

## Lemonade stand fundraiser to be held

Gymboree Play & Music of Williamsville with Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation will hold a charity lemonade stand to raise money for childhood cancer research from 12 to 4 p.m. Sunday, June 10 at the Gymboree site, 8012 Transit Road, Premier SteinMart Plaza. Call 565-9261.

# Traveling theater alive once again

*Jewish Repertory Theatre finds audiences — multiple WNY homes*

by **ELIZABETH TAUFA**  
Reporter

"If you Google 'Jewish theatre artists,' the list just goes on and on."

Those words, spoken by Saul Elkin, are part of the cornerstone of the philosophy of the Jewish Repertory Theatre, now in its fourth season.

Elkin is the artistic director and a familiar face in JRT productions.

"The idea started with a conversation I had with (producer) David Bunis," he said. "We took it to the board of the Jewish Community Center, and there it was."

The mission of the theater, according to managing director Marcia Frankel, is to "present theater of high artistic quality dealing with Jewish and multicultural issues and themes and to share our vibrant Jewish culture with the Western New York community."

The theater began with funding from the JCC, but after two years it is now self-sustaining, said Frankel.

"We have a subscription audience of about 500 people," Elkin said. "We're finding an audience, and an audience is finding us."

While the JRT has in its previous seasons produced two shows a year and this coming season will produce three, it does not have its own theater. Instead, the JRT has struck up agreements with area theaters to use their spaces when there are no other productions.

The JRT has performed in the Alleyway Theatre, the Irish Classical Theatre in Buffalo and the MusicalFare Theatre in Amherst.

Elkin noted that this arrangement is beneficial to both the JRT, as it is given a space for shows, and the theater in which it is performing because it brings audiences into a space when it would otherwise be dark.

One of the goals of the theater is not

only to acclimate audiences to Jewish heritage and culture but also to focus on human issues that have to do with societal circumstances, which sometimes are found in plays that are not necessarily about Jewish issues.

The 2007-08 season will begin in November with "Kindertransport," which chronicles the escape of Jewish children from Nazi-occupied Germany. "Kindertransport" will be performed in The Road Less Traveled Theatre in the Market Arcade in Buffalo.

The season will continue in February with "Halpern & Johnson" in the Alleyway Theatre and will conclude with "Golda's Balcony," a one-woman show chronicling the early life of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, also one of the founders of the state of Israel. Elkin noted that the JRT's production of "Golda's Balcony" will coincide with the 60th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel.

"It (the play) is an insight into the early days of Israel," Elkin said.

As for the actors, the JRT is in search of quality performers, whom, according to Elkin, are not hard to come by in Western New York.

"Buffalo is an extraordinary theater town with a huge community of talented actors," Elkin said, noting that the quality of actors, not Jewish heritage, is what leads to roles at the JRT.



Kelli Bocock-Natale, Barbara Link LaRou and Eileen Dugan, shown here in this season's "The Sisters Rosensweig," are among the actors who are part of the Jewish Repertory Theatre, now in its fourth season. The group performs at various theaters in the Buffalo area, depending on availability.

Elkin, who is the founder and artistic director of Shakespeare in the Park, has collaborated with many of the area's theater talents both on- and off-stage, which has been an asset to the growing theater group.

Since its establishment, the JRT has fulfilled a role in the Western New York theater that was previously empty, said Elkin. However, funding for the arts has become a problem for all organizations.

"All theaters are not-for-profit organizations," he said. "And we're all going after the same money."

That has led the JRT to make careful artistic decisions, picking plays that have smaller casts or limited sets, which has not put a damper on the JRT's goals, according to Elkin.

"We want to put on plays that open audiences to Jewish life and culture," he said. "We want to share Jewish culture and important human social issues."

For more information on the JRT's upcoming season or to order tickets, call 688-4114, ext. 334 or visit [www.jewishrepertorytheatre.com](http://www.jewishrepertorytheatre.com).

e-mail: [etaufa@beenews.com](mailto:etaufa@beenews.com)

## JRT's 'Old Wicked Songs' set at MusicalFare



Saul Elkin, seated, and Lou Colaiacovo star in the Jewish Repertory Theatre's "Old Wicked Songs," which begins June 7.

by **ELIZABETH TAUFA**  
Reporter

As the last show of its 2006-07 season, the Jewish Repertory Theatre will present "Old Wicked Songs" from June 7 through July 1 at MusicalFare Theatre, 4380 Main St., Suite 810, Amherst.

"Old Wicked Songs" is the story of a young American pianist who is suffering from creative burnout and travels to Vienna to study accompaniment. He is assigned to a voice teacher, and they begin a contentious relationship that warms as the play progresses.

Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, "Old Wicked Songs" stars Saul Elkin as voice teacher Josef Mashkan and Lou Colaiacovo as student Stephen Hoffman.

"Both characters are denying who they are," Elkin said. "In the end though, they come to terms with themselves, with each other and their Jewishness."

Robert Schumann's "Dichterliebe" song cycle acts as the third character with Mashkan and Hoffman. Elkin noted that the songs of the cycle parallel different themes of friendship and love throughout the play.

The play is also set in 1986 on the eve of the presidential election of Kurt Waldheim, a former Nazi. This situation provides an underlying political theme to the play.

An added element is the student-teacher relationship, which Elkin and Colaiacovo know well.

Colaiacovo was a student of Elkin's in the University at Buffalo Theatre Department. He later was Elkin's teaching assistant as a graduate student.

"It's about love, understanding and the humor in life," Elkin said.

Performances of "Old Wicked Songs" will be at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays; 4 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; and 2 p.m. Sundays.

For more information or for tickets, call 688-4114, ext. 334 or visit [www.jewishrepertorytheatre.com](http://www.jewishrepertorytheatre.com).