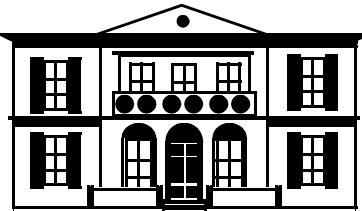


# IN TOUCH

JULY 2006



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## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

CLAUDE ROLLIN, ESQ.



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to report that the staff of the Jewish Museum in Hohenems is hard at work developing the new permanent exhibition for the museum. It is a tremendous undertaking, ably led by Museum Director Dr. Hanno Loewy, to re-do the entire permanent exhibition, which has not been updated since the

Museum first opened in 1991. I invite you to read the News from the Museum, which provides many details concerning this exciting project.

In order to finance this huge project, the Museum needs substantial funding from a variety of public and private sources. As you probably know, the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems (AFJMH) was set up, in large part, to provide financial support for the museum's many wonderful programs and exhibitions. The AFJMH was established in 1999 as a 501(c)(3) (not-for-

profit) organization in the United States to provide Americans with an easy way to provide financial support for this Austrian museum and at the same time get a tax deduction for their contributions.

Over the years, our organization and some of its individual members have contributed to the museum in many important ways, including donating funds for specific projects and programs. Since the overhaul of the permanent exhibition is a major project, the American Friends are being asked to raise at least 15,000 Euros,

(Continued on page 6)

## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

DR. HANNO LOEWY

### A NEW CORE EXHIBITION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The present core exhibition of the Jewish Museum Hohenems illuminates the history of the Jewish community of Hohenems and its connection with Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Vienna. The exhibition also presents the sad history of the destruction of Jewish life in the Vorarlberg region, including the story of Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi Germany to Switzerland. It documents the impact of National-Socialism and anti-Semitism. And it presents the aftermath of Hohenems, including Jewish life in the DP camps after 1945, when Jewish survivors lived in the former Jewish quarter of Hohenems. In addition to these fragmented lines of regional history, the exhibition was also devoted to the Jewish families who lived in Hohenems and their personal story in the center of Europe.

But there is more to say about Jewish Hohenems and we have to find a language appropriate for an internationally attended Museum.

The transnational and intercultural dimension of Jewish life and the migration of families and institutions, reaching from Southern Germany to Italy, Vienna to Switzerland, later to England, France and Belgium, the U.S., Israel and Australia,



is represented today by the descendants; their relationships must be fully acknowledged in the Museum's exhibition. Since the Museum attracts a growing international, partially non-German speaking audience, the exhibition must be updated to accommodate them as well.

Fifteen years after the opening of the Museum, we want

(Continued on page 2)

## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

*(Continued from page 1)*

to respond to the challenges of today and tell the story of Hohenems with fresh ideas, utilizing new media and incorporating an archive and a collection that has grown tremendously since 1991. Together with architects Steinmayr & Mascher, who recently refurbished most successfully the Albertina Galleries in Vienna, and designer Roland Stecher, we want to make a difference; we hope to develop a Jewish Museum for the future and will reopen anew on April 29, 2007.

- We will connect with an international audience by means of a multi-lingual exhibition.
- We will present a multidimensional perspective that will include more in depth presentations of the life of the Jewish community and different Jewish biographies, their personal experiences, and the variety of cultural, religious and secular selections they made.
- With recently acquired artifacts, personal and official documents, photographs and artworks, we will be better able to explore Jewish memory and presence.
- We will show the significance of transnational relations, of migration and networks as a resource for a European future.
- We will present the fields of tensions in Jewish culture and history in a thought-provoking manner.
- We will enable visitors to connect more closely to our subjects by audio-installations creating a more intimate perception of the subjects.
- And we will enable young visitors to view their own world differently by a specially designed children's tour through the exhibition.

We have received tremendous support for this 700.000€ project and, with that support, the Museum now can enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The city of Hohenems and the State of Vorarlberg, the Federal government and the State of Tyrol, the Association for the Preservation of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, and foundations such as the National-Funds for Nazi Victims in Vienna, Ars Rhenia in Zurich and the Karl-Kahane Foundation in Celerina; companies and banks, clubs and industrialists like Collini, Rhomberg and Otten, the Vorarlberg Power Station and Energy companies, and the Dornbirn Sparkasse Bank, the Austrian-Israeli Chamber of Commerce in Vienna and many others, have all pledged to contribute substantially to the project.

But still there is urgent need for support. So the Museum is extremely grateful for the support of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, which is helping us to make the Museum a living place for the future.

We will credit those who help us prominently! To give prominent credit to all those who contributed financially to this enterprise we have created a "ranking" to be used in our communications and engraved on the inaugural plaque to be installed in the Museum in 2007:

Founders: more than 8000 €  
 Benefactors: 4000 to 7999 €  
 Patrons: 2000 to 3999 €  
 Sponsors: 1000 to 1999 €  
 Donors: 400 to 999 €  
 Friends: 100 to 399 €

Individual contributions to the AFJMH will be acknowledged in the same manner. We are

grateful to all who contribute to make the new core exhibition a success.

