
Guest Editor's Introduction to *Mahol Akhshav* (Dance Today) 36

Judith Brin Ingber

Extraordinary was the word describing Arizona State University's (ASU) international research conference¹ "Jews and Jewishness in the Dance World," October 13-15, 2008 in Tempe, Arizona, USA. The conference celebrated and examined the impact of Jewish artists and scholars and the Jewish experience in the dance field and broader communities. As editors of this issue, we continue the inclusivity that was so remarkable at ASU, presenting no exact definition or finality on Judaism, Jews or Jewishness and dance but continuing the dialogue and interactions with the articles we present in this issue. The authors (living in Israel, the United States, Germany, France, England and Argentina) explore a multitude of ideas and aspects of Judaism, as well as individual dancers, some of whom may be introduced for the first time and others who may be well known to readers. Tangentially readers can learn about some of the differences and similarities in the Jewish communities² of the Diaspora and Israel (in some of the articles you will read different terms used before Israel's independence in 1948. The *Yishuv*, British Mandate Palestine and *Eretz* Israel basically refer to the same area). Author biographies follow each article and include each author's email because they have agreed to be available should you be interested in contacting them.

In "An Israeli Reflects on the Series of Articles on the Subject of Diaspora Jews and Jewishness in Dance," the Editor-in-Chief, **Ruth Eshel**, considers differences in dance and outlooks between *Klal Yisrael* (or one nationhood of Israel), the Jewish communities in the Diaspora, and in Israel regarding ideas she hadn't considered before attending the ASU conference. **Naomi Jackson**, after her travel to Israel following the ASU conference, writes in her preface about the even wider definitions she discovered in interpreting Jewish identity, especially as it relates to the dance world.

What is our responsibility as dance researchers, writers and editors to the Jewish dancers and the *Shoah* (Holocaust) to remember and to record what happened? It turns out that half of the articles in this issue delve into these questions, reflecting on the Nazification of the 20th century with its horrid continuity into our time. In **Marion Kant's** keynote address at ASU and her article, "Then in What Sense Are You Jewish?", she considers the past centuries and modernity leading up to the Nazi era as it affected individual Jewish artists, including a unique look at the well-known ballet *Giselle* with its Jewish story writer. **Laure Guilbert's** "Dancers Under Duress: The Forgotten Resistance of Fireflies" paints a picture of the European continent in turmoil with examples of Jewish dance artists and their creativity escaping the Nazis but, if unsuccessful, Guilbert writes

of the ruses developed by the artists against their tormentors to maintain the imprisoned's inner freedom even in the death camps. **Judith Brin Ingber's** "Correcting a Published Error: 'Kamila Rosenbaumová, the Choreographer of Theresienstadt's *Broučci* and *Brundibár* died in Auschwitz' and Other Quandaries" writes of the challenges over many years researching through many archives for facts about the Czech choreographer Kamila Rosenbaumová (who actually survived several camps including Auschwitz). **Yehuda Hyman's** realization that the specter of *Kristallnacht* (Or the Night of Broken Glass, Nov. 9, 1938 when German synagogues, homes, schools and businesses were torched) continues to foul the air in the central square of Freiburg, Germany on the site of its destroyed synagogue. The score for Yehuda Hyman's "Jew in the Pool" site performance piece is reproduced as text for readers to reimagine his touching ASU performance. Two essays trace the burden and the horror of surviving the *Shoah*. **Rima Faber's** "Ghosts of the Past: The Creation of Pola Nirenska's *Holocaust Tetralogy*" describes the poignant choreographic suite by the dancer who had been dropped from Wigman's final company as a Jew, fled Europe, and received refuge in the US but was irreparably haunted that everyone else in her large family had been murdered by the Nazis. The Viennese Hilde Holger, on the other hand, found refuge far off in India and then thrived in London as a teacher and therapist, illustrated in **Jacqueline Waltz's** "Hilde Holger: Legacy of an Expressionist, Emigrant, Innovator." The portrait by **Judith Chazin-Bennahum**, "Ida Rubinstein Faded into Oblivion, Why? (1883-1960)" bridges countries and eras including the Nazi period in analyzing the damning effect of anti-Semitism on Rubinstein's career.

Five articles feature individual dancers in both North and South America, considering the overt or covert effect of their Jewishness. In **Elizabeth McPherson's** and **JoAnne Tucker's** "An Exploration of the Life and Work of Helen Tamiris (1902-1966)", readers can consider the role of Tamiris's Jewishness in her color-blind casting on Broadway and her choreographic fervor showing the plight of minorities.

We read about David Allan's choice to choreograph a Jewish subject ballet for the National Ballet of Canada and its successes including the positive effects on Jewish and Gentile cast members and audiences in **Jennifer Fisher's** "The Case of David Allan's 1987 Ballet *Masada*: Did it Matter that the Topic was Jewish?". In **Diane Wawrejko's** article "Daniel Nagrin: On 'This and That' and Choreographic Methods as Jewishness" the author shows Nagrin's choreographic output to have been misunderstood, and by using

interpretations of *tikkun olam* brings him to a newly valued place amongst the dance modernists of the 20th century.

Meryl Jackson's "Is All that Jazzy Modern Dance Jewish?" takes us from modern day Israel to Philadelphia in tracing the career of Rami Koresh, not shirking from differences he feels as a *Mizrachi* Yemenite Jew in Israel making his way in the US. In Argentina, dancer/choreographers are not only innovators, but Jews, surprising author **Silvina Szperling** in her "Jewish Argentine Princess (The Sequel)"; A Possible Point of View about Jewish Choreographers and Dance Teachers in Argentina" spotlighting Ana Itelman, Renata Schottelius and Ana Kamien.

Two articles offer historical perspectives. Firstly, **Alexander H. Schwan** "Theologies of Modern Dance" analyzes how religiousness (and the more general term spirituality) in both Christianity and Judaism affected dance aesthetics and choreographers in Europe, the United States and the *Yishuv* in the early 20th century. Secondly, to heal individuals in their families and communities is implicit in the discussion "Dance as Therapy: A Jewish Perspective" emphasizing *tikkun olam* as a driving force for the writers **Miriam Roskin Berger, Joanna Gewertz Harris, Masha Perlmutter Kalina and Johanna Climenko.**

We close pointing up the Kabbalistic coincidence of this issue of *Mahol Akhshav* or *Dance Today's* Number 36. It is said that the world rests on 36 righteous souls, anonymous in the world, but necessary for its existence. We wonder which 36 dancers might the readers consider, especially after reading the biographies of such special choreographers and performers? We also reflect on 36 through Jewish numerology which assigns each Hebrew letter a mathematical equivalent. The Hebrew word for life is spelled with two Hebrew letters equaling 18 (the Hebrew letter *het*, equivalent to the number 8, followed by *yod*, the equivalent of the number 10). We find this issue of the magazine assuredly lively, filled with daring

and perseverance despite the *Shoah*, bringing history to life and meaning in today's world, doubling the enchanting Hebrew number of 18 for an even stronger, vital 36. Enjoy this dynamic issue of *Mahol Akhshav* or *Dance Today* Number 36.

