

**DONNA  
MURPHY**

**THE  
PEOPLE  
IN THE  
PICTURE**

**A NEW MUSICAL**



**UPSTAGE**

A PUBLICATION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT **ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY** SPRING 2011

# THE PEOPLE IN THE PICTURE

A NEW MUSICAL

## UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

**WHAT:** *The People in the Picture*, a new musical, takes the audience through Bubbie's story from her days as a Yiddish theatre performer to her life in the Warsaw ghetto, through the Holocaust, to America where her granddaughter, Jenny, is eager to hear her grandmother's story. The play tackles her daughter Red's struggle with her Jewish identity, Bubbie's desire to preserve the stories from her past, and, above all, the importance of laughter in times of struggle.

**WHO:** Libretto & Lyrics by Iris Rainer Dart; Music by Mike Stoller & Artie Butler; Directed by Leonard Foglia.

**WHERE:** Warsaw, Poland and New York City.

**WHEN:** Pre-World War II and 1977.



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## THE WRITER IN THE PICTURE

*Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, sat down with writer Iris Rainer Dart to discuss the inspiration for The People in the Picture.*

ate a show called *The Shape of Things* that was directed by a woman, Lee Grant, produced by a woman, Caroline Raskin, had an all-women staff of writers and all women in the cast. It turned out to be a one time special but the stars were Phyllis Diller, Joan Rivers, Erma Bombeck, Brenda Vaccaro, Lee Grant, Lynn Redgrave, and tons of other stars. I wrote a song called, "O Henry!" about a Jewish girl who falls in love with Henry Kissinger, who was then the Secretary of State. It was much appreciated, especially by George Schlatter. He called me shortly after that show and said, "I'm about to produce three specials: one will be for Diana Ross, one will be for Doris Day and one will be for Cher. Which one would you like?" I picked Cher. I was the only woman in a room with a bunch of guys writing jokes and sketches. The guests on the show were Elton John, Bette Midler, and Flip Wilson.

**TS:** You also had a great success writing the novel *Beaches*.

**IRD:** I finally decided that television was too collaborative. I didn't want to have to deal with the network, the producer, the head writer, the star. They say "a camel is a horse made by a committee". I didn't want to do work in a group. I decided I would write novels. I had just made enough money on a couple of pilots to be able to say, "I'm going to tighten my belt, live on this money and write a novel." I tried to sell an idea for a novel about two little girls who meet on a beach in Atlantic City. It covers 35 years of their friendship. Everyone said, "It's nice writing, but the idea is not commercial. Who

**TS:** I read that you came from Pittsburgh. Is that true?

**IRD:** That's correct. I grew up in Pittsburgh and went to college at Carnegie Tech which is now called Carnegie Mellon University. I was an acting major in the drama department there.

**TS:** How did you start writing for television?

**IRD:** The only part of my acting career that was successful was voiceovers. I worked for a company that produced TV children's shows called "Rankin/Bass". I wrote some shows for them, so I got into the rhythm of writing every day. Then I decided to try to write a spec script, which means you watch a show and mimic the show as best you can in a script which you send out to agents and producers. One of my spec scripts was taken to George Schlatter, who was then the producer of "Laugh-In". He was about to produce an all-woman special. It was 1974 or 1975. He wanted to cre-

### *The People in the Picture Play Development Timeline*

1995	2000	2001	2006	2006-2008	2009 December	2010 January	2010 June
Iris starts writing the script	Iris meets Mike Stoller and he joins the team as composer	Iris and Mike bring in Artie Butler to collaborate on music	Iris's agent Peter Hagan introduces her to Leonard Foglia who then joins as director	Team works on script and songs	Workshop with Roundabout adding Donna Murphy and Paul Gemignani	Workshop continues with Roundabout	Small reading at Roundabout with script and song changes; Todd Haimes, Roundabout Artistic Director gives his approval

cares about two little girls?” My agent came back and asked me if I had any ideas that were commercial and I sold this idea for a novel called *The Boys in the Mailroom*. The boys are in the studio mailroom and they work their way up to moguldom. That book was a big hit, so everybody suddenly changed their minds and thought *Beaches* might, in fact, be commercial.

**TS: Am I correct in saying that *Beaches* has some autobiographical material in it?**

**IRD:** All writing has autobiographical material in it. I mean that I don't know how to write about someone else's life. I only know how to write about my own. I have a cousin with whom I was very close and she said to me one day, “When one of us dies, I hope it's me first because I couldn't live in a world without you in it.” I thought, “That is powerful sentiment and I think I want to write about that,” and I did.

**TS: Can you talk to me about the inspiration for *The People in the Picture*? I sense there is a personal investment in it.**

**IRD:** Both of my parents were immigrants; my father from Lithuania and my mother from Russia. They came over to America, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at different times. My father was about 10 years older than my mother, and he worked his way through college to become a social worker. He worked in a big settlement house in a neighborhood called the Hill District which has since been made famous by August Wilson in his plays. My dad was very involved in the arts there. I made early stage appearances there, because they needed a kid and my dad brought me in to play the part. The one thing about social work that hasn't changed over the years is that these very important people get paid almost nothing. My siblings and I grew up with very little money and were living on a social worker's salary. Both of my parents spoke more Yiddish in the house than they did English. For my mother, it was because she was one of nine children and her sisters were her best friends. She would speak to them on the phone every day. As a little kid I would be walking around listening to what she said. Her sisters would come over, speak to each other and I would hear their language. I would understand what they were saying the way children do when they hear a language. As an adult, I would speak to friends and they would talk about their childhoods saying, “We were so unhappy. We didn't have this or we didn't have

that.” I always looked at my childhood as being extraordinarily happy. I tried to figure out why it was so happy. Then I realized it was the Yiddish culture for me. The jokes, the songs, the language — all have a built-in sense of humor.

**TS: What motivated you to write this particular story?**

**IRD:** When I started to write this piece, I wanted to tell the story of how the Yiddish language and the Yiddish culture have helped the Jews survive. I started researching and sent away for Yiddish films. I watched them and the first thing that happened was I realized that I didn't need to read the subtitles because I understood what everyone was saying. Also, from a historical perspective of 1935 Poland, anybody who knows anything about their history knows what was going on for the Jews then: the rampant anti-Semitism and the Nazi threat. Everything that was going on was anti-humor, and yet this group of filmmakers and actors were making musical comedies. It's almost a form of cultural resistance, as if to say, “You think that you are going to stop us from being Jewish? We are going to be even more Jewish by making movies; movies that are not only in our language but also wonderful comedies.” It was mind blowing to me to see these movies; to see how funny, charming, and full of life they were, knowing what was going on for these people at that same time. Then I started researching Yiddish humor and realized that they told jokes in the Warsaw ghetto, collected them, and buried them. I was able to find books about the archives that were retrieved that contained jokes. Also, in the concentration camps they were telling jokes. I ended up interviewing many, many survivors who told me of the humor. There is actually a book I've used for research called *Laughter in Hell* by Steve Lipman that chronicles many of the jokes that they told. As a joke writer, I was very appreciative of the quality of the jokes and I was awed by the strength of the human spirit under those circumstances. Nothing was sacred.

Nothing, or no one in our world can fathom those horrifying circumstances. But we can be in awe of their remarkable ability to make jokes in the face of the worst imaginable event in history. The Yiddish sensibility through the years enables us to laugh at funerals, laugh when we sit Shiva for the dead, at an ill-fitted hand-me-down and at an empty stomach because there is always a joke to be made. That was what catapulted me into being able to write comedy because I was taught from day one how to take something and turn

it into funny. That's an autobiographical thing you hear in the opening scene when she sings, "laughter is precious and laughter's exquisite." That to me is the key to life.

**TS: Did you do anything specific to research the Warsaw ghetto?**

**IRD:** I had to do several things. There's a fellow by the name of Moishe Rosenfeld who is a Yiddish expert and scholar and was my advisor on every step of this piece. In fact, Moishe was the translator on a lot of those Yiddish films. His mother grew up in Warsaw. He knew what was going on there and he was the one who made it very clear to me that in 1935, Warsaw was pretty much the cultural center of the world. The artists, the painters, the poets and the writers who were thriving there were a huge part of the tragedy of the Shoah. He led me to the Ringelblum Archives, the archives that were buried under the homes in the Warsaw ghetto that are part of my story. My husband and I went to Warsaw and Krakow. Warsaw was completely decimated and rebuilt, but in Krakow there's still a big semblance of what the life was like there. I listened, watched and read. Moishe was a huge help and the travel was as well. I talked to many survivors and got a sense for the personality and what that experience does to one; how they got through it and how they continue to live in this world after that experience.