### THE OPENING OF THE SALOMON SULZER AUDITORIUM

After two years of preparation, the Salomon Sulzer Auditorium in the former synagogue of Hohenems was officially inaugurated on May 21, 2006.

In collaboration with the Jewish Museum, the municipality of Hohenems prepared a high profile program to celebrate this event.

Having been misused as a fire brigade building since 1955, it was not until the year 2000 that the reconstruction, at least of the old shape of the hall and the facade, of the building could begin. Thus, the old synagogue had the opportunity to regain part of its dignity.

Given the fact that there are still very few Jews living today in Vorarlberg – a tiny "community" of mostly mixed marriages, which formally is affiliated with Innsbruck – there is no need for a synagogue in Hohenems for the time being. So it was determined that a music school and an auditorium, open for cultural events fostering both intercultural exchange and community events, and available to the Jewish Museum for its activities, might be the best use to make of this proud building and still preserve the memory of its history.

Asked by the municipality, the Jewish Museum was given the opportunity to install a small exhibition about the history of the synagogue in the new foyer. This is intended to begin the implementation of a program, over

the course of the next few years, of similar installations recalling the particular history of other important buildings in the former Jewish quarter of Hohenems

Nevertheless, the future of the synagogue building will be a matter of further consideration another time. Making it a place of worship again is a dream for a distant future – but the opportunity to use it for services from time to time already exists and whether it is so used will depend on the intentions of those who live in the region or might settle here in the future.

The inauguration ceremony for the auditorium on May 21 was a major event, attracting many more people than the auditorium could accommodate; so the event was transmitted to a large screen in the foyer. A huge tent was erected in the square to accommodate the reception after the ceremony and offered people the chance for talks and moving encounters.

Harry Weil Jr. from Albuquerque, son of the last cantor of the Jewish community, came to the event, as did many other descendants, such as Uri Taenzer from New Jersey, Felix Jaffe from Jerusalem, and the Bollags, Burgauers and Reichenbachs from Switzerland.

In the auditorium, Uri Taenzer related his connection with Hohenems and his grandfather's role in preserving the memory of its history, while cantor Marlena Taenzer moved the audience with her sensitive interpretation of Salomon Sulzer's "Uvashofar Gadol". Mayor Richard Amann and Landesrat Erich Schwärzler stressed the significance of the revitalization

*(Continued on page 3)*

## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 2)  
of the former Jewish quarter for the community and public life today.

Rabbi Hermann Schmelzer from St. Gallen, who fixed a mezuzah on the doorpost before the opening, spoke, as did Hohenems Reverend Thomas Heilbrun and the Imam of Vorarlberg, Samir Redcepovic, all emphasizing the need for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and mutual respect, a most significant message in these times of growing tensions in European immigrant societies; emotions that cast shadows over Austria and Switzerland too.

The church choir gave an example of a possible dialogue, presenting Franz Schubert's 92<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, written for his friend Salomon Sulzer, a rare example of music for the synagogue written by a non Jewish composer.

The program of events following the opening ceremony was extremely well attended too. *David Orlowsky's Klezmorim*, a German ensemble interpreting traditional Klezmer music in a fresh, sometimes jazzy and sometimes classical way, was enthusiastically received by the audi-

ence on the evening of May 21. On May 22 and 23, the *Jewish Theatre Austria* from Vienna performed two one-act plays, "Pessach" and "Ramadan", written on the basis of stories by David Mamet and Huda Al-Hilali, about the impact of intergenerational dialogue and memory in Jewish and Muslim families, particularly attracting a young audience of school children attending the performance in the morning.

The climax of the program was Grigori Frid's chamber opera "Diary of Anne Frank" by the Linz based *Ensemble Sonare*,



with Soprano Nina Maria Plangg, presented on May 26 and 27. Her interpretation of the young girl's desperate plight for an independent life,



supported by a reading from the diaries by the famous Austrian writer Michael Köhlmeier, reached the heart of the audience and was also most thought provoking.

We all hope that the standards set by the opening program will be maintained by those now responsible for the auditorium, the city of Hohenems and the *tonart* music school.

### EXHIBITION ABOUT ANTI-SEMITIC "KITSCH" ENDED SUCCESSFULLY

The special exhibition about "Anti-Jewish knick-knack, popular images of the Jews and contemporary conspiracy theories" was a big success. More than 5000 visitors came to see the exhibition, among them were about 500 school children that attended 33 half-day workshops with intensive preparation and feedback afterwards.

The press praised the original approach of the Museum confronting a most uncomfortable subject that has enough recollection and more contemporary significance than we all might wish: "Not your average Jewish-history museum," concluded the *Bangkok Post*, January 5, 2006.

