

Yiddishkayt Initiative
(Avi Hoffman, Producing Artistic Director)
and

Theatre for the New City
(Crystal Field, Artistic Director)

present

YI Love New York

YiddishFest

**Nine-Day Celebration of
Yiddish Life, Theatre, Art, and Culture
For Chanukah 2019**

**Inaugural Festival Honors
Lives and Legacies of
Joseph Papp and Isaiah Sheffer**

December 21-29

**Presented In Association With
Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre, Manhattan Jewish Historical Initiative,
Center for Jewish History, Symphony Space
American Society for Jewish Music, and Museum of Yiddish Theatre
The Forward Association**

(NEW YORK, NY – November 18, 2019) – Over nine days in December—coinciding with Chanukah 2019—Jewish cultural organizations from across New York will come together for ***YI Love New York YiddishFest***. Produced by the **Yiddishkayt Initiative (YI)** (Avi Hoffman, Producing Artistic Director) and **Theatre for the New City** (Crystal Field, Artistic Director), the inaugural festival features a curated lineup of theatrical presentations, concerts, film screenings, lectures, panel discussions, and famous personalities in the world of Jewish culture from December 21-29. Tickets for all events are available online at www.yiddishfest.org.

This holiday season, New York audiences will be immersed in the joy of Yiddish culture at ***YI Love New York YiddishFest***. For millennia, Jewish culture has been shaped by the issues

surrounding Chanukah: religious freedom, identity, conquering oppression, and a love of artistic expression. During this festival of miracles and light, **YiddishFest** will capture the various facets of Jewish and Yiddish culture in a multimedia celebration that has something for everyone.

The festival will pay homage to the memory of **Joseph Papp** (born Yosl Papirovsky), famed theatrical producer and director who founded the New York Shakespeare Festival and the Public Theater. On December 22 at 3pm, *Celebrating Yosl Papirovsky – The Miracle of Joseph Papp* will honor Papp's life and career, as well as the founders of the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre—Gail Merrifield Papp, Rena Berkowitz Borow, and Miriam Hoffman—with excerpts of Yiddish Broadway songs, including *Songs of Paradise* with members of the original cast and *Joe Papp at the Ballroom*.

Festivities officially kick off on Saturday, December 21 with *The Heart of Yiddish: Remembering Isaiah Sheffer*, a multimedia tribute to Symphony Space founder and artistic director Isaiah Sheffer. Other highlights of the nine-day festival include *Reflections of a Lost Poet*, the solo show about the life of prolific Yiddish poet Itzik Manger written by Miriam Hoffman and performed by Avi Hoffman; *Exploring God of Vengeance*, a reading and discussion of the Yiddish play that inspired Paula Vogel's Tony-winning play *Indecent*; a recreation of the original *Finkel's Follies* that celebrates the storied career of a beloved Emmy-winning actor in *The Great Fyvush Finkel*; and a concert presentation of *The Great Ostrovsky*, the lost Cy Coleman-Avery Corman musical about an over-the-top star of the Yiddish theatre in the 1920s. A full lineup of presentations for the nine-day festival will be announced soon.

"I was inspired by Howard Teich of the Manhattan Jewish Historical Initiative to join my mother in bringing Yiddish theatre back to the Lower East Side, where it thrived during the early twentieth century. This festival is the thrill of a lifetime," said Hoffman, a child of Holocaust survivors. "We hope to create a greater awareness of the importance of Yiddish language and the Jewish arts in the development of mainstream American culture."

Tickets for **YI Love New York YiddishFest** are \$18 per event, with some lectures and screenings free to the public. Space is very limited and reservations are required for all events. Sponsorship opportunities begin at \$1,000 and include tickets to multiple tributes and events. For Tickets and information, call (888) YI-Love-J (888-945-6835) or visit www.yiddishfest.org. English subtitles and translations will be provided at all events.

ABOUT THE YIDDISHKAYT INITIATIVE

YI Love New York Yiddishfest is a presentation of the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre, a division of Yiddishkayt Initiative (YI), a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that celebrates and promotes Jewish history, life, and culture and their positive and far-reaching impact on the world. From performing arts, publishing, and education to language, philosophy, and literature, YI offers a global clearinghouse of Jewish culture and entertainment. We work with a wide range of organizations, including Federations, JCCs, synagogues, Hadassah chapters, Hillel chapters, men's groups, women's guilds, special interest clubs, youth groups, summer camp programs, and educational institutions.

ABOUT THE CO-FOUNDERS

Avi Hoffman is best known as an actor and Jewish Culture Activist. He was nominated in 2015 for a Drama Desk Award for his Yiddish language portrayal of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*. Recently inducted into the Bronx Jewish Hall of Fame, Avi has been awarded Congressional recognition for his work on behalf of Jewish culture. He was most recently seen in New York with his award-winning solo shows *Too Jewish?* (Performer of the Year, NY Press Magazine; Ovation Award, Best Actor in a Musical; Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations); *Too Jewish, Too!*; and *Still Jewish After All these Years: A Meshugene Life in the Theatre*. On TV, he was featured opposite Jeffrey Dean Moran in the Starz series “Magic City” and has been seen on Netflix’s “Bloodline,” A&E’s “Burn Notice,” “The Glades,” and “Law & Order.” Additional film and TV credits include the title role in *The Imported Bridegroom* and the PBS documentary *They Came for Good: A History of the Jews in the United States*. He currently stars in the award-winning Yiddish language short film *Shehita*. Avi was invited to The Vatican to meet Pope Francis II for his important interfaith work on Holocaust and genocide awareness and is dedicated to building bridges among people through the arts.

Miriam Hoffman is a renowned scholar with a 50-year career that includes 25 years teaching Yiddish language and Jewish culture at Columbia University. Her textbook, *Key to Yiddish*, is standard curriculum for Yiddish educators around the world. She is an award-winning playwright whose plays have been produced in Israel, Europe, and throughout North America. Her books include the recently-published *A Breed Apart* and the soon-to-be-released *Legends of the AlefBet (The Origins of the Alphabet)*. For 35 years, her weekly newspaper columns have been published in *The Yiddish Forward*. She is a co-founder of both Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre and the Yiddishkayt Initiative.

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