

לעקסיקאָן פון ייִדישן טעאַטער

Index

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Cumulative Index to Zalman Zylbercweig's *Leksikon fun Yidishn Teater*

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The six published volumes of editor Zalman Zylbercweig's *Leksikon fun Yidishn Teater* [Lexicon of the Yiddish Theater] appeared over a period of more than thirty years (1931-1969) and in three countries. Dozens of volunteers collected the information and wrote the entries, which reflect fully not only the personalities and histories of the individuals listed but also the varying styles and idiosyncrasies of the contributing writers. Volume two, published in Warsaw in 1934 on the worst possible paper, poses more of a preservation problem than the other five volumes, published in New York or Mexico City, and it is extremely difficult to obtain. Volume five, the Holocaust memorial volume, lists primarily individuals and theater organizations destroyed by the Nazis, and the mere brevity of the entries, many of them lacking even full names, not to mention precise dates of death, speaks to how little was sometimes known of an individual and yet how important this gesture of commemoration was to the Yiddish-speaking theater community. Volume seven got as far as the page proof stage but was never published and remains scattered in several repositories.

Crucial as this reference tool is to researchers in the fields of Yiddish culture and theater history, it has been difficult to use for want of a single index. Volumes one and two cover the letters alef to ayin in order, but, as the editor proceeded, he discovered more and more omissions and included them in subsequent volumes. Eventually any attempt at alphabetical order was abandoned, and volumes three through six have individual indices to facilitate their use. In preparing this cumulation, however, names have been discovered in the indices which do not appear in the text while some entries in the text do not appear in any of the indices. This index, therefore, seeks to point the reader to what is actually in the body of the six published volumes; "see" entries included in the body of the work are noted as well, although it must be pointed out that not all "see" entries lead to anything. The instruction "see supplement" must refer to a projected further volume that never came to fruition. The surprising omission of such luminaries as the brilliant Israeli comedy team of Dzhigan and Shumakher or the reference in the entry "Badkhonim-aktyorn" that instructs those interested in Eliakum Zunsler to see a separate entry under his name, which does not exist, also suggest the expectation of further volumes. In those cases in which a name is listed without a corresponding entry, the name does appear in the index but with the notation 'דערמאָנען נישט געפונען'. Users of this index who find references to these or other names are encouraged to communicate their discoveries (fjones@nypl.org).

The utility of the *Leksikon* would be further enhanced by an index not just of name entries but of the productions, theaters, and places mentioned within the entries as well. Another major desideratum would be to assemble and publish (and add to this index) a complete set of page proofs of the unpublished seventh volume. Finally, it should be noted that illustrations have not been indexed, even when captioned with names, since the great merit of this work seems not so much visual as textual.

Zalman Zylbercweig (Sept. 27, 1894 - [July 25, 1972])

From: *Leksikon fun der Nayer Yidisher Literatur* translated by Faith Jones, Dorot Jewish Division

Born in Ozorkow, near Lodz, Poland, into a family related to Malbim [Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Mikhal]. Son of the Yiddish-Hebrew writer Tsvi-Hirsh Zylbercweig. At the age of three moved with his parents to Lodz, studied in a modernized traditional Jewish religious school, in the Lida [Belarus] yeshivah of Rabbi [Isaac Jacob] Reines, and in vocational courses. For a time managed an estate office, then went into business. From youth on he was an enthusiast of Yiddish theater. In 1912 he managed Hebrew and Yiddish theater groups, and was a founder of "LIDA" (Lodz Yiddish Dramatic Actors). In 1913 he was engaged as an interpreter of European theater repertoire at the Scala Theater in Lodz. In 1915-1918, during the German occupation, he managed a touring company in Lodz province and for it he wrote skits and one-act plays and also adapted plays by European dramatists. In 1922, he began to collect materials for an intended volume on Yiddish actors and Yiddish theater, from which grew the biographies in his later work, *Leksikon fun Yidishn Teater* [*Lexicon of Yiddish Theater*]. In 1924, he left Lodz and settled in Palestine, from where he traveled to America for three months in 1926, after which he returned to Palestine, visiting America again in 1927. Later he traveled in connection with his lexicon to Jewish communities around the world. In 1936, he visited Argentina, Poland, France, England and other countries. In 1937, he returned to America, settling in New York, and became an employee of the American branch of YIVO, a member of the national executive of the Jewish National Workers' Alliance, president of the United Emergency Relief Committee for the City of Lodz, etc. In 1948 he travelled to Los Angeles, where ever since he has presented (with his wife Celia) the "Zylbercweig Yiddish Radio Hour," serves as chair and executive member of the "Committee for Yiddish Education," chairs the local YIVO committee, and is active in other institutions.

