

## NEWSLETTER 2003/2

### SILENCED TONES EXHIBITION

The exhibition, *Silenced Tones – the Life and Work of the Czech Jewish Composers Gideon Klein and Egon Ledeċ*, was held in the Museum's Robert Guttman Gallery between 16 April and 15 June 2003. It was curated by Anita Franková and Jana Šplíchalová, whose focus was on the composers' less widely-known works from the period before World War II and their deportation to the Terezín ghetto. Although the two composers were more than a generation apart, in the end they shared the same tragic fate.



**Egon Ledeċ** (b. 1889) was an outstanding performer and one of the most successful pupils of professors Otakar Ševčík, Jaroslav Kocian and Karel Hoffmann at the Senior School of the Prague Conservatory. His professional ambition was fulfilled in 1926, when he was accepted as a member of the renowned Czech Philharmonic under the legendary Václav Talich. Ledeċ was also active as a composer, mainly of occasional and light works. An exceptional work is *Dawn*, a musical monologue set to the words of Frán Šrámek's poem "Eternal Soldier"; this represents the composer's personal declaration of faith and hope, but is also a presage of his tragic end and of his unrealised plans. The years spent in the Terezín ghetto were also closely connected with Ledeċ's mission in life – music. His life ended at Auschwitz in 1944.

**Gideon Klein** (b. 1919) made his mark on the Czech pre-war music scene from the end of the 1920s. He was a celebrated pianist and a composer of original works that in their day attracted great critical acclaim. Klein undoubtedly had a promising career ahead of him as a concert pianist and a renowned composer, and may even have become a successful conductor. What he achieved before the age of twenty-two, when he was deported to Terezín, and during his three-year incarceration in the ghetto, is proof of this. He died at the age of twenty-five in the Fürstengrube concentration camp in January 1945.

The exhibition, *Silenced Tones*, was made possible largely thanks to the kindness of Egon Ledeč's nephew, Jan Ledeč, who dedicated all the material from his uncle's estate to the Museum. We are also grateful to Gideon Klein's sister, Eliška, who, at the end of her life, dedicated most of her brother's estate to the Museum. Most of the exhibited documents and notes have never been on show before.

The exhibition was accompanied by unique recordings of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra from the 1930s. The opening featured a renewed premiere of part of Egon Ledeč's musical monologue *Dawn*, which was performed by the singer Rudolf Pellar, with piano accompaniment by Milan Jíra, and the String Trio by Gideon Klein, which was performed by the Gideon Trio.



#### **INTERDISCIPLINARY SEMINAR INSPIRED BY THE EXHIBITION MOUNTAIN OF MOUNTAINS**

As we mentioned in the last Newsletter, the enigmatically titled exhibition *Mountain of Mountains: Aleš Veselý's Desert Projects* was held in the Robert Guttman Gallery between 13 February and 6 April. Following on from this exhibition, the Museum, in association with the Archaeological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, organized an interdisciplinary seminar that took place on 31 March 2003 in the lecture hall of the Museum's Education and Culture Centre. The co-organizers, together with the National Centre of Egyptology, are currently preparing a collection of seminar contributions for publication. More details will be provided at a later date.

#### **MAJOR ART ACQUISITION (A. JAKESCH: SELLING OF MILK IN JOSEFOV, 1889)**

The Museum's art collection has been enriched by the purchase of an extraordinarily valuable work by the Prague Jewish painter Alexander Jakesch (1862-1934). Jakesch studied at the Prague and Munich academies and, from 1903, at the School of Applied Art in Prague. His studio was based in Ovocná Street (now 28. října St.) in the centre of Prague. He is known mainly for his portraits, which were highly praised in their day. This is the first major work by this painter to be represented in the Museum's collection.



The large painting, *Selling of Milk in Josefov*, depicts a typical scene from

Prague's Jewish Town in the nineteenth century – the morning delivery of milk . More important than this somewhat melodramatic genre scene, however, is the faithful depiction of the environment of the former ghetto and its residents. It shows one of the most picturesque corners of this part of Prague – the Three-Well Square and Maisel Lane. The painting was made in 1889 and is the earliest pictorial representation of this place.

### **DOCUMENTATION OF JEWISH CEMETERIES IN BOHEMIA, MORAVIA AND SILESIA**

In co-operation with the civic association Hazkara, represented by Jaroslav Haidler, the Museum has launched a project to document Jewish cemeteries in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Projects with a similar focus have been previously carried out by the Museum but this research is different in that it aims to provide complete pictorial and text-based documentation of all extant epitaphs and tombstones in all Jewish cemeteries throughout the country. Transcriptions of epitaphs and photographs will be gradually stored in a specially developed database that will be publicly accessible at the Museum's office.

