

was his liberal sentiments and support of the Bela Kun government that kept him from getting such work.

More likely, however, Hoffman and other experts believe, Kozma's problem was that he was a Jew in an increasingly anti-Semitic country. By 1938, Hungary's anti-Jewish laws stripped Kozma of his membership in the Chamber of Architects as well as his license to work. Kozma responded by writing a book of his architectural principles, illustrated by his work, "The New House," which was published in Switzerland in 1941.

Once the Nazis invaded Hungary, Kozma went into hiding with false papers. Surviving the war, he was reinstated as an architect, received his first public commission for a school, joined the editorial board of a modernist architecture journal *Uj Epitezset* (New Architecture) and was appointed both as a director of the School for Applied Arts and a professor in the School of Architecture at Budapest Technical University. Unfortunately, before the school's new building opened in 1946, Kozma died at age 64.

Hoffman's own story begins shortly before Kozma's death. Hoffman was born in 1941 in Budapest to a very middle-class Jewish family. "My father was a merchant," she told me, "he had a leather supply business." Her mother was a university-educated artist, a graduate of the School of Applied Arts, an achievement all the more remarkable because in the 1930s there was a quota, the Numerus Clausus, that restricted the number of Jews allowed to attend.

In early 1942, three months after Hoffman was born, her father was conscripted as a Jew into a forced labor battalion. His unit was eventually captured by the opposing Russian forces, and despite being Jewish and a natural enemy of the German forces, the Russians made him a prisoner of war.

In 1944 after the Nazis invaded, Hoffman and her mother were forced to move into Budapest's ghetto. "The ghetto was bombed, repeatedly," Hoffman recalled. "And in the winter of 1945, just before it [Budapest] was freed, our building got hit and everyone in it died. I was the only survivor — a 3-year-old child."

Her maternal grandparents raised her, along with her uncle and aunt, until 1947, when the Russians finally allowed her father to return to what was now communist-controlled Budapest, where he reunited with the 6-year-old daughter he barely knew. He remarried soon after.

Under the communists, Hoffman's father was allowed to resume his leather trade. But based on what he had experienced under the Soviets during the war, he was not optimistic about the future. In 1956, at the time of the Hungarian revolution, Hoffman's father and her uncle hired a truck to drive them to the Austrian border. They walked across to freedom.

Hoffman arrived in Los Angeles with her father and stepmother in 1957. She graduated

from Hollywood High School and at 19 married a fellow Hungarian, who had also fled to Los Angeles. For the next two decades, she worked in accounting and raised her son (who is now married to a Hungarian girl — proving paprika is as thick as blood). But her passion was for design, and in the 1980s she returned to UCLA to pursue a degree in interior design.

In the 1990s, she began to travel more often to Hungary. "I rediscovered Budapest," she said. She also began finding Kozma furniture in former government consignment shops, thrift stores and antique shops. At first Hoffman bought the antiques for herself, then for her clients and finally, five years ago, she opened Szalon.

Hoffman describes the Kozma pieces as "so noble. They were such jewels." She also found that other dealers revere Kozma, as well. As she started collecting the pieces, she found herself learning more and more about Kozma. Whenever someone came to her store and inquired about the pieces, she would launch into a lecture. Doing so evolved into the talk she will give at Szalon on May 8.

In Kozma's story we see both the glory and the tragedy of that exceptional generation of 20th century Hungarian Jews. The genius of Kozma lies in his ability to mix the traditional



Table by Lajos Kozma (Photo courtesy Szalon)

and the new, to innovate and create an aesthetic desired by the rising middle class — and yet, because he was a Jew, he found society turned against him. Hoffman, herself the survivor, has championed Kozma, reaching back through history to Hungary itself to rescue him.

In choosing to call her store Szalon, Hoffman refers to a common Hungarian formulation for the spelling of many words, an "s" followed by a "z." I would like to suggest that Szalon is more than that, however, itself a way, perhaps, of seeing the world: Just as the "z" resembles an "s" that has been flipped, Szalon also reflects the way in which Hungarian culture, as evidenced through Kozma's design, bounces between the traditional and the modern, between the seen and the hidden, between Magyar and the European, the Hungarian and the Jewish, and how it can once again bounce between the past and the present, between Budapest and Los Angeles.

For more information, visit this article at [jewishjournal.com](http://jewishjournal.com).

The Fountain Theatre in association with The Israeli Leadership Council presents

# The Accomplices

by Bernard Weinraub

**It's Back! The Smash Hit Play!**  
The true story of one man's fight to save the Jews.

"Gripping!" - *LA Weekly*  
"Powerful!" - *Hollywood Reporter*

At the Odyssey Theatre in West L.A.  
**(323) 663-1525**

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

"Great laughs and songs!" ~ Ruta Lee, Canyon News

# THE MUSICAL

# DIVORCE!

When Couples Lose...  
Lawyers Win.

Music, Lyrics & Book by Erin Kamler  
Staged & Directed by Rick Sparks

**NOW In its 4th SMASH MONTH!**

HUDSON MAINSTAGE  
6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood 90038  
Call now for tickets: 323.960.1056  
[www.divorcemusical.com](http://www.divorcemusical.com)

\*\*\* CRITIC'S CHOICE \*\*\*  
"Genuinely a vivid mosaic... Simply terrific!" - *LA Times*

\*\*\* CRITIC'S PICK \*\*\*  
"Joyful energy and surprising tenderness!" - *Backstage*

## The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony and BODYTRAFFIC

PRESENT BLOCH (1880-1959) & ZEISL (1905-1959)

# 50 YEARS LATER

Wadsworth  
Theatre,  
West LA  
Tuesday,  
May 19, 2009  
8 pm



### TICKET INFORMATION

\$100 Patron of the Arts  
(includes post-concert Artists' Reception and recognition in the program)  
\$36 Reserved Seating • \$25 General Admission  
\$18 Student and DRC Discount

To purchase tickets [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com), (800)838-3006

LAJS: [info@lajewishsymphony.org](mailto:info@lajewishsymphony.org) • [www.lajewishsymphony.org](http://www.lajewishsymphony.org)  
(818)728-1923

BODYTRAFFIC (424)204-9097

We are grateful to HILLSIDE MEMORIAL PARK AND MORTUARY for their sponsorship

