



15 West 16th Street
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Newsletter

SPRING 2017



Letter from the Director



What does Jewish “continuity” mean? During World War II, YIVO leaders believed that the continuity of the Jewish people depended on the survival of cultural memory, which meant the preservation of the documents and artifacts that recorded Jewish history. They risked their lives to preserve these artifacts and today YIVO is ensuring their permanent preservation through the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Collections Project. But preservation of documents is not enough. They must be read and understood, put in context, and given life through narratives. We must look toward innovative educational programs,

as well as digital means of reaching Jews around the world who have been cut off from their history, language, and culture by the catastrophes of the 20th century in order to rebuild our understanding of our history and sense of our future. This is YIVO’s challenge. I hope you will join us in meeting it.

Jonathan Brent
Executive Director

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is the leading academic center for East European and Russian Jewish Studies in the world, specializing in Yiddish language, literature, and folklore; the Holocaust; and the American Jewish experience. YIVO preserves, studies, shares, and perpetuates knowledge of the history and culture of East European Jewry to advance scholarship, to strengthen community, and lay a foundation of self-knowledge and pride for future generations.

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LIBRARYINQUIRIES@YIVO.CJH.ORG

» Travel Directions

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is located in the Center for Jewish History at 15 West 16th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, New York, NY 10011.

by subway

14 St / Union Sq. **L N Q R 4 5 6**
14 St + 6 Ave **F L M PATH** 18 St + 7 Ave **1**
14 St + 7 Ave **1 2 3** 14 St + 8 Ave **A C E L**

by bus

M2 M3 M5 M7 M14

» Hours [CLOSED ON MAJOR FEDERAL AND JEWISH HOLIDAYS]

Gallery Hours

Sun 11:00am – 5:00pm
Mon+Wed 9:30am – 8:00pm
Tue+Thu 9:30am – 5:00pm
Fri 9:30am – 3:00pm
Sat CLOSED

Administrative Hours

Mon–Thu 9:00am – 5:00pm
Fri 9:00am – 4:00pm

Library Hours

Mon–Thu 9:30am – 5:00pm

Edward Blank Joins YIVO Board

Retired New York telemarketing pioneer Edward Blank joins YIVO's Board of Directors. Ed received his BA in Economics from the City College of New York and attended NYU Graduate School of Business. He is a board member of the City College 21st Century Foundation and is a member of its Finance Committee. Ed is a member of the National Board of the Jewish National Fund and co-chairman of the Audit Committee. Ed serves as a Board Member of the American Friends of The Museums of Israel and *The Forward* and is a member of AJC, ELEM and the World Jewish Congress.



YIVO Opens UK Office

YIVO now has a London office to serve as a hub for programs and projects in the United Kingdom. Among the treasures in the YIVO Archives are rare historical materials about the modern Jewish experience in Great Britain, many of them unique and not found in any other collection. The Lithuanian embassy in London will host a reception for YIVO on November 29, 2017 and, on November 30, an exhibition on YIVO's archives on Jews in Great Britain, including Lucien Wolf's archives.

YIVO Visits Naples, FL for No Asylum Screening

In January, the Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida and GenShoah SWFL hosted a screening of *No Asylum: The Untold Chapter of Anne Frank's Story*. Director Paula Fouce and YIVO Executive Director Jonathan Brent held a Q&A afterwards. *No Asylum* is the little-known story of Otto Frank's desperate attempts to secure American visas before going into hiding with his family in 1942. Based on recently-discovered letters by Otto Frank in YIVO's archives, *No Asylum* interviews Anne Frank's surviving family about her father's efforts. Their story mirrors the experiences of many struggling through today's refugee crisis. Over 300 people attended.



PHOTO BY AGNEŠKA AVIN

Abraham Joshua Heschel School Visits YIVO

Parents from the Heschel School attended a breakfast and tour of YIVO in March. Executive Director Jonathan Brent presented a history and overview of YIVO and its unique resources and initiatives; YIVO Board vice-chair Irene Pletka spoke about her own history with YIVO; and Alyssa Quint, Scholar-in-Residence of the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Collections and Heschel School parent, introduced the riches of the Esther Rokhl Kaminska Theater Museum Collection, part of the Vilna Collections. Guests viewed original archival treasures including the letters of Otto Frank, Sigmund Freud, and Marc Chagall, and the remarkable "Book of the Children," a registry of over 14,000 students' and 715 teachers' signatures from the Lodz Ghetto's schools. The visit concluded with a tour of the exhibit, "The Strashun Library: Treasures Rescued from the Ashes of Vilna."



