

AN ANNOUNCEMENT IN TWO PARTS

I.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR
THE LAST CYCLIST
AT TEMPLE SHOLOM OF WEST ESSEX
MAY 1 and MAY 2

A bitter joke circulated among the Jews living in Europe between the First and Second World Wars: Three men are talking.

First man: "The Jews and the cyclists are responsible for all of our misfortunes."

Second man: "Why the cyclists?"

Third man: "Why the Jews?"

The joke provided the kernel for the plot of a daring, pointedly satirical comedy called *The Last Cyclist*, mocking the Nazis as bumbling lunatics. It was written and rehearsed – but never performed – in Terezin, banned by the Jewish Council of Elders of the concentration camp following its dress rehearsal because they feared Nazi reprisals.

The script has been adapted by Naomi Patz as a play within a play. "The whole concept of theater in a concentration camp is incredible," Naomi states, "and the idea of comedy in that setting even more so. And yet," she stresses, the play is indeed a comedy. "The camp inmates at Terezin who attended open rehearsals of *The Last Cyclist* before the play was banned, laughed. And I hope the audience for our performances here will laugh, too. But our laughter is uncomfortable laughter: first, because the situation in the play, despite its humor, is a protest against totalitarianism; and second, because we know the fate of the cast and its audience."

The Last Cyclist premiered in 10 performances in St. Paul last June, where it was hailed as "a damn good play." As one Holocaust scholar who reviewed the production explained, "The key to understanding this work is to realize that the actors at Terezin were not trivializing.... The inmates were in a dire situation they could not control, and theater was a way to overcome their fear of not knowing what was going to happen to them from one day to the next. Though their comedy was ironic and allegorical in form, it allowed the playwright, the actors and the audience to feel, if only for a few hours, in control of their situation – and to make the Nazis look ridiculous."

Temple Sholom is privileged to present a staged reading of *The Last Cyclist* on May 1 and May 2, directed by Laurie Katzmann and starring members of our own congregation. Mark your calendar now and invite your friends to join you for this important – and very entertaining – event.

II.

CALLING ALL ACTOR/READERS

Do you act? Do you enjoy being part of a theater production? If you do, we need you – whether you have lots of acting experience or if this will be your first time onstage!

We are casting speaking parts and looking for crew members to help with scenery, lighting and music for the staged reading of *The Last Cyclist* here at Temple Sholom on May 1st and 2nd. If you want to be part of this exciting production, we'll have a role for you to play!

Please come to the temple either on Sunday morning, February 7th at 11:00 a.m. or on Monday evening, February 8th at 7:00 p.m., at which time we'll be holding tryouts to assign parts.

Call the temple office – or Sharon Resnick or Laurie Katzmann – if you want more information.