Ross’s visit was organized as part of a series in memory of Pearl and Nathan Berkowitz, Sam and Helen Stahl’s daughter and son-in-law. Dan Schnur explains, “Because of the lifelong devotion and commitment that both Pearl and Nathan Berkowitz displayed throughout their lives to the state of Israel, we could think of no better way to honor their memory. Our speakers discuss the challenges and opportunities for Israel’s future, and each program is marked by us talking about my grandparents’ work on behalf of both Israel and the American Jewish community. Three programs have taken place so far, in Los Angeles and Milwaukee, with plans for more in both Southern California and the greater New York area.”

Ambassador Ross prefaced his remarks with the observation that while no U.S. administration in modern times has been able to avoid having the Middle East become a focal point, the Obama administration faces a unique confluence of crises, with significant problems arising not only in predictable places, but with upheavals, and often violence, in one country after another.

Egypt was at the forefront at the time of Ross’s talk. He argued that withholding aid to Egypt would be a mistake, leading to the loss of any leverage the U.S. has there. Ross added that whatever happens next—and he noted that we should be highly skeptical of anyone making confident predictions on this topic—it will take some time for Egypt to stabilize.

In July, Ambassador Dennis Ross (Washington Institute for Near East Policy) presented a lecture at UWM on U.S. Middle East policy and the prospects for peace. Ross has served in five presidential administrations from Reagan to Obama, and was instrumental in assisting Israelis and Palestinians to reach the 1995 Interim Agreement. Ross, who has published widely on the former Soviet Union, arms control, and the Middle East, also brokered the 1997 Hebron Accord, facilitated the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, and worked to bring Israel and Syria together.

250 people came to hear Ross discuss “Instability and Transformation of the Middle East: Threats and Challenges, 2013.” UWM Chancellor Mike Lovell brought greetings, and praised the Stahl Center for its accomplishments—particularly the extraordinary success of the “Roots & Restlessness” series. Dan Schnur then introduced Dennis Ross. Schnur is director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at USC, and a great-grandson of Sam and Helen Stahl.

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To learn more about these events and other Stahl Center news, visit www.uwm.edu/cjs and “like” UWMJewish on Facebook.

Professor Alan Corré

Kayleigh Rappaport with Professor Alan Corré

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Over the past few months, several major gifts significantly expanded the Stahl Center’s resources, enhancing our ability to organize public programs, develop innovative curriculum, and support our hard-working students.

The Baye Foundation has been the source of much of our funding. A $2 million gift several years ago made possible the renovation of the Greene Museum, our headquarters on the east side of the UWM campus. When the renovations came in under budget, several new funds were established per the donors’ instructions. Among those are two under the name of Nathan and Pearl Berkowitz, the son-in-law and daughter of Sam and Helen Stahl. Jewish Studies major Ricky Levin was selected as the first-ever recipient of the Berkowitz Jewish Studies Scholarship in recognition of her academic excellence. A separate fund will be the primary source of support for an exciting year of programs in 2013-14 (and beyond).

Another recent gift connects Hebrew and Jewish Studies today to their historical roots at UWM. On the occasion of his 80th birthday two years ago, the family of Alan D. Corré, Emeritus Professor of Hebrew, and his wife Nita, established the Alan D. Corré Scholarship. That fund is now available for use, and Kayleigh Rappaport was its first recipient. This is particularly fitting since, in addition to her overall excellence in Jewish Studies, Kayleigh is an accomplished student of Hebrew language, and one of the first of our students to take advantage of our recently established study-abroad program at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The Stahl Center was also approached in the recent past by donors who sought to honor the memory of their parents. Robert and Sylvia Grossman. Sylvia Grossman grew up in Waukesha, then a small town with only 25 Jewish families and no synagogue or religious school; her lack of formal Jewish education as a child propelled her to begin to study Hebrew when her children did. Long after her bar and bat mitzvahs, she continued her study of Hebrew wherever she could, including all of the offerings of the UWM Hebrew Studies program, which she and Bob had long supported through their involvement in the Wisconsin Society for Jewish Learning. Ultimately, Sylvia taught Hebrew to adults, including many who became Jews by choice, and believed that the fact that she’d studied as an adult was key to her effectiveness as a teacher.

The Grossmans’ children and their spouses, Linda and Eh Frank and Ellen and Larry Grossman, established the Robert and Sylvia Grossman Fund to ensure UWM students of Hebrew access to special tools and opportunities. In this way, the fund preserves the legacy of Sylvia’s and Bob’s passion for Jewish education and their long-term, multi-generational family friendship with the family of Sam and Helen Stahl. The first purchase the program made with the assistance of this fund (and matching funds from the Hebrew program) was a Smartboard for the use of Hebrew-language teaching by our innovative, tech-savvy instructor, Yael Gal. The Frank and Grossman families have continued to build this fund in order to ensure students access to Hebrew resources, enhancing our ability to organize public programs, develop innovative curriculum, and support our hard-working students.