Notes

¹Co-creators of the Arizona State University (ASU) conference were **Naomi Jackson** and **Liz Lerman**. Naomi Jackson was its lead organizer; she is Associate Professor in ASU's School of Film, Dance and Theatre and has written several books including: *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Dignity in Motion* (co-edited with Toni Shapiro-Phim, Scarecrow Press) and *Converging Movements: Modern Dance and Jewish Culture at the 92nd Street Y* (Wesleyan University Press) as well as articles in such publications as *Dance Research Journal* and *Dance Chronicle*. In the spring, she presented the keynote address at the Conney Conference on Jewish Arts at the 92Y, New York City. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Od-hTMmeWI> (accessed June 30, 2019). Naomi.Jackson@asu.edu.

Liz Lerman, choreographer, performer, writer of three published books, and the recipient of numerous honors, including a 2002 MacArthur Genius Grant is ASU's first Institute Professor at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, making an on-line resource, the Atlas of Creative Tools, for people in all fields seeking creative solutions in their work. She is also a member of Temple Micah in Washington, DC where she has collaborated with the congregation and its rabbis over the past several decades. As part of Synagogue 2000 she introduced dance for congregational life throughout the United States and also ran a program called Moving Jewish Communities that brought Jewish dance artists together for shared learning.

²To understand differences and history of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and in Israel, see the essay by Judith Brin Ingber in the ASU program, pages 76-78 <https://jewishstudies.clas.asu.edu/jewishdance-about> (accessed June 25, 2019).

Correcting a Published Error: “Kamila Rosenbaumová, the Choreographer of Theresienstadt’s *Broučci* and *Brundibár* died in Auschwitz” and Other Quandaries

Judith Brin Ingber¹

Why Terezin/ Theresienstadt?

I first heard about Theresienstadt in the late '60s along with the term Terezin. I read the shocking and so powerful book *...I Never Saw Another Butterfly...Children's Drawings and Poems from Theresienstadt Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. Throughout I'll use the Nazi name for what was the site of an Austro-Hungarian garrison town called Terezin, founded by Emperor Joseph II of Austria who named it after his mother, Maria Theresa. Originally, the town included the soldiers' army barracks and homes for the soldiers' families, taverns, a post office, bank and brewery enclosed by twelve ramparts in the shape of a star. Surrounding the town were meadows, and farmlands, fruit trees and tall poplars, a train ride from Prague, the closest city.

I came across all this and more when I read the beguiling book which at first glance could be misunderstood as a children's book. It was filled with colorful drawings by children, but created as the result of a terrible situation². A time-line published in the epilogue explained that mass deportation of Jews from Prague to the ghetto began on Sept. 27, 1941 and soon all the Jews of Moravia and Bohemia were deported there, and then Jews were brought by train from all over Europe to what at first was considered a spa town but turned out to be a work camp and hub for further deportations. By August 23, 1942 the average work week lasted from 80-100 hours including children from the age of 14, subject to the same compulsory labor as the adults. Approximately 150 people died every day. By war's end some 15,000 children had gone through Theresienstadt, staying in children's "barracks," divided by gender. How many children survived varies, but the general number is used only 150. Theresienstadt was liberated on May 7, 1945 by the Soviet Russian army.

I also read that in the book about "this place of famine and of fear," where the "children saw everything that the grown-ups saw, the executions, the funeral carts, the speeches, the shouts of the SS-men at roll call," but the poems and colorful paintings reproduced in the book were arresting and not all were bleak. Nowhere in the book did it explain WHO encouraged the children to paint and draw, only that "the instructors permitted the children to draw whatever they wanted to".

I was moved to create a dance solo to Pavel Friedman's title poem, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* which I premiered in 1970. I couldn't stop thinking about the place and determined I wanted to see it for myself. The following year, in the summer of 1971, I convinced my new husband that we should include Prague on our honeymoon and also visit Theresienstadt. We were able to get visas to Communist Czechoslovakia but no information about how to get to Theresienstadt. Surprisingly, through a family friend, Ed Grosmann, in Minneapolis, we were given a letter of introduction to his friend Dr. Karl Lagus in Prague. When we arrived in Prague and located him, Lagus helped us plan our trip in the city, but only on the last day, did he agree to take us to Theresienstadt.

To our amazement, it turned out Lagus was the director of the Theresienstadt/Terezin site. We discovered that the government wanted no tourists to see what was left of the ghetto nor apparently did the government want any evidence of the crimes committed there to be known. No sign announced the name of the town, and no signage explaining anything that had happened there - many buildings were still reduced to rubble, and there seemed to be no repairs in progress. It was only 26 years after the liberation of Theresienstadt which in the overall scheme of things wasn't so long. We learned Theresienstadt served as a "settlement," and a concentration camp, with recognizable features of both ghettos and concentration camps. It also was unique in its function as a tool of Nazi deception, maniacally posing as a spa town for families³.

Lagus gave us a thorough tour, walking us around what seemed like a dreary town⁴, stopping at the main square and then on to what he called the barracks. Many looked like they'd recently been abandoned, and one could still see wide wooden slats one above the other, used for beds, he told us. Lagus also told us the eerie fact that he had been imprisoned there and now sat in what had been the office of the Nazi Commandant of Theresienstadt. Lagus took us, too, to see the ramparts, which were the old fortified walls, wide enough on top to have grass and the illusion of a play area, with views of the surrounding farm country and the train tracks. Hidden from view was the small crematorium near the tracks, but we saw it and its hideous smoke stack. The daily death rate was terrible and

apparently bodies were burned rather than buried. One of Lagus's aims, he told us, was to build a museum with paintings by some of the artists who had been imprisoned and perished.

It took me years to learn about performances presented in Theresienstadt, and years to piece together who were some of the imprisoned artists and what did they succeed in doing before they were deported. How did they keep up their honest creativity in the face of such Nazi dishonesty? In particular, I searched for information about a choreographer named Kamila Rosenbaumová.

First Encounter with Kamila Rosenbaumová

I first encountered the name of the choreographer Kamilla Rosenbaumová at the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles in 2001. I read her name in a caption placed below two watercolors by an artist named Friedl Dicker-Brandeis.



Pavel Rosenbaum, Ivo and Kamila before WWII. Photo courtesy of Kate Rys

I thought it so incongruous, so unlikely, that someone sketched costume designs for two dances to be performed in a Nazi camp. Why? How? Who was the choreographer Kamila Rosenbaumová, making two dances in such a context? In looking at the watercolors, I could see the dancers were sketched as if they were dancing, already "wearing" their costumes as they moved in big unison movements that were familiar to me from mid-century modern dance forms. The dancers' arms made angular shapes and their legs (in long skirts) were nonetheless striding out and lunging, as if bringing the dances to life. I kept wondering who was Kamila Rosenbaumová?

It took several research trips over many years to eke out the very little I did learn about Kamila Rosenbaumová and her career. At first, I gathered she and painter Friedl Dicker-Brandeis had worked together on artistic projects in Theresienstadt. Nothing could

change the fact that the choreographer and her costume designer were both deported to Auschwitz, and at the museum exhibition I learned Auschwitz was where Friedl Dicker-Brandeis was murdered. I wrongly assumed that Kamila was also murdered there. The Museum of Tolerance archivist Adaire Klein couldn't give me any information about Rosenbaumová but I was given permission to include the image of the two watercolors when I lectured and eventually I was given permission to use them in my book, *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*. Images of the two watercolors were prominently placed, with the caption "for a dance choreographed by fellow prisoner Kamila Rosenbaumová and performed by inmates." I searched briefly for more information but came up short.