**TS: How long has it taken for this project to come to fruition?**

**IRD:** You have to understand that I've been working on this show for so many years that when I started writing it, I was Red and now I'm Bubbie. My daughter is now 25 and she was 10 when I began. My husband used to get quiet when I'd talk about the show and I'd say to him, "Why are you so quiet about the show?" and he'd say, "Well, why would I want you to work on something that will take you away from the family?" I would say, "Honey, by the time this show sees the light of day, Rachel, our daughter, will be in college in New York." She was 10 years old when I said that. I told him, "She will be in New York and you will want to go there all the time." Not only did Rachel end up choosing Tisch, so she was in college in New York, but she has since graduated and is out in the theater community working. A project takes as long as it takes. It's the creative process. I had to find Mike Stoller, one of the great tunesmiths since Irving Berlin.

I think he writes the best tunes. Mike was a little concerned about the Jewishness of it because, even though he is Jewish, he grew up writing in the black culture. Leiber and Stoller wrote the best rock and roll songs there are. Then Mike brought on Artie Butler, another amazing composer, to work with us. For about five years, I drove a five- or six-hour drive to L.A. once a month and we would all meet. We would say, "Okay. Now we need this or now we need that. Everybody go home and do it." And a month later I would come back and it would be not only finished but fantastic. Then six or seven years ago, Peter Hagan, my mutual agent with Lenny Foglia, said, "I want you to meet a director client of mine and have him look at the script," and I did. Lenny read the script and wanted to become involved with the show. Lenny has made an enormous contribution to this script. I have published a couple of books in the meantime and have worked on another musical that's almost finished but my main focus has been this project. And it's finally ready to be presented.

**TS: Will you talk to us about the workshop process, because you've done some readings here at Roundabout, correct?**

**IRD:** Yes. Under the aegis of Roundabout we did one last January. It was the first time that we had Donna Murphy. Donna had read the script and fallen in love with it. Todd Haimes found us Paul Gemignani, who is the musical director. Paul has really become a part of our family. He is so talented, very funny and a pleasure to work with. Donna, who Lenny says is a genius, is such a consummate actor. You can hand her any script and she'll make it brilliant. She is just fantastic. She's also right for this role because the character has to go back and forth in time. You have to believe she's 80 and you have to believe she's 39. Donna is beautiful, elegant and young looking so you can believe her when she does the past. Then she is such a good actress that you believe her when she does the present when she is a grandmother.

**TS: Do you have any advice for young people who want to write?**

**IRD:** See everything in the theatre you possibly can. To young novelists I say read everything. Expand your world in the best way that you are able. And never never never give up. I am as old as your grandmother, and I'm still working and loving it. (Maybe older than your grandmother.)

## THE STYLE IN THE PICTURE



TOP: Sholem Asch's *Amnon and Tamar* performed by the Vilna Troupe. Warsaw, 1921

BOTTOM: "King Lear" *King Lear* was a popular choice for Yiddish Shakespeare revivals.

### Vilst gaien tsum Yiddish teater?

Translation: Would you like to go to the Yiddish theater?

In 1876, Avrom Goldfaden established the first professional Yiddish theater company in Romania. Goldfaden is considered the "father (or tateh) of the Yiddish theater" and his work was a mix of farce, melodrama, singing and dancing.

The Yiddish theatre, having reached the shores of the United States through European Jewish immigrants, became a community theatre with a very distinctive style.

Most of the Yiddish theatres were located in Jewish districts – tied to local synagogues, community groups or labor unions – and so steeped in their local neighborhoods that jokes and subject matter were locally inspired, while actors became local celebrities. They produced original plays – both dramas and comedies – as well as Yiddish adaptations of classics, especially the plays of Shakespeare.

Since the troupes arrived from a large variety of European regions and traditions, the acting styles varied. Some of the performers were famous for their broad, florid acting style, but others offered a more realistic approach. These actors studied and adopted the methods of Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky long before English-speaking actors did so.

One of these actors was Stella Adler, the youngest daughter of famous Yiddish tragedians Jacob and Sara Adler. Stella began her career in the Yiddish Theatre at age four. She would go on to become a founding member of The Group

Theatre, then establish her own acting studio in 1949, passing on to young actors her rich experiences from Broadway, Hollywood, and the Yiddish theatre.

The National Yiddish Theatre in New York City is one of the many cultural institutions that continue the tradition of Yiddish theatrical customs today.

# THE LANGUAGE IN THE PICTURE

Farshtaist?: The Yiddish Language

Translation: Do you understand?: The Yiddish Language



For many who speak Yiddish, it is not just a language but also a way of life. The language is just one part of a cultural identity expressed through books, Yiddish theatre and songs. In times of despair, Neal Karlen explains, “Yiddish kept the Jews alive and together, their religion and dreams of someday going home intact.” The language has a specific rhythm and poetry to it. Yiddish is expressive and often uses humorous metaphors to describe any situation both happy and sad.

The Yiddish language dates back to the early 10th century. Linguists distinguish its origin as a conglomeration of the dialects of Jews from Italy and France who formed small communities with Jews in Germany. Each group added in expressions and words from their dialect into everyday language which formed the beginnings of Yiddish.

By the 16th century, many Jews had settled in Poland, and it was at this time that Yiddish was represented in written form using Hebrew characters. The Yiddish language was spoken by approximately 11,000,000 people worldwide prior to WWII. Then, the Holocaust annihilated about half of the original native speakers. Yiddish language is still present today however, despite the devastating blow to its community. *The Forward*, a Yiddish daily newspaper launched in 1897, continues to circulate in 2011 with access to both Yiddish and English translations. *The People in the Picture* is another important contribution to the legacy of Yiddish culture.

Some Yiddish expressions and words have made their way into the English vernacular.

## COUNT FROM 1-10 IN YIDDISH!

1:	Ains	6:	Zeks
2:	Tsvai	7:	Ziben
3:	Drei	8:	Acht
4:	Fir	9:	Nein
5:	Finf	10:	Tsen





A man and his violin in the Warsaw ghetto.

“YIDDISH WASN’T JUST WORDS. IT WAS AN ATTITUDE. IT WAS SWEET AND SOUR. IT WAS A SHRUG AND A KISS. IT WAS HUMILITY AND DEFIANCE ALL IN ONE.” -AUTHOR ERICA JONG

HERE’S A LIST OF SOME WORDS YOU  
MAY ALREADY KNOW THAT  
HAVE YIDDISH ORIGINS:

**BAGEL** a ring-shaped bread roll  
**CHUTZPAH** audacity, nerve  
**KIBBITZ** to meddle  
**GLITCH** a minor mishap  
**KLUTZ** a clumsy person  
**MAZEL TOV!** Congratulations!  
**MISHMOSH** hodgepodge  
**SCHLEP** to drag around  
**SCHMOOZE** to make small talk  
**SCHMUTZ** Dirt

HERE ARE SOME YIDDISH WORDS  
USED IN THE SHOW:

**BISSEL** a little bit  
**DYBBUK** a malicious possessing spirit  
**GELT** money  
**KICHLACH** cookies  
**KVELLING** beam with pride  
**MAIDELAH** young girl  
**MISHUGINAH** crazy person  
**PLOTZED** collapsed  
**SHAH** hush  
**TOCHAS** the gluteus maximus  
**VAY’S MERE** woe is me

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## THE ACTRESS IN THE PICTURE

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*Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, sat down with actress Donna Murphy to discuss her role as Raisel/Bubbie in The People in the Picture.*

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**TS:** Why did you decide to perform in *The People in the Picture*? Tell us a bit about your history with this piece.

**DM:** It was first presented to me by Tracy Aron, who is the producer who brought it to the Roundabout. I was working with her on *LoveMusik* and she said, “There’s something I’m working on that I’d love to have you read.” At first, I thought she just wanted me to read it to get my perspective on it as a friend and colleague. When I did finally read it, I was blown away by the story itself, the relationships and by these three generations of women living in conflict and what was fueling that conflict. Of course, I asked if the same actress was going to play both Raisel and Bubbie and she said, “Well, that’s what we want but we’re not sure we’ll be able to accomplish that.” Sometime later I was asked to do a reading of it and I wasn’t available. I had this sense of mourning that I wasn’t able to do it. This project had already been worked on for some time at that point, but was still evolving, and I recognized it as something I was interested in being a part of. There’s something about being a part of the beginnings of things and taking those early steps with a project.

