

# COMMENTATOR

March 28, 2000/21 Adar Bet 5760

The Official Newspaper of Yeshiva College

Volume LXV Issue 9

## ARTS FESTIVAL 2000 Record Number of Students Attend

BY RAMI COHEN

Drawing over one thousand people, the fourth annual YC/SCW Arts Festival has come and gone, securing for itself a place in Yeshiva tradition for years to come. Despite many changes made to this year's program, Arts Festival 2000 proved to be the most successful to date. Yeshiva deans and Arts Festival directors could not have been happier with the results of the event.

Steven "I." Weiss of Yeshiva College, and Rebecca Leicht of Stern College for Women shared the burden as co-directors of the festival, as this year's festival was co-sponsored by Stern College for Women and Yeshiva College. Past festivals were sponsored solely by Yeshiva College.

Festival 2000 kicked off with a student-concert, now slated to be the perennial "opening event" due to its tremendous success. The concert attracted the largest audi-



ence of any event, with over three hundred in attendance in Weissberg Commons. Students gave powerful performances, demonstrating the wide range of musical talent in Yeshiva University.

The concert included a blend of original music and energetic performance. Hillel Glazer, a YC Junior, performed his "Jerusalem Stone," an original piece about a Russian immigrant's return to Israel, to the

outstanding harmonica accompaniment of Avidan Friedman. Other highlights of the concert included Yakov Fleischmann, Eli Kohl, and Danny Zwillinberg's performance of Hendrix's "Little Wing" and the Grateful Dead's "Sugaree." Fleischmann's melodic vocals were backed by Kohl's powerful guitar riffs. For a change of pace, Elie

*continued on page 18*

## Yeshiva Chairman Resigns Encourages Others to Follow

BY AARON KLEIN

and Committees."

David S. Gottesman, who has served Yeshiva as Chairman of the Board for seven years, announced his resignation last week effective June, 2000. Robert M. Beren, current Vice-Chairman, will be assuming the Chairmanship upon Gottesman's withdrawal from office.

The announcement follows a series of resignations by various upper-level administrators, including Dr. Efreim Nulman, University Dean of Students, Dr. Paul Virkuil, Dean of Cardozo School of Law, Dr. David Nirenburg, Dean of Sy Syms School of Business, and Rabbi Mevin Davis, University Registrar.

Gottesman expressed hope that his resignation will spark other administrators to resign as well, so the University may continue to grow and promote positive change. He said, "I feel for the good of the institution a rotation of Chairmen, not only on my level, but on the level of the individual schools, is appropriate and almost a necessity in order to keep a flow of fresh ideas moving...The example I set has [already] resulted in changes at Ferkauf, Syms, Stern and Einstein with respect to the Board, Chairman, Committee Chairman

Although Gottesman stated that his decision was personal and would not list any specific tensions that exist between him and current Board members, a high-level administrator informed *The Commentator* that Gottesman "may have recently stepped on the wrong feet and is now leaving as a result." The administrator said that Gottesman last year hired an independent committee to review the balance of power within the University infrastructure, and that the analyst reportedly found that Vice President of Business Affairs, Dr. Sheldon Socol, "exercised too much control and influence over University practices and academic programs." Socol refused to comment, while Gottesman denied that the independent analyst had anything to do with his decision to resign, asserting that "the report is still a work in progress."

During his term as Chairman, Yeshiva has flourished greatly and prospered on many levels. Einstein has surged to its current ranking of twenty-one among medical schools nationwide; Cardozo has hired a new staff of renowned legal professionals and has instituted programs that have garnered inter-

*continued on page 20*

## SOY/REITS Publication Causes Controversy

### Facilities Removes Copies from Campus

BY AARON KLEIN

Beit Yitzchak, a religious publication of REITS and SOY which features scholarly works by faculty and students, has elicited much criticism this year after the editors decided to publish an article stressing academic talmud learning over that of a more traditionally routed system. The article has caused many Rosh HaYeshiva, including Rabbis Hershel Schachter, Mordechai Willig, and Yehuda Parnes, to publicly denounce the printed work. These contentions recently culminated in Yeshiva's refusal to finance Beit Yitzchak and Facilities' alleged confiscation of the publication.

The article in question, "Absolute Liability: Development of the Law of the Damaging Man," was written by MYP students Elli Stern and Meir Katz, and quoted several sources that Rabbeyyim found to be "problematic." Among those cited are Professors Saul Leiberman, Shamma Freidman and David Weiss



Halivni, all of whom are associated with the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Rabbi Hershel Schechter, who's works in Beit Yitzchak are said to have greatly increased its sales, told

The *Commentator* that he feels personally slighted by the editors decision to include the controversial article, and expressed regret over contributing to this year's edition. "Had I known such an article would be in there, I would never have written anything for them," said Shachter. "They've lost all tradition and should be ashamed of themselves. They are stealing money from the Yeshiva; this is not what they're being paid to print."