Dos telerl fun himl (The Plate from the Sky) by Alef Katz was published in New York, 1934 and illustrated by the artist Yosel Cutler. It is a children's poem about an enormous plate of food that is dragged to earth from the sky by an old magician. The cornucopia of food on the plate could feed all of the poor, hungry people, but they are blocked by a space alien who protects the plate. The people rise up to attack him and those who get to the plate wind up riding on it to a wonderful green land free of hunger and poverty. **This book and other items will be included in *Yidische kinder*, an exhibition for Children's Day on April 30.**

[SEE UPCOMING PROGRAMS.]

Create A Lasting Legacy...

You can make sure your wishes are fulfilled by writing a will so that your assets go to your loved ones and the causes you care about.

A simple way to ensure that the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research can help Jews worldwide to reconnect with their own history and to safeguard it for generations to come is a Gift in your Will or Living Trust. **By including a bequest to YIVO in your Will or Living Trust, you will make a profound difference in our capacity to bring our materials to more people around the world and help ensure Jewish continuity.**

For more information, please contact Irma Friedman, Director of Development at 212.294.6156.



Jonathan Brent with Yvette and Albert Marrin, members of YIVO's Gaon Legacy Society.



← A program from a staging of Aaron Zeitlin's Yiddish translation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by celebrated director Mordkhe Mazo, c. 1930. YIVO Archives.

BY ALYSSA QUINT
Scholar-in-Residence of the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Collections

"*Ibergezetst un farbesert*" ("translated and improved") is a phrase associated with Yiddish translations of Shakespeare's plays for the American stage in the early twentieth century. It meant that the Yiddish translation made the original worse, sometimes egregiously worse. What did it really mean? *Ibergezetst un farergert* ("translated and worsened").

In truth, the "translated and improved" phenomenon of degrading translations accounts for only a tiny fraction of translations for the Yiddish stage. Thousands of surviving programs and placards in YIVO's Esther Rokhl Kaminska Theater Museum Collection (part of the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Collections) reveal translation—good and artistic translation—to be a crucial ingredient to the Yiddish theater during its most creative decades, especially in the interwar period. Yiddish translations of world theater reflect the players' thirst to broaden their theatrical vocabulary, to stretch their emotional reach, and their desire to contain cultural multitudes.

The presence of translated works on Yiddish stages throughout Poland and America during this era reflects not a shortage of native Yiddish imagination, but rather translation's importance to the creative foundation of a language. Translation gave translators a unique communion with a fellow playwright of a different era or language as the original authors' inspired, inky words flowed through his or her pen.

For Yiddish theater participants of this era, who were almost all multilingual and prided themselves on their worldliness, translation created cultural bridges that allowed creativity to travel in both directions. The most important example is Sh. An-ski's *The Dybbuk*, a work that itself coalesced from Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian, and played in many languages after its explosive first Yiddish run. Translation brought Yiddish theater into conversation with theaters and studios of other languages so that trends of staging, set design, and acting technique flowed freely across linguistic borders. *Ibergezetst*, and, yes, *farbesert*.

Read the full article at vilnacollections.yivo.org/Translated-Theater.



Jews in Revolution

YIVO-Bard Winter Program on Ashkenazi Civilization

This past January, over 100 students attended YIVO's Winter Program on Ashkenazi Civilization, which featured eight courses spanning a broad range of topics, from Modern Yiddish Theater to Baruch Spinoza, Jewish Humor, and the short stories of Isaac Babel. The Winter Program on Ashkenazi Civilization offers an integrated curriculum in the culture, history, languages, and literatures of Eastern European Jews and the Jewish Diaspora. These short, intensive seminars are open to all. This year they were centered on the theme of "Jews in Revolution." Courses were taught by leading academics in the field, including Sam Kassow, Steven Smith, Richard Wolin, Alyssa Quint, Eddy Portnoy, and Jonathan Brent.

