

The
Alumni
Association
newsletter
of the



SPRING/SUMMER 2018

Dear Alumni,



A lot has happened since our last edition of *Nu?*. Perhaps most exciting are the updates that we've received from Yiddish Book Center alumni that span the Center's educational programs. As you'll read, your fellow alumni are doing some interesting, surprising, and varied work, both personally and professionally—and in both English and Yiddish. We even have news of alumni who were married right here at the Yiddish Book Center.

We're thrilled to share news of the launch of our mentoring program. After reviewing your replies from our recent survey, we've put together guidelines for those interested in taking part in the pilot launch, either as mentor or mentee—or in some cases both. You'll find our mentorship pilot program guidelines on page 5, so please look them over. If you're interested in participating, you can email us at alumni@yiddishbookcenter.org and we'll match you with the appropriate person.

We also have updates from the Center, news from the field, an alumni Q&A with Center fellow Zeke Levine, and so much more that reflects the range and scope of what's happening at the Center and the great work being done by our alumni.

Enjoy this issue of *Nu?*, stay in touch, drop by and say hello when you're in the neighborhood, and feel free to send us your latest news, questions, and suggestions. And don't forget that you can reach us and your fellow alumni via our alumni Facebook page—if you're not part of the group, send us a request and we'll invite you to join.

Also, if you'll be in the western Massachusetts area, consider joining us for one of our weekend or public programs, or to attend Yidstock: The Festival of New Yiddish Music, which will take place this year July 12–15.

Vareme grusn!

Debra Caplan (Yiddish Book Center intern '04)
President of the Yiddish Book Center Alumni Association

Inside

- 1 A Letter from Debra Caplan
- 2 The Shmooze
- 2 Four Questions for: Zeke Levine
- 3 Alumni Updates
- 4 New on Our Website
- 4 A New Work in Translation
- 5 Mentorship Pilot Program
- 6 New and Notable Reads
- 6 Other Recommendations
- 7 Wedded at the Center
- 7 Become an Ufhalter (Sustainer)
- 7 Click to Open a Culture
- 8 Mark Your Calendar

Four Questions for: Zeke Levine

Zeke Levine is an alumnus of the Yiddish Book Center's 2016 Steiner Summer Yiddish Program and is a 2017-18 Yiddish Book Center Fellow. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a bachelor of music in jazz bass performance and a certificate in conflict resolution and peace studies. He also studied Yiddish language and Jewish-American history while gaining familiarity and experience with klezmer music through rehearsal and performance with an Austin community klezmer band. While living in Austin, he worked as a freelance musician in the city's jazz, rock, folk, and R&B scenes.

What are you working on? My main projects involve music and audio collections at the Center. I am currently in the process of organizing and making accessible a great deal of Yiddish sheet music that comes to us from the personal collections of individuals. I am also working to improve accessibility of the Frances Brandt Online Yiddish Audio Library, which has put me into contact with some great audio recordings. In addition, I produce the Yiddish Book Center's weekly podcast, *The Shmooze*.

Any great finds? I am very interested in Yiddish of the 1950s and 1960s, so I was very excited to find a great songbook compiled in 1965 by the writer and musician Sam Liptzin, called *Zingen mir far sholem* (*We Sing for Peace*). This book contains both Yiddish folk and resistance songs, as well as American folk songs. Similarly, I came across an incredibly enlightening poetry reading event by Allen Ginsberg in our Frances Brandt Collection, which touches on Jewish themes and reflects the social, political, and artistic consciousness of the 1960s.

What drew you to Yiddish? Yiddish offers a connection to my own family history, and to an incredibly rich world of culture that continues to surprise and inspire me. Learning Yiddish has allowed me to communicate not only with figures of the past but also with today's vibrant community of Yiddish speakers.

