

# New Israel Fund celebrates Yom Ha'atzmaut

## CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER? A PLAY BY A. B. YEHOSHUA

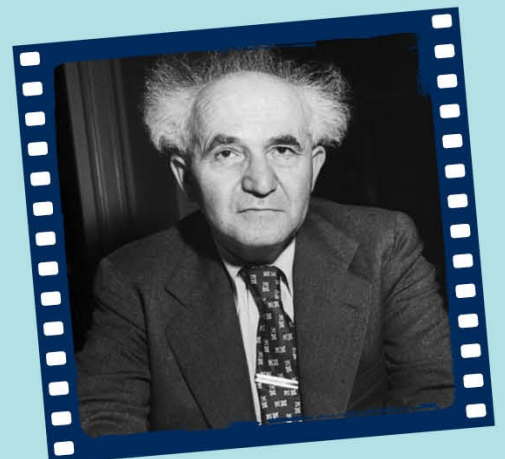
Rehearsed reading



Event Programme  
Thursday 10 May 2012

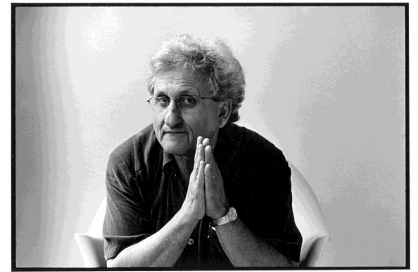


Royal Society of Medicine  
1 Wimpole St W1, London



New Israel Fund <sup>20</sup>years  
Progress. Together.

## Introduction by A.B. Yehoshua



The seed of this play was planted by Prof. Dan Miron, who gave me a copy of his book about the poetry and prose of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Best known as the founder of Revisionist Zionism, the movement that was the forerunner of the Likud and Israel's right-wing "nationalist camp," Jabotinsky was also an accomplished novelist, poet and translator. Born in Odessa, he was banished from Palestine by the British in 1930, and died in New York in 1940, just short of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In the course of conversation with Dan Miron, I learned of the failed attempt by Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Labor Zionists, to reconcile their two movements. The two conducted a series of meetings in 1934 in London, facilitated by Pinhas Rutenberg, a pioneering Zionist leader who established the Palestine Electric Company under the British Mandate.

This series of meetings whetted my historical curiosity. When I discovered that during one of the encounters, in a private apartment, Ben-Gurion cooked an omelet for Jabotinsky, I was seized by a "literary urge" that resulted in this play, which blends actual events with fictional moments. Re-imagining the dialogue between these two extraordinary rivals has been my way of exploring ideological differences that lie at the heart of the Israeli experience.

Yet the two men had much in common. Both were staunch secularists, and one wonders what they would make of the fierce disputes between Orthodox and secular Jews in Israel today. They both subscribed to the classic Zionist notion of "*shelilat hagolah*," or "the negation of the Diaspora." Ben-Gurion did so for reasons of identity and morality, and Jabotinsky for existential reasons. "Eliminate the Diaspora," he wrote, "or the Diaspora will surely eliminate you." Jabotinsky further believed that militant nationalism would lead the Palestinian Arabs to reconcile themselves to Jewish sovereignty, on condition that their rights as individuals would be respected.

In actuality, the two men met eight times on London, which for dramatic purposes I have condensed into two. These meetings took place after Hitler rose to power and the Nazi threat had become clear. As I worked on the play, I wondered: Was it feasible, even before the Holocaust, to establish a Jewish state where great numbers of European Jews might have found refuge? At the time, Jabotinsky was certain that it was possible, if stronger steps were taken by the Zionists. Ben-Gurion believed that the small Jewish community (*Yishuv*) in Palestine was still unready to do battle against the British and the Arabs, and that such a campaign could topple the whole Zionist enterprise.

In the event, Ben-Gurion hoped to persuade Jabotinsky to accept his leadership of the Zionist movement in Palestine, but to no avail. Believing that the Labor Zionist position was too conciliatory and defeatist, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists left the Zionist Organization, and his disciples Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir later became leaders of the Irgun and Lehi (the "Stern Gang.") In 1948, Ben-Gurion ordered the consolidation of all Israeli fighting forces, and the subsequent shelling of the Irgun ship *Altelana*, after Begin refused to surrender its cargo of weapons. To this day, this painful history haunts Israel's efforts to achieve a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict.

Hovering over this play is "The Raven," the poem by Edgar Allan Poe that Jabotinsky translated brilliantly into Hebrew. What does this bird symbolize? I myself do not know, and Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky, in the mid-1930s, wonder what it means to them. Is it an embodiment of Hitler's satanic scheme? Or is it a messenger, warning of terrible days to come?

