

Kol Bogrei Rambam is the Alumni Committee's monthly e-newsletter for and about Maimonides School graduates. Each month we share information on individual graduates' ventures and accomplishments, as well as general news notes, all reflecting the school's mission of preparing educated, observant Jews to be contributing members of society. Your ideas and accomplishments will help sustain and strengthen this key communications tool; please forward to alumni@maimonides.org.

Designer's Invitations, Centerpieces Reflect Her Clients' Personalities

Amy Weiss '94 feels like there's no limit to the invitations and centerpieces she can design. "What I like to do best," she said, "is to match the invitations to the personalities of the people who are throwing the party. There could be a theme, or colors, or a style."

She launched Amy Weiss Design, LLC, in Brookline last February. "I started making a lot of samples of stuff that I can do. People have a hard time imagining what can be done. The more samples I can make, the better

"What I like to do best is to really get to know the people for whom I am creating designs," Amy continued. "It's really nice to create something that someone really loves. It can be as simple or as crazy as they want it to be." Her designs are electronic, but printed and created by hand.

Amy acknowledged that it was challenging at times to find an outlet for her artistic proclivities as a Maimonides student in the 1980s and early '90s. "A big influence for me was Mrs. (Deborah)

Onie in sixth grade. She used to have some of us decorate her classroom bulletin boards," Amy said. "It was the first time I ever saw art as something more than a project to do in class."

She also recalls the excitement of building a model *beit hamikdash* in Benzion Cohen's Grade 5, and added that the literary magazine was an important outlet for her artistic talents in high school.

Amy majored in art at Brandeis University, then earned a master of fine arts degree at the University of Pennsylvania,

where she concentrated in sculpture. In 2001, while at Penn, she helped design the graduate student center website, then "taught myself how to use the

graphic design program InDesign, which enabled me to transition to a career in graphic design."

"It was really hard to find a job teaching art at the collegiate level," Amy remembered. She taught introduction to graphic design at Mercer College for a year, worked at some temporary jobs in the field, and then joined the marketing department at JEVS Human Services, an umbrella services agency in Philadelphia.

"I made my first invitations during that time," Amy said. "A synagogue member wanted to do a Frank Sinatra karaoke party. It was so much fun to come up with that invitation. They liked it so much they hired me to do an *A Chorus Line* themed invitation the following year."

She relocated to New York and worked as a designer in the marketing department of Montefiore Medical Center. Then in 2010 Amy moved to Boston, where her husband Dr. Jonathan Slutzman had a medical residency. She did some freelance work while taking care of their children, but once they were both in school she decided to pursue some design work.

"About two years ago I decided to figure out how to market myself – and what did I want to market?" Amy related. "I looked back at all the projects that I had done and decided that invitations were the ones I liked the best, whether

continued on page 2



Amy Weiss '94

for people to get an idea of how my designs could be adapted to their needs," she said.

Graduate to Be Guest Conductor of Philharmonic Orchestra in China

Isaac Selya '03 will be guest conductor for an April performance of the Xiamen Philharmonic Orchestra, which has been honored as one of the most "Advanced Social Organizations in China."

The opportunity originated back in 2014, when Isaac, a doctoral student, met a conductor from Taiwan enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. "She had a bunch of contacts in China and had the ear of the president of this orchestra," he said. "She knew they were looking for guest conductors and she gave them my name."

The founder and artistic director of Queen City Opera in his hometown of Cincinnati, Isaac said he is not sure about the Xiamen musicians' facility with English. "I am learning to count from one through 1,000 in Mandarin, so at least I can communicate where the bars start."

"Music is pretty universal and transcends language," he asserted. "The conductor can get the point across."

The program features works by Weber, Mozart, Wagner and Sibelius. Among Chinese audiences, Isaac said, "Western music is huge. There is traditional Chinese music, but China is also a major center of Western classical music; millions of students study violin and

piano. Many of today's international soloists on any instrument are coming out of China."

The concert will be preceded by a week of rehearsals. Guest conductors, he noted, "are pretty normal for the orchestral world." And he isn't concerned about transitioning from opera to the philharmonic for this concert. "Most standout conductors we think of really do both," he said.

