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THE YIDDISH STAGE .

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The year 1877 may be considered as the date of the birth of the Yiddish stage , and Jassy in Roumania as its birthplace ; it was originated by a former rabbi of Zytomir . At first the comedians and singers were recruited from clerks , artisans out of work , assistant teachers at religious schools and kindred professional failures . The first personators of female roles and singers were servant girls dissatisfied with their mistresses , cooks fond of dancing , and millinery girls afraid of work . Whoever is acquainted with the history of the origin of the Yiddish stage will justify our doubts in the existence of a Yiddish Thespian cart . In Abraham Goldfaden , the real creator of the Yiddish stage and originator of the Yiddish drama, the Yiddish Thespis celebrated his resurrection , Goldfaden was devoted enough to take over from his predecessors the Thespian cart with all its troubles and tribulations . He pushed it assiduously from Jassy to Botuschani , from Botuschani to Galatz , from Galatz to other towns and at last to Bucharest . The times were very propitious for Goldfaden's enterprise. The Russian-Turkish war lured many "Podratschiki" (army contractors) to Bucharest , and these acclaimed the Yiddish Theatre with great enthusiasm .There at last they had found in the strange town a place where they could meet in the evening and for a few rubles enjoy a thrilling drama interspersed with peals of laughter. Goldfaden did a splendid business , and the Yiddish theatre had become an established fact.

Goldfaden has made himself lastingly famous through the Yiddish stage . He created an institution which has become one of the most powerful factors for the promotion of culture among the Eastern Jews . We cannot praise Goldfaden as being a dramatic author of note , nevertheless we must admire the originator of the theater . He laid the plans for it and executed them . He was sponsor of the thought and executed it . He created the stage and also the repertory . In the first year he wrote not less than sixteen melodramas and composed the music for the same ; he gave instruction to his horde of artists in acting and in singing and prepared them for the stage . It is true , the stage , the drama , the acting , all was no good but it would have been a wonder if it had been different . An author who divides his mental powers in hundreds of parts , cannot with the best of intention , create something good . This uncanny many-sidedness of the creator left its impression on his creations . Goldfaden became founder of the theatre , director , author of dramas , composer of songs and manager all in one person . The Goldfaden Theater was the home of the drama , the opera , the operettas , the variety shows and the orpheum , all in one house . A play written by Goldfaden is made up of just as many parts ; it is a drama , a comedy , a farce , an operetta and a variety specialty all in one . One would be tempted to call Goldfaden a childishly naive author , if he had not been so deucedly artful . He speculated on the ignorance of his audiences amusing themselves in his theatre. The lack of all artistic feeling of his audiences made it possible for him to cover his artistic nudity . Every play was replete with mis-statements , but his audiences accepted them with thanks as true and good value . He produced puppets on his stage , and they were greeted as living persons . He invented the most impossible situations , nobody took offense , his actors cracked the most insipid jokes , and the audience laughed to shake the beams of the house . Goldfaden knew his audiences . He once said , "I play for Moische , not for Moses ." He knew that this ghetto people possesses a wonderful imagination , and will supplement from its own mind , everything that is missing. It sufficed to paint a single tree on the scenery , and the people saw in it a whole forest . A yellow scalloped paper headgear was for the audience a brilliant golden crown .

Whoever carried a sword at his left side was a hero according to all the rules of the art and whose body was covered

best .

With all his artfulness Goldfaden possessed a high degree of ingenuity . He was a tolerably good lyric and imagined himself a high-class dramatist . In the hundreds of dramas which he wrote there is not one character true to life . He designs kings and heros of olden times , as well as types from the ghetto with whom he came in daily contact with the same childish awkwardness. Characteristic of Goldfaden's ingenuity are his types of fools , not missing in a single one of his plays . He introduced about two hundred fools on the Yiddish stage , but not one of them ever utters a witty or sensible word . But it would be unjust to the highest degree if one would for this reason , detract from Goldfaden's merit . The Yiddish theatre has not only become , in its further development , an institution of art creating and advancing culture among the masses of the Jews , it has been a school of civilization in Goldfaden's times already . He did not spoil the artistic taste of those who composed his audiences, because before the appearance of Goldfaden , they had none at all . And what does not exist , cannot be damaged . On the other hand it is also true he has not cultivated the taste for better things among them . He did not have the power nor the poetic ambition to do so . But indirectly his theatre has instructed the Jewish masses of the East . It was a preparatory course for the modern Yiddish stage , which was established later in New York and London . In using the melodies from the best known German operas and operettas for his songs , Goldfaden rendered the ear of his audiences susceptible to other melodies besides the synagogue liturgy or the music played at weddings . He told them in his plays , not dramatically , but in well sounding rhymes , all kinds of instructive tales from history , ethical legends from the world of myth and occurrences from practical life . Makkabi and Mattithjahu , Bar Kochba and Elieser , Herod and Mariamne , Holofernes and Judith , Rabbi Joselman and Doctor Almassado—Goldfaden taught the Jewish masses how to pronounce these names , and made them acquainted with the most important events happening in their career .The success of Goldfaden in Roumania was of short duration . After the close of the Russian-Turkish war , the sources of revenue for the Yiddish theater became exhausted , because the Podraschitki and their helpers had left for home . Goldfaden was compelled to return to Russia . He went with his troupe of players to Odessa . In that place his enterprise took on a new start from an artistic as well as from a material viewpoint . The setting of the stage was greatly improved, the actors had outgrown the amateur period , and some good and artistic results could be conceded . The patronage of the public surpassed all expectation , in one word business was flourishing . (To be Continued .)

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