I wish to thank two friends who provided me with valuable guidance: Prof. Dan Miron, currently of Columbia University, and Prof. Yaacov Goldstein, my colleague at Haifa University, co-author of a book – entitled "Without Compromise" – about the failed rapprochement of Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky. To these two learned scholars I dedicate this play.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Stuart Schoffman*

# Cast List

## The play is set in London in October 1934

### Author—A. B. Yehoshua

Born in Jerusalem in 1936, A.B. Yehoshua is the author of nine novels and a collection of short stories. One of Israel's top novelists, he has won prizes worldwide for all his novels and in the UK was shortlisted in 2005 for the first Man Booker International Prize. He continues to be an outspoken critic of both Israeli and Palestinian policies.

### Director—Richard Beecham



Richard is a freelance theatre director working throughout the UK. He has a particular interest in Israeli/Palestinian theatre: He has adapted Ilan Hatsor's seminal Israeli play *The Masked* about the first Intifada which he also directed at the National Theatre, and he is currently developing a new adaptation of Gilad Evron's controversial drama *Ulysses on Bottles*, originally produced by the Haifa Municipal Theatre, for production in the UK.

### Translator—Dr David Janner-Klausner



David grew up in Jerusalem and has lived in London intermittently. He holds degrees from the LSE, the University of Sussex and the Centre for Alternative Technology. Since 2007 he been Programme and Planning Director at UJIA. David is married to Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner and they have three children. "Can Two Walk Together?" is David's first translation of a play.

### Adapted for stage—Amy Rosenthal



Amy is an acclaimed playwright whose plays include *Sitting Pretty* (Chelsea Theatre, Hypothetical Theatre Company New York, Watford Palace Theatre and national tour); *Henna Night* (Chelsea Theatre); *Jerusalem Syndrome* (Manchester Royal Exchange Studio, Soho Theatre); and *On The Rocks* (Hampstead Theatre), shortlisted for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize in 2008/9.

### David Ben-Gurion—Adrian Schiller



Theatre includes: The Veil, Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, (RNT), Julius Caesar, Romeo and Juliet, Henry V, As You Like It, The Tempest, Roberto Zucco, Measure for Measure, Macbeth (RSC), Macbeth, HIT ME! (West End) Madame Bovary, Mary Stuart, Tartuffe. Television includes: The Bible, Dr Who, Silk, Being Human, Zen, Going Postal, The Devil's Whore. Film includes: Richard II, Brighton Rock, Wild Target, Bright Star, Good, RKO 281.

### Ze'ev Jabotinsky—Michael Mears



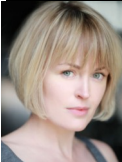
Theatre includes: Henry IV Parts 1 & 2 (Bath) Woman in Black (Fortune Theatre), All's Well That Ends Well, Nation, Harper Regan (National Theatre); Measure for Measure (Peter Hall Company & RSC); Hamlet, The Comedy Of Errors, Epicene or The Silent Woman, Clockwork Orange (RSC); Conversations with my Father (Old Vic); The Goodbye Girl (Albery Theatre); Life After Scandal, Osama. Film includes: Private Peaceful, Acts Of Godfrey, The Oxford Murders. Television includes: Parade's End, Hatfields & McCoys, The Colour of Magic

### Pinchas Rutenberg—Jonathan Tafler



Theatre includes: work for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Exchange, English Touring Theatre, Leicester Curve, The Orange Tree, Birmingham Rep, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Sheffield Crucible, Bristol Old Vic. Television includes: The Shadow Line, Murphy's Law, New Tricks, Foyle's War, Trail of Guilt, Waking the Dead, Mairret, Cadfael, Anno Domini. Film includes: The Infidel, Song of Songs, Yentl. Radio includes: several hundred radio plays and serials for BBC.

### Marussia—Sally Tatum



Sally trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama and has worked with such companies as RSC, The Globe, The Old Vic, Theatre Royal Bath, BBC, ITV, SKY 1 and Channel Four. As a stand up comic she has performed through out The UK.

With thanks to this evening's partners



**New Israel Fund supports those working in Israel's society to create a better future for all its citizens.**

**Your support will help to achieve this.**  
**[www.newisraelfund.org.uk](http://www.newisraelfund.org.uk)**  
**[info@uknif.org](mailto:info@uknif.org); 02077242266**

A close-up portrait of Amos Oz, an elderly man with glasses, looking slightly to the side. The image is overlaid with a blue tint.

**04.11.12**  
**SAVE**  
**THE DATE**

**Honouring Amos Oz with a Lifetime Achievement Award**  
**Further information [amit@uknif.org](mailto:amit@uknif.org) 020 7724 2266**

**New Israel Fund** <sup>20</sup>years  
**Human Rights Awards Dinner**