YIVO'S SHINE ONLINE EDUCATIONAL SERIES

Join our global community of online learners!

You can explore Jewish history and culture and access YIVO's unique collection of archival materials from the comfort of your home.

Delve into our first two courses – **sign up today!**

Discovering Ashkenaz

JEWISH LIFE IN EASTERN EUROPE

Join **Prof. Samuel Kassow** for a survey of the 1000-year history of Jews in Eastern Europe.

Folksong, Demons AND THE Evil Eye

FOLKLORE OF ASHKENAZ

PRESENTED BY **EDWARD BLANK AND FAMILY**
Explore the music, folktales, rituals, and superstitions of Jewish Eastern Europe with **Prof. Itzik Gottesman** and special guests.

VISIT YIVO.ORG/ONLINE-CLASSES

ARCHIVAL ACQUISITIONS

- ▶ YIVO recently received **the archive of Lazare Saminsky** (1882-1959), a prominent Jewish composer, folklorist, intellectual, and music activist. His archive consists of music manuscripts and published scores (operas, cantatas, symphonies, choral works, chamber music), programs, correspondence, personal documents, photographs, clippings, and other memorabilia with a focus on the American period of his life. Born in Ukraine, Saminsky graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1906 where he studied under the guidance of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Saminsky was one of the most active participants and contributors to the activities of the St. Petersburg Society for Jewish Folk Music founded in 1908. He advocated for using ancient liturgical melodies as the foundation for the contemporary works of Jewish composers. After a few years of travel, Saminsky immigrated to the U.S. in 1920. For 34 years, he was the music director of Temple Emanu-El in New York. Saminsky's archive also contains philosophical works authored by him and his unpublished autobiography, *The Third Leonardo: Illusions of a Warrior of Civilization*.

← Lazare Saminsky's passport, 1919. YIVO Archives.

- ▶ Jessica Hirshbein donated **the Papers of Peretz Hirshbein and Esther Shumiatcher Part II**, which contains numerous handwritten manuscripts of the Yiddish dramatist Peretz Hirshbein and the Yiddish poet Esther Shumiatcher, his wife. It includes correspondence between Hirshbein, Shumiatcher, and many notable artists and writers, including Uri Zvi Greenberg, Kadya Molodowsky, Celia Dropkin, H. Leivick, Melech Ravitch, and Marc Chagall. The collection also contains approximately 1,000 photographs, many documenting the Hirshbein's travels around the world to China, Japan, Egypt, India, Argentina, Tahiti, and Mexico. Additionally, there are over 50 watercolor paintings done by Hirshbein during the 1920s, which shed light on another facet of his artistic abilities.