Xiamen, a city of about 1.8 million, is on China's southeast coast, across a strait from Taiwan. Isaac said Xiamen "industrialized really late, so parts of it are relatively pristine."

Isaac also will be giving a one-day master class on opera at the local university, focusing on singers and lyric diction. He noted that "because there's a linguistic component, the Chinese working with opera haven't yet reached the same level of international recognition."

"There's a lot of real minutiae involved in opera," he explained. "It's like being an athlete, learning how to use your voice to project unamplified for about two hours. There are tricks of the trade you only learn by seeing and doing it."

Isaac launched the opera company some five years ago. "It's hard work," he

acknowledged. "Working with any small arts organization, you wind up doing a lot of administrative tasks in addition to the artistic stuff."



Isaac Selya '03

Isaac grew up in Cincinnati and boarded during his four high school years at Maimonides. As a sophomore, junior and senior he played cello in the Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra. As an undergraduate at Yale University, he studied conducting and was principal cellist of the Yale Symphony.

Invitations, Centerpieces Reflect Her Clients' Personalities

continued from page 1

in-house for a holiday party or annual meeting, or people I did invitations for in Philadelphia. They tell a story and inspire really personal designs."

"I showed my invitations around, and the thing people really reacted to was the decorations and designs I did for my kid's birthday party," she said. "I actually like making those sorts of things. It seems like

a good fit, since my degree is in sculpture -- putting graphic design and sculpture together. And what I do is pretty different; I really like to use reusable or recycled materials."

Once she started the business, Amy set up a Facebook page and joined an association of event planners. "A lot of this year has been learning and creating samples. Now I am looking to build clientele. I've had a few little events, need more to get

really great pictures, and hope it takes off from there," she said. "My focus right now is on bar and bat mitzvahs. You can really reflect the personality of the child in an invitation, or as a centerpiece, even incorporate a mitzvah project into the decor."

"It would be great to have a separate studio that isn't in my basement. If this business grows, I can see being the primary designer and having other people help with the fabrication."

"Business Is What I Left Behind to Do What I'm Doing Now," Grad Reflects

Michael Sugarman '93 says he always has loved television commercials. "They appealed to me the same way three-panel newspaper cartoons did – as a really compact art form that has to deliver a comic payoff or a surprise inside a limited frame."

Today he is an award-winning director, "and my job is to turn the ad agency's idea into a film that communicates to their intended audience." Michael directs commercials as well as interac-

I graduated from college I took a job in finance," Michael related. "But the job really wasn't me. I always felt like a spy behind enemy lines. So I left after only a year – actually, it wasn't even a full year -- and I went to film school. That was the last real job I ever had! It's funny for me to think of what I do as a business, because to me business is what I left behind to do what I'm doing now."

Michael earned a master's at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, then began working on interactive campaigns around 2008, when brands were starting to see the Internet's potential as a platform for telling stories in something other than the traditional 30 or 60 second TV commercial format.

"I'd sort of blundered my way into interactive commercial directing after film school but mostly had no idea what I was doing," he conceded. "So whenever I'd get a brief for a project that had an interactive component, I'd always go to this one great London company's website to see what they were doing and what ideas I could borrow. Then when I had the opportunity to move to London, I knew they were the ones I wanted to work for. Fortunately they hired me."

He stayed in London for three years and loved it. "I lived in a lovely neighborhood called Highgate, which had some of the oldest, most beautiful pubs in London. There was always a fire lit with some hounds curled up around it, and I felt privileged to be living in a world that felt very ancient, and where I also happened to already speak the language," he said.

Eventually Michael made the decision to come back to the U.S. and settle in Brooklyn. "After three years away I felt I was on the verge of becoming a permanent expat, and as much as I loved my

life and friends in London, I wanted to be back home again."

Michael described the creative process for his current commercial work: "I often get hired for comedy. (Here's an example: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr5esKfUeYw&list=PLADNcabi-P9YbOugCL4rfqlpkQxrUSdwU) Sometimes the idea is defined precisely – there's a script, and a clear vision – and then my job is to translate that script for the screen. Other times the agency's vision is more murky, or they're looking to me to rewrite the script with them."