What are you listening to? Two recent albums have been at the top of my playlist. The first is Lipa Schmeltzer's *24/6*, which has 39 tracks of very high-energy music, and which contains a lot of Yiddish. The second is Daniel Kahn's *The Butcher's Share*, which came out only a few months ago. The song "Avrom Ovinu Sharft Dos Meser," from this album, is a beautiful setting of an Itsik Manger text.

[Note: You can also listen to Zeke take a trip to the Center's vault to explore our collection of Yiddish sheet music on a recent episode of *The Shmooze*: yiddishbookcenter.org/the-shmooze/yiddish-sheet-music.]



Photo: Ben Barnhart

Have You Heard **The Shmooze**?

If you haven't subscribed to *The Shmooze*, the Yiddish Book Center's podcast featuring conversations with Jewish culture makers, as well as news and stories related to Yiddish literature, language, and culture, what are you waiting for? Recent alumni who have been on *The Shmooze* include Ruby Elliott Zuckerman, who discusses her new Yiddish radio show in Minnesota, and Michael Yashinsky and Leah Reis-Dennis, who performed their original Yiddish songs at the 2017 *Der Yidisher Idol* in Mexico City. Additional episodes have featured conversations with New Yiddish Rep director David Mandelbaum and author Beth Kaplan, great-granddaughter of Yiddish playwright Jacob Gordin.

You can catch up on past episodes and subscribe at yiddishbookcenter.org/the-shmooze.



Alumni Updates

Sam Ashworth (Tent: Creative Writing '16) writes: "I'm finishing my MFA in fiction at George Mason University. Since Tent, my fiction and essays have appeared in *Barrelhouse*, *Catapult*, and *Eater*. I also began writing a monthly column for the arts and literary website *The Rumpus* called "Dispatches from the Swamp," which focuses on living and working in Washington, DC. I spent the summer of 2017 researching an ongoing novel about the life and death of a chef, told through his autopsy, the research for which was every bit as graphic/delicious as it sounds."

Dionna Dash (GJB Summer Program '17) writes: "I just started my senior year of high school and I'm really enjoying my classes, especially French, Latin, and government. I've begun filling out my college applications, too. After I finished the

Great Jewish Books program this past summer, I went camping with some of my friends in Ithaca, NY. We hiked trails through waterfalls and gorges, took boat rides across Cayuga Lake, and watched the stars from Cornell University's campus. It was beautiful and relaxing."

Rachel Field (Translation Fellowship '17) finished her translation of *Ikh bin geven a partizan: di grine legende* (*I Was a Partisan: The Green Legend*), Shmerke Kaczerginski's account of life and resistance in the Vilna Ghetto, which was excerpted in *Jewish Currents* in December 2017.

Sofia Gardenswartz (GJB Summer Program '16) is the president of Serving Spoons, a nonprofit organization that prepares and delivers healthy and

home-cooked meals to families in need and helps combat the social isolation many recipients face resulting from physical and/or financial struggles.

Grace Idle (Steiner '14) is currently working as a project coordinator for the Holocaust Educational Trust, where she has organized the Lessons from Auschwitz Project, a program aimed at 16–18-year-old students across the United Kingdom. She is also editing her MA dissertation, which is to be published in *Transactions*, the journal of the Jewish Historical Society of England. In more personal news, she is also training to be a yoga teacher.

Emily Jaeger (Tent: Creative Writing '15) is a 2017–18 Olive B. O'Connor Fellow at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. She is studying creative writing and poetry.

Daniel Stein Kokin (Internship '94) is on an extended visit at UCLA (2016–18), where he is teaching Jewish and Israel studies. He is normally based at the University of Greifswald, in Berlin, where he is a professor of Jewish literature and culture.

Linda Elovitz Marshall (Tent: Children's Literature '17) writes: "What happens when a new baby displaces the family dog? For the dog's point of view, check out my latest picture book, *Mommy, Baby and ME*, debuting October 1 from Peter Pauper Press. And in honor of my father's 90th birthday, I've written (and self-published through Amazon) a tribute to him and his unfailing ability to make lemonade out of lemons: *Good Stuff Cheap!* is the story of my father, Jerry Ellis (aka, Gerry Elovitz), and the wonderful world of Building #19 that he created.

