



**HERB BRIN
ACROSS
the
City
Desk**

**Max Helfman,
Brandeis and me**

My early days as a poet were wrapped up with Brandeis's Camp Institute, now known as the Brandeis-Bardin Institute, located on several thousand acres in the hills of Sami Valley.

I remember Shlomo Bardai taking me on a duck at the House of the Book one evening, serving an arm in a huge circle, saying, "We did this for *Yiddiskeit*. We did this for our people."

(Will write about my remembrances of the House of the Book at another time.)

This, today, is Max Helfman's time. Ben Ari and Michael Blankfort will take front and center in Hararitzat, somewhat later.

Max Helfman. One of the authentic Jewish musical stars of our people.

The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony will celebrate Max Helfman in a concert of his music to be performed 7 pm, Sunday, Dec. 12, at Valley Beth Shalom, 15739 Ventura Blvd. in Encino.

The program, conducted by Noreen Green, founder of the Jewish Symphony, has arranged a remarkable group of artists for the occasion, all paying tribute to the memory of Max Helfman.

Max Helfman (can't get myself to write "Max" as I knew him, or "Helfman" as some of the auctions would have it) played an important role in my poetic development.

He left us all too early in his life.

Those are descendants of a spirit on high. The concert in honor of the great Jewish musicologist will pay tribute to one of the most prolific and influential people in the world of Jewish liturgical music.

Included in the concert (please, please attend!) will be Max Helfman's Yiddish adaptation of Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*. In time for the impending Chanukah.

The concert will feature works by Helfman-Brandeis artists in residence. These include the works of composers such as Lucas Richman, Amundav Aloni and Robert Strassberg.

Soprano Shira Adler will perform in honor of Max Helfman. Turner David Katz will be featured. A guitar performance will be presented by Jordan Chumovsky and a cello presentation will feature David Low, director of the Brandeis-Bardin Young Artists Program.

Jewish folks of the Southland all have their own memories of Max Helfman.

More are special.

Special special.

I did a poetry reading for Ben Ari to a group of guests on the porch of the cottage at the Camp Institute, since Ben Ari handled the drama programs.



MAX HELFMAN

Listening in the background was Max Helfman. He came up to me after the reading. He had been taken by one of the poems —

Ashteklon.

The poem starts:
*Upon the shores of Ashteklon
The sun is warm and clean
And rolling waves in tender tone
Touch her pulse of sand and stone
This ancient Ashteklon.*

The poem tells of the destruction of "Tzerpura's Ashteklon" — and then these lines:

*Tell not the daughters in Ashteklon
Of battles lost for men of song.
Sing not lament to their defeat.*



NOREEN GREEN

*Dispersion to the winds of time
Dispersion to the death decree —
Grieved and baked to crumbs.*

Then came the return of Israel forces to Ashteklon... and the following concluding lines of the poem:

*Oh Philistine, how have your sand,
Your colonnades upon the ground,
Derketo's gods without a sound
Are idle stones in Ashteklon*

*and all that's left is memory
A chip of marble by the sea
A coin with face of Ashdod.*

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City Desk

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*Green as broken pottery
That tells a course of history
In this city by the sea.*

□

"That's a canana!" Max exclaimed. "It has already been set to music," I told the musicologist. "It was done by Aaron Tshkovsky."

I handed him a copy of the music. "Come back tomorrow," he told me, "which I did."

"This is a Jewish canana," he insisted as we considered the poem once again while seated on the front steps of the BCI hangar.

Max Helfman and I met a number of times to discuss the treatment of Tshkovsky's music, this time as a canana. Before the new work could be completed, Max Helfman died. The loss hit me hard.