

## Fiddler on the Roof, Kimberley Theatre, March 1983

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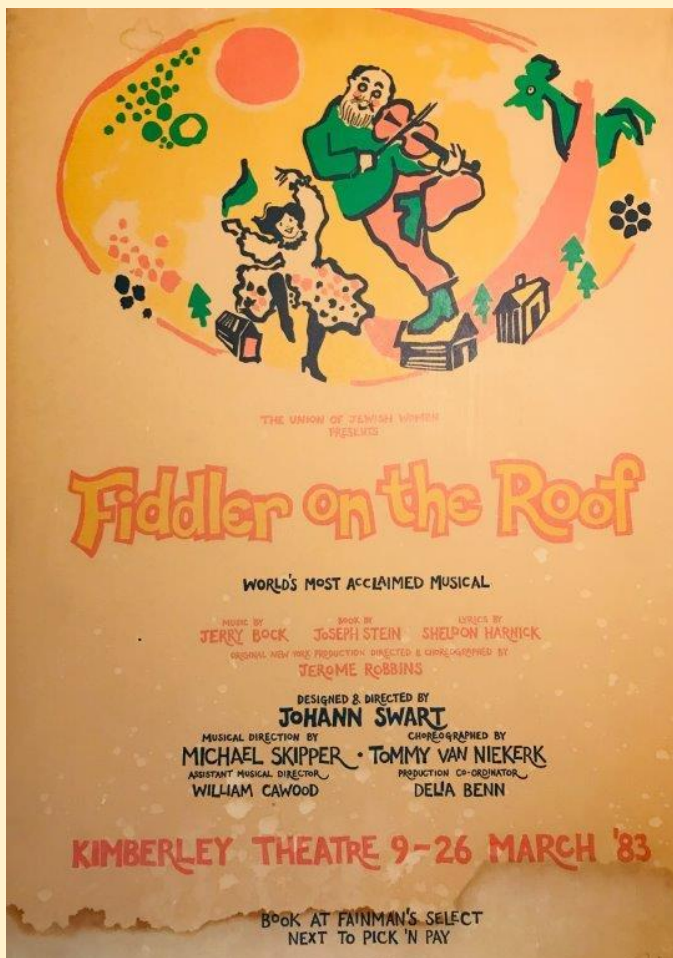
Here is some happy nostalgia. The Kimberley community was very creative and culturally minded. They created and took part in musical activities, balls and parties. They were active in the theatre. We now have a page on our website – under ‘Community’ for [Shows and Productions](#). It includes hilarious reference to the Mock Wedding of Menuval PaSkoodnik to Dr Percy Shepsel Ferd-Ganif in 1975 – and to an even earlier ‘liquor pageant’ of some kind from the 1950s.

It also has the subject of this Newsletter #40 – the fantastic production of ***Fiddler on the Roof*** presented by the Union of Jewish Women at the Kimberley Theatre in March 1983. Enjoy the wonderful article that Delia Benn wrote – about the production in which she and her family were heavily involved.

At the same time, we are sad to learn of, and send condolences to Delia and Bobby and family on the passing this week of his sister Beryl Benn, an attractive and strong personality and character at the time that we grew up in Kimberley in the 1940s and 50s.

At present we are working on the Hammar family and the Sagar family. Keep your stories coming.

Best wishes Geraldine Auerbach, London, 6 June 2021



### Fiddler on the Roof – March 1983

**Delia Benn** writes: My family and I were heavily involved with the production of ***Fiddler on the Roof*** in the Kimberley Theatre in March 1983. It was presented in aid of and with lots of participation, by the Union of Jewish Women

When I was offered a teaching post at Kimberley Boys' High School (KHS) in 1979, I accepted immediately as I was drawn to the talented colleagues I would be working with, especially Johann Swart, whom I'd known for a while. During the 11 years that I was part of the KHS family, I served as head of English, head of Maths and on the school leadership team where I was responsible for the Cultural Portfolio. Those were memorable years!

**Johann Swart** designed and directed many hit musicals for the school and for Kimberley and, as I've always had a love of theatre, it did not take me long to be involved. Johann was very

impressed with the work done by the UJW to assist the disadvantaged in Kimberley and **offered to produce Fiddler on the Roof as a fundraiser for the UJW**. Wow! There were 2 conditions though: the community had to be involved and all the men had to grow beards!

‘Tradition!’



By this time, I was heavily involved in Johann’s drama productions, so I automatically became Production Co-ordinator and assistant Director. Johann was often a guest in my house and very familiar with Jewish tradition and its rituals. He wanted the show to be as authentic as possible, so he borrowed my ‘Joy of Yiddish’ and often sprinkled his comments with Yiddish expressions. The cast loved it and it certainly added an extra warmth.

**Doreen Cohen** had taken over the chair again in July 82 and was thrilled with the offer. She immediately became the Production Organiser and was inspirational in this regard, especially as there were 110 people involved. The branch knew it was a huge undertaking and its members enthusiastically came on board.