"A closer look at the paintings, paperweights, pipes and other knickknacks reveals something chilling...the comfortable, homey look with a purpose - to unsettle visitors and get them thinking." commented the *Associated Press* in January 2006. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, on October 28, 2005, saw in the

Hohenems exhibit a "view into the abyss .... Those who think the era of anti-Semitic knickknacks is a matter of the past, in Hohenems learn better. And those who review the debate about a possible membership of Turkey in the EU somewhat closer will realize that stereotyping religious minorities today is not only restricted to Jews. Particularly for that it is highly recommended to visit this exhibition." And the *Jewish Forward* in New York, October 14, 2005, simply concluded: "one of Europe's most innovative Jewish museums."

The success of the exhibition will lead to its next presentation; the exhibition will now be shown, adapted to the environment, in the museum of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, starting on October 9, 2006.

The catalogue of the exhibition *Anti-Jewish Knick-knack and Popular Images of the Jews, The Finkelstein Collection* will be published in a complete English edition in the fall and can be ordered from the Jewish Museum in Hohenems.

### NEW STAFF MEMBER: GERLINDE FRITZ

After six eventful years, Renate Kleiser retired from her post as the Museum's secretary. Since April 2006, her post has been filled by Gerlinde Fritz who is now in charge of the Museum's desk, accounts and communication. So please, if you address the Museum's office regarding any practical matters of information, organization etc., contact Gerlinde Fritz who is pleased to be at your disposal. ♦

# REMARKS AT THE OPENING MAY 21, 2006

URI TAENZER

My Dear Friends,

Marlena, my daughter Laura, and I are so pleased to join with you and greet you on behalf of the 150 members of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum on this auspicious occasion. Hohenems has been our second home since we fell in love with this area during the 1998 descendants' reunion. My first impressions of Hohenems, the town where my father was born and where his father was rabbi between 1896 and 1905, came about in 1984 when the organizers of the Museum inquired whether our family might still have some memorabilia relating to Aron Tanzer's rabbinate here. As luck would have it, my parents kept a box containing some of my grandfather's items which traveled with

them from Germany to Palestine in 1935 and then to America in 1951. My father passed away in 1974. I had not dared open the box before. So as I began to sort through this box full of my grandfather's books, his pamphlets and his newspaper articles, with considerable trepidation, suddenly I came across a well-worn-old cellophane-encased package which, to my complete amazement and delight, contained photographs taken right outside this place at the turn of the century.

Obviously, as a historian, my grandfather had anticipated the day when these early photographs which bore the name of a studio "Sueti" in Vienna and "Rützler" in Dornbirn could be of some importance.

I immediately arranged to have the photographs reproduced and sent to the organizers of the Museum. Some have since been made into postcards and most of you probably are familiar with them.

With your permission, I would like to share these photographs (by Power Point) with you again because I believe they represent a unique link with the past and help us better appreciate what this community has accomplished by restoring this building with such devotion to its original purpose as a place where people come together to enjoy cultural events and to learn.

The word which we American Jews use to describe our synagogues is "Schul." The origin of this term is not German or Austrian, it is east European.

Yet it must have been derived from the German word "Schule." It still means "school" because the synagogue, similarly to a church, is where we come together to be educated in God's ways.

It is therefore fitting that this building will not only bring people together to celebrate our diverse cultural heritage but it will also continue to serve one of its original purposes, namely, to serve as a "Schul," albeit a music school.

I am sure Salomon Sulzer, if he were alive today, would be thrilled to know that God's gift of music is being taught again in his former synagogue.

Hohenems Jews have not  
(Continued on page 5)



From Left: Gruessing, Taenzer, Weil.



From Left: Rabbi Schmelzer, Dr. Felix Jaffe.



From Left: Harry Weil, Jr., Dr. Eva Grabherr.



Guests at the reception.



The audience at the dedication.



Eva-Maria Hesche of the Museum Staff,  
Dr. Hanno Loewy and guest at the reception.

## REMARKS AT THE OPENING MAY 21, 2006

*(Continued from page 4)*

been spared western Europe's checkered history of repression followed by periods of prosperity. It is when we are reminded of the past and when we honor and appreciate those who came before us that we and our descendants can learn to live together in harmony and peace, just as Christians and Jews had prospered together here for over 300 years. It is by upholding, rather than denigrating, each person's background and faith that a civilized society emerges, a society which today encompasses many Muslims and which is also free from fear and violence.

As you dedicate this magnificent building as a cultural haven in honor and respect for your Jewish forebears, I and all the many descendants of this region, the majority of whom are practicing Christians, all of us good peo-

ple who are scattered throughout the world, we congratulate and thank you. This place is a fitting shrine to mark your history as well as our history as descendants of Hohenems former inhabitants.

May this wonderful community continue to inspire the message of tolerance and good will toward people everywhere. ♦



*Uri Taenzer presenting.*

"Hohenems was the home of a vibrant and important Jewish community for centuries. With the Jewish Museum, the city began to recognize this past. Now also the synagogue was restored. But as the director of the Jewish Museum emphasized, 'without undoing the history and its contradictions, and the traces of the intentional destruction'."