As noted, I learned that the choreographer was deported from Terezin to Auschwitz around the same time as the painter Friedl Dicker-Brandeis where she was murdered. I assumed the same fate happened to Kamila Rosenbaumová but I only discovered my assumption was totally wrong after my article "Vilified or Glorified? Nazi Versus Zionist Views of the Jewish Body" had been published. It wasn't possible to correct the published error⁵. This new article is my attempt to make amends and share the steps in my search to learn more about Kamila Rosenbaumová. I continue to write about her, speak about her and even through an extraordinary experience at the Czech and Slovak Sokol organization of Minnesota restage her children's musical *Broučci*, trying to bring her work back to life.⁶

Researching at Yad Vashem

In the 1990s, I began my first research about dancers in the Holocaust at *Yad Vashem* ("A Monument and A Name," Israel's official memorial in Jerusalem to the victims of the Holocaust. It includes several museums and archives). My friend Yehudit Shendar, who was director of the art museum at *Yad Vashem*, encouraged me to study in the archives to find out about the history of Jewish dancers during the *Shoa* (Holocaust) period, admonishing me to spend time in the archives; she said I couldn't leave out this period within the Jewish dance experience just because I found it difficult. So, I began a new chapter in my dance research with many visits to the *Yad Vashem* archives. What first caught my eye were photos of theatre productions in the Warsaw Ghetto which clearly showed trained dancers participating. I found photos of children folk dancing in the Lodz Ghetto, including a creative dance around a barrel of soup someone had choreographed; I read stories about how adults kept Jewish identity alive through holiday celebrations with dance; I learned about transit camps with performances, as in Westerbork with its weekly Monday performances directed by famous Berlin directors so excellent Nazi officers would come to be entertained, though deportations on Tuesdays to Auschwitz might include the performers. I saw the scrap books of Zami (Sami) Shmuel Sajnwel Feder who was a trained theater director before WWII. Along with many Jews from Bendin, Sami was deported in May of 1941 to a succession of 12 forced labor and concentration camps, ending in Bergen-Belsen. He was liberated in '45 but had to stay as a Displaced Person until the summer of 1947 in the same DP Camp established by the British occupiers. There he established a successful theatre company with other survivors, so good they toured to other DP camps throughout Europe. One photo from his pro-

ductions in the *Yad Vashem* archives really caught my attention, two women dressed incongruously like Hasids, clearly dancing, kicking up their feet, in front of a city scape backdrop.



Zami Feder Bergen-Belzen production. Photo courtesy of *Yad Vashem*

At *Yad Vashem* I couldn't concentrate only on dancers, and I studied about other artists also in Theresienstadt, especially Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. I discovered it was her children's art classes which produced the incredible paintings and poetry of the children I had found so inspiring when I read the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Many artists went unnamed and unrecognized; I was so sad she received no attributions in the edition of the book I had read. I learned she had been trained at the Bauhaus, had her own atelier in Vienna and then Prague, and was also a child art therapist. She and her husband had hoped to find a safer place away from the Nazis in the Czech countryside but to no avail. It made perfect sense she was the heroine responsible for the outpouring of child sketches and painting in Theresienstadt where she also lectured the adults about her aims for children and for the worth of art in society. She considered the art work with the children a way to learn tools to cope with where they were and to work together. She even managed to have art exhibits including a secret one in the basement of children's barrack L417 (for it was totally illegal to teach children, or exhibit their art. Many adults also volunteered to teach children surreptitiously on a variety of subjects after work hours).

What really struck me was that when Dicker-Brandeis knew she would be deported to Theresienstadt, she took her allotted two suitcases and packed them full of art supplies for children. The most surprising objects she carried with her were her bedsheets which she had dyed green. She brought them in case she would create productions for and with children. She reasoned the green sheets could help the children to imagine being part of a forest

or all kinds of lovely green growing things. Most probably those sheets were used when she designed the set and costumes for the future productions of *Broučci* (Fireflies), but more on that later. During Dicker-Brandeis's incarceration she managed to bribe some guards to continue to bring in art supplies for the children. When she knew she would be deported from Theresienstadt, one of the older boys who had been her student, Willy Groh, helped her to pack her same two suitcases full of as many of the children's drawings and poems that they could. Then they hid them in the rafters.⁷

I read the autobiography of actress and director Nava Shean at *Yad Vashem*. In Theresienstadt she was known as Vava Schönová, a trained actress. She reports that her first work with children was a puppet show. Then she claims ownership for the idea for *Broučci* (Fireflies). "My second project for the children was a dramatization of stories about fireflies. Jan Karafiát's (Czech) collection of stories on fireflies is part and parcel of Czech classics. Every Czech child then and today was brought up on stories about the lives of the fireflies...This children's book was brought to Terezin of course."⁸ In fact, there were probably quite a few copies in the camp. Perhaps this was my first inkling about this children's musical and about the guts necessary to do creative work. Shean continues that "*Fireflies* was performed several times. During one show, an S.S. officer entered the room, watched the performance and left. The following day I was summoned to his office.

'Are you in charge of the show I saw yesterday?'

'Yes'

"Did you select and direct the play?'

'Yes'

'Why did you choose something so Czech and not something Jewish, like Hanukah?'

'How do you know about Hanukah?'

'I lived several years in Palestine and studied at the University in Jerusalem.'

'And this is how you arrived at the conclusion that the Jewish people should be destroyed?'

'Yes.'

"I admit I had the courage to talk back like that only because he approached me as if I was a theater director, not a prisoner."

Back at *Yad Vashem*, perhaps in 2013

Much of my dance research at *Yad Vashem* went into the dance book I edited and was published in 2011. Tangentially, I had learned that Nava Shean, noted theatre director and actress in Tel Aviv, was one and the same as Vava Schönová, who had survived Theresienstadt and World War II, emigrating to Israel. I've mentioned reading her autobiography. But it was in 2013 at *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem where I discovered the catalogue about Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and her work, the catalogue that originally accompanied the exhibition I'd seen years before in the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. Somehow, I hadn't seen the catalogue which included a small head shot portrait of Rosenbaumová and a caption: "The portrait was from 1960".⁹ The caption confirmed that I had been mistaken, assuming that Rosenbaumová had been murdered at Auschwitz.

However, in this visit to *Yad Vashem* I still learned nothing further

about Kamila Rosenbaumová – because there was apparently nothing about her in the archives. Instead, I learned Dicker-Brandeis was involved in two children’s theater productions, too. And I studied the art catalogue,¹⁰ seeing the careful curriculum she decided to impart to her students, how to teach concentration, how to do breathing exercises before starting art class, all kinds of preparations to help the whole child where he or she was living.

Returning to Prague, 2014

I made my second visit to Prague and Theresienstadt in December, 2014, when I was invited to teach at the Academy of Performing Arts, as well as to give a lecture at the Jewish Museum - an overview about how Jews who knew traditional dances such as at weddings, Jews who knew the new Israeli folk dances from the kibbutzim as they developed in the *Yishuv* and professional dancers all got caught up in the *Shoa*. At least I could tell the audience I was looking for more information about a choreographer at Theresienstadt, Kamila Rosenbaumová and correcting my misunderstanding that she had been deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and murdered there.

