of their own generation.²

It was founded as an experiment. Millo wanted to develop a new company dedicated to the establishment of avant-garde theatre. The company felt its main function was to nourish the art of theatre and help it flourish. Members of the group pledged to work for two years without remuneration. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Israel's theatre.

A year or so later, the troupe attained success and
public acceptance with its production of Goldoni's full-length verse play *A Servant of Two Masters*. The play was adapted and staged by Millo in the Commedia dell'arte style with actors seemingly improvising lines and freely stepping on and off stage to mingle with the audience.

The premiere at Mograbi Hall in Tel-Aviv on October 23, 1945 was warmly received by Israeli theatre-goers. Nothing had ever been staged in so unconventional and spontaneous a manner. The audience was generally young and, for the first time in many years, rose and applauded enthusiastically. The production was extremely popular and was retained in the repertoire for many years, being performed on the average of at least once a week.

*The Servant of Two Masters* was a financial success. It enabled Cameri to go on to other productions, one of which was *Blood Wedding* (1946) by Frederico Garcia Lorca. *Blood Wedding* unfortunately survived only thirty-four performances. Lorca's Spanish gloom did not appeal to the public's taste.

Another production was Anouilh's *Antigone* (1946), considered avant-garde at the time. It also failed. It soon became apparent that foreign avant-garde plays did not have wide audience appeal. The Israel public had not previously been exposed to such material and found it remote in content and style. Cameri learned quickly that pure art does not always pay off financially.
This lesson prompted a major decision by the management. The company would function as a people's theatre and try to reach the broad masses rather than a limited group of intelligentsia. It would present plays dealing with issues relevant to the Israeli public and reflecting the times. Yosef Millo persuaded Moshe Shamir to dramatize his topical novel, *He Went Through the Fields* which had at that time aroused tremendous interest.

*He Went Through the Fields* eloquently expressed the tensions and nature of the days when the War of Independence was being fought. For the first time in the history of Israel's theatre a play dealt with Israelis, their problems and their struggle for freedom.

This was a new development on the Israeli stage which had until then been heavily influenced by the 19th century European traditional drama. This new Israeli theatre presented true-to-life characters with their lively, slangy language and its contemporary relevance. The play was literally a revelation to audiences who, for the first time, saw living Israel portrayed on the stage.

*He Went Through the Fields* deals with a boy who comes home to his kibbutz from school, falls in love with a new girl, joins the Palmach and dies in action, leaving behind an unmarried, pregnant girl. There is much emphasis on military action. The love element develops predictably. The play's major assets were: a good
portrayal of everyday life in the kibbutz, the presentation of the Israeli hero as a new kind of Jew who is uncomplicated, abrasive to the point of brutality, brave, and a product of communal, agricultural life. His counterpoint is the girl who is a refugee from Nazi-occupied Poland, her body and soul bearing the scars of many cruel experiences. The clash between the two personalities is what furnishes the real drama of the play.

The premiere took place on May 31, 1948, two weeks after the independence of Israel was proclaimed, in the midst of the War of Independence. The production, under Millo's forceful direction, so effectively captured the spirit and tenor of the period and the actors performed with such fiery conviction, that the almost total rapport between stage and audience was electrifying. These factors and the dramatic timing of the presentation elicited a rare audience empathy and made the play an outstanding success.

In 1956, the Cameri won first place in an International Theatre Festival held in Paris with this play. In 1966, He Went Through the Fields was produced successfully by Haifa Municipal Theatre under Millo's direction. In 1967, Millo made it into a film.

Cameri was instrumental in influencing Nathan Shaham and Yigal Mosenson to write plays on the local scene and subsequently gave them a hearing. Author-poets
Abraham Shlonsky, Nathan Alterman and Leah Goldberg were assigned the job of translation and adaptation of foreign plays into Hebrew. The translations are excellent modern Hebrew of the highest literary and dramatic quality. Shakespeare's works and other world classics, as well as important representative modern dramas, were now available to Israelis for stage and library.

Whenever possible, Cameri presented original Israeli plays. On February 1, 1950, less than a year after the fighting in the Negev had ended, Natan Shaham's They Arrive Tomorrow was presented. This topical play was based on an event which had occurred during the War of Independence. A squad of young Israeli soldiers was pinned down in a small area previously seeded with land mines by other Israelis. The exact location of the land mines was unknown. With memories of the recent struggle and the many war casualties still fresh in the public's mind, the play was an especially moving and emotional experience for audiences.

Shaham's They Arrive Tomorrow was probably the best of the plays in this genre and most typical of his generation's attitude toward the War. Shaham and his fellow playwrights, having seen combat service with the Palmach and Haganah, wrote of the turbulent days from first-hand experience. Unfortunately, sufficient original scripts of merit were not available and Cameri's Artistic
Committee turned to international sources for suitable dramatic literature.

