



## 2019 Annual Report

The Yiddishkayt Initiative has been incredibly active in the past year and many of our efforts have been in collaboration with the University of Miami's Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies and the George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies.

Beginning in January 2019, YI presented our first 6 part *Yiddishkayt Live @ The Betsy Series* - a new alliance with The Betsy Hotel on Miami Beach, in collaboration with The Betsy Community Fund and PG Family Foundation.

Our series included presentations and panel discussions on the following subjects:

January 6 -

**Subject: What is a Jewish Writer?**

**Special Guest L. M. Feldman**

In association with Gablestage, January 7th staged reading of a new play:  
'A People' by L. M. Feldman

January 27 -

**Subject: What Makes Yiddish Sexy?**

**Special Guest: Mario 'Moyshale' Alfonso**

With excerpts from his multimedia presentation Making Yiddish Sexy Again and readings from Isaac Bashevis Singer, Itzik Manger and other sexy Jewish writers.

February 3rd -

**Subject: Glickl Von Hamel, The Maiden of Ludmir and Feminism in Yiddishkayt**

**Special Guest: Dr. Judy Slater**

February 17th - **Subject: Sholem Asch - Great Yiddish Author of God of Vengeance**

**Special Guest: David Mazower, great grandson of Sholem Asch**

**Bibliographer/ Editorial Director, National Yiddish Book Center**

In association with the Gablestage production of Paula Vogel's *Indecent*, based on *God of Vengeance* and a staged reading of the original *God of Vengeance* at Gablestage on February 18th at Gablestage



**March 3 - What is a YidLife Crisis?**

**Special Guests: Jamie Elman and Eli Battalion**

**Internationally renowned Millennial Jewish Web-Log Sensations**

**Presented in association with the Sold Out Miami Beach JCC presentation of YidLife Crisis.**

**Our April program was related to Holocaust Remembrance and Awareness:**

**April 28th - Yiddishkayt, God and the Holocaust - The Lost Yiddish Writers**

**Special Guests: Professor Miriam Hoffman and Avi Hoffman**

YI was proud to participate in the 2019 5th annual National Jewish Theater Foundation Holocaust Theater International Initiative - Remembrance Readings. This play reading commemorates International Holocaust Remembrance Day January 27th and of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), honoring the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Our collective goal is to keep alive their memories, stories and its must never to be forgotten lessons. May the power of live theater serve as a moral compass for future generations.

**Also in April in New York:**

**April 11 - YI Founder Avi Hoffman participated with world renowned artists Evgeny Kissin; Gil Shaham; Mike Burstyn; Katrina Lenk; Daniel Kahn and others in a SOLD OUT Carnegie Hall Celebration of Yiddish Music and Culture entitled *From Shtetl to Stage*.**

**On April 14th, while in NY, YI presented a reading and discussion of the new musical project: D.P. - A Refugee Musical**

**Based on the writings of Miriam Hoffman and the DP Camp Song Journal. This event took place at the Sholem Aleichem Center, The Bronx, NY and was sold out.**

**May 26-Jun 2**

**4th Annual TesFest - International Yiddish Theatre Festival - Bucharest, Romania**

**For the 4th year in a row, YI was invited to perform multiple selections, including a new piece with Maestro Aaron Kula, entitled:**

***Romerika: The Legacy of Yiddish Theatre***

***(This piece will also be performed at the upcoming YI Love NY YiddishFest on Dec 28th)***

**June-July '19**

**5 week - Bi-weekly Yiddish Conversational Class with 28 students at a condominium on Miami Beach, organized by Elaine Sisman**



**September 14-15**

***Fiddlers on the Roof* at the Betsy Hotel - 3 day YI Love Yiddish MiniFest -**

**Special Guest: Grammy award winning violinist Alicia Svigals and Maestro Aaron Kula.**

**3 Major events included a Fiddler on the Roof Sing Along, a panel discussion on the subject Fiddler and Feminism and a Klezmer Jam concert. This series was presented with additional grant support from Miami-Dade County and in collaboration with The Betsy Community Fund and PG Family Foundation.**

**Upcoming:**

**Yi Love NY YiddishFest**

**December 21-29, 2019 - 13 events over 9 days in 3 major NY venues**

**Symphony Space; Center for Jewish History; Theater for the New City**

This selection of performances, screenings, and discussions centered around Jewish culture and Yiddish entertainment will play several New York City venues from **December 21-29**. Following in the footsteps of the highly-successful Yiddish-language production of *Death of a Salesman* and the phenomenon of the *Fiddler on the Roof – In Yiddish*, Yiddishkayt Initiative revives the heyday of Yiddish theatre with the first-ever ***YI Love New York YiddishFest***. Drawing from the wide array of film, theatre, and music created by Jewish entertainers, artists from multiple generations and across genres will gather to celebrate the vast influence Yiddish entertainment has had on American and worldwide culture over the past century and beyond.