After my lecture at the Jewish Museum, I went to visit the famous Sephardic Synagogue in the old Jewish Ghetto of Prague, which contains a permanent exhibit about Czech Jews. What did I find in a dark corner inside a badly lit glass vitrine?

First Glimpse

I spied a single page, typed document, decorated with charming little flowers, ghosts and firefly/children holding little lanterns. I used my phone camera so I could study the page afterwards and get help with the German. I later found out this was an announcement explaining the three act performance of *Broučci* (fireflies); by then I knew the “Play based on a fairy tale by J. Karafiát” had been choreographed by Kamila Rosenbaumová but the page announced it was “adapted for the stage by Vlasta Schoen, (sic)” whose name I also knew to be Vava Schönová. I was able to get the gist of the musical: the first scene would show the firefly family awakening from its winter slumber with their little firefly boy named Brouček running wild in the house. In the interlude, he is taken outside to fly for the first time. He hides between large flowers in the meadow, admiring the dancing fireflies (including the one he will later marry), but one carelessly hits him and he falls to the ground. He is resuscitated by his friends and brought to his mother. In the second act, we see Brouček convalescing and receiving many presents from his friends. His mother sings him a lullaby and reads to him; he dreams ghosts are hovering around him and he is scared but he recovers from his bad dream and his injury. In the final act we see his happy engagement and his wedding, complete with dances. This was an allegory about survival, getting through the winter which was a metaphor

for the war and the camp, so to speak, and it was encouragement to the imprisoned children that they would be cared for and would get food in the future, even gifts, too. Brouček was an energetic happy boy and those in the play and in the audience could identify with him. I was determined to find out more about the production but it took much longer than I ever imagined.

Researching performances in Theresienstadt

In 1971, our original guide in Theresienstadt had been Dr. Karl Lagus. He was no longer living when I returned, but through Czech connections, I was able to locate his daughter, Dr. Helena Lagus Illnerová, a prominent Czech scientist and professor. She was gracious when we met; she and her husband drove me to Theresienstadt where she made arrangements to visit the archives there. The archivist showed us binder after binder of hand painted and hand lettered placards or advertisement posters meant to publicize cabaret revues and performances in Theresienstadt. As we looked through the binders, Illnerová helped me to read the cast lists and names of the creators; I discovered how often Rosenbaumová’s name appeared on the different posters, sometimes listing her as choreographer and sometimes as dancer. Unfortunately, there was no kind of explanatory material about the productions and nothing about the creators.

Probably the most well-known production advertised that we looked at was for *Brundibár*, the children’s opera in two acts. The ad featured a charming drawing of a three-sided wooden fence, as if it belonged in a children’s book. Children peered over the fence top, some of the girls in pigtails with bows, and one of the boys in his knickers at the edge of the fence. They were all focused on the space in the middle of the page surrounded by the fence with the list of names of all who were credited with the production. I immediately noted the choreography was by Rosenbaumová. Of all the poster ads in the archives, this is the only one I saw that is available on the internet.¹¹



Poster of *Brundibár*

The plot of *Brundibár* involved a brother and a sister and their friends (including a dog, a cat and a sparrow) who all outwitted an evil organ grinder named Brundibár. Those who watched the opera were filled with hope because it was clear that the organ grinder represented the wicked Hitler, mustache and all. In the opera, the character of Brundibár was an unsuccessful failure, outwitted by the children. Kamila Rosenbaumová co-staged and choreographed the 55 performances of *Brundibár*. A sheet advertising a play called *Esther* caught my eye. I was surprised to see that even the assimilated Jewish artists had an idea of using a beloved Biblical story, though it was entwined with a Czech folk tale for the performance. Two columns of old-style hand writing included the names of two dancers: Trauta Lachová, and Rosenbaumová. Maybe it was to be perfor-

med sometime in March when the Jewish holiday of Purim would fall, celebrating the heroine Esther? But it's impossible to know because none of the poster advertisements had any dates on them. My translator Blanca Brichta wrote that: "One could say here that the play as written would be like any other play depicting biblical stories, which used to be re-enacted and staged in churches first for the nobility then for the people in the church courtyards on Sundays. In the program it says that *Ester* is by Vucedálek, František (who lived in late 18th century). He also wrote other Biblical plays, based on King David, Moses and plays about Christian saints such as St Peter and Paul. These dramas played an important role in the development of Czech theater."

In another poster advertising a drama about Francois Villon, we see Rosenbaumová's name appears coupled with the word "*choreografe*" (or choreographer). There are black outlines of an old town with a tall man in a Medieval-looking costume, playing a mandolin-like instrument. A scroll announcing a drama about Villon opens as if to reveal the names of all involved including Rosenbaumová. A group of four dancers are featured: her and Lantschová Picková, Kirschnerová. I note that in the *Esther* play, there is a dancer named Trauta Lachová. Here it's spelled Lantschová. If it is the same person, why the discrepancy in last name spellings?¹² It is apparently a sign of the polyglot community in Theresienstadt.

Several ads mentioned the composer Karl Švenk who I knew had composed the music for *Broučci*. He was often a producer, and sometimes he created his own cabarets known as the *Švenkův kabare* (Švenk Cabarets). The ads included *tance nastudovala* (another word for choreography) by Kamila Rosenbaumová. It's impressive to look at the amount of shows that included Rosenbaumová, especially the program about Frances Villon, about Queen Esther, and in the cabarets.

Another of the *Švenkův kabaret* was advertised with a big black grand piano drawn on the page; above the piano a flood of water poured from a barrel with the bold words proclaiming *Večer kabaretní retrospektivy* (an evening of cabaret retrospective) to be performed *totěž ale jinak* (the same but differently). The evening would include *hraje, zpívá, tančí* or acting, singing, dancing. The names listed on the ad included our by now familiar trio of Rosenbaumová, Schönová, and Švenk as choreographer, director and composer.

Another Švenk Cabaret was advertised with only lettering and no illustration; it also includes Vava Schönová, and Rosenbaumová among a cast of 15. They all must have felt camaraderie and solidarity but so far there's no way to know anything about what exactly transpired in the plays or the cabarets. All that is left are the poster advertisements and in the memories of the survivors one might somehow locate. Occasional tag lines on the penned ads only whet one's appetite to understand more about the spirit of the artists such as "Long Live Life or Dance Around the Skeleton".

I had so hoped that Lisa Peschel's book, *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape; Cabarets and Plays from the Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto* could lead me to some answers. She covered a variety of productions including *Laugh With Us*, an original Czech Cabaret produced in the ghetto; Hans Hofer's Cabarets, and other revues.

But not a one coordinated with any of the creations by Švenk, Rosenbaumová and Schönová. On the other hand, Peschel's important book is a tribute to the artistic creativity in the ghetto, which could be considered resistance to the Nazi erasure of self and murder not only of the Jews, but of the very meaning of arts, culture and community. Peschel writes "defiance toward their captors was just one element in a whole range of strategies the authors (of the plays) used to confront the unprecedented crisis they faced. If we widen our definition of resistance to encompass all the forms of opposition to powerlessness that they exercised within the symbolic space of performance, we become true witnesses to these authors and to all the Terezin/Theresienstadt prisoners who engaged so intensely with theatrical performance in the ghetto."¹³

Broučci, A Musical in Three Scenes

Researching facts about the stage director of *Broučci* turned out to be easier than finding information about the choreographer. I had already read the autobiography of the director of the production, Vava Schönová which I found in the *Yad Vashem* archives. She claims that though she was only twenty years old in Theresienstadt, she got the idea for *Broučci* (fireflies), based on the well-known and beloved Czech children's book by Jan Karafiát.