The drawings that previsualize the progression of shots for a commercial are called storyboards, and "they're basically cartoons," Michael pointed out, adding, "I'm sure I learned at least as much about shot design from the hundreds of hours I spent reading *Bloom County* and *The Far Side* as I did from film school."

Film is a very collaborative medium, Michael emphasized, "which is my favorite part. Directors, whether we're making a commercial or a TV show or a film, audition the performers, select the people we want to work with, like the cinematographer and the production designer, and then we have to share our vision for the finished product with everyone we're collaborating with. Then we all go off together to make the film."

"I used to think the best part of directing would be the part where you finish the film and get to show it off to your friends," Michael said. "That was always the best part of finishing my cartoons in high school, for the newspaper – after I'd been working on one all night, when I'd bring it to **Naftali Cohn ('91)**, who was the editor, in the morning, and he'd look at it and laugh. That was the best

continued on page 8



Michael Sugarman '93

tive experiences for the web, which he describes as "stories in which the user can enter the story somehow, and determine the flow of the experience (for example, www.vimeo.com/48067278)."

"I always wanted to be a director, but when I was in college (Harvard University, Class of 1998) I started to think that maybe it wasn't a realistic goal, so when

Maimonides School Alumni Here and There...

Four years ago, **Elisha Galler '13** launched Hope Time Cure, a new charity designed to support Massachusetts General Hospital's research and treatment of epilepsy. On March 17, around 180 people, including 39 Maimonides School alumni, raised close to \$125,000 for Hope Time Cure by participating in the Jerusalem Marathon.

That represents about 90 percent of the proposed revenue for the year, and "also helps with our exposure outside the Boston area," Elisha said.

campus ambassador program in the fall and to produce a video series featuring individuals and their stories.

A Maimonides graduate is an associate producer for an Israeli filmmaker's upcoming documentary that she feels "is the first positive thing I have come across in a long time." **Marika Feuerstein '05** said the film, whose working title is *The American Question*, aims "to try to get this country, on a grass-roots level, to come together."

through connections with clients, family members, and her community.

"I have stayed away from politics – in my career, it's not good for me to pick sides," said Marika, who is a real estate agent. "But it has really hit me about how divided we are, and it makes me sad to see how many of my friends are fighting on social media." She added, "I had lunch with a couple of classmates and it came right up – 'Whom did you vote for?'" Reconciliation, she feels, "is going to have to come from the people. A lot of people are feeling disenfranchised by the political parties and are really turned off."

Marika is worried about recent upswings in U.S. anti-Semitic incidents, and hopes fellow Jews share her concern "regardless of political affiliation. Once again we are being scapegoated" in public opinion. "The first thing that happened in Europe (in the 1930s) was false articles and false information about Jews."

Dr. Ben Galper '97 has been elected a fellow of the American College of Cardiology, our nation's voice for cardiologists and patients.

Rabbi Allan Houben '98 has been named high school Judaic studies principal at Atlanta Jewish Academy. Allan, now an assistant principal at SAR High School in the Bronx, also taught at Weinbaum Yeshiva High School in Boca Raton, FL. "I look forward to the challenge and opportunity this position will bring," Allan said. "It was great to see some familiar faces, and Maimonides alumni who live in Atlanta and, along with the rest of this warm community, have been very welcoming to me and my family."

Now a sophomore at the University of Maryland, Elisha continues to administer and grow Hope Time Cure, along with his sisters Meital, a student at Barnard College, and Yakira, a Maimonides seventh grader. "Between November and March I was recruiting and fundraising – it was like a part-time job," Elisha testified.

Elisha said the funding supports ongoing efforts at Mass. General, including after-school programs, a webinar series, support groups for parents and siblings, and educational awareness programs for high schools. The Gallers are also working to launch a

The film's point is "to show Americans what the real root of the problem is: we don't have shared values anymore," Marika said. "Once a values system breaks down, everything becomes a fight."