**Sharon Geller**, another active lady on the UJW Executive who had studied Dress Design both in South Africa and in Israel worked with Johan on the costume design. She was assisted in making the costumes by **Joyce Sack, Cecile Jawno, Shirley Allen** and others.

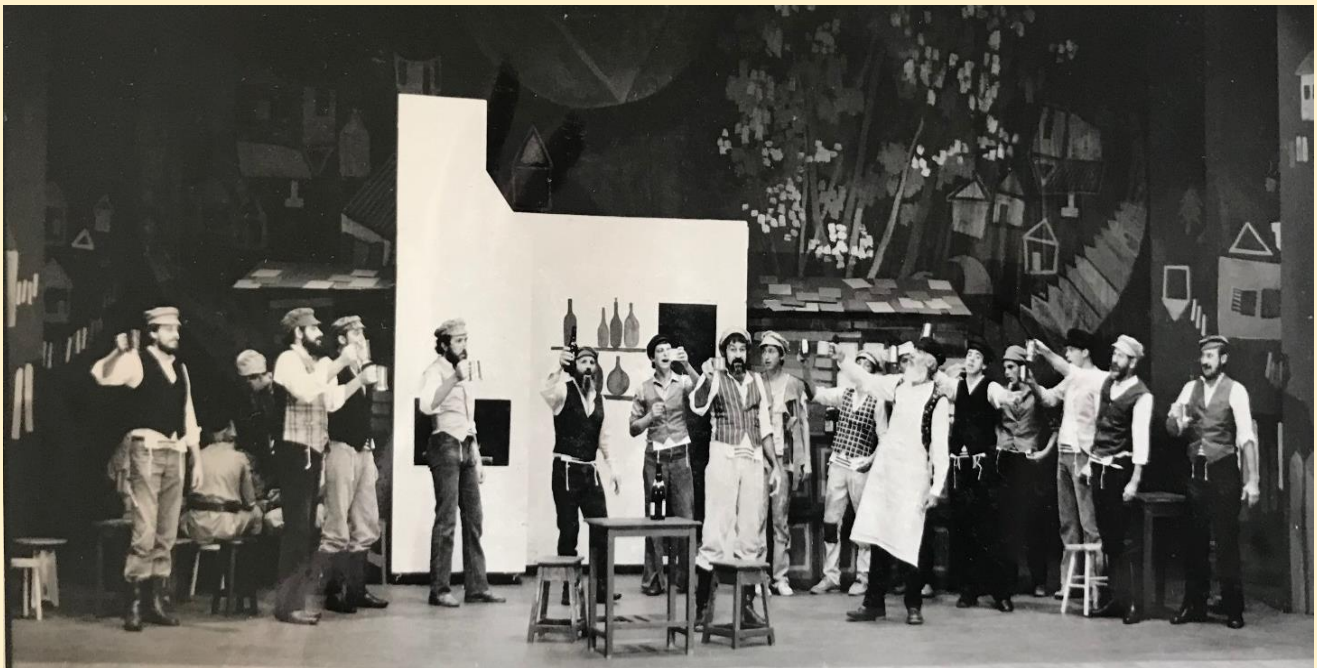
Michael Skipper, a graduate of Rhodes University, who became Head of Music at KHS when he completed his army service, was the Conductor and Musical Director. He was assisted by William

Cawood, at that time completing his army service, who also served as rehearsal pianist. This was necessary because Mike had a significant role on stage as well as Fyedka, the Russian suitor of Chava.



Above we see the set design and also Tevya with his milk wagon and

below the cast are enjoying celebrations at the Inn.



## We all turned out for the auditions!

Kimberley already had an established drama tradition and many talented actors and singers to draw from, but Johann wanted as many from the Jewish Community as possible.



Auditions for Johann's shows were always well attended, but this one was busier than ever. (Left) **Beryl Capon** and **Hillary Waldman**, landed the star parts of Yente the Matchmaker and Tevye's wife Golde.

My husband, **Bobby Benn**, got the part of Mordcha, the Innkeeper and my three children had small parts, **Lara** and **Justine** as daughters.

Our son **Arnie** as one of Mordcha's sons. He also became quite skilled at the bottle dance!

Other members of the cast from the community included

**Neville Levin, Morris Klevansky, Colin Kenny, Rhona Bayer Farrel Cohen Michael Waldman**

**Louis Benjamin**

**Sue Levin**

**Ida Selmann Sharla Cohen Shelley Cohen Jenny Haberfeld Daphne Greenblatt and Brandon Haberfeld.**



Backstage workers were also well represented by **Ivan Waldman, David Allen, Susan Bayer** and **June Haberfeld**.

**Johann** designed and painted the sets which were built by **Barry Katz** and assembled on stage by **Ivor Haberfeld, David Allen** and **Ivan Waldman**, assisted by members of the cast and backstage crew.

Additional members of the UJW assisted

with the production and these included **Joan Rauff, Myra Goldenbaum** and **Shirley Katz**. In all, the people involved totalled 110 people, of which at least 37 were from our Jewish community!