Illustrations are by Building #19's cartoonist, Mat Brown."

Pamela Mayer (Tent: Children's Literature '17) is working on a children's picture book and a children's chapter book.

Isaac Moore (Fellowship '14–'15) is working as an administrator at Harvard Law School. He is also preparing to pursue a master's degree in education with a focus on advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education.

Johnathan Mopurgo (Tent: Museums '14 and Tent: Fashion '14) writes: "I applied what I learned in Tent Fashion to my line of rainbow keffiyeh scarves, Tahrir Scarf (www.tahrirscarf.com). Gilbert Baker, the late inventor of the gay pride flag, helped me start this business. The first set of keffiyehs were designed this winter while I was volunteering on an organic farm and a kibbutz in Israel. I am in 35 stores and am working on a new, more up-market season of the line. On the Museums front, my



Go to page 4 ►

New on Our Website

Yiddish Book Center Education Specialist Michael Yashinsky (Fellowship '15 and Senior Fellowship '16; Tent: Creative Writing '13, Theatre '13, Fashion '14; Steiner Summer Yiddish Program '14) recently translated an excerpt of poet Rokhl Korn's November 1977 speech at Montreal's Jewish Public Library. The following is a small sample of what you can find on our website, which includes the audio of Korn's speech in Yiddish.

So, as you can see, I had no books to read. I myself do not know what pushed me towards literature . . .

Except that in wintertime, I would sit on the daybed in the kitchen and look through the window on the snow-covered expanse, and especially at the orchard, with its small, young sour cherry trees, their crowns just barely peeking out over the fallen snow which had formed a fortress around our house. And I would read a dark calligraphy etched into the white snow, the tracks of wild animals that had emerged from the forest to pay us visits in the night: foxes, hares, does, and sometimes even a wild boar.

This was the writing that I read.

איז אזוי אז איך האב נישט געהאט קיין שום בוך צום לייענען. איך הייס אליין נישט וואס האט מיך געשטויסן צו דעם, צו דער ליטעראטור . . .

מידן אין די ווינטערטייג פלעג איך זיצן אויפן באנקעטל אין קיך, קוקן דורכן פענעסטער, אויף דעם פארשטייטן שטח און דער סאך איבערהויפט, די קליינע, די יונגע חישל-ביימער, קום ארויסגענוצן די ווערבעס פון דעם אָגענשטין שניי האָס איך געזען ווי אַ פעסטונג אַרום דעם הייז. און איך פלעג לייענען אַ טונקלען כתב אויף אַם דעם חושן שניי, דאָס זענען געווען די שפורן פון ווילדע חיות וואָס זענען פון וואַלד געקומען אום צו אָפּשאַטן אין די געכט ווייטן. דאָס זענען געווען פּוקסן, האָזן, סאַרנעס, און טייל נאַל איר, אַ ווילד־חזיר.

פלעג איך אָס לייענען אָט די דאָזיקע שריפטן.

A New Work in Translation by 2017 Translation Fellow Rachel Field

You can read an excerpt of Rachel Field's translation of Shmerke Kaczerginski's *Ikh bin geven a partizan: di grine legende* (*I Was a Partisan: The Green Legend*) on the *Jewish Currents* website at <http://jewishcurrents.org/escaping-from-the-vilna-ghetto-an-authentic-memoir/>. Rachel began translating the work as a 2017 translation fellow under the mentorship of Alex Zucker, an award-winning translator of Czech literature.

You can read this and other translated works on the Center's website at yiddishbookcenter.org/language-literature-culture/yiddish-translation.

Alumni Updates, continued from page 3:

vintage queer art book and ephemera shop, Teleidoscope, was at the New York Art Book Fair in September 2017.

Kinga Esther Neder

(Steiner Summer Yiddish Program '12) writes: "I began a program in language didactics at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle in Paris where I currently focus on multilingualism and using digital technology in the classroom. I hope to specialize in e-learning development as the next step. When I am not studying, I am

working teaching French or English online or in person."

