



PRESS RELEASE

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THEATER ICON JOE PAPP, CREATOR OF NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL AND THE PUBLIC THEATER, TO BE REMEMBERED AND HONORED AT 100TH BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION
YI Love Jewish to Host “Celebrating ‘Yosl’ – Joe Papp at 100” featuring a full day of live and virtual star-studded events and celebrity testimonials

CORAL SPRINGS, FL/NEW YORK, NY – He revolutionized theater as we know it today and now Joe Papp, born ‘Yosl Papirofsky’, will be the subject of a major memorial commemoration on what would have been his centennial birthday on June 22, 2021. This tribute will be presented by YI Love Jewish (a division of Yiddishkayt Initiative).

“Celebrating Yosl – Joe Papp at 100” will be hosted by YI Founder and CEO, world renowned actor and Jewish cultural activist Avi Hoffman, who was mentored by Joe Papp in the 1980’s. This full day of events will feature live, virtual and pre-recorded performances starting at 11am and continuing into the evening. In the spirit of Papp’s visionary FREE Shakespeare in the Park, MOST of the day’s events will be free of charge with the exception of an exclusive, celebrity-filled LIVE and VIRTUAL Gala and Reception, starting at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$36 for the Virtual Gala at 7 p.m.; \$100 for the Virtual Gala at 7 p.m. AND an Exclusive Celebrity Virtual VIP Reception at 9 p.m. (A very limited number of in-person tickets may be made available)

“Joe Papp did more to revolutionize the world of theater than any impresario in the world,” said Hoffman, himself an internationally recognized entertainer and founder of YI, a global provider of Jewish cultural programming. Hoffman and his mother, retired author, journalist and Columbia University Professor Miriam Hoffman, became friends and colleagues of Papp in NYC in the 1980s, when they launched the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre.

After Papp’s death, they continued a close association with Joe’s widow, Gail Merrifield-Papp, and his daughter Susan Papp-Lippman, who will both be serving as Honorary Chairs of the Centennial commemoration.

Papp’s vision led him in 1957 to establish free Shakespeare in Central Park. Ten years later, he created The Public Theater in the building that was formerly the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), a haven for newly arrived refugees. The building was saved from demolition through Mr. Papp’s efforts after a long negotiation with the City of New York. It became the permanent home of the New York Shakespeare Festival/Joseph Papp Public Theatre (The Public) and is currently designated as a New York City Historical Landmark.

At the Public, an innovative model was used for creating a new dynamic way of producing plays in a workshop-style manner that had never been tried before. The concept involved bringing writers, directors, designers and actors together in one place to brainstorm and create the foundations for new and groundbreaking productions.

The most famous Broadway shows to evolve from these workshops include the original productions of “Hair,” “A Chorus Line,” and “Runaways,” among the over 700 shows that Joe Papp produced and developed, as well as modern blockbusters like “Hamilton.” He championed the cause of multiethnic casting and socially relevant topics. Papp was a social activist who also helped to develop other off-Broadway experimental theaters, worked to preserve the historic Broadway Theatre District and was considered one of the most philanthropic providers of inner city access to the arts, believing that “if public libraries were free, public theatre should be free as well. “

The Hoffmans became affiliated with Papp when Miriam Hoffman, a journalist at the time for The Jewish Daily Forward, did an interview with the theatre icon in 1985. Both she and Joe bonded quickly over their mutual love for Jewish culture and the Yiddish language, an identity that Papp kept private for much of his career.

During the 1980s, the Hoffmans were working on several Jewish and Yiddish productions in NYC. At one point, a conversation between Hoffman, his mother and Papp occurred, where they said “Joe, we want to do Yiddish theater and we want to create it with you.” Papp’s response

was, "Let's create a Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre and transform the Yiddish theatre world." Avi and his mother were able to do a small production of a groundbreaking Yiddish/English musical at the Riverdale Y in The Bronx called Songs of Paradise (Lieder fun Gan Eyd'n). Papp came to opening night, loved the show, and opened it a month later at his theater in Manhattan. That production became one of the longest running shows in the history of the Public Theater.

Fast forward to 2016 when Joe's daughter Susan shared with Avi an audio recording of her father's 1978 concert series at a venue in SoHo entitled: "Joe Papp at the Ballroom."

"I was blown away because I never knew that Joe had a flare for singing. Included in the one-man show were personal stories of his life and career interspersed with his favorite tunes of the day. It was the only concert series that Joe had ever performed," said Avi Hoffman.

One of the signature events will feature Avi's re-creation of the Joe Papp at the Ballroom performance, based on the transcript including added dialogue, quotes, and additional material from the Papp Archives. He will also be sharing personal recollections of his relationship with Papp.

FULL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

11:00am EST- The Miracle of Joe Papp - A Lecture

1:00 pm EST- Avi Hoffman in "Joe Papp at the Ballroom"

3:00 pm EST- A conversation with Tracie Holder and Karen Thorsen- Co-Producers/Directors of the documentary film 'Joe Papp in 5 Acts'

5:00 pm EST- CELEBRATING 'YOSL': The Legacy of Joe Papp;
A Musical Celebration

7:00 pm EST- CELEBRATING 'YOSL': JOE PAPP @ 100 - THE GALA
Live Broadcast featuring celebrity performances and testimonials in honor of 'Yosl'

9:00 pm EST - VIP Virtual Reception

To sponsor these events or make a tribute in our virtual tribute book, please visit:
www.yilovejewish.org/papp100.

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ABOUT YI LOVE JEWISH: YI Love Jewish is a division of Yiddishkayt Initiative (YI), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that builds Jewish engagement and forges multi-cultural connections through an immersive and varied range of programming for audiences around the globe. From performing arts, publishing and education to language, philosophy and literature, YI offers a global clearinghouse of Jewish culture and entertainment staffed by experts in subject matter and production. The organization works with a wide range of organizations, including the University of Miami's Sue and Leonard Miller Center and the George Feldenkreis Program in Contemporary Judaic Studies and Federations, JCCs, synagogues, Hadassah chapters, Hillel chapters, men's groups, women's guilds, special interest clubs, youth groups, summer camp programs and educational institutions.