Ten years after its founding, Cameri in 1954 opened a theatre on Nachmani Street. Although located in an old renovated building, it was preferable to the Mograbi Theatre. Stage facilities were better at the new location.

Habimah, as Israel's National Theatre, receives an annual government grant and a substantial subsidy from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. Cameri has to make its own way. Confronted by a new financial crisis, the theatre's very existence was threatened.

Cameri experienced its gravest crisis in 1958 when it became necessary to give three performances every night to cover operating costs. This led to a lowering of artistic standards and, as a result, Yosef Millo submitted his resignation. The company's actors called many emergency meetings to try and prevent the imminent dissolution of the theatre. Eventually, it was decided to try to carry on as a cooperative.

Cameri had two permanent staff directors, Shmuel Bunim and Gershon Plotkin. Bunim specialized in comedy and Plotkin directed a wide variety of plays, helping the company achieve a generally high level of technical accomplishment. Cameri also attracted new talent, a fact which helped put the company into the first rank in Israel.
The public remained faithful to Cameri after it recovered from its 1958 financial crisis and the company went on to produce Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1959) and William Gibson's *Two for the Seesaw* (1960). They were successes equal to those of the pre-crisis days.

*Two for the Seesaw* presented a slice of American life in which the main characters are two lonely Americans. It is a sad little story of two people who suffer from loneliness in the large city of New York. Jerry Ryan is an attorney from Nebraska who meets Gitel Moscow, an unsuccessful seamstress and would-be dancer. They are good for each other, bring out the best in themselves and really are in love. They are the only two characters in the play. The telephone enables them to bridge the distance and come together when the bigness of the city would otherwise have separated them. In the end, the telephone also enables Jerry to say good-bye when he decides to go back to the wife he has never stopped loving. Gitel is left alone with her shabby dreams and impossible aspirations.

Orna Porat succeeded in playing the sad and unhappy girl. Yosef Yadin received the part of Jerry Ryan, the fellow who comes to New York after his marriage has gone on the rocks and he has come to feel that he has been pushed into success by his father-in-law rather than by his own efforts. In New York, he views himself as a
complete failure until he meets Gitel. She helps re-establish his self-confidence so that he decides to return to his home town and wife, believing he is now able to stand independently on his own feet. Jerry Ryan is a less appealing character than Gitel but Yosef Yadin nevertheless makes him understandable and likeable.

Mary Stuart is an abbreviated adaptation of Friedrich Schiller's play. It was one of the best productions during the 1961-62 season. It was especially noteworthy for Gershon Plotkin's remarkable growth as a stage director. Hanna Meron\textsuperscript{17} played Queen Elizabeth and Orna Porat did Mary Stuart.

What attracted story-tellers to Mary Stuart was the fact that she was apparently irresistible to men. She came to a tragic end, her conflict with Elizabeth being a conflict of two women as well as of two kingdoms.

Schiller did not obscure the fact that Mary was a scheming, conniving woman who married the murderer of her second husband. While he took some liberties with the historical aspect, he nevertheless realized that Mary's death was necessary for Protestant England. Schiller brilliantly manipulated the facts and necessities to his advantage as the focal point of a conflict between two women.

At the opening of the play, Mary has been a prisoner in England many years. Elizabeth is urged by Lord Bur-
leigh to sign the execution order and have Mary beheaded. Elizabeth fears the consequences. Through the connivance of Leicester, Elizabeth's lover, who once hoped to marry Mary, an accidental meeting is arranged between the two queens. This is a superb scene in which Orna Porat played Mary Stuart beautifully. She begins by trying to be humble before the woman who holds her life in her hands, but ends by pouring scorn upon this "bastard" who occupies the throne which is rightly hers. By the time she finishes her scene, she has become the true queen and Elizabeth retreats in rage.

Although Schiller called his play Mary Stuart, Elizabeth is the center of action and Hanna Meron as Elizabeth steals the show. Meron created an Elizabeth who is a composite of all the stories and legends which have surrounded this extraordinary queen. Her lack of femininity, her jealousies, her search for love, her loneliness, her faith in her mission to keep the throne strong—Meron put these into her characterization of one of the monarchs who made England great.

The play was well directed by Gershon Plotkin and the settings by Dani Karavan were simple yet effective. They served not only as good background for the play but also as a splendid framework for the costumes. The audience left the theatre with a feeling of having gone through a fine theatrical experience created by professionals.
The Nachmani Street building was sold. It had also outlived its usefulness. Cameri, however, still rents it for rehearsals and some performances.