The piece itself is written almost as a film. It has the presence of “ghosts”, in the characters of the Warsaw Gang who remain in Bubbie’s consciousness. They are there with Jenny as she becomes more and more engaged in the story. How do you get an audience to follow all of this? At the time I first read it, there was even more to it. There were scenes that showed Red in her workplace. It was a lot to track. But even with as many questions as I had, I couldn’t shake it. I communicated to Tracy at that time, “Please don’t take my ‘no’ as- I’m not interested in this piece. It’s something I just can’t



do at this time. Keep me posted.” All I know is somehow, the stars aligned and they managed to arrange a workshop in the city at a time when I could do it. It was a week in December of 2009 and two weeks in January in 2010. The writers had a chance to step away, make some additional changes and discuss what they learned after that first week. Then we came back and worked on it for several weeks in what became a semi-staged reading. That was the first time Todd Haimes saw it. Our director Lenny and the writers then took several months to work on changes based on what they heard and saw, and input they got from Todd as well. Then we came back together again for a few days in June 2010 to really just sit around the table and read through this new draft. The changes were very good; definitely refining the story telling and focus of the piece.

**TS:** Can you talk about how this role affects you emotionally?

**DM:** I tend to be attracted to scripts that are not in my world and yet, in some way, I click with them. I might not know exactly why I click with it. When I say “click”, I mean that I respond to it in some part of my insides, my heart or my gut. Also, I find material intellectually provocative when it grabs me somewhere in my mind and imagination; and gets me thinking about the world that this person exists in: the time,

society and the culture. I get pulled in and I cannot sever that connection. That is usually a sign that I'm going to have to pay attention to the possibility of doing that script.

With Bubbie, it was all of these things. All of the bells and alarms were going off. It was the challenge of playing someone considerably older than me and it was culturally not my background. Historically, I was of course aware of this horrendous tragedy, the Holocaust. In doing some research for a reading I'd done for Arthur Miller's *Playing for Time* and from just being a human on this planet, I knew something about that time. I knew a little bit about the Yiddish theater as someone who studied with Stella Adler. In studying with her, I learned about her background and her family's background in the theater. But this isn't a story about the camps or living in the ghetto. It's a story about these three women living in 1977 and how one person, Bubbie, is so driven to be heard and pass on this information to her granddaughter. Because she is old and not well, there is a sense of urgency about it. But it is also great fun in its communication, because that's who she is. She was an actress, and a theatrical person, but didn't choose to pursue that work when she came to the States. She's acting this all out for her granddaughter in her apartment. She, to me, is such a fascinating woman. I was impressed that she was a woman who saw the glass half-full in a time when it could not have been easy to do that. When things were really bad and people around her would say, "What do we do?", as a member of the theatre group she would say, "We'll give them our silliest comedy of all." She was about bringing light, laughter and joy to her people, her culture and the society she lived in. That's another element to Bubbie (Raisel). Despite the circumstances, she recognized the need for humor. She says, "Humor is the key to survival." People have used different tools, but that is one of her most substantial tools. As an actress, I get the chance to be funny and also to go to the depths of what a person feels in extremely difficult circumstances.

Iris, the author, and I have talked about her back story and about the circumstances she came from before joining the theatre group; we are developing this idea that her parents were intellectual people. They related to poets, artists and philosophers and lived in Warsaw. Warsaw at that time was a cultural Mecca in Eastern Europe.

**"SHE WAS ABOUT BRINGING  
LIGHT, LAUGHTER AND JOY TO  
HER PEOPLE, HER CULTURE AND  
THE SOCIETY SHE LIVED IN"**

**TS:** Like Paris was in Europe in some ways.

**DM:** Yes. There was so much going on. We think her parents strongly identified as Jews and observed much of the dietary laws and holidays but didn't necessarily wear the garb. The arts were a big deal to them. We also think that maybe Doovie, the character who founded the Warsaw gang, was a friend of her father. We think he might have come over and had lively discussions about politics and art. It wasn't dark necessarily but passionate and vital. I think that when she hears Doovie talk about what he thinks a theatre should do, she gets excited about the chance to do anything with them. I think Raisel was a natural for the theatrical life and for a group that had a social consciousness about it. It was about bringing the theatre to the people; not just in the fancy theatres that existed then in Warsaw but going out to the villages with a travelling theater. The actress part of me was very curious about Raisel. She seemed like an eternally young spirit because there was a sense of, "We can do anything. We can change the world." Even in the worst of circumstances, she was trying to do that. Then, in the play, we also experience her as Bubbie, a woman who has suffered greatly. We learn about some of the personal suffering that has affected her family and that she survived the Holocaust. There's a chunk of years that you don't know what happened in the play. Bubbie is a very complex woman and very affected by what has happened in her past. She is a survivor on many levels and I love the opportunity to meet this person before things got dark; the lightness that was Raisel. It was very moving to me when I read it and it continues to be moving for me to explore.

I think it is a beautiful way to tell a family story. I myself was raised Catholic, with a mixed heritage of Czech, French, German and Irish; the eldest of seven children I am now a mother, stepmother and step-grandmother ! Family is huge

**“IT’S A STORY THAT I THINK HAS THE POTENTIAL TO REACH A WIDE AUDIENCE AND RESONATE ON SO MANY LEVELS DEPENDING ON WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU COME FROM, HOW OLD YOU ARE AND WHAT YOUR FAMILY SITUATION IS. WHETHER YOU HAVE A STRONG FAMILY CONNECTION OR NOT, IT WILL SPEAK TO YOU BOTH FOR WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH OR WHAT YOU MIGHT YEARN FOR.”**

to me. I think so much of this show is about both the importance of knowing where you come from and also the desire to be remembered and live on; to live on through the generations that follow you.

It’s a story that I think has the potential to reach a wide audience and resonate on so many levels depending on who you are, where you come from, how old you are and what your family situation is. Whether you have a strong family connection or not, it will speak to you both for what you have been blessed with or what you might yearn for.

**TS: What attracted you to the score?**

**DM:** Mike and Artie, the composers, have created some of the most beautiful ballads I’ve ever heard for this score. The first time I heard “Selective Memory”, I just thought, “Oh. My. God.” The piece just blew me away. It’s gorgeous: the melody and harmonics within the structure of the song, and the lyrics are stunning. The moment that it happens is an unbelievable moment to give voice to what that woman is feeling at that time. I just thought, “Boy. That is a MOMENT.” It is a moment that is so earned and they have taken it and given it all the glory it deserves, in a very gentle way. There’s music that is heavily influenced by the European culture and the Yiddish sounds. There are also moments that take place in 1977 (but it’s not disco). It has a more contemporary feel and sounds like a standard of its time. The humor is both in the music and the lyrics; very clever and very funny.

**TS: If a young person told you they wanted to be a performer, what advice would you give them?**

**DM:** In terms of looking towards a professional career, you need to train. There are people who are inherently, naturally gifted but you need to have technique because some days it’s

going to be there and some days it won’t. You might have a fantastic voice but you don’t know why it works or why you can’t sing well when you have a cold. You need to know how it works when you are healthy so you can use it correctly. You also have to have something in your gut that says, “I must

do this” or “I must try to do this”. Then you do everything you can to arm yourself and be prepared for the opportunities when they come. That means both training as an actor or singer if that is what you do, or as a dancer if that is a part of what you do. It also means becoming a student of the world. Be a great observer of life around you and try to understand other people and why they behave the way they do. Look outside yourself and try to step inside other people’s shoes.