One other donor, who chose to remain anonymous, also made generous provisions for scholarships and awards for Hebrew Studies and Jewish Studies students. The first recipients of the newly established B’rahah Hebrew Studies Scholarship and B’rahah Jewish Studies Award are Jeremy Zelman and Sarah Ruble, respectively. Congratulations to all of this year’s scholarship and award winners, and many thanks to our donors, whose generosity is making a tremendous mark both on the UWM campus and in the surrounding community.

Joel Berkowitz

Lembersky Goes to School

by Kevin Karmen, Art Teacher, Lake Bluff Elementary School, Shorewood

Students in the 3rd and 4th grades at Lake Bluff Elementary in Shorewood, a suburb of Milwaukee, drew inspiration from artist Felix Lembersky as they created murals for their Fine Arts Performance in the Spring of 2013. In my art classes, the students studied Lembersky’s use of color, texture, and symbolism. In the course of one month they translated some of his ideas into their own Wisconsin-themed paintings, vividly colorful landscapes dotted with emblems of local and national culture: Bucky Badger, the Brewers and Packers, fast-food chains, and other familiar images.

As they developed their paintings, the Lake Bluff artists needed to make choices of theme, color, and texture based on their lives in Wisconsin. Some of the paintings represented the school, Miller Park (home to the Milwaukee Brewers), and downtown Shorewood. The paintings were displayed and enthusiastically received by their fellow students and family members at their Fine Arts Performance.

In the Spring of 2013, one group of student artists—the “MAC” (multi-age classroom) class of 3rd and 4th graders taught by Mathia Gonomer and Mike Roberts—had the good fortune to visit the Jewish Museum Milwaukee to view the Felix Lembersky exhibit. Dr. Berkowitz, along with his curator, the Museum’s Molly Dubin, guided the eager students through the exhibit and answered their many questions about Lembersky and his work. Dr. Berkowitz found the students so lively that he offered—perhaps not in jest—to trade places with the MAC teachers from time to time.

L to R: Seamus Moloney, Giselle Pritzlaff, Laura Oldfather

At Lake Bluff Elementary, Grace Bailey studies slides of Lembersky’s work as she paints.
NEW VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR:

Maggie Levantovskaya

Maggie Levantovskaya, who was born in Kiev, Ukraine, but grew up in San Francisco, will join the staff as a visiting professor of Russian and Jewish Studies.

“I have been interested in issues of Jewish identity since childhood; she observes. “I went to a Jewish school in Kiev and participated pretty actively in the Jewish community there. However, I did not decide to become a ‘Jewologist’ until graduate school. That was when I became interested in contemporary Russian literature and found myself reuniting some of my own experiences as a Russian-Jewish immigrant through the fiction. Yet, in a way, I embarked on my current research in order to move beyond my personal recollections and see Russian-Jewish immigration in a larger context.”

Maggie Levantovskaya attended Pitzer College in Claremont, CA for her undergraduate studies and spent almost two years on and off studying and traveling in France. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of California-San Diego, where she explored the tensions and overlaps between traditional conceptions of Jewish identity, its reformulation in the Soviet Union, and the emergence of a post-Soviet Jewish diasporic self through the analysis of contemporary literature.

Levantovskaya describes herself as a “big film buff” who enjoys attending film festivals and film preservation events, and seeing movies at the Old Broadway theaters in Los Angeles. Her courses in the Literature Department at UC-San Diego focused on both film and literature reshape our knowledge of the past and the analysis of non-fictional literature and film.

In the fall, Levantovskaya, who reads, writes, and speaks Russian with native proficiency, will teach elementary Russian and a course on film and literature titled “Brave New Russia: Film and Fiction After Communism.” That course will center largely on films about Russian-Jewish immigration and the use of autobiography as a literary device in Russian-Jewish fiction.

Dr. Levantovskaya’s self-proclaimed evolution as a pedagogue is motivated by the desire to inspire students’ intellectual engagement with historical, social, and political issues through the discussion of canonical, emergent, and underrepresented texts. Her research will continue to explore representations of identity and diaspora in Russian-Jewish fiction.

Ambassador Ross

Ross then turned to Syria, which he distinguished from Egypt in a number of key ways. Economic concerns have driven much of the turmoil there, and were largely responsible for toppling both Muhamar and Morsi. Violence, by contrast, is much more sectarian, with the country divided along tribal and religious lines. For that reason, as well as the considerable bloodshed that has occurred there, Ross doubts whether Syria can be put back together. He argued further that while the United States cannot control the situation in Syria, doing nothing is not a viable option. “These are not Las Vegas rules,” he sternly observed, that is, what happens in Syria will not remain in Syria. Indeed, it has already spread, with a refugee crisis spilling over into surrounding countries.