In addition to providing finance, the Museum will be contributing expert supervision and database management, as well as gathering data. Cemeteries in Nový Bydžov (Bohemia) and Šafov, Rousínov and Úsov (Moravia) will be documented this year. Documentation of cemeteries in Brandýs n. Labem and Luže will be completed in connection with other Museum projects. More detailed information will be provided on the Museum's website.



### **AWARD FOR THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE**

The Museum has taken part in a competition for the title European Museum of the Year 2003, the final of which was held in Copenhagen under the auspices of her Royal Highness, Queen Fabiola of Belgium, and the Council of Europe. 51 European museums from 21 different countries entered this competition.

The selection of finalists was made on the basis of an assessment of candidates by members of the competition jury, who visited the respective institutions last year.

Even though the Prague visit took place in unfavourable circumstances, in the wake of the August floods, we still managed to make our presence felt in the

face of strong competition from other museums. The Jewish Museum in Prague reached the final and was particularly praised for the way it uses its collections in educational and cultural activities to encourage tolerance and combat prejudice.

### **CONTINUED FLOOD REPAIRS AND RECONSTRUCTION**

The August floods of last year caused damage to the Museum's properties and facilities amounting to about 18 million Czech crowns (about \$680,000). However, all the objects in the collections were saved from destruction by Museum staff and all the sites affected - except for the Pinkas Synagogue - have been fully repaired.



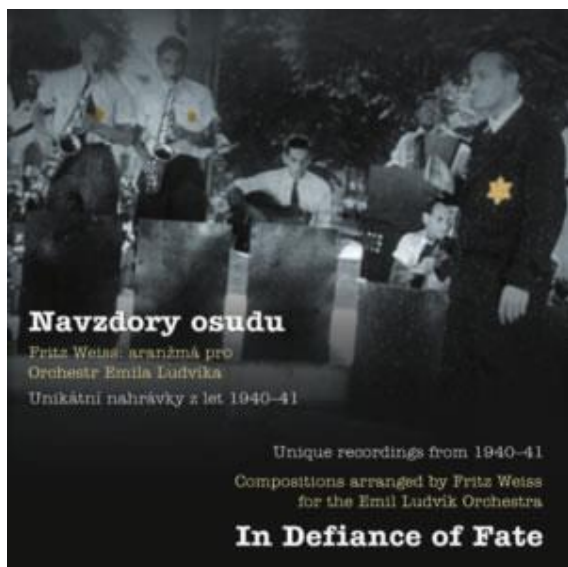
The basement facilities of the Museum's office building were put back into operation in April 2003. These facilities had been completely inundated with water during the floods, which completely destroyed the transformer station, boiler, cooling, air-conditioning and lift machine rooms, the vast majority of new publications, packing-room, changing room for security guards, maintenance workshop and café facilities. After pumping out the water, the plasterboard partitions were taken down and the entire basement area was disinfected several times. Once they had dried out, the partitions were reinstalled and all the technical facilities were repaired. The state of the facilities is now as it was before the floods.

With the financial support of sponsors, the Museum has also carried out a number of improvements to the state of its properties in the event of repeated flooding. The basement areas of the Museum's office building have been provided with special fluorescent lights that are resistant to water pressure and are separately connected to an alternative source of electricity - a mobile generator that can supply energy and secure the Museum's technical facilities in the event of a power cut.





**NEW ISSUES AND PUBLICATIONS:**



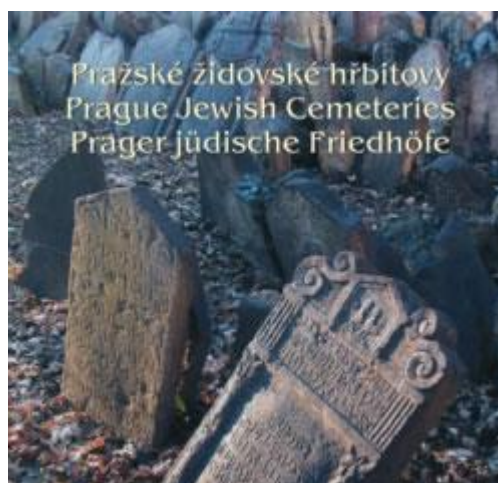
***“IN DEFIANCE OF FATE”  
FRITZ WEISS AND HIS  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EMIL  
LUDVÍK ORCHESTRA,  
UNIQUE RECORDINGS FROM 1940-41  
(CD, 71 MINUTES)***

In association with Gabriel Goessel, a gramophone record collector, the Museum has prepared a treat for jazz fans – the first ever CD issue of recordings of popular works from 1940-41 arranged by the Jewish musician Fritz Weiss (born 1919, Prague) one of the leading Prague jazz men of the late 1930s.