**“LOOK OUTSIDE YOURSELF AND TRY TO STEP INSIDE OTHER PEOPLE’S SHOES. THAT’S WHAT ACTING IS. GETTING INSIDE SOMEONE ELSE’S SKIN AND SEEING THE WORLD FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE”**

That’s what acting is. Getting inside someone else’s skin and seeing the world from their perspective. It’s always going to be channeled through you. We are all very different and that is good. You have to trust that you are a unique instrument and things are meant to come through you in a very particular way. If you don’t allow yourself that, then the world will never see it coming through you. That doesn’t mean you settle for, “Hey, this is the way I do things.” It’s about really taking in as much as you can about life, the world and things that affect you because then you have a really rich instrument to bring to your work. You might say, “Why am I in history class?” but you need it as a human being on this planet and if you want to be an artist, you need it. Every time I do a show that allows me to jump into another world it’s like going to school and I love it. I always loved school and reading and escaping to places in both fiction and non fiction. It has continued in my life as an actress and it is one of the greatest gifts of doing what I do.



# THE HISTORY IN THE PICTURE

## The Holocaust

From 1933 to 1945, amidst World War II, the Holocaust referred to the discrimination and murder of six million Jews by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party. While Jews were the primary focus, Hitler also saw those with disabilities, homosexuals, and Gypsies as inferior and he resorted to any means necessary to maintain his idea of the purity of the German race.

Organized persecution began with boycotts in front of Jewish owned stores where military personnel would stand outside preventing anyone from purchasing anything inside. On November 9 and 10, 1938, the “Night of Broken Glass” or Kristallnacht shook the Jewish community with anti-Semitic acts of violence. Hundreds of synagogues were burned to the ground and about 30,000 Jews were arrested.

Ghettos, forced labor camps and concentration camps were created to control and eliminate the Jewish population. Within these contained areas, many died of starvation and were forced to struggle for survival. In the face of struggle, some in the Jewish community found a way to survive through laughter. Sarcasm, irony, joke telling and singing in the ghettos and camps were distractions. It provided a sense of freedom and hope to an otherwise hopeless situation.

In 1945, the Germans surrendered, bringing the end of WWII in Europe and with it, the end of the Holocaust. Those who lived to see the end were liberated and ghettos were destroyed. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Jewish families and survivors began to rebuild their lives all over the world. Many continue today in carrying on their legacy.

**“I SEE THE WORLD GRADUALLY BEING TURNED INTO A WILDERNESS... I CAN FEEL THE SUFFERINGS OF MILLIONS AND YET IF I LOOK UP INTO THE HEAVENS, I THINK THAT IT WILL ALL COME RIGHT, THAT THIS CRUELTY TOO WILL END, AND THAT PEACE AND TRANQUILITY WILL RETURN AGAIN.”**

**–ANNE FRANK, SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1944**

**August 2, 1934**

Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi Party became dictator of Germany.

**September 15, 1935**

The Nuremberg Law made Jews 2nd-class citizens.

**October 1937**

A program was initiated in Danzig destroying Jewish businesses and homes.

**November 9-11, 1938**

Kristallnacht, a nationwide program killed 91 Jews, sent 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps and hundreds of Jewish women to jails. Nazis burned synagogues and looted homes.

**September 1, 1939**

Germany invaded Poland and WWII began.

**October 12, 1940**

Germans established a ghetto in Warsaw forcing over 400,000 Jews to live in designated area of 1.3 miles.

**November 15, 1940**

The Warsaw ghetto was sealed off with an 11-foot wall patrolled by officers around the perimeter.

**April 14-May 16, 1943**

In the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jewish fighters revolted against German officers. The ghetto was destroyed.

**May 8, 1945**

Victory in Europe day was declared as the Germans surrendered.

**September 2, 1945**

Japan surrendered and WWII ended in the U.S.



## THE PLACE IN THE PICTURE

In mitten drinnen: The Warsaw Ghetto  
Translation: In the midst of it all: The Warsaw Ghetto

The Warsaw ghetto was the largest in Europe. Like most ghettos, it was a small, densely populated section of the city segregated from the outside world where the Jews were forced to live. Economic activity was almost nonexistent and forced labor didn't pay. A wall of over 10 feet topped with barbed wire enclosed about 400,000 Jews in the ghetto that was approximately 1.3 square miles.

### SURVIVING THE GHETTOS: PERSONAL HISTORIES

*"In the very beginning, my mother and several other women organized a clandestine school for children who were below the age of work, and it was a wonderful thing because we had something to look forward to... Several of the ladies, including my mother, would barter on the outside and they came home with crayons, with writing paper, with some books, and I mean they would tell stories, we would sing and we would color, and it was something to look forward to."*

**Charlene Schiff, Born 1929, Horochow, Poland**



The wall that enclosed the Warsaw ghetto.

**"HUMOR IS THE KEY TO SURVIVAL. IN DARKNESS IT BRINGS PEACE-OF-MIND."  
-RAISEL IN "WE WERE HERE"**

The lack of space meant that approximately seven people lived in one apartment and food rations only provided 200 calories per person, per day.

### SURVIVING THE GHETTOS: PERSONAL HISTORIES

*"Who knows if some day a memorial will not be put up in memory of the smuggler, for having risked his life – because, in retrospect, we know that he thus saved a large part of Warsaw's Jews from death by starvation."*

**Perec Opoczynski**

HERE'S A LINK TO MORE  
PERSONAL HISTORIES

HOW BIG WAS THE GHETTO?  
CLICK HERE FOR A MAP



A man emerges from underground hiding place.





Before



After

In 1943, after years of persecution, youth resistance movements formed in the underground of the ghetto. The Jewish Fighting Organization, or ZOB, was led by 23 year old Mordechai Anielewicz. The ZOB and other organizations yearned to liberate Warsaw. Germans had been visiting the ghetto and deporting people to forced labor camps for months when the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising occurred. On April 19th, the Germans arrived to deport the remaining inhabitants and were met by the youth resistance movements who fought back with whatever they could. The Germans however, had captured many Jews and ended up liquidating the Warsaw ghetto by burning its buildings to the ground.



Resistance fighters digging an anti-tank trench and barricade during the Warsaw Uprising.

**SURVIVING THE GHETTOS: PERSONAL HISTORIES**

*"In 1942 a partisan group that included my friend Ruben helped me escape from Iwie's ghetto. I began working in a partisan hospital in the woods—a camouflaged cavern in the earth. We "appropriated" medical supplies from captured German stores."*

**Chaja Kozlowski, Born 1922, Iwie, Poland**



Jewish children in the ghetto.



A hidden child in Warsaw.

## Hot ir kinder? Hidden Children of the Holocaust

Translation: Have you any children? Hidden Children of the Holocaust

Parents hid their children in basements, forests, and Christian institutions in an effort to save their children from the horrors of the Holocaust. Numerous parents also gave their children to other families to take care of until the war was over. Lola Kaufman was one of the many hidden children who survived Nazi rule while growing up with a different family. She describes the day she left her family as follows: “[My grandmother] hugged me and she said, ‘Don’t ever forget you were

very important to your mother.’ My grandmother made arrangements with the Ukrainian woman who delivered our milk. For money the woman agreed to keep me. She held out her hand, and I gave her the tin cup in which my grandmother had hidden the money. Then we set out on our journey through the warm spring evening.” Some families were reunited years later; some of the reunions were joyous while others had to face the truth that they had grown up in two different worlds.

## THE YOUNG ACTRESS IN THE PICTURE

*Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, interviewed 10-year-old actress Rachel Resheff about her role as Jenny and her advice to young people her age who want to be performers.*



**TS:** How long have you been acting? Where do you go to school? Do you take acting/singing/dancing classes? Tell us about yourself.

**RR:** I am ten years old, and I am in fifth grade. I have been acting since I was six and a half. I began performing in a community theater called Random Farms, because my sister was doing shows there, and I thought, “I can do that.” In one of the shows, I played Oliver in *Oliver*, with all older kids. Somebody found me there, and started sending me out on auditions.

I was seven and three quarters when I started acting professionally. One of the first auditions I went on was a feature film, with Edie Falco, and I booked one of the leading roles. That film just received distribution. (I have learned a lot about how far projects can travel, before they make it to theaters, both in film and on Broadway) *The People in the Picture* will be my fourth Broadway show. I was in *Shrek the Musical* when I was eight; I was in *Billy Elliot* when I was nine; and I turned ten a few months after I started *Mary Poppins*.

I go to my local school, and I LOVE school. People think I am weird when I say that, but it is true. I read everything and anything I can. I just finished the Harry Potter series, and I am consumed with thoughts of Harry Potter. I also recently read *The Secret Garden*. I am now reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, to help me learn more about what Bubbie (Donna Murphy’s role) went through. My theater “dad” in *Mary Poppins* introduced me to Shakespeare sonnets, so I read them in between everything else.