Marika got involved with the project a few months ago. A realtor, she was attending an event for entrepreneurs, working with Israelis on short-term rentals. There she met Guy Seemann, an Israeli who said he was so alarmed about some of the things he was seeing in the U.S. that he decided to make a documentary. She is helping raise funds



Jerusalem Marathon participants who raised money for the charity Hope Time Cure unwind after the event.



Rabbi Dovid Roth '07 poses with renowned scholar Rabbi Herschel Schachter at the recent Chag HaSemikhah of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University. Rabbi Schachter holds the Nathan and Vivian Fink Distinguished Professorial Chair in Talmud at RIETS.



Members of the Class of 1994 reunite at a recent *simcha* in Israel: from left, Rabbi Adi Krohn, Bracha (Shapiro) Krohn, Brocha (Ginis) Strous, Medinah (Katchen) Korn and Beruria (Cohn) Novich. The occasion was the bat mitzvah of Medinah's daughter.



Relaxing after taking part in the Jerusalem Marathon's family run are, from left, Dr. Leora Leeder '86, her daughter Raphaella and their cousin Sara Laya Heller, daughter of Shayna (Leeder) Heller '72. "I ran the 5K myself, first thing in the morning," Leora reported.



Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter, second from right, former dean of the Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik Institute at Maimonides School, poses with three alumni at a recent rabbinical conference he organized in Boca Raton, FL: from left, Rabbi Elie Mischel '98, Rabbi Beni Krohn '02 and Rabbi Philip Moskowitz '99. Rabbi Schacter is University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought, and senior scholar at the Center for the Jewish Future, at Yeshiva University.



David Galper '93 and son Elan outside Gocheok Sky Dome in Seoul, South Korea, where they joined other fans for the Israel national baseball team's successful run in the first round of the World Baseball Classic. The Galpers live in Ra'anana, which is a 10-hour flight.

Maeir Sadwin '54 poses with Rabbi Henoah Millen '56 following the reading of Megillat Esther in Boca Raton, FL. Dr. Tamy (Simon) Chelst '66 arranged the connection. She said the two had not seen each other in decades, and "it was a very warm reunion."



Alumni and Families Share Their Impressions of Purim 5777



Davida (Wolfson) '08 and Shimon Fried and son Joseph.



Emma (Wonder Woman), Jacob (Batman) and Max (Spiderman), children of Beth (Lampert) Kraus '00.



Yosef Dov Cohn, first great-grandchild of Ada (Greenwald) Jacobowitz '53.



Judith (Lupatkin) Bernstein '00 with husband Matthew and daughter Nina.



The Liben family salad: Noah '00 and Nessa, Ayelet and Shaya.



Harry Davidoff, son of Elka Tovah (Menkes) Davidoff '88.



Elise (Kohen) '04 and David Askenazi and their "Jet Blue family."



Benji and SarahBatyah (Kempner) Cohen '96, her mother Mindy Kempner, Naomi (the baby), Danya (Moana/ Hawaiian girl), and Pelah (unicorn).



Dr. Howard Covitz '66.



Caleb and Noa Hartman, children of Eliyahu Hartman '01.



Adam '05, Tova and Noam Berman.



Sarah (Lampert) '03 and Ronnie Lee and family.



Children of Rena (Katz) '90 Berger: (from left) Adiellah, Ekinoa and Zakai.



Avital and Ilya Pittel '01 and kids.



Stickfigures Orah (Weberman) '96 and Lev Katz '96 and children.



Rebecca Jacobs '74, founding member of the Alumni Steering Committee.



Max, Jordan and Evan, sons of Erica (Bogdansky) '96 and Reuben Scherzer. (There is some overlap in the montage.)



Yechiel Robinson '01 and Jacob Jonathan.



Amy (Sisel) Snow '03 and family - fantasy football.



Rachel (Miller) '00 and Justin Sakofs and family.



Benjamin Shimshak '99 and Kaila Wruble and their family.



Gavriel Gordon, son of Anne Gordon '85.



Tova Katz '01 and her husband Ithamar Jotkowitz; Liat, Amiel and Eyal.



Andy '96 and Shoshana Geller and sons Dvir and Lev.