Like other artists in the ghetto, she had chosen to work with children in their "children's houses" which were really barracks where children all lived in one room, separated by gender, where they slept and ate and "played." Vava Schönová wrote that she began working on the musical in 1943 because she noticed that many of the children who came to Terezin brought with them their favorite story book. It's true she wrote that as a child she also loved the children's book *Broučci* and she also loved dancing. She wrote in her autobiography that starting at age 6 she had begun her dance training in Prague with a student of Isadora Duncan's. She also became a child actress, encouraged by her mother. "In Terezin (sic) when people discovered I was an actress, I was asked to contribute something, to declaim, to entertain in the evenings; so I began to travel around (the ghetto) after work doing solo recitations either from dramas or poetry. I don't think it was the desire to escape from reality but rather it's more accurate to say that the cultural activity provided a genuine expression for the desire to prolong our internal life and not let the external conditions affect was the wish not to surrender to the sub-human conditions". Vava began a plan to dramatize the classic Czech book about fireflies. "Everyone was brought up on these stories," she wrote, "about the daily routine of fireflies and how they would awake in the summer and sleep in the winter under the snow, how they learn to fly at night and light up the world for humans."

The advertisement for *Broučci* in the archives showed the names of those involved with *Broučci* in addition to "Vasja" (also known as Vlasta and Vava) Schönová (in Israel, Nava Shean). In a small section of her book she mentions *Broučci*¹⁴ was performed in Barracks L417 (where most of the girls were forced to live); some said that the girls' children's barracks was where the first series of *Broučci* performances took place. Maybe there were up to 35 shows. I learned much from Vera Meisels, the child survivor who had participa-

ted in *Broučci* and I had the privilege of interviewing in Tel Aviv. She told me the later 1945 series of performances took place in an attic theatre, a different venue than the children's barracks. Other performances of several different cabarets and theatre productions also took place there. The second series of *Broučci* performances in the attic theatre took place after all the founding creators were deported except for Schönová.

Originally, according to her autobiography, it was Schönová who turned to other artists she'd met in the ghetto to help her with the production: Karel Švenk contributed the music and Kamila Rosenbaumová was chosen for the choreography. Eventually, I began to suspect that it was Rosenbaumová (who arrived in Theresienstadt with her husband Pavel Rosenbaum and their son Ivo) who might have played a more important part in the making of the piece in addition to providing the choreography for *Broučci*. A more careful reading of Shean's autobiography makes one wonder, was this a case of Rosenbaumová being overlooked for the credit due her? Shean continued, "One of the counselors in the children's house was Camilla Rosenbaum (sic) who before arriving at the camp was a professional dancer. She told the stories of the fireflies to the children in her group and taught them to dance according to the text in the book. Once the children could happily perform the dances of spring, winter, snowflakes and sun rays, Camilla decided to put together a show for all the children in the camp. She asked me if I would recite the text to accompany the children's dancing. I agreed. I could see immediately there was groundwork for developing something bigger....I adapted the book into a play...I adapted the play to Camilla's dances...thus a show was created for scores of participants...they had a sense of success". These two paragraphs turned out to be basically all I knew about *Broučci* for a long time.

A great deal of information existed about Friedl Dicker-Brandeis who I learned had created the sets and costumes for *Broučci*. I already mentioned that Dicker-Brandeis brought her dyed sheets to Terezin, but only now did I begin to understand the importance of the green-dyed sheets for the *Broučci* set. Schönová or Shean reported that she rehearsed the play with girls from barracks L410 who are even credited in a colorful ad for *Broučci* that was posted throughout the ghetto. Barracks L410 was where both Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and Kamila Rosenbaumová also taught the girls.

A Rare Source

How did I learn that there were actually two waves of *Broučci* performances, the first in 1943 had some 31 performances and the second set in 1945 with new artist collaborators? By the time of the second wave of performances, Dicker-Brandeis, Rosenbaumová, with her son Ivo and husband Pavel, and Švenk had all been deported to Auschwitz. Švenk apparently was sent from Auschwitz near the end of the war on a death march where he died going to Mauthausen. I never learned the story of how Rosenbaumová kept going. She was the only survivor in her family, and along with Schönová, the two of the original *Broučci* creators to endure and outlast the *Shoa*.

The second series of *Broučci* productions, performed in 1945, were described to me by Vera Meisels, one of the rare performers to survive. I had learned about Vera from Lauren McConnell, theatre professor at Central Michigan University who was also staging *Broučci*

with her college students at that University, in 2013. Vera Meisels was flown from Tel Aviv to Central Michigan University to participate as the role of narrator, sitting on stage. I interviewed Vera in Tel Aviv in 2014 and learned that she was eight years old during the performances and had a lead role as the girlfriend of firefly *Brouček*.¹⁵

Vera remembered, "As a child we had many rehearsals and we all rehearsed many parts. We were assigned several because we never knew who would be present for the next rehearsal or for the performances because there was illness, and so many fell sick and were absent. Or gone because there were deportations all the time (to Auschwitz). One never knew who would be missing". Vera demonstrated gestures so enthusiastically and sang me Czech folk songs she recalled were part of the performance. "I remember the loving gestures of opening your arms, the optimism - we sang about the coming of spring, and we opened our arms so wide to the sides, as if we could encompass the sky".

Vera remembered one performance when they came to watch the show. The SS officers had removed their helmets and placed them on the edge of the little attic stage, the insignia of the Nazi skull and crossbones facing the stage and leering at Vera and the other children. Were the skull and crossbones a warning for what the SS officers would do to them after the show? It's all she could think about. Finally, the end of the performance came, the men took their helmets off the edge of the stage, put them back atop their heads and



Friedl Dicker-Brandeis watercolor costumes design for Rosenbaumová. Photo courtesy of Museum of Tolerance archives

left. Vera Meisels was amazed. She has written poetry books based on her childhood memories of Theresienstadt. *Threshold of Pain* is her latest book.

After my interviews with Meisels, she sent me to visit the Museum Beit Theresienstadt (House of Theresienstadt) at Kibbutz Givat Haim, including a special section on the children in Terezin. Meisels has been one of the docents in this museum which contains information by some of the 15,000 children who went through the ghetto camp including testimonies of some of the approximately 150 children who survived. Drawings and poems created in Friedl Dicker-Brandeis's classes hang on the walls. The archives also include an electronic database with details about the 160,000 Jews interned in the ghetto camp. I was able to glean two things from my museum visit: I purchased my own copy of Vava Shean's autobiography and I received the name and email address of another child survivor, Jana Urbanova who had been a performer in the second wave of *Broučci* performances.

Unfortunately, I could find nothing in Beit Theresienstadt that give me any information about Rosenbaumová.

The Most Invaluable Resource

In 2015, through my contacts at the Jewish Museum in Prague, I was told about Rosenbaumová's daughter, Kate Rys with an email address. I wrote to her in England with anticipation, relieved I could express myself in English as I discovered she wrote in both Czech and English. We have been corresponding ever since. Through Kate Rys I could finally learn the outlines of her mother's life.