I take singing lessons to keep my voice healthy. Lots of kids think that loud is best, but singing correctly means

you can sing when you are an adult, if that’s what you choose to do. I dance a lot. I started when I was young, and now I’ve been doing ballet, tap, jazz, and hip-hop for more than six years. I take classes with adults now, because to stay in school, and do my shows, that is the best way for me to continue dancing. I love tap, because tap is the music in your feet. I work with someone in acting who teaches me to take from my own self and instincts when I connect to a character. He never tells me how to act. I believe in that. I believe in always being yourself in whatever you do.

I am a busy person and a happy person. I am lucky to have an older sister and brother who are always there for me. I have a lot of close friends in the business and not in the business. I have a best friend named Sydney who I’ve known since I was two and a best friend Maddy who was in *Billy Elliot* with me.

I love to play piano and write songs. I love to sing just for fun. I just memorized the rap/song called “96,000” from *In the Heights*, which closed. I play basketball, but I am not very good at it. When I grow up, I want to be an actress, a singer, a dancer, a composer, a director (you make decisions) a choreographer, a producer, a musical director, a news reporter, a journalist, an author, or a forensic scientist.

**TS:** How did you get involved in *The People in the Picture*?

**RR:** I got involved in *The People in the Picture*, when I was

eight, and performing in *Shrek the Musical*. The show was called *Laughing Matters*. The show was going to California, and I went in so many times but I didn't care because I loved Jenny right away. The music hit me inside and stayed in my head; I felt like I was in a room with a big family. It was a while, before we heard any news. *Laughing Matters* was workshopped by Roundabout at Lincoln Center instead of going to California. By then, I was turning nine, and in *Billy Elliot*. I was brought in again, and fifteen minutes after my audition, I was offered the role of Jenny. The first workshop was in the winter of 2010. We did another reading that summer, and then we got the amazing news that Roundabout was putting up the show on Broadway. At that time, I was in *Mary Poppins*, playing Jane Banks, when I was offered the role of Jenny on Broadway.

In theater, the company sings "Happy Trails" when somebody leaves a show. The message is "until we meet again" and you cry and cry, but your tears become joy, because you know that wherever you go, your experiences, and the people who are with you, remain a part of you. That is one of the messages of *The People in the Picture*. I am so happy for Iris (the writer), Lenny (the director), Artie, (composer) and Mike (composer) because they worked for so long to make the dream real. I don't think anybody could have a better experience than playing Donna Murphy's granddaughter, because just watching her work you learn a lifetime of lessons in how to make the character become part of your soul.

**TS: Tell us about your character Jenny. What part does she play in the story?**

**RR:** Jenny is a ten year old, just like me. She is smart, funny, and very optimistic. She wants everything around her to be all right. Jenny is Bubbie's (Donna Murphy's) granddaughter, and Red's daughter. Jenny is fiercely loyal to her grandmother. Bubbie has raised her, while her mom, Red, is busy working. Jenny becomes Bubbie's mirror, Bubbie's protector, and her past, present, and future. Jenny is mad at her mom, but loves her, just like Red is really mad at Bubbie, but still loves her. Jenny thinks that what Bubbie did, when Red was a child, wasn't her fault, that she didn't have a choice, and she was doing it to protect her. Red doesn't realize that she's doing the same thing to Jenny, but in a different setting. Jenny is very attached to Bubbie, because she acts like a mother to her

Jenny is Bubbie's link, to Bubbie's memories of the past. She loves being with the ghosts of Bubbie's history. They are her friends. What Jenny doesn't see is that although Bubbie is having a great time telling these stories, and reliving the past, she is only seeing the past, which isn't good for her. Jenny is torn by the fighting of her mother and grandmother, and she wants the relationship between her and her mother to be as strong as the one she has with Bubbie; and she wants the same for her mother, and Bubbie as well. She is Bubbie's bridge to Red because Jenny is what Red and Bubbie share. Jenny pulls at people's hearts. Jenny connects the pieces of the story.

**TS: Iris Dart, the author of the musical, told me you interviewed your own Grandmother will you tell us what that experience was like?**

**RR:** I might not have thought to interview my grandmother, Safta, if I had not experienced playing Jenny. I am so glad that I did and I believe my grandmother is too. Connecting to her life, gives my own a stronger purpose. Safta lives in Israel, where she and my grandfather, Saba, settled after World War II. Both of my grandparents survived the Holocaust, which makes me a third generation of Holocaust survivors. The concentration camp my grandmother was in is called Auschwitz. After interviewing my grandmother, I realized that one of my jobs in life no matter what else I do is to remember and tell her story.

On visits to Israel, I always knew my grandmother to be brightly smiling, cooking, sewing, always working on something, and when not moving, reading. She taught herself English, so she could be able to talk to my sister, my brother, and me. This past summer, we visited my grandparents, and we were very worried about my Safta because she was going to have heart surgery.

Listening to her story, I realized what a strong person she is. She was raised on a small village in Hungary, and she walked four miles to school each way. The Nazis came to take her when she was eighteen, where she survived, with her mom, working in a bomb factory in Auschwitz. Her brother was helping people escape in the Hungarian underground. When they got to the camp, the Nazi soldiers had them stand in a line, and they said go left or right. If you went right, you were safe. To the left, was the crematorium. Unfortunately, my great grandfather was sent to the left.

After the war, she met my grandfather in a gathering of a Zionist youth movement. They were caught by the British on the way to Israel and were put in a Cyprus detention camp where they spent another year of labor. In Israel, they built a new Kibbutz, and then moved to Nahariya, where she continued with her profession as a dress-maker. I found out from my interview with my Safta that her mother had a soprano voice and sang opera. This answered a big question for my family and me about where my love of performing and music came from.

As I interviewed my grandmother, she sometimes turned off the tape, because she was worried that her English wouldn't sound good, but she didn't want to stop talking. She wanted me to know what her life had been, and to carry it with me as Jenny carries Bubbie in *The People in the Picture*.

The day after we came home from our visit to Israel, my grandfather passed away. He was ninety-one years old. He sat in his wheelchair, listening to my grandmother tell me about her life. He couldn't speak English, so he would say what he wanted to say to my dad, and my dad would translate it to English. He would ask me to sing for him and he would close his eyes and smile. After I was done, he would clap for me. My Safta continues to be strong, and I am thankful that I was able to know her better through recording her history.

**TS: What is the most challenging part of acting in this musical? What do you enjoy the most?**

**RR:** I feel that everything that I have done has brought me to Jenny. Creating this role involves being sunny, funny, angry, and frustrated, and creating a character who is emotional at times, yet always strong. This brings new challenges to me as an actress. I have sung solos, I have danced, and I have acted, in almost every scene, in shows; but Jenny brings the biggest range of feelings in one character that I have played. Working with Donna Murphy as her granddaughter, is also extremely challenging, because Donna is so amazing and it raises the bar for what I do.

What I enjoy most in playing Jenny is working with the people involved in *The People in the Picture*. The show feels like one huge heart. All of the creative team, Roundabout, the actors (I know a lot of them from the workshops) and Donna connect in a story that is everyone that we know in life, and speaks to everybody in some way. *The*

*People in the Picture* is about finding ways to build bridges, and understand the people we love: where they came from, and how laughter, and joy carry us through hard times.