Meghan Paradis

(Steiner Summer Yiddish Program '15) is in her first year of a PhD program at Indiana University-Bloomington. Her major field is modern European history with an outside minor in Jewish studies.

Janine Julia Jankovitz Pastor

(Tent: Creative Writing '13) is now in her fifth year of rabbinical school at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical

College in Philadelphia, PA. After studying in Haifa, Israel this past summer, she is currently working on a project focused on the experiences of children of Holocaust survivors, which includes conducting interviews, writing about her own personal history as a third-generation survivor, and poetry.

Nina Pick

(Internship '05) is working as an editor at Princeton Architectural Press and recently published her second chapbook, *Leaving the Lecture on Dance*. She writes:

"As field fellow with the Wexler Oral History Project, I am glad to have circled back around to Yiddish and the Yiddish Book Center and am grateful to have met such amazing narrators!"

Avery Robinson

(Tent: Food NYC '14) is building an archive of approximately 50,000 books at Yung Yiddish in the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station. She is also serving as an editor and project manager with the Posen Library for Jewish Culture and Civilization.

Sivan Rotholz

(Tent: Creative Writing '17) is attending a master's degree program in Jewish Education program at Hebrew Union College in New York City. Next year, in Jerusalem!

Dorothee Rozenberg

(Internship '86) is currently singing with her husband in the Boston Workmen's Circle Yiddish chorus, A Besere Velt.

Lawrence Schimel

(Tent: Children's Literature '17) has authored

Mentorship Pilot Program

Our mentorship program guidelines offer a template for mentors and mentees to connect and build a relationship. While you don't have to follow these steps exactly, we hope that they provide you with a solid framework to get started. We hope you're as excited as we are about this new program. To participate in the program, email alumni@yiddishbookcenter.org.

For Mentors

Contact your mentee via email to introduce yourself. Find out who your mentee is and what they're looking for in a mentor.

Set up a time for initial conversation. This conversation could take place online, via Skype, by phone, or in person. Plan for a 30–45 minute conversation. Some suggested questions to start with: "What Yiddish Book Center program/s were you part of and what was your experience like?" "What are your educational or career goals?" "What are your interests?" "What professional skills are you looking to build?" "What do you most want to know from someone in my position?"



Reach out to your mentee 3–4 times over the next year to check in, to follow up on things you discussed, and to let them know that you're there for them as a mentor. Encourage your mentee to share news of recent accomplishments.

For Mentees

Introduce yourself to your mentor when you receive an introductory email and let him or her know what you're hoping to get out of the program. Make a list of questions prior to your initial conversation with your mentor. What would you like learn from this person? What do you want to make sure they know about you?

Follow up with your mentor whenever you have a question they may be able to help you with. Share news of your accomplishments, and don't hesitate to ask for advice or introductions. Continue to let your mentor know how they can help you.

two new books in 2017—the picture book *Will You Read My Book With Me?*, illustrated by Thiago Lopes and two titles in the Bia & Beto series, both illustrated by Paz Rodero, *Um Presente Per Mamae* and *Tudo Igual*. New books that he has translated into English in 2017 include, *Nothing Is Lost: Selected Poems* by Jordi Doce; picture books *One House for All*, by Inese Zandere, and *A Bigger Family* by Olalla González; and the middle grade novel

The Wild Book, by Juan Villoro. New books that he has translated into Spanish in 2017 include poetry collections *La Caligrafía De La Aguja* by Arvis Viguls, *La Geografía Del Amor* by Kätlin Kaldmaa, *30 Cosas Que La Gente Jamás Se Pregunta* by Inga Gaile, and *Papás* by Karlis Verdins.

Sebastian Schulman

(Internship '04) became executive director of KlezKanada in Montreal, Quebec in December 2017. Sebas-

tian also served as the director of the translation fellowship program and a development officer at the Yiddish Book Center.

