

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



10/5C

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## Film find

### Actor talks about Yiddish movie

By Dan Greenberg  
special writer

**D**AVID OPATOSHU still sparkles with enthusiasm for acting — 52 years after his first, hesitant step into the profession at the Yiddish Workers' Theater on Broadway and 48th Street in Manhattan.

"Jules Dassin (director of 'Never on Sunday') and I started the same night," Opatoshu recalled in a phone interview. "We entered acting class the same night. We held hands, as a matter of fact, saying, 'Who's going first?' Then he said, 'Let's hold hands and go together,' and we're still friends."

Opatoshu's first American theater appearance was in "Golden Boy" at the famous Group Theater. "The production was directed by Elia Kazan, and we toured the Bronx, Brooklyn and Jersey."

Opatoshu, a California resident, will speak at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, at Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills. His appearance is in conjunction with a screening of the recently rediscovered Yiddish film, "The Light Ahead," in which

Opatoshu made his first film appearance, in 1939.

The film program is open to the public free. The synagogue is at 29901 Middlebelt, just north of 13 Mile. For further information, call the synagogue office at 851-5100.

"THE LIGHT AHEAD" was the last Yiddish film made before World War II in a period when Yiddish theater and Yiddish filmmaking were thriving.

The film, Opatoshu said, "was made in New Jersey. Edgar Ulmer was the director, an international director... and it took about three weeks to shoot. It was done so quickly, at a low budget... Ulmer was a very creative director, and everybody was working for peanuts."

Ulmer was a Viennese film director known for his Yiddish films shot in Poland and in the United States as well as for his work in Hollywood.

"It came out a wonderful film, a very socially conscious film," Opatoshu said. The New York Times of Sept. 23, 1939, noted, "The Light Ahead"... seems particularly significant because of the reassuring message it contains for world Jewry."

"The Light Ahead" was rediscovered a few years ago and Opatoshu recalls:

"I don't know why it was lost, but then this man (Herman Axelbank, a collector of Soviet films) found a print. I think in Holland, and brought it back to the United States."

The film was restored by the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. The center acquired the print from Axelbank's estate after his death.

"The Light Ahead," in Yiddish with English subtitles, symbolizes the patient suffering of the Jewish people through countless centuries of European history.

IT IS THE STORY of "Fishe the Lane" — the film's Yiddish title — with Opatoshu in the title role. He is engaged to a blind orphan, Hodel (Helen Beverly). Their prospects, indeed, are lame.

The film's love story sums up much of European Jewish experience. Its treatment of suffering little people ignored by history strikes the same chord that Group Theater, the WPA Theater Project and the Yid-

dish Worker's Theater did. From the depths of the Depression, those institutions cried out for social justice, and that is where David Opatoshu began his career with Jules Dassin.

From that humble beginning, Opatoshu's half-century career has crisscrossed the world working with Dassin, Hitchcock, Pressburger, Preminger and Nicholas Ray, among many noted film directors, while appearing on stage with Paul Muni, Martin Ritt and numerous other stars. Opatoshu's theatrical work includes writing and directing a musical based on a Sholem Aleichem play.

His most recent film appearance as Judge Hoffman in the made-for-TV HBO cable film, "Conspiracy," received critical accolades.

Opatoshu's television debut in 1949 was on "Studio One," and he has since appeared on "Playhouse 90," "Aloha," "Hitchcock," "Star Trek," "Kojak," "Policewoman" and "Run for Your Life," among many others.

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David Opatoshu and Helen Beverly are co-stars of "The Light Ahead" (1939), a Yiddish-language feature film, with English subtitles, that has been restored and distributed by the National Center for Jewish Film.

## He writes lyrics for 'Rosary' theme

By Marie Chastney  
staff writer

Words by Bobby Laurel and Dennis Leahy.

After 18 years spent struggling for success as a songwriter, his name printed on top of the sheet music is a lovely sight to Livonia resident Dennis Leahy.

The song, "In Your Eyes," is the theme music for the recently released movie, "The Rosary Murders."

It is sung at the end of the movie, after a priest and reporter part, going their separate ways.

"He's a priest. She falls in love with him, but there is nothing for her. So everything they feel for each other can only be expressed in their eyes," said Leahy.

And that expression of love is heard in the song's words. Leahy put the tape of the song in the stereo at home and listened.

"Is it me that I see when I look in your eyes?  
Making love, sharing dreams,  
is that me in your eyes?"

The last few months have been pure excitement for Leahy. The hours he spent laboring with co-writer Laurel to get the words just right have paid off.

The song may soon be recorded and released as a single. And now he's working on another song for another Laurel movie.

AS A youth, Leahy never envisioned himself as a songwriter. But one day in 1969 in Vietnam, two of his friends were killed by two exploding grenades.

Leahy, walking between the two soldiers, survived the blasts. He spent eight months in hospital while doctors took grenade parts from his body.

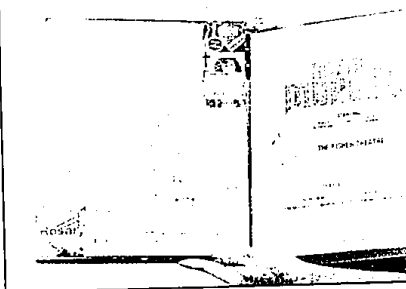
To pass the time, to keep his emotions under control, he began listening to music. He noticed the word patterns, the rhyme, the meter. Soon he began writing words of his own. "It was my therapy," Leahy said. "I did it to get through the hard times. I learned by listening to the radio."

The day came that he was released from the hospital, a fully disabled Vietnam vet. Over the years, he tried to make it as a songwriter. But there were always obstacles standing in the way.

He didn't have a background in music. He wrote only song lyrics, not the tune, and publishers wanted both. He needed a partner to help him polish his lyrics and compose the music.

"THEY WOULD say, 'You have talent, but we don't have time to help you,'" Leahy said. Then, in 1980, he met Laurel.

*The last few months have been pure excitement for Leahy. The hours he spent laboring with co-writer Laurel to get the words just right have paid off.*



ART EMANUELE/staff writer

Dennis Leahy's big break in the music writing business came when he met Bobby Laurel. Working as a team, Leahy and Laurel wrote

the words to "In Your Eyes," the theme song for "The Rosary Murders."

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