***YiddishFest*** begins on Saturday, December 21 with a benefit performance of ***The Heart of Yiddish: Remembering Isaiah Sheffer***. This tribute to the founder of Symphony Space will be held at their very own Leonard Nimoy Thalia Theatre and will benefit the Hebrew Actors Foundation, as they seek to save the building which housed the historic union where Yiddish Theatre thrived. The following afternoon, the founders of Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre—Gail Merrifield Papp, Miriam Hoffman, and Rena Borow—will be honored at ***Celebrating Yosl Papirovsky – The Miracle of Joseph Papp***, a multimedia celebration of the Jewish/Yiddish side of the artistic visionary behind The Public Theater. Another legend of the theatre, musical theatre star and Emmy-winning actor Fyvush Finkel, will be honored in an evening dedicated to his work in ***The Great Fyvush Finkel***, which will see a new iteration of *Finkel's Follies* and members of the original cast and utilizing collected material from across the late actor's career,.

***YiddishFest*** co-founder Avi Hoffman will serve as Festival MC and will take to the stage throughout the course of the festival, first in a pair of one-man shows. ***Reflections of a Lost Poet***, written by festival co-founder (and his mother) retired Columbia University professor Miriam Hoffman, which follows the life of beloved Yiddish poet Itzik Manger. Avi also recreates ***Joe Papp at the Ballroom***, the singular evening of cabaret performed by the late founder of The Public Theater. Miriam's work will also be explored in ***Mirl – The Life and Works of Miriam Hoffman***, featuring both her original plays and Yiddish translations of contemporary classics.



Avi Hoffman will also be seen on screen in the award-winning short film *Shehita*, a thriller set on a kosher farm that pits a young Orthodox farmer against his faith. *The Ancient Law*, a 1920s landmark Weimar film, will also have its own screening, accompanied by a live, original score from Alicia Svigals and Donald Sosin.

Two heavyweights in world music will take the stage on the penultimate evening of the festival. Grammy Award-winning trumpeter **Sir Frank London** of The Klezmatics and Grammy-nominated percussion virtuoso **Deep Singh** transform Irving Fields' classic 1959 LP *Bagels & Bongos* into a Yiddish-infused bhangra party. London has played with artists from Pink Floyd to Mel Tormé, Karen O to Itzhak Perlman; Singh is widely-known as teacher to The Beatles' George Harrison, has played with everyone from Falu to Sting, and has even taken to the Broadway stage in *Bombay Dreams*. Joined by Avi Hoffman on vocals, *Bagels & Bhangra* is a mash-up of music and culture sure to rock the stage.

A notorious century-old play and a lost musical will both take the stage at Theatre for the New City. Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance*, which caused an uproar and subsequent arrest of its actors in its Broadway outing in the 1920s—and served as the inspiration for the Tony Award-winning play *Indecent*—will receive a reading in an English translation by Caraid O'Brien. The playwright's great-grandson, David Mazower, joins for an open discussion following the reading.

Closing out this inaugural festival, producers have unearthed a true lost gem to bring back to life on the stage. Cy Coleman, composer of *Little Me*, *Sweet Charity*, *The Will Rogers Follies*, and other treasures of the musical theatre canon, wrote a musical with best-selling author Avery Corman that has been tucked away—that is, until *YiddishFest* 2019. *The Great Ostrovsky*, about a larger-than-life star of the Yiddish theatre, will receive a very rare staged reading concert performance on December 29, marking the final event of this year's festival.

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**We are currently in discussions with the UM Richter Library, Jewish Museum of Florida and several national JCC's for exhibitions, curricula development and cultural programs and concerts, as well as with several cultural organizations in NY for the return of the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre as a resident Yiddish Theatre.**