

# Young Cape Town Producer In America

## Leonard Schach Has Interesting Experiences

(From Our Cape Town Correspondent)

MR. LEONARD SCHACH, the well-known young Cape Town producer, who left for the United States a few months ago under the auspices of the Union Education Department to make an intensive study of stage and theatrical work, has been having some interesting and colourful experiences. Because of the official nature of his visit, he has had entree to the highest circles in the theatrical and film world, and some of his encounters with film stars in Hollywood will no doubt arouse envy in the hearts of film fans in this country.

I have been privileged to read some of the fascinating letters which Mr. Schach has written home to his mother, Mrs. Edith Schach, of Sea Point, and to his brother and sister-in-law, Adv. and Mrs. Sydney Schach, who are well known in Zionist and communal circles in Cape Town. Mr. Schach's late father, Mr. Solomon Schach, was one of the most prominent of Jewish communal workers and a pioneer in charitable work in Cape Town.

In his letters home, Mr. Schach makes several references of Jewish interest. Thus, he writes that he visited the home of Mrs. Rose Halperin, the president of Hadasah, whom he describes as "a brilliant woman." He adds that many Zionist leaders are worried about Ben Hecht, who is capturing all the youth by his flaming propaganda.

### Met Sophie Tucker

In a night club in New York Mr. Schach met Sophie Tucker, who features in a floor show there, celebrating her 50th year on the stage. "What a consummate artist she still is!" he writes. "She sings a clever song about the joys of old age, ending 'When it seems my arteries won't let me, Let the shammas come and get me.' I spoke to her afterwards. She sells her book, 'Some of These Days,' for wounded soldiers (it has netted over £200,000 already). It was a thrill seeing her."

At a Kosher restaurant in New York Mr. Schach found himself sitting at the next table to Eddie Cantor, the famous film star.

In Chicago Mr. Schach had an interesting experience in connection with his theatrical work. He visited the Goodman Theatre (part of the Art Institute in Chicago), which was built by the Goodman family in memory of their actor son, who was killed in 1917 and is run by Dr. Gnesin, of the Moscov Art Theatre, and his chief assistant, David Itkin.

### A Giant Russian

"David is a giant of a Russian, the son of a long line of Rabbis, who trained in Moscow to be a singer, damaged his vocal chords, and after the family had practically sat shiva for him, studied under Stanislavsky and then under Vagtangov when the latter founded Habimah, of which he was an original member. He toured with them on their 1927 American tour, and it was here that the Habimah split into the Yiddish-Hebrew division, and, strange to relate, those who voted for Yiddish are to-day in Palestine (having been picked up on the Continent and sent there), and the Hebrew-speaking propo-

nents are to-day still in America. David . . . is a fine old man to-day and one of the most striking personalities I have met. . . . When stranded in Chicago in 1927, he made his living as a chazan there, and to-day still offers his services free of charge every New Year and Yom Kippur; and his Passover 'seders' are an experience, I am told. The Goodman is a fine school, conducted on the Moscow Art Theatre system."

### Pnina Saltzman is Married

Mr. Schach also mentions that he re-met Ella Goldstein, Sigi Weissenberg and Pnina Saltzman (now married), all of whom are at present in America. He also re-met Felix de Cola, the famous jazz pianist, who formerly resided in Cape Town and has made a name for himself in Hollywood. Danny Kaye, the famous film star, who is another Jewish resident of Hollywood, gave Mr. Schach his views on (among other things) Zionism.

Since his visit to Hollywood was an official part of his tour and of his research work, Mr. Schach was able to meet many of the film stars personally and to watch others in the studios while production work was going on. Among those he met were Orson Welles, James Mason and his wife, Cary Grant, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Walt Disney, Edward G. Robinson, Shirley Temple and her mother and Natalie Kalmus, the inventor of Technicolor. Others whom he watched were Robert Taylor, Lana Turner, Spencer Tracy, Van Johnson, June Allyson, Walter Pidgeon and Deborah Kerr. Mr. Schach also watched Ben Hecht (who is a well-known playwright in Hollywood) working on a film with Gregory Peck.

### Mistaken for Son of Leslie Howard

Mr. Schach adds humorously that Orson Welles' art director wanted him to do a Leslie Howard film, but that he turned the offer down. He was further amused by the fact that at Ciro's (the famous Hollywood restaurant) he was mistaken by several people, including bobby-soxer autograph hunters, for the son of Leslie Howard (who is also an actor).

In addition to all the prominent personalities in the theatrical world that Mr. Schach met, such as Prof. John Erskine, the famous poet and author, he met Mary Boettzer, the daughter of the late President Roosevelt, who is the owner of the "Seattle Post." In the course of his extensive tour of the country, which covered 41 of the 48 states and lasted three months, Mr. Schach visited Chi-

cago, where, at the Stevens Hotel, Henry Wallace had the room next to his.

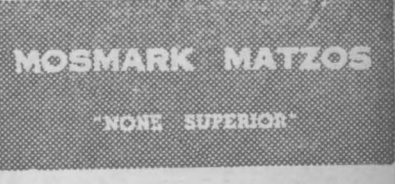
"He speaks to-morrow night, but all the 29,000 seats are already sold. I passed him in the corridor, heavily guarded," writes Mr. Schach.

The "Cape Times" featured a photograph of Mr. Schach, which pictures him together with Ginger Rogers, whom he also met in Hollywood. The "Cape Times," writing of Mr. Schach's visit to Hollywood, mentions an incident which was not referred to by Mr. Schach in his letters home. The "Cape Times" correspondent in Hollywood writes that at the last moment the young actress Mr. Schach had invited to accompany him to the premiere of "Black Narcissus"—the first Anglo-American preview to be held there—was unable to go. Instead of wasting the extra ticket, Mr. Schach walked up to a queue of fans who had been sitting in the blazing sun for four hours, to get a glimpse of their favourites, and picked out the oldest and shabbiest woman and invited her to accompany him to the exclusive event. The woman was so overcome, as she had never been to a premiere before, that she asked a policeman whether she could go along with Mr. Schach. The correspondent commends Mr. Schach for his "gallantry."

Mr. Schach is a cousin of Miss Sallie Kussel, who has already left for America, and they hope to be together during the High Festivals.



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