**The cast worked very hard.** Rehearsals were held regularly during the week and week-ends for the best part of **nine months**. We were like a family, all involved in this powerful experience together.

As it got closer to opening, the excitement mounted, not only amongst those of us involved, but also in the city. And then, to crown it all, a film company arrived in Kimberley to film "King of Diamonds", for TV3. They decided to film scenes from our show to appear on the TV magazine programme, Portfolio!

**The show was a resounding success.**

People travelled to Kimberley to see it. We had standing ovations every night and tickets for the two weeks **sold out** very quickly. It was a unique time in which ties between the Jewish and non-Jewish community were strengthened as each learned to appreciate the strengths of the other.

**My family all agree that it was a privilege to be part of something so uplifting.**

Delia Benn (née Brown), Baltimore June 2020.

Read Delia's own family story here: <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Benn.html>  
 the Awerbuck Brown story here [https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Brown\\_Awerbuck.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Brown_Awerbuck.html)  
 and the Maresky story here [https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families\\_files/Maresky%20Family.pdf](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families_files/Maresky%20Family.pdf)

# 'FIDDLER' RECEIVES STANDING OVATION

TICKET sales for the Union of Jewish Women's production of 'Fiddler on the Roof' are generally 'going very well', according to Mrs Doreen Cohen, the chairman.

Tickets are still available for the family shows on Monday and Tuesday of next week,' he said.

The family shows begin at 7 pm to allow parents to bring their children to the performance.

Tevya, played by Tony Bail, and the cast of the production, received a standing ovation from a near-capacity audience at the conclusion of Saturday evening's gala performance.

'We were extremely

proud,' Mrs Cohen said. 'I can't remember another standing ovation at the theatre.

The members of the cast deserved the ovation, as they have worked extremely hard for this production. We were thrilled at the response.' After the performance, the mayor and mayoress of Kimberley, Councillor

J H V and Mrs M Viljoen, went backstage to congratulate the cast. The show runs until March 26. There will be no performances on Fridays or on March 15.

Bookings can be made at Fainman's Select. The price of the tickets ranges from R1,50 to R5,00.

## Excerpts from reviews:

"The Union of Jewish Women, the cast and the many others involved, are to be congratulated on the marvellous production. It was a credit to Kimberley."

"Johann Swart has rightly praised the teamwork put into the production by the Union of Jewish Women, and we hope that this will not be their last joint venture."

"I would like to congratulate the Union of Jewish Women for staging "Fiddler on the Roof" and I take my hat off to these women for the wonderful work they do for charity, regardless of race, colour or creed."

## Facts and notes

- Production Organizer, Doreen Cohen
- Production Co-ordinator and Assistant Director, Delia Benn
- Conductor and Musical Director, Michael Skipper
- Assistant Musical Director, William Cawood
- Choreography, Tommy van Niekerk
- Costumes designed by Sharon Geller and Johann Swart,
- Set designed by Johann Swart
- lighting designed by Johann Swart and Brian Nel

## Cast List

### CAST

#### THE FIDDLER

Tommy van Niekerk

#### THE PAPAS

TEVYE, the milkman	Tony Ball
LAZAR WOLF, the butcher	Charles Bishop
MORDCHA, the innkeeper	Bobby Benn
AVRAM, the bookseller	Gordon Dally
THE RABBI	Terry Elmer
YUSSEL, the hatter	Mike Bradnum
SHLOIME, the bagel man	Neville Levin
YACOV, the fishmonger	Peter Fisher
LABEL, the cobbler	Morris Klevansky
SHMERIL, the knife-seller	Colin Kenny

#### THE MAMAS

GOLDE, Tevye's wife	Hilary Waldman
YENTE, the matchmaker	Beryl Capon
SHANDEL, Motel's mother	Anthea de la Harpe
RIFKA	Hilary Fisher
MIRILA	Shearon Sales
Other Mamas	Rhona Bayer, Shirley Dally, Beryl Evans, Jana Fourie, Dawn Reddie

#### THE SONS

MOTEL KAMZOIL, the tailor	Steve Grobler
PERCHIK, the student	Dudley Holmes
MENDEL, the Rabbi's son	Godfrey de Meyer
NACHUM, the beggar	Lionel Newton
CHAIM	John McDonnell
YITZUK   Mordcha's sons	Terence Lake
RUEVEN	Arnold Benn
Other Sons	Farrel Cohen, Michael Waldman, Jonathan Gates, Malcom Lowenthal, Louis Benjamin, Ernest Widdicombe

#### THE DAUGHTERS

TZEITEL	Kathy Fuller
HODEL	Susan Skipper
CHAVA   Tevye's daughters	Jacqui Hough
SHPRINTZE	Sue Levin
BIELKE	Cathy Powell
FREDEL	Ida Selmann
BERILLE	Lara Benn
Other Daughters	Lorin Bayer, Justine Benn, Sharla Cohen, Shelley Cohen, Lori Gie, Jenny Habersfeld, Denise Ortel, Anita Snyman, Michelle Snyman