

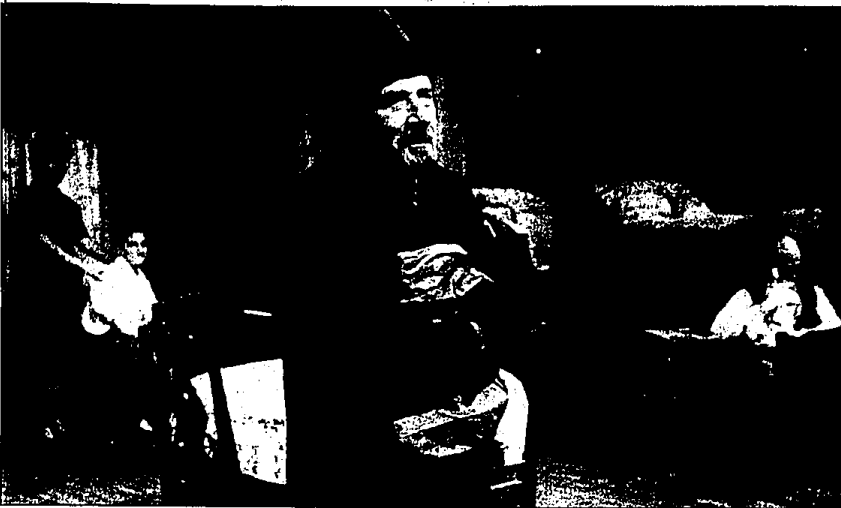
Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor 644-1100



Thursday, December 20, 1990 O&E

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Sol Frieder, German-born actor who originated seven roles in "A Rosen by Any Other Name" off-Broadway, repeats these roles in the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production.

7 faces

Actor plays many roles in drama

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

SOL FRIEDER PLAYS seven character roles in "A Rosen by Any Other Name," the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production of Israel Horowitz's comedy-drama, through Sunday, Jan. 6, at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.

He is almost a one-man supporting cast. Frieder portrays Jacob Ardenstinsky, the narrator of the play, and Reb Brechtman, the ancient rabbi who is preparing 12-year-old Stanley Rosen for his bar mitzvah. He also plays a photographer, a stubborn sign painter, a shopkeeper and a thief who sculpts Stanley's likeness in chopped liver for his bar mitzvah.

Funnest of all, Frieder plays Judge Brown wearing a pompous, judicial wig like a slightly askew hat put on in a hurry. Frieder describes the seven roles he plays as "comical, tragic and tragic-comical" and says they "give me an opportunity to show various facets of acting."

In person, the man with an im-

pressive resume of acting credits is a soft-spoken, unpretentious gentleman with more than a hint of German in his accent. With gracious humility he tells of his eventful life and his career in the theater.

FRIEDER WAS raised in Germany. When the Nazis began to gain power, he and his eight brothers and sisters escaped to Switzerland. He relates his early life in an understated, factual way, and tells how his parents remained behind in Germany, were eventually deported to a concentration camp in Poland and died there.

Between 1938 and 1949, Frieder lived in Switzerland, part time in refugee labor camps and part time as a student at the University of Lausanne, where he earned a doctorate of social science. His dissertation was on "the history of religious tolerance in connection with the general social history of Europe."

He wrote in French, and his adviser was none other than the famous Jean Piaget. Frieder studied heretical movements persecuted by the church in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. He concluded that heretics

who "developed their own ideology opposed to the Catholic Church's" most often arose from the poorer classes.

"I finished the dissertation to become an actor," he says. "I got the acting bug later, but my general education in history, philosophy and literature gave me a good intellectual basis."

He remembers seeing a production of Shaw's "Candida" that was a turning point and impressed him with the power of theater. At the time he had a friend who was a director in Prague and Vienna, and his friend encouraged his aspirations to become an actor. He studied acting in Bern before coming to the United States in 1949.

IN THIS COUNTRY Frieder made his home in New York, where he still lives, and became a professional actor in 1958. Unlike most actors who spend anxious years playing walk-on roles and paying their dues, Frieder started at the top — on Broadway — in the role of Mr. Frank in "The Diary of Anne Frank." That same year he toured with Faye Emerson.

Of his decision to become an actor,

the man who speaks fluent German, English, French and Yiddish says, "I think I did the right thing." He expresses few regrets, saying, "I would like to have started earlier as an actor and worked in a language closer to me. I haven't been able to get classic parts in English because of my accent. That's how it is."

Frieder counts several dozen Broadway, off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway shows in his long list of acting credits as well as feature roles in 12 movies, multiple TV appearances and a handful of stock company runs and tours. He played Lear and Shylock in Shakespearean productions and Mr. Frank, to name a few readily recognized roles. In musicals, he played Mr. Schultz in "Cabaret," the rabbi in "Fiddler" and Crooked Finger Jake in "Three Penny Opera."

In 1976, his accent worked in his favor and won him a part as a German immigrant taking an evening class in "The Primary English Class." The play by Israel Horowitz starred Diane Keaton as the teacher. That was Frieder's first acquaint-

Please turn to Page 8

Similarities to character

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

Daniel Kahn is 12 years old and studying for his bar mitzvah. So is Stanley Rosen, the character Kahn plays in "A Rosen by Any Other Name," and the similarities don't end with the coincidence of age and religion.

"Stanley is a lot like me in his whole outlook," says Kahn. "The way he is open and serious. If he thinks something, he says it." Kahn, a sixth grader at Hooper School, explains, "But Stanley's unlike me, too. He keeps more to himself, doesn't have a lot of friends and spends more time in the house with his family."

"A Rosen by Any Other Name," at the Jewish Ensemble Theatre is Kahn's acting debut, but he has been singing and dancing in front of audiences for years. He is the kind of forthright, natural performer who seems born to the footlights and is not intimidated by an audience.

His mother, Marcia, jokes that he was on stage in a prenatal state because she performed in dinner theater when she was expecting him. Love of theater is a Kahn family passion. Marcia belongs to

both the Birmingham Village Players and St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, and Daniel's father, David, also belongs to St. Dunstan's.

YOUNG KAHN cites two emotionally charged, physical moments in the play as especially challenging. "The hardest part is when my father (Mr. Rosen) slaps me. It hurt until we worked it out," he says, reluctant to divulge particulars of how actors preserve the illusion of a slap, and eliminate the pain.

In the play when his cousin Manny, who suffers from shell-shock, "has a freaky dream, I slap him across the face to wake him up."

Kahn, who plays Stanley in a refreshingly natural, unstudied way, admits that playing the part has involved more than acting challenges. The social sacrifices required by auditions and rehearsals frankly bother him. "I missed my very first dance for the call-back auditions and missed a five-day camping trip up North."

Much as he loves performing, he is a realist and says of his future, "I don't want to be an actor. It's too risky economically. I just want to be happy and be able to support a family."



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Daniel Kahn, 12, plays a 12 year old studying for his bar mitzvah with a rabbi portrayed by Sol Frieder.

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