*St. Gallen Tagblatt,  
18.5.2006*



*The Synagogue restored.*



*Guests at the reception following the dedication.*

## A LETTER...

(Continued from page 1)  
which is roughly 2 % of the entire cost of the project.

To help us achieve our fund-raising goal, I am pleased to announce that the Stephan and Renee Rollin Family Charitable Foundation has agreed to match dollar-for-dollar every contribution for this important project received by the American Friends before September 15, 2006, up to a maximum of \$7,500. In order to make sure we get the maximum matching contribution and reach our overall fundraising goal, I am asking each of you to contribute as much as you can to this very important project. I am hoping that each AFJMH trustee will donate \$500 or more to the permanent exhibition campaign but we also need everyone else to chip in as much as you can if we are going to meet our ambitious fund-raising goal.

Any and all contributions to this project would be most appreciated and will be matched by the Rollin Family Charitable Foundation as indicated above. Checks should be made payable to: The American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems and sent to: AFJMH, P.O. Box 237, Moorestown, New Jersey 08057-0237.

I know that there are many other things we can all do with our money but I hope you will agree with me that this is an extremely worthwhile project that deserves our strong financial support.

Thanks again for your continued support of the American Friends and the Jewish Museum in Hohenems. I hope you and your family have lots of fun this summer.

All the best to you and yours,

*Claude Rollin*

## OPENING REMARKS

### HANNO LOEWY

I'd like to welcome you to the Salomon Sulzer Auditorium in the old synagogue of Hohenems. In particular, I'd like to welcome all those who came from abroad, some from great distances and some from just across the river – as we are living right on the border. You come because you associate with this building, with this location, its very distinctive memories, a building that will revive a culture of living together. A culture of diversity, or to be more precise, a promise that we are here to celebrate.

The descendants of Hohenems' Jews, some of whom are with us today, have given us a present, a gift we may well not deserve. Who can open the newspapers today and read some of the articles and many of the letters to the editors, or the self confident words of some of our politicians, and not be puzzled and full of doubt as to whether this culture of living together with mutual respect is really what people want.

Blame evidently continues, at least by those in public life who say new arrivals are responsible for all of society's problems. It is those officials who determine whether these new arrivals have a chance to fit into society. Integration can work for both sides, but only if each side respects the other. If we are curious about what a newcomer brings and the newcomer is curious about what he or she finds in the new land, then both sides will benefit.

Integration should not mean degradation of one's culture. It can only work if both sides participate – and only when

both sides respect each other as human beings. It can work as long as we are curious about and care for each other, curious about what each person brings to the community and curious about what one discovers in a new environment.

If we at the Jewish Museum are able to help to establish this house as such a place of respectful curiosity we will achieve something great both for Hohenems and for this country and its people, whether they have their roots in the Rhine valley or in Swabia, in the Bre-genz Forest or in Alsacia, in the Trentino, in Turkey, in Israel or in the destroyed but, in a special way, the still living Jewish community of Hohenems.

It took 150 years before the Jews of Hohenems were granted the right to build their visible pride, their synagogue. The famous "Schutzbrief", the Letter of Protection they received from the imperial Count in 1617, did not allow them to practice their religion outside of their private houses. How long will it take until the sight of a mosque will be a matter of course in Austria or Germany – and not a vision of horror on propaganda posters for election campaigns?

It took only two years, between 1938 and 1940, to empty this space and to deport the last Jewish citizens of this town to their final destination, the camps. A gym for local school kids was planned for this auditorium, while others said that a cinema for Nazi propaganda movies was a proper desecration of the synagogue. In 1942 a decision was made to turn the former synagogue into a fire brigade building. After 1945 the Jewish community of Innsbruck, reestablished after the Shoah against all odds and to whom the building reverted, had no

other choice but to sell the synagogue to the town, even though some restitution had been realized. Without a living community in Hohenems what else should have been done? So, for the second time, in 1955, the reconstruction of the building as a fire brigade garage extinguished the memory of the Jewish community.

We are not here today to celebrate a history of success but, rather to acknowledge that here we have a fragile opportunity to deal differently with the past and the present, one that is different from a culture of intentional forgetfulness and resentment. Different from the way the mayor of Hohenems, fifty years ago, dealt with the desire of Harry Weil, the last Jewish cantor of Hohenems, to return to his hometown. When Harry Weil asked for his belongings and his apartment in the Rabbi's house, property stolen from him in 1938, he was told that nobody and nothing waits for him here, that he should apply to the office of housing, just as anybody else and not expect any "privileges".

The fact that Harry Weil Jr. came from Albuquerque, New Mexico to be with us today for this occasion, is truly an undeserved pleasure. I'd like to say thank you for that in particular.