Aaron Koller, coeditor-in-chief of Beit Yitzchak, said he knew the article would generate debate, but decided to publish it anyway, "to see what the response would be. I wanted to test the waters a little." The response that followed, he said, "was not at all

*continued on page 20*

## Belz Professor Fired For Cursing

BY JASON CYRULNIK

cussion of inappropriate topics that had no place in a music classroom could be tolerated no longer.

A bizarre tenure at Yeshiva University's Belz School of Music came to an end three weeks ago, as Mr. David Feinberg, one of the institution's most multi-faceted instructors, was fired just three classes into the semester. It is the questionable set of circumstances surrounding the termination of Feinberg's stay that has evoked outcries from concerned students. Cantor Bernard Beer, Director of the Belz School, citing complaints from anonymous students that Feinberg's in-class decorum was what the administration deemed "unacceptable," informed Feinberg that his services were no longer welcome. Beer specified that Feinberg's notorious use of foul language in the classroom and dis-

Feinberg reacted to the decision with what he simply described as "complete shock." Feinberg had been teaching a similar schedule of classes at the Belz school with comparable in-class behavior for some two years; during that span of time he developed quite the following of loyal students. Feinberg's devotion to his students was described by one YC Junior as "unparalleled" among the staff of teachers that I have encountered in my college career." The understandably close-knit relationship that developed between the teacher and his students laid the ground for an open atmosphere

*continued on page 20*



**Exclusive  
Insider  
Interview  
PAGE 17**

### In This Issue:

- Meet Presidential Candidates ..... Page 12
- Exclusive With Ben Younger ..... Page 15
- Are You Mentally Aware? ..... Page 19
- LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ..... Page 6
- SPORTS ..... Page 21

**Election  
Fever Hits  
Yeshiva  
PAGE 24**





## Gottesman continued from page 1

recognition; the undergraduate school has moved from second tier to its now-famed position among the top tier universities in America. A new honors program has been instituted at Yeshiva College and Stern; enrollment has soared at all affiliated campuses; and Yeshiva has been honored with the presence of distinguished guests and world-renowned lecturers.

Mr. Gottesman will continue to serve as a Trustee of the American Museum of Natural History and Mount Sinai Hospital, and he will remain an active Trustee at Yeshiva as well. "I will certainly help wherever and whenever I

can," he stressed.

Mr. Beren, who became Vice-Chairman in 1998 upon the demise of long-term Trustee and Vice-Chairman, Hermann Merkin, was elected to fill Gottesman's void. Gottesman says that he was involved in the selection of Beren, and asserts that Beren is expected to do an a fine job. When asked to list the contributions of which he is most proud, Gottesman said, "I will leave it to others to judge my contributions. I am just proud that, when I relinquish my office in June, the University is in much better condition than when I began."

## Publications continued from page 1

what I had expected."

Stern, in defense of his work, confirmed that "I went over the article with Shamma Yehuda Freidman, the world's leading talmudist, who found our arguments to be sound and convincing. We [Katz and I] tried to follow in Yeshiva's Torah U'madda tradition and give something positive and meaningful to our readers."

Perhaps most disturbing are reports that some eleven boxes containing the newly published sefer were removed from this year's SOY Seferim Sale. Sales manager Amichai Erdfar, said the books were "mistakenly left in the freight elevator and taken by Facilities. When we went back for them, they were missing." At least three of the boxes have been recovered, but eight remain unaccounted for.

Facilities refused to comment on the issue, but many students were not surprised when they discovered that another Yeshiva publication had been removed. BMP President Scott Nadel, stated, "Now they're taking religious books? Where does this end?" JSS/SSSB Junior Jarred Tuchinsky, said, "It's scary that I'm not shocked anymore when I hear about these things."

The MYP/RIETS administration is also refusing to contribute to the publishing costs of Beit Yitzchak, which this year amount to about \$5,200. Administrators explain that their decision was not based on the content of the publication, but instead resulted from other complaints they had against this year's

publication - in particular its failure to pay tribute to its supporting donors.

The Scharf Foundation, a family-run charitable organization, provides yearly donations to MYP and RIETS for the financing of religious publications. In previous years, Beit Yitzchak featured a "tribute page" acknowledging the Foundation's generosity. This year, however, the page was omitted and administrators therefore refused to delineate the Foundation's money for its publication. Further, the administration expressed their disappointment with the lateness of the book, which was scheduled for printing in June, but was not published until February. As a result, the volume carries the date "5760," the current Hebrew year; the administration feels that it should have been dated 5759, the year in which it was supposed to appear, in order to keep the integrity of the series intact.

Koller explained that "the delay was caused by negligence and laziness on our part." He attributes his failure to include a tribute page for the donors to a "lack of communication between the students and the administration" although the page was included in prior years. He concedes that this year's edition, which was about half the size of those from previous years, "did not turn out quite the way I had anticipated."

Koller would not comment on Facilities' removal of the publication, but admits that "I now think the controversial article didn't belong in Beit Yitzchak."

