Hineni ... Here I am ...

Nationally known Jewish performer Sam Glaser wowed a large, receptive audience last Sunday evening at Landerhaven, belting out his high-energy, high-spirited, poprock songs, his emotionally evocative melodies, and his inspiring lyrics based on biblical themes. An unabashed crowd-pleaser, the multi-talented musician and songwriter, who accompanied himself on electric percussion keyboard, had plenty of audience participation, right from the opening. “Hineni.” It could have been the theme song and rallying cry of the scores of Jewish teachers and educators who filled the hall.

Centerpiece of this Sixth Annual Meeting of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC) was honoring exceptional teachers: The presentation of the prestigious Rainer-Goldberg Israel Fellowship to Rabbi Hillel Drazin, a teacher at the Hebrew Academy; and to Mila Schwam, a teacher at Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple; The Steiger Family Education Grant to Thea Rus, a teacher at Solomon Schechter; and The Libbie Braverman Award to Leslie Schwersen, a teacher at Puchs Mirzachi School. The honorees responded with gratitude and heart, reflecting their passion for teaching, passionate teachers who excel in creating challenging learning environments for their students. Also recognized that evening were 27 teachers of 25 years and more from temples and schools all over the city, a proud record for this community which places a high priority on Jewish education. That was reiterated by Harley Gross, president of the JECC, who earlier in the evening recounted some past accomplishments and the challenges and goals ahead. The latter include educator training, conference grants to teachers, morebet programs, “Hebrew On One Foot” and modern technology. That was what the evening was all about: to teach, to learn, to strengthen Jewish education and to celebrate. That came through loud and clear in the poppy, energizing songs of troubadour Glaser, who closed the evening with a medley, “I’m A Learning Machine.” A great song for anyone, especially the wonderful Jewish educators of this city who joined in the refrain ... “I’m a learning machine!”

Hitting the high notes ...

The deeply felt and expressive music of the prestigious Emerson String Quartet – Eugene Drucker, Philip Setzer, Lawrence Dutton and David Finckel – was enthusiastically applauded by a capacity audience at Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple. It was the first of seven concerts to be presented by The Cleveland Chamber Music Society, now celebrating its 50th year. The gala reception following the performance was buoyant in feeling, with many longtime members present, including Elaine Newman, current president; Hank and Shirley Segal (she chaired the event); Harold and Lenore Koppel; Larry and Myrna Siegler; Dr. Dan and Judy Weidenthal; Tony Miller; Hope and Stan Adelstein and younger member Lauryn Ronis, gracious hostess of more than a few mini chamber music concerts at her Shaker Heights home. Reuben Silver, host of the reception, paid tribute to Dr. Hans Hirschmann and Marjorie Utter for 50 years of dedication to the Society and to chamber music. Enjoying the evening were Leonard Ronis and Naomi Mesch; Larry Caplano and Annabelle Weiss; Mims Adler; Gertrude Rubin and her husband, Art Greenberg; Hannah Morgenstern and Ben Housen; Sonia Margles (director of the Chardley Quartet); and Marjorie Lowenthal and her friend Sidney Spew of Philadelphia. Mingling with the guests at the reception were members of the quartet, with no one having a better time than violinist Philip Setzer, a native Clevelander whose parents, veteran Cleveland Orchestra violinists Elmire and Marie Setzer, flew in from their home in Sarasota for the occasion.

Saturday evening at Landerhaven. Optic decorations filled the room, reflecting the theme of the new millennium, in addition to dogs dressed in different period attire – from flapper to cosmic. Having a down-to-earth, doggone good time were 400 animal lovers who support the League and its Mobile Adoption Unit Program. Like Dr. Dan and Judy Weidenthal, Scott and Jillian Wolstein, Ken and Jackie Fisher, Roger and Marianne Perlmutter and Howard and Donna Sporber: The Sporbers, owners of Sunshine, a beautiful yellow Labrador; related a heartwarming story to us about their adoption of “Orphan” Annie, a neglected, abused and abandoned mixed-breed dog suffering from a cancerous tumor who was rescued by members of Valley Save-A-Pet. After she had six months of chemotherapy, Annie (she’s not an orphan anymore) became a precious member of the Sporber family. And that story is really what the evening was all about ...

Around the town ...

Far-out felines, Pluto’s pop-stars and cosmic corporate kernels “lashed” together for a super-sonic good time at the Animal Protective League’s annual gala, the Y2K Fur Ball, held last weekend.

Teachers honored at the JECC annual meeting are Rabbi Hillel Drazin, pictured with his wife, Bina, and from left, Thea Rus, Mila Schwam and Leslie Schwersen.

Recipients of Medical Mutual’s 1999 Outstanding Volunteer Award are Nate and Betty Berliner.

The Berliners have been dedicated volunteers for Jewish Family Service Association (JFSA) for the past 32 years, with Nate a member of the JFSA Volunteer Advisory Committee and a Caring Connection volunteer. The Berliners were recognized by Medical Mutual of Ohio at its annual award luncheon several weeks ago.