That we were able to organize this program in such a remarkable way was possible due to exceptional support. Many put their ideas and efforts into it and last, but not least, they provided the necessary funds: the staff of the municipality of Hohenems, in particular Martin Hölblinger and Andrea Fritz, the staff of the Tonart Music School, and my colleagues at the Jewish Museum. They all

(Continued on page 7)

## OPENING REMARKS

(Continued from page 6) went to great effort during the last few weeks.

I also want to say thank you to the sponsors and donors that helped us to make these events possible:

- The *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur*
- The *Dornbirner Sparkasse*, our sponsor of the year.
- The community of Altach
- The Soroptimist International Club in Bregenz,
- The companies *Fink Zeitsysteme* and *Ender Bau* in Altach, and last but, not least,
- the Association for the Promotion of the Jewish Museum of Hohenems and its members, who support our work throughout the year.

The program through which I will guide you begins with Isabella Pincsek and the Preludes of George Gershwin. Gershwin was a character who crossed borders all his life, between the Jewish and the American culture, between "white" and "black" music, and between classic and popular music. It is not too far fetched to think of Salomon Sulzer at such a moment; he also crossed limits of Jewish and ritual music and opened a dialogue with others. Music is a virtual space of encounter, sometimes a kind of paradise, always an illusion. But the kind of illusion that forms a resource of life.

The Church choir of St. Karl under the lead of Rudolf Berchtel and Barion Christian Büchel will sing Psalm 92., "Tov Lehodos" as Franz Schubert wrote it for his friend

Salomon Sulzer and for the temple in Vienna. "Tov Lehodos" is a song of gratefulness for the Sabbath that many Jewish composers, from Louis Lewandowski to Eric Zeislatter, later transformed into contemporary music. We will end with Sulzer himself, his Uvashofar Gadol,



sung by Marlena Tänzer, Cantor from New Jersey. A stunning song for the high holiday, for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. And today too is a day of beginning.

Uvashofar gadol: the great shofar is sounded, the still small voice is heard, and the angels tremble with fear as they proclaim, 'Behold! The Day of Judgment!' ♦

Even the armies of heaven are to be brought to judgment, for in your sight even they are not innocent.

It is not often that three representatives of the monotheistic faiths greet the opening of such a public building together. There is no protocol for a joint sanctification. Despite common roots, the common ground of our different beliefs today is perhaps more

secular. But still there is room for prayer. Rabbi Hermann Schmelzer from St. Gallen posted the mezuzah at the door before we began, acknowledging monotheism, the one God remembered at many of the doors here in earlier days.

With him, we welcome Imam Samir Redzepovic from the Islamic congregation of Bregenz for Tirol and Vorarlberg, and Reverend Thomas Heilbrun from the community of St. Karl. They all want to pray for the well being of this building and its visitors and the mutual respect of the communities to which they belong.

The speakers are Mayor Richard Amann and Landesrat Erich Schwärzler, representing the city of Hohenems and the State of Vorarlberg, Ada Rinderer who, together with her husband Reinhard, fulfilled the most delicate task of turning back this desecrated building into a place of dignity, memory and future; and Uri Tänzer, grandson of the last major Rabbi of Hohenems, who came here with his wonderful wife Marlena, a cantor, to speak about his own memory of a place he learned to know only late, after the turmoil and destruction of the last century. ♦



"A town confronts its history. (...) For years, even the memory of the rich Jewish culture and community life was suppressed. That only changed with the founding of the Jewish Museum that now, with the opening of the former synagogue as a place for cultural events, receives a harmonizing part." *Vaterland*(Liechtenstein), 30.4.2006

"Reinhard Rinderer: 'We wanted to expose a historical development.' The organizers wish that 'the building shall evolve a new life of cultural diversity' says Loewy, in that 'not only an exclusively Jewish-Christian relationship should have its say.' Therefore in the official opening ceremony the Reverend and the Rabbi will be joined by an Imam. Gesture and concept." *Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*, 12.5.2006

"There are even more pleasant prospects for the future: By 2009, the street in front of the building will be cleared of traffic and the square in front of the Sulzer auditorium will be available for events. 'We are glad that a gap in the Jewish quarter could be closed,' said Günter Linder, responsible for culture in the town council." *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, 13.5.2006

# REMARKS AT THE OPENING MAY 21, 2006

DI ADA RINDERER—ARCHITECT, DORNBIRN/AUSTRIA



Salomon Sulzer Hall  
The Hohenems Synagogue:  
House of Prayer – Fire Station – House of Culture

Honorable Minister  
Honorable Mayor  
Dear Descendents  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Buildings are like people, they can tell stories..

This building also tells a long story with joyful, but also very sad parts. The story begins in 1771 as a synagogue for the Jewish community in Hohenems. Built in a late baroque style, with a distinctive mansard roof, corner pilaster strips, oval and arch windows.

During the years, it housed feasts, songs and prayers.