A new roof-top theatre with a seating capacity of 900 was built in Dizengoff Passage, the center of Tel-Aviv, and opened in December, 1961. The auditorium is well-equipped, with ingenious facilities for enlarging the stage. It has an acoustic ceiling in geometric form covered with another ceiling consisting of a fine metal network. The acoustics are perfect. Elizabeth Taylor generously contributed I.L. 125,000 towards the completion of the theatre. This sum represented the proceeds of several guest performances by her in Israel.

During its early years, Cameri was a theatre for the younger generation but it has neither a program nor a repertoire with which to lure young audiences. It is essentially a high-brow theatre, as evidenced by its repertoire and standards and did not appeal to low-brow audiences, certainly not recent immigrants from Yemen, Iraq and Morocco, whom Ohel has succeeded in attracting with such productions as Haketuba.

Avant-garde plays by Beckett and Ionesco were valid for a sophisticated Western society but of dubious value for the new or "oriented" immigrants. Highly intellectual plays would have limited appeal in Israel with a respon-
sive audience to be found only among the small group of intelligentsia of European extraction. A broadly based audience is important for financial survival. The Cameri management ought to gear its repertoire to the needs and interests of a wider public. The year 1963 marked a promising change of pace for the Cameri. In concentrating on Israeli originals, it made an invaluable contribution to the country's theatrical scene.

January, 1963 ushered in Nathan Alterman's The Inn of the Spirits, a poetic allegory about the trials and tribulations of a violinist who renounces human contact and love for the sake of his art. Critics generally felt the play had universal appeal because it did not deal with a specifically Israeli theme. It also constituted a turning point in the development of Hebrew dramaturgy.

The Inn of the Spirits, because of its excellent literary and dramatic qualities, makes good reading as well as good listening. Hananel leaves his wife Naomi for 12 years to go into the world and cultivate his talents as a violinist. Naomi indentures herself to a rich man whose son constantly pursues her passionately.

The inn is a meeting place of artists who once were human beings. Hananel meets the Beggar, the Angel of Death, who becomes his impresario. He also meets the Innkeeper who is a beautiful and sensuous woman. She thrives only when someone looks at her with desire, eventually
becoming Hananel's mistress.

Promoted by the Beggar, Hananel becomes the world's greatest violinist, idol of music-lovers, both the genuine and the hypocritical. As the twelve years draw to an end, he is unwilling to return to the cottage where Naomi patiently awaits the appointed hour. Hananel has apparently indentured himself too. Upon his unwilling return, however, he is released from his vow for another twelve years. During the second twelve-year period Hananel becomes more empty, until he finally abandons the concert stage to wander aimlessly. Again, at the appointed hour, he appears at the cottage to join Naomi, It is too late. The Beggar, Angel of Death, has arrived to claim her. Naomi goes peacefully. Her life has been meaningful, her love having found fulfillment in her twenty-four years of devotion to Hananel.

The cruel demands art puts upon those who pursue it and the artist's alienation from that which makes life human is not a new subject and Alterman has not added significantly to what others have said before. But the poetic imagery with which Alterman presented it has given the subject freshness, beauty and power. His use of symbols is interesting. The inn represents the artist's spiritual homelessness; the Beggar leads the artist to worldly success and finally to spiritual death; the innkeeper represents sensual and transitory love; Naomi is spiritual love.
According to the January 18, 1963 issue of the Jerusalem Post, there was a controversy between Cameri and the Ha-aretz drama reviewer, Dr. Haim Gamzu. The cause of the controversy was Dr. Gamzu's review of The Inn of the Spirits in which, although he commented favorably on the play, he found Gershon Plotkin's direction inept, the acting by Hanna Meron and most of the cast bad, and the costumes ridiculous. Elsewhere, the production received mixed reviews, varying from enthusiastic to reserved; all critics, except for Dr. Gamzu, found The Inn of the Spirits to be a brave attempt and congratulated the theatre for trying.

The Cameri people, long nettled by Dr. Gamzu's barbs, considered the review of the Alterman play an unwarranted attack which went beyond the limits of legitimate criticism. They decided to suspend their policy of not reacting to critics. The first salvo was fired by the theatre's manager, Shaikie Weinberg. In an interview in Yediot Ahronot, he attacked the critic as irresponsible and guilty of misleading the public. Following the Weinberg interview, director Gershon Plotkin published an article in the newspaper Davar in which he took the critic to task for what he termed a generally arrogant attitude towards the theatre. He quoted Dr. Gamzu on various occasions in which he wrote that he "dozed" and "yawned" during a performance, showing contempt for both
the theatre and his readers. Plotkin charged that Dr. Gamzu had become a commissar for theatre, literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, dancing, French culture and other fields by virtue of his holding a number of public positions.