Jess Spear (Great Jewish Books Summer Program '15) is in her first year at Brandeis University, majoring in computer science and sociology.

Arielle Stein (Steiner Summer Yiddish Program '13) is a 2017–18 fellow at Mechon Hadar in New York, studying Talmud.

Tammar Stein (Tent: Children's Literature '17) is preparing for a trip to Israel where she will be researching the Yom Kippur War for a middle-grade companion novel to *The Six Day Hero*, which was published in 2017.

Naima Tokunow (néé Woods) (Tent: Creative Writing '15) is working at African American Student Services at the University of New Mexico and has begun her second master's program in

comparative literature and cultural studies.

Ri J. Turner (Translation Fellowship '14) is studying at the Medem Library (Maison de la culture yiddish) in Paris this year while she finishes writing her thesis for her master's degree in Yiddish from Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Cady Vishniac (Tent: Creative Writing '17) won the 2017 Fiction Contest at Salamander Residency and grant at the Vermont Studio Center.

New and Notable Reads

Yiddish Book Center alumni continue to produce engaging work, both in print and electronically. Here are some recent publications.

Jewish Comedy: A Serious History by Jeremy Dauber (Internship '92) was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, Dauber's book is a rich account of Jewish humor—its nature, its development, and its vital role throughout history.

Judgement by David Bergelson, translated by 2014 translation fellows Harriet Murav and Sasha Senderovich, is now available in English for the first time. *Judgement* is, according to *Kirkus Reviews*, an "ahead-of-its-time novel by one of the best-known Yiddish writers of his era proves powerfully relevant in its first English translation."

Subcortical is Lee Conell's (Tent: Creative Writing '16) highly praised collection of short stories contains "The Lock Factory," winner of the Chicago Tribune's 2016 Nelson Algren Literary Award.

What Girls Are Made Of, by Elana Arnold (Tent: Children's Literature '17),

is a young adult novel that explores the meaning of being a teenage girl in the modern world. It was a finalist for the 2017 National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

Nathan Goldman's (Tent: Creative Writing '17) "The Divinity of Dog Writing" looks at the relationship between people and their canine companions through the eyes of Virginia Woolf, Eileen Myles, and others (<http://lithub.com/the-divinity-of-dog-writing/>).

madness, sam sax's (Tent: Creative Writing '14) debut collection of poetry, "embodies the strange and disjunctive workings of the mind as it grapples to make sense of the world around it," and was the winner of the 2016 National Poetry Series Competition.

Other Recommendations

Be sure to send us your recommendations of what you've been reading, listening to, and watching. Here are a few of our recent favorites.

Menashe: "Within Brooklyn's ultra-orthodox Jewish community, a widower battles for custody of his son. A tender drama performed entirely in Yiddish, the film intimately explores the nature of faith and the price of parenthood." Also, be sure to listen to director Joshua Z. Weinstein and star Menashe Lustig discuss the film on *The Shmooze*. The film was screened at the Center in March as part of the Pioneer Valley Jewish Film Festival.

One of Us: This Netflix original film explores the insular world of New York's Hasidic community, focusing on three individuals driven to break away despite threats of retaliation.

Henri Oppenheim's album *Tur Malka (New Songs of Yiddish Montreal)* consists of 15 original melodies based on Yiddish poems that were written in the 20th century by poets who chose Montreal as their home.

David E. Fishman's *The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets, and the Race to*

Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis is "the nearly unbelievable story of ghetto residents who rescued thousands of rare books and manuscripts—first from the Nazis and then from the Soviets—by hiding them on their bodies, burying them in bunkers, and smuggling them across borders."

And recommended by Zeke Levine, 2016 alumnus of the Steiner Summer Yiddish Program and 2017-18 Yiddish Book Center Fellow, "Daniel Kahn & the Painted Bird," an album by "Yiddish Punk Cabaret" band The Butcher's Share is "the most powerful and complex work of the band so far and is dedicated to the great political and personal themes of our time."