Prevented from performing in public after the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939, Weiss continued to play, under various pseudonyms, with well-known orchestras, for whom he also often arranged various pieces. This new issue presents his arrangements for the Emil Ludvík's Orchestra, with whom he worked closely for two years before being deported to the Terezín ghetto in December 1941. He was later deported to Auschwitz on transport Ek on 28 September 1944, which is the last record of his fate. It is not known when or where he died.

**PRAGUE JEWISH CEMETERIES**

The Museum has published the long-awaited “Prague Jewish Cemeteries” (text by Arno Pařík, photographs by Dana Cabanová and Petr Kliment). This book provides detailed information on Jewish burial grounds in Prague from the Middle Ages through to the present. The introductory chapters are on Jewish burial customs and ceremonies and the history of the Prague Burial Society, which was founded in 1564.



Most of the 132-page volume is dedicated to the Old Jewish Cemetery, which is now the oldest and best preserved Jewish cemetery in Europe. Apart from the detailed historical information on all the Jewish burial grounds of Prague, the main attraction of this publication is the large amount of full-colour photographs (about 200), many of which have been published for the first time. The illustrations show overall views as well as details of individual tombstones. There are also cemetery maps with lists of the graves of the most prominent

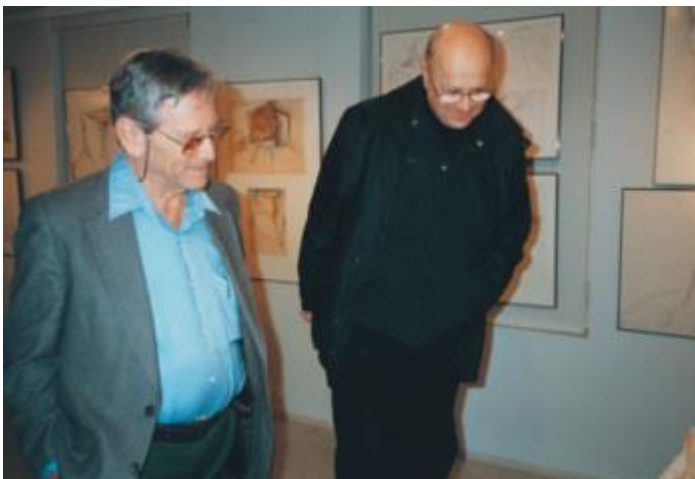
personages, so it can be used as a guidebook , too. It is a trilingual Czech-English-German edition.

### JUDAICA BOHEMIAE XXXVIII / 2002

The latest, 240-page issue of the Museum's journal *Judaica Bohemiae* has just come out, with studies and articles on the history of Bohemian Jews from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries:

Ivo Cerman: Maria Theresa in the Mirror of Contemporary Mock Jewish Chronicles; Hana Legnerová: Das Exil der Prager Juden auf der Herrschaft Rothenhaus (Červený Hrádek ) in den Jahren 1745-1748; Alexandr Putík : Prague Jews and Judah Hasid. A Study on the Social, Political and Religious History of the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries /Part One/; Kateřina Čapková: Specific Features of Zionism in the Czech Lands in the Interwar Period; Miloš Pojar: T. G. Masaryk s Relations with Jews; Anna Hyndráková - Anna Lorencová: Systematic Collection of Memories Organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague. Except for Hana Legnerová's study, all contributions are in English.

You can order the above (and other) publications from the Museum's office, by e-mail: [sales@jewishmuseum.cz](mailto:sales@jewishmuseum.cz), or via the Museum's website.



### PROMINENT VISITS

April

- The world renowned Israeli writer Amos Oz
- Yehiel Leket, President of Keren Kayemeth Leisrael (Jewish National Fund), Israel

**We would like to thank the following donors who have contributed or agreed to contribute to the elimination of the damage suffered by the Museum as a result of the August floods:**

World Monuments Fund, USA	E. Raport, Canada
The American Friends of the Czech Republic, USA	J. Zimer, Canada
The Czech-German Future Fund, Czech Republic, Germany	H. Friedman, USA
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