Throughout her years as a working dancer and choreographer whether before, during or after World War II, Rosenbaumová worked with the best and most interesting Czech artists. For me, that is the ultimate measure of her own exceptional worth artistically. Perhaps before WWII, Rosenbaumová already worked as a choreographer. She surely worked for the important Czech theatre director F. Burian and his D34 theatre company, a Czech equivalent to Bertolt Brecht's ensemble. They did productions expressing Burian's communist ideas about the nobleness of the worker, and the need to support workers and show solidarity with them. "Mum was a staunch communist, just like Friedl (Dicker-Brandeis), having grown up in a poor family, having been ostracized or made to feel ashamed as a young girl...I believe she was inspired a lot by other dancers and choreographers while she danced at F. Burian's Theatre D34 and later at Voskovec & Werich's 'Liberated Theatre' before the war, especially by Saša Machov" (Jan. 2, 2016 email).

In Prague at the Arts Academy, I happened to address the class of Doprota Gremlicová. She gave me a book in which a paper of hers appeared called *Traditional Dance as a Phenomenon inside The Czech Modernism*;¹⁶ she makes a very significant point about the meaning of using a folktale like *Broučci* to work with: "The significant personalities in Czech modernist arts were dancer Jarmila Kroschlová (*Ausdruckstanz*), theatrical director Emil F. Burian, choreographer Saša Machov and the linguist Petr Bogatyrev. Their artistic opinions were based on values which they found also in the folk arts...as a complex structure potentially able to address the modern people thanks to metaphorical ways of expression, imaginative playfulness, the con-

tact with the everyday life combined with the free fantasy, critical, burlesque view of the world. For the stage, it necessitated complex knowledge of the material and the context, understanding of the ethos of folk culture." It seemed to me that perfectly explained the use of folk songs by the composer and the elements of simple folk dance woven together by Rosenbaumová, combined with her own dance ideas for the children to express the scenes in the folk tale so beloved by adults and children alike.

In other correspondence with Kys, I learned that Rosenbaumová's first marriage was to Pavel Rosenbaum. After they met, she discovered they had a love of music in common. "He played the violin very well, and Mum played the piano and they often played together. He and Kamila had their son Ivo, born in 1933."

They lived in Prague. Kate knew her mother was born in Vienna in 1908 to a Czech couple, who moved back to Prague... Pavel's family in Peruc. They were deported from there to the Theresienstadt Ghetto in 1940.

Rosenbaumová's Message

Kate's letters and article provide the only real information about Kamila Rosenbaumová. In all of her decades working in dance - before, during and after World War II - she had several goals. She wanted children to stay engaged and healthy, she wanted to help adults and children to experience the excitement of creation, whether professionally or as amateurs (using the true meaning of the word, for love of something). As a working choreographer she knew that a story could be expressed through movement, and that dance wasn't just something decorous or auxiliary. It was a way to enhance and illuminate a story and move the narrative forward through movement. She knew how to carry on the idea of the importance of collaboration and the collective - she knew participating together would benefit the individual but also it would benefit the group and even society. It is ironic that the translation of the Czech word for choreography, *Taneční spolupráce* which appears on the *Brundibár* poster coupled with her name literally means "dance cooperation". Kamila Rosenbaumová's very being seemed invested in the idea of finding cooperation in every situation especially children creating together. In the case of *Broučci* it meant creating together an ideal society for the children to experience. In rehearsal and in performance, they could believe in the reality of what they created together.

Sometimes the society she worked to improve was urban life of Prague, and sometimes it was resisting the authority of the Nazis, banding children and adults together for the benefit of the ghetto, showing that they would live on through the humor of cabaret productions, through delight and imagination. She took the message of *Broučci* quite seriously, and through an imaginative, enchanting children's story, she found a metaphoric way with the other artists, to show the children a path, to continue and to light the way. Ultimately at the end of every *Broučci* performance, the children were strong and free, frolicking in the springtime they had created, despite what might be lurking offstage. Onstage, they were playing and loving and marrying in a grand wedding celebrated in dance and song. I have not read anything that Kamila Rosenbaumová wrote in her own

Kate knew little about the war years growing up

On Dec. 5, 2015 Kate wrote to me that “I found Friedl’s beautiful costume sketches for dance on the internet some years ago, when I started searching for information about my mum, as I knew very little about her previous life, especially about her time in Terezin. Mum didn’t talk about her past much.”

Later, when discussing dance styles including expressionism, Kate wrote to me (January 2 2016), “I must have seen mum dancing when I was little, but don’t remember it at all and when I was older, mum had already stopped dancing – she was born in 1908 and dance isn’t like other art, it can only be practiced for limited years.

...I agree with you that if you wish to stage *Broučci* with references to Terezin, it does sound right to incorporate expressive dance movements into the performance. After all, Mum did that with other performances too, e.g. in *Brundibár* where she taught Ela Weissberger (then Stein) who played the cat, not only how to move as a cat on the stage, but also how to dance waltz.”

Her mother not only choreographed in L410 girls’ *heim* or home but she also lived there. Pavel lived elsewhere and Ivo was in a home for young children. In Kate’s article called “Remembering Our Mum Kamila” printed in the *Terezin Initiative Newsletter No. 82*, in 2016, she wrote that, “Pavel Rosenbaum was deported from Terezin to Auschwitz in September 1944 allegedly ‘for work’, but he perished in the gas chamber straight after his arrival. The following month my mum, together with her son Ivo and a girl named Eva Wollsteiner (aged 13) whom she informally adopted in Terezin ...were transported to Auschwitz as well. Immediately after their arrival they were separated and both Ivo and Eva perished shortly afterwards. After several days in Auschwitz, my mum was sent to a labor camp in Oederan, Germany together with girls she used to take care of in a girls’ home in Terezin. Towards the end of the war they ended up by chance back in Terezin.” Kate specified on August 30, 2019, “haggard prisoners from concentration camps started to arrive to Terezin from other camps. Mum hoped that Ivo and Pavel would return...After she was liberated (by the Russians) and returned to Prague, her

search for her beloved son and her husband continued through a “repatriation office.” Later she met her second husband Ing Otto Guth...

Rosenbaumova Remarried

Kate continues in her article, “Mum did not want to remain paralyzed by the tragic past and wanted to have children again; my sister and I appeared, me in 1946, Mariana two years later. Mum continued dancing for several years and later on she returned to choreography, for example for the City Youth Theatre and in the *Rural Theater Vesnické divadlo*. In 1955 Mum started teaching gymnastics, ballet and dance in our local school. My sister and I scurried enthusiastically round the stage during Mum’s school performance of *Fireflies* having no notion of its connection with the performance in Terezin. Later on, Mum worked for the local authority, organizing various public courses including ‘ballroom for young adults’ (a tradition which introduces dancing as well as social etiquette to teenagers).”

Kate wrote me (Jan. 2, 2016) that she had visited Israel in 2006 “and met some of the Terezin girls’ my mum looked after in the girls’ *heim* L410.” As was the case for me, too, when I visited the touching museum to Theresienstadt called Beit Terezin outside of Tel Aviv, she wrote “I also spent a short time at Beit Terezin but did not find much there about my mum.”

