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.

continued on page 4
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 Rivky Litvin 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 their bar and bat mitzvahs, she continued her study of Hebrew wherever she could, including all 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 Eli 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 since its creation, and it now will also be used to help cover some of the costs incurred by our students who study in Israel.

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
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.

The students began the project by learning about Felix Lembersky’s life in the Soviet Union. His work frequently depicted people and places significant to him. Many of his paintings consisted of layer upon layer of symbols taken from his deep commitment to the lives of his fellow Soviet citizens. The students found this information fascinating and could not wait to try some of his ideas in their art.

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 their 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 Marita Gruber and Mike Roberts—had the good fortune to visit the Jewish Museum Milwaukee to view the Felix Lembersky exhibit. Dr. Berkowitz, along with his co-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.
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’ve 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 revisiting 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 theatres in Los Angeles. Her courses in the Literature Department at UC-San Diego focused on how 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 analysis of aesthetic works, and to provide them with the methodology for developing critical voices in oral and written forms. Levantovskaya has extensive experience in instructing multidisciplinary courses focusing on literary analysis, composition, rhetoric, research, and language acquisition. In her courses, she will follow and promote interdisciplinary and transnational approaches to the discussion of canonical, emergent, and underrepresented texts. Her research will continue to explore representations of identity and diaspora in Russian-Jewish fiction.

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 Mubarak and Morsi. Violence in Syria, 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 wryly 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 16-point plan (most of which 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 Blank only in settlement blocks—that is, in only 8% of the territory. On the Palestinian side, he suggested that a great place to show good faith would be to put Israel on maps 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 if stability 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
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 CUNY 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 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.

Guardian theatre 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…. (I)t’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 posts without them ever feeling airlifted 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. In 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.
Faculty Updates

Ellen Amster recently published *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956*. She was also invited as a guest lecturer to the Middle East History and Theory Workshop at the University of Chicago and the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and provided the closing remarks regarding the politics of reproduction in the Middle East for the Conference on Women and Children’s Health in the Middle East. At the Society for French Historical Studies meeting in March, she presented the conference paper “The Syphilitic Arab? A Search for Civilization in Syphilis Etiology, Prostitution, and Native Physiology.”

In January, Amster was featured in an interview on Wisconsin Public Television’s International Focus program regarding women’s rights, development, and health in Morocco. Amster developed and taught a study-abroad course in global health, with the support of $16,000 from the U.S. Department of Education. In the spring of 2013, a memorandum of understanding was drafted between the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education and UWM as a direct result of the relationships that were developed during the course. The course was also affiliated with the UW-Madison Global Health Certificate Program, 2013.

Amster was also elected to the Board of Directors for the American Institute of Maghrib Studies, and was a USIE Fulbright Scholars Program.

Please visit UWMJewish on Facebook and Twitter for more information and additional events.
Dana Margolis was featured as a speaker and Scholar in Residence at a L’Chaim Center of Illinois weekend retreat in May. She led the group of approximately 75 participants in an in-depth exploration of the Book of Ruth and its connections to the holiday of Shavuot. The L’Chaim Center, led by Rabbi David and Ali Begoun, offers experiential and educational Jewish programming to hundreds of students in multiple locations throughout the North Shore of Chicago.

Margolis also received a Certificate in Online and Blended Teaching from UWM’s Learning and Technology Center. She is currently teaching two upper-level, fully online courses in the Hebrew Studies Program—”Women in the Bible” and “Prophets and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible”—which has greatly expanded the Hebrew Studies program’s ability to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students alike.

Tasha Oren, Associate Professor of English and Media Studies, won the 2013 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Best Edited Collection Award, which was presented in March at the annual conference in Chicago. The collection, Global Television Formats: Understanding Television Across Borders, co-edited by Sharon Shahaf, features several essays about Middle Eastern television, including two chapters on Israel. The contributors address both little-known examples and massive global hits ranging from the Idol franchise, to telenovelas, dance competitions, sports programming, reality TV, quiz shows, and sitcoms. This work examines how global television formats are vital for various cultural meanings, relationships, and structures, while containing an overall aim of showing how formats can further our understanding of television and the culture of globalization at large.

Lisa Silverman recently completed a residential fellowship at the University of Michigan’s Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, where she worked on her next monograph dealing with the restitution of Aryanized property after the end of the Second World War. This spring, she was invited to present her work at the symposium “New Directions in Jewish Literary and Cultural Studies,” which was held at the Frankel Institute on March 28-29.

In May, she undertook a two-week research trip to Austria to conduct research at archives in Linz and Graz, and visited the town of Frohnleiten, where renowned turn-of-the-century photographer Madame d’Ora returned after the war to live in the Aryanized house that had originally belonged to her and her sister. She also participated in a workshop on Jews in popular culture hosted by the Center for Jewish Studies at the Karl-Franzens-Universität in Graz, Austria.

Also in May, Silverman delivered the lecture “Becoming Austrians: Jews, Antisemitism, and Culture between the World Wars” at the Jewish Museum in Prague. This talk was based on her monograph Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture Between the World Wars (Oxford University Press, 2012) which was reviewed positively on H-Net, the Humanities and Social Sciences online network.

This fall Dr. Silverman will teach “Introduction to Jewish History” as a hybrid course for the first time. The course will combine elements of online and traditional classroom teaching in order to facilitate and reinforce students’ understanding of the history and culture of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present.

Silverman is also currently collaborating with Daniel H. Magilow, Associate Professor of German at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville, on a co-authored volume, Introduction to Holocaust Representation, under contract with Bloomsbury Academic Press.

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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