The heaviest salvo was fired by playwright Nathan Alterman. Although notoriously audience-shy, he consented to appear at a discussion of The Inn of the Spirits at the Tzavta Club in Tel-Aviv. The controversy had by then assumed such sensational proportions that the club was filled hours before the scheduled beginning of the discussion. Alterman and the other participants literally had to be lifted in through a window.

The poet wasted no time attacking the critic whom he termed a personal friend of many years' standing. Alterman said that Gamzu had become a public menace which had to be dealt with. Referring to the Gamzu review, he said that he had found it in poor taste, particularly the remarks about Hanna Meron. Dr. Gamzu's reply was somewhat flat. He also affirmed that he was not afraid of all those attacks upon him because they did not interest him. Nothing positive seems to have come out of the discussion.

Another important and exciting production followed on March 22, 1963 with the presentation of Tura, an original play by Israeli dramatist Yosef Bar-Yosef.
Tura was the first serious attempt to explore the rich human and dramatic potential in the lives of Israeli citizens who had come from Middle Eastern countries and undergone a difficult process of adjustment to alien surroundings. They were disadvantaged by cultural and economic handicaps and often had to sacrifice cherished customs and traditions. Yosef Bar-Yosef dramatized the problem with a murder at the center of his plot.

The murder is committed by Abraham Tura, an old man who had been a rabbi in his native country. He is now unemployed and supported by his children. The victim is his daughter. She has dishonored the family by becoming pregnant out of wedlock. In Tura's view, the killing was an act of justice in accordance with a tradition which invests the father with the authority of judge and power of executioner, if necessary, on his family. This so-called "act of justice", however, causes his final disintegration. A series of fateful steps are taken by the unhappy and formerly religious Jew: he cuts off his beard, symbol of dignity and status, gets drunk in a cafe on the Sabbath, and eats pork. The violence has been turned in on himself.

The play begins with discovery of the murder on a Saturday morning and ends that evening when the murderer and the rest of his family, who acted as accomplices, are imprisoned. Much of the action shows the conflict of two
worlds alien to one another: the Tura family and their neighbors in one and the outside, dominant world as represented by the police officer on the other. The action takes place in the courtroom of a dilapidated house in Jerusalem.

With the opening scene, the author evokes an atmosphere of poverty; the upstairs neighbor empties his slop bucket under the window of the blind old man living below him as he laughs at his helpless victim's protestations.

In the next scene, we have one of the dramatically most powerful moments in the play. The mother, sister and brother appear, mourning the girl's death. This is followed by a drunken Tura holding an empty arak bottle and accompanied by the policeman. The action takes place quickly and the tension rises to considerable heights. From this point on, however, the play sags. Even the latter revelation that the murdered girl was the fruit of her mother's adulterous liaison fails to save the play. The basic fault lies in the structure: Most of the climaxes have been introduced too early.

One of the characters is The Woman, a neighbor. She serves as a one-woman Greek Chorus and is the catalyst of action. Though she is important and she is given some of the best lines, the result weakens the central figure of Abraham Tura.

Directed by Gershon Plotkin, Tura received a warm
critical reception but did not at first catch on. Later, however, it began to do well, particularly in Tel-Aviv.

Cameri continued with a repertoire designed to attract mass audiences. Occasionally, it produced classics, original Israeli plays and gave the avant-garde its due after a foreign play first proved its success abroad.

The Revolution and the Chicken was an original Israeli play, by Nissim Aloni. It became the subject of controversy during the 1963-64 season. Some were not only baffled but angered by the obscurity and walked out in the middle of the play. By contrast, groups of Aloni admirers frequently interrupted performances with enthusiastic applause. Actually, there were enough ideas for several plays on democracy, sex, crime, law and order, youth and old age.

The action takes place in Little Victoria where tradition is personified by a 118 year-old lady and the Constitution is Holy Writ. The action is triggered by two shipwrecks, fugitives from justice. They steal the Constitution and, having undermined law and order, set up a dictatorship. The 118 year-old lady steps in, seduces one of the intruders, and puts him out of action with a generous dose of castor oil, thereby being able to
re-establish law and order.

In the April 10, 1964 issue of *Ha-aretz*, Dr. Haim Gamzu wrote that it was difficult to distinguish between logic and absurdity in the play. Aloni's direction, as well as his play, was confused. In the April 10, 1963 issue of the *Jerusalem Post*, Mendel Kohansky wrote:

> The Revolution and the Chicken is an exciting, entertaining—and thoroughly baffling—play. I can recommend it to those who want to spend a stimulating evening, and don't mind coming out of the theatre without knowing what the playwright intended to say.

He also added:

> The show is exceedingly well directed. For once there is something to say in favor of an author directing his own play.

July, 1964 brought increased activity into the theatre. The most serious productions seem to have been reserved for that particular period. Cameri presented Robert Bolt's *A Man for all Seasons*, the play about Sir Thomas More.