**TS: Do you have any advice for young people who would like to have an acting career?**

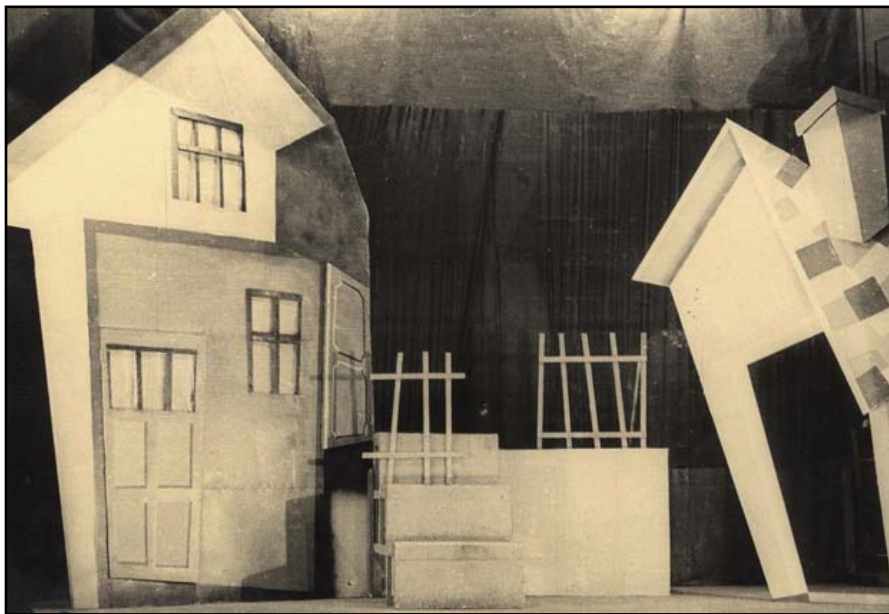
**RR:** My advice to young people who want to pursue acting is to remember three things:

- 1) Stay true to yourself. When I create, or play a part, I always try to keep it real and connected to who I am. I don't focus on performing; I focus on being. I think of myself as a performer but I also think of myself as a person who just loves what they do. When I do a show, I always pick a person in the audience to do my show for. My goal is to make them feel something they didn't feel before they came to the show. I think the best way to do this is to feel your character's journey, and be involved with your role every minute that you are onstage, even when you are not speaking, singing, or dancing.
- 2) Don't take anything personally. Auditions are tough. Ninety-nine percent of the time, you will face rejection. Getting a role is about what the production sees for that role. I was always taught that shows and movies are like puzzles, and every one is a different puzzle. So if you get a role in one show, but you don't in another, it doesn't mean you're not talented, it just means that you don't perfectly fit in the puzzle. If you go in, and have fun, and put yourself out there, then you have done your job. I feel that once you exit the audition room, don't think about it. News of a callback or a role is satisfying, but if I haven't been chosen, I just realize that somebody else was a better fit.
- 3) Work hard at your craft, but make sure it is just a *part* of your life, not your *whole* life. I train very hard to keep up the skills I need for my work. But I also love doing other things, spending time with my friends and family, reading, playing basketball, playing piano, and writing music, and I love school. I wouldn't be able to be as good an actress if I didn't have my other activities. In my acting, I draw from what I have experienced in my life and what I haven't experienced yet I draw from the books I read. Through *The People in the Picture*, I have also learned that I can draw so much from interviewing, and learning about people close to me, like my own grandmother.

## THE ARTS IN THE PICTURE

### Doz iz a bild fun mein mishpocheh: Arts in the Ghetto

Translation: This is a picture of my family: Arts in the Ghetto



Courtesy of Yad Vashem. A theatrical set from the Lodz ghetto.

Abraham Rubinsztajn was known as the “Jester of the ghetto”. Some also described him as a cynic and a wit. Often seen roaming Leszno Street laughing and shouting at those who passed by, he was a symbol of humor in the ghetto.

Art forms in the ghettos were a cathartic release for the Jews and also a means of resistance against the Nazis who imprisoned them. Even though the arts survived amongst the harsh conditions, the content of what was being presented was regulated by the Nazis. However, hidden among Nazi content regulations was an underground arts movement. In the Warsaw ghetto, music was in high demand. Symphonies, choirs and concerts were performed in the surrounding cafes and clubs. Many secret musical and theatrical establishments lined Leszno Street deeming it “the Broadway of the Warsaw ghetto.” Symphonies presented Mozart and Schubert while original songs were usually comedic or inspirational for the many ghetto inhabitants that listened to them.

Visual artists did not have the luxury of supplies. Most of the drawings were done with pencil and stolen ink. Visual art depicted what the artists saw in everyday life: people lying in the streets, funeral marches, and other struggles. Self-portraits and portraits of family members were also very common. The portraits were a way to preserve identity and document existence.

Poets and writers in the ghettos also documented everyday life in a variety of ways. Poetry could encourage and inspire. Several resistance leaders used poetry to rouse their followers to fight. Others wrote in diaries to dictate day to day occurrences and conditions.

Yiddish theater as portrayed in *The People in the Picture* was another crucial art form that spiritually lifted and entertained the people in the ghetto. Yiddish theater was presented in less formal ways. In the Warsaw ghetto, readings and concerts were performed in any available space that could accommodate performers and their audiences.

### ONEG SHABBAT ARCHIVES

Oneg Shabbat means “Joy of Sabbath”. A group of people in the Warsaw ghetto led by Emanuel Ringelblum, met on each Sabbath day during the Holocaust to discuss their experiences and to document them in essays, poems, and diaries. They created an underground archive by hiding the things they had written in milk cans and metal boxes. Parts of the archives were recovered in 1946 and 1950 while other parts were lost forever.



A collage done by a child imprisoned in the Theresienstadt ghetto.

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## THE IDENTITY IN THE PICTURE

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# Maintaining Jewish Identity

In the mid-1800's there were less than 50,000 Jews living in the United States, 16,000 in New York City. By 1900, this had grown to one million Jews living throughout the US, half of whom lived in New York City. One and a quarter million more Jewish immigrants would arrive by 1924. The resulting concentration of Jews in US eastern cities began to shape American Jewish politics, traditions, communities and character. With the meeting of the Jewish and secular traditions, an important task for these immigrants and their children was to maintain their Jewish identity. Jewish people in America during the late 1940's after WWII faced the challenge of dealing with assimilation — adopting and incorporating the dominant culture into their own — while also maintaining Jewish customs and beliefs. Many immigrants experienced a loss of spirituality after the brutality of the Holocaust, struggled to balance Hebrew teachings with those of their secular schools, and navigated family unrest during discussions of interfaith marriage. At times, children of immigrants felt embarrassed when their parents could not speak English or held too tightly to traditions not understood by their neighbors and peers. All these challenges coincided with those of starting a new life in America.

Despite their struggles, American Jews have played a tremendous role in shaping American life



Abraham Joshua Heschel walks with Martin Luther King, Jr. on a civil rights march.

and have influenced art, business, education, and science. Jewish people have had particular influence on the entertainment industry. The major movie studios such as Paramount, Fox, MGM, and Warner Brothers were all founded by Jews.

On a global level, many Jewish Americans became involved in the Zionist movement to support the founding of the State of Israel. The Jewish value of “*tikkun olam*” (repair of the world) manifests in many charitable organizations. Most notably, American Jews had a profound involvement in both the women's movement and the civil rights movement and this value, along with a strong emphasis on education and the arts, remains an important component of the American Jewish identity.

# THE HUMOR IN THE PICTURE

## The Art of Jewish Humor

Ironic, self-deprecating, rueful, satirical, wise, wistful and witty, Jewish humor is, in a nutshell: “laughter through tears”. Cultures evolve styles of humor as a result of life conditions and cultural traditions. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews began to laugh at themselves, and their artistry for doing so exploded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a people, their long history of suffering would instill a sense of realism and perspective, while humor would become a survival mechanism and serve as a safe way to criticize and to conceal anger. Through laughter, the harshness of life would seem to dissipate.

Central to Jewish humor is wisdom –the “jesting philosophers” of Jewish humor guide a person to not only laugh uproariously at a joke, but in the end, probably not even realize he or she is the joke! This is humor in which one will most certainly laugh, probably recognize the universality of the joke’s meaning, and only possibly, understand its very personal one as well. Jewish humor is characterized by deep admiration of rhetoric and debate, as well as a strong storytelling component, a flair for the dramatic, a tweaking of reality and an intellectual bent. These “jesting philosophers,” like the Jewish people historically, sought to shed light on human shortcomings, teach and strive toward a better self.

Humor subjects derive from every significant topic in Jewish culture: marginality, anti-Semitism, rabbis, mar-



TOP: The Marx Brothers  
BOTTOM LEFT: Neil Simon, BOTTOM RIGHT: Bette Midler



riage, mothers, doctors/lawyers/accountants, and family, and it has flourished throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century from Groucho Marx to Bette Midler to Jerry Seinfeld. Jewish humor and talent arose from every stage of entertainment history: Yiddish Theatre, vaudeville and burlesque, Broadway, radio, TV, film, and comedy clubs. During the 1970’s, 80% of all successful comic entertainers were Jewish. On TV at that time, Jewish humor was reflected in the work of Mel Brooks, Neil Simon, Carl Reiner, and Larry Gelbart, and on the big screen most famously by Woody Allen.