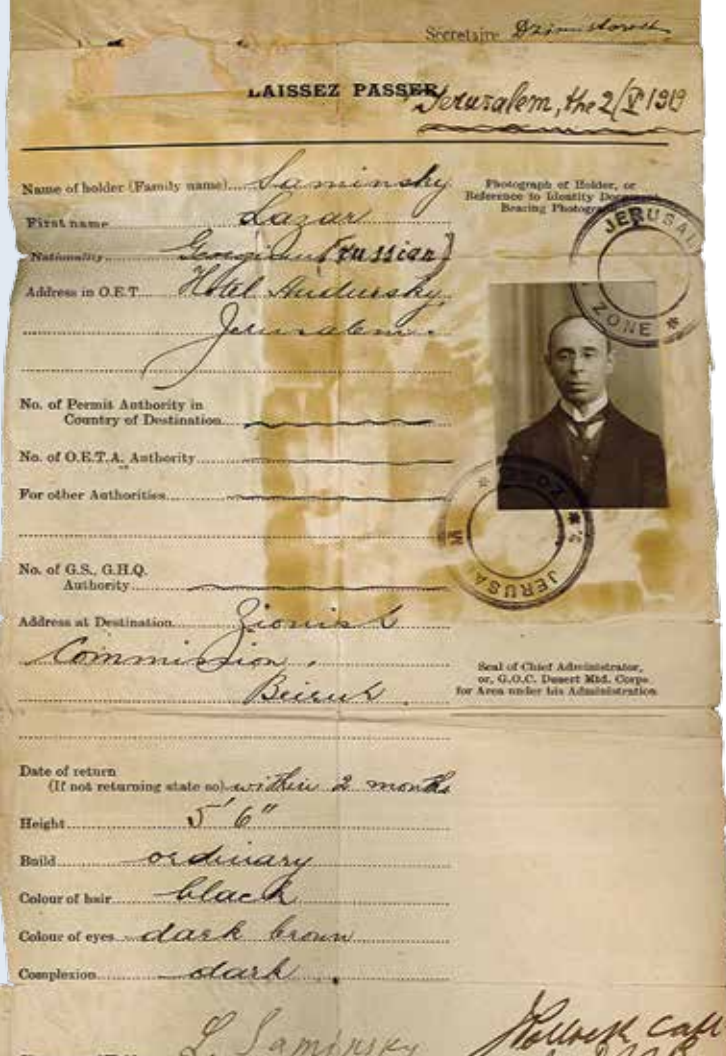


PHOTO BY STEVEN PISANO

The Blood Libel Then and Now: The Enduring Impact of an Imaginary Event

(OCTOBER 9, 2016) The blood libel—the accusation that Jews killed Christian children—is seared into Europe's cultural memory. These alleged ritual murders never happened, yet this devastating lie endures. YIVO's conference explored the impact of the blood libel over the centuries across regions. Scholars Elissa Bemporad, Raphael Israeli, David Kertzer, Hillel Kieval, E.M. Rose, Magda Teter, and Barbara Weissberger presented.

The History and Future of the Strashun Library

(JANUARY 22, 2017) YIVO hosted a conference on the Strashun Library, once a cultural center renowned for its collections of old and rare books. The library shared the fate of Vilna's Jews during WWII: destruction. But some books were sent to the Institute for Study of the Jewish Question. These were recovered in 1945 by the U.S. Army and sent to YIVO in New York. Others were hidden and saved by ghetto inmates and righteous gentiles and rediscovered in the 1980s. As part of the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Collections Project, the library's surviving components are being digitized and reunited online.

Young Jewish American Composers

(NOVEMBER 2, 2016) How might composers' identities as Jews and as Americans influence their music? YIVO's Fall Sidney Krum Young Artists Concert embraced this question, exploring how Jewish history and identity informs the creation of new works of art. The concert featured new classical works by young and emerging Jewish American composers: Lainie Fefferman, David Hertzberg, Julie Hill, Adam Roberts, Alyssa Weinberg, and Alex Weiser.

Money, Love, and Shame!

(FEBRUARY 6, 2017) Once a staple of the popular Yiddish stage, Isidore Zolotarevski's legendary 1910 melodrama was presented at YIVO in a new English translation by writer/director Allen Lewis Rickman. Not for the weak of heart, "Money, Love, and Shame!" is a wild ride with a group of dysfunctional Jewish immigrants. Considered "shund," or "trash" by critics, it was one of the most popular plays on the Yiddish stage. Performed by Samantha Maurice, Everett Quinton, Kevin Sebastian, Yelena Shmulenson-Rickman, Kaig Swartz, Jacqueline Sydney, and Allen Lewis Rickman. Original score by Steve Sterner.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30 | 11:00AM

Children's Day

A morning of activity and cultural immersion for children of all ages. Join us for sing-alongs, storytelling, and puppetry inspired by the lives of Jewish children before World War II. *Co-sponsored by Center for Jewish History.*

SUNDAY, APRIL 30 | 2:00PM

Leading Scholars from Around the World Discuss: Growing Up Jewish

PANEL

Before World War II, Jewish culture blossomed throughout Eastern Europe and in the growing Ashkenazi diaspora. Scholars Samuel Kassow, Miriam Udel, Naomi Seidman, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discuss the lives of children in this Jewish world.

