

## Preface

Mathematicians do not work in isolation. They stand in a long and time honored tradition. They write papers and (sometimes) books, they read the publications of fellow workers in the field, and they meet other mathematicians at conferences all over the world. In this way, in contact with colleagues far away and nearby, from the past (via their writings) and from the present, scientific results are obtained which are recognized as valid. And that – remarkably enough – regardless of ethnic background, political inclination or religion.

In this process, some distinguished individuals play a special and striking role. They assume a position of leadership. They guide the people working with them through uncharted territory, thereby making a lasting imprint on the field. Something which can only be accomplished through a combination of rare talents: unusually broad knowledge, unflinching intuition and a certain kind of charisma that binds people together.

All of this is present in Israel Gohberg, the man to whom this book is dedicated, on the occasion of his 80th birthday. This comes to the foreground unmistakably from the contributions from those who worked with him or whose life was affected by him. Gohberg's exceptional qualities are also apparent from the articles written by himself, sometimes jointly with others, that are reproduced in this book. Among these are stories of his life, some dealing with mathematical aspects, others of a more general nature. Also included are reminiscences paying tribute to a close colleague who is not among us any more, speeches or reviews highlighting the work and personality of a friend or esteemed colleague, and responses to the laudatio's connected with the several honorary degrees that were bestowed upon him.

The documents collected here give a fascinating and sometimes moving insight in the human factors that influence the development of mathematics. The focus is not on formal mathematical results but instead on the personal relationships that constitute the underlying propelling-power in scientific cooperation. Centered around the remarkable figure of Israel Gohberg, a picture emerges of the development of operator theory and its applications during the last four or five decades.

The book is divided in seven parts which we will now briefly describe.

*Part I.* This part contains two presentations written by Gohberg himself in which he speaks about his mathematical development in former years and on some general, philosophically tinted aspects of mathematics. It also features a piece written

by the two Gohberg daughters, Zvia and Yanina, giving an impression of what it meant to be the children of a loving father leading a life devoted to mathematics.

*Part II.* This part starts with some documents carrying factual information: Gohberg's curriculum vitae, a list of his publications and a list of his Ph.D students. Also included are a translation of a letter of reference written by M.G. Krein, when Gohberg was a master student, and translations of letters and telegrams supporting his nomination as a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the Moldavian SSR. The next two documents, written by Rien Kaashoek and by Rien Kaashoek and Leonid Lerer, respectively, present a review of Gohberg's mathematical work. The final document of this part concerns the Nathan and Lily Silver Chair of Mathematics at Tel-Aviv University which was created for Israel Gohberg especially and has played such an important role in his life after his immigration to Israel.

*Part III.* This part reproduces the Gohberg Miscellanea as published earlier on the occasion of Gohberg's 60th birthday in *Operator Theory: Advances and Applications*, Vol. 40. This biographical text was composed from reminiscences, notes, letters and speeches prepared by Gohberg's former students, colleagues and friends.

*Part IV.* This part contains the dinner speeches of the 1998 IWOTA meeting in Groningen as they appeared in *Operator Theory: Advances and Applications*, Vol. 124.

*Part V.* This part reproduces articles that were written or co-authored by Israel Gohberg himself. Some of those have the character of an *In Memoriam*, paying tribute to a dear colleague who has passed away. Others are *Recollections*, *Reminiscences* or *Reviews* that highlight the work and personality of a friend celebrating a special occasion. These documents taken together give a fascinating and sometimes moving insight in the human factors that have influenced the development of the field.

*Part VI.* This part contains material connected with the honorary doctorates of Israel Gohberg. Included are laudatios, acceptance speeches and other related documents.

*Part VII.* This final part consists of short articles written by friends and colleagues in which they reflect on their experiences with Israel Gohberg. The contributions are comparable to those of Parts III and IV but written especially for the present occasion. They again underline the impact Israel had on the lives of those that worked with him.

As indicated several documents appearing in this book have been published before. At appropriate places references are given. Here and there typos have been corrected. In translations of some documents into the English language the editors have taken the liberty of rewording certain phrases in order to clarify their meaning. Finally, editorial comments have been added at a few places.

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Israel Gohberg and Friends

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