In the same email she wrote that “I know that some years after the war she taught stage movement to actors, but don’t know more details. I only know because once, while watching a performance in a theatre together, she made a proud remark about having taught the leading actor how to move on stage.”

I wrote to ask Kate when did her mother die? The answer came in Kate’s July 10, 2019 email: Kamila Rosenbaumová died, sadly due to cancer, on the 26th of July, 1988 in Prague. She had lived 80 very full years, not the Nazi’s maniacal plan to cut her off at 36 by murdering her– hers was an optimistically productive life investing in children and in fellow professional artists, always focused on improving the community where she found herself, whether in Terezin or in Prague as a loving woman and a creative dancer.

hand, so her ideas come to us through her expressionist sweep of dance movements and through the relationships she had and creations she made - notated so briefly on valiantly colored one page ads saved in the archives of Theresienstadt. In trying to bring back her potent ideas to help articulate what she created, before Terezin, during her years when she was captive, and after 1945 I've been sad about the paucity of information. I unwittingly added to the situation by publishing a mistaken fact about her fate in Auschwitz. To counteract this, I continue to speak out about Kamila Rosenbaumová as often as I can, I create dance programs and was moved to recreate *Broučci* at the Sokol Czech Slovak Center in St. Paul, Minnesota; in the Milwaukee JCC program presented a program for *Yom hashoa*, the Holocaust Commemoration in conjunction with the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, in May of 2016; I did an exhibition with photos and information about Rosenbaumová and her three fellow creators of *Broučci* when I recreated the musical at the Czech Slovak Center in St. Paul, MN with 32 children; I spoke about her at a week of dance teaching in Weimar, Germany in 2017 when I taught at the Yiddish Summer Weimar.

Coda

Now, with this article, I can say how vital was Kamila Rosenbaumová's artistic and humanistic contributions, giving children and audiences joy through movement, expressing a charming story of childhood friendship. Rosenbaumová's creative forces helped her to outlast her tormentors; she could create despite the destruction she lived through, despite the horror of losing her young son, her husband, friends, and the community as she knew it, both the mundane and the artistic.

Only recently did I think to write to Rosenbaumová's daughter to ask what was her the date of her death? The answer came in Kate's July 13, 2019 email. Kamila Rosenbaumová died on July 26, 1988, felled by cancer in the city she considered home. She was in Prague where she had established two different households, one before WWII and one after, each with a family, each a place she also left from to choreograph or to teach.

After all these years trying to trace Rosenbaumová's biography and learn about her aesthetics and her ideas, I am still left with only the outlines of her life. But I understand that foremost, I deeply admire Rosenbaumová and I know her to be extraordinary. I am committed to acclaim her incredibly creative accomplishments in the worst of situations, surrounded by illness and starvation and death, bringing beauty and joy and humor to children and adults alike. I also know she worked with optimism to contribute to make a better world as she envisioned. Now I have the true information that she lived 80 years and not the 36 years that the Nazis had plotted for her. I surely will continue to correct the basic flawed information I published in my original story and I will speak about her as often as possible. At the least, we are now able to write Kamila Rosenbaumová more fully back into the list of the living.

Notes

¹ All translations from Czech to English are by Blanka Brichta.

² ...*I Never Saw Another Butterfly...Children's Drawings and Poems from Theresienstadt Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*, edited by Hana

Volavkova, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962, with the slight information that the "documents collected in this publication have been chosen from the archives of the State Jewish Museum in Prague". The book was translated into English, German, Swedish, Spanish and Yiddish.

³ I originally created the solo for myself for the first *Young Choreographers Evening*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, in 1971. For newest rendition of the solo danced by Megan McClellan, see website www.jbriningber.com. Past Projects 2017, link down to RUN of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (accessed June, 2019).

⁴ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt> (accessed July 1, 2019). "Succumbing to pressure following the deportation of Danish Jews to Theresienstadt, the Germans permitted the International Red Cross to visit in June 1944. It was all an elaborate hoax. The Germans intensified deportations from the ghetto shortly before the visit, and the ghetto itself was "beautified." Gardens were planted, "houses painted, and barracks renovated. The Nazis staged social and cultural events for the visiting dignitaries and a film was made. Once the visit was over, the Germans resumed deportations from Theresienstadt..."

⁵ For the Red Cross visit to see the "town", Lagus told us, stores had been set up on the town square with produce temporarily placed in the "stores", providing the illusion that the prisoners could buy food and goods in their "model town." The film by the Nazis, *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, included part of a performance of the musical *Brundibár*. In 2019 I chanced upon an internet entry about Karel Švenk which mentioned him and Rosenbaumová in a different film: "In the autumn of 1942 he appeared in passing in the propaganda film *Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet*, standing with the puppeteer Otto Neumann and the dancer Kamila Rosenbaumová." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karel_Švenk (accessed in May, 2019).

⁶ "Rosenbaumová was deported from there and killed at Auschwitz in 1944" appears in Judith Brin Ingber's "Vilified or Glorified? Nazi Versus Zionist Views of the Jewish Body", ed., Judith Brin Ingber, *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, 264.

⁷ I was invited by the Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota organization to recreate *Broučci*. The children's five months of rehearsals culminated in two performances on Sunday May 15, 2016 and a week later at the Sholom Home for the Jewish aged in St. Paul, Minnesota. See sidebar for more information.

⁸ Willy Groh survived the war, returned to Theresienstadt to recover the treasure and donated the drawings and poems to the Prague Jewish Museum. Others are also credited with saving children's art works, including Mrs. A. Flachová of Brno whose husband had been a teacher in the L417 children's home, as well as individuals who were able to save single items.

⁹ Nava Shean, *To Be an Actress*, 33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ Makarova, Elena, *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Vienna 1898-Auschwitz 1944; The Artist Who Inspired the Children's Drawings of Terezin*, Los Angeles: Tallfellow/Every Picture Press, 2001, 33. On this catalogue page there are three images: a large reproduction of a poster of *Broučci*, a small photo of Karel Švenk, circa 1940, and the all important small head shot portrait of Kamila Rosen with the simple caption "Kamila Rosenbaumová circa 1960."

¹² The Czech translation for the Children's opera in two acts *Dětská*

Brin Ingber's MN

Production of *Broučci*

I recreated *Broučci* at the Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota organization (CSPS), May 15, 2016 with 44 children ranging from the ages of 4 through their late teens. We created a new production with Czech and Slovak folk dances which I interwove with my imaginative movement and also Jewish *Ashkenazi* wedding dance *freylich's* for the final scene, Czech folk songs, and prose from stories based on the original 1876 favorite Czech children's book *Broučci*, and a Hebrew translation by Vera Meisels. Information from interviews with child survivor Vera Meisels, who had been a child performer in Terezin; letters from another child performer Jana Urbanova (born Klacer) whose father also had staged *Broučci* Czechoslovakia after WWII; discussion and studio work with Czech dancer Blanka Brichta plus conversations and studio time with Craig Harris (the musician who had also worked on reconstructing a Theresienstadt revue called *Why We Laugh*) all helped me to create the production. The children in the cast and their families learned much about Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto in age appropriate auxiliary and interactive talks especially by Tim Lauer whose parents had been interred in Theresienstadt, his mother in charge of the over-all life of the children, plus age appropriate books made available during the rehearsal process from September through May. One of the older boys, for example, asked to borrow my copy of *The Diary of Ann Frank*. I could see him avidly reading while he waited during rehearsals for his part on stage. When he finished reading, he asked me if I thought Vera Meisels (the child in Theresienstadt) had met Ann Frank? It was heartbreaking for me to try to explain briefly how that wouldn't have been possible. In some cases, the background information about *Broucci* was the families' first experience learning about Czech Holocaust history and what happened to Jewish Czech and Slovak families, their citizenship and rights totally abrogated during the war. Families at the Czech and Slovak Sokol organization include those who are relatively newly arrived in Minnesota, the parents working in one of the multi-national MN firms or at the Univ. of MN. Other families represent Czech or Slovak descendants who have lived in MN for several generations.