Who knew a joke could be so much more than funny?

**Two women, good friends, leave their teenagers at home for a few days and check into a fancy resort. Just before dinner, one of the women invites the other to join her in the bar for a martini.**

**“I never drink,” the woman answers.**

**“Why not?”**

**“In front of the children, I don’t think it’s right to drink. And when I’m away from the children, who needs to?”**

[Click here to see Groucho Marx](#)

[Click here to see Carl Reiner & Mel Brooks](#)



## PLACES TO VISIT

### WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION ON JEWISH HISTORY AND JEWISH CULTURE?

92nd St. Y - Bronfman Center for Jewish Life  
1395 Lexington Ave.  
New York, NY 10128  
<http://www.92y.org>

Museum at Eldridge Street  
12 Eldridge Street  
New York, NY 10002  
[contact@eldridgestreet.org](mailto:contact@eldridgestreet.org)  
<http://www.eldridgestreet.org/>

The Jewish Children's Museum  
792 Eastern Pkwy.  
Brooklyn, NY 11213  
[info@jcm.museum](mailto:info@jcm.museum)  
<http://www.jcm.museum/>

The JCC in Manhattan  
334 Amsterdam Avenue. at 76th St.,  
New York, NY 10023  
[info@jccmanhattan.org](mailto:info@jccmanhattan.org)  
<http://www.jccmanhattan.org/>

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum  
91 Orchard St.  
New York, NY 10002  
<http://www.tenement.org/>

Manhattan Jewish Experience  
131 W86th St., 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10024  
[Info@jewishexperience.org](mailto:Info@jewishexperience.org)  
<http://www.jewishexperience.org/>

Museum of Jewish Heritage-  
A Living Memorial to the Holocaust  
36 Battery Place  
New York, NY 10280  
[info@mjhny.org](mailto:info@mjhny.org)  
<http://www.mjhny.org/>

The Museum of Tolerance  
226 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017  
[motny@wiesenthal.com](mailto:motny@wiesenthal.com)  
<http://www.themuseumoftolerance.com>

National Museum of Jewish History  
101 S. Independence Mall East, Philadelphia, PA  
[info@ncjwny.org](mailto:info@ncjwny.org)  
<http://www.nmajh.org/>

National Council of Jewish Women  
820 Second Avenue.  
New York, NY 10017  
[info@ncjwny.org](mailto:info@ncjwny.org)  
<http://www.ncjw.org/>

Yeshiva University Museum  
15 West 16th Street.  
New York, NY 10011  
[info@yum.cjh.org](mailto:info@yum.cjh.org)  
<http://www.yumuseum.org/>

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research  
15 West 16th Street.  
New York, NY 10011  
<http://www.yivo.org/>



The National Yiddish Theatre - Folksbiene presents our critically acclaimed production, *The Adventures of Hershele Ostropolier*, a musical comedy filled with comic hi-jinks and songs that kids of all ages will love.

THE NATIONAL YIDDISH THEATRE FOLKSBIENE  
55 Lexington Avenue  
New York, NY 10010  
<http://www.folksbiene.org/>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### HERE IS A LIST OF BOOKS ABOUT JEWISH CULTURE RECOMMENDED FOR STUDENTS:

[The Diary of Anne Frank](#)  
[Number the Stars](#) by Lois Lowry  
[Letters from Rifka](#) by Karen Hesse  
[When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit](#) by Judith Kerr  
[Hidden Child](#) by Isaac Millman  
[The Book Thief](#) by Markus Zusak  
[Love in a World of Sorrow: A Teenage Girl's Holocaust Memoirs](#) by Fanya Gottesfeld Heller  
[Strange and Unexpected Love: A Teenage Girl's Holocaust Memoirs](#) by Fanya Gottesfeld Heller  
[Night](#) by Elie Wiesel  
[Why Zaida](#) by Alvin Abram  
[The Cats in Krasinski Square](#) by Karen Hesse  
[The Cage](#) by Ruth Minsky Sender  
[Maus](#) by Art Spiegelman  
[The Devil's Arithmetic](#) by Jane Yolen  
[Hitler Youth](#) by Susan Campbell Bartoletti  
[The Year of Goodbyes](#) by Debbie Levy  
[Someone Named Eva](#) by Joan Wolf  
[Annexed](#) by Sharon Dogar  
[Twenty and Ten](#) by Claire Huchet Bishop and Janet Joly  
[Snow Treasure](#) by Marie McSwigan

### HERE ARE SOME BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR ADULTS:

[No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War](#) by Anita Lobel  
[Bintel Brief](#) compiled, edited and with an introduction by Isaac Metzker  
[Playing for Time](#) by Fania Fenelon  
[Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language & Culture](#) by Jeffrey Shandler

### HERE ARE SOME WEBSITES TO VISIT:

**Jews in America: Our Story**  
<http://www.jewsinamerica.org>  
As part of the Center for Jewish History, this site offers a look into American Jews.

**My Jewish Learning**  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/index.shtml>  
This site offers a comprehensive look into Jewish history, religion and culture.

## MICHAEL IN THE PICTURE

*Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, interviewed songwriter Mike Stoller to discuss his career and his thoughts on writing for **The People in the Picture**.*



**TS:** It's an amazing body of work you both have created. Can you tell us what it was like to work in the music industry at that time?

**MS:** It was very different. In our case, we were writing for the blues singers that we admired: Charles Brown, Big Mama Thornton, and Jimmy Witherspoon. It was a very small part of the industry because rhythm and blues was considered of lesser importance and quality than the pop songs of the day. It had a lot to do with race. Black ethnic music was not performed on the major disc jockey shows in the middle of the dial on your radio. It was relegated to the extreme ends of the dial, but it was the music we loved.

**TS:** What about training? Are you self taught or did you take many years of piano lessons?

**MS:** I have a very sporadic background in piano. I took a few lessons from my aunt when I was five. She was a very gifted concert pianist, harpsichordist and organist. She slapped my hands when I didn't curve my fingers properly so I quit taking lessons. A few years later, I took some piano lessons from my neighborhood's door-to-door piano teacher, but I was not too attentive to practicing. Around the same time, I went to an interracial summer camp where I heard a black teenager playing boogie-woogie. I fell in love with that music and actually began to play it rather well, for an eight year old. A neighbor heard me playing and introduced me to James P. Johnson, the great pianist and composer who had been Fats Waller's mentor. When I was 10 or 11, I took five or six lessons from Mr. Johnson. I started to study with my aunt again when I was 16 and she wasn't slapping my hands. However, I moved to Los Angeles and my piano lessons ended, but I did study composition privately with a great orchestrator and composer named Arthur Lange. A number of years later, back in New York, I studied composition with the composer, Stefan Wolpe.

**TS:** Tell us about getting involved in writing for the musical theatre. Was it an easy transition?

**MS:** It's hard to say. In musical theatre, you are writing for characters in a story that have to sing about who they are and about their point of view and how they relate to other characters in the story. You have to represent people from different places, different cultures, different attitudes, and different ages. When writing for pop or cabaret singers you are, ideally, emphasizing the personal qualities of the performers themselves. I like working in both fields. I'm not sure I really answered your question.

**TS:** How did you meet Iris, the librettist and lyricist of *The People In The Picture*?

**MS:** I got a phone call.

**TS:** And did you say "no?"

**MS:** I said, "Maybe." Iris seemed really very nice. She asked me if I had written with anyone other than Jerry Leiber. I said, "I have on a few occasions, as Jerry has written with other people than me on a few occasions. Mostly we've worked together." She said, "Bette Midler said I should call you. It's a Jewish subject." I said, "Why did you call me? I wasn't even Bar Mitzvahed." I am Jewish and very proud of it, but I have little knowledge of Yiddish. Iris had been asked to write something by Bette, who wanted to examine her own ethnic

background (other than Hawaiian). That's how it started. I said, "Let's write a song together and see how it goes." It was and still is great fun to work with her. She's a delight. At a certain point early on in the process, she sent me an email saying that we were going to need an arranger to do the demos for the songs that we wrote. She asked, "Have you ever heard of Artie Butler? If so, do you like him?" I said, "I have heard of him. I don't like him; I love him. Jerry Leiber and I started Artie in the music business. I've known him for 50 years. He's not only a great arranger, he's also a very fine composer in his own right. Why don't we invite him in?" It has proven to be a very happy collaboration. Incidentally, Artie wrote the song "Here's to Life," which has been recorded many times, most recently by Barbra Streisand.