King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife in order to marry Anne Boleyn who, he felt, would present him with a son. The divorce of course ran counter to the wishes of the Pope and the Church.

Thomas More was the statesman, philosopher and moral authority of the day and he would not submit to the royal wish and approve the marriage. He also refused to save
his own life by taking an oath of allegiance to the King as head of the Church: He considered such an oath to be sinful. In the end, he was beheaded. He died not only because king and advisors were evil, but also because the people did not care about moral principles. For this reason, the Hebrew theatre was interested in the problem and in Robert Bolt's treatment of it.

The 1966 production of Hamlet failed mainly because of the influence of foreign directors. Polish director Konrad Swinarski interpreted Hamlet as a modern political play. While Hamlet as a political activist made sense to Swinarski's contemporaries in Poland, the idea was alien to the Israeli theatre public. It had not undergone the chastening experience of a Communist revolution.

Swinarski felt social forces were all-powerful and men were but servants to the dialectics of history. This is not a concept of Hamlet many are ready to accept. On the other hand, few could deny the validity of the classic, romantic and Freudian interpretations which have guided directors and actors in presenting Hamlet over the years. Hamlet requires interpretation. The play cannot be presented objectively. And since one can make the point that Shakespeare did not necessarily know what motivated Hamlet, that is perhaps why Hamlet can be all things to all men.
Cameri held more or less to its original intention of bringing new West European and avant-garde plays to the Hebrew theatre along with original Israeli plays calculated to reflect the new generation's attitudes.

Unlike the older Habimah and Ohel, Cameri was never burdened with the impractical policy of the collective system that gave actors the power to decide which plays would be produced and how they should be cast. After Yosef Millo resigned as artistic director there was a period when a committee did assume artistic responsibility.

In 1963, Yeshaya Weinberg assumed the role of executive director. He was a former government official whose mild manner concealed a powerful personality with the talents of an organizer. Starting out as the administrator with a voice in artistic matters, he was soon given full authority to decide in matters of repertoire and choice of directors. The actors' committee served in a limited advising capacity. Under his management, Cameri developed greater efficiency and obtained stronger financial support by government and the local Tel-Aviv municipality, ultimately reaching first place among the repertory theatres.
V. Conclusion

The Israeli public is a sensitive, responsive audience that is passionately fond of theatre. Theatre is an important part of its cultural-social life. The early pioneers who came to Palestine had been theatre-oriented in their European countries of origin and brought with them a tradition of theatre from their native lands.

An average of about twenty-five new plays are staged annually by the various companies. Many people attend the theatre regularly and see almost every production. Others go as often as three or four times a year.

Until about fifteen years ago, Israeli authors tended to deal almost exclusively with immediate, local problems such as resettlement of the land by the pioneers, the struggle for independence, the loss of idealism and the social-moral criticism that loss engendered, and Biblical subjects. The plays were for the most part journalistic reportage. Increasing participation by the country's eminent poets, the emergence of a talented young generation of Hebrew actors, the breakdown of confining provincialism by dealing with a wider range of themes and subjects and the improvement of playwrighting
skills were partially responsible for new and exciting scripts: Children of the Shadow by Tomer, The Inn of the Spirits by Alterman, Tura by Bar-Yosef and Aloni's The Emperor's Clothes. These plays were significant fore-runners of a new and evolving Hebrew drama.

The rise in professional standards and quality was an important feature of the sixties and it was due in great measure to the work of directors imported from abroad. They were responsible for some of the best productions of the period: The Merchant of Venice (1959) at Habimah and Schweik in the Second World War (1963) at Ohel.

The influence of foreign directors also had a negative side as found, for example, in the 1961 production of Julius Caesar at Habimah and the 1966 production of Hamlet at Cameri. It probably happened because of a lack of effective communication between guest directors and the local professionals.

The basic characteristics of repertory theatre make it almost impossible for such a theatre to exist as a profit-making enterprise. Commercial theatre is concerned with long-run successes whereas repertory must maintain a costly, permanent artistic ensemble and choose repertoire with a view for its artistic value rather than economic profit.

Despite the fact that Habimah gets more financial
support than any other repertory theatre in Israel, its subsidies have covered less than twenty per cent of the budget. Habimah has made mistakes in the choice of plays and been criticized for "commercial deviation," but Habimah argues that repertory theatre must necessarily be permitted the luxury of such mistakes if it is not to go commercial. The key to its survival, it believes, is bigger subsidies.