But – there were also other times. During the Second World War, the House of God was seized. Its attire and its ornaments, like the beautiful ceiling paintings, were removed until it became completely naked. Its shining eyes, the windows, were taken away, its proud head, the bell tower with the Star of David – was beheaded.

Later on its entire strong body was drilled through in order to build a hose tower. Its large body was partitioned into countless small sections and its heart, the Torah Ark, was forcefully torn out of its body. A loud cry could often be heard issuing from the open, bleeding wound, a fire siren whose aim was saving other peoples' lives.

Its eternal light was extinguished.

The old, well known child named Synagogue was not recognized anymore, and with the "1955" keystone it was christened "Fire Station". A plaque at the entrance disowned its history: "Built in 1955".

When I moved from Israel to Vorarlberg 12 years ago, - a second generation Holocaust survivor – I heard this story and it became important for me and my husband to research part of the history of this house.

In 1996, we began to research, to work out the historical development of the building and to describe it in

documentation of the building's changes.

Thanks to the engagement of Gerhard Lacha and the Synagogue Building Beneficiaries, as investors, together with the Jewish Museum and the town of Hohenems, the restoration of the building could begin. We submitted a plan and presented a solution that would enable the building to regain its nobility.

There is no future without a past.

This was the motto of our plan and it was intended to stretch like a red thread through the entire house.

We never intended a historical rebuilding of the former synagogue. We did not intend to create something that does not exist anymore, and for which there is no use anymore.

Our aim was the "rebuilding" of the Prayer Hall and restoration of the original cubature, the length, width and height and the general appearance of the hall in order to give the image of the original.

Extensive work had to be done for this purpose, such as tearing down the inserted ceiling, restoring the previous window openings and closing the fire station doors. The former women's gallery was rebuilt in order that the total cubature could be felt.

The round arch windows were reconstructed according to old plans and pictures.

Since the building is not used as a synagogue anymore, there is an emptiness on the East Wall where the Torah Ark was situated; it can never be filled by the new use.

The enclosing building and parts of the hall, floor, walls and ceiling are smaller. However, they are finished according to the original form and material. We deliberately abstained from reconstructing the decoration and ornamentation or the ceiling paintings. The hall should stand as such, calmly and full of dignity.

The new vestibule is separate from the old building. The vestibule opens into the old synagogue through a glass façade. The conduction of light and contact by sight enable the visitor to feel the old in the new.

The realization of these aims was achieved in close cooperation with the Federal Office for the Preservation of Monuments by combining modern materials and techniques with old handicrafts. Further technical prerequisites - acoustics, ventilation, and lighting – for the small hall are also simple and minimal and are integrated into the original form of the former Prayer Hall. The new chandeliers were designed by us to remind us of the original oil lamps.

It was not always simple to achieve what we see today – and it would not have been possible without the effort of many people in the Synagogue Building Beneficiaries Association, the town of Hohenems and the Jewish Museum, to whom we wish to express our heartfelt thanks.

This reconstruction has ensured the local value of the building in the Jewish Quarter and the meaningful use of the former sacral house for a long time in the future. Music in these halls is something very beautiful. The new Salomon Sulzer Hall has its light back.❖

# MY PERSONAL FORMER SYNAGOGUE DEDICATION IMPRESSIONS

URI TAENZER

Inasmuch as this newsletter is dedicated to the reader's better appreciation of the amazing program of events which took place in connection with the former synagogue's official investiture, I will try to focus this article on my own impressions as your on-site AFJMH representative.

First, it's vitally important for our dedicated and loyal members, supporters and descendants throughout the world, to appreciate the importance of

our organization and the involvement of descendants generally to the continued vitality of this jewel of a museum, one of only three Jewish museums in all of Austria.

Having met with local officials and dignitaries, good and honorable men and women whose influence can make or break the Museum financially and administratively, people who support the cause of remembrance but who are also politically astute, it's clear to me that international recognition, promotion of cultural inclusiveness and integration, acceptance of diversity as well as popular exhibits, are the essential features which resonate. The residents of Hohenems and Vorarlberg have endured years of controversy surrounding not only the Museum's cost-benefit ratio, but also regarding the former synagogue and its conversion from a fire station. We outsiders have been spared much of the contention over so many issues, those related to architectural features, expenses and even litigation over the location of the vestibule and air conditioning equipment.

Nevertheless, there can be no dispute as to the magnificence of the end result. Architects Ada and Reinhard Rinderer have designed a masterpiece. The citizens of Hohenems, in collaboration with the JMH and assisted by investor Gerhard Lacha, must be congratulated on their singular achievement of creating a state-of-the-art community cultural center in Hohenems, a hallowed space which quite fittingly also serves as home to a great music school.

I feel a sense of exhilaration

"Simple and full of dignity' (Reinhard Rinderer) the hall stands for itself. While one refrained from ornaments, the rounded windows and the arched ceiling were restored. Where once the torah shrine stood, now an emptiness can be sensed. It will not be filled by making use of the space."