**TS: Can you talk to us about the way you and Artie work on the score?**

**MS:** Artie and I have had a wonderful time being on this project together, but we don't really write together. Artie has written some songs and I have written others. I can say that we love and admire each other's music.

**TS: Does Iris hand you the lyric or did you offer a melody first?**

**MS:** With me, in most cases, it was Iris's lyrics first and then my setting them to music. We would tear them apart or twist them around and I might say, "I need you to change the meter in the second verse to fit the music." It's a very gentle tug-of-war until we get something that we feel is absolutely right. With Artie, usually the music came first.

**TS: What about the story attracted you to working on it?**

**MS:** It's a beautiful story and it has to do with relations between mother, daughter and granddaughter. Early on, I sent Iris an article from the newspaper because it was so germane to what she had written. It was a story of a Korean grandmother who sang old Korean songs, and her granddaughter was fascinated by the songs and wanted to learn them. But her daughter wanted nothing to do with these old songs. It's typical. I have a dear friend, an African-American woman, who said, "This isn't Jewish. This is universal."

**TS: Was there Yiddish spoken in your household as it was in Iris's or did you have no connection to that culture?**

**MS:** It was hardly spoken in our house. My parents didn't know more than a couple of words. Most of the Yiddish I know I picked up in the music business. My grandmother

did speak Yiddish, and also Russian and Polish, and English with a Yiddish/Cockney accent. She came from Bialostok and learned her English in the east end of London.

**TS: Tell me a little bit about how the writing process works for you?**

**MS:** It's nothing special. I sit in front of my keyboard or piano. I tend to use a little electric piano at home and put earphones on, even though my wife tells me I shouldn't wear earphones because it's not good for my ears. I sit at a piano and start. I don't know how to describe it other than letting "your fingers do the walking" like they say in the Yellow Page ads. So, I let my fingers do the walking until I feel happy with what I've got. I always keep an eraser handy.

**TS: Can you talk about a song that was challenging to write?**

**MS:** Every song has a different challenge. When you're finished, it all seems very easy but when you're doing it, it can be very challenging. We are still writing and, in fact, were rewriting a couple of songs even yesterday.

**TS: How did the workshop and reading process at Roundabout work for you? Did you find those valuable?**

**MS:** Absolutely. My field is music — not in writing the book, continuity or dialogue — but the workshops helped me understand the core elements of the story and to appreciate them. There were a number of songs written that I thought were very good and worked well in performance but are no longer useable in the show, because the characters who sang them are no longer in the show.

**TS: What would you tell a young person who wants to be a composer?**

**MS:** Just keep doing and listening to what other people are doing. If there is something that others are doing that you like, then start by emulating it until you develop your own voice. The things you hear that you love should be utilized and the things you hear that you don't love should be rejected.

**TS: Is there anything else you want to tell us about *The People In The Picture*?**

**MS:** When Iris first approached me and asked me to collaborate on this project I kind of put one foot in, still dragging the other foot. But I grew to love the story she wrote and the process of writing with her, as well. It has been an incredible experience and I can't wait to see it take shape onstage.

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# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

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## HOW DO WE USE THEATRE TO EXPLORE A NEW LANGUAGE?

*The Yiddish language is a highly musical and expressive language, and plays a very important part in *The People in the Picture*. Create a scene of conflict between two characters (A & B), using one of the following scenarios:*

1. Your best friend runs away
2. Two actors share a dressing room
3. A son or daughter arrives home very late
4. A parent meets with a teacher about a failing student
5. Someone sends an important or intimate text to the wrong person
6. Choose your own scenario to create a scene of conflict

*Now let the scene of conflict play out on paper: using a single sheet, character A starts by writing the line: "What did you say?" Character B responds with a line on the paper. Continue passing the paper between each of you, responding to each other via a line of dialogue. Be sure to use at least one Yiddish word in every line of dialogue. Rehearse and perform your scene for the class.*

*Now using yiddish words and phrases from the yiddish language page (p.8) or from your own experience, go back through your dialogue and replace at least one yiddish word from each line.*

*Rehearse and perform your scene for the class.*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did the sounds of the Yiddish words help carry their meaning and inform the meaning of the scene? How did they inform the relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

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Maybe there have been immigrants in your family or in friends' families. How do you think they might have felt after arriving to a new country without speaking the language fluently? Do they still speak their native tongue or have only certain words survived? \_\_\_\_\_

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# POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

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## HOW DO WE USE THEATRE TO CONNECT TO OUR HERITAGE?

*You've seen how Bubbie's life story helped Jenny and Red understand their heritage and their cultural identity. Elder relatives often hold important stories and insights that can enrich our understanding of who we are. This activity asks you to explore your own unique heritage.*

### PART ONE: THE INTERVIEW

1. Choose a relative (a grandparent, aunt/uncle, etc), family friend, teacher, or neighbor from a previous generation.
2. Ask permission to interview this person and to create a short performance based on your interview. If you have an audio recorder, ask permission to record the interview, or else take written notes.
3. Here are some suggested questions to ask (you may add your own questions and allow the conversation to flow freely):
  - What are your strongest memories of your childhood? Where? When? Why are these important memories?
  - What are the most important events that happened in your life? When? Where? Who was involved? Why are they important?
  - What historical events do you recall most vividly? Why? How did the event have an impact on you?
  - What are your strongest associations with your cultural heritage? Food? Holidays? Places? People? Events?
4. Take notes during the interview. If you record it, you can use the recording to help you with Part Two.

### PART TWO: PUT IT ON STAGE! (CHOOSE EITHER A OR B BELOW)

**A)** *Create a monologue (a speech for one actor) in which you share one of the events you remember from your interview. Think about WHY this was an important event for this person. Can you perform the monologue and recreate the experience of how this person talked to you? What speech patterns, body posture, gestures, expressions did you observe and how can you recreate those for your audience?*

OR

**B)** *Write a scene based on one of the events you learned about in the interview. Imagine how it would look onstage. Use as many of the facts as you have, and then use your imagination to fill in the blanks. A scene can have multiple characters speaking to each other (dialogue) and also stage directions to describe the activity. Think about:*

- WHO** are the people in this scene and **WHAT** are they doing?
- WHERE** and **WHEN** does it take place?
- WHAT** is the event? **WHAT** is the beginning, middle, end of this scene?
- WHY** is this event important? How can you show that in the scene?

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did this activity help you better understand your own heritage? \_\_\_\_\_

How do writers explore their own heritage to inspire new plays, stories, movies? \_\_\_\_\_

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# GLOSSARY

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**ANTI-SEMITISM** – Hatred, hostility, or discrimination directed at people because they are Jewish.

**ASSIMILATION** – The process of adapting one’s behaviors and attitudes to become like those of the surrounding culture.

**GENOCIDE** – The deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group.

**KRISTALLNACHT** – German for “Night of Broken Glass.” On the night of November 9-10, 1938, anti-Jewish riots (organized by the Nazi leadership) raged across Germany and Austria. Thousands of windows were smashed, and synagogues and other Jewish-owned buildings were set on fire. At least 91 Jews were killed, and some 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and deported to concentration camps. This event, which came to be known as Kristallnacht, was the first large-scale attack on Jews by the Nazis.

**MATRYOSHKA** – Russian nesting doll which is a set of dolls of decreasing sizes placed one inside the other

**NAZI** – a member of the National Socialist German Workers’ party of Germany, which in 1933, under Adolf Hitler, seized political control of Germany. The party was officially abolished in 1945 at the conclusion of World War II.

**POGROM** – From a Russian word meaning “havoc.” A mob attack in which Jewish men, women, and children were brutalized and killed and their homes sacked and looted. Pogroms in Eastern Europe were often carried out with the support of local authorities.

**SHEHEKHIYANU BLESSING** – “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.”

**SS OFFICER** – Officers originally set up as Hitler’s personal bodyguard

**ZLOTYS** – Polish currency







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# WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE...

Below are some helpful tips for making your theatre-going experience more enjoyable.

## TICKET POLICY

As a student participant in producing partners, page to stage or theatre access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

## PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "who's who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

## AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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