He began writing humorous sketches in his youth and in 1910 published a translation from Polish--a skit by Janusz Korczak--in the *Lodzer Tageblatt* [*Lodz Daily News*]. From 1909 to 1910 he published his translations of sketches and stories from European literature in A. Reisen's Warsaw periodical *Eyropäische Literatur* [*European Literature*]. In 1912 he became a regular staff member (and for a time co-editor) of the daily paper *Lodzer Tageblatt*, where, from 1915 to 1924 he was the editor and published feuilletons, political articles, reportage, humour, anecdotes, adaptations of novels, and translations of European belles-lettres as well as criticism of books, music, and Yiddish theater. For many years he was the Lodz correspondent and contributor to the Warsaw newspaper *Haynt* [*Today*], the New York *Forverts* [*Forward*], the Buenos Aires *Yidishe Tsaytung* [*Jewish Newspaper*], and other publications. He also contributed to *Fraye Erd* [*Free Soil*], *Teater un Kunst* [*Theater and Art*], *Teater un Kino* [*Theater and Film*], *Heftn far Literatur* [*Literary Notebooks*], *Der Yidisher Zhurnal* [*The Jewish Journalist*] (of these last four he was also co-editor), *Literatur* [*Literature*], *Yugend* [*Youth*], *Di Yetstige Tsayt* [*Contemporary Times*], and other literary journals published in Lodz since 1912. He has appeared also in *Altnayland* [*Old-New Land*], *Literarische Bleter* [*Literary Review*] (Warsaw); *Vilne Tog* [*The Vilna Day*]; *Dos Naye Leben* [*New Life*] (Bialystock); *Keneder Adler* [*Canada Eagle*] (Montreal); *Morgen-Zhurnal* [*Morning Journal*], *Amerikaner* [*The American*], *Tsukunft* [*The Future*], *Teater-Shtern*

[*Theater Star*], *Pinkus fun Amopteyl* [Reports from the American Section of YIVO], *YIVO-Bleter* [YIVO Review] (New York); *Parizer Haynt* [Paris Today], *Undzer Vort* [Our Word] (Paris); also in the Yiddish and Hebrew press in Israel. He was the editor of *Der Amerikaner* (New York, 1937-1948) and of the *Lodzer Yisker-Bukh* [Lodz Memorial Book] (New York, 1943); co-editor of *Eliyahu Tenenholts's Yoyvl-Bukh* [Eliyahu Tenenholtz's Jubilee Book] (New York, 1955).

In book form he published: *Hintern Forhang* [Behind the Scenes] (articles and anecdotes about Yiddish theater), Vilna, 1928, 207 pp.; *Vos der Yidisher Aktyor Dertseylt* [What the Jewish Actor Recounts] (curiosities and anecdotes), Vilna, 1928, 70 pp.; *Teater-Zikhroynes* [Theater Memoirs], Vilna, 1928, 106 pp.; *Avram Goldfaden un Zigmunt Mogulesko* [Abraham Goldfaden and Sigmund Mogulesco], Buenos Aires, 1936, 186 pp.; *Teater-Figur* [Theater Personalities], Buenos Aires, 1936, 159 pp.; *Albom fun Yidishn Teater* [Album of Yiddish Theater], New York, 1937, 116 pp.; *Avram Goldfaden* [Abraham Goldfaden] (on the 100th anniversary of his birth), New York, 1940, 16 pp.; *Teater-Mozaik* [Theater Mosaic], New York, 1941, 320 pp.; *Ahad Ha-am un Zayn Batsiung tsu Yidish* [Ahad Haam and his Relationship to Yiddish], Los Angeles, 1956, 140 pp.; *Teater-Heftn* [Theater Notebooks], New York, 1943-1948 (part of these were reprinted in the third volume of the *Leksikon fun Yidishn Teater*); and the one-act plays *Ir Shvester* [Her Sister], Warsaw, 1920, 32 pp.; *Kharote* [Remorse] (children's play with song lyrics), Lodz, 1921, 32 pp.; and more. He was the author of the topical comedy *Poznanski un Kon* [Posnanski and Cohn] (which played in Lodz, 1924); of the one-act plays *Vide* [Confession], *Der Medalyon* [The Locket], Piotrkow [Poland], 1920, 24 pp.; and of the melodramas, *Der Yidisher Revolyutsyoner* [The Jewish Revolutionary], *Mit Farmakhte Oygn* [With Closed Eyes], *Man un Vayb* [Husband and Wife], *Di Farbrecher* [The Criminals], *Di Shtoltse Froy* [The Proud Woman], and others (produced in Lodz province in the years following World War I). He translated and adapted for the Yiddish stage plays by Alexandre Dumas, William Shakespeare, Hermann Sudermann, Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, Herman Heijermans, Leonid Andreyev, Fiodor Dostoyevski, Arthur Schnitzler, Octave Mirbeau, and others.

Zylbercweig's most important contribution to Jewish literature is the *Leksikon fun Yidishn Teater*. Volume 1, New York, 1931; Volume 2, Warsaw, 1934; and Volume 3, New York, 1959 (the first three volumes were edited jointly with Jacob Mestel), comprise 2,416 columns, with over 700 entries on Yiddish actors, playwrights, translators, critics, directors, reviewers and theater organizations, which make up the history of Yiddish theater over the last 150 years. In this theater lexicon, there is also material about Jewish badkhnim [jesters], Purim shpilers [carnival players], Broder singers [troubadours], and folk singers, as well as comprehensive monographs on Abraham Goldfaden, Jacob Gordin, I. L. Peretz, David Pinski, Sholem Aleichem, Zalman Rejzen, Peretz Hirschbein, Sholem Asch, Mendele Mokher Seforim, and others. [Volume 4 appeared in New York, 1963; Volume 5, Mexico City, 1967; Volume 6, Mexico City, 1969; the six volumes totaling 6,132 columns. Volume 5, subtitled "Kdoyshim band" (martyrs volume), is a memorial book for actors killed in the Holocaust; Volume 6 includes biographical information on the contributors to the *Leksikon*].