*Der Standard (Wien),  
13.5.2006*

"Then it was the Jewish citizens who lived together with the Christians till the Nazi times in this community; today living together with Muslims forms a particular challenge in the town."

*Vorarlberger Nachrichten,  
22.5.2006*

because, from every indication, the dedication program on May 21 seemed to strike the proper tone. The timing was right. Perhaps the crisp newness of the environment helped to dispel past misunderstandings. Ada Rinderer's words (the English translation is reproduced in this edition) brought tears to my eyes. The audience seemed spellbound by Franz Schubert's composition of Psalm 92, which he dedicated to Salomon Sulzer. "Tov Lehodos" was vocalized with masterful clarity by the astounding Kirchenchor St. Karl Hohenems. I was so proud of my dear wife, Marlena, who chanted Sulzer's "Uvashofar Gadol" with such devotion to her craft.

From conversations with many attendees during the delectable tent-covered reception following the program, I am led to believe that the speakers (many of whose words are also reproduced in this edition) seemed to strike the right chords. Integration of Muslims is a huge issue in Vorarlberg. Fortunately, in large part due to the efforts of JMH's very able first director, Dr. Eva Grabherr, this issue is being channeled in positive directions. I understand that the spirit of inclusiveness which permeated the dedication ceremony, echoed by Imam Recepovic, was deemed to be an important and positive element, politically speaking.

Our good friend and JMH stalwart, Felix Jaffe, asked me why I thought the former synagogue has been and will again become a bridge for greater understanding. The answer is very much implicit in the wise words of Dr. Hanno Loewy, Bürgermeister Richard Amann, Landesrat Erich Schwärzler,

Pfarrer Dr. Thomas Heilbrun, Rabbi Dr. Hermann Schmelzer, Architect Ada Rinderer and Imam Samir Recepovic. It is fitting that their statements have been widely disseminated by the Austrian media.

The new Salomon Sulzer Auditorium is named after history's great Jewish cantor and composer of modern music. He certainly bridged the Jewish past to the present. Formerly, from 1771-1938, Jewish residents congregated and worshipped here. Notwithstanding the horrific intervention of the Nazi era, the building's tasteful makeover features many characteristics of its Jewish past. To that extent the building's new life is linked to its past history by a solemn bridge over the stormy waters of the Holocaust.

As they say, the past is prologue. What matters now is that May 21, 2006 may well signify a turning point for the community's perception of the significance of the Jewish Museum Hohenems and its cousin, the Salomon Sulzer Saal. What occurred on May 21 and what can and, we hope, will take place in this former synagogue building in the future, are programs to foster more harmonious relations and a better understanding between peoples whose religions and cultures may be different.

In the final analysis, I believe that this tastefully rededicated former synagogue building is truly a link, a bridge between the past when Christians and Jews cohabited in relative tranquility in Hohenems, the present time of reconciliation, and the hope we have for a better future for all.♦

"Where once the praise of God had its place, for half a century more profane things were 'celebrated.' Not even a memorial plaque remembered the old

meaning of the building. Even in democratic Austria the Nazi mayor's intention prevailed: the 'memory of the site remained extinguished.' Only the founding of the Jewish Museum brought about a change in thinking. Now public officials could no longer maintain such a Museum and still celebrate fire brigade parties in the former synagogue at the same time."

Walter Fink, *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*,  
24.5.2006

## LET'S GET TOGETHER! DECENDANTS' REUNION 2008

The Museum is planning a Reunion for the Descendants of the Jewish Families of Hohenems. That Reunion, about which you should have received a mailing directly from the Museum, will be held from July 31 to August 3, 2008 in Hohenems. The previous Reunion held in 1998 brought 160 descendants to Hohenems. Now the Museum has learned about many more descendants, a total of over 900, and hope that with our assistance, all living descen-

dants of those families will have the opportunity to meet in Hohenems on this special occasion. By the time of the Reunion, the new Permanent Exhibition will be on display. Details about the program will be mailed by the Museum and the Descendants Committee in due course. It is hoped that the Reunion will permit us to learn more about our ancestors, give us the opportunity to visit monuments and sites of our common past, discover the Hohenems surroundings, ex-

perience the diversity of today's descendants, create a sense of community and continuity of the history of Hohenems and permit us to look into the future of our relationship to Hohenems.

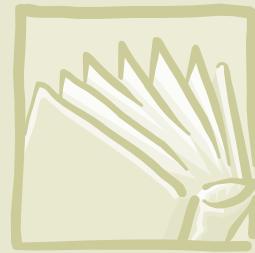
If you have not received your reunion packet, please contact the Museum. For those of our members who are not descendants, but are curious, we welcome you also. Please contact the Museum for a packet.❖

"There was simply great music that the highly inspired trio revealed to the public at the official opening of the Salomon Sulzer Auditorium in the former synagogue. Absolute virtuosos who not just play klezmer in all its diversity but also develop it with innovation."

*Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*,  
22.5.2006

### ONLY A FEW COPIES REMAIN,

"...an Illusion, the History and Presence of the Hohenems Synagogue," edited by Johnannes Inama and Hanno Loewy remain with us here in the United States. If you wish to order a copy, please contact Uri Taenzer. The cost of the book is \$45.00.



" 'Maybe nobody will believe all this anymore after the war,' sings Nina Maria Plangg as Anne Frank. Maybe everything will be forgotten only too easily. But what remained, aside from the artistic merits of this Hohenems opera evening, was an ice cold shiver in the neck that one cannot get rid off too soon."

*Vorarlberger Nachrichten*,  
29.5.2006

*From Left: Mayor Richard Amann, Imam Samir Recepovic, Landesrat Erich Schwarzier, Rabbi Herman Schmeizer, Cantor Marlena Taenzer, Pfarrer Thomas Heilbrun, Di Ada Rinderer, Di Reinhard Rinderer, Director Hanno Loewy, Uri Taenzer.*

# *Please Contribute*

TO THE  
AFJMH'S SPECIAL FUND  
FOR THE  
NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION

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If you have already contributed,  
we hope that you will consider  
making an additional donation.

## *Don't forget:*

Funds contributed between now  
and September 15, 2006 will be  
matched dollar for dollar by the  
Stephan and Renee Rollin Family  
Charitable Foundation.

The Museum will recognize those  
making contributions, as speci-  
fied in this issue of *In Touch*, in  
communications and on an  
inaugural plaque to be installed  
in the Museum in 2007.

## *And,*

As always your contribution is  
fully tax deductible.

Please make  
checks payable to  
AFJMH and mail to:

P.O.Box 237  
Moorestown, NJ  
08057-0237

# IN TOUCH

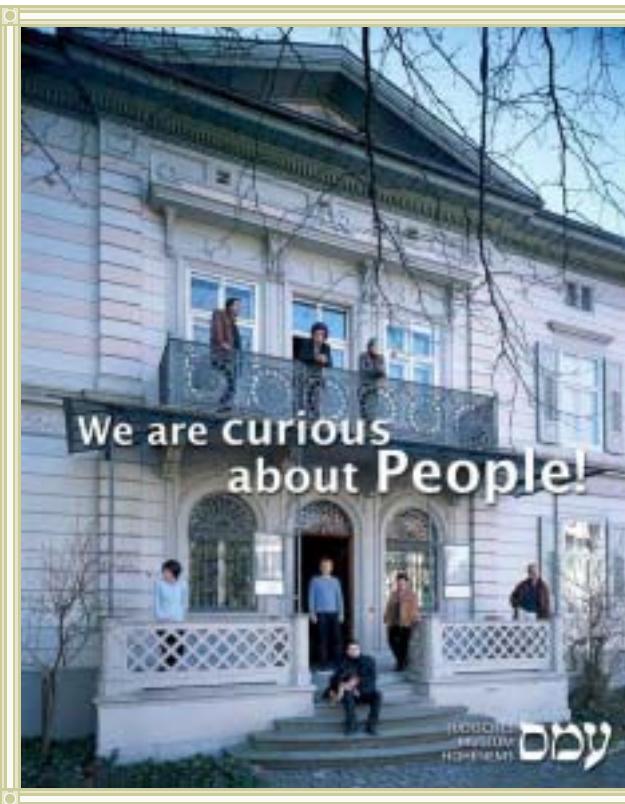
JULY 2006



We're on the Web!  
<http://www.jm-hohenems.at>

The Jewish Museum of Hohenems, as a regional museum, remembers the rural Jewish community of Hohenems and its various contributions to the development of Vorarlberg and the surrounding regions. It confronts contemporary questions of Jewish life and culture in Europe, the diaspora and Israel - questions of the future of Europe between migration and tradition. The museum also deals with the end of the community of Hohenems, the regional Nazi history, the expulsion or deportation of the last members of the community, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Along with these fragmented lines of regional and global history, it is also devoted to the people and their histories and maintains a relationship to the descendants of Jewish families in Hohenems around the world.

The permanent exhibition in the Heimann-Rosenthal Villa, which was built in 1864, documents the history of the Jewish community in Hohenems which existed for over three centuries until its destruction during the era of the Nazi regime. The museum offers annually changing exhibitions and an extensive program of events. ♦



**JOIN US . . .  
BECOME A MEMBER AND LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!**



During the meeting of the descendants of Jewish families from Hohenems in 1998, the idea to found the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Inc. emerged. The association unites the numerous descendants living in America and supports the Jewish Museum

of Hohenems in various ways. Annual dues are \$25. We hope to count on you to join today. Dues can be sent to:

PO Box 237  
Moorestown, NJ 08057-0237

Any additional contribution you could make would be very

much appreciated and thus enable the American Friends to continue to make important contributions to the Museum at Hohenems as well as to other endeavors designed to contribute to knowledge of the Hohenems Jewish Community as it was when our ancestors lived there. ♦