In Israel, as throughout the world, commercial theatre provides the public with entertainment—usually light entertainment. The percentage of artistically valuable plays in commercial theatre has always been small since the criterion for choice is potential profit. Total dependence upon commercial theatre will mean neglect and abandonment of classical drama as well as avant-garde. It will mean theatre without Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekov, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco, since plays by such men are rarely money-makers. There seems to be only one alternative to total surrender to the commercial theatre: subsidized public repertory. Institutional and financial troubles have in the past assumed the dimension of a crisis which is endangering the very existence of art theatre. Increased public involvement, as well as greater funding would seem to be a necessary pre-condition for creative survival of the theatre arts in Israel.
I. Introduction

1 The root of the term "Zionism" is the word "Zion" which early in Jewish history had become a synonym for Jerusalem. It had special meaning as early as the destruction of the First Temple, symbolizing the yearning of the Jewish people for its homeland. The modern term "Zionism" appeared at the end of the 19th century and denoted the movement whose goal was the return of the Jewish people to Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. It was coined by Nathan Birnbaum in his journal Selbstemanzipation (April 1, 1890). Birnbaum himself explained the term (in a letter of Nov. 6, 1891) as the "establishment of an organization of the national-political Zionist party in juxtaposition to the practically oriented party that existed until now." The term expressed a political orientation toward Eretz Israel in place of the then prevailing philanthropic approach.

2 Palestine, one of the names of the territory known as the Land of Israel or the Holy Land.
Footnotes

II. Habimah Theatre

1 Zemach (1887-1939) was born in Volkovysk, grew up in Poland and was a successful businessman in Moscow before devoting himself to literature and theatre.

2 Gnessin (1882-1952) was an actor and pioneer in the Hebrew theatre. He went to Palestine from the Ukraine in 1903 and for some years was a laborer and teacher in the villages. Returning to Moscow in 1912, Gnessin and Zemach established a Hebrew group which formed the nucleus of Habimah.

3 Rovina (1892- ) was born in Berezino, Minsk, Russia and trained as a kindergarten teacher. In 1917 she joined Habimah. She achieved success and fame with her portrayal of Leah in An-Ski's The Dybbuk. Arriving with the company in Palestine in 1928, she was soon acknowledged as the country's leading actress and henceforth her career was permanently identified with that of Habimah's.


5 An-Ski (pseudonym of Solomon Zainwill Rapaport; 1863-1920) was author and folklorist. He was born in Chashnik, White Russia. At the age of sixteen, he joined the Haskalah (Enlightenment) movement and studied Russian. Until 1904, An-Ski wrote chiefly in Russian and thereafter in Yiddish. He brought to Yiddish literature a deep appreciation of Jewish folk values. His knowledge of folklore inspired his famous play The Dybbuk.

6 Hassidism is a popular movement giving rise to a pattern of communal life and leadership as well as a particular social outlook which emerged in Judaism in the second half of the 18th Century. Ecstasy, mass enthusiasm, close-knit group cohesion, and charismatic leadership of one kind of another are the distinguishing socio-religious marks of Hassidism.

8 Talmud means: study or learning. It is commonly used to denote a body of Rabbinic teaching.

9 Kabbalah (received doctrine) is the term used to refer to the esoteric teaching of Judaism; it has also been a synonym for Jewish mysticism, especially the kind dating from the Middle Ages. In its broader sense, it signifies the successive esoteric movements in Judaism from the Second Temple period.


11 Golem is a creature in human shape made artificially by magic through the use of holy names. The word golem appears once in the Bible (Psalms 139:16). From it originates the talmudic usage of the terminology—something poorly formed and imperfect. In philosophic terminology it means matter without form. Adam is called golem, meaning body without soul, in a talmudic legend concerning the first twelve hours of his existence. (Sanh. 38 b.)

In popular legend, the golem became a creature who served his creators and fulfilled tasks placed upon him.

As a local legend of Prague, it is connected with the Altneuschul Synagogue in an explanation of special practice in the prayers of the congregation of Prague. According to these legends, Rabbi Loew created the golem so that he would serve him, but was forced to return him to dust when the golem began to run amok and endanger people's lives.

In art, the legend concerning the golem served as a favorite literary subject, at first in German literature of both Jews and non-Jews in the 19th century and afterward in modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature.

12 Leivik (pseudonym of Leivik Halpern; 1886-1962) was a Yiddish poet and dramatist. Born in Igumen, Beylorussia, Leivik was gripped early in life by a deep dissatisfaction with social conditions around him and believed he could ameliorate them through poetry. His first literary efforts were in Hebrew but he soon turned to Yiddish which remained his permanent literary medium. From World War I, he abandoned his exclusive devotion to autobiographical poems and began to write about humanity's suffering. Because he believed the mission of suffering was to
purge the human soul, he saw in suffering a redemp-
tive purpose.

13Ben-Ari, pp. 125-133.