While Syria looks increasingly bleak, a new opportunity has opened up in Iran. Ross added a caveat: the newly elected president, Hassan Rouhani, is no maverick. Quite the contrary; he is very much a part of the establishment, and if the Supreme Leader hadn’t wanted him to win, it would have been easy to rig the election. “The question is,” suggested Ross, “why was he allowed to win?” Perhaps, he offered, because Iran feels that Ahmadinejad’s anti-Western stance did not work, and wants an opportunity to develop a nuclear program for peaceful purposes. Ross urged the U.S. to test this possibility by putting an offer to Iran on the table.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, Ross announced that he has a hypothesis. “I suspect,” he articulated in an op-ed in the New York Times on March 2, 2013. Because of time constraints, he offered just a few. For example, the Israelis should build new housing in the West Bank only in settlement blocks—that is, in only 5% of the territory. On the Palestinian side, he suggested that a great place to show good faith would be to put Israel on the map of the region.

All in all, Ross’s talk combined an optimistic outlook about America’s place in the world, and for the prospects for peace. At the same time, he made clear that there are no easy answers, and that whatever does come to some of the region’s hot spots, it will not happen soon, or without much additional bloodshed.

The complete video of Ambassador Ross’s speech is available at www4.uwm.edu/jewishstudies/media/index.cfm

Jill Dolan Gives 2013 “Woman of Valor” Lecture

In a lively multimedia presentation, pioneering theatre scholar Jill Dolan presented the 2013 Faye Sigman “Woman of Valor” lecture. Her talk, “What Makes a Jewish Theatre Artist? Gesture, Voice, and Ethics in American Performance,” explored notable examples of contemporary theatre, as well as key moments from the speaker’s own life, to raise questions about the characteristics that make a Jewish theatre artist remarkable in contemporary America.

Jill Dolan is the Annan Professor in English, Professor of English and Theater in the Lewis Center for the Arts and Director of the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies at Princeton University. She previously taught at the University of Texas, the CLINT Graduate School, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Her first book, The Feminist Spectator as Critic (1991), immediately launched her to the forefront of feminist theatre theory and criticism—a place she has held with distinction ever since.

Professor Dolan has received numerous awards and honors for her teaching, scholarship, and criticism. In 2009, she was inaugurated into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. In 2012, she was awarded the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism—the highest award of its kind in the nation—for her blog, “The Feminist Spectator” (www.thefeministspectator.com). It was the first time this award was given to a web publication, and Dolan became only the seventh woman to win in the award’s 56-year history.

Guest theater critic Lyn Gardner summed up Dolan’s achievement as follows: “Much of the joy of the online Feminist Spectator comes from the sense of someone letting their hair down, writing with lucidity and freedom about whatever she bloody well pleases…. (It’s) a rare treat these days to read someone working their way through a critique so thoroughly and thoughtfully, and an inspiration to see how Dolan keeps issues of gender and sexuality (and difference, more broadly) at the forefront of her poems without them ever feeling conflated in. Gender’s an issue because it’s an issue. This is how a feminist sees it. Boom.”

In her “Woman of Valor” lecture, Dolan treated the audience to video clips from productions of Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman, Wendy Wasserstein’s The Sisters Rosensweig, and Joshua Harmon’s Bad Jews, each of which she used to examine the qualities by which audiences might identify both artists and dramatic characters as Jewish. As a spirited Q&A following the presentation, Dolan and the audience discussed the value and implications of examining the ethnic particularities of Jewish artists and characters.
Art and Conflict: Ashkenaz and Beyond

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2
Joel Berkowitz: "The Mendelev Beside the Elders": A Blood-Libel Trial on the Yiddish Stage
100 years ago, the trial of Russian Jewish brickyard foreman Mendel Beilis for ritual murder made headlines around the world. It also inspired numerous Yiddish play. This talk examines them, and the heated controversy they inspired.
7pm, Congregation Emanu-El B’nai Jeshurun, 2020 W. Brown Deer Rd.

For more information, please contact lshpocoff@uwm.edu

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23
Jewish Latin American Writers: A Symposium
2-3:30pm: Le Menuy et Judes Bilingual Reading of Jewish Latin American Writing
Wisconsin Room Lounge, UWM Student Union.
4:30pm: Open Master Class with Cuban-American poet, essayist, fiction writer and activist Marjorie Agosín; Cuban-born poet José Kozer; and translator and scholar Stephen Sadov (Northeastern University).
UWM Student Union, room TBA
5:30pm: Jewish Thought, Latin Flavor: Jewish Literature in Latin America, a roundtable panel discussion.
4th floor Conference Center, Golda Meir Library

Please visit UWMJewish on Facebook and Twitter for more information and additional events.
The Golden Peacock

The bird that gives its name to this publication, and its image to our logo, figures prominently in Jewish folklore. In folk song, the golden peacock frequently arrives bearing some important message. We proudly adopt this figure as a symbol that connects us to the long tradition of Jewish learning and creativity.

Yes, I want to become a friend of the Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies.

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☐ Faye Greenberg Sigman Lecture Series Fund
☐ Milwaukee Jewish Community Fund (student support)
☐ Robert & Sylvia Grossman Fund (program support)

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