1994 Classmates Medina (Katchen) Korn and Brocha (Ginis) Strous and their families have been sharing Purim *seudot* together for the past 18 years. Cramming on the couch after the festivities in Beit Shemesh are (from left) Yehuda Strous; Uriel and Meira Korn; Ayala, Nitzana and Lielle (back) Strous; Ayelet Korn; Chaya Strous; and Shoshana Korn.

"Business Is What I Left Behind to Do What I'm Doing Now," Grad Reflects

continued from page 3

part. With directing, the part I love best is when I'm in the midst of working with my favorite collaborators, people I trust and depend on, and we're all equally obsessed with making this thing – even if it's ultimately something fairly inconsequential. The projects I've enjoyed the most have been the ones where everyone is fully committed and we're all absorbed in the flow of work together."

There's a level at which technology is changing constantly in the industry, Michael said, "and there are people I work with who are really thrilled and challenged by those changes. And I do get caught up in that excitement. Whenever I work on an interactive project, I always get to team up with great programmers and developers, and they make it feel like whatever I can imagine is possible."

"But these technologies are not the ones I really get into," he continued. "I'm more curious about what you could call the fundamental technologies of cinema, which really haven't changed significantly over the past several decades. There have been obvious developments, of course, like the whole revolution from film to digital, but even that hasn't affected the basic functionality of a camera, or how you light a set."

As an artist who started drawing cartoons as a kid, Michael says his career is a source of satisfaction – and some frustration. "The great thing about my job, and I'm aware of how lucky I am to be able to say this, is that my work is so close to what I would be doing even if I never had to work for a living," he observed. "But this is also the difficulty of my job: when I'm making a commercial, the work is never really mine."

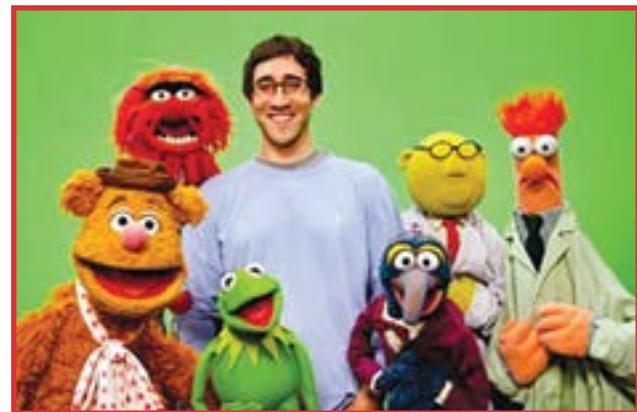
Michael describes his position on a shoot as subject to scrutiny from many sources, including the ad agency and the client

who has hired them to advertise their product. Under these circumstances, he says he finds it difficult to consider what he's doing art. "Even when we're all perfectly in sync about what it is we want to make, and how it should look, and the tone it should have, what I'm making still ultimately exists to sell something else – the car or the video game or the dog food. I'm not saying that I'm against any of these things; but as long as what I produce is in the service of other interests, it's never really possible to consider it my art."

He acknowledged that "I've learned over the years that the more I rely on commercials as my main creative outlet, the more creatively frustrated I become... I always feel happiest when the commercial work is balanced by things I'm doing that are uncommercial." He says that as he spends more time directing commercials, he finds it necessary to alternate them with projects that are completely his own.

Michael has also been growing more interested in documentary work. "The project I'm working on now is a short documentary portrait of the avant garde

filmmaker Jonas Mekas, now in his 90s... It has been simultaneously intimidating and inspiring to hang around him a bit, and I'm working with a small team of close friends who are just as fascinated by him as I am. So it's another family affair, and I



feel lucky to be doing work like this with people I feel so close to already. "

Asked if he had any favorite projects, Michael said one he particularly loved "was an interactive online experience with the Muppets. I still kind of can't believe I actually got to work with them. A lot of the Henson crew and performers are still there from the original *Muppet Show* days, and it was unreal to be on set surrounded by those same voices from my childhood."



Rabbi Allan Houben '98 and family with their Purim montage of professional destinations.



Following a Megillah reading in Jerusalem: from left, Renee Blechner-Hirsch '76, former Maimonides parent Sheila Hauser, and Debra Weiner Solomont '74.