MONDAY, MAY 1 | 10:00AM

Being a Jew in the Soviet Union: Findings from *A Comprehensive History of the Jews in the Soviet Union*

CONFERENCE

Join us for this unique opportunity to hear from renowned scholars working on *A Comprehensive History of the Jews in the Soviet Union* as they share their findings with the public in this day-long conference. *Co-sponsored by NYU's Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies.*

THURSDAY, MAY 4 | 7:00PM

Annie Gosfield Portrait Concert

CONCERT

This concert explores music of composer Annie Gosfield that takes its inspiration from Jewish culture, history, and the New York immigrant experience.

MONDAY, MAY 8 | 7:00PM

Drunk from the Bitter Truth: The Poems of Anna Margolin

BOOK CLUB

This meeting of the 16th Street Book Club will discuss *Drunk from the Bitter Truth: The Poems of Anna Margolin*, translated from the Yiddish by Shirley Kumove.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24 | 7:00PM

The Yiddish Celluloid Closet and the Isle of Klezbos

MUSIC PROGRAM

Despite the taboo surrounding homosexuality, the topic was too intriguing to be left entirely out of the Yiddish picture. This program presents Yiddish cinema as you've never seen it. *Hosted by American Jewish Historical Society, in partnership with YIVO and American Society for Jewish Music.*

You can watch recordings of many of our programs from the comfort of your own home with our **Video and Audio Archive** at yivo.org/Video.

TUESDAY, JUNE 13 | 6:30PM

A Yiddish Liederabend — An Evening of Yiddish Song

ANNE E. LEIBOWITZ MEMORIAL CONCERT

An elegant, nostalgic program devoted to treasures of Yiddish song and poetry, presented in the intimate chamber music setting of a traditional classical Liederabend (song evening). YIVO's Anne E. Leibowitz Visiting Professor in Residence in Music, Neil W. Levin, delivers the pre-concert lecture on the Yiddish lieder tradition.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21 | 7:00PM

Jewish Songs and Dances: Music from the Archive of Lazare Saminsky

LOCATION:

Temple Emanu-El, 1 E 65th St, New York, NY 10065

SIDNEY KRUM YOUNG ARTISTS CONCERT

Explore the legacy of composer Lazare Saminsky, whose music takes its inspiration from all around the Jewish world. This concert will feature a variety of songs and chamber music with violin, cello, and piano.

THURSDAY, JUNE 22 | 7:00PM

Jews and the Left Reconsidered

BOOK TALK

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jews held highly visible positions in a number of different left-wing movements. What can explain this phenomenon? Presented by YIVO's Jacob Kronhill Visiting Professor, Jack Jacobs.

TUESDAY, JULY 11 | 7:00PM

The Muses of Bashevis Singer

SCREENING AND Q&A

Isaac Bashevis Singer, the famous Yiddish writer and Nobel Prize winner, wrote with a "harem" of dozens of translators behind him. Beyond simple translators, these women were a vital source of his creativity. Discover how in this documentary. Director Asaf Galay will join for a Q&A after the screening.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2 | 6:00PM

Summer Yiddish Song Celebration

URIEL WEINREICH ZUMER PROGRAM CONCERT

A concert in celebration of the graduation of YIVO's Yiddish language summer program's class of 2017 showcasing the breadth of music with Yiddish lyrics including Yiddish folk, theater, and art songs. Singers include Eléonore Biezunski, Miryem-Khaye Seigel, and Eliza Bagg.

For tickets and more information:

Visit yivo.org/events »

Call **212.294.8301 ext. 6108**
or email BOXOFFICE@YIVO.CJH.ORG »

HOURS:

Monday – Wednesday, 10:30am-3:00pm



[Left to right] YIVO Board vice-chair Irene Pletka with Elaine Oneill-Hess, executive director of the Kronhill Pletka Foundation.

PHOTO BY MELANIE EINZIG

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In addition, we extend our gratitude to all YIVO members, each of whom is critical to our success.

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JANUARY 1, 2016 - DECEMBER 31, 2016

Your Gift will help YIVO to preserve and digitize our exclusive archival materials and ensure that the flame of Jewish culture and memory is preserved for future generations.

To make a Major Gift or to remember YIVO in your will, please contact Irma Friedman, Director of Development, at 212.294.6156 or IPFRIEDMAN@YIVO.CJH.ORG.