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## Professor Fired continued from page 1

that at times gave way to very candid discussions. Feinberg thought of himself as more than just a music instructor, but a devoted teacher and more accurately "a friend" to his students. Those close with him confirm that this attitude was consistent with Feinberg's personality in general and approach toward music in particular. Indeed, his students indicate that the disposition was contagious: "His love for music made it a pleasure to be his student," explained YC Junior and Feinberg student Ariel Penkower. "I sincerely feel that Dr. Feinberg was one of the best teachers I've had over my 3 years on campus in YU. His one goal was to teach the students who wanted to learn."

This unique relationship not only changed the nature of the classes that Feinberg instructed, but it also took its toll on Feinberg's schedule. He instructed weekly courses in Keyboard Work, Musicianship, Rudiments, and various other music topics. He came in Wednesday after Wednesday to meet with some twenty-five students who signed up for his various classes. While the official class hours spanned until 8 o'clock at night, Feinberg rarely, if ever, left the building before nine and often as late as 10:30. On his own time he instructed students personally, driven by the promise that he saw in each one and his love for the topics being discussed. His singular personality was what drew many of the students to carve their schedules to meet his Wednesday hours.

Feinberg, however, points to other factors that contributed to his decision to address some time off-color topics in class and use language that administrators might view as inappropriate. He did not deny the use of such language, but pointed out that it was never directed at a student, but instead a way of expressing a particular feeling that he was trying to pinpoint - a methodology that he feels is closely connected with music.

Feinberg points to the wide array of students that his classes have attracted as the most important factor in explaining some of his unorthodox teaching habits. Firstly, many MTA high school students are able to arrange for their high school schedules to designate an entire time slot to a college class; some of these students ironically attempt to use this privilege as a means of softening their schedules. Accordingly, they gravitate toward Belz classes because of their relative ease in comparison to another 3 credit Yeshiva College class.

The extremely high percentage of high-school students that Feinberg teaches, he claims, demands a different type of teaching method. He finds that they constantly raise issues in class not pertinent to music and, rather than turn them away, the committed Feinberg felt that his help in tackling these issues as a teacher was vitally needed. He cited his training in psychology as the basis for his particular attunement to various issues that the students raised; what he gauged to be sincere inquiries were asked of him on topics ranging from psychiatric concerns to sexual discussions and his concern for his students constituted the reason for his decision to address rather than turn away the issues.

Perhaps more disturbing to Feinberg is what he believes to be the true reasons behind his dismissal. Feinberg's relationship with the Belz school, and in particular Cantor Beer and his administrative officials, was "strained at best." Feinberg paints this characterization as the product of some ten years of selfless service to the school. Feinberg served three distinct times in different capacities over the past ten years

aiding the direction of choral groups at the school, constantly performing an inordinate amount of successful work, but rarely if ever receiving recognition. He composed scores of pieces for YU choir performances, but received little credit from higher-ups who according to Feinberg "had to know at least some amount of the work [he was performing]." His "behind-the-scenes" work and decision to remain unassertive demanded a reciprocal integrity from his supervisors and colleagues, who in truth failed to meet those expectations.

He points to a generation gap between himself and the older generation at Belz as the main culprit lying at the base of the rift between himself and the administration. The unwillingness of "the old-time school" to recognize a shift in modern day musical trends has from the outset built a barrier to a close relationship with the two generations of teachers. While he admits that he has "much regard" for Cantor Beer's many accomplishments, he does not deny that he was never granted the opportunity to develop a relationship with the director.

What has surprised Feinberg and his students most, however, is the quick-tempered manner with which Belz handled what they suddenly saw as a problematic situation. Feinberg's unorthodox teaching methods have been well-known for quite some time, but he has not been reprimanded by officials in the past. One student claimed that "his eccentricities made the class all the more interesting." In fact, just one week prior to the dismissal Belz administrators had asked Feinberg to consider teaching a new class in guitar playing after discovering that Feinberg's talents extended beyond the piano. Feinberg admitted that if Beer's reference to the anonymous complaints was indeed accurate, that he felt betrayed by any student who chose to bypass addressing the issue directly and going behind his back to supervisors. It is a candid reaction that his devotion to his students has at the least mandated.

Nevertheless, Cantor Beer explains that he simply could not tolerate the behavior being described. Admittedly, Beer had been aware for years that Feinberg's personality was unique, and claims to recognize that "everyone has their own teaching methods." Beer stressed, however, that Feinberg's antics have changed this semester and that his state of being was no longer fit for teaching. In addition to inappropriate behavior and open recognition of psychiatric medication that he currently takes, Beer cited ineffective teaching as another reason for his quick reaction to the complaints. "This wasn't an isolated complaint. Some eight to ten students had come" to address their concerns.

Regardless, Beer admitted that if Feinberg had submitted to demands to curb his language and selection of topic material, that he would have possibly been able to hold onto his job. Feinberg viewed such demands as uncalled for and simply ridiculous. The resulting impression that students have described is one of injustice: "Dr. Feinberg has an incredibly deep fountain of knowledge to offer his students... the vast majority of his students are very fond of him and hate to see him forced to leave because of faculty prejudices," explained aspiring musician and YC Junior David Statman. He, along with many fellow students hope that Belz reopen the Feinberg case, and redress what Ariel Penkower deemed a "great injustice which was done to him and to all of his past, present, and never-to-be future students."