Stay in Touch

CONNECT with other alumni at the Yiddish Book Center Alumni Group on Facebook | **READ** alumni profiles, updates, and news at yiddishbookcenter.org/alumni-association | **EMAIL US** at alumni@yiddishbookcenter.org

FOLLOW US on   

Wedded at the Center

Emma Rachel Morgenstern (Fellow and Senior Fellow 2011-12) married Sam Anzaroot at the Center on May 28, 2017. Emma is currently an audio producer in New York who has produced one-off radio stories for Public Radio International's "The World," Vox, Tablet, and the BBC Food Programme. Sam is a data scientist at Dataminr, a company specializing in AI and machine learning.

Oral Historian Spotlight



Photo: Christa Whitney

New on the Center's website is a profile of Agnieszka Ilwica, 2012-13 alumna of the Center's fellowship program and current international field fellow for the Center's Wexler Oral History Project.

During her fellowship year, Agnieszka completed the Center's oral historian training and since 2012 has recorded 47 interviews of Yiddish students, scholars, artists, and native speakers in five different countries—expanding Wexler's collection in invaluable ways. You can read about and see some highlights of Agnieszka's work by visiting yiddishbookcenter.org/heft-notebook.

Become an *Ufhalter* (Sustainer)

Visit yiddishbookcenter.org/sustaining-alumni to make your donation and become a Sustainer today.

אויפהאלטער
Ufhalter (Sustainer)

Making a recurring gift is an easy and convenient way to support the Yiddish Book Center's work on an ongoing basis. Become an *Ufhalter* (Sustainer), and for the cost of two black & white cookies, your support will help us continue our work rescuing, translating, and disseminating Yiddish books, and offering innovative educational and public programs and exhibitions.

DONATION PER MONTH	FOR THE MONTHLY COST OF	ANNUALLY YOU WILL PROVIDE FUNDING TO
\$6	Two black & white cookies 	cover the cost of admission for 10 students on a field trip to the Center
\$12	An order of blintzes with sour cream 	make it possible for our summer students to attend cultural activities
\$18	Homemade hummus with a side of fried olives 	give course packets to three of our Steiner Summer Yiddish Program students

Click to Open a Culture

Check out the Language, Literature & Culture section of our website at yiddish-bookcenter.org/language-literature-culture, where you'll find articles, podcast interviews, and short films about Yiddish and modern Jewish literature and culture; Yiddish works in translation; news from the Yiddish Book Center; Yiddish language learning tools; and more.

And in our digital Yiddish library you'll find a diverse collection of contemporary oral histories, archival recordings, Yiddish audiobooks, and more at yiddishbookcenter.org/collections.





Yiddish Book Center
1021 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002-3375

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 121
Pittsfield, MA

Mark Your Calendar



CONCERT SCHEDULE

..... THURSDAY, JULY 12

THE HELEN & IRVING SUNSHINE MEMORIAL CONCERT

David Krakauer's
Acoustic Klezmer Quartet | 8 PM

..... FRIDAY, JULY 13

Heather Klein &
Joshua Horowitz | 2:30 PM

Tsvey Brider featuring
Anthony Russell
& Dmitri Gaskin | 5:30 PM

..... SATURDAY, JULY 14

THE JOAN A. BACKMAN MEMORIAL CONCERT

David Krakauer's **Klezmer**
Madness Reunion,
with special guest **Socalled** | 8 PM

..... SUNDAY, JULY 15

THE BERNARD AND REVA BRODER MEMORIAL CONCERT

Beyond the Pale
with surprise guest | 12 PM

Yiddish Meets Ladino, with
Sarah Aroeste &
Anthony Russell | 3 PM

Socalled
String Quartet | 7:30 PM



THE YIDDISH BOOK CENTER ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Great Jewish Books Summer Program ■ Steiner Summer Yiddish Program ■ Fellowship

Tent: Encounters with Jewish Culture ■ Translation Fellowship