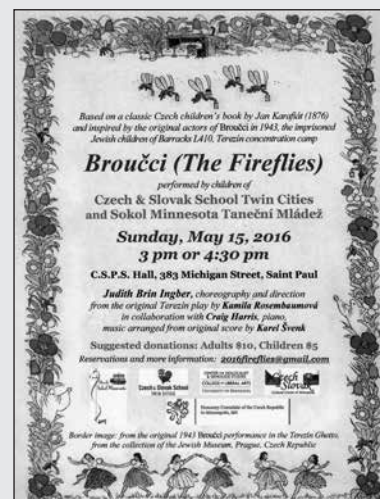
The rehearsals and performance at Sokol took place at the historic CSPS Hall, 383 Michigan St, St. Paul, MN, the first proscenium stage in the state, according to historic records, with a fly loft including many hand drawn canvas backdrops of the Czech countryside. This added authentic looking aspects to the stage picture. I designed the costumes coordinating colors with the backdrop; a committee of mothers sewed for the production and a committee of parents added props for the firefly house, and giant flowers for the night scene with the little child animals hiding under the flowers. By the end of the rehearsal process, the children and the adults could almost personalize their connection with the four original artists who had created the musical in Theresienstadt/Terezin ghetto.

The sold-out audiences gathered at the historic Sokol Hall (visited by Dvorak when he was composing and teaching for a year in near-by Iowa), plus there was an added performance nearby which some also attended, at the Sholom Senior Housing and Assisted Living, also in St Paul, MN. The Sholom home performance, also with the adult choir, with Harris's playing on a grand piano, the narration declaimed by a senior high school student in the cast, plus speaking by the cast occasionally in Czech and singing by the children to augment the choir, was a command performance for the late Walter Schwartz, survivor from Czechoslovakia and Rumania.

Further aid in the rehearsals and performances came from Lenka Bragg, coordinator of the Czech and Slovak School for the Twin Cities Theater Program; Louise Wessinger, director of Czech and Slovak folk dance groups for Sokol MN; Don Haselbauer, director of the Sokol MN Singers; and Craig Harris, the pianist and composer (Harris extended the few known jazz fragments composed by Švenk with Czech children's folk songs, and Harris's own music to accompany all the scenes). Also, cookies and strudels were prepared in the Sokol kitchen by volunteer chefs following recipes in the cookbook *In Memories Kitchen: A Legacy of the Women from Terezin*. These desserts were made available after the performances.

At both sites there was an exhibition I co-produced with Blanka Brichta including objects, photos, pod-casts, maps and informational signage plus books about the Theresienstadt/Terezin Ghetto. Recorded stories with photos featuring Czech and Slovak Jewish families who had survived and resettled in MN were featured. We were aided in preparing the exhibit by the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (CHGS) at the University of Minnesota. One of the podcasts showed Walter Schwartz interviewed by the CHGS telling his story about living through the *Shoah* as his portrait was being painted. A photo of the painting, in the CHGS collection, was also in the exhibition. In the exhibition, there were also photographs of Kamila Rosenbaumová and her family (sent by her daughter Kate Rys) along with information about her and the three other artists who created the original *Broučci*.

See link to the whole project at www.jbriningber.com, click on "Past Projects", scrolling down from heading 2017. This section includes a short film by Nancy Mason Hauser, compiled from the performances.



Border of the 2016 performances from original flyer for *Broučci*, courtesy of the Jewish Museum of Prague

Opera 'o' 2 Obrazech, showing order of importance of creators after the overall director, Hans Krása. *Hudebně nastudoval* (Musical staging) by Rudolf Freudernfeld; *Režie a scéna* (Stage Director): Fr. Zelenka; *Taneční spolupráce* (Choreography) by Kamila Rosenbaumová. It says ironically that the place of performance will be *Děti Terezínkých Dětských Útulků* or the Children's Refuge of Theresienstadt, clearly necessary for public consumption.

¹³The translator notes: "the spelling of names can be a challenge - because sometimes they are written in German, sometimes only "Germanized" or "Czech-ized", or sometimes spelled only in Czech but those are the same ladies - with the same names. For example, in German the name would be Lantsch, but in Czech-German version would be Lantschová (as it appears here), but in other advertisements it was also written in pure Czech spelling, making it Lančova or Lančová." Brin Ingber has chosen to refer to the artists throughout this article with the Czech spellings of the artists' names.

¹⁴ Lisa Peschel, ed., *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape; Cabarets and Plays from the Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto*, 7.

¹⁵ Dorota Gremlicova, "Traditional Dance as a Phenomenon Inside the Czech Modernism", 243-244.

¹⁶ Without Rosenbaumová during the second run, the performances must have been a little different though the spirit was the same. Her daughter wrote to the author on Jan. 2, 2016 that "Mariana Smeralova who was also a dancer and mum's close friend before the war and in Terezin she helped to choreograph Broučci in 1945 after Mum's deportation to Auschwitz." In Nava Shean's book she writes that years later, "in 1985, at a reunion of Terezin survivors in Israel, an attractive middle-aged woman approached me and introduced herself: "I am a firefly." A few days later she sent me a letter. 'I approached you during the reunion because I owe you my childhood. My entire childhood up to age 6 was totally erased from my memory because of the trauma of the Holocaust. When I was your 'firefly' then eight years old, after two years of anxiety, fear and everything that each Jew experienced... this became my best childhood memory: to run around the stage and sing *The Spring will come* (a well-known Czech folk song). For me it was more than you can imagine. You created there, under the difficult conditions, great moments for the children, and fulfilled a significant positive role within the hidden corners of our souls," 34.

¹⁷ Gremlicova wrote in her chapter about dance artists in World War II that the dancer Nina Jirsiková was in Machov's dance group working with Burian in his Theatre D34. We know Rosenbaumová was also part of this constellation of artists. The author wrote on page 244: "Together with Burian, Jirsiková was arrested by the Nazis and she spent several years in the concentration camp." I realized I should have understood that Jirsiková was a Jew; I was told she was an important avant garde Jewish dancer who eventually escaped to Israel. Here is another figure I know nothing about.

¹⁸ Vera Meisels showed me a large reproduction of a child's drawing of a flower in the exhibition in Beit Theresienstadt. I realized Vera had drawn it and signed it in a very legible hand. Vera's childhood drawing had turned up in one of the collections of saved paintings from Friedl Dicker-Brandeis's classes that Vera must have participated in. It has joined other drawings in the museum to the children of Theresienstadt at Kibbutz Givat Haim Ihud, Emek Hefer, Israel.

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