14The Israelite prophet Elijah was active during
the reigns of Ahab and Ahazia (ninth century B.C.E.).
According to II Kings 2:1-11 Elijah did not die; he
was borne to heaven in a chariot with fiery horses.
Malachi's final prophecy that Elijah would be sent
by God "before the coming of the great and terrible
day of the Lord" so that he may "turn the hearts of
the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the
children to their fathers" (Mal. 3:23 ff.) became
the point of departure for the subsequent association
of Elijah with the Messianic age.

15Meskin (1898- ) was a founding member of
Habimah. He was a Russian government official when,
in 1917, he heard of the establishment of the Habimah
studio in Moscow and applied for admission. He
played his first major role in 1925 as Golem in
Leivik's play and from that time ranked as a leading
member of the company. He subsequently played many
leading roles both in Israel and on tour abroad. In
1960, he was awarded the Israel Prize. He was the
first chairman of the Israel Section of the Interna-
tional Theatre Institute.

16Kohansky, p. 139.

17Kohansky, p. 139.

18Lopez (1525-1594) was a Portuguese Marrano
physician. After graduating the University of
Salamanca, he settled in London early in the reign
of Queen Elizabeth, became a member of the College
of Physicians and the first house physician at
St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He was later appointed
physician to the Earl of Leicester and in 1586 to
Queen Elizabeth. Early in 1594, he was arrested and
accused of plotting to poison Elizabeth, found
guilty and executed at Tyburn. The case attracted
much attention and it is generally believed that
Lopez was the Shylock prototype.

19A Flat for Rent (1962) by Shlomo Bar Shavit and
Irma La Douce (1962) by Alexander Breffort and Mar-
guerite Monnot.

20Aloni (1926- ) was born in Tel-Aviv, served
in the War of Independence and studied in Jerusalem
and Paris. In 1963, he established Te'atraron Ha-onot (The Theatre of the Seasons), serving as director and artistic manager.


22 Ninio is a member of the company and permanent director at Habimah.

23 Meged (1920- ) is an Israeli writer and editor. Born in Wloclawek, Poland, his family emigrated to Palestine in 1926. He joined a kibbutz and worked at the port of Haifa. Meged left the kibbutz in 1950 and settled in Tel-Aviv where he edited the journal Ba'sha-ar. From 1960 to 1971 he served as Israel's cultural attaché in London.
III. Ohel Theatre

1. Ohel is the Hebrew word for "tent." It had not only a biblical connotation but a contemporary one as well, for many of the Halutzim (pioneers) in that period still lived under canvas. The name also signified its character as a wandering theatre, a theatre meant to perform in all places, even the smallest.


6. Shlonsky (1900-__ ) a poet, editor and translator, occupies a central position in the development of modern Hebrew poetry.


8. Mendele Mokher Seforim (Abramowitsch, Shalom Jacob; 1835-1917) was both a Hebrew and Yiddish writer. Mendele's life and work encompassed several periods in the development of Jewish society in Russia. He lived until the Russian Revolution.

9. Sholom Aleychem (1859-1916) was a Yiddish author and humorist, born in Pereyaslav, Ukraine. His immense popularity after his death increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public. Through the translation of a large selection of his writing into Hebrew by Y.D. Berkowitz, he has become a classic in Hebrew literature and his major work is familiar to the Hebrew reader.

10. Halevy, later established a theatre in Tel-Aviv bearing his name in the spring of 1963.
Peter Frye is a graduate of Piscator's school in New York and workshop chairman in the Drama Department of Tel-Aviv University.


The Thirst and the Hunger, 1966.


Entertaining Mr. Sloane, 1965.

Etienne Debel had been head of a Flemish experimental theatre. Earlier in the season he had staged Pirandello's Right You Are If You Think You Are for Habimah.

Western Wall, the section of the western supporting wall of the Temple Mount which has remained intact since the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.). It became the most hallowed spot in Jewish religious and national consciousness and tradition by virtue of its proximity to the Western Wall of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. It became a center for mourning over the destruction of the Temple and Israel's exile, on the one hand, and of religious--and, in the twentieth century, also national--communion with the memory of Israel's former glory and the hope for its restoration on the other.

Haganah, the underground military defense organization of the Yishuv (Jewish community) in Eretz Israel from 1920-1948. The idea of establishing a defense organization that would protect the Yishuv was born during the Ottoman period. The name of Haganah was also incorporated into the official name of the army of the new state: Zeva Haganah Le-Israel (Israel Defense Forces.)

The fourth original Israeli play Ohel produced was Yigal Mossinson's The Black Sabbath (1959).
IV. Cameri Theatre

1Millo (1916- ), is an Israeli theatrical producer and director. Born in Prague, Millo was taken to Israel in 1921. He later received his theatrical training in Prague and Vienna, where he became acquainted with the theatres of Brecht and Reinhardt. Returning to Israel, he worked with a marionette troupe (1937-41), acted for two years with the satirical theatre Ha-matate, and founded the Cameri Theatre afterwards. In 1958, he broke with Cameri and in 1961 he founded the Haifa Municipal Theatre in Haifa. He served as its artistic director and producer and staged many productions: The Taming of the Shrew (1961) by Shakespeare, Rashomon (1961) by Michael and Fay Kanin, Max Frisch's Andora (1962), Eugene Ionesco's Rhinoceros (1962), Bertolt Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1962), The Servant of Two Masters (1964) by Carlo Goldoni, Richard III (1966), by Shakespeare, He Went Through the Fields (1966), by Moshe Shamir and Marat/Sade (1967), by Peter Weiss.

2Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem-New York, 1971) V, p. 73.

3Kohansky, p. 151.

4Kohansky, p. 153.

Shamir, (1921- ), was born in Safed, and grew up in Tel-Aviv. From 1941 to 1947 he was a member of Kibbutz Mishmar ha-Emek. He edited Ba-Mahaneh, the underground weekly of the Haganah and later the official weekly of the Israel Defense Forces. From 1969 until 1971 he headed the Jewish Agency Immigration Department in London.

6Palmach (abbreviation for Peluggot Mahatz "assault companies") was the permanently mobilized striking force of the Haganah. The Palmach was
established by emergency order of the Haganah's national command on May 19, 1941. It consisted of volunteers from existing Haganah units prepared to report for active service on 24 hours notice and serve in any capacity whenever and wherever required. In May, 1948, the Palmach was absorbed by other Israel Defense Force units.

7 Kohansky, pp. 155-8.

8 Shaham (1925- ) was born in Tel-Aviv, served in the Palmach and on the southern front during the War of Independence and later joined Kibbutz Bet-Alfa. He has written fiction, plays and children's stories.

9 Mossinson, Yigal (1917- ) was born in Ein-Ganim. Mossinson was a member of Kibbutz Na'an from 1938 to 1950 and served in the Palmach and the Israel Defense Forces from 1943 to 1949. After six years in the United States (1959-65), he returned to Israel. Mossinson wrote stories, novels, plays, thrillers, adventure books for children and dealt with topical and historical themes.

10 Alterman (1910-1970) was born in Warsaw and settled in Tel-Aviv in 1925. He achieved distinction as a poet on two levels: as the author of popular satirical verse which reflected the political aspirations of the Yishuv in its struggle against the policies of the British authorities in the 1940's and as a sophisticated modern poet who was recognized as one of the leaders of the country's literary avant-garde.

His role as a poetic spokesman for the national struggle began in 1934 when he became a regular contributor of political verse to the daily Ha-aretz. He also wrote several plays. Alterman's translations of Moliere's plays appeared in three volumes in 1967. He has also translated some of Shakespeare's plays.

11 Goldberg (1911-1970), Hebrew poet and literary critic, was born in East Prussia. Arriving in Tel-Aviv in 1935, she joined the circle of modernist authors headed by Shlonsky.

12 The Negev (meaning: dry or parched) is an area comprising the southern parts of Israel characterized by an arid desert climate. Rural settlement quickly progressed as great efforts were invested in
piping in increasing quantities of water.

13 Bunim, directed an entertainment troupe of the Israeli army after the War of Independence. Their program usually consisted of alternating sketches and songs. Bunim was the first to combine singing with gestures and movement to a degree where the song became a mini-scene. This method was imitated and perfected by other groups and later became standard in Israel.

14 Plotkin was active for years in the kibbutz amateur theatre movement. After attending the Dramatic Workshop of the New School in New York where he took the Stage Directing course, he joined Cameri in 1949 and has been there ever since.

15 Porat came from Germany after the War of Independence, joined Cameri and became one of the theatre's most important dramatic actresses, scoring successfully in many productions.

16 Yadin was born in Jerusalem and joined the Cameri in 1945 to become one of Cameri's leading male actors.

17 Meron (1923- ) was born in Berlin and appeared on the German stage before going to Palestine in 1933. She trained at the Habimah Studio, served in a British Army entertainment unit during World War II and in 1945 joined the newly founded Cameri Theatre. She was also responsible for some of the company's greatest successes. In 1970, she lost a leg as a result of an Arab attack in the Munich airport on Israeli passengers. After her recovery, she courageously resumed her work on the Israeli stage.

18 Gamzu (1910- ) is an Israeli drama and art critic. Born in Chernigov, Russia, he emigrated to Palestine with his parents in 1923 and later studied art and philosophy at the Sorbonne and the University of Vienna. He has written regularly on painting, sculpture and the theatre.

19